

Wednesday, August 16th. In camp in the home-stead of Staðastaðr.

I DREAMED very distinctly this morning that I had come home again, and that Webb was asking me what sort of climate we had in Iceland; I cried out "atrocious!" and waking therewith heard the rain pattering on the tent, and found C.J.F. busy drawing the things from the edges of the tent; I helped him therein, and fell to sleep again almost before I had got under the blankets. Waking again later on and hearing the talk of Eyvindr with some of the country-folk, I lay for some time puzzled to think where I was, and with an unhappy feeling of being a long way from where I wanted to be, and there and then began an access of homesickness for me.

Eyvindr brought us coffee at six instead of seven by mistake; but our early rising didn't avail us much, as one of our horses had run away in the night, and Gisli had to mount and go after him. Meantime we had to breakfast, and C. J. F. and Evans busied themselves with rearranging the boxes, while I sauntered toward the sea, and going down a sort of rough stairs, came to a little bit of strand, smooth and dipping into a smooth sea, between two walls of rock one of which is continued out to sea by masses of pillared rocks which give the place its name (Stapi, Staff). Close down by the sea, and not all troubling themselves about my presence, are five ravens stuffing themselves with fish-guts, and all the near sea is alive with eider-duck, sanderlings, gulls and cormorants: there is no ripple on the water, and the sun shines bright on the mountains that fence in the wide bay: the said bay is Broadwick (Breiðavík) which names Biorn, the Broadwick champion of Eyrbyggja, him who was found in America in the last chapter of the saga. Just opposite me is a long range of cliff down the face of which tumbles fifty feet of grey glacier stream right into the sea. So back to the camp where I notice that the little stream running round our meadow which was quite clear last night has gone all turbid now, I can't think why. Gisli had just come back with the missing horse when I got back to the tents, and we were off in a few minutes, and riding out from our ness-meadows, came on to a high plateau under the mountains that ends in the cliffs (the same I saw from the beach), close to whose edge we had to ride presently. Many streams running down from the mountains fell from the cliffs' edge besides the big grey one above mentioned: some of them had cut a passage through the rock, but the more part fell right over the bare edge; it is strange riding through these to see the sea below over their waters. As we rode over these cliffs an eagle flew to meet us, and sailing quite close to our heads, pitched down on the cliff's edge not twenty yards from where I rode. Off these cliffs we rode, down into a shaly hollow and then on to a rushy plain: to the left of this lay the stead of Kambr, the

house of Biorn above mentioned. This plain was quite on a level with the sea: we noticed several great drift-logs on it; and one part for several acres was all strewn with little sponges: I am too ignorant to know if they grew there or had been washed ashore. After a mile or two of very good riding over this we had to come into lava again: a lava not hilly like yesterday's but all honeycombed with holes, burst bubbles I suppose; the flowers and grass grow very thick and rich at the bottoms of these holes, meadow-sweet, cranes-bill and buttercups mostly. Amidst this lava, which a little way off would look like a quite smooth plain, rises a steep conical hill of black stones called Búða-klettr (cliff); round the landward side of this we wind and getting clear of its flank see the trading-station of Búðir (the booths) up a creek, and between it and the sea a schooner lying to, waiting with hoisted flag for the tide to bring her in: there are masts visible by the houses also and it all looks very near in the bright day, but proves over two hours of very troublesome riding; for the road (?) was all beset with false paths ending in ragged holes, in slippery ridges and pitfalls: one of the horses fell clean into a hole, and we had to pull him out with ropes; I wonder he didn't break his neck, but Icelandic ponies fall soft, and he was only a little bit scratched about the nose and legs. After a while the lava gets sprinkled with sand, which soon partly covers the rocks and then is grown over with wild oats, and then we come out on to sand and grass alone and are at the station of Búðir where are several neat houses and a church, on the top of whose cross sits a raven gravely watching our arrival. Here we had to swim our horses over the creek and have our luggage flitted over in a boat, so having seen this done and the horses all happy in the fields beyond, we went into the merchant's house, who would fain have had us stay the night with him, which was impossible; so we had to put up with chocolate and biscuits for entertainment, and afterwards went into his store to see what we could buy, for he boasted he had every thing up to live falcons. We bought some blue-fox skins there, and presently afterward crossed the river and went our ways over

flats near the sea, with a wall of mountains always on our left: Stadastadr it was bright still at about three in the afternoon, and I thought it pretty, as we rode along apace, to see all the hoofs glittering in the sun.

We rode on what seemed a longish way at last till Magnússon, beginning to have doubts about the road, turned off to a little stead, and finding an old woman there, asked the way and thus reported to me the dialogue that followed.

She: What men are you?

He: Four travellers and two followers.

She: Where do you come from?

He: London.

She: What is your name?

He: I am called Eiríkr, and am Magnússon.

She: Where are you going to?

He: Staðastaðr: is it a long way hence?

She: Yes, long.

He: How far?

She: I don't know.

He: Do you know the road?

She: No.

Nevertheless about twenty minutes afterwards we turned round by some big pools, and saw the church and stead of Staðastaðr lying on a low mound a furlong off, and were soon in the tún of it, the day now, at about seven o'clock, getting spoilt, grey clouds covering the hills and spreading downwards as it seemed. The priest seemed glad to see us and offered to kill us a lamb which we accepted, and then I went off with Faulkner and Evans to help pitch the tents, and coming back presently saw a sorry sight, for the lamb was killed, and the poor old ewe was bleating and rubbing her nose against the skin in a way to make you forswear flesh-meat for ever; happily however the ending relieved one somewhat, for one of the sheep-dogs sniffing about, came rather too near the ewe, who suddenly charged him, hit him in the ribs and bowled him over howling.

To dinner in the stove, and soon after to bed in our tents, the rain coming down a little.