

Tuesday, August 15th. In camp by Stapi.

UP rather early to a cold bright morning, and had a fine breakfast of fish in the stead, which is a very good one, the room we breakfasted in being larger than usual and quite pretty. We didn't get to horse very early, as the goodman was loth to let us go: a lodger in the house, an ex-parson I understood, brought us a couple of MSS. to see if we would buy them: one was well written in a hand of the 17th century: it was a copy of Jónsbók, one of the old law-books, but was in such an evil plight that I wouldn't buy it. At last we got away with the bonder to help us through the lava, and rode down the knoll on which the stead stands turning somewhat seaward: the knoll was quite round and rather steep on this side; bold slopes led away from it towards the lower spurs of Snæfell which is plain enough to see from here. It is some four thousand feet high but doesn't look a

Snæfells-
ness

very big mountain; I don't think any peaked mountains do: its double crown of dazzling white snow all crumpled like curd showed much the same from whatever side we saw it. We soon rode off the grassy slopes into the lava that has flowed from the big mountain; it was a very old lava all grown over with heath and grass and flowers and dwarf shrubs, and was pleasant riding enough especially as the day began to get hot among it. At first when we left the slopes of Ingjaldshóll a cliff hid Snæfell from us, but as we went on it ran into spurs of the mountain itself on the very lowest parts of which we rode and now could see the sea before us as well as on our right. It was as blue as blue can be: between it and us was a plain not high above the sea level, except that westward on the very land's end of this promontory was a cluster of strange-looking crater-like hills turned all sorts of red and yellow colours with burning: the land's end; for we had now fairly turned the corner; at least when after the goodman had left us we rode over the plain to a poor stead called Beruvík close down on to the sea: here we got the goodman to guide us, for almost all the rest of our day's journey lay through a very troublesome lava. It was characteristic of Iceland that when we asked him he wanted at first two dollars for his pains, but when a maid of his found his horse he agreed to come for one dollar; you see he would otherwise have had to walk back. We rode into the lava at once from here; there was a good deal of change in it; now it would be all in little hillocks flower- and herb-grown, now a flattish plain roughly paved with lava and now over wide slopes of stones leading right up to Snæfell, with little streams, grey sometimes and red sometimes but always muddy, running through it: the stones themselves being queerly mingled of grey, red and black; the red ones being the ruin of the red sides of a broken-down crater thrusting up from halfway (as it seems) up Snæfell. Three or four hills rise from the flat ground betwixt us and the sea; they are all conical in shape, and craters no doubt: to one of these we rode off our way; it was quite round with smooth grass-grown sides about the breach by

which we entered it: the floor of it was all covered smoothly Stapi
with round black and red stones: the tradition runs that this
is the burial place of Bera, the "Landnáms-woman" of these
parts, who would be buried in such a garth as that the sun
should not shine on more than half of it at once. The sun is
bright enough on half of it as we turn away and ride into the
hillocky lava again, and look over the hazy blue sea clearer
now than before, though we have never lost it since Ingjalds-
hóll. We are turning the flank of Snæfell now, whose side is
a mass of frightful ridges of inky grey lava running down
into the plain from the snowy cap. Another mountain lies
before us now, joined by lower necks to Snæfell: it is called
Stapafell and is of the hipped house-roof shape and prodigi-
ously steep, and crested with most fantastic pinnacles; it is
right over our resting-place of to-night.

Just above here we see a little schooner out in the offing
which is the second craft we have seen to-day, the other was
a fishing smack before we came to Beruvík. Then presently
from the sea-side, just beyond the grass slopes of the stead,
rises a rock that looks at first like two straight pillars, but as
we draw round it turns into a church with a steeple beside it;
Tröllakirkja (Troll's Church) is its name therefore.

Then we rode along the edge of a wave of new lava, whose
heaped up ragged stones hide the mountains from us for a
while, and so presently come off the lava on to a wide grassy
valley that slopes up to the feet of Stapafell, on whose sides
for as steep as they are we can see the sheep grazing: between
Stapafell and Snowfell are great spurs of slip and rock run-
ning up to the latter close in the valley. Our road, going
over a low neck out of this valley, brings us again into a lava
whose stones, when one sees them bare and broken, are black
and smooth like bottle glass. We are now at the end of Stapa-
fell, and can look down a valley running toward the sea. The
lava ends some way on seaward and leaves a smooth grass-
grown ness between it and the sea, the hither horn of a wide
shallow bay, which bay is backed by a sweeping range of
peaked mountains, that drawing very near the sea, leave a

Stapi

flattish plain along it, with a low spit of land to make the further horn. On the end of the hither horn aforementioned is a group of little cottages, which is Stapi our resting place. We ride swiftly down the hill and on to the grassy ness, and soon come upon the houses where we soon make all arrangements for things needful, and buy some fish for supper (for the people here are fishermen), and presently have our tents pitched in the tún. It is quite a beautiful little camping place this: a small hollow lying under the mound on which the houses stand, the grass soft, fine, and smooth; the tents are pitched just outside the grass-grown remains of an old stead (for there was once a grand house—for Iceland—here). A swift clear little stream runs round about this meadow on its way to the creak on the side toward the bay, and just beyond the stream is a green turf bank all along it, over whose smooth top we can see the huge steeps of Stapafell, and round the shoulders of them the last white fragment of Snæfell Jokul. The sun set in a sea of crimson clouds, and the night was calm and clear and warm. We lighted up to eat our dinner, and a lot of girls and women sat meanwhile to watch us on the bank on the other side of the stream, just as if it were a show they had taken places for. So to bed well pleased.