

Saturday, August 12th. In camp by Berserkia-hraun.

**U**P and to breakfast at nine on board the "Holger" where the master had asked us last night; I thought as a matter of course that he had asked Thorlacius too, but to my confusion he had not. The little ship looked clean and trim, and very small was the cabin: room for us all to sit down, and two bunks somewhere: the "Holger" was going to Liverpool with wool, and was to come back thence with an "assorted cargo;" after which she was to go to Lisbon (from Iceland) with salt-fish.

Breakfast over we loitered about a bit among our horses, which Eyvindr and Gisli had now brought in, till we found to our consternation that Thorlacius expected us to breakfast with him, not knowing at first, it seems, that we had eaten on board the "Holger:" I prayed Magnússon to apologize to him for our going away without his knowing it, and tell him that it was not our fault, if he could manage it: after which at about half past eleven in we went to one of the best breakfasts ever insulted by abstinence. The train started about one o'clock and we fondly hoped to follow it in about half an hour; but I think it was more like two hours before any break in the hospitality would let us escape. Mr. Thorlacius rode with us, and we soon came to the stark bare side of the Holyfell again, round which the road winds to the back of the stead, which lies deep sunk in a little valley at the hill's foot: the land around is waste-looking and mournful enough in these days: I suppose its nearness to the sea and consequent fishing made it good time ago. We got off here and wandered about the stead again, and Thorlacius showed us a mound in the churchyard, which they call Gudrun's grave-mound, as I don't see why it shouldn't be. Then

we all rode away together passing by a little creek that Thorlacius pointed out to us as Sword-firth (Vigrafiörðr) the scene of that queer fight in Eyrbyggja where Freystein Rascal is killed, and often mentioned in that Saga: I remembered what a much bigger place I had always thought of for that place, where the very skerry in the middle is named after the fight, and [called] Fight-skerry. A little afterwards we got off to say good-bye to Thorlacius: the old man was very warm and kind both now and before; though he had almost quarrelled with me at dinner yesterday for saying some ill of Snorri the Priest. He is a learned man, and comes of a learned family, and was quite delightful company though very quiet and shy.<sup>1</sup> Berserkia-hraun

So we rode on our way toward the lower end of the often-mentioned toothed mountains, whose outmost spur reaches the sea-beach as the whole range sweeps round this lower land. We blundered thrice about the road, but found it at last, and after asking at two steads about our train, were told at the second one that it had been seen three hours before: so as you may imagine it was grown late by then we found it halted in a grassy valley within sight of the sea, but close under the aforesaid mountain-spur, a huge mass of black cliff, with a wild sea of lava tossing up into great spires and ridges landward of it, and at the back of that mountains and mountains again: the valley went up into a long green slope from a little stead that stood at the seaward end of it; and above the green slope showed a few dark grey peaks far away: the sea of lava is called Berserkia-hraun (lava) memorable for the story in Eyrbyggja of the two berserks whom Styr betrayed and boiled in the bath, after they had made a road amidst the lava, as the tale tells.

We had ridden but a very little way (say eight miles) and had intended to sleep at Grundarfirth a long way on: we had still more than three hours of day-light—but, somehow, it

<sup>1</sup> This year (1873) C.J.F. hunting up books about the Sibyls for our stained-glass found that the principal modern book about them was by one Thorlacius, the uncle (or great-uncle) of our friend.

**Berserkia-  
hraun** was a beautiful place, and a very warm fine evening, and I looked at C. J. F. and he looked at me, and presently I had the hardihood or shamelessness to propose stopping there; so stop we did though Evans didn't half like it, and in half an hour's time I was busy over my fire. We had a very pleasant evening ending with whist; but first I climbed up to the top of the long slope, for the pleasure partly of looking at those tumbled hills again before we turned round their flanks and changed them, and partly of looking down on the green valley, and our camp with the horses feeding about it, and the grey smoke curling up from it, as I had done at that first camp on Bolavellir; O how long ago it seemed! It was a fine sunset again, but not like yesterday, for there were no clouds except a long bank all along the sea: and afterwards when I came out of the tent after our whist, and it had grown darkish, this cloud bank was grown so inky-black and the sea beneath it was yet so bright, that it was long before I was fairly sure that it was not a strip of brightest sky beneath the cloud.