Tuesday, July 18th. At Mr. Thorgrímsson's house at Eyrarbakki.

Up at about nine for we were all somewhat tired: I can't say I had slept much, not that I was uncomfortable or cold, but the strangeness and excitement kept waking me up; there had been queer noises too through the night: the wild song of the plovers, the horses cropping the grass near one, the flapping of the tent-canvas, for there was a good deal of wind, and it was a cold morning though very bright; one longed for it to be warm that one might have the due enjoyment of the beautiful grass of the little meadow. Magnusson and Faulkner had laid the fire over night with the frying-pan on it, so we soon had it alight with bacon and my plovers in the frying-pan: I did the frying (with the help of the fire) and I confess it was with pride that I brought the pan into the tent and sat down to breakfast. That over we began to decamp, and as I wasn't wanted I wandered about up the hill-spurs and looked about me: just at the feet of the hills there was a space of bog which caught the little brooks that ran from the hills till they could gather into the streams bounding our camp; but above this the slopes were mostly covered with sweet grass, and sank into little hollows every here and there where the flowers grew very thick, notably the purple cranesbill aforesaid. Again I felt I don't know
what pleasure at the sight of the little camp where the guides had gathered the horses now: it was on the chord of the arc of a big semicircle of flat ground, some three miles at its deepest, I should think: a grassy plain saved out of the waste of lava, that rolling down from the mountains on either side, spread out grey for many a mile about, the last dribble of it reaching to the hither side of the tarn aforesaid: coming down from the hill I went thitherward and sat on its deep grey moss to write up my diary till I was called to saddle; in our camping-ground that [was] all changed and unrecognisable from the absence of the tents now; and so off we went, at first straight across the plain, but turning to our right presently came into valleys among sandy spurs of the hills, grey or yellow or red, and then beginning to mount are on the rocky path of the pass, among the barrenest hills I have yet seen, though here and there are stripes of scanty green on some of the lower slopes, on one of which a sheep was standing, and looking so much too big among the emptiness that at first we took him for a rein-deer which inhabit these mossy parts. We rode up and down through these wastes a long way, going higher on the whole, of course, the path so steep that we have to get off and walk sometimes (though I for my part felt safer on horse-back) till at last we came to the crest of the pass, and saw the sea lying deep blue a long way ahead, the sea we sailed over the other day before we made Reykjaness; descending hence we soon lose the sight of the sea; and here in the very steepest of our road we met a parson and his man; whom, the parson, Magnússon knew and embraced.

Still down, and the hills get lower now; I note here our riding over a huge waste of black sand all powdered over with tufts of sea-pink and bladder-campion at regular intervals, like a Persian carpet, and then over a bank of sand into

1 Lágaskarð (Low shard) to wit.
2 We rarely met travellers on our way throughout the journey: farmwork (haymaking) being at its height, and the Althing sitting at Reykjavík, the people were little on the move.
a flat plain of smooth grass where we rested awhile, then off Olfusa this into a deep rut between two slopes, the southward-looking one grass-grown and flowery, the northward-looking one a mass of spiky cindery lava, with nothing on it but the grey moss: the gorge widening in a while we see the sea again, the Westman Isles lying far to the east. We have been descending speedily of late and are now on the verge of the hills, and nothing lies between us and the great plain that stretches right up to Eyjafell (east of Njal’s country) but a short space of utterly barren shaly slopes populous with ravens: the plain before us shows to the west nothing but an awful dead grey waste of lava, but to the east are grey green pastures with the emerald green patches of home-meads lying about the shore of Olfusa, the estuary of White-water and its tributaries: of this however we can only see the lower part, low slopes hiding the rest. So we rode down the shaly hillsides, I with my heart in my mouth the while, for they were as steep as the side of a house, and so came among the lava-plain at their feet: at last we got clear of it, and rested by the wall of a prosperous-looking stead on the short grass of the pastures, and ate and drank there, getting a great pail of milk from the stead, where they were busy haymaking.

About this time began the first series of losses that I suffered, to the great joy of my fellow-travellers: for, lunch over, I missed the strap that fastened my tin pannikin (which made such a sweet tinkle) to my saddle-bow: I applied to Faulkner for another, and of course he refused me with many reproaches: then afterwards, hunting about, he found the strap, but pride prevented me asking for it, so I tied my pannikin on with a piece of string, and so off we go and ride presently off the grass on to the smooth black sand about Olfusa, called the Skeið, and lo after I have ridden a furlong or so, the knot of the string has slipped and my pannikin is gone. We ride close on to the water now; a wide estuary, narrowing and deepening as we go seaward, is on our left, on our right the sand rises (above high-tide mark I suppose)

1 C.J.F. was store-keeper and almoner to the party. Ed.
The Ferry and is grown over with tall grey-green wild oats; we are far enough off now to see a wall of mountains, dragged across by clouds, rising over the lower slopes we have just travelled over; they are black and heavy-looking, all the blacker that the day has turned gloomy and it even rains somewhat. Further east we can see the higher mountains that dominate the Njala country, Hekla first, then Three-corner and the higher ice-capped mountains that lead round at last to Eyja-fell, but the tops of them are all under clouds now.

