

## Reykjavik

Saturday, July 15th. In the same place.

**V**ERY nice coffee and biscuits before we are up, and afterwards, regular breakfast, with all Icelandic matters; smoked mutton, stock-fish and the rest: I find none of it comes amiss to me at any rate. After breakfast we go first to see about our money; Mr. Fischer the agent says at first he doubts if he can get us any, as the season has been so good, more silver than usual was wanted to pay the farmers:<sup>2</sup> however, he says he will do his best; and then off we go to see Zoega, who is going to start this morning for the Geysirs with an English party: him we find with two ponies by our lodging, and he invites me to mount and come to his own

<sup>1</sup> Heavens! how glad I was to see it again though, six weeks afterwards.

<sup>2</sup> Meaning that they would be paid in kind mostly.

house where the rest are; with some trepidation I do mount, and all my fears and doubts vanish as the little beast<sup>1</sup> begins to move under me, down the street at a charming amble, that would not tire anybody. I see the other horses in Zoega's yard, sixteen of them at present, but he will bring them up to twenty before we start, and then we shall have about ten more to buy in the early part of our journey. So our saddles are shown, and have to be stuffed, the Icelandic boxes are sent down to our house, and Evans, Faulkner and I begin the serious work of packing afresh the things for the journey—that is to say, they two do, for I am principally of use as a mocking-stock, an abusing-block, how shall I call it? Magnússon meantime is away to see his friends about the place.

And now wait and consider if it isn't lucky that a good joke should not lack its sacred poet—Evans and I bought some stores the other day at the co-operative society in the Haymarket: they were to pack them in two cases and send them to us, as they did; but the day after came a message to say they had made a mistake, and put a parcel not ours in one of the cases, instead of some bologna sausage we had ordered, and which they then delivered. I asked them to unpack the case and take their property away; they said they would send the next day to do it; I agreed to that, but told them that if they didn't come that day, to Iceland their case would go with all that was in it, and that there we would eat their parcel if it was good to eat, or otherwise treat it as it deserved. Well, they never came, and here was the case, with the hidden and mysterious parcel in its bowels: many were the speculations as to what it was, on the way; and most true it is that I suggested (as the wildest possible idea) fragrant Floriline and hair-brushes—now in went the chisel, and off came the lid: there was the side of bacon; there were the tins of preserved meat; there was the Liebig, the soup-squares, the cocoa, the preserved carrots and the peas and sage and onions—and here IT was—wrapped up first in

<sup>1</sup> It was the pony I rode all the time, and brought to England with me.

Reykjavik shavings—then in brown paper, then in waterproof paper, then in more ditto, then in whitey-brown—and here IT is—four (was it) boxes of FRAGRANT FLORILINE, and two dozen bottles of Atkinson of Bond Street his scents, white violet, Frangipanni, Guard's Bouquet—what do I know? yea and moreover the scents were stowed in little boxes that had hair-brushes printed on them.

We looked at each other to see if we were drunk or dreaming, and then—to say we laughed—how does that describe the row we made; we were on the edge of the hayfield at the back of the house; the haymakers ran up and leaned on their rakes and looked at us amazed and half-frightened; man, woman and child ran out from their houses, to see what was toward; but all shame or care had left us and there we rolled about and roared, till nature refused to help us any longer—then came the inevitable regrets of the time it would take before my friends could know it, and that I should not be by to see their faces change; for how was I to keep it out of my letters?

Well, we calmed down at last and went on with our packing: afterwards I went with Magnússon to see some of his friends; the most noteworthy of them was Jón Sigurdson, the President of the Althing, a literary man whose editions of sagas I know very well: he seemed a shy, kind, scholar-like man, and I talked (Icelandic) all I might to him.

Also we went into some shops that overlook the harbour, and bought some useful things, cheese, cherry-brandy, knitted guernseys and gloves: then we went to the agent's (Fischer's) who had got our money for us, and counted and carried away 1,000 dollars in canvas bags; and now it seemed certain that we should be able to start on Monday; if those damned Icelandic locks can be got either to lock or to unlock. I needn't say I was in a fever to be off. Well, dinner and bed ended the day.