

Snorri Sturluson

HEIMSKRINGLA

History of the Kings of Norway



Translated by Lee M. Hollander

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by Snorri Sturluson

Translated with Introduction and Notes by

Lee M. Hollander

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Introduction

In Snorri Sturluson the northern world has had a historian who in many ways can be compared with Thucydides and in some is in no wise inferior to his Greek counterpart. And considering the great disparity in general culture and intellectual advancement between his times and Periclean Greece we may marvel all the more at Snorri's genius. His work is unique in European historiography in presenting us with a continuous account of a nation's history from its beginnings in the dim prehistoric past down into the High Middle Ages.

The protagonists of both "nature" and "nurture" as influence on the development of a man will find support in the ancestry and the upbringing of Snorri. He was born in 1179 (or 1178) at Hvamm in western Iceland. His father, Sturla Thortharson,¹ was a shrewd and grasping landholder, descended in a direct line from that canny leader, Snorri the Priest, who in many ways played a dominant part in early Icelandic affairs. Snorri's mother, Guthný, was the daughter of Bothvar Thortharson, who reckoned among his ancestors the redoubted fighter and great poet, Egil Skallagrímsson, as well as the lawspeaker and able skald, Markús Skeggjason; while on the spindle side she was likewise a descendant of Snorri the Priest. So much for his ancestry.

While Snorri was still a child of three or four there occurred an incident which was to have a decisive influence on his life and career. As we are told in the *Sturlunga saga*, that rather chaotic but most informative chronicle of the internecine struggles in Iceland during the thirteenth century, a dispute had arisen about an inheritance between a certain priest, Pál Sölveson, and Bothvar. The latter's case was being argued by Sturla when, exasperated by the lengthy wrangling, Thorbjorg, Pál's wife, rushed at Sturla with a knife, exclaiming, "Why shouldn't I make you like him you most want to be like, and that is Óthin,"² and with that she aimed at Sturla's eye; but persons standing near pushed her so that the blow struck Sturla on the cheek, inflicting a big wound. A fight appeared imminent between the two parties, but Sturla ordered his followers to put up their swords, proposing that Pál agree to pay a compensation for his wife's attack—which he set so high that it would have beggared Pál.³ But later, through the intercession of the great Jón [Jóan] Loptsson, it was lowered considerably. To mollify Sturla, Jón offered to foster his youngest son, Snorri, at his estate of Oddi.

Now to grasp the import of this offer we must bear in mind that he who offered fosterage to another man's child thereby acknowledged himself inferior

in rank. As a fact Jón Loptsson was at the time the most powerful as well as the most high-born chieftain in Iceland. Jon's father, Lopt Sæmundarson, had married a daughter of King Magnús Barelegs of Norway;⁴ and his grandfather, Sæmund, a kinsman of the Earl of Mœr, enjoyed an almost legendary respect for his wisdom and for the learning he had acquired when studying in France. Oddi, the family estate in south Iceland, had since Sæmund's time been the seat of the highest culture the island could boast of, and functioned informally as a kind of school for clerics. It was a place where a knowledge of the common law of the land was handed down and in whose atmosphere the study of history, of skaldship, and of course of Latin, were cultivated.

We do not know why Jón offered fosterage to Snorri in preference to his two (legitimate) older brothers, Thord and Sigvat. Is it possible that he discerned signs of unusual precocity in a child so young? It is tempting to think so. But we may take it for granted that, with so wise and responsible a foster father, the child, and then the youth, early imbibed the respect for learning and culture prevailing at Oddi. And we may be certain that his knowledge of the law, his grasp of history, his profound insight into the nature of skaldship, were derived from instruction there.

When Jón Loptsson died (1197) Snorri, then about nineteen, seems to have continued living at Oddi. Snorri's own father had died, and his widow—from all we can infer, a gifted but extravagant woman—had run through Snorri's share of his patrimony. To set the young man up in the world, a marriage was arranged for him with Herdís, only child of Bersi the Wealthy; and when he died a few years later, Snorri moved with her to Bersi's estate of Borg, which was also the ancestral home of Snorri's family. Meanwhile Snorri had with all the impetuosity of youth plunged into the politics of his time and had quickly amassed a fortune, most likely in the same unscrupulous and ruthless manner he exhibited in his later dealings. With the inheritance from Bersi went the possession of a *goðorð* (gothi-dom), to which in the course of time others were added, so that Snorri soon became a powerful chieftain. The institution of the *goði* was peculiar to Iceland. It had come down from heathen times—Christianity had been adopted in 1000 A.D. by resolution of the Althing—and survived till after the middle of the thirteenth century when it was superseded by royal subordinates. The *goði* (or temple priest) had both religious and secular prerogatives and duties. His office could be inherited or bought and sold or held in partnership, even loaned. The farmers and cotters of his bailiwick, known as his thingmen, had to pay toll to the temple and, later, to the church, and render the *goði* services. All their minor disputes were referred to him for settlement;

and he on his part, like a feudal lord, afforded them protection.

In all likelihood Snorri's marriage to Herdís was only a cold-blooded means of acquiring wealth. In the year 1206 he left her in Borg, with what arrangements we know not. She had borne him a son and a daughter. He himself moved to the estate of Reykjarholt, some twenty-five miles to the east of Borg. He had acquired this property by an agreement with the priest Magnús Pálsson, who then put himself and his family under Snorri's protection. Snorri is said to have been skilful in all he undertook. To this day one may see one of his improvements on this estate, a walled circular basin, some three feet deep and about twelve feet across, which is filled with water from one of the many hot springs in the Reykja Valley. No doubt it was originally roofed over so that it could be used at any time.

That Snorri as a comparatively young man was elected lawspeaker for the Althing, the yearly general assembly, bespeaks the respect of his peers for his ability. He occupied this responsible post during two periods, from 1215 to 1218 (when he went abroad), and then again from 1222 to 1231. As the laws were not written to begin with, the lawspeaker's duties involved pronouncing the letter of the law in any case of doubt; and in Iceland, in particular, reciting the body of the law once a year before the assembled Althing. Needless to say, especially considering the inveterate propensity of Icelanders for litigation, an intimate knowledge of the law offered manifold opportunities for enriching one's self by taking advantage of the subtleties, the ambiguities, the dodges of the law. And Snorri seems to have made good use of this advantage—and made many enemies thereby. The years while he lived at Reykjarholt were filled with feuding in which Snorri was by no means always the gainer.

At a somewhat later time Snorri entered into a "community ownership" with Hallveig, widowed daughter of Orm, reputed to have been the richest woman in Iceland at that time, and "received into custody the property of her sons, Klæng and Orm, eight-hundred hundreds (ounces of silver). Then Snorri had far greater wealth than any other man in Iceland."⁵ Not that he had lived without concubines, both at Borg and Reykjarholt—that was fairly common practice during the Sturlung Period, nor was it particularly frowned upon. At least three are mentioned by name, and he engendered a number of children with them.

Winter in subarctic Iceland with its darkness and inclement weather and long periods of enforced idleness always has been the time when people gave themselves up most to the cultural activities for which the short and hectic summer months offered little leisure. No doubt it was so, too, in Snorri's time; and there is no doubt, either, that Snorri kept up the interests awakened and

fostered in him during his youth at Oddi. We hear that he composed a poem now lost, but most likely adulatory, about the Norwegian Earl Hákon Galinn, a nephew of King Sverri, and was rewarded with the gift of a sword, a shield, and a coat of mail, together with an invitation to visit this influential lord. And probably nothing would have suited the ambitious young chieftain better than a chance to get his hands into the larger affairs of the continent. Poems reportedly composed by him about Kings Sverri and Ingi also indicate attempts to insinuate himself into the graces of the royal house of Norway. But the earl died in 1214, and Snorri's plans had to be postponed, especially since most likely he knew that he was selected as the lawspeaker for the following year.

In this connection it is well to bear in mind that though separated from the motherland Norway by broad and stormy seas, for over three hundred years attachment to it never waned in Iceland. The language had scarcely changed, bonds of kinship in Norway were kept intact, intellectual and commercial relations were never interrupted. Young Icelanders of birth in surprising numbers took passage to the "old country" to acquire a knowledge of the world, and returned enriched with experience, incidentally having sold their cargoes of wool and homespun for good money and things not readily obtainable at home. They brought back with them news of changes abroad—news told and avidly listened to at meetings of the Althing and the local assemblies. For one like Snorri, raised in a family that boasted of royal connections, the pageant of contemporary history would naturally rouse interest in what had happened in bygone times and would stimulate a desire to write a connected history of the motherland.

The opportunity for travel came at last in 1218, when Snorri was forty and at the height of his powers. At that time Hákon the Fourth of Norway, the grandson of the adventurer king, Sverri, and then a boy of thirteen, had ascended the throne. The affairs of state were conducted for him by his uncle, Earl Skúli, as regent; and it was to him Snorri attached himself. It may have been a case of like to like, Skúli resembling Snorri in his ambitious, unscrupulous—and indecisive—disposition. One can imagine the two travelling together about the countryside of southern Norway on government errands, with the lively commercial town of Túnsberg (Tönsberg), at that time serving as the royal residence, as their headquarters, Snorri eagerly absorbing and storing in his mind the amazing information about topography and local history which was to stand him in such good stead later. In late summer Snorri by himself made a side trip to visit the lawspeaker of (Swedish) West Gautland (Götland), who had married the widow of Earl Hákon. We can think of him as travelling in the footsteps of Skald Sigvat

two hundred years before him, going by way of Oslo, Sarpsborg, the Eidskog Forest, till reaching Skara (near Lake Vänern), and gathering there and on the way that detailed information about Swedish conditions exhibited in the seventy-seventh chapter of his *Óláfs saga Helga*. In the fall he returned, possibly by boat down the lordly Gaut Elf River (Göta Elf River) to Konungahella where he took ship for Trondheim to rejoin the king and Earl Skúli. If the trip was accomplished leisurely, sailing only in the daytime, Snorri could have been afforded an insight into the fantastically complicated coast line of western Norway.

In the spring following (1220) the court journeyed south to Bergen. Snorri had made himself very useful, among other ways, by composing a bloody altercation between Icelanders and the townsmen of Bergen which had assumed dangerous proportions, almost threatening war. For that, the king rewarded him by conferring on him the title of “landed-man” (approximately “baron”). Even before that, both the king and Earl Skúli had appointed him *skutilsveinn* (approximately “chamberlain”). For the home journey, Skúli presented him with a ship and “fifteen lordly gifts,” after Snorri had composed a poem about him, now lost except for the refrain.

It had been the ambition of several Norwegian kings to subject distant Iceland by conquest to their rule as they had done in the case of the Orkneys and the Faroes; and the recent altercation had suggested this anew to both King Hákon and Skúli. But Snorri was able to dissuade them, promising to accomplish this by peaceful means. However, after his return to Iceland he did not bestir himself in the least to keep that promise—whether because he had changed his mind or because he had never meant to do so, having given the promise only to save his country from warfare and destruction, we shall never know. The action is in line with his ambiguous character. Rumors of this secret deal with the king had gone before him, and when Snorri set foot on land he was met with lampoons and distrust. Nevertheless, born diplomat as he was, he overcame all suspicions, regaining the confidence of his compatriots to the extent that he was chosen lawspeaker for the second time, holding that influential post for ten years. And by conducting successful lawsuits and advantageously marrying off three daughters he was soon again considered the most powerful man in Iceland. It was in these years, presumably, that he composed the works which cause posterity to consider him the most versatile and gifted man of letters in medieval Iceland, nay in the whole North—the *Prose Edda*, *Heimskringla*, and, possibly, the *Egils saga*.

Later, circumstances worsened again for Snorri. He fell out with his eldest

brother, Sigvat, who had a just cause against Snorri because of the depredations of the latter's favorite but ungovernable son Órækja on his properties and thingmen. In revenge, Sigvat fell upon Snorri (1236) and drove him out of house and home at Reykjarholt; on which occasion Snorri showed little physical courage and determination.

It was, possibly, in order to escape his many enemies, or (who knows?) perhaps with a forlorn hope of regaining his possessions through the help of Skúli, that Snorri ventured a second journey to Norway (1237), this time accompanied by Órækja, even though he might have known that he was under heavy suspicion there for having gone back on his promise to deliver Iceland to the king—sufficient reason for him to avoid King Hákon and associate only with, now, Duke Skúli. Whether Snorri was aware of the dangerous tension which had been building up between the two men we do not know. In the fall of 1238 news was brought to Norway of the bloody Battle of Orlygsstathir in which both Sigvat and his son Sturla were killed. This strongly affected the king, who had hoped to find in Sigvat a more willing tool to bring Iceland under his sway, and also Snorri, who after all mourned his brother. Yet here was his chance to regain his properties and influence. So in the following spring, directly counter to the express order of the king, but with the connivance of Duke Skúli, he sailed back to Iceland. The rumor preceded him that Skúli had conferred on him the title of earl.

Once more Snorri succeeded in re-establishing himself. But he was then struck a hard blow in the death of Hallveig, to whom he appears to have been sincerely attached. All the more we wonder at his cupidity and unwisdom in denying the sons from her earlier marriage their rightful share in their inheritance. That proved to be his undoing: they turned for help to their uncle, the chieftain Gizur Thorvaldsson, Snorri's own, but estranged, son-in-law. The same summer (1241) a letter came to Gizur from King Hákon, to the effect that he was to bring Snorri to Norway, with or without his consent; or else kill him, because he had committed high treason against him in wilfully disobeying his embargo. With sixty of his followers Gizur surprised Snorri in the night of September 23d, 1241 at Reykjarholt and had him slain. The king claimed Snorri's properties. Thus his death may be called the prelude to Iceland's loss of independence, twenty years later, after four hundred years of republican, or at least oligarchic, rule.

For his own contemporaries Snorri no doubt was the powerful chieftain known for his munificence as well as his avarice, the lawspeaker who could throw his weight in one's favor or against one, a ruthless intriguer whom it was dangerous

to have as one's adversary. But for us he is the author of the *Prose Edda*, the *Heimskringla*, and, possibly, the *Egils saga*—works, that is, which in after times have had a far-reaching and profound influence on the literary and political life, not only of Iceland and Norway, but of all Scandinavian countries.

Habent sua fata libelli—books have their own, often curious fates. In the case of Snorri's works we do not know when they were written; we are not even absolutely sure that they *were* written by him.

Least uncertainty obtains with regard to the so-called *Prose Edda*. Yet only the least authentic vellum of this work, the *Uppsala Codex*, says in so many words that Snorri had “put it together,” *i.e.* composed it. But the incomparable style of his *Edda*, surely one of the most delightful of “text-books,” allows little doubt as to who could have written it. The avowed purpose of the slight volume is to set forth the principles of skaldship, its foundations and rules—for its times a most original undertaking; in fact, one without parallel for a similar stage of literary development. It was *not* intended to be a treatise on Northern mythology, even though to us it is invaluable precisely in this respect, but rather to give the beginning skald the material for his *kennings*, the most characteristic feature of skaldic poetry, and also to explain the metrical rules governing that difficult art. Some of Snorri's information, we see, is drawn from certain lays of the so-called *Older* or *Poetic Edda*; but much also from sources otherwise unknown.

The work is in three sections. In the first, called “Gylfaginning,” “The Duping of Gylfi,” we are given a synopsis of the heathen beliefs of the olden times—at Snorri's time the island had been Christian, at least nominally, for some two centuries. This is done with inimitable charm and verve, even though the myths are presented in the pedantic medieval form of question and answer. King Gylfi asks, and Hár, “the exalted” (*i.e.* Óthin) and his hypostases Jafnhár, “Even-as-Exalted,” and Thrithi, “the Third,” satisfy his curiosity about creation and the nature and the fates of the gods.

The second part, “Skáldskaparmál,” “The Language of Poetry,” deals with the *kennings*⁶ and their mythologic and legendary background. It, too, is presented in the form of a dialogue, this time between the sea god, Ægir, and Bragi, the god of poetry.

The third section, as its name, “Háttatal,” “Enumeration of Metres,” indicates, has as its matter the exceedingly numerous verse forms at the disposal of the skald. Each is described in technical fashion, then illustrated by a stanza of Snorri's own encomiastic poem on King Hákon and Duke Skúli—a technical feat, even if dull poetry.

The many sagas of Old Iceland are practically all anonymous. Exactly why, we do not know. Present scholarship inclines to regard most of them as composed by individual authors making more or less use of local tradition. The masterly *Egils saga* is no exception to this anonymity; but in recent times more and more students are inclined to attribute it to Snorri, and this for a number of stylistic and compositional reasons. It must be admitted, however, that among the many arguments adduced for crediting it to him, the only tangible one is this: through his mother's ancestry Snorri belonged to the kin of the Mýramen, as the kinsfolk of Egil were called. So it must have been a satisfaction for him when coming into the possession of the ancestral estate of Borg, to acquire the intimate knowledge of surrounding localities exhibited in the saga. There also he could, from old retainers of the family, gather reminiscences of the colorful personality of Egil. Negatively, we know of no skald in the thirteenth century from that particular region, and certainly no one equipped like Snorri with the skill to write a saga like *Egla*.

We have no certain indications when *Heimskringla*, a work of so much larger scope than these earlier works, was composed. Most likely it was the occupation of a lifetime. Also, what more likely than that the chieftainly seats of Oddi and of Reykjarholt were well stocked with all the manuscripts about history available and obtainable. For Snorri was by no means the first Icelander to write history. Since the heroic age of the mass migration to Iceland—oversimplified as being due only to the tyranny of King Harald Fairhair⁷—took place about the same time as the introduction of writing, traditions of that time no doubt were in annalistic form, fixed on parchment by clerics, and of course in Latin. Thus Sæmund the Learned (1056-1133) is reported to have written about the lives of the kings of Norway from Hálfðan the Black down to Magnús the Good. But as Snorri stresses in his Foreword, it was the priest Ari Thorgilsson the Learned (1067-1148) who first wrote history in the vernacular.⁸

This remarkable man seems with one stroke to have lifted Icelandic historiography to a high level. As he himself tells us, he bases his history of Iceland on the reliable oral testimony of veracious old persons of tenacious memory, anchoring its chronology on the established dates of Old English annals and world history. His *Libellus Islendorum* [*Little Book about the Icelanders*] gives a compact, matter of fact history of Iceland from its first settlement (*ca.* 874) down to his own times (*ca.* 1130). His style is admirably clear and quite unpretentious, his account sober, eschewing all imaginative embellishments. No higher praise can be given him than is bestowed on him by his great successor, Snorri, in his Foreword. Ari's more comprehensive work called *Islendingabók*

(*Book about the Icelanders*), now lost, contained genealogies of the kings of Norway as well as accounts of their lives; and Snorri, for much of his narrative about the earlier kings down to the death of Magnús Barelegs, seems to rely on his predecessor. Another work Ari may have written, or at least have had a hand in compiling, is the famous *Landnámabók* (*Book of Settlements*), unique in European historiography in specifying in detail what families first settled in Iceland, and where.

Another Icelander to whom Snorri owes many of the details of the history of Magnús the Blind and Harald Gilli and his sons is Eirík Oddsson. His work, called *Hryggjarstykki*⁹ has come down to us only in what we find in *Heimskringla* and the *Morkinskinna Codex*. We gather that it was essentially a history of his own times as witnessed by himself or told him by contemporaries.

Of Karl Jónsson, the author of the excellent *Sverris saga*, we know only that he twice, and for long years, was abbot of the cloister of Thingeyrar in Iceland and that he wrote it under the supervision of the adventurer king himself. The hypothesis may be entertained that Snorri read this work when in Norway. If so, he may have learned from Karl how to compose the speeches which form so notable a part in both works. And though Snorri does not say so, he may have concluded his own work, rather abruptly, with the accession of Magnús Erlingsson because he knew of the existence of Karl's work, which starts about that time, and considered it unnecessary to continue.

About the turn of the century two Icelandic monks, Odd Snorrason and Gunnlaug Leifsson, likewise of Thingeyrar monastery, composed works in Latin, but now known only in fragmentary Old Norse translation, about the two missionary kings; however, they were more in the style of hagio-graphic and thoroughly uncritical compilations than historic writing. Still, they probably furnished the basis of more connected lives of the two Óláfs.

Of greater historic interest are the Latin works of two Norwegian (?) clerics of about the same time. One, Theodricus monachus, in his *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*, gives us a brief, soberly written account of the lives of the Norwegian kings from Harald Fairhair to the death of Sigurth Jerusalemfarer. It is noteworthy that Theodricus is the first to make use of Skaldic verse and insofar is the forerunner of Snorri and others in recognizing its importance as contemporaneous testimony. The other work, *Historia Norwegiæ*, has been called the oldest continuous history of Norway. But its chief interest for us lies in the copious topographical information it furnishes about Scandinavia and the various tributary lands of Norway, and also Iceland. Unfortunately it breaks off

in the middle of Saint Óláf's reign.

Finally there is a poorly written compilatory work in Icelandic from the last years of the twelfth century, properly called *Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum* (*Epitome of the Sagas of the Norwegian Kings*), which, with considerable gaps, deals with all Norwegian history from Harald Fairhair to the sons of Harald Gilli.

Then there are the many works of hagiography, rather than historiography, dealing with the lives of northern saints; among them, fragments of an independent life of Saint Óláf in Icelandic, dating from the latter part of the twelfth century; also, a later *Legendary Óláfs saga*, apparently based on the former. Snorri leaned heavily on this saga for his Life of Saint Óláf.

