

beside a certain pile of wood, running into the house herself. At this time Hrafnkell was not up as yet; his chosen men lay about in the hall, but the workmen had already gone each about his business, the time being the hay-making season. Now when the maiden came in she took up the wood, saying: "Sooth, indeed, are most of the old saws; 'so one grows craven as one grows old;' that honour mostly cometh to but little which, beginning early, is allowed to drop into dishonour, the bearer having no courage to wreak his right at any time, and such must be held a great wonder in a man who, once upon a time, has had bravery to boast of. Now the thing is changed; those who grow up with their fathers, and are deemed as of no worth against you, yet, when they grow up in another country, they are deemed of the greatest worth in whatsoever place they show themselves, and come back again from abroad and hold themselves better even than any chieftains. Now Eyvindr Bjarnarson has just crossed the river at the ford of Skúli, riding with a shield so fair that it beamed again; surely he is so much of a man as to be worth taking in revenge." These things the handmaiden said in great eagerness of temper. Hrafnkell rose and answered her: "May be the words thou speakest are only too true; not because that thou meanest anything good thereby; but it is well that thou have something for thy ado, and go forthwith, as hard as thou canst run, south to Víðivellir, to the sons of Hallsteinn, Sighvatr, and Snorri, and bid them at once come to me with as many men as they have about them able to bear weapons." Another handmaiden he sent down to Hrólfstadil to fetch the sons of Hrólf. Thordr, and Halli, together with such men as might happen to be there able-bodied. All these were the stoutest of men, and were skilled in all manly parts. Hrafnkell also sent for his house-carls. And thus they were at last eighteen together. They armed themselves trustily, and rode across the river where the others had crossed it before. By this time Eyvindr and his men had got upon the heath, and on he rode until he had crossed the heath half-way, and had come to a spot called Bessagötur, where there is a boggy mire like a slough to ride through, where the horses waded all the way knee-deep, haunch-deep, or even belly-deep; but underneath the bottom was as hard as a frozen earth. On the western side of this bog is a large lava, and, when they got upon the lava, the youth looked back and said to Eyvindr: "Some men there be riding after us, no less than eighteen in number, among whom there is one, a big man on his horse, riding in blue raiment, and to me he seems to bear the likeness of Hrafnkell, the priest, although I have now not seen him for a long while." Eyvindr answered: "What is that to us? I know nothing whereby I need fear the anger of Hrafnkell, having never done aught to offend him. No doubt he has some errand into the next valley, desiring, may be, to go see his friends." The youth answered: "My mind bodes me that he be minded to meet thee." "I am not aware," says Eyvindr, "that aught has happened between him and my brother Sámr since their atonement." The