

Breiðaból-
staðr CHAPTER III. FROM LITHEND TO THE GEY-
SIRS.

Sunday, July 23rd. In camp in the home-mead at Völlr.

WE had given out that we wanted to buy horses yesterday, so this morning about breakfast time there was quite a horse-fair in our camp: we bought about half-a-dozen, making up our full number of thirty with one over, a little mare Evans fancied, and speculated in privately. Jón came in to say good-bye, bringing me a book that Magnússon had noticed at his room, an 18th century Icelandic poet, rather rare I believe. We all thought Jón a very good fellow and were quite sorry to part with him.

So to saddle and off, on a grey cold overcast day threatening rain; Faulkner in poor spirits and obviously not very well. We ride west along the sides of the Lithe, and after an hour's ride are delayed by Evans' mare finding herself near the stead she was bred at, and running off at score accordingly: so we sit down on a little mound, and watch Eyvindr chasing her all up the slopes, till at last he catches her and brings her back, rather in an ill temper; so she is tied to the tail of a stolid old pack-horse to check her exuberance, and on we go again. We make for Breiðbólstaðr, a church and priest-stead¹ which we had seen on the Lithe-side from the plain on Friday; we are to get our horses shod there, as there was no smith at Lithend: the priest² was gone a preaching at another place, but his wife, a good-looking gentle mannered woman, received us kindly, promised us a smith, and gave us a splendid meal of salmon-trout and "red-grout³ with cream," making many apologies for the scantiness of the meal: Faulkner ate, but was rather silent: the good wife provided a smith for us, and the horses were shod, after which, and having presented the daughter with a bottle of our mistaken scents, we went on our way under the guidance of the

¹One of the best livings in the country, worth some £140. E.M.

²Síra Skúli Gíslason. E.M.

³A sort of jelly flavoured with cherry-juice and eaten in a soup-plate full of cream.

parson's son, a little lad of twelve who jumped on to his horse with much confidence. Breiðabólstaðr is near the west end of the Lithe, so we turned north now and rode over down-like country for some time till after looking up a dale through which we have our nearest view of the great mass of Three-corner we come out on the edge of the hill-country and look west over the vast plain we journeyed through last week seaward of this. We were very much amused by the precocity and readiness of the lad: he drove on the horses most handily, talking all the time to the guides and Magnússon, asking the latter, who was comforting Faulkner (now by no means in good estate), What did you say to him then? What did he say to you then? We could see below us the stead of Völlr which we did not intend to stop at, as we were making for Stóruvellir, and meant a long jog the next day to Geysir, but fate otherwise willed it, thus—We rode down into the plain and soon came to the garth-wall of Völlr, and Evans and I had already passed it when Magnússon came up to us with a long face and told us that Faulkner was in great pain and could positively ride no further: a selfish pang shot through me at the news as I pictured to myself all the delay and worry that friendship might entail on me: however there was no doubt that poor Faulkner was not shamming, but had indeed been behaving with great heroism for the last few hours, so back we turned, I certainly in poor spirits (Faulkner I can *now* imagine in poorer). We all went up to the stead together: it was a handsome new-built house, and its owner was sheriff of the district,² and Magnússon knew something of him, so Faulkner was made as comfortable as might be, and we were soon all at coffee and cakes: the sheriff found beds for Magnússon and Faulkner in his house, and Evans and I were to sleep in camp which we pitched straightway, and after a talk in the stead went off and housed ourselves, and soon got cheerful enough over chocolate and supper and grog, though the rain now began to fall in torrents and it blew hard; I was quite used to tent life now and slept well enough in spite of

²His name was Hermannius Jónsson. E.M.

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all that, and though before we got under the blankets we could hear above the roaring of the wind and flapping of canvas the steady boom of Eyvindr's nose in the other tent some twenty yards from ours.