All these works were in existence by 1220 when the two large compilations, the one called *Morkinskinna* (Rotten Vellum), the other *Fagrskinna* (Beautiful Vellum), came into being. The first is a work of high caliber, stylistically, but in typically medieval fashion uncritically decked out with a wealth of anecdotes relating to the various kings, some to be sure brilliantly told. The unknown author makes no pretence of historic reliability, following the happy principle of *quod bene dictum est, meum est*—what is well told I make my own! The likewise unknown author of *Fagrskinna*, on the other hand, writes in an awkward style, but more scrupulously foregoes bringing in irrelevant material. What gives his compilation great importance is that, to an even larger extent than *Morkinskinna*, it cites skaldic stanzas, many not found elsewhere. It is from these two collections that Snorri has lifted bodily some of the most telling pages of the sagas of Harald Sigurth-aron and the kings succeeding him—always improving and clarifying their accounts.

I have dwelt on the fact that several of the histories mentioned contain skaldic verses. The modern historian, with documents of all sorts at his disposal, would not dream of depending—of all things—on poems for his source. The case is different for the historian of a preliterate age. Just as Thucydides, quite correctly for his times, relies on Homer as his witness for legendary history, Snorri cites as his authority Thjóthólf's genealogic poem *Ynglingatal* (*Enumeration of the Yngling Kings*) and Eyvind's corresponding *Háleygjatal* (*Enumeration of the Hálogaland Chieftains*) for the origins in dim antiquity of the Scandinavian nations. Together with scanty living tradition they were the only source available. For later times, he draws importantly on the contemporary encomiastic poems of the skalds, both for the information they contain and for a check on tradition. As he explains in his Foreword:

“At the court of King Harald [Fairhair] there were skalds, and men still remember their poems and the poems about all the kings who have since his time ruled in Norway; and we gathered most of our information from what we are told in those poems which were recited before the chieftains themselves or their sons. We regard all that to be true which is found in those poems about their expeditions and battles. It is [to be sure] the habit of poets to give highest praise to those princes in whose presence they are; but no one would have dared to tell them to their faces about deeds which all who listened as well as the prince himself knew were only falsehoods and fabrications. That would have been mockery, still not praise ... As to the poems, I consider they will yield the best information if they are correctly composed and judiciously interpreted.”¹⁰

As to the latter statement, Snorri, himself the greatest expert on skaldic poetry, has for the most part been confirmed in his interpretations by modern Icelandic and continental scholars. Yet skaldic poetry, both intrinsically, and often by faulty tradition, is difficult—perhaps the most difficult body of poetry in existence. The translator of it must ever be on his guard to render these verses faithfully, without adding a tittle of spurious matter and thus falsifying their testimony. At the same time it is in the nature of things that, like any translation of Thucydides, his version needs must read more smoothly than the gnarled original.

It has been the arduous task of historians and philologists to determine which of the sources available at the time were used by Snorri, and to what extent. It cannot be the purpose here to give in detail the often conflicting results of their labors. Nor has it been the aim in the present translation of his work to point out the hundreds of errors of fact or chronology which he is, or may be, guilty of, or to cite variant and differing accounts in English and continental annals or histories. Like every historian, Snorri builds largely with materials brought together by his predecessors. In a number of cases he frankly mentions his sources. But it is generally conceded that, while making abundant use of them, he stands high above all his predecessors in deliberately omitting, or at least rationalizing, what he considers less credible. As he remarks concerning King Harald Hardruler, “Yet many more of his famous deeds have not been set down, both because of our lack of information and because we do not wish to put down in writing stories not sufficiently witnessed ... it seems better that [some accounts] be added later, rather than that they needed to be omitted.”¹¹ To be sure, this critical attitude would seem to us moderns to be sorely wanting when he includes the multitude of stories of witchcraft; and still more so when we are regaled with the numerous mawkish, and often revolting, miracles of Saint Ólaf,

chapters which we would regard as serious blemishes in his work. But here we must not fail to remember that Snorri, like other great men, after all was a child of his own times—in his case, the thirteenth century, a period more given to superstitions of all kinds than any other, before or after. Moreover, the possibility must not be ruled out that Snorri, keen intellectual as he was, may not have put more credence in some Christian miracles than in heathen magic and that he copied these accounts of miracles verbatim from older collections to placate the Church: their sanctimonious, lachrymose style is easily distinguished from Snorri's own cool and matter-of-fact manner. Another matter, born storyteller as he was, Snorri evidently was loath to forego the pleasure of including such entertaining *fornaldar saga*¹² style yarns of derring-do as the one of the robbing of the temple of Jómali,¹³—nor would we, admittedly, wish this omitted—even though a much briefer account would have sufficed to account for Thórir the Hound's later actions. The same is true of many other telling episodes which often do not seem indispensable, yet add zest and life to his narrative. On the other hand, still others, seemingly irrelevant, finally reveal themselves as indispensable links in the course of events. Take the case of Thórarin Nefjólffsson's ugly feet, where broad bantering leads to a wager, and that to Thórarin's being intrusted with the responsible task of disposing of dangerous King Hrørek.¹⁴ The very long episode of Ásbjorn Selsbani¹⁵—by the way, one of the pinnacles of Snorri's narrative art—at first blush appears wholly unrelated to the main course of Norwegian history, but then is seen to lead to the irreconcilable, and ultimately fateful, conflict between King Óláf and Erling Skjálfgsson.

The extensive saga literature of Iceland contains few “speeches,” though it abounds in dramatic dialogue. Admirable examples of both are found in the *Færinga saga*, from which Snorri, a good judge of such matters, has lifted bodily several chapters containing in their taut narrative the superb short speech of Sigurth Thorlaksson as well as the prevaricating answers of Thránd. But the “set speech” as a feature of historic writing was introduced by Abbot Karl in his *Sverris saga*, emulating Livy, who in his turn imitated Thucydides. Snorri had probably become acquainted with Karl's work while in Norway. What Thucydides says about the many speeches he introduces—“I have made the persons say what it seemed to me most opportune for them to say in view of each situation; at the same time I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said”¹⁶—might have been claimed, with the same slight justice, by Snorri who, wisely, makes only sparing use of long set speeches but, unlike Thucydides, integrates them into the action. Thus, in a

famous passage, we see Thorgrý, the powerful leader of the farmers, sitting broad and self-possessed at the Uppsala Assembly, facing the king of Sweden. Both Bjorn, the emissary of King Ólaf of Norway, and Rognvald, earl of Gautland, have pleaded the cause of peace between the two countries, to be sealed by a royal intermarriage, but have been talked down by the loud-mouthed king of Sweden, and there is much tumult and shouting. Then Thorgrý arises to speak, the crowd surges forward, hushed, to hear him. When he has finished, a tumult of applause breaks out; and the king, cowed, promises he will agree to all he is asked to do.

Again, the modern reader finds monotony in the narrative of Thucydides, unrelieved as it is by the innumerable picturesque touches with which Snorri enlivens his pages. Where, in the older historian, will you find such trenchant characterizations of great leaders as—to choose one among many—that of the grizzly, old, wry-necked warrior, Erling Skakki, with his old-fashioned garb and gaunt appearance, which Snorri gives us?¹⁷ Or such a startlingly candid appraisal and comparison as Halldór makes of King Saint Ólaf and his half-brother, Harald Hardruler, both utterly different outwardly, but much alike in temperament, nevertheless?¹⁸ Is it a wonder that *Heimskringla* still is favored reading in Scandinavia among high and low, young and old? Thucydides makes it clear that he intends his work to be “useful.”¹⁹ Snorri no doubt intended that too, but he also intended that it might serve *til skemmtanar*, for entertainment.

Still further, compared with Thucydides’ frequently turgid and obscure style, Snorri’s prose is simplicity itself, even where it rises to heights of passionate eloquence or expresses high dramatic tension. But it must be admitted that occasionally his paragraphs are disfigured by drab, careless sentences; that there are altogether too many which begin with the childlike “then ... then”; worse, that sometimes sentences, or even whole paragraphs, are absentmindedly repeated and, in places, contain contradictory statements—all shortcomings of which saga literature is rarely, if ever, guilty. Concerning these obvious blemishes (which the translator is often tempted to remove) the surmise may be entertained that they are due to the author’s not having had the time or opportunity to set matters straight, what with the huge pile of vellum involved. Perhaps portions of the work dictated from notes had not been gone over by him for a last filing.

Readers of *Heimskringla* have been troubled by the author’s lack of any recognizable philosophy or central view concerning the pageant of history he lets pass before our eyes. There certainly is no enthusiasm shown about the

missionary activities of the two Óláfs, and not much enthusiasm for Christian ideals, apart from some obligatory passages in the life of Saint Ólaf. Is it that Snorri at heart was a fatalist? Before the decisive battle of Stiklar-stathir the saint to be has the vindictively-minded skald Thormóth intone the heathen Old Bjarkamál, and thanks him for it. He trusts that the better cause will win, but “fate will decide the outcome.” On the other hand the old heroic ideals of loyalty to king and defiance of death prevail in his evaluation of the fallen—“fair fame will fade never, I ween, for him who wins it,” as the thoroughly heathen Eddie “Hávamál” has it.

Intimately connected with this religious indifferentism—after all rare in the Middle Ages—is Snorri’s cool impartiality. Earl Hákon the Powerful’s great qualities are acknowledged, Sigurth Slembidjárn’s stoicism under torture is admired, notwithstanding conduct which in our eyes would brand them as criminals on a grand scale. The opponents of King Saint Ólaf have their day in court as well as the hero and his followers. We are given to understand how ill will accumulates against him, how his harsh justice alienates more and more of his former friends. Snorri does not moralize, he is “objective,” and is content to let facts speak for themselves; whereas the compiler of *Morkinskinna*, on whom he leans heavily, often cannot refrain from expressing his indignation or approval.

As was remarked above, we do not know when Snorri’s works were written, nor are we absolutely sure that they *were* written by him. To be sure, the *Sturlunga saga*²⁰ tells us that in the winter of 1230 to 1231 “Sturla [Sig-vatsson, Snorri’s nephew] was for a long time in Reykjarholt and concentrated on having saga books copied from the books which Snorri had put together [composed].” But how can we be certain that this refers to *Heimskringla*?

Of the main manuscripts (or copies of lost manuscripts) giving us the text of *Heimskringla* (*Kringla*, *Jǫfraskinna*, *Codex Frisianus*), not one mentions Snorri as the author. The best of them, *Kringla*, was written about twenty years after Snorri’s death. It was brought to Norway some time in the Middle Ages, and later was transferred to the library of the University of Copenhagen. Already then it had lost the first page containing the Foreword. Toward the end of the seventeenth century two excellent copies of it were made—fortunately; in 1728 occurred the great conflagration of Copenhagen which destroyed also the greater part of the University Library. *Codex Frisianus* was written about 1300 in Norway, by an Icelander, and contains all of the histories excepting the one dealing with Saint Ólaf. It was found in 1550 in Bergen, and was brought to

Denmark before 1600 when it was acquired by the book collector Otto Friis, who then sold it to the famous bibliophile, Árni Magnússon, in whose huge collection, now belonging to the University of Copenhagen, it still reposes. The third manuscript, called *Jǫfraskinna (Kings' Vellum)* because in it were the pictures of two Norwegian kings, was written about 1320 by a Norwegian who copied an Icelandic original. It contains all of *Heimskringla*, together with the *Sverris saga* and the *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, and also landed in the University Library where it was burned, but not before a good copy had been made of it. There is, finally, the codex called *Eirspennill (Vellum with Copper Clasps)*, written about 1300 by an Icelander and now in Árni Magnússon's collection. In it are found the sagas of the Norwegian kings, but only from the accession of Magnús the Good to the death of Hákon Hákonsson.

The first, abridged, translation, by the Norwegian lawman, Matthis Størssøn, about 1561, shows no knowledge of Snorri's being the author. Yet Laurents Hanssøn, a royal steward who in the years 1548 to 1551 translated the central portion of *Heimskringla*, twice states outright, in the heading and at the end of the Foreword, that the work is by Snorri. And the Norwegian divine, Peder Claussøn Friis, who in 1599 translated all of *Heimskringla*, likewise mentions Snorri twice. A recent study of Hanssøn's and Claussøn's versions seems to show that both used a manuscript now lost.

A copy of Claussøn's translation got into the hands of the learned Danish antiquarian, Ole Worm, who at once recognized the importance of the work and published it in 1633 under the title of *Snorre Sturleson's Chronicle of Norwegian Kings*. The book soon won a large circle of readers, especially in Norway. A second edition came out in 1757.

The first edition of the original text, with a translation into Swedish, based on the *Kringla* manuscript, was prepared by the royal Swedish antiquarian Johan Peringskjöld. It was he who gave the work the title *Heimskringla*, after the two first words of the *Ynglinga saga*, *Kringla heimsins (The Earth's Round)*. The title has been adopted generally. A more appropriate name would be *The Lives of the Kings of Norway* as, indeed, it is frequently called in other Old Icelandic manuscripts.

It was subsequently translated into Danish by N.F.S. Grundtvig (1818-1821), into Dano-Norwegian by Jacob Aal (1838-1839) and P. A. Munch (1859-1871), into Swedish by H. O. Hildebrand (1869-1871)—to mention only translations by outstanding authors. By these translations *Heimskringla* became a "folk-book" such as few nations possess. Certainly, no other work, the Bible excepted, has

exerted such broad and pervasive influence on Scandinavian life, literature, the arts. In Norway especially it has been a source of inspiration and strength in times of national stress as well as in those of prosperity; particularly since Gustav Storm's exemplary translation (1899) in one volume made the work, richly illustrated with drawings by the best Norwegian artists, available to all at a popular price.

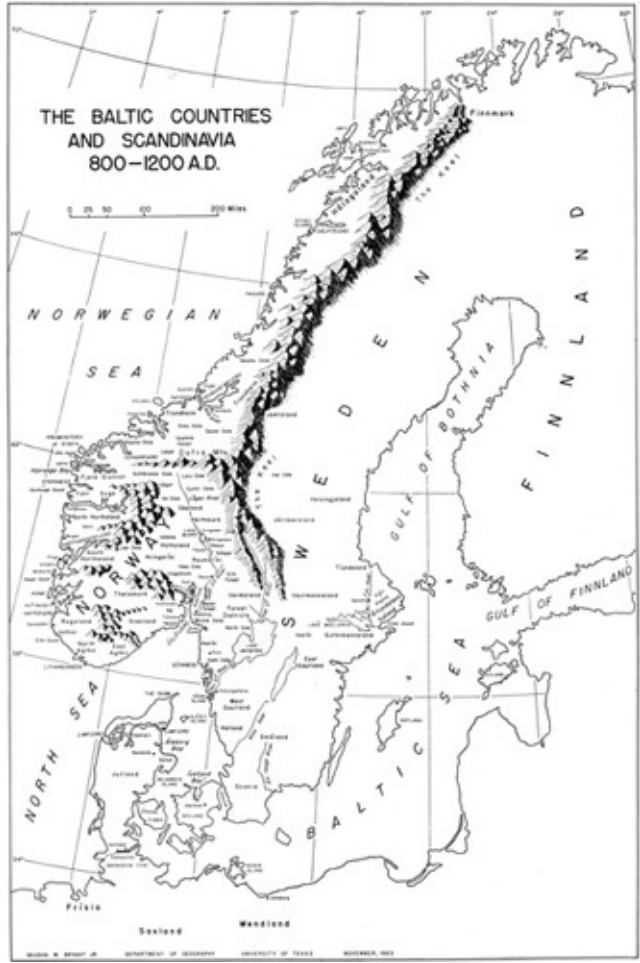
The text followed in this translation of *Heimskringla* is that of the manuscript "Kringla" as edited by Bjarni Athalbjarnarson, with the variants of the other manuscripts, in three volumes (Reykjavik: Hið Islenska Fornritafélag, 1941, 1945, 1951). It differs from previous translations into English, and from all others, for that matter, in endeavoring to adhere closely both to the form and the content of the copious skaldic stanzas. I have laid down my views on how best to render skaldic verse in the Introduction to *The Skalds* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1945), and also in *Scandinavian Studies*, XVIII (1945), 233-240. Readers interested in the nature of skaldic art, its verse forms, kennings, rimes, and alliterations will find a brief orientation in the former publication.

Reviewers are urged to take note of what I consider the proper diction to be employed in the rendering of Old Norse poetry (discussed in *Scandinavian Studies*, V (1920), 197-201), and of what can be said concerning the proper rendering of Scandinavian personal and geographic names (*ibid.*, XXVI (1954), 25-29). As to the latter, I have in general used the forms likely to be most familiar to English-speaking readers. However, a little reflection will show that consistency on this score is unattainable.

I have of course followed Snorri's very capricious division into chapters. The headings to these are mine. Naturally it is difficult to do justice in these to the contents of divisions so greatly varying in length.

As to my Introduction and, to a large extent, the footnotes, I disclaim any independent value. The specialist will without difficulty discern in how far both are based on the conclusions of previous scholarship. The scope of the present translation has, of course, precluded going into the—legionary—difficulties of the interpretation of the skaldic verse. My own interpretation has, I hope, profited from the best scholarship in this field.

The gracious permission from Gyldendal Norsk Forlag of Oslo to reproduce the illustrations by Norwegian artists is hereby gratefully acknowledged; likewise the permission extended by Hið Islenska Fornritafélag to use the sketch of maps of Nitharós, Ósló, and Björgvin from their edition of *Heimskringla*.



Snorri's foreword

In this book I have had written down old accounts about the chieftains who had dominion in the North and were speakers of the Danish tongue,¹ basing myself on the information given me by well-informed men; also, on some of their genealogies according to what I have learned about them, some of which information is found in the pedigrees which kings or other persons of exalted lineage have about their kin; and still other matter follows ancient lays or legends people have entertained themselves with. And although we do not know for sure whether these accounts are true, yet we do know that old and learned men consider them to be so.

The learned Thjóthólf of Hvinir² was a skald at the court of King Harald Fairhair. He composed a lay about King Rognvald the Highly Honored which is called *Ynglingatal* (*Enumeration of the YnglingKings*). Rognvald was the son of Ólaf Geirstathaálf, the brother of Hálfdan the Black. In this lay are mentioned thirty of his forebears, together with an account of how each of them died and where they are buried. Fjólnir is the name of the son of Yngvifrey to whom the Swedes made sacrifice for a long time afterwards. That race is called the Ynglings after him. Eyvind Skáldaspillir³ also enumerated the ancestors of Earl Hákon the Mighty in the lay which is called *Háleygjatal* (*Enumeration of the Hálogaland Chieftains*),⁴ which he composed about Hákon. There, Sæming is named as the son of Yngvifrey. And in it also we are told about the death of each of them and where his burial mound is. First we have written the lives of the Ynglings according to Thjóthólf's account, and this we amplified with the information given us by learned men.

The first age is called the Age of Cremation. In that age it was the custom to burn all the dead and to raise memorial stones after them; but after Frey was put to rest in a burial mound at Uppsalir [Uppsala], many chieftains used to erect burial mounds as often as memorial stones to commemorate departed relatives. However, after Dan the Proud, the Danish king, had a burial mound made for himself and decreed that he was to be carried into it when dead, in all his royal vestments and armor, together with his horse, fully saddled, and much treasure besides, and when many of his kinsmen did likewise, then began the Age of Sepulchral Mounds. However, the Age of Cremation persisted for a long time among Swedes and Norwegians.

Now when Harald Fairhair was king of Norway, Iceland was settled. At the court of King Harald there were skalds, and men still remember their poems and

the poems about all the kings who have since his time ruled in Norway; and we gathered most of our information from what we are told in those poems which were recited before the chieftains themselves or their sons. We regard all that to be true which is found in those poems about their expeditions and battles. It is [to be sure] the habit of poets to give highest praise to those princes in whose presence they are; but no one would have dared to tell them to their faces about deeds which all who listened, as well as the prince himself, knew were only falsehoods and fabrications. That would have been mockery, still not praise.

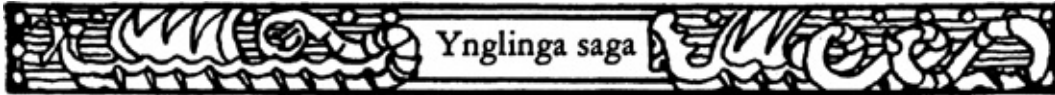
Priest Ari the Learned, the son of Thorgils, the son of Gellir, was the first man in this country to write in the Norse tongue about lore both ancient and recent. In the beginning of his book he wrote chiefly about the settlement and legislation of Iceland, then also about the lawspeakers, how long each one was in office; and he employed this reckoning, first for the time before Christianity was introduced in Iceland, then for the period down to his own days. He included also much other matter, both concerning the lives of the kings of Norway and Denmark, as well as of England, and also the notable events which had occurred here in his own country. And what he says appears to me most noteworthy. He was exceedingly well informed, and so long lived that his birth occurred one year after the fall of King Harald Sigurtharson [1067].⁵ As he himself tells us, he wrote the lives of the kings of Norway, following the narrative of Odd Kolsson. [Kol was] the son of Hall of Sítha. Odd himself had heard it from Thorgeir Afráthskoll, a well-informed man whose life extended back to the time when he dwelled in Nitharness and Earl Hákon the Powerful was slain. In this same locality Óláf Tryggvason founded the market town which is there now [995].⁶

Ari the Priest when seven years old came to Hall Thórarinsson in Hauka Dale and remained there for fourteen years. Hall was a man of extensive information and possessed an excellent memory. He remembered Thangbrand the Priest baptizing him when he was three years old. That was one year before Christianity was adopted by law in Iceland [1000]. Ari was twelve years old when Bishop Isleif died. Hall travelled much and had commercial dealings with Holy King Óláf, and profited greatly thereby. For this reason Hall was well informed about his reign.

