

Saturday, August 19th. In camp in the tún of Borg.

Borg

THIS morning I saw for the first time the ancient Icelandic fiddle called Langspil: it was a long box with the strings stretched along it, and lay on the table to be played with a fiddle bow; a little maiden played "Eigi má ek á ægi" (out of the Viglund Saga) on it, but it was sadly out of tune.

It was an evil morning of wind and sleet, with the snow above mentioned visible enough on the mountains. So I suggested staying where we were, especially as we had heard very dismal reports of the bogs of the Mýrar (Mires).

Evans was sick and didn't care: C.J.F. suggested going half way to Borg, saying, as was reasonable, that the weather might be just as bad to-morrow, and then we should have to go on in any case: so I agreed, whereat C.J.F. seemed down-cast, for he had hoped I should be obstinate. However he brightened up presently, and said why shouldn't we ride all the way then: I wouldn't say no, and we got ready as speedily as might be, and were off not much before noon. The day brightened up somewhat for our reward, and when we got alongside of these ruined-minster-looking rocks, a gleam of sun made a mist-rainbow of that flat-segment shape on the mountain-spur above the house.

We rode along the feet of the hills on this side the valley till it opened, and the great plain of the Mýrar lay before us with the sea beyond, and the Snæfelsness promontory came in sight again on our right hand. We were now come to the point whence we needed a guide so we rode to a poor stead down the slope, and got the goodman of it to go with us, and so start again after sitting awhile with him and his wife (who is an acquaintance of Magnússon's).

He led us by a way that seemed to turn away from Borg again right under the mountains that fell away to the east, though the crow had not a very long way to fly straight over the bogs to Borg. The hills above us were broken cliffs, and their spurs that we rode over were much begrown with birch-scrub, twisted more than usual by the wind, a tree with a stem

Borg

as thick as my leg often creeping quite along the ground. At last we came on where Langá (Long-water) split these cliffs and ran right away for White-water:² there we turned toward the plain going on the seaward or west side of the river. The plain is a very wide one; it rises into broken ridges as it gets toward the east, but these for a long way are not high enough to take away its character of a plain: seaward it looks from where we are a quite unbroken plain, though it really is not so. Southward where the mouth of White-water would be, and on the other side of it, is a group of grand mountains that seem set in a circle as if they had once been the sides of some enormous crater. They end abruptly on the seaward, but landward drop gradually till they become mere hillsides along White-water: over the tops or between the gaps of them we should see, but for the clouds of this sullen day, the jokuls we passed by earlier in our journey (Long, and Ball Jokul). As we get clear of the mountain-spurs behind us we can see the north-east boundary of this great plain, which is a range of hills not very high or characteristic except for a pyramid which thrusts out from them called Baula (the Bawler).

We ride some little way along this west side of Langá, a shallow clear river, and then cross to the other side, and turn straight toward Borg. There turns out to be nothing dreadful about the bogs, for there is a good road through them; the marshland too is varied by sudden shelves of rock and grassy islands rising from its surface, and between these the birch-scrub grows thick mostly, and is higher than I have yet seen it in Iceland: the day though sulky was not very windy now, and was gotten much warmer. The day was far spent by then we came in sight of the water of the firth lying under

² Really for Western Burgfirth, the estuary of White-water. Taking his position high up on the west bank of Langá, the author has swept the country with his eye, east-ward to Long Jokul and Ball Jokul, west away to the Snæfell promontory, up north to the pyramid of Baula. He has embraced the main features of the country with general accuracy and breadth of vision, and one or two discrepancies in detail need not be noted. Ed.

the great mountains aforesaid, and we were hungry, and I Borg for my part, when we came first to one stead and then to another, lying each on its own knoll, thought that it must be Borg: at last rounding a corner of one of those rock-ledges we come upon a creek that runs up from the firth, and standing back from the water-side across the space of gentle green slope is a five-gabled stead under a sheer cliff, the highest of any of those ledges of rock, and that is the house of Borg, with a little church standing beside it.

It was quite dusk as we rode up to the door, and we got leave to sleep in the house that night, on the condition that we should turn out early enough in the morning to give them time to get the parlour ready for the dean of Stafholt who is coming to preach. So came supper and bed.