So at last we come to the place where we are to ferry over the river; it is much narrower here, but still half a mile over I should think, and to our grief the tide has just turned long enough to be running out seaward at a great rate, the seals dropping down with it one after another with little fear of us. The river is milky-white as all the rivers it takes into it are glacier-born: Magnússon says the tide and wind are too strong for it to be safe to swim the horses over without help, as can mostly be done, so we are like to have a long job of it; we saw the boat stirring on the other side as we came down to the strand, and presently it is here, small and crank enough. The horses are all unloaded by this time and the packs lying about on the black beach, so we stow some of the luggage into the boat, and then Magnússon and the guides tie eight horses four and four together by the muzzles, Eyvindr takes one lot of strings, and Magnússon the other, and they wade into the boat while we drive the horses into the water; after a little snorting and kicking they take the water, the boat pushes off and they are soon off their legs. I watched them slowly gaining the other bank with some anxiety, but we saw them all ashore in a while and slowly going up the bank of the stream: while the boat set off for the return trip.

While it was on the way back, we saw travellers coming down along the strand to our side of the ferry, and in a while could make out one of our fellow-passengers by the "Diana" who is making for the east country, with his guide Einar Zoega: (half-brother to Geir of that ilk): as they draw nearer I see something glittering at the traveller’s saddle-bow, and presently riding up he jumps off his horse and greets us and
asks if anybody has lost this, viz: my pannikin, thank heaven: Eyrar-
he found it just at the beginning of the Skeið, and Einar was
for letting it lie there on the score of honesty, but our friend,
having an inkling of my ways, let us say, insisted on bringing it on.

Well, we pile the luggage up in the boat, every scrap of it,
string more of the horses together, Faulkner and I on one
side taking two each, and Magnusson and Evans other two;
we perch ourselves on the saddles, the horses are lugged and
driven in and off we go again: to me unused it is rather ex-
citing work; we have orders to do our best to help any horse
that seems flagging, and on no account to let go; however,
they mostly swam very well with their noses up, snorting and
blowing furiously as the ice-cold water washed right over
their heads every instant; we were swept a long way down by
the tide, so far as to be quite close to the rocky bar, on which
we could see the breakers dashing, while we ourselves seem-
ed almost level with the cold grey sea outside. Well, we
scrambled ashore presently and walked along the strand to-
wards the place opposite to where we started: now I that
morning had forgotten to put my slippers away in my box
till it was duly on the pack-saddle, so thrust them into the
pocket of my waterproof coat, and had found them safe when
I put it on on the other side of Olfusa during a shower: but
now a misgiving coming over me, I put my hand into my
pocket, and draw out only one slipper—well there is no help
for it, so on I trudge, till I come up with the others, and tell
them of my loss with some hesitation on my part and much
jubilation on theirs; then we mounted, and rode about a mile
into the trading station of Eyrarbakki, our resting place that
night: a collection of a few turf-built houses, a big wooden
store and the merchant’s house, all clustered about a bit of
green close to the low rock-strewn beach: a schooner also was
lying just off the bar of the Olfusa, for nothing bigger than
a row-boat (if that), can get into it from the sea: the place
looks, and is, a very insecure roadstead.

We went straight to Mr. Thorgrímsson the merchant’s

1 i.e. into this harbour from the sea except at spring tide. E.M.
house: to ask for quarters; he was out, but Magnússon saw his wife and set the matter straight, and presently Thorgrímsson himself came in with another man, the doctor of the Westman Isles, and greeted us, of course in that queer shy way that made one doubt at first if we were welcome: however in we go and wash, and get to talk with our host, who as well as the Westman doctor, and a Danish partner Le-Folij, talks English very well: the fellow-traveller also comes in presently: he calls himself an Italian and looks like one and talks with a foreign accent; but his name is no more unenglish than just—Dapples. Thorgrímsson makes us great cheer and is very talkative and merry: his house is a pretty wooden one with big low-ceilinged rooms of the ship’s cabin aspect: we have a big supper at a round table of roast mutton and all the northern delicacies, which I am quite used to now, and so to bed in various dens, I in a comfortable little room with a real clean bed, of course of the northern type, i.e. a feather bed under you and another over you: nevertheless sleep came easy.