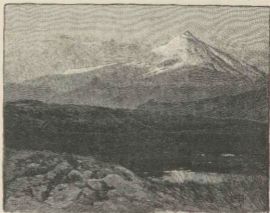


as well, the hood of cloud which often drifts around her head. At this distance, five-and-twenty miles, and standing 'end on,' so that her three peaks are merged into one, she looks but an ordinary hill, though in reality sixth among Icelandic heights: Oræfa Jökull, 6426 feet; East Snæfell, 5982; Vatna Jökull, not ascertained, about 6000; Eyjafjalla Jökull, 5593; Herthubreith, 5446; Hekla, 5108.

While standing here, I was accosted by the farmer, who informed me that my position was hardly safe, seeing that a cavern some ten or fifteen feet in depth was underneath, of which the rising ground was but the somewhat fragile roof. These caverns, it appears, are sometimes used as storehouses for hay. Some are simply bubbles in ancient lava streams, others are excavated on purpose, though haystacks hereabout are often built in the open air and covered with long bands of turf, secured by ropes, to which are fastened blocks of stone or lava. In an hour or two the *Sysselman* returned with the truant ponies.



DISTANT VIEW OF MOUNT HEKLA.

The rallying-point of travellers from the west to Hekla is, as a rule, the parsonage of Stóruvellir, a home whose peace and comfort have been highly praised by many a visitor. An early start is made, and in an hour or two the *Vestri Ránga* is reached, over a sandy plain with blocks of lava here and there, and now and then some ugly rifts among the lines of ancient scoria, for one at least of the older streams has pushed its way almost as far as Stóruvellir. Should the weather have been bad, the crossing of the river may be somewhat troublesome, especially to a traveller unprepared to deal with rivers such as these; but with shoes and stockings off, and knees drawn up to grip the saddle, there need be little trouble. Sometimes, in a rougher stream than this, the mount may prove unsteady; if so, the reins may be loosely thrown across one arm, and the fingers knotted in the pony's mane. It may not be very dignified, but it is an excellent safeguard,