Now when Bishop Isleif expired [1080], nearly eighty years had elapsed since King Óláf Tryggvason's fall. Hall died nine years after Bishop Isleif's demise. He reached the age of ninety-four years. When thirty years old he established himself in Hauka Dale and lived there for sixty-four years—all this according to Ari. Teit, Bishop Isleif's son, was fostered by Hall in Hauka Dale and lived there afterwards. He was the teacher of Ari the Priest and gave him much information,

which Ari wrote down afterwards. Ari also had much information from Thuríth, the daughter of Snorri the Gothi,⁷ who was a wise woman. She remembered Snorri, her father, who was nearly thirty-five years old when Christianity was introduced to Iceland and died one year after the fall of Holy King Ólaf. Therefore it is not strange that Ari was well informed about events that had happened in the olden times both here [in Iceland] and in foreign parts, because he had learned from old and well-informed men, and himself was both eager to learn and endowed with an excellent memory.

As to the poems, I consider they will yield the best information if they are correctly composed and judiciously interpreted.⁸



The Saga of the Ynglings

Chapter 1. Of the Three Continents

The earth's round, on which mankind lives, is much indented. Great seas cut into the land from the ocean. We know that a sea goes from the Norva Sound [The Strait of Gibraltar] all the way to Jórsalaland ["Jerusalem Land," Palestine]. From this sea a long arm extends to the northeast which is called the Black Sea. It separates the three parts of the world. The part to the eastward is called Asia; but that which lies to the west of it is called by some Europe, by others Eneá.¹ North of the Black Sea lies Svíthjóth the Great or the Cold.²

Some men consider Svíthjóth the Great not less in size than Serkland the Great ["Saracen Land," North Africa], and some think it is equal in size to Bláland ["Blackman's Land," Africa]. The northern part of Svíthjóth is uncultivated on account of frost and cold, just as the southern part of Bláland is a desert because of the heat of the sun. In Svíthjóth there are many large provinces. There are also many tribes and many tongues. There are giants and dwarfs; there are black men and many kinds of strange tribes. Also there are animals and dragons of marvellous size. Out of the north, from the mountains which are beyond all inhabited districts,³ a river runs through Svíthjóth whose correct name is Tanais [The Don River]. In olden times it was called Tana Fork or Vana Fork. Its mouth is in the Black Sea. The land around the Vana Fork was then called Vana Home or the Home of the Vanir.⁴ This river divides the three continents. East of it is Asia, west of it Europe.

Chapter 2. Of Ásgarh and Óthin

The land east of the Tana Fork was called the Land or Home of the Æsir, and the capital of that country they called Ásgarh.¹ In this capital the chieftain ruled whose name was Óthin.² This was a great place for sacrifices. The rule prevailed there that twelve temple priests were highest in rank. They were to have charge of sacrifices and to judge between men. They are called *díar*³ or chiefs. All the people were to serve them and show them reverence.

Óthin was a great warrior and fared widely, conquering many countries. He was so victorious that he won the upper hand in every battle; as a result, his men believed that it was granted to him to be victorious in every battle. It was his habit that, before sending his men to battle or on other errands, he would lay his hands on their heads and give them a *bjannak*.⁴ Then they believed they would succeed. It was also noted that wherever his men were sore bestead, on sea or on land, they would call on his name, and they would get help from so doing. They put all their trust in him. Often he was away so long as to be gone for many years.

Chapter 3. Of Óthin's Brothers

Óthin had two brothers. One was called Vé, and the other, Víli.¹ These, his brothers, governed the realm when he was gone. One time when Óthin was gone to a great distance, he stayed away so long that the Æsir thought he would never return. Then his brothers began to divide his inheritance; but his wife Frigg they shared between them. However, a short while afterwards, Óthin returned and took possession of his wife again.

Chapter 4. The War between the Æsir and the Vanir

Óthin made war on the Vanir, but they resisted stoutly and defended their land; now the one, now the other was victorious, and both devastated the land of their opponents, doing each other damage. But when both wearied of that, they agreed on a peace meeting and concluded a peace, giving each other hostages. The Vanir gave their most outstanding men, Njorth¹ the Wealthy and his son Frey;² but the Æsir, in their turn, furnished one whose name was Hœnir,³ declaring him to be well fitted to be a chieftain. He was a large man and exceedingly handsome. Together with him the Æsir sent one called Mímir, a very wise man; and the Vanir in return sent the one who was the cleverest among them. His name was Kvasir. Now when Hœnir arrived in Vanaheim he was at once made a chieftain. Mímir advised him in all things. But when Hœnir was present at meetings or assemblies without having Mímir at his side and was asked for his opinion on a difficult matter, he would always answer in the same way, saying, "Let others decide." Then the Vanir suspected that the Æsir had defrauded them in the exchange of hostages. Then they seized Mímir and beheaded him and sent the head to the Æsir. Óthin took it and embalmed it with herbs so that it would not rot, and spoke charms over it, giving it magic power so that it would answer him and tell him many occult things.

Óthin appointed Njorth and Frey to be priests for the sacrificial offerings, and they were *díar* [gods] among the Æsir. Freya was the daughter of Njorth. She was the priestess at the sacrifices. It was she who first taught the Æsir magic such as was practiced among the Vanir. While Njorth lived with the Vanir he had his sister as wife, because that was the custom among them. Their children were Frey and Freya. But among the Æsir it was forbidden to marry so near a kin.

Chapter 5. Gefjon Ploughs Seeland Out of Lake Mælaren

A great mountain chain runs from the northeast to the southwest.¹ It divides Svíthjóth the Great from other realms. South of the mountains it is not far to Turkey. There Óthin had large possessions. At that time the generals of the Romans moved about far and wide, subjugating all peoples, and many chieftains fled from their possessions because of these hostilities. And because Óthin had the gift of prophecy and was skilled in magic, he knew that his offspring would inhabit the northern part of the world. Then he set his brothers Vé and Víli over Ásgarh, but he himself and all *díar*, and many other people, departed. First he journeyed west to Gartharíki [Russia], and then south, to Saxland [Northwestern Germany]. He had many sons. He took possession of lands far and wide in Saxland and set his sons to defend these lands. Then he journeyed north to the sea and fixed his abode on an island. That place is now called Óthinsey [Óthin's Island],² on the island of Funen.

Thereupon he sent Gefjon north over the sound to seek for land. She came to King Gylfi, and he gave her a ploughland. Then she went to Giant-land and there bore four sons to some giant. She transformed them into oxen and attached them to the plough and drew the land westward into the sea, opposite Óthin's Island, and that is [now] called Selund [Seeland], and there she dwelled afterwards. Skjold,³ a son of Óthin married her. They lived at Hleithrar.⁴ A lake was left [where the land was taken] which is called Logrin.⁵ The bays in that lake correspond to the nesses of Selund. Thus says Bragi the Old :⁶

1.⁷ Gefjon, glad in mind, from
Gylfi drew the good land,
Denmark's increase, from the
oxen so the sweat ran.
Did four beasts of burden—
with brow-moons⁸ eight in foreheads—
walk before the wide isle
won by her from Sweden. (1.)

But when Óthin learned that there was good land east in Gylfi's kingdom he journeyed there; and Gylfi came to an agreement with him, because he did not consider himself strong enough to withstand the Æsir. Óthin and Gylfi vied much with each other in magic and spells, but the Æsir always had the better of it.

Óthin settled by Lake Logrin, at a place which formerly was called Sigtúnir.⁹ There he erected a large temple and made sacrifices according to the custom of the Æsir. He took possession of the land as far as he had called it Sigtúnir. He gave dwelling places to the temple priests. Njorth dwelled at Nóatún, Frey at Uppsala, Heimdall at Himinbjorg, Thór at Thrúthvang, Baldr at Breithablik. To all he gave good estates.

Chapter 6. Of Óthin's Skills

It is said with truth that when Ása-Óthin¹ came to the Northlands, and the *díar* with him, they introduced and taught the skills practiced by men for a long time afterwards. Óthin was the most prominent among them all, and from him they learned all the skills, because he was the first to know them. Now as to why he was honored so greatly—the reasons for that are these: he was so handsome and noble to look at when he sat among his friends that it gladdened the hearts of all. But when he was engaged in warfare he showed his enemies a grim aspect. The reasons for this were that he knew the arts by which he could shift appearance and body any way he wished. For another matter, he spoke so well and so smoothly that all who heard him believed all he said was true. All he spoke was in rimes, as is now the case in what is called skaldship. He and his temple priests are called songsmiths, because that art began with them in the northern lands. Óthin was able to cause his enemies to be blind or deaf or fearful in battle, and he could cause their swords to cut no better than wands. His own men went to battle without coats of mail and acted like mad dogs or wolves. They bit their shields and were as strong as bears or bulls. They killed people, and neither fire nor iron affected them. This is called berserker rage.

Chapter 7. Of Óthin's Magic

Óthin could shift his appearance. When he did so his body would lie there as if he were asleep or dead; but he himself, in an instant, in the shape of a bird or animal, a fish or a serpent, went to distant countries on his or other men's errands. He was also able with mere words to extinguish fires, to calm the sea, and to turn the winds any way he pleased. He had a ship called Skíthblathnir with which he sailed over great seas. It could be folded together like a cloth.

Óthin had with him Mímir's head, which told him many tidings from other worlds; and at times he would call to life dead men out of the ground, or he would sit down under men that were hanged. On this account he was called Lord of Ghouls or of the Hanged. He had two ravens on whom he had bestowed the gift of speech. They flew far and wide over the lands and told him many tidings. By these means he became very wise in his lore. And all these skills he taught with those runes and songs which are called magic songs [charms]. For this reason the Æsir are called Workers of Magic.

Óthin had the skill which gives great power and which he practiced himself. It is called *seith* [sorcery], and by means of it he could know the fate of men and predict events that had not yet come to pass; and by it he could also inflict death or misfortunes or sickness, or also deprive people of their wits or strength, and give them to others. But this sorcery is attended by such wickedness that manly men considered it shameful to practice it, and so it was taught to priestesses.

Óthin knew about all hidden treasures, and he knew such magic spells as would open for him the earth and mountains and rocks and burial mounds; and with mere words he bound those who dwelled in them, and went in and took what he wanted. Exercising these arts he became very famous. His enemies feared him, and his friends had faith in him and in his power. Most of these skills he taught the sacrificial priests. They were next to him in all manner of knowledge and sorcery. Yet many others learned a great deal of it; hence sorcery spread far and wide and continued for a long time. People worshipped Óthin and his twelve chieftains, calling them their gods, and believed in them for a long time thereafter. The name "Authun" is derived from that of Óthin,¹ and men gave their sons that name; but from the name of Thór are derived such names as "Thórir" or "Thórarin," or it is combined with other names, as in "Steinthór," "Hafthór," and also changed in other ways.

Chapter 8. Óthin Ordains the Burial Rites

In his country Óthin instituted such laws as had been in force among the Æsir before. Thus he ordered that all the dead were to be burned on a pyre together with their possessions, saying that everyone would arrive in Valholl¹ with such wealth as he had with him on his pyre and that he would also enjoy the use of what he himself had hidden in the ground. His ashes were to be carried out to sea or buried in the ground. For notable men burial mounds were to be thrown up as memorials. But for all men who had shown great manly qualities memorial stones were to be erected; and this custom continued for a long time thereafter. A sacrifice was to be made for a good season at the beginning of winter, and one in midwinter for good crops, and a third one in summer, for victory.

In all Sweden men paid tribute to Óthin, a penny² for every head; and he was to defend their land against incursions and to make sacrifice for them so they would have good seasons.

Njorth married a woman who was called Skathi. She would not have intercourse with him, and later married Óthin. They had many sons. One of them was called Sæming. About him, Eyvind Skáldaspillir³ composed these verses:

2. That scion (2.)
his sire gat, of
Æsir's kin
with etin⁴ maid,
the time that
this fair maiden,
Skathi hight,
the skalds' friend⁵ had.
3. ... (3.)
Of sea-bones,⁶
and sons many
the ski-goddess
gat with Óthin.

Earl Hákon the Mighty reckoned his pedigree from Sæming. This part of Svíthjóth they called Man Home; but Svíthjóth the Great they called God Home.⁷ About this God Home many stories are told.

Chapter 9. Óthin's Death and Burial

Óthin died in his bed in Sweden. But when he felt death approaching he had himself marked with the point of a spear, and he declared as his own all men who fell in battle. He said he was about to depart to the abode of the gods and would there welcome his friends. So then the Swedes believed that he had gone to the old Ásgarth and would live there forever. Then the belief in Óthin arose anew, and they called on him. Often, the Swedes thought, he revealed himself before great battles were fought, when he would give victory to some and invite others to come to his abode. Both fates seemed good to them.

Óthin was burned after his death, and this burning on the pyre of his body took place with great splendor. It was people's belief that the higher the smoke rose into the sky, the more elevated in heaven would he be who was cremated; and [therefore] a man [was considered] the nobler, the more possessions were burned with him.

After him, Njorth of Nóatún took power among the Swedes and continued the sacrifices. Then the Swedes called him their king, and he received their tribute. In his days good peace prevailed and there were such good crops of all kinds that the Swedes believed that Njorth had power over the harvests and the prosperity of mankind. In his days most of the *díar* died, and all were burned, and men made sacrifices to them. Njorth died in his bed. He had himself marked for Óthin before he died. The Swedes burned his body and wept sorely at his tomb.

Chapter 10. Frey's Reign of Plenty

After Njorth, Frey succeeded to power. He was called king of the Swedes and received tribute from them. He was greatly beloved and blessed by good seasons like his father. Frey erected a great temple at Uppsala and made his chief residence there, directing to it all tribute due to him, both lands and chattels. This was the origin of the Uppsala crown goods, which have been kept up ever since. In his days there originated the so-called Peace of Fróthi, There were good harvests at that time in all countries. The Swedes attributed that to Frey. And he was worshipped more than other gods because in his days, owing to peace and good harvests, the farmers became better off than before. His wife was called Gerth, the daughter of Gymir. Their son was Fjólnir. Frey was also called Yngvi; and the name of Yngvi was for a long time afterwards kept in his line as a name for kings, and his race were thereafter called Ynglings.¹

Frey took sick; and when the sickness gained on him, his followers hit upon the plan to let few men see him, and they threw up a great burial mound with a door and three windows. And when Frey was dead they carried him secretly into the mound and told the Swedes that he was still alive, and kept him there for three years. But all the tribute they poured into the mound—gold by one window, silver by another, and copper coin by the third. Thus good seasons and peace endured.

Freya kept up the sacrifices for she was the only one among the godheads who survived. Therefore she became most famous, so that all women of rank came to be called by her name. They are now called *frúvur* ["ladies"]. Thus everyone who is a mistress over her property is called *freya*, and *húsfreya* ["lady of the house"] one who owns an estate.

Freya was rather fickle-minded. Her husband was called Óth, and her daughters, Hnoss and Gersimi.² They were very beautiful, and we give their names to our most precious possessions.

When all Swedes knew that Frey was dead but that good seasons and peace still prevailed, they believed this would be the case so long as Frey was in Sweden; and so they would not burn him and called him the God of the World and sacrificed to him ever after for good harvests and peace.

Chapter 11. King Fjornir Drowns in a Mead Vat

Thereafter Fjornir, the son of Yngvifrey, had sway over the Swedes and the Uppsala crown goods. He was powerful; there were good harvests, and peace obtained during his reign. At the same time Peace-Fróthi ruled in Hleithrar, and there was friendship between them and they invited one another to feasts. Once when Fjornir went to visit Fróthi on the Island of Selund, a great banquet had been prepared and many had been invited from near and far. Fróthi had a large estate, and a vat had been built there, many ells high, and reinforced by stout timbers. It stood on the lower floor of a storehouse, and above it was a balcony with an opening in the floor, so that liquids could be poured down, and mead mixed in it. An exceedingly strong drink had been prepared. In the evening Fjornir and his retinue were led to lodgings in a loft close by. During the night he went out on the balcony to find a place to relieve himself. He was drowsy with sleep and dead drunk, and on his way back to his lodgings he went along the balcony and to the wrong loft door and through it. He missed his footing and fell into the mead vat and drowned. As says Thjóthólf of Hvinir i¹

4. Doom of death (4.)
where dwelled Fróthi
fulfilled was
on fey Fjornir;
and in mead-
measure's spacious,
windless wave
the warrior died.

Chapter 12. King Sveigthir Is Lured into a Rock by a Dwarf

Sveigthir succeeded to the throne after his father. He made a vow that he would try to find God Home and Óthin the Old. With eleven others he fared widely about the world. He came to the land of the Turks and Svíthjóth the Great, and there he met many of his kinsmen. He was five years on this journey. Then he returned to Sweden and remained at home for a while. In Vanaland he had married a woman named Vana. Their son was Vanlandi.

Sveigthir set out again to look for God Home. In the eastern part of Sweden there is a large estate, called Stein. There stands a boulder as big as a large house. In the evening, after sunset, when Sveigthir went from the feast to his sleeping quarters he saw that a dwarf was sitting by the boulder. Sveigthir and his men were very drunk and ran toward the boulder. The dwarf stood in the doorway [of the rock] and called to Sveigthir, inviting him to enter in if he would see Óthin. Sveigthir ran in, and the rock at once closed after him, and he never came out again. As says Thjóthólf of Hvinir:

5. Daylight-shy, (5.)
Durni's kinsman,¹
the rock's warder,
wiled King Sveigthir,
after him
when hastened the thane,
Fjolnir's son,
scion of godheads;
and that hall,
hewn by etins,
swallowed up
Sveigthir, the king.

Chapter 13. King Vanlandi Engenders a Son in Finland and Is Killed by a Nightmare

Vanlandi was the name of Sveigthir's son who succeeded him and ruled over the Uppsala crown goods. He was a great warrior and fared far and wide from country to country. He accepted an invitation to pass the winter in Finland with Snær ["Snow"] the Old, and there he married his daughter Drífa ["Snowdrift"]. But in the spring he departed, leaving Drífa behind. He promised to return after three years, but did not within ten years. Then Drífa sent for Huld, a sorceress, and sent Vístur, her son by Vanlandi, to Sweden. Drífa prevailed upon Huld by gifts that she should conjure Vanlandi back to Finland or else kill him.

At the time when she exercised her sorcery, Vanlandi was at Uppsala. Then he became eager to go to Finland; but his friends and counsellors prevented him from doing so, saying that most likely it was the witchcraft of the Finns which caused his longing. Then a drowsiness overcame him and he lay down to sleep. But he had hardly gone to sleep when he called out, saying that a nightmare¹ rode him. His men went to him and wanted to help him. But when they took hold of his head the nightmare trod on his legs so they nearly broke; and when they seized his feet it pressed down on his head so that he died. The Swedes burned him by a river called Skúta, and there they erected memorial stones for him. As says Thjóthólf of Hvinir:

6. A vile witch (6.)
caused Vanlandi
to visit
Vili's brother,²
when that trod
the troll-woman,
wicked wench,
the warrior king;
was he burned
on bank of Skúta,
noble prince, whom
the nightmare killed.

Chapter 14. King Vísbur's Sons Burn Him in His Hall

Vísbur was the heir of his father Vanlandi. He got in marriage the daughter of Authi the Wealthy, and for her bridal gift gave her three large estates and a gold necklace. They had two sons, Gísl [Ski-staff] and Ondur [Ski]. But Vísbur deserted her and got himself another wife, so she returned to her father with her two sons. Vísbur had a son called Dómaldi. Dómaldi's stepmother inflicted harm on him through sorcery. When the sons of Vísbur were twelve and thirteen years old they came upon him and demanded from him their mother's bridal gifts, but he would not yield them up. Then they said that the gold necklace would be the death of the best man in his line. Thereupon they left him and returned home. Then another incantation was chanted to enable them to kill their father. Then Huld, the sorceress, told them she would bring it about, but also that there would always be slaughter of kinsmen in the race of the Skyldings. They agreed to that. Then they gathered a host and fell upon Vísbur unawares at night and burned him in his hall. As says Thjóthólf: (7.) 7. And Vísbur's

vault-of-wishes¹

Ægir's sib²

swallowed forthwith,

when the throne's

theft avengers

on their father

the fire did turn,

and the gleedes'

greedy-dog³ bit

the liege-lord,

loudly howling.



The seeress chants incantations against Vísbur.

Chapter 15. King Dómalði Is Sacrificed for Better Seasons

Dómalði succeeded his father Vísbur and ruled over his lands. In his days there was famine and starvation in Sweden. Then the Swedes made huge sacrifices in Uppsala. The first fall they sacrificed oxen, but the season did not improve for all that. A second fall they sacrificed humans, but the season remained the same or was even worse. In the third fall the Swedes came in great numbers to Uppsala at the time for the sacrifices. Then the chieftains held a council, and they agreed that the famine probably was due to Dómalði, their king, and that they should sacrifice him for better seasons, and that they should attack and kill him and redden the altars with his blood; and so they did. As says Thjóthólf:

8. The time was (8.)
when weapon-bearing
Swedes reddened
their soil with blood
of their liege.
Lifeless lay then
Dómalði,
dead in his blood,
when that him,
harvest-eager,
his folk gave
as gift to gods.

Chapter 16. King Dómar Dies of a Malady

Dómar was the name of Dómaldi's son, and he succeeded to the kingdom. His rule was a long one, and good seasons and peace prevailed in his days. Nothing more is told about him than that he died in Uppsala of a sickness. His body was brought to Fýrisvellir¹ and was burned there by the river, and there stand his memorial stones. As says Thjóthólf:

9. Oft had I (9.)
about Yngvi's sib²
vainly asked
the wisest men:
where Dómar's
his dead body
had been borne
on Hálf's bale-fire.³
Now I know:
gnawed by disease,
Fjólnir's kin⁴
by Fýri burned.

