



ICE CONES ON THE BREITHAMERKE JÖKULL.

CHAPTER V.

HEKLA AND BURN'T NJAL'S COUNTRY.

THANKS to an introduction from Sjera Jón, of Bjarnanes, I travelled, for several days after leaving Víkr, with Herra Olafsson, a southern *sýslamaðr*, and Herra B. M. Olsen, Ph.D., of Reykjavík. This was a change indeed from our solitary wanderings in the south-east, where for days together no other passenger was seen, and I was fortunate in witnessing the manner in which these Icelanders themselves are wont to 'fare' across their native land.

The old fourfold partition of the island has given way to north and south divisions into *amts*, whereof the governor of the southern, and, in some sense, of the whole, resides at Reykjavík, and the lieutenant-governor of the north at Akureyri. The *amts* are subdivided into eighteen *sýslar*, or counties, and these again into one hundred and sixty-nine *hveppur*, or poor-law districts. Each *sýsla* is in charge of a *syssełman*, or sheriff, local judge, and inland revenue official, whose gold-laced coat is generally in evidence at all the larger ports.

Mr. Olafsson had been at Kirkjubær, but was on the point of moving west. Both he and Dr. Olsen had many friends along the route. Sometimes these turned out with us in the morning. Throughout the day festivities continued; a breakfast here, another there, and nondescripts between till supper time. On our right, as we journeyed, were the snow-fields of the Eyjafjallajökull, which 'floats in air,' the natives say. From it