



BRIDGE OVER THE JÓKULSÁ.

## PREFACE.

'BUT didn't you find it very cold?' is a question so often asked the writer, that he fears there are many intelligent Englishmen yet to whom Saga Land is little else than an ice-bound, ice-clad, ice-capped isle, save where Hekla's flames or Geysir's floods have pierced the crystalline crust! To such, these pages will come with special interest, revealing the wealth of historic lore and the fulness of mountain beauty possessed by Iceland. And even the snowfields themselves, in the hot bright summer days, become dazzling fairylands, while the wild-flowers at their feet can rival those of many a Switzer Alp. There are few countries in which such great changes of scenery occur within a compass so limited. From pasture to desert, from peak to sea, from ice to lava is often a transition for which an hour may suffice.

It is true that monuments of antiquity are conspicuous only by their absence; but the presence of a people with the language and many of the customs of a thousand years ago is a monument of itself. Nor is the attraction merely academical, for these people are our kinsmen, and many of us have far more ancient right to speak of Cousin Jón than Cousin Jonathan.