Chapter 17. King Dyggvi Dies of a Sickness

Dyggvi was the name of his son, who ruled the land after him, and nothing more is told about him than that he died of a sickness. As says Thjóthólf:

10. I doubt not (10.)
but Dyggvi's corpse
Hel does hold
to whore with him;
for Úlf's sib¹
a scion of kings
by right should
caress in death:
to love lured
Loki's sister
Yngvi's heir
o'er all Sweden.

The mother of Dyggvi was Drótt, the daughter of King Danp, the son of Ríg, who was the first to be called “king” in the Danish tongue.² His kinsmen have ever since borne the title of “king” as that of the highest rank. Dyggvi was the first of his line to be called “king.” Before that they were called *dróttnar*, their spouses, *drottningar*, and the king's men, *drótt*. But everyone in their line was always called “Yngvi” or “Ynguni,” and all of them, “Ynglings.” Queen Drótt was the sister of King Dan the Proud, after whom Denmark is named.

Chapter 18. King Dag Seeks Revenge for His Sparrow and Is Slain

Dag was the name of King Dyggvi's son who succeeded to the kingdom. He was so wise that he understood the speech of birds. He had a sparrow which told him many tidings. It used to fly over various countries. One time this sparrow flew into Reithgothaland¹ and to the farm called Vorvi. He flew to the field of a farmer and fed there. The farmer came up and seized a stone and killed the bird. King Dag felt greatly concerned when the sparrow did not return to him. He prepared a sacrifice, offering up a boar to Frey, to find out what had happened, and received the answer that his sparrow had been killed at Vorvi. Then he summoned a large fleet and proceeded to Gotland. And when he arrived at Vorvi he debarked with his army and harried there. The people fled in all directions. In the evening King Dag returned with his army to the ships after having slain many and taken many prisoners. But as they were crossing some river, at a place called Skjótansford or Vápnaford, a work slave ran out of the woods on to the river bank and hurled a pitchfork into their flock. It struck the king on his head, and he fell straightway from his horse and was dead. In those days a chieftain on a harrying expedition was called *gram*,² and his men, *gramir*. As says Thjóthólf:

11. Heard I have (11.)
that high-born Dag,
to death doomed,
undaunted came
to avenge
on Vorvi strand,
with spear armed,
his sparrow's loss.
And eke that,
in eastern lands,
the king's host
of combat told:
that this thane
by thrown hay-fork
from hind's hands
to Hel should fare.

Chapter 19. King Agni Is Hanged by Skjálfr to Avenge Her Father's Death

Agni was the name of Dag's son who was king after him, a famous man of much power, a great warrior, and a man of many accomplishments in every way. One summer King Agni proceeded to Finnland with his fleet, landing and harrying there. The Finns collected a great force to oppose him. The name of their leader was Frosti. A great battle ensued, and King Agni was victorious. Frosti and a great many others fell there. King Agni harried far and wide in Finnland, subjecting it and making enormous booty. He took Skjálfr, Frosti's daughter, prisoner and carried her away together with Logi, her brother. And when he returned west he anchored in Stokk Sound¹ and erected his tents on the meadow south of it. A forest was there at that time. King Agni had [with him] the golden necklace which had belonged to Vísbur. King Agni proceeded to marry Skjálfr. She prayed the king to make a funeral feast for her father. So he invited many men of note and celebrated a great feast. He had become most famous through his expedition. Then there was a great drinking bout. And when King Agni had become drunk, Skjálfr asked him to take care of the necklace he wore. So he seized it and bound it fast to his neck before he went to sleep. His tent stood close by the forest, with a high tree over it to shield it against the sun's heat. Now when King Agni had fallen asleep, Skjálfr took a thick cord and fastened it to the necklace. Then her followers took down the tent posts and threw the coil of rope over the limbs of the tree, then pulled, so that the king hung high in the branches; and that was the death of him. Skjálfr and her men ran to a boat and rowed away. King Agni's body was burned there, and the place was later called Agnafit. It is east of Taur and west of Stokk Sound. As says Thjóthólf:

12. Marvel were't (12.)
if Agni's men
did not scout
Queen Skjálfr's scheme, when
Logi's sib
lifted aloft
the good king
by golden torque,
and hanged him
high 'neath heaven

like Signý's
lover² on gallows.

Chapter 20. Kings Alrek and Eirík Kill Each Other

Alrek and Eirík were the names of Agni's sons who were kings after him. They were men of great power, great warriors, and skilled in all arts. It was their habit to ride horses, training them both for pacing and racing. They were exceedingly skillful in this. They vied with each other who was the better horseman and who had the better mounts. One time both the brothers rode away from their followers on their best horses. They traversed some level lands and did not return. A search was made for them, and both were found dead, with their heads battered. They had had no weapons besides the bridle bits of their horses, and it was believed that they had killed each other with them. As says Thjóthólf:

13. Fell Alrek (23.)
where Eirík, too
breathed his last,
by brother slain.
With racer's
reins, men said that
Dag's kinsmen
killed each other.
Unheard was't,
that with horses' bits
Frey's offspring
fought each other.

Chapter 21. King Álf Slays King Yngvi in a Jealous Rage and Is Killed by Him

Yngvi and Álf, the sons of Alrek, succeeded to the kingdom in Sweden after him and Eirík. Yngvi was a great man of war, victorious, handsome, much versed in all skills, strong and keen in battle, generous with his gifts, and of a most cheerful disposition. On account of these qualities he became famous and popular. King Álf, his brother, stayed in his own country and did not go on warlike expeditions. He was called Elfsi. He was a taciturn man, imperious, and of a morose disposition. His mother was Dageith, the daughter of King Dag the Powerful, from whom the Doglings are descended. Álf had a wife called Bera, a most beautiful woman, of strong character, and of a most cheerful disposition. One fall, Yngvi, the son of Alrek, had returned to Uppsala from a viking expedition in which he had gained great renown. Often he sat up late in the evening, drinking. King Álf used to go to bed early. Queen Bera frequently sat up in the evening, talking with Yngvi. Álf often spoke to her about that and asked her to come to bed earlier, saying that he did not want to stay awake for her. She answered that it was better for a woman to marry Yngvi than Álf, and as she often said that, he grew most furious. One evening Álf came into the hall when Yngvi and Bera sat together on the high-seat, talking. Yngvi had a sword on his knees. His men were very drunk and had not noticed the king come in. King Álf went up to the high-seat, drew his sword from under his cloak, and ran his brother Yngvi through with it. Yngvi leapt up, drew his sword and gave Álf his death blow; and both fell dead on the floor. Álf and Yngvi were buried in a funeral mound on the Fýri Plains. As says Thjóthólf:

14. Eke must he (24.)
whom Álf did smite,
the fane's priest,
fall on hall floor,
when his sword
the sib of Dag¹
reddened, hot
with jealous rage.
Baleful was't
that Bera should
egg to strife
the athelings twain,

so the thanes
thrust each other
through with swords
for sake of bride.

Chapter 22. Haki Slays King Huggleik in Battle

Huggleik was the name of Alf's son who succeeded to the kingdom of Sweden after these brothers; because Yngvi's sons were still children. King Huggleik was no warrior but remained quietly in his kingdom. He was exceedingly wealthy, and miserly of his goods. He was given to have in his retinue all sorts of jugglers, harpers, and fiddlers, and players on the viol. Also, he had with him sorcerers and all kinds of magicians.

Haki and Hagbarth was the name of two brothers of great fame. They were sea-kings and had a great fleet. Sometimes they joined forces, at others, they fought separately. Many men of valor followed each of them. King Haki with his force moved against King Huggleik, and King Huggleik gathered an army to counter him. Then two brothers, Svipdag and Geigath joined him, both famous men and the greatest warriors. King Haki had twelve champions in his company. Starkath the Old was one of them. King Haki also was a great champion. The armies met on the Fýri Plains, and a great battle ensued. Many of Huggleik's men fell very soon. Then the two champions, Svipdag and Geigath advanced, but Haki's champions went against them, six against each of them, and they were captured. Thereupon King Haki entered the shield castle¹ of King Huggleik and killed him and both his sons. Then the Swedes fled, and King Haki conquered the lands and made himself king over the Swedes. He remained three years in the land, but while he remained there in peace, his champions left him and went on viking expeditions and thus amassed spoils for themselves.

Chapter 23. King Guthlaug of Hálogaland Is Overcome by Jorund and Eirík

Jorund and Eirík were the sons of Yngvi, the son of Alrek. During all this time they were at sea. They were great warriors. One summer they harried in Denmark, when they encountered Guthlaug, the king of the Háleygir¹ and fought a battle with him. In the end Guthlaug's ship was cleared of men [by the brothers], and he was taken prisoner. They brought him on land at Straumeyrar Ness and hanged him there. His followers threw up a mound in memory of him. As says Eyvind Skáldaspillir:

15. Overcome (15.)
by East-Kings twain
Guthlaug rode
the grim steed, by
Sigar raised,²
when Yngvi's sons
fastened him
on high gallows.

16. On ness droops, (16.)
the dead bearing,
Fjolnir's tree³
where forks the bight;
there, far-famed
for folk-warder,
by stone marked,
is Straumeyrarness.

The brothers, Eirík and Jorund, became very famous through this deed, and were considered to have grown much greater than before in stature. They learned that King Haki of Sweden had sent away his champions. Then they sailed to Sweden and collected an army. But when the Swedes learned that the Ynglings had come to their land, an immense army joined them. They sailed into Lake Mælaren and proceeded toward Uppsala to attack King Haki. He met them on the Fýri Plains with a much smaller force. A great battle ensued. King Haki advanced so vigorously that he felled all who stood nearest to him, and finally he slew King Eirík and knocked down the banner of the brothers. Thereupon King Jorund and all his men fled to their ships.

King Haki had received such great wounds that he knew that his days were

KING HAKI had received such great wounds that he knew that his days were numbered. Then he had one of his galleys loaded with slain men and weapons. He had it moved out to sea, with the rudder shipped and with hoisted sails, and had a funeral pyre of resinous wood piled on the ship and fired. The wind blew from the land. By that time Haki was dead, or nigh unto death, when he was laid on the pyre. Then the ship stood blazing out to sea; and this event was celebrated for a long time thereafter.

Chapter 24. King Jorund Is Captured and Hanged

Jorund, the son of King Yngvi, was king in Uppsala. He governed his lands, and often in summer went on viking expeditions. One summer he sailed to Denmark with his fleet. He harried in Jutland, and toward fall sailed into the Limfjord and harried there. He lay with his ships in Odda Sound. Then Gýlaug, the king of the Háleygir and son of Guthlaug, mentioned before, approached with a large force. He gave battle to Jorund, and when the people of the country learned that, they came from all quarters with ships large and small [and joined Gýlaug]. Jorund was overpowered and his ships cleared of men. Then he leapt overboard but was captured and brought up on land. King Gýlaug had a gallows raised. He led Jorund up to it and had him hanged. Thus his life came to an end. As says Thjóthólf:

17. Was Jorund, (17.)
of yore who died,
reft of life
in the Limfjord,
when the high
horse, flax-bridled,¹
got to bear
Guthlaug's slayer,
and Hagbarth's
hair-braided noose
wound about
the warrior's neck.

Chapter 25. King Aun Sacrifices Nine Sons to Prolong His Life

Aun or Áni was the name of the son of Jorund, who ruled over Sweden after his father. He was a wise man and a great believer in sacrifices. He was no warrior but remained [quietly] in his lands. During that time when those kings ruled in Uppsala as has been told here, there reigned in Denmark, first, Dan the Magnificent—he lived a very long life—and then his son Fróthi the Magnificent or the Peaceful; and then his sons, Hálfðan and Frithleif. They were great men of war. Hálfðan was the older and the foremost of the two in all respects. He led his army to Sweden against King Aun. There were some battles, and Hálfðan always was the victor. Finally, King Aun fled to West Gautland.¹ He had been king in Uppsala for twenty years. He also lived in Gautland for twenty years whilst King Hálfðan resided in Uppsala.

King Hálfðan died in Uppsala of a sickness and was buried in a mound. After that, King Aun returned to Uppsala. At that time he was sixty years of age. Then he made a great sacrifice to have a long life, dedicating and sacrificing his son to Óthin. King Aun was given an answer by Óthin, to the effect that he was to live another sixty years. Then King Aun ruled in Uppsala for another twenty years. Then Áli the Bold, the son of Frithleif, invaded Sweden with an army. Some battles were fought, and Áli was always victorious. Then King Aun fled a second time from his kingdom and went to West Gautland. Áli was king in Uppsala for twenty years before Starkath the Old slew him.

After Áli's fall King Aun returned to Uppsala and ruled over it for another twenty years. Then he performed a great sacrifice, sacrificing his other son, and was told by Óthin that he would continue to live if he sacrificed him a son every tenth year; and also, that he was to name some district after the number of sons he had sacrificed to Óthin. And when he had sacrificed seven of his sons he lived on for ten years in such a fashion that he could no longer walk and had to be carried in a chair. Then he sacrificed his eighth son and lived for another ten years, but bed-ridden. Then he sacrificed his ninth son and lived for another ten years, and had to drink from a horn like an infant. Then Aun had one son left and wanted to sacrifice him, and also dedicate to Óthin Uppsala and the districts adjoining it and call it Tíundaland.² But the Swedes forbade him to do that, so no sacrifice was made. Then King Aun died. He is buried in a funeral mound at Uppsala. Since that time one calls it Aun-sickness when a person dies painlessly of old age. As says Thjóthólf:

18. Of yore did

(18.)

old age at last
fell King Aun
at Uppsala,
when, tough-lived,
he had to take,
as before,
an infant's food,
and to him
was turned the thinner
end of an
ox's-brow-sword,³
and his kin's
killer⁴ from teat
lying down,
lapped up his milk.
Hardly could
the Eastmen's king⁵
hold the horn
upheld to him.

Chapter 26. Tunni Rebels against King Egil—King Egil is Killed by a Bull

Egil was the name of the son of Aun the Old who succeeded his father in Sweden. He was not a warlike man and resided quietly in his lands. Tunni was the name of one of his slaves, who had been the treasurer of Aun the Old. When Aun had died, Tunni took a great quantity of valuables and buried them in the ground. Now when Egil became king he put Tunni among the other thralls. That he resented bitterly, and absconded, together with many other slaves, and they dug up the goods he had hidden. He gave them to his men, and they chose him to be their leader. Thereupon a great many evildoers drifted to him, and they camped out in the woods, and ever so often made incursions into the farm lands, robbing or killing people.

King Egil had heard of this and went out with his men to hunt them down. But one time when he had taken night quarters, Tunni came upon him with his band without warning and killed many of the king's men. But when King Egil became aware of the surprise attack, he prepared to resist and raised his banner. But many of his men fled, and Tunni and his band assailed them briskly. Then King Egil saw no other recourse but to take to flight. Tunni and his men pursued them all the way to the forest. Then they turned back to the farm lands and harried and plundered, nor was any resistance made to them. All the property Tunni took in the countryside he gave to his followers, and by doing so he became popular and many flocked to him.

King Egil collected an army and went to do battle with Tunni. They fought, Tunni was victorious, and Egil fled after losing many of his men. King Egil and Tunni fought eight battles, and Tunni was victorious in every one. Then King Egil fled his land and went to the Island of Seeland in Denmark to Fróthi the Bold. He covenanted King Fróthi a tribute from Sweden if he would help him. Then Fróthi supplied him with an army and his champions. Thereupon King Egil returned to Sweden. But when Tunni learned that, he marched against him with his army, and there was a great battle. Tunni fell, and King Egil regained his kingdom. The Danes returned. King Egil every year sent King Fróthi good and valuable presents but paid the Danes no tribute. Yet Fróthi and Egil maintained friendly relations.

After Tunni's fall King Egil ruled the land for three years. It so happened in Sweden that the ox that was intended for a sacrifice was old and had been given such strong feed that he became vicious; and when they wanted to capture him

he ran to the woods and became wild and stayed in the thickets, doing much damage. King Egil was a great hunter and frequently rode to the woods to hunt animals. One time he had gone to hunt with his men. The king chased a deer for a long time, riding after it into the forest away from his men. Then he came upon the bull and rode up to him, intending to kill him. The bull turned upon him. The king thrust at him with his spear, but it glanced. The bull stuck his horns into the horse's flank so that it fell flat, and the king with it. Then the king leapt to his feet and wanted to draw his sword, but the bull sank his horns deep into his chest. At that moment the king's men came up and killed the bull. The king lived but a short while. He is interred at Uppsala. As says Thjóthólf: (19.)

19. Fled his land
the far-famed King,
Týr's offspring,¹
from Tunni's power.
But his brand
the bull reddened,
etin's beast,²
in Egil's blood,
which that ere
in East Forest
long had borne
his brow-temple:³
scabbardless,
in Skilfing's sib's⁴
heart did stand
its head's broadsword.

Chapter 27. King Óttar Refuses to Pay Tribute to the Danes

Óttar was the name of Egil's son who succeeded to his realm and crown. He did not maintain the friendship with Fróthi. Thereupon Fróthi sent men to King Óttar to fetch the tribute which Egil had covenanted to him. Óttar made answer that the Swedes never had paid tribute to the Danes, and that he would not either. The messengers returned.

Fróthi was a great warrior. One summer he proceeded to Sweden with his troops and made an incursion in it, harrying, and killing many, and making some prisoners. He collected immense spoils. He burned the villages far and wide, and ravaged the land.

In the summer following King Fróthi sailed on a warlike expedition to the Baltic lands. King Óttar learned that Fróthi was not in his kingdom. Then he boarded his warships and sailed to Denmark, and there he ravaged the land without any resistance being made to him. He learned that a great army had gathered on Seeland. Then he steered west [north] in the Eyrar Sound,¹ and then south [west] to Jutland and entered the Limfjord. Then he harried in the Vendil District, burning, and devastating the land.

Vott and Fasti were the earls to whom Fróthi had assigned the defence of the realm of Denmark while he was abroad. Now when these earls learned that the Swedish king was harrying in Denmark they collected a force, boarded their fleet, and sailed south to the Limfjord. They took King Óttar entirely by surprise and attacked him at once. The Swedes made stout resistance, and many were slain on both sides; but as men fell in the Danish ranks, others and still more arrived from the surrounding countryside, and also the number of their ships was increased by all those in the neighborhood. The outcome of the battle was that King Óttar succumbed, together with the greater part of his host. The Danes took his corpse to the land, and laid it upon a hill to let the beasts and the birds devour it. They made a crow of wood and sent it to Sweden with the words that their King Óttar was of no more value [than that]. Thereafter they called him Óttar Vendil Crow. As says Thjóthólf:

20. Fell Óttar, (20.)
to eagles a prey,
doughty prince,
by Danes vanquished:
his body
blood-stained ravens,

wide-ranging,
in Vendil trod.
And the work
of Vott and Fasti
to the Swedes
a tale became,
how island-
earls of Fróthi
o'erborne had
the battle-urger.²

Chapter 28. King Athils Brings Home Yrsa as His Queen

Athils was the name of King Óttar's son who succeeded him. He ruled for a long time and had great riches; and he, too, went on viking expeditions during several summers. One time King Athils came with his fleet to Saxland. A king ruled there by the name of Geirthjóf, and his wife was called Álof the Powerful. We are not told whether they had children. The king was [at that time] not in his land. King Athils and his men stormed on land to the king's estate and plundered it. Some of them drove down the livestock to slaughter it on the shore. Those who had tended it were thralls, both men and women, and they were taken along with the cattle. Among them was a maiden of singular beauty. Her name was Yrsa. Then King Athils returned home with his booty.

Yrsa was not put with the women thralls. It soon appeared that she was clever and spoke well and was well informed about all things. Everyone took a liking to her, but most of all the king. And it ended with Athils taking her to wife. So Yrsa became queen in Sweden, and she was considered a woman of great ability.

Chapter 29. King Helgi Carries Off Yrsa and Engenders Hrólfr with Her

At that time King Helgi, the son of Hálfðan, ruled in Hleithrar. He went to Sweden with so mighty a host that King Athils saw no other alternative but to flee. King Helgi went on land with his army to harry, and got much booty. He captured Queen Yrsa and took her with him to Hleithrar where he married her. Their son was Hrólfr Kraki.

When Hrólfr was three years old, Queen Álof came to Denmark. She told Yrsa that King Helgi, her husband, was her father and Álof, her mother. Thereupon Yrsa returned to Sweden to rejoin Athils, and was his queen for the remainder of her life. King Helgi fell in warfare. Hrólfr Kraki was eight years old then, and was chosen king at Hleithrar.

King Athils fought great battles with King Áli of the Uppland District in Norway. They fought a battle on the ice of Lake Vænir.¹ King Áli fell there, and Athils was victorious. Much is told about this battle in the *Skjoldunga saga*;² also about Hrólfr Kraki's expedition to Athils in Uppsala. It was then Hrólfr Kraki sowed gold on the Fýri Plains.³

King Athils took great delight in fine horses and owned the best horses in those times. One of his steeds was called Slongvir, another, Hrafn. He had captured them when Áli had fallen, and between them was bred another horse called Hrafn. He sent him to King Gothgest in Hálogaland. King Gothgest rode him but could not rein him in, and was thrown and killed. That was in Omth in Hálogaland.

One time King Athils attended the sacrifice to the Dísar and rode his horse about the hall of the goddess. The horse stumbled and fell, and the king was thrown. His head struck a rock so that his skull broke, and his brain spilled on the rock and he died. This happened at Uppsala, and a burial mound was thrown up for him. The Swedes considered him a mighty king. As says Thjóthólf:

21. Learned I eke (21.)
that Athils' life
a vile witch
was to finish—
that Frey's sib⁴
to fall was doomed,
head foremost,

from horse's back,
and with sand
the sovrán's brain
mingled was,
the mighty king's;
and bold thane
did breathe his last,
Áli's foe,
at Uppsalir.

