

Wednesday, July 26th. In camp at the same place.

**A** BRIGHTISH morning at first, and after bathing in the stream that flows from Blesi, as low down as was pleasant, we fry our bacon and have our breakfast in great comfort: then walk about our dismal garden, after taking our clothes to the wash in the above-mentioned stream. The red "Melr" is really the highest point of a low ridge running parallel to the master ridges that form this wide valley: here it is just as if the ridge had been split in two and half of it tumbled into the plain which indeed I suppose was the case: north of the big Geysir is a rise of sulphury shale that hides the crater till you are close up to it; it is divided by a little hollow through which runs the stream from Blesi: this ground has no big spring in it but is quite full of little ones, most of them just big enough to put your thumb into, if you have a mind to be scalded: then comes Blesi, and be-

## Geysir

tween it and our camp a spring of boiling mud about a yard across; a rod further south you come to the second biggest kettle, Strokkur to wit, i.e. the Churn: this is not like Geysir which has a little crater inside the big basin, but has only one



visible crater with a ragged lip to it, the water gurgling and boiling fiercely many yards below:<sup>1</sup> Strokkur used to gush but not so often as the Geysir: it will not do so now spontaneously, but must be stuffed with turf first: past Strokkur again, near the mouth of a little hollow running up to the "Melr" is the little Geysir which is exactly a model in petto<sup>2</sup> of the big, its inner crater being about as wide as a dinner plate: it gushes three or four times a day, sending a column up about twenty feet high; there are several other springs about this, a notable one low down the slope which boils very fiercely, and where the people of the poor stead just below come to do their washing. The Melr a little past this sinks into the boggy flats about a bright little river that having run behind the ridge meets below it the stream we crossed just below our camping stead: looking south the wide valley is very flat, and you can see this stream wandering away to join Tungufliót, itself a tributary of White-water: a long way [off] a long house-roof-shaped mountain suddenly blocks the valley as with a door, and you may imagine beyond it the great flats of the Njála country and the sea to end all: to the north the Melr sinks into the plain only a little way from the stead of Hawkdale which lies under the north boundary of the valley, above which one can see on fair days the long line of Ball- and Long-Jokuls: on fair sunlit days there is something pleasant about the wide valley, especially looking south over the winding stream and green flats.

To-day the weather is very broken, and after a little we went back to our tent, for the rain began to come down heavily; and there we sit contentedly enough for some time, solaced by the snoring of Eyvindr in the other (spare) tent:

<sup>1</sup> The big basin of Geysir is full up to the brim except just after an eruption, when you can walk right up to the real crater.

<sup>2</sup> *In petto*: a verbal slip, the idea being "in little." Ed.

by whom sits Gisli awake but most intensely lazy, knocking one stone against another for amusement, and smoking cigars that I had provided him with: it was some hours though before we were any less lazy; and then we bethink us that there ought to be some fish in these streams, and I wake up Eyvindr, who sets off to get me worms, and presently Evans and I both set off in the rain: Eyvindr leads me to a place at the end of the Melr near Hawkdale, where a strange stream runs from one river into the other: strange, because it runs mostly underground cropping up here and there in bright clear bubbling holes. Eyvindr borrows a hook from me, ties it to a piece of string weighted with a flat stone, lies on his belly over one of the holes and drops in his hook, and has a plump little trout in a minute, before I had got my line in the water: in short we caught five trout apiece. The sun came out while we were fishing, and showed the valley at the back of the Melr green and pleasant looking after our horrible camp, and it was quite a rest for me. Eyvindr and I went back along the stream below our camp, and presently met Evans, fishless but with a plover and a snipe he had shot, and back we all go to camp, and begin to get ready for cooking our fish: but it soon comes on to rain again, our fuel is smallish birch twigs not very dry, and after patient struggles on Evans' part, and my wandering about barefoot trying to help him, we give it up, and dine off preserved beef, entirely to my satisfaction, but not to his, for he was ambitious, and thought himself beaten. So grog, pipe, and sleep unbroken.

In camp