



APPROACHING THE SUMMIT OF THE ÖRALFA JÖKULL.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ICE MOUNTAINS OF THE SOUTH.

HOWEVER grand we may consider the mountains of the East, they must of necessity yield in glory to the stupendous ice-clad masses of the South. Here the outbursts of volcanic energy have occurred in closest contact with the no less marvellous phenomena displayed in the realm of the Ice King. It is here that frost and fire have grappled in sternest conflict.

The travellers who have penetrated into its recesses have been few and far between, but their testimonies are significantly similar. Some, who have written big books on Iceland, advanced upon it with great expectations, but ended by leaving it severely alone. Its dominating features are, firstly, the Great Vatna Jökull, or Water Glacier, sometimes called the Klofa, or Cleft, Jökull, crossed by Mr. Watts, in one direction, in 1875; and secondly, the Óræfa Jökull, the loftiest peak in Iceland, whose summit was first reached by the author in 1891. The Vatna Jökull covers nearly two thousand square miles, and from its western extremity, known as the Skaptarjökull, has proceeded the largest stream of lava known to have been ejected at one eruption.

The term *Jökull* is applied by the Icelanders both to true glaciers and to mountains plus the glaciers upon them, although the former are sometimes distinguished by the term *Skrithjökullar*, or slipping glaciers. It is derived from *Jaki*, a fragment of ice. A corresponding word in Anglo-Saxon is,