Chapter 30. King Eystein Succeeds Athils

Athils' son, whose name was Eystein, succeeded him as king over Sweden. In his days Hrólfr Kraki fell at Hleithrar. At that time, both Danish and Norwegian kings harried much in Sweden. Many of them were sea-kings who “never slept under sooty roof-beam and never drank by hearth-nook.”¹

Chapter 31. Solvi Burns King Eystein in His Hall

Solvi was the name of a sea-king, the son of Hogni of Njarthey,¹ who was at that time harrying in Sweden. He ruled over [a part of] Jutland. He led his fleet to Sweden. King Eystein was then being entertained in the district of Lófund. King Solvi came upon him in the night when he least expected it, and burned him inside his hall with all his following. Then Solvi proceeded to Sigtúna and demanded to be proclaimed king and be received as such; but the Swedes collected an army to defend their land, and there ensued a battle so great that it was said to have lasted more than eleven days. King Solvi was victorious and ruled over Sweden for a long time, until the Swedes betrayed and slew him. As says Thjóthólf:

22. Is Eystein's (22.)
end known to me:
at Lófund
his life he lost;
in Sweden
Solvi did burn
in his hall
him and his host.
And the fire
fell upon him
in his tight-
timbered homestead,
when the tang-
of-slopes'-terror²
overwhelmed
him and his men.

Chapter 32. King Yngvar Invades Esthonia and Is Slain

After that, Sweden was ruled by Yngvar, the son of King Eystein. He was a great man of war and frequently on board his warships, because before his time there had been many incursions made in Sweden, both by Danes and hordes from beyond the Baltic. King Yngvar concluded a peace with the Danes, and then took to harrying in the Eastlands. One summer he summoned his fleet and proceeded to Esthonia where he harried in the district of Stein. Then the Esthonians came upon him with a great host, and there was a battle. The army of the Esthonians was so strong that the Swedes were unable to withstand them. King Yngvar was slain then, and his host fled. He is buried in a mound there, close by the sea, in Athalsýsla District.¹ After this defeat the Swedes returned home. As says Thjóthólf:

23. Said it was (23.)
that slaughtered had
Esthnic folk
Yngvar the fair,
and at Stein
had struck with force
against the
gallant leader.
And the sea
a song doth sing
in the east
to atheling slain.

Chapter 33. King Onund Clears Forest Lands in Sweden

Onund was the name of the son of Yngvar, who succeeded him. In his days, good peace prevailed in Sweden, and he became very wealthy in chattels. King Onund proceeded with his host to Esthonia to avenge his father. He landed, and harried far and wide and made great booty. In the fall he returned to Sweden. In his days there was great prosperity in Sweden. He was the most beloved of all kings. Sweden has much forest land, and there are such great stretches of it uninhabited that it takes many days' journey to cross them. King Onund bestowed great diligence and expense on clearing the forests and cultivating the land which had been cleared. Also he had roads made through the uninhabited forests. Then many tracts were found throughout the forests which were not covered with woods, and these came to be populous districts. In this manner the land was populated, for there was no lack of people to cultivate it. King Onund had roads built throughout Sweden, both through forests and over bogs and mountains. Because of this he was called Road-Onund. King Onund established estates for himself in every large district in Sweden and made his royal progress throughout the land.

Chapter 34. Ingjald Is Given a Wolf's Heart to Eat

Road-Onund had a son who was called Ingjald. At that time King Yngvar ruled over Fjathryndaland.¹ He had two sons by his wife, Álf and Agnar. They were of about the same age as Ingjald. There were at that time district kings all over Sweden. Road-Onund ruled the district of Tíundaland.¹ Uppsala is located there, and there is the place of assembly for all Swedes. Great sacrifices were held there, and many kings came to attend them. They were held in midwinter. And one winter, when a great multitude had come to Uppsala, King Yngvar and his sons were present. They were six years old.

Álf, the son of King Yngvar, and Ingjald, the son of King Onund, set a-going a boys' game in which each of them was to head his side. And when they played against each other, Ingjald proved to be weaker than Álf, and grew so vexed about it that he cried bitterly. Then Gautvith, his foster brother, came up to him and led him away to Svipdag the Blind, his foster-father, and told him that he had fared ill [because] he was weaker and not a match for Álf, the son of King Yngvar. Then Svipdag said that was a great shame.

The day after, Svipdag had the heart cut out of a wolf and had it steaked on a spit, and then gave it to Ingjald, the king's son, to eat. And from that time he became the most cruel and most ill-natured of men.²

When Ingjald was grown, Onund asked for him the hand of Gauthild, daughter of King Algaut. He was the son of King Gautrek the Generous, the son of that Gaut after whom Gautland³ is named. King Algaut thought that his daughter would be well married if she were given to the son of King Onund if he had the disposition of his father. The maiden was sent to Sweden, and Ingjald held his wedding feast with her.



Ingjald and Gautvith come to Svipdag the Blind.

Chapter 35. King Onund Is Buried by an Avalanche

One autumn, King Onund journeyed from one of his estates to another, and came to the one called Himinheith. It lies in a narrow valley between high mountains. It had rained heavily, but before that, the mountains had been covered with snow. Then an avalanche of stones and clay descended and buried King Onund and his following. Both the king and many followers perished. As says Thjóthólf:

24. Onund was (24.)
'neath open sky
with Jónakr's-
son's-evil¹ slain.
And the Esths'
enemy strong
by bastard
base was murdered;²
and he who
Hogni's blood shed,
o'erborne was
by bones-of-earth.³

Chapter 36. King Ingjald Burns Six District Kings in His Hall

Ingjald, the son of King Onund, ruled at Uppsala. The Uppsala kings were the most powerful in Sweden, where there were many district kings. From the time Óthin was chieftain in Sweden, the chieftains who resided at Uppsala were the absolute rulers over all Sweden until the death of Agni; but then, as written above [chapter 20], by the division of inheritance among brothers, the rule and the kingdom was divided among the [various] branches of the house, and some kings cleared large forest tracts and cultivated them, thus increasing their dominions.

Now when Ingjald succeeded to the realm and kingdom, there were many district kings, as was written above. King Ingjald had a great banquet prepared at Uppsala for the purpose of honoring King Onund, his father, with a funeral feast. He had made ready a hall in no wise smaller or less stately than the one already at Uppsala, which he called the Hall of Seven Kings. In it were erected seven high-seats. King Ingjald sent messengers through all of Sweden, inviting kings, earls, and other prominent men. To this funeral feast came King Algaut, Ingjald's father-in-law, and King Yngvar of Fjathryndaland and his two sons, Agnar and Álf. Also, King Sporsnjall of Næríki¹ and King Sigverk of Áttundaland.² Only King Granmar of Suthr-mannaland³ did not come. There, the six kings were assigned seats in the new hall. One high-seat that King Ingjald had had erected remained empty.

All the host that had come there were given seats in the new hall. But for his own bodyguard and all his people King Ingjald had made room in the [old] Uppsala hall.



Svipdag's sons and their warriors storm the Hall of Seven Kings.

It was custom at that time, when a funeral feast was prepared to honor a [departed] king or earl, that the one who prepared the feast and was to be inducted into the inheritance, was to sit on the step before the high-seat until the beaker called the *bragafull*⁴ was brought in; and then he was to stand up to receive it and make a vow, then quaff the beaker, whereupon he was to be inducted in the high-seat which his father had occupied. Then he had come into the [rightful] inheritance to succeed him.

So was done here; and when the beaker was brought in, King Ingjald stood up, seized a large drinking horn, and made the vow that he would increase his dominion to double its size in every direction, or else die. Then he emptied the beaker.

Now when everyone was drunk, King Ingjald told Fólkvith and Hulvith, the sons of Svipdag, to arm themselves and their men when evening approached, as was planned. They went out to the new hall and put it to the torch; the hall blazed up, and the six kings and all their followers were burned [inside]. Those that tried to come out were quickly cut down. Thereupon King Ingjald took possession of all the realms these kings had ruled, and levied tribute on them.

Chapter 37. King Hjorvarth Marries Hildigunn

King Granmar heard these tidings and believed the same fate awaited him unless he took precautions. That same summer King Hjorvarth, who was called an Ylfing,¹ came with his fleet to Sweden and anchored in the firth called Myrkva Firth.² When King Granmar learned that, he sent messengers to him, inviting him and all his men to a banquet. He accepted that, because he had not harried in the realm of King Granmar. And when he arrived at this banquet he was given a great welcome. It was the custom of those kings who resided in their own lands or sat at the banquets they had arranged, that in the evening, when beakers were passed around, two and two were to drink together, in couples, one man and one woman, as far as possible, and those left over were to drink [together] by themselves. Otherwise it was viking law that at banquets all were to drink together.

The high-seat of King Hjorvarth was prepared opposite that of King Granmar, and all his followers sat on the bench [on that side of the hall]. Then King Granmar said to Hildigunn, his daughter, that she should make ready to pour the ale for the vikings. She was an exceedingly handsome woman. She took a silver beaker, filled it and, stepping before King Hjorvarth, she said, "A health to all you Ylfings, in memory of Hrólfr Kraki," and quaffed half of it before handing it to King Hjorvarth. Thereupon he seized the beaker and her hand as well, and said that she should sit by his side. She replied it was not the custom of vikings to drink two and two with women. Hjorvarth replied that for once he would make a change and not abide by the laws of the vikings, but drink two and two with her. Then Hildigunn sat down by his side, and both drank together and had much to say to each other during the evening.

The day after, when Granmar and Hjorvarth met together, Hjorvarth asked for the hand of Hildigunn. King Granmar laid his proposal before Hild, his wife, and other persons of influence, saying that they might expect much help from King Hjorvarth. There was made great acclaim at that, and all considered it advisable; and as a result Hildigunn was betrothed to King Hjorvarth, and he celebrated his marriage with her. It was decided that King Hjorvarth was to remain with King Granmar, because he had no son to defend the realm with him.

Chapter 38. King Ingjald Flees from King Granmar

That same fall King Ingjald collected a force, intending to proceed against Granmar and his son-in-law. He summoned troops from all the districts of which he had taken possession. When Granmar and Hjorvarth learned of this, they collected their forces, and there came to their aid King Hogni and his son who ruled over East Gautland. Hogni was the father of Hild, the wife of Granmar.

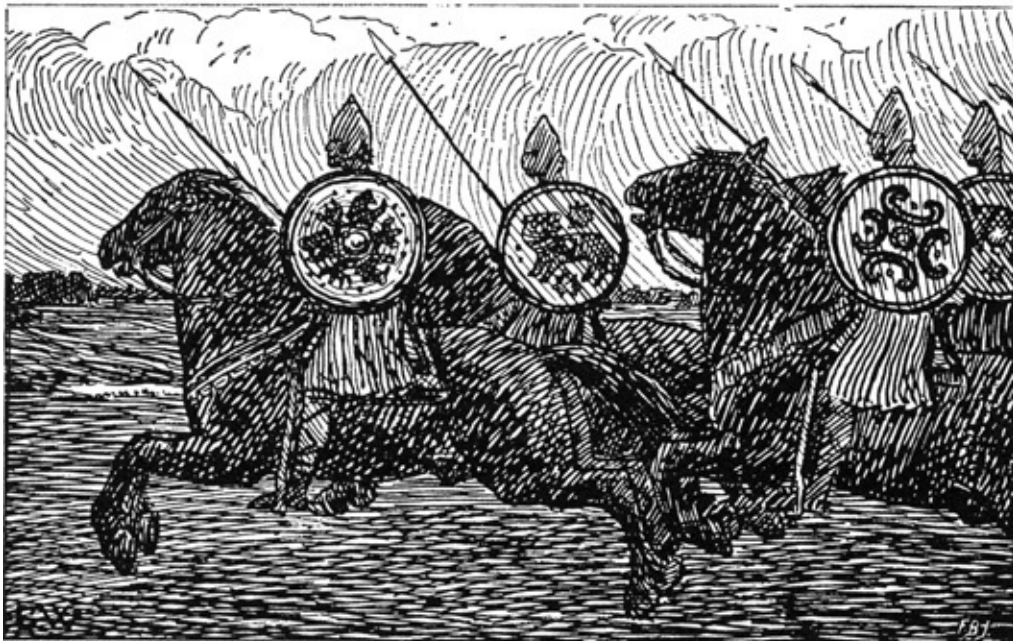
King Ingjald landed with all his army, and his forces were larger by far. Then they fought a hard battle. But when the battle had lasted but a little while, the chieftains over the districts of Fjathryndaland, West Gautland, Næríki, and Áttundaland took to flight, together with all the men from those districts, and went aboard their ships. Thereafter King Ingjald was hard bestead. He was wounded in many places and so fled to his ships. Svipdag the Blind, his foster father, fell there together with his sons, Gautvith and Hulvith.

King Ingjald then returned to Uppsala, ill-pleased with his venture. He felt certain that the troops he had levied in those parts of his dominions won by him through force had betrayed him.

After that, hostilities persisted between King Ingjald and King Granmar. When this had lasted for a long time, friends of both managed to get them reconciled. The kings arranged for a meeting and met with one another and concluded a peace, between King Ingjald on the one hand, and King Granmar and King Hjorvarth, his son-in-law [on the other]. This peace between them was to last as long as the three kings lived. This was confirmed by oaths and pledges of faith. In the spring following, King Granmar went to Uppsala, in order to sacrifice, as was the custom toward beginning of summer, that this peace might last. Then the oracle of staves¹ foretold him that he would not live much longer. Thereupon he returned to his kingdom.

Chapter 39. King Ingjald Burns King Granmar and King Hjorvarth in Their Hall

In the fall of that year, King Granmar and King Hjorvarth, his son-in-law, made their royal progress to the island called Sili,¹ [there to be entertained] at their estate. And while they were there, King Ingjald fell upon them one night with his army, surrounding their house, and burned them inside with all their followers. Then he subjected all the dominions they had had and set chieftains over them.



King Hogni and his men ride into Sweden.

King Hogni and Hildir, his son, often made incursions in Sweden and slew the men King Ingjald had set over the realm which had belonged to King Granmar, their relative. Hostilities lasted a long time between King Ingjald and King Hogni. Yet King Hogni managed to maintain himself against King Ingjald until his dying day.

King Ingjald had two children by his wife. The elder [a girl] was called Asa, the younger [a boy], Óláf Trételgja (Woodcutter). Gauthild, the wife of King Ingjald, sent the latter to Bóvi, her foster father, in West Gautland. He was raised there together with Saxi, the son of Bóvi, who was called Flettir.

It is said that King Ingjald slew twelve kings, and all by treachery. He was called Ingjald the Wicked. He was king over the greater part of Sweden. He

married his daughter Ása to Guthröth, king of Scania. She had the same nature as her father. It was Ása who made him [*i.e.* her husband] kill his brother Hálfðan. The latter was the father of Ívar the Widedather. Ása also brought about the death of her husband, Guthröth.

Chapter 40. King Ingjald and His Daughter Burn Themselves in Their Hall

Ívar the Widefathomer proceeded to Scania after the death of his uncle, Guthröth. He forthwith collected a large force and then advanced on Sweden. Ása the Wicked had before this come to visit her father. King Ingjald was being entertained at Røning¹ when he learned that the army of King Ívar was near at hand. He did not consider that he had a sufficient force to fight against Ívar. He also saw clearly that if he fled, his enemies would fall upon him from all sides. So he and Ása hit on a decision which since has become famous: they had all the people [with them] become dead drunk, then set fire to the hall. It burned down with all the people inside, and King Ingjald also. As says Thjóthólf:

25. Raging fire (25.)
at Røning farm
trod Ingjald
while in this life,
when by stealth
in stocking feet
it fell on
the friend-of-gods;²
and this fate
most fitting seemed
to all Swedes
for scion of kings:
to die first
in fiery death,
and end first
his own brave life.

Chapter 41. King Ívar Rules Sweden and Denmark

Ívar the Widedfather subdued all of Sweden. He also had possession of all the Danish realm and a large part of Saxland, all of the Eastern lands and a fifth of England. From him are descended the kings of Denmark and of Sweden who have ruled there. With Ingjald the Wicked the race of the Ynglings lost their power over the domain of Uppsala, so far as one can follow the line.

Chapter 42. Óláf the Woodcutter Finds the Province of Vermaland

When Óláf, the son of King Ingjald, learned of the death of his father, he departed with all those who would follow him; because all the people in Sweden with one accord rose up to drive out the kin of King Ingjald and all his friends. Óláf first proceeded to Næríki, but when the Swedes learned of his whereabouts he could not remain there. So he proceeded west along forest paths to the river which flows into Lake Vænir from the north and is called Elf [Klar Elf River]. There they settled and cleared the forest, burning it down and cultivating the land. Soon this came to be a populous district. They called it Vermaland.¹ The land there afforded good sustenance. But when people in Sweden heard about Óláf clearing the forest, they called him Trételgja [Woodcutter], and considered it an unworthy proceeding.

Óláf married a woman called Sólveig or Solva, a daughter of Hálfðan Goldtooth of Sóleyar, which is west of Vermaland. Hálfðan was the son of Solvi Solvarsson, the son of Solvi the Old, who first cleared the District of Sóleyar.² The name of Óláf the Woodcutter's mother was Gauthild. Her mother was Álof, a daughter of Óláf the Keeneyed, king of Næríki. Óláf and Solva had two sons, Ingjald and Hálfðan. Hálfðan was raised in Sóleyar by his maternal uncle Solvi. He was called Hálfðan Whiteleg.

Chapter 43. Hálfðan Whiteleg Takes Possession of Sóleyar and Raumaríki

It was a great multitude that fled out of Sweden before King Ívar. They heard that Ólaf Woodcutter had [developed] good conditions for living in Vermaland and so great a multitude drifted there that the land could not give them sustenance. There came a very bad season and famine. They laid the blame for that on the king, as the Swedes are wont to ascribe to their king good seasons or bad. King Ólaf was but little given to offer sacrifices. The Swedes were ill-pleased at that and believed it was the cause of the bad harvests. They collected a host and moved on King Ólaf. They surrounded his hall and burned him inside, giving him to Óthin and sacrificing him for good crops. That was by Lake Vænir. As says Thjóthólf: (26.) 26. By bay bight

the building-wolf¹

swallowed up

Ólaf's body.

Fornjót's son²

with flaming heat

smelted off

the Swede king's mail.

That ruler

of royal race

long before

had left Uppsalir.

Those of the Swedes who were wiser attributed the famine to the fact that the inhabitants were too numerous for the land to support and they believed that it was not the fault of the king. Then they decided to advance with all their numbers westward across the Eith Forest,³ and appeared very unexpectedly in Sóleyar. They killed King Solvi and captured Hálfðan Whiteleg. They elected him their leader and made him king. Then he took possession of Sóleyar. Thereupon he advanced on Raumaríki,⁴ harried there, and added that district to his dominions.

Chapter 44. Hálfðan Conquers Eastern Norway

Hálfðan Whiteleg was a powerful king. He married Asa, the daughter of Eystein the Hardruler, king of the Upplands. He ruled over Heithmork. They had two sons, Eystein and Guthröth. Hálfðan took possession of much of Heithmork, Thótn, and Hathaland, together with a large part of Westfold.¹ He lived to be an old man. He died of a sickness when he was in Thótn, and was afterwards carried to Westfold to be buried in a mound at a place called Skæreith in Skíringssal. As says Thjóthólf:

27. All have heard (27.)
that Hálfðan King
then was mourned
by men of peace,
and that Hel,
the howes'-warder,²
in Thótn took
the thane from life.
And Skæreith
in Skíringssal
droops above
the dead thane's bones.

Chapter 45. Hálfðan Takes Over Vermaland

Ingjald, the brother of Hálfðan, had been king over Vermaland; but after his death King Hálfðan took possession of Vermaland, levying tribute and placing earls over it during his lifetime.¹

Chapter 46. King Eystein Is Knocked Overboard and Killed by a Sailyard

Eystein, the son of Hálfdan Whiteleg, who ruled after him over Raumaríki and Westfold, married Hild, the daughter of Eirík, the son of Agnar, king of Westfold. Agnar, the father of Eirík, was the son of King Sig-trygg of Vendil. King Eirík had no son. He died during the lifetime of King Hálfdan Whiteleg. Then Hálfdan and his son Eystein took possession of all of Westfold. Eystein ruled over Westfold whilst he lived.

At that time a king ruled in Varna¹ whose name was Skjold. He was greatly skilled in magic. King Eystein proceeded to Varna with several warships and plundered there, taking whatever he found—clothing and other valuables and farm tools. They slaughtered the cattle by the seashore for provision and then departed. King Skjold came to the seashore with his army. King Eystein had by that time departed and had got across the fjord, and Skjold saw their sails. Then he took his cloak, swung it about, and blew against it. King Eystein was sitting by the rudder as they rounded the Island of Jarlsey, when another ship sailed close by. There was some swell. The sailyard of the other ship knocked the king overboard, and that was his death. His men got hold of his corpse and brought it to Borró where a funeral mound was erected over him on the ridge by the sea near Vathla.² As says Thjóthólf:

28. But Eystein (28.)
by yard slain, fared
to Býleist's-
brother's-daughter;³
and now lies
the liege buried
under rocks
'neath ridge's brow
where, ice-cold,
by Eystein's howe
Vathla inlet
opens to sea.

Chapter 47. Hálfðan the Generous Dies of a Malady

Hálfðan was the name of King Eysteinn's son who ruled after him. He was called Hálfðan the Generous and the Stingy of Food. It is told that he gave his men for their pay as many gold coins as other kings did silver coins, but he starved them in their food. He was a great warrior and was for a long time on viking expeditions to gain treasure. He was married to Hlíf, the daughter of King Dag of Westmarir.¹ Holtar in Westfold was his chief residence. There he died of a sickness, and he is buried in a mound at Borró. As says Thjóthólf:

29. Loki's child² (29.)
from life summoned
to her thing³
the third liege-lord,
when Hálfðan
of Holtar farm
left the life
allotted to him.
And his men
made for the king
at Borró
a barrow high.

