

Monday, August 28th. In a house at Reykjavík.

NOR were we disappointed: I gathered the wreck of my last cooking together under a thick drizzle, and by then we had breakfasted it had begun to pour; in the midst of which by nine o'clock we rode away from our last camp in Iceland, going into the Great Rift, and up that broken stair of the bastion aforesaid. The rain increased rather than not, but the wind was warm, and we minded it little. The two Cambridge men and their guide went with us, so that we were quite a big body of horse; the road was good steadily, and we went a fine pace; we could see little because of the driving rain; but if we had seen more I could tell you little about it, for excitement about my letters quite swallowed up everything else in me; and I was only glad that we went so fast. We stopped to bait in a fine valley surrounded by great cliffs called Seliadal, & there we ate in the downpour and rode on again in about half an hour. I remember I noticed after that a troop of men driving home sheep, who seemed to cross our path without our meeting them in some queer way. At last we stopped again, with the rain nearly done, in a little plain near Helga-vatn, and a mile or two further on we came (with a great jump in my heart) to the sea, and riding past a creek or two, we could see, a long way off, the beacon

¹ "of Paris" the note-book says. Ed.

on the hill above Reykjavík, and very dimly the harbour and ships lying there. Then we turned from the sea a little, and presently our road ran into the one that led to Bolavellir, our first camp in Iceland: thence away the road was almost like a road in England, and we swung along a great pace, keeping quite close together, the horses knowing well that they were coming near their journey's end. Nothing happened except that once Gisli, charging over a stony piece of ground after a straying horse, fell horse and man such a fall that I thought he must have broken his neck this time, but he was none the worse for it, and only laughed as he picked himself up. There we were, past the beacon, and into the little town, and I, heeding not other people, galloped my best to Mistress Maria's house, jumping off my horse (Mouse to wit) just six weeks to the minute since I had mounted him before by the paling of the queer little weedy-looking garden before the black, white-windowed cottage that I have seen in night dreams and day dreams so often since. Well, Miss Sæmundson, who met me, presently told me that there were no letters for me there, so off I galloped for the post office. Why doesn't one drop down, or faint, or do something of that sort, when it comes to the uttermost in such matters? I walked in quite coolly in appearance, and gave Mr Finsen my name scribbled big on a piece of paper; he shuffled the letters and gave me eleven; I opened one from Ellis there and then, thinking that from him I should hear any bad news in the simplest form; though indeed the eleven letters at first glance did somewhat cure my terror, for there was no one dead at least.

So home I went soberly to another lodging than last time, and thence, after reading my letters with not more than the usual amount of disappointment and wondering at people's calmness, I suppose, to Mrs Maria's house again, where was dinner, and the courtly old carle, Sir Henry Holland, whose age (eighty-four) I thought was the most interesting thing about him. I was rather low, after all, and cowed by the company, and a sense of stiffness after our joyous rough life just ended. So to bed.