



CHAPTER VI.

REYKIR AND REYKJAVÍK.

FROM the Hekla district, a traveller, crossing the island but once, should proceed northward to Gullfoss and Geysir, and thence by Thingvellir's classic fields to Reykjavík; but we are hastening there direct, and will give the Goldforce and the Gusher a chapter to themselves. The country between the Rángá and the Thjórsá is monotonous after the mountains of the south, but its rolling grassy hills are an improvement on the marshes of Landeyjar, though bogs are not by any means unknown among them. Midway we meet the wretched little Rauthalekr, or Red Brook; either the stream or the road does not know its own mind, for we have to cross the water eighteen times. When the bed is good, and the depth but little, our party dashes in at full speed, and the splashing may be well imagined. The terminations of these river names are almost universally significant. *Lakr* is a brook; *Kvsl*, a forked stream, dividing constantly, as the glacier outlets almost always do; *á* is the regular river name; and *fljót*, the flood.

The Thjórsá is a serious matter. From its sources in the ice caverns of the central glaciers to the great lagoon which receives its own waters and those of the Thverá, its course exceeds 120 miles, while here its bed is half a mile wide, and fording out of the question, but a ferry exists instead.