Chapter 48. King Guthröth Slays King Harald and Marries his Daughter Ása

Guthröth was the name of Hálfðan's son who ruled after him. He was called Guthröth the Generous, and some called him the Hunting-King. He was married to Álfhild, the daughter of King Álfar of Álfheim, who brought with her as dowry half of Vingulmork.¹ Their son was Óláf, who later was called Geirstatha-Álf. Álfheim was at that time the name of the district between the Raum Elf River and the Gaut Elf River.² But when Álfhild had died, King Guthröth sent messengers west to the king who ruled over Agthir³—the one who is called Harald the Redbeard—to sue for the hand of his daughter Asa; but Harald did not consent. The messengers returned and told the king of the outcome. Some time afterwards King Guthröth launched his ships and proceeded to Agthir with a large force. He approached undetected, landed with his army, and at night came to the estate of King Harald. When Harald was aware that a hostile force had come against him, he issued with the men he had with him and started to fight against great odds. He fell together with his son Gyrth. King Guthröth captured a large booty and took with him Asa, the daughter of King Harald, and married her. They had a son called Hálfðan. And when he was one year old, King Guthröth was on his royal progress. He had anchored his ship in Stiflu Sound. A great banquet was given him, and the king was very drunk. In the evening, when it was dark, the king went on land from his ship; and when he came to the head of the pier a man leapt at him and ran his spear through him. That was his death. The man was immediately killed. And in the morning, when it grew light, they recognized the man. It was the page of Queen Ása; nor did she conceal that it was done at her instigation. As says Thjóthólf:

30. Was Guthröth, (30.)
the great-hearted,
of yore felled
by foulest play:
deep-wrought wiles
the wicked woman
'gainst drunk liege
laid vengefully.
With ease did
Ása's evil
errand-boy

end the lord's life;
and the prince,
pierced to the heart,
stumbling fell
by Stiflu Sound.

Chapter 49. King Óláf Shares Westfold with His Brother

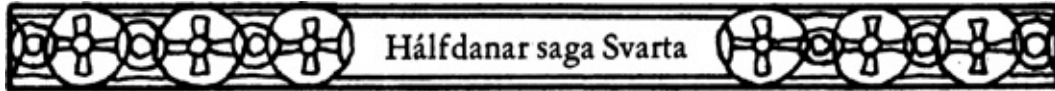
Óláf succeeded his father. He was a man who wielded much power and was a great warrior. He was exceedingly handsome and very tall. He had possession of Westfold [only], because King Álfgeir had taken over all of Vingulmork and placed over it King Gandálf, his son. Both father and son made many incursions in Raumaríki and possessed themselves of the greater part of that district. Hogni was the son of Eystein the Powerful of the Upplands.¹ He conquered all of Heithmork as well as Thótn and Hathaland. At that time the sons of Guthröth also lost possession of Vermaland, so that these districts [again] paid tribute to the king of Sweden. Óláf was twenty years of age when King Guthröth died. And when King Hálfðan, his brother, shared the rule with him, they divided Westfold between them. The western part fell to Óláf, and the eastern [?] part to Hálfðan. King Óláf resided at Geirstathir.² He succumbed to a disease of his leg and is buried in a mound at Geirstathir. As says Thjóthólf:

31. And óthin's (31.)
offspring, of Yngling
kin, thewfully
throve in Norway.
Of yore ruled
his realm Óláf,
wide domains
in Westmarir,
till foot-ill
by Folden's³ shore
overwhelmed
the hardy king.
Now buried
in barrow lies
the glad liege
at Geirstathir.

Chapter 50. King Rognvald Dies of a Bone Disease

Óláf's son, Rognvald ruled over Westfold after his father. He was called Heithumhæri.¹ About him, Thjóthólf of Hvinir composed the poem *Yng-lingatal* (*Enumeration of the Ynglings*). In it he says as follows:

32. Best of names, (32.)
blue sky beneath,
that e'er was
given any king,
Rognvald had,
the ruler of ships,
Heithumhár
who was called aye.



The Saga of Hálfðan the Black

Chapter 1. King Hálfðan Regains Vingulmork and Raumaríki

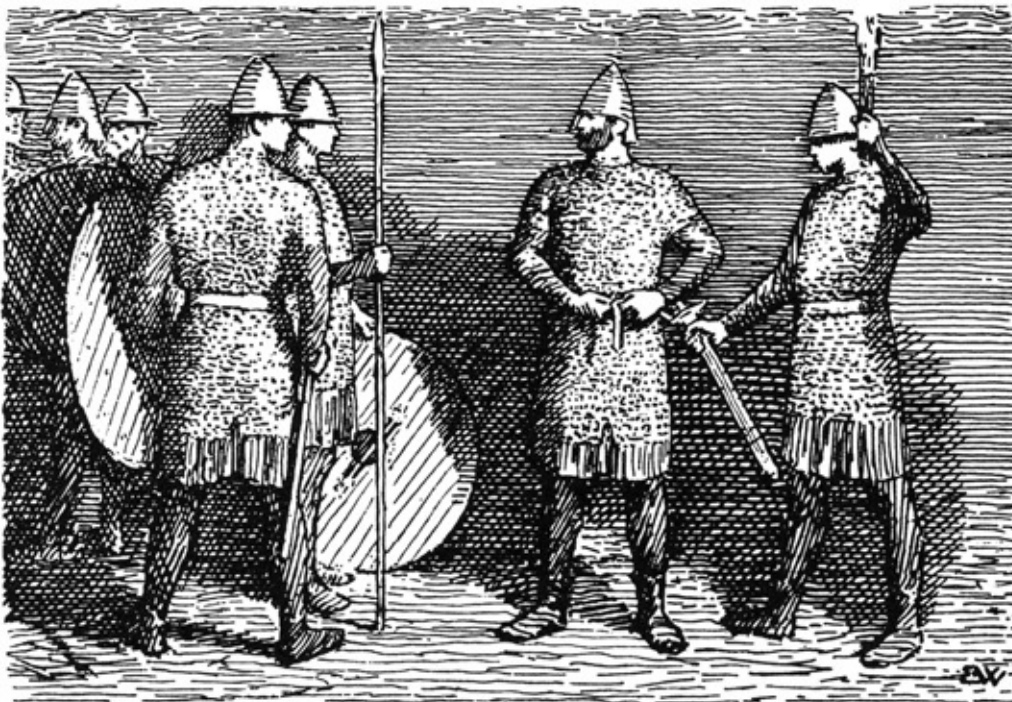
Hálfðan was one year old when his father died. Ása, his mother, at once proceeded west to Agthir and established herself in the kingdom over which her father Harald had ruled, and there Hálfðan grew up. At an early age he was large and strong, and he had black hair. He was called Hálfðan the Black. He was eighteen when he succeeded to the kingdom in Agthir. Then he⁸³⁹ immediately proceeded to Westfold and divided that kingdom with his brother Ólaf, as has been set down before. In the fall of the same year he advanced with an army to Vingulmork against King Gandálf. There were many indecisive battles, but they finally agreed that Hálfðan should take possession of half of Vingulmork, which Guthröth, his father had had before him.

Thereupon King Hálfðan proceeded against Raumaríki and subdued it. King Sigtrygg, the son of King Eystein, heard of this. He resided at that time in Heithmork, after bringing Raumaríki under his sway, and moved against King Hálfðan. There was a great battle, and Hálfðan was victor. At the time his ranks broke in flight, King Sigtrygg received an arrow shot under his left arm and fell. Thereupon Hálfðan took possession of all of Raumaríki.

Another son of King Eystein, the brother of Sigtrygg, was [also] called Eystein. He ruled over Heithmork. When King Hálfðan returned to Westfold, King Eystein proceeded with an army against Raumaríki and subdued the greater part of it.

Chapter 2. King Hálfðan Overcomes King Eystein

Hálfðan the Black learned of these hostilities in Raumaríki and collected an army, with which he proceeded against King Eystein, and a battle ensued. Hálfðan was victorious, and Eystein fled to Heithmork, but King Hálfðan pursued him with his army, and they had another battle in which Hálfðan was victorious. Then Eystein fled north to the Dales,¹ seeking the aid of Hersir² Guthbrand. There he reinforced his troops and in the winter made an incursion into Heithmork. He encountered Hálfðan the Black on the large island in Lake Mjors.³ They had a battle, and many fell on both sides, but King Hálfðan was victorious. Among the dead was Guthorm, the son of Hersir Guthbrand, who was considered the most promising man in the Upplands. Then King Eystein again fled north to the Dales. From there he sent his kinsman, Hallvarth Skálk, to King Hálfðan to seek a truce, and because of the kinship [between them] Hálfðan yielded to King Eystein the half of Heithmork, such as had been the case before. But Hálfðan conquered Thótn; also, the district called Land,⁴ as well as Hathaland, because he made war far and wide. So he was a very powerful king.



Hálfðan the Black prepares for battle.

Chapter 3. Hálfðan Adds Sogn to his Possessions

Hálfðan the Black married Ragnhild, daughter of Harald Goldenbeard, king of Sogn.¹ They had a son to whom King Harald gave his own name, and he was brought up in Sogn on the estate of King Harald, his mother's father. And when King Harald was in his old age and had no son, he gave his daughter's son, Harald, his dominion and had him named king. Soon afterwards, Harald Goldenbeard died, and in the same winter his daughter Ragnhild. In the spring following, young King Harald took sick in Sogn and died. He was ten years old.

As soon as Hálfðan the Black learned of his death he journeyed to Sogn with a large force. He was received well there. He laid claim to the realm as heir of his son, nor was any resistance made to that; and so he added that realm to his own. Then he was joined by Earl Atli the Slender of Gaular.² He was a friend of King Hálfðan, and the king set him over the Sogn District to speak judgment according to the laws of the land and to collect the taxes for the king. Thereupon the king proceeded to the Upplands and his realm there.

Chapter 4. Hálfðan Flees from the Sons of Gandálf

In the fall King Hálfðan journeyed to Vingulmork. One night, at midnight, when King Hálfðan sat at table, drinking, a man of his mounted guard came in and told him that a [hostile] force was approaching the house. The king arose at once and bade his followers arm themselves, then went out into the courtyard and drew up his men in battle array. Presently, the sons of Gandálf—Hýsing and Helsing—came up with a large host. A violent fight ensued; but because King Hálfðan faced a much superior power he fled to the woods after losing many of his men. Olvir the Wise, King Hálfðan's foster father, was among those who fell. Subsequently, a host collected about King Hálfðan, and he proceeded to search for the sons of Gandálf. They met at Eith by Eyi¹ and gave battle. Then there fell Hýsing and Helsing, but their brother Haki took to flight. Thereupon King Hálfðan brought all of Vingulmork under his control; but Haki fled into Álfheim.

Chapter 5. King Sigurth Hart Is Slain by the Berserker Haki

Sigurth Hart was the name of a king in Hringaríki.¹ He was larger and stronger than any other man; also, he was exceedingly handsome. His father was Helgi the Keen, his mother, Áslaug, the daughter of Sigurth Serpent-in-the-Eye, the son of Ragnar Lothbrók.² It is told that Sigurth was twelve years old when he slew the berserker³ Hildibrand in single combat, together with eleven [of his companions]. Many a deed of derring-do he performed, and there is a long saga about him.

Sigurth had two children. Ragnhild, his daughter, was a woman of exceeding beauty and excellence. She was twenty years at this time, and Guthorm, her brother, was a youth. We are told about Sigurth that he was accustomed to ride by himself into the wilderness, hunting large and dangerous beasts, and that he was always most eager in that pursuit. One day, Sigurth rode alone in the woods, as was his custom. And when he had ridden a long ways he came to a clearing not far from Hathaland. There he encountered the berserker Haki with thirty men. They fought, and Sigurth Hart fell, as did twelve of Haki's men. Haki himself lost one of his arms and was wounded in three places. Thereupon Haki and his men rode to the estate of Sigurth and carried off his daughter Ragnhild and her brother Guthorm, together with many cattle and other valuables, and took them along to Hathaland, where he had large estates.

Then he prepared a feast, intending to celebrate his marriage with Ragnhild. But that was delayed for a long time because his wounds festered.

Haki the Hathaland berserker lay abed with his wounds during the fall and the beginning of winter. During Yuletide King Hálfðan was being entertained in Heithmork. He had been informed about all these occurrences. Early one morning when the king was dressed, he summoned Hárek Gand⁴ and told him to proceed to Hathaland—"and bring me Ragnhild, the daughter of Sigurth Hart." Hárek got himself ready, together with some hundred men, and planned it so that they crossed the lake at dawn of day toward the dwelling of Haki and occupied all doors to the hall in which slept the followers [of Haki]. Then they went to the house where Haki slept, broke open the doors, and carried off Ragnhild and her brother Guthorm, as well as all the valuables they found there, and burned down the hall with all those who were within. They put a covering over a magnificent carriage, placed Ragnhild and her brother in it, and drove [down] to the ice [-covered lake]. Haki got up and pursued them for a while; but when he came to the ice-covered lake he turned down the hilt of his sword and let himself fall on

its point, so that the sword pierced him through, and that was his death. He is interred on the shore of the lake there.



Queen Ragnhild's dream.

King Hálfðan caught sight of them crossing the ice, because he had exceedingly sharp eyesight. He saw the tented carriage and surmised that Hárek's mission had turned out the way he had intended. So he had his table set and sent messengers far and wide in the countryside to invite many people. And a great and splendid banquet was prepared on that day, and at this banquet King Hálfðan married Ragnhild, and in time she became a powerful queen. Her mother was Thyrrni, daughter of King Klakk-Harald of Jutland, the sister of Thyri, Savior of Denmark, the one who was married to Gorm the Old, king of Denmark, who ruled the Danish realm at that time.

Chapter 6. Queen Ragnhild's Dream

Queen Ragnhild had great dreams, and she was a wise woman. One of her dreams was that she seemed to be in her garden, removing a thorn from her shirt. And as she held it, it grew in such a fashion that it became a long twig, so that one end of it touched the ground and took root quickly, while the other end reached up high into the air. Very soon thereafter the tree appeared to her so tall that she could hardly see over the top of it. It was also marvellously thick. The lowest part of it was red as blood, but farther up the trunk was fair and green, and its branches white as snow. There were many and big twigs on it, some above and some below. The limbs of the tree extended so far that they seemed to her to spread over all Norway and even much farther.¹

Chapter 7. King Hálfðan's Dream

King Hálfðan never dreamed. To him that seemed strange, so he went to a man called Thorleif the Wise, and asked for his advice concerning what could be done about it. Thorleif told him what he himself did when he was eager to know about something: he went to the pigsty to sleep there, and then he did not fail to have a dream.

The king did this, and he had this dream: it seemed to him that he had the longest hair of any man and that this hair was all in ringlets, some touching the ground, some reaching to the middle of his leg, some to his knees, some to his hip or middle, some reaching down no farther than his neck, whilst some sprouted out of his skull like little horns. But his curls were of all colors, with one lock exceeding all others in beauty, brightness, and length. He related this dream to Thorleif, and Thorleif interpreted it in this wise that a great line of descendants would come from him, and that they would govern the land with great distinction, though not all equally so; but that one would arise out of his line who would be greater and nobler than all the rest. And it is the opinion of all that this lock betokened Holy King Óláf.

King Hálfðan was a very wise man, both truthful and fair-dealing. He both made laws and kept them himself. He compelled all to keep them; and in order that violence should not overthrow the laws, he set up penalties, fixing everyone's compensation according to his birth and position.

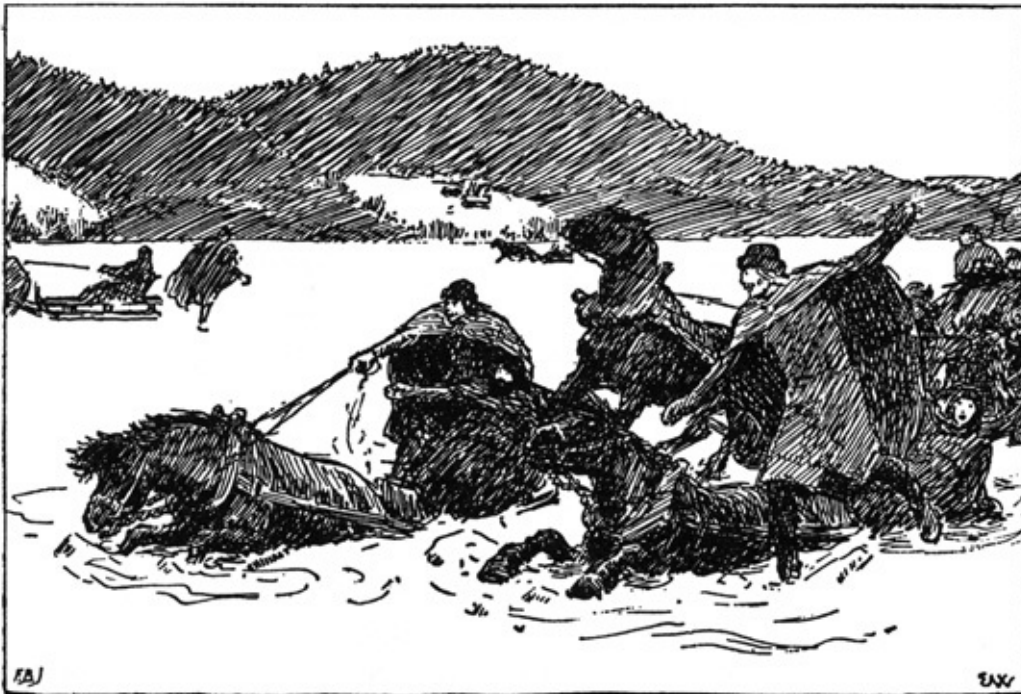
Queen Ragnhild bore a son. He was sprinkled with water and named Harald. He quickly grew into a tall handsome man. He grew up there and soon became accomplished and a man of good understanding. His mother loved him dearly, but his father, less.

Chapter 8. King Hálfðan's Banquet Disappears

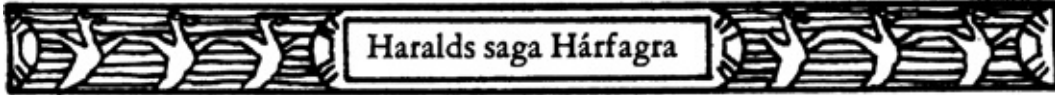
King Hálfðan was entertained at a Yuletide banquet in Hathaland. Then on Yule eve there occurred a strange incident: when they had sat down to the table—and a very large number were assembled there—all food and all ale disappeared from the tables. With a heavy heart the king remained sitting, but all the others went to their homes. Now in order to find out what had caused this event, the king ordered a Finn to be seized who was reputed to be skilled in many hidden things, to make him confess the truth. He tortured him, yet got nothing out of him. The Finn turned to the king's son Harald for help, and Harald asked the king for mercy, but in vain. Then Harald let him escape, braving the king's anger, and accompanied him himself. They came to some chieftain's house where a great feast was being celebrated, and they were to all appearances welcomed there. And when they had remained there till spring, one day this chieftain said to Harald, "A mighty great affront your father thinks it that I took some food from him, this winter; but I shall reward you with some joyful news: your father is dead now, and you must return home. Then you will have as your own all the realms he ruled, and all of Norway besides."

Chapter 9. King Hálfðan Is Drowned

Hálfðan the Black rode away from the entertainment in Hathaland and, as it happened, his way lay over Lake Rond.¹ It was spring, and the sun shone with great warmth; and when they drove over Rykins Inlet—people had watered their cattle there during the winter, and their dung had fallen on the ice, and the sun's warmth had melted the ice there. Now when the king drove over that stretch, the ice broke under him, and he perished with many of his followers. He had
860 reached his fortieth year then. There had been excellent seasons during his rule; and people were so affected by his death that when they learned of his demise and that his body was being taken to Hringaríki in order to be interred there, men of influence from Raumaríki, Westfold, and Heithmork came and prayed, all of them, to take the body with them to be buried in their lands; for it was thought that he who got possession of it could expect good seasons. They reached an agreement in this wise, that the body was assigned to four places: the head was laid in a mound at Stein in Hringaríki, but each of the others carried away their share and interred them in burial mounds in their homelands, and all are called the Mounds of Hálfðan.



King Hálfðan breaks through the ice.



The Saga of Harald Fairhair

Chapter 1. King Harald Overcomes His Enemies

860 Harald succeeded to the kingdom after his father. He was ten years old at the time. He was exceedingly tall and strong, very handsome, wise, and a man of parts. Guthorm, his maternal uncle, assumed leadership of the *hirð*¹ and took upon himself the governance of the country. He was the commander of the army.

After the death of Hálfdan the Black, many chieftains made incursions into the realm he left behind. The first were King Gandálf and the brothers Hogni and Fróthi, sons of King Eystein of Heithmork; and Hogni, the son of Kára, invaded large parts of Hringaríki. Then Haki, the son of Gandálf, proceeded against Westfold with three hundred [360]² men, taking the landway across several valleys, with the intention of coming upon Harald unawares; whilst King Gandálf remained in Lóndir³ with his army, planning to cross the fjord [and march] against Westfold.

