

Sunday, July 30th. In the bonder's house at Kalmanstunga.  
**N**O very long ride before us to-day, which is lucky as we didn't manage to leave camp till 12 o'clock. We passed by the three pools that name this place with their little patch of green, and were soon on the bare sand and stone of the waste again: after a mile or two's ride we strike the great north road from Reykjavik, a regular and tolerably wide track instead of the imaginary road of yesterday: looking behind us as we mounted a low gradual rise, we could see still the great barn-like mass of Hlōðufell hull down nearly now, and the spreading cone of Skjaldbreið, still unchanged; right ahead are first a long line of broken down mountain-

<sup>1</sup>As we came up to it we couldn't see the three ponds from which the place takes its name.

wall black as ink under a dull cloudy sky, then beyond them to the north steep cliffs that hide the ice of Geitland's Jokul from us, then the pass of Kaldidalr (Cold-dale) through which our road lies; hedged in on the other side by another flat cone of a glacier-capped mountain called Ok (The Yoke): in front of this a narrow steep tent-shaped mountain called Fanntófell; except for this the steeps of Geitland's Jokul on one side of the way and the flat cone of Ok reproduce very closely Hlöðufell and Skiadbreið of yesterday: the ground about us is no longer lava, but water-washed boulders, reminiscences I suppose of vanished glaciers; it is even barren than that of yesterday since no flowers grow amongst it, but the road is good: despite of that we were like to have lost one of our pack-horses, who taking fright at something set off at score galloping furiously, the red-painted Icelandic boxes bounding about on his sides; we all thought he would damage himself seriously, till at last one of the boxes got one end unhooked and trailing on the ground, stopped him; of course the lid flew open, and our candles and spare boots and a few other things strewed the soil of Iceland: it doesn't sound very funny to tell of but amused us very much at the time to the extent of setting us into inextinguishable laughter; and in fact I remember still the odd incongruous look of the thing in the face of the horrible black mountains of the waste: well, we picked them up and jogged on, nearing the jagged wall aforesaid for some time, till at last we headed straight for the pass, and turning a shoulder of the near cliffs were presently in the jaws of it: a dismal place enough is Cold-dale, and cold enough even with a warm<sup>1</sup> east wind blowing as to-day; it is a narrow valley choked a good deal with banks of stones and boulders and stripes of unmelted snow lying about even now: the black cliffs of Geitland's Jokul on one side with the glaciers sometimes trickling over the tops of them, and on the other side flatter dismal slopes of stones and sand that quite hide the ice that caps Ok. At

<sup>1</sup> The east wind is warm and wet in Iceland; the coldest wind is north-west there for obvious reasons.

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the entrance of the valley is a heap of stones standing in the middle of a small patch of grass, this is a landmark called a Carline,<sup>1</sup> common enough on the wilderness roads, but at this special one 'tis the custom of travellers to dismount and write a joke or a scrap of doggrel and put it under one of the stones for the benefit of the next comers, which office I fulfilled for our company now very inefficiently. Then on we go with little change for two or three hours; at last after rising somewhat we find we have turned the shoulder of Ok, and have a faraway view of more and more waste and more and more inky mountains; but may imagine if we please the inhabited dales that lie beyond these and go down to Broad-firth, and through which some weeks hence we shall be travelling: this is on our left; on our right the black cliffs break down and show us a huge Jokul-field, and from this run four dark spurs down into the lower land; behind the third of them we are promised Kalmanstunga. We descend now pretty sharply for about an hour<sup>2</sup> till at last we can see some green patches on a distant hill-side, and then after a mile or two's further ride can look into a wide deep semi-circular valley, the greater part of which indeed is a waste of black, but green slopes run down the lower part of the hills about it, and on the furthest slope is the usual emerald-green patch that shows supper and bed: We are still seven miles off however, and the rain which had held up till now (say half-past 6 p.m.) through a dull sunless day, now begins to come down smartly, and I don't much look forward to the tent-pitching for the night: we turn towards the valley and a little further on crossing some little streams (the first water since the pools of Brunnar) come presently to a meadow of deep grass on the brow of a very steep descent into the valley, down into which thunders a milk-white stream through an awful look-

<sup>1</sup> They call the heaps of stones that mark the summit of the Lake-country hills "old men."

<sup>2</sup> I am sorry to be so vague about time: the fact is it was of almost no value to us at this stage of the journey, especially on moderate rides like this.

ing gorge it has cut for itself in the rock:<sup>1</sup> we dismount here and have a rest in the rain for the horses' sake: then down the slope to a swift turbid river<sup>2</sup> which Gisli, who is more at home here than before, tries for a ford and does not like the look of: so we have to mount a prodigiously steep slope again and down on the other side into a hollow much grown over with birch, and so pretty and pleasant looking a place in spite of the rain that the non-Icelanders of the party were for staying and camping there: Magnússon however and the guides say that we shall have no good pasture for the horses, which they sorely need, last night's bite at Brunnar having been but scanty: so we turn down to the river-side, and cross it on to a plain of quite black stones with jagged rocks sticking up here and there, shiny black just like coals; four more streams run through this, and crossing the last of them we come on to a scanty strip of out-meadow, beyond which is the wall of the tún of Kalmanstunga: as Magnússon and I gallop through this I can see even through the pouring rain that it is a very sweet looking soft place with a little bright stream running through it and grass bright green to the water's edge: the house at whose door we are soon standing is a very poor looking place, just a heap of green turf without the cheerful looking wooden gables turned south one generally has seen hitherto: however the bonder is good tempered and invites us into the house, and offers us his parlour for our night's lodging: it rains so hard that we make few words about accepting the offer, though this was the first bonder's house we shall have slept in, and I had yet to shake off my dread of—, inspired principally by Baring-Gould's piece of book-making about Iceland: so we are soon all housed in a little room about twelve feet by eight: two beds in an alcove on one side of the room and three chests on the other, and a little table under the window: the walls are panelled and the floor boarded; the window looks through four little panes

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<sup>1</sup> The streams of the valley are the head waters of White-water that flows past Gilsbank and Burg of the Gunnlaug's Saga.

<sup>2</sup> White-water, no less.

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tunga of glass, and a turf wall five feet thick (by measurement) on to a wild enough landscape of the black valley, with the green slopes we have come down, and beyond the snow-stripped black cliffs<sup>r</sup> and white dome of Geitland's Jokul. We sup off the last of our lamb from Hawkdale presently, overhaul one or two boxes (huge anxiety of Faulkner) and find the biscuits going to powder a good deal—and so to bed after plenty of talk.