But when Guthorm, the commander of the army, heard of this, he collected troops and, together with King Harald, marched against Haki through the countryside. They met in some valley. There was a battle, and King Harald was victorious. King Haki fell there, together with a large number of his men. The place later received the name of Haka Dale.⁴ Thereupon King Harald and Guthorm, his commander, turned against King Gandálf who had invaded Westfold. They advanced against each other, and when they met there was a hard fight. King Gandálf took to flight after losing most of his men and managed to get back to his own kingdom. And when the sons of King Eystein of Heithmork heard this, they expected that their turn would come next. They sent messengers to Hogni, the son of Kára, and to Hersir Guthbrand and arranged a meeting at Hringisakr in Heithmork.

Chapter 2. King Harald Subjugates Central Norway

After these battles King Harald and Guthorm, his commander, together with all the troops they could muster, proceeded to Uppland, travelling mostly through the forests. They learned where the meeting of the Upplending kings was to be and arrived there at midnight. Before the sentinels discovered their presence a force surrounded the house Hogni Káruson slept in and the one Guthbrand slept in, and set fire to them. The sons of Eystein managed to get out with their men and fought for a while till both Hogni and Fróthi fell.



Gytha sends King Harald's messengers away.

After the fall of these four chieftains King Harald, owing to the power and prowess of his kinsman Guthorm, took possession of Hringaríki and Heithmork, Guthbrands Dale and Hathaland, Thótn, Raumaríki, and the entire northern part of Vingulmork. Following that, King Harald and his marshal, Guthorm, contended and had battles with King Gandálf. Finally, in the last battle King Gandálf fell and King Harald took possession of all the land as far south as the Raum Elf [Glommen] River.

Chapter 3. Gytha Turns Down King Harald's Suit

King Harald sent his messengers to fetch a maiden called Gytha, the daughter of King Eirík of Horthaland—at that time she was being fostered in Valdres with a powerful franklin—whom he desired to have as his concubine, because she was a maiden of great beauty and high spirits. And when the messengers arrived there they delivered their message to the maiden. She answered to this effect that she did not intend to cast away her maidenhood to marry a king who did not dispose of more than a couple of shires. “But it seems strange to me,” she said, “that there is no king ambitious enough to claim Norway as his own and be sole king over it as is King Gorm in Denmark and Eirík in Uppsala.”

The messengers were of the opinion that her answer showed extraordinary haughtiness and asked her what she meant by her answer, saying that Harald was a king powerful enough to bestow her hand upon. But though her answer was different from what they had expected, they saw no other way, for the time being, to accomplish their mission; so, despairing of having her with them against her will, they prepared to leave. But when they departed, her men accompanied them on their way. Then she spoke to the messengers and asked them to carry this message from her to King Harald: that she would consent to be his lawful wife only if, before that, he would, for her sake, conquer all of Norway and govern that realm as independently as did King Eirík of Sweden and King Gorm of Denmark theirs. “Because [only] then,” she said, “it would seem to me, could he be called a sovran king.”

Chapter 4. King Harald Vows to Conquer All of Norway

The messengers then returned to King Harald and reported to him the words of the maiden. They told him that she was the most insolent and foolish woman, and it would be right if the king dispatched a great force to bring her to him in disgrace. Then King Harald answered that the maiden had not spoken evil or done anything meriting revenge. He bade her [on the contrary] have many thanks for her words.

“She has reminded me,” said he, “of what it seems strange that I never thought of before.” And still further he said, “I make this vow, and call God to witness, him who created me and governs all,¹ that I shall neither cut nor comb my hair before I have conquered all of Norway, with all its taxes and revenues, and govern it altogether, or else die.” His marshal, Guthorm, thanked him much for these words and said it was a royal task to fulfil his vow.



The captive King Grýting is led before King Harald.

Chapter 5. King Harald Overcomes King Grýting

Thereupon he and his kinsman collected a large army and journeyed to Uppland, then north through the Dales, and north from there over the Dofra Mountains. And when he descended into the settled district, he had everyone killed and their houses burned down. But when the people learned of this, all who could, fled, some down to Orka Dale, some to Gaular Dale, some into the forests. Some begged for mercy, and that was granted to all who came to the king and swore allegiance to him. The king found no resistance until he arrived in Orka Dale. There an army had gathered, and a man whose name was Grýting fought the first battle against the king. Harald was victorious. Grýting was made captive and many of his men were slain. He made submission to Harald, swearing allegiance to him. Thereupon all the people in the Orka Dale District submitted to King Harald and became his followers.

Chapter 6. King Harald Appropriates All Ancestral Possessions

Wherever King Harald gained power he made it the law that all ancestral lands and possessions belonged to him; also, that all farmers had to pay a tax to him, both the great and the humble. He appointed an earl for every district, whose duty it was to administer the law and justice and to collect fines and taxes. And the earl was to have a third of the taxes and penalties for his maintenance and other expenses. Every earl was to have under him four or more *hersar*, and every *hersir* was to have twenty marks of revenue. Every earl was to furnish the king sixty soldiers for his army, and every *hersir*, twenty. But King Harald increased imposts and taxes to such an extent that his earls had greater power than kings had had before. When this was learned in the Trondheim districts,¹ many men of influence joined the king and became his followers.

Chapter 7. King Harald Subdues the Trondheim District

We are told that Earl Hákon, the son of Grjótgarth, came to King Harald from the outer district of Yrjar and brought with him a great force in support of King Harald. Thereupon King Harald proceeded into Gaular Dale and there had a battle, slaying two kings and taking possession of their lands, to wit the Gaular Dale and the Strinda districts. Then he gave Earl Hákon rule over the Strinda District. Subsequently, King Harald marched into Stjóra Dale, where he had the third battle. He was victorious and took possession of that district. Thereupon the men from the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord collected an army [against Harald]. One of their kings ruled Vera Dale, another Skaun, a third the Sparbyggva District, the fourth the Inner Eyin—the one who also ruled the Eyin District. These four kings advanced against King Harald. He fought a battle with them and was victorious, slaying some of them and putting others to flight. Altogether, King Harald had eight or more battles in the Trondheim districts, but after laying eight of their kings low he took possession of the whole of Trondheim.

Chapter 8. King Herlaug Immures Himself

North in Naumu Dale two brothers, Herlaug and Hrollaug, were kings. They had been three summers about fashioning a funeral mound. This mound was constructed of stones, mortar, and timber. But when this mound was completed, the brothers learned that King Harald was marching against them with an army. Then King Herlaug had much food and drink brought to the mound, and then entered it with eleven other men, whereupon he had it walled up [from the outside].

King Hrollaug went up on the mound on which the kings were wont to sit. There he had a king's high-seat prepared for himself, and seated himself on it. Then he had down pillows laid on the footstool where it was the custom of earls to sit. Thereupon King Hrollaug rolled himself down from the king's high-seat and onto the earl's seat¹ and gave himself the title of "earl." Then he went to meet King Harald and gave to him all his realm, offering to become his follower and informing him about the procedure he had taken. Then King Harald took a sword and fastened it in Hrollaug's belt. He hung the shield around his shoulder and named him his earl and led him to the high-seat. He gave him the District of Naumu Dale to rule, setting him as earl over it.

Chapter 9. King Harald's Fleet and Bodyguard

Thereupon King Harald returned to Trondheim and resided there during the winter; and ever after he regarded Trondheim as his place of residence. There he established his chief estate, called Hlathir. That same winter he married Ása, daughter of Earl Hákon, the son of Grjótgarth, and the king conferred great honors on Hákon.

In the spring King Harald had his ships put in readiness. During the winter he had a large dragon ship¹ built and outfitted richly. On it he quartered his bodyguard and berserkers. Most carefully he chose his forecastle-men, because they carried the king's banner. The space from the forecastle benches back to the bailing space was called *á rausn* [forecastle room], and there the berserkers were quartered.

Only those men were accepted into King Harald's bodyguard who were of unusual strength and bravery and had all sorts of achievements. Only they were allowed on the ship, but then he had good choice in picking out men for his bodyguard from every district. King Harald had a large army and many large vessels, and many men of influence were his henchmen. The skald Hornklofi² mentions in his poem *Glymdrápa* that King Harald had had battles in the Uppdale Forest against the people of Orkn Dale³ before he had issued this levy:

33. Harald on heights wooded— (33.)
hardily he fought aye—
battled against banner-
bearers wishing combat;
ere that the king, ever-
eager, led his shield-clad
roller-horses,⁴ ready for
riding, 'gainst his foemen.

34. Bore into wolves' wilding (34.)
wastes the evil-doers'-
foeman⁵ the fear of his
flashing snake-of-combat,⁶
ere that Baron Nokkvi's
bitter foeman with his
stained steeds-of-sea-ways⁷
steered into the swans-road.⁸

Chapter 10. King Harald Is Victorious in the Battle of Sólskel

King Harald with his fleet sailed out of the Trondheim[fjord] and turned south to Mær. The king who ruled this district was called Húnthjóf, and his son, Solvi Klofi. Both were great warriors. The king who ruled over Raums Dale bore the name of Nokkvi, and he was the maternal uncle of Solvi. These chieftains gathered a fleet when they heard of King Harald's coming, and proceeded against him. They met at the island of Sólskel. There ensued a great battle, and King Harald was victorious. As says Hornklofi:



The battle of Sólskel.

35. From the north the nags-of-
Njorth¹ by storm were driven,
so with twain kings he came to
clash broadside to broadside.
Words none—long the lance-fight
lasted—the kings bandied,
but whining hail-of-steel they
hurled in murderous combat.

(35.)

Both kings fell there, but Solvi escaped by flight. Then King Harald took possession of these two districts and dwelt there long during the summer, giving laws to the people. He set governors over them and assured himself of the

loyalty of the people.² But in the fall he made ready to return to Trondheim.

In the course of the summer, Rognvald, earl of Mœr and son of Eystein Glumra, had sworn allegiance to King Harald, and the king had set him as governor over the two districts of North Mœr and Raums Dale, lending him the support of both large landholders and farmers, as well as the naval strength to defend the land against invasions. He was called Rognvald the Powerful and the Resourceful; and it is said that both names were appropriate. The winter following was passed by King Harald in Trondheim.

Chapter 11. King Harald Overcomes Kings Arnvith and Authbjorn

In the spring following, King Harald collected a large army and announced that with this army he would proceed to South Mœr. Solvi Klofi had during the winter been at sea with [his] warships and had harried in North Mœr and killed many of King Harald's men. He had plundered some, burnt down the houses of others, and had ravaged the land greatly. Part of the winter he had passed in South Mœr, staying with King Arnvith, his kinsman. But when they learned that King Harald had gone aboard his ships and had a large force, they gathered their troops and managed to have a considerable number of men, because many wanted to avenge themselves on King Harald.

Solvi Klofi sailed south to the Fjord District to meet King Authbjorn, who ruled there, and asked him to support and join him and King Arnvith—"and then we may well expect to be successful if all of us rise up against King Harald, because then we shall have ample forces, and then let fate decide who will be victorious. The other alternative—and that is unacceptable to men who are of no less exalted birth than King Harald—is to become his thralls. My father preferred to fall in battle in his kingdom, rather than of his own free will serve King Harald or to fail to stand up under attack, as did the kings of the Naumdalers."

So successful was Solvi with his persuasive speeches that King Authbjorn promised to join him. He collected troops and sailed north to join King Arnvith. They had a very large fleet. Then they learned that King Harald had come from the north. They met on the land side of the island of Sólskel.

It was the custom [in those days] that when a sea battle was fought the ships were lashed together, so that men fought in the forecastles. That was done in this case. King Harald laid his ship against King Arnvith's. The battle raged furiously, and many men fell on both sides. Finally King Harald grew so wrathful and furious that he went forward in his ship and fought so valiantly that all the men in the bow of King Arnvith's ship retreated to the mast and some fell. Then King Harald boarded King Arnvith's ship. Thereupon King Arnvith's men took to flight, and he himself fell on his ship. King Authbjorn fell, too, but Solvi saved himself by flight. As says Hornklofi:

36. Waged the warrior dauntless (36.)
 weapon-thing¹ against them—
 red blood rushed—then fiercely
 raged the fray—from gashes.

In storm-of-Hild² when foemen
struggled and fell in ship's prow—
savage swords 'gainst shields rang—
sithen he gained victory.

In that battle there fell on King Harald's side his earls Ásgaut and Ásbjorn, and also his relatives Grjótgarth and Herlaug, the sons of Earl Hákon. For a long time Solvi continued as a powerful viking and often inflicted heavy damage in King Harald's realm.

Chapter 12. Earl Rognvald Burns King Vémund in His Hall

Thereupon King Harald took possession of South Mær. Vémund, the brother of King Authbjorn, held onto the Fjord District and made himself king over it. That was late in fall, and King Harald and his men agreed that he was not to sail south around the promontory of Stath¹ so late in fall. Then King Harald set Earl Rognvald over both North and South Mær and Raums Dale. The earl had many henchmen about him [at that time]. King Harald himself then returned north to Trondheim.

The same winter Earl Rognvald marched overland across the Eith neck-of-land and from there south into the Fjord District. He had learned from his scouts that King Vémund was in a place called Naust Dale, and he arrived there at nighttime. Vémund was there on a visitation. Earl Rognvald surrounded the house and burned the king in it, together with ninety men. Thereupon Berthlu-Kári joined Earl Rognvald with a fully manned warship, and both sailed north to Mær. Earl Rognvald appropriated the ships which had belonged to King Vémund, together with all the chattels he could lay his hands on. Berthlu-Kári sailed north to Trondheim where he joined King Harald and became his man. He was a great berserker.

In the spring following King Harald sailed south along the land with his fleet and subdued the Fjord District. Thereupon he sailed [south and]² east along the land till he arrived in Vík. King Harald set Earl Hákon, the son of Grjótgarth, over the Fjord District, giving him that district to govern. But when the king had left for the east, Earl Hákon sent word to Earl Atli the Slender, telling him to remove himself from Sogn and be earl in Gaular Dale as he had been before. Atli replied that King Harald had assigned the Sogn District to him and that he would keep it until he had spoken to King Harald about it. The earls quarrelled about this until both gathered troops. They met in Fjalir, in Stafaness Bay, and fought a big battle. Earl Hákon fell there, and Earl Atli was mortally wounded. His men brought him to Atley Island, and there he died. As says Eyvind Skáldaspillir:

37. Was Hákon, (37.)
Hogni's-daughter's-
tree,³ fey when
to fight he went;
and his life
lost in combat
Frey's offspring⁴

on Fjalir strand.

38. Blended was
with blood the wave,
as friends fell,
faithful to him,
and wound-gore
warm of warriors,
in Ygg's-storm⁵
by Stafaness.

(38.)

Chapter 13. King Harald Regains the Eastern Districts

King Harald arrived with his fleet in Vík in the east and sailed to the town of Túnsberg. There was a market town there, at that time. King Harald had then been in Trondheim for four years and had not come to Vík in all that time. He learned then that Eirík Eymundarson, the king of Sweden, had taken possession of Vermaland, levying tribute on all the Forest Districts. All the land north to the Svína Sound and that west along the coast—that is, West Gautland—the Swedish king claimed as his own; and he levied tribute from it. He had set over it an earl by the name of Hrani the Gautish. His domain extended from the Svína Sound to the Gaut Elf River. He was a powerful earl.

King Harald had been told of the declaration of the Swedish king that he would not stop before acquiring as large a realm in Vík as had had Sigurth Hring or Ragnar Lothbrók, his son; that is, Raumaríki and Westfold, all the way to Grenmar, as well as Vingulmork and all the land to the south of that. Throughout these districts many chieftains and other men had given their allegiance to the Swedish king.

This highly displeased King Harald and he called an assembly of the farmers there in Fold.¹ He accused them of treason against himself. Some farmers managed to prove their innocence, and some had to pay fines, others were punished. In this wise he travelled about that district during the summer. In the fall he went into Raumaríki and proceeded in the same fashion, repossessing himself of that district. Then he learned that Eirík, the king of Sweden, was on his royal progress² about Vermaland with his bodyguard.

Chapter 14. Áki Entertains Both King Eirík and King Harald

King Harald marched his army eastward through the Eith Forest and arrived in Vermaland. He arranged to have himself entertained there. A certain man, Áki by name, was the most powerful farmer in Vermaland. He had great wealth and was then an old man. He sent messengers to King Harald to invite him to a feast, and the king promised to come on the day agreed on. Áki also invited King Eirík to a feast, arranging it for the same day. Áki had a large and old hall. And now he had a new banquet hall built, no less in size, and had it constructed most carefully. He had this hall decorated with new tapestry, and the old one, with the old furnishings.

Now when the kings arrived for the banquet, King Eirík and his company was assigned to the old hall, but King Harald and his followers, to the new one. The same procedure was followed with the table service: King Eirík and his company all had old drinking vessels and horns, gilt and beautifully ornamented; and King Harald and his men had all new drinking vessels and horns, all adorned with gold. They were polished and smooth as glass. The drink was equally excellent in both places.

Yeoman Áki had before been King Hálfðan's man. Now when the day came when the entertainment was to come to an end, the kings made ready to leave, and their mounts were brought out. Then Áki stepped before King Harald, leading his twelve-year-old-son Ubbi. Áki said, "If you, sir king, consider me worthy of your friendship, seeing the good will I have shown you in the feast I prepared for you, then repay my son for it. I give him to you to be your squire." The king thanked him with many fair words for his hospitality and assured him of his complete friendship. Thereupon Áki produced splendid gifts for the king.

Then Áki went up to the Swedish king. King Eirík was all clad by then, ready to depart, and he was in rather an ill humor. Áki presented him with noble gifts, but the king gave short answers and mounted his horse. Áki accompanied him on his way and spoke to him. A forest was near by, and their road lay through it. And when [the king and] Áki reached the forest, the king asked him, "Why did you make a difference in the hospitality you showed me and King Harald in giving him the best of everything? You know very well that you owe me allegiance."

Áki replied, "I believed, sir king, that the hospitality I showed you and your men at this banquet was in no wise inferior. And as to the old service from which you drank, the reason for that is that you are old now, whereas King Harald is in the full flower of his youth and that is why I gave him new table

Harald is in the full flower of his youth, and that is why I gave him new table service. But as to your reminding me that I am your man, why, I consider it no less true that you are my man.” Then the king drew his sword and gave him his deathblow. Then he rode on.

When King Harald was about to mount his horse, he requested that Yeoman Áki be sent for. But when men searched for him, some ran to the place where King Eirík had ridden. They found Áki dead there, turned back, and told the king. And when he heard this he called out his men to avenge Yeoman Áki. Then King Harald rode the way King Eirík had taken until they became aware of each other. Then both parties rode the fastest they could until King Eirík came to the forest that separates Gautland from Vermaland. Then King Harald turned back to Vermaland, took possession of it, and slew King Eirík’s men wherever he found them. In winter he returned to Raumaríki.

Chapter 15. King Harald Regains Vingulmork

In the course of the winter King Harald proceeded to Túnsberg to join his fleet. He got the ships ready, and after crossing the [Ósló]fjord eastward he put the whole of Vingulmork under his rule. He was aboard his warships all winter and harried in Ranríki. As says Thorbjorn Hornklofi:¹

(39.) 39. Fain outside would he
drink ale at Yule-tide,
the fray-loving folk-warder,
and Frey's-game² play there.
Even half-grown, he hated
the hearth-fire cozy,
the warm women's room,
and the wadded down-mittens.

The men from Gautland collected forces over all the country.

Chapter 16. King Harald Invades Gautland

In the spring, as soon as the thaws came, the Gautlanders drove stakes into the Gaut Elf to prevent King Harald from going up the river. King Harald steered his ships into the river and anchored by the stakes while harrying the land on both sides and burning the villages. As says Hornklofi:

40. South of the sea did the (40.)
sater-of-ravens¹ conquer
land and lieges, fighting,
loved and kept by godheads;
and the hero harbored,
helm-clad, in the river
by the stakes his storm-tossed
stags-of-linden² safely.

Then the Gautlanders came riding with a large army and gave battle to King Harald. There was very great loss of life, and King Harald was victorious. As says Hornklofi:

41. Whetted hounds-of-bucklers³ (41.)
whining—crashed battle-axes,
clanked spearshafts—there cut down
caitiff Gautish warriors,
when that Harald over
hosts of foes gained victory—
loud the din of light-winged
lances hurled, above them.

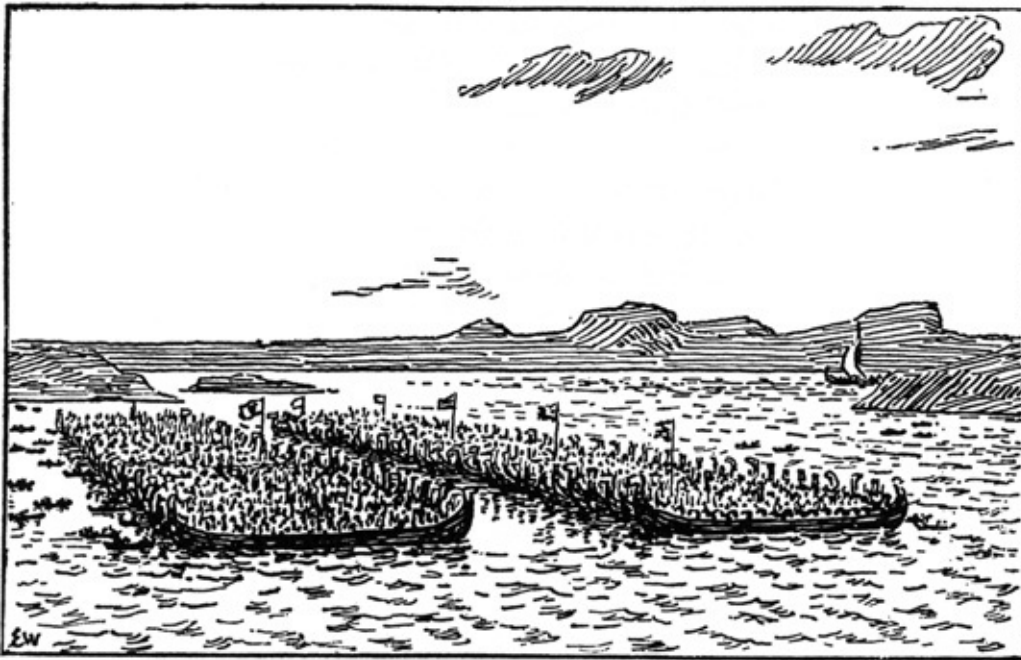
Chapter 17. King Harald Conquers Vermaland

King Harald harried far and wide in Gautland and fought many battles on both sides of the river. Most often he was victorious, and in one of these battles Hrani the Gautish fell. Then King Harald took over all the land north of the river and west of Lake Vænir as well as all of Vermaland. And when he returned from there, he appointed his marshal Guthorm to defend the land, leaving a considerable force with him. He himself proceeded to the Upplands and dwelled there for a while, then marched north over the Dofra Mountains to Trondheim where he stayed for a long time. At this time he began to have children. By Ása he had these sons: Guthorm was the oldest; then came Hálfðan the Black and Hálfðan the White—they were twins—and Sigfröth was the fourth. All of them were brought up in Trondheim and reared as became their state.

Chapter 18. King Harald Is Victorious in the Battle of Hafrsfjord

872 Tidings came from the south that the people of Horthaland and Rogaland, of Agthir and Thelamork gathered an army and planned a rebellion. They had ships, weapons, and a great host. The originators of this uprising were Eirík, the king of Horthaland, Súlki, the king of Rogaland, and his brother, Earl Sóti; also, Kjotvi the Wealthy, king of Agthir, and his son Thórir Haklang; and from Thelamork the two brothers, Hróald Hrygg and Hadd the Hard.

As soon as King Harald became aware of these tidings he collected an army, launched his ships, and outfitted his troops, then sailed south along the land with many troops from every district. When he had rounded the promontory of Stath, King Eirík, who had by that time gathered all the troops he could expect to get, learned of that and proceeded south to join the force he knew would arrive from the east. So the entire fleet [of the enemies of Harald] met north of Jathar and put into the Hafrsfjord. There, King Harald and his fleet lay anchored.



The ships made ready at the battle of Hafrsfjord.

At once there began a great battle which was both violent and long-lasting. But finally King Harald was victorious. King Eirík fell there, as well as King Súlki and Earl Sóti, his brother. Thórir Haklang fell. By that time his entire ship had been cleared of men. Then King Kjotvi fled to a small island where it was easy to make resistance. Following that their entire force fled, some by ship,

some up on land, and from there south around Jathar. As says Hornklofi:

42. Heard hast how the high-born one (42.)
in the Hafrsfjord fought,
the keen-eyed king's son,
'gainst Kjotvi the Wealthy.
Came their fleet from the east,
eager for combat,
with gaping figureheads
and graven ship-prows.
43. Were they laden with franklins (43.)
and linden shields unstained,
with Westland¹ spearshafts
and Welsh broadswords.
Their berserkers bellowed
as the battle opened,
the wolf-coats² shrieked loud
and shook their weapons.
44. Their strength would they try, (44.)
but he taught them to flee,
the lord of the Eastmen³
who at Útstein dwells.
His steeds-of-Nokkvi⁴ he steered out
when started the battle.
Then boomed the bucklers
ere a blow felled Haklang.
45. The thick-necked atheling (45.)
behind isle took shelter:
he grew loath, 'gainst Lúfa⁵
his liege-lands to hold.
Then hid under benches
and let their buttocks stick up
those who were wounded,
but thrust their heads keelward.
46. Their shoulders shielded (46.)

the shifty heroes—
were they showered with sling-shot—
with the shingles-of-Gladhome.⁶
Home from Hafrsfirth
hastened they eastward,
fled by way of Jathar,
of their ale-cups thinking.

Chapter 19. King Harald's Rule over Norway Causes an Exodus

After this battle, no further resistance was made to King Harald in Norway. All of his greatest antagonists had fallen, though some had fled the country. And that was a very great multitude; because at that time extensive lands that were previously uninhabited were settled—for instance, Jamtaland and Helsingjaland, though both of these had been settled to some extent before by Norwegians. During the times of warfare when King Harald brought Norway under his domination, foreign lands such as the Faroes and Iceland were settled [by Norwegians]. There was a great exodus to the Shetlands, and many of the nobility fled King Harald as outlaws and went on viking expeditions to the west, staying in the Orkneys and the Hebrides in winter, but in summer harrying in Norway where they inflicted great damage. But also many of the nobility pledged their allegiance to King Harald, entered his service, and helped to build up the country with him.

Chapter 20. King Harald Fetches Gytha

King Harald had now become sole ruler of all Norway. Then he called to mind what that proud maiden had said to him. Then he sent his messengers to her and had her brought to him to share his couch. The following were their children: Álof was the eldest, then came Hrørek, then Sigtrygg, Fróthi, and Thorgils.

Chapter 21. King Harald's Wives and Their Sons by Him

King Harald had many wives and many children. He married Ragnhild, the daughter of King Eirík of Jutland. She was called Ragnhild the Powerful. Their son was Eirík Bloodyaxe.¹ Still further he married Svanhild, the daughter of Earl Eystein. Their children were Ólaf Geirstatha-Álf, Bjorn, and Ragnar Rykkil. Still further King Harald married Áshild, the daughter of Hring Dagsson of Hringaríki. Their children were Dag and Hring, Guthröth Skirja, and Ingigerth. It is told that when King Harald married Ragnhild the Powerful, he let go eleven of his wives. Hornklofi makes mention of this:

47. The high-born liege-lord (47.)
chose the lady from Denmark,
broke with his Rogaland loves
and his lemans of Horthaland,
the maidens of Hálogaland
and of Hathaland eke.

Each one of King Harald's children was brought up where his mother's kin lived. The king's commander, Guthorm, sprinkled with water the eldest son of King Harald and bestowed his name on him. He adopted that boy, acted as his foster father, and had him along east in Vík. He was raised there at the court of Harald's commander, Guthorm. Guthorm was sole governor of the lands around Vík² and in the Uppland districts when the king himself was absent from those parts.

Chapter 22. King Harald Clears the Western Isles of Vikings

King Harald learned that vikings harried in the Westlands who during the winter stayed in the islands beyond the sea. Therefore every summer he equipped ships and men to search for them in islands and outlying skerries; and wherever the vikings became aware of the presence of his fleet they all fled, and most of them took to the sea. But when he grew tired of this, one summer King Harald sailed across the sea with his fleet. He first came to the Shetland Islands, where he slew all vikings who did not escape by flight. Then he sailed to the Orkneys, and there cleaned out all vikings. From there he sailed all the way to the Hebrides and harried there. He killed many vikings who previously had had men and ships. He had many a battle there. But when he arrived west [south], in Man, the population there had heard what depredations he had made in those lands, and all the people fled to Scotland, so that the land was altogether void of people, and all chattels had been removed, too. So that when King Harald and his men went on land, they found no booty. As says Hornklofi: (48.) 48. The ships' lord shields many

shore-ward sent—oft times the
sea-king on sandy foreshore
sword-play urged—to harry,
ere from their fight-strong
foe all of the Scotsmen
timidly took to flight, and
toward the mainland hied them.

It was at this time that Ívar, the son of Earl Rognvald of Mœr, fell in battle. To make up for that loss King Harald, when he sailed back east, gave Earl Rognvald dominion over the Orkneys and the Shetland Islands; but Rognvald promptly gave both lands to his brother Sigurth; and the latter remained behind in the west when the king returned to Norway. Before that, he had bestowed the earldom on Sigurth. Then Thorstein the Red, the son of Óláf the White and of Auth the Deep-Minded, joined him, and they harried in Scotland, taking possession of Caithness and of the Hebrides as far as Ekkjalsbakki.¹ Sigurth slew Melbrigthi Tooth, a Scottish earl, and fastened his head to his saddle straps. The calf of his leg struck the tusk protruding from the skull, mortification set in, and he died from it. He is buried by Ekkjalsbakki. Thereupon Guthorm, his son, ruled the islands one year, and died childless. Then vikings, both Danes and Norwegians, settled in the islands.

Chapter 23. King Harald Has His Hair Cut and Combed

King Harald was being entertained in Møer at Earl Rognvald's estate. By that time he had taken possession of the entire country. Then the king had a bath prepared for himself. He had his hair combed and dressed. Earl Rognvald cut his hair, which had gone uncut and uncombed for ten years. Then, people called him Harald Lúfa; but afterwards Earl Rognvald gave him the name of Harald Fairhair, and everyone who saw him said that this was a most appropriate name, because his hair was both long and beautiful.

Chapter 24. Ganger-Hrólf Is Outlawed

Rognvald, the earl of Mœr, was a very close friend of King Harald, and the king held him in high esteem. Rognvald was married to Hild, a daughter of Hrólf Nefja. Their sons were Hrólf and Thórir. Earl Rognvald had sons also from a concubine, one called Hallath, a second, Einar, a third, Hrollaug. These were full-grown when their brothers born in wedlock were still children.

Hrólf was a great viking. He was of such great size that no horse could bear him, so he always journeyed on foot. He was called Ganger-Hrólf. He harried much in Baltic lands. One summer when he returned from a viking expedition in the east to Vík, he raided there. King Harald was in Vík then, and was greatly incensed when he learned this, because he had interdicted most severely depredations within the country. The king announced at the assembly that he had made Hrólf an outlaw in Norway. When Hild, Hrólf's mother, learned that, she went up to the king and begged him to forgive Hrólf. But the king was so enraged that it was of no avail. Then Hild spoke this verse:

49. You banish Nefja's namesake:¹ (49.)
now you oust as outlaw
him the holders' brother.²
Why so heady, ruler?
'Tis ill 'gainst wolf³ to be wolfish,
warrior, such wolf opposing.
Hard that wolf will harry
your herds, once he runs to the forest.

Ganger-Hrólf then sailed west to the Hebrides, and from there west [south] to Valland [France] where he harried and conquered a great earldom which he peopled to a large extent with Norwegians, and it was later called Normandy. From Hrólf are descended the earls of Normandy. The son of Ganger-Hrólf was William, the father of Richard, the father of the second Richard, the father of Robert Longspear, the father of William the Bastard, king of England. From him all later kings of England are descended.

Queen Ragnhild died three years after coming to Norway. After her death Eirík, her son by King Harald, went to be fostered by Hersir Thórir in the Fjord District and was raised there.

Chapter 25. King Harald Consorts with Snœfrith and Is Bewitched by Her

One winter King Harald made his royal progress about the Uppland districts and had a Yule banquet prepared for himself at Thoptar. On Yule eve, when the king sat at table, a certain Finn called Svási came to the door and sent word to the king to come out to him. The king became angry at this message, and the same man who had carried the message to him bore out the king's anger with him. But Svási for all that bade him go in again and tell the king that he was the same Finn whom the king had allowed to set his tent on the other slope of the hillside there. The king came out and promised him to go along; which he did with the encouragement of some of his men, while others tried to dissuade him.

When he got there, Snœfrith, Svási's daughter, and a most beautiful woman, arose to meet him. She poured a cup of mead for the king, and he took both the cup and her hand; and immediately it was as if a hot fire coursed through his body, and he desired to lie with her that same night. But Svási declared that could not be except with his consent and unless the king married her lawfully. This the king did and betrothed himself to Snœfrith, and loved her so madly that he neglected his kingdom and all his duties. They had four sons, one was called Sigurth Hrísi [Bastard], another, Hálfðan Hálegg [Longshanks], the third, Guthröth Ljómi [the Radiant], and the fourth, Rognvald Rettilbeini [the Straightlimbed].

Thereafter Snœfrith died, but her color changed in no-wise, so she was as ruddy as when she was alive. The king kept sitting by her side, imagining that she would come to life again. And this continued for three years that he sorrowed over her as dead, whereas all the people sorrowed over him as being bewitched. To cure him of it there came to him Thorleif the Wise who freed him of this sorcery by wheedling him first in this wise:

“It is not strange, sir king, that you remember so beautiful and noble a woman and honor her by bedding her on down and costly fabrics as she bade you do; but your honor is less than is seeming to you and her in this that she is lying overlong in the same raiment, and it would be more fitting for her to be moved and have the bedclothes shifted under her.”

And no sooner did they raise her body from the bed than stench and foul smell and all kinds of odors of corruption rose from the corpse. They hastened to make a funeral pile and to burn her. But before that her entire body became livid, and all kinds of worms and adders, frogs and toads and vipers crawled out of it. So

her body was reduced to ashes, and the king was brought back to his senses and reason, and swore off his folly. Thereafter he governed his kingdom, regained his strength, and had joy of his liegemen, and they of him, and the kingdom of both.

Chapter 26. Thjóthólf Intercedes with the King for His Sons by Snæfrith

After King Harald had become clear of the deception of the Finnish woman he became so incensed that he drove off the sons he had with her and did not want to see them any longer. But Guthröth Ljómi sought out Thjóthólf of Hvinir, his foster father, and begged him to go with him before the king, for Thjóthólf was a close friend of the king. The king was in the Uppland districts at the time. So they journeyed there, and when they arrived at the king's estate late in the evening they seated themselves near the door and let no one see who they were. The king walked about on the floor, looking at the benches, for a banquet had been prepared and the mead mixed. Then he spoke this verse to himself:

50. Far too fond are ever, (50.)
find I, of the mead cups
my old hoary henchmen.
Why so many here now?

Then Thjóthólf made answer:

51. Upon our heads have we, (51.)
hoard-despoiler,¹ many
wounds from combat with thee:
were not too many there then.

Thjóthólf removed his hood, and the king recognized him then and welcomed him. Then Thjóthólf prayed the king not to scorn his own sons—"because they would be eager enough to have had better lineage on their mother's side if you had granted it to them." The king promised him that and bade him take Guthröth home with him where he had been before, and sent Sigurth and Hálfðan to Hringaríki, and Rognvald, to Hathaland. And they obeyed the king's command. They all grew up to be gallant men, well trained in all accomplishments. Now King Harald stayed quietly within his realm, and there reigned peace with good seasons.

Chapter 27. Earl Rognvald's Son Einar Becomes Earl over the Orkneys

Rognvald, the Earl of Mœr, learned of the death of his brother Sigurth, and also that the vikings had settled in his lands. Then Rognvald sent his son Hallath west with a large force. He was given the title of earl and took possession of the lands as soon as he arrived in the Orkneys. But both in fall, in winter, and in spring vikings visited the islands, raiding the nesses and committing depredations. Then Earl Hallath grew tired of residing in the islands, and he resigned the title of earl and took the rank of *hǫldr* [franklin], whereupon he returned to Norway.

When Earl Rognvald learned this he was mightily ill-pleased with Hallath's behavior and said that his sons were likely to be unlike their parents. Then Einar answered, "You have set little value upon me, and there has been little affection wasted on me. I shall sail west to the islands if you will provide me with some force, and I shall promise you what you will be mightily pleased with, and that is that I shall never return to Norway."

Rognvald said that he would be well pleased if he never returned—"because I hardly expect that your kinsmen will be honored in you, because on your mother's side they are all thralls." Rognvald provided Einar with one warship, equipping it for him with a crew.

In the fall Einar sailed across the North Sea. When he arrived in the Orkneys he found anchored there vikings in two ships, headed by Thórir Tréskegg and Kálf Skurfa. Einar at once gave battle and was victorious, and both fell. Then this verse was spoken:

52. Then gave he Tréskegg to the trolls, (52.)
Turf-Einar killed Skurfa.

He was called Turf-Einar because he had peat cut and used it instead of firewood since no forests grew on the Orkneys.¹ Thereafter Earl Einar made himself earl over the islands and was a man of power. He was a man of ugly appearance and one-eyed, yet sharp-sighted as few.

Chapter 28. King Eirík Emundarson Dies

Marshal Guthorm most often resided at Túnsberg and had under him the governance of the entire District of Vík during the king's absence, and was responsible for its defence. There were many depredations committed by vikings in that province, and there was much disturbance of the peace inland in Gautland, during the lifetime of King Eirík Emundarson. Eirík died when King Harald Fairhair had been king of Norway for ten years. Bjorn, the son of Eirík, ruled Sweden after him for fifty years. He was the father of Eirík the Victorious and of Óláf, the father of Styrbjorn. Marshal Guthorm died of a sickness in Túnsberg. Then King Harald gave the governance of all that province to Guthorm, his son, and set him over it as chieftain.

Chapter 29. Hálfðan and Guthröth Kill Earl Rognvald

When King Harald had reached forty years, many of his sons were full fledged. All of them were mature early. They began to be discontented that the king did not grant them power but set an earl over every district, and they considered earls of lower rank than they were.

It happened one spring that Hálfðan Hálegg and Guthröth Ljómi with a large force of men came upon Rognvald, the earl of Mœr, surrounded his house, and burned him in it with sixty men. Thereupon Hálfðan seized three men-of-war, found a crew for them, and then sailed west across the sea. But Guthröth saw no other alternative than to surrender to King Harald, and the king sent him east [south] to Agthir. The king then set Thórir, a son of Earl Rognvald, over Mœr and gave him Álof, one of his daughters, in marriage. She was called Árbót.¹ Earl Thórir the Silent then had the same realm to govern as had had Earl Rognvald, his father.

Chapter 30. Earl Einar Avenges His Father's Death

Hálfdan Hálegg arrived in the Orkneys without warning, and Earl Einar fled at once from the islands, but returned soon the same fall and surprised Hálfdan. They met in battle, and Hálfdan fled at nightfall after a short fight. Einar and his men passed the night in the open without tents; but in the morning as soon as it was light enough they hunted for the fugitives round about the islands and killed all where they caught them. Then Earl Einar said, “I don’t know whether out there on Rínanseý [North-Ronaldshay] I see a man or a bird—sometimes it lifts itself up, and sometimes it lies down.” Then they went there and found Hálfdan Hálegg there [hiding] and caught him. In the evening, before he went into battle, Earl Einar recited this verse:¹

53. From Hrólfr’s hand, nor either (53.)
from Hrollaug’s, perceive I
spear dispatched against the
spiteful foes of Rognvald.
And this evening, as we
enter battle savage,
over his drink dawdles,
deedless, silent Thórir.

Afterwards, Earl Einar went up to Hálfdan and cut the “blood eagle” on his back, in this fashion that he thrust his sword into his chest by the backbone and severed all the ribs down to the loins, and then pulled out the lungs; and that was Hálfdan’s death. Then Einar spoke this verse:

54. Richly avenged I Rognvald— (54.)
righteous the norms’ judgment—
has the folk-warder fallen.
My fourth part² have I done now.
Heap now, hardy swains, on
Hálfdan—victory won I—
gravel on his grave for
gold which he demanded.

Then Earl Einar took over the Orkneys as he had done before. But when these tidings came to Norway, the brothers of Hálfdan were filled with resentment and considered [that Hálfdan’s death] ought to be avenged, and many others agreed with them. But when Earl Einar heard that, he spoke this verse:

55. Are there athelings many
eager to take my life; and
goodly grounds indeed I
gave them for their vengeance:
Forsooth, though, no one knows whose
neck, when fallen in battle,
under the iron claws of
eagles will be riven.

(55.)

Chapter 31. Earl Einar Acquires the Allodial Rights in the Orkneys

King Harald summoned a force and assembled a large fleet, whereupon he sailed west to the Orkneys. But when Earl Einar learned that the king had arrived from the east, he sailed over to [Caith]ness. It was at this time that he recited this verse: (56.) 56. Many a fair-bearded fellow

faces outlawry for
killing cattle; but I, for
king's son's fall in the Orkneys.
The royal wrath, they say, I
risk, for I have dented
heavily Harald's 'scutcheon;
my heart, though, quakes little.

The messengers with proposals [for an agreement] passed between the king and the earl, and the result was that a meeting was arranged between them; and when they met, the earl submitted his case to the king's decision, and the king imposed upon the earl and all Orkney people a fine of sixty marks of gold. The farmers considered that too high a mulct, so the earl offered to pay it all himself if he were given all the allodial rights¹ in the islands. To this they agreed, chiefly because the small farmers owned little land, whereas the large landowners thought they could redeem their property rights whenever they wanted. So the earl paid out the whole sum to the king. Thereupon the king returned east in the fall. So it came that in the Orkneys for a long time afterwards the earls possessed all the allodial rights until Sigurth Hlothvisson restored them.

Chapter 32. Eirík Meets Gunnhild in Finnmark and Marries Her

King Harald's son Guthorm had under him the defence of the Vík District, and he sailed with his warships about the outer reaches [of the Ósló fjord]. But when he lay anchored in the arms of the [Gaut Elf] River, Solvi Klofi came up and gave battle to him. There Guthorm fell.

Hálfdan the Black and Hálfdan the White were on a viking expedition and harried in the lands east of the Baltic. They fought a great battle in Esthland [Esthonia], and Hálfdan the White fell there.

Eirík was fostered in the Fjord District by Hersir Thórir, the son of Hróald. King Harald loved him best of all his sons and held him in highest estimation. When Eirík was twelve years old, King Harald gave him five warships, and he went raiding, first in the Baltic, then south around Denmark and about Frísland and Saxland, and he was four years on this expedition. After that he sailed west across the sea, harrying in Scotland, Bretland [Wales], Ireland, and Valland [France], and passed four more years there. Then he sailed north to Finnmark [Lappland] and all the way to Bjarmaland [Permia], where he fought a great battle and was victorious.

When he returned to Finnmark, his men found in a hut a woman so beautiful that they had never seen the like of her. She gave her name as Gunnhild and said that her father dwelled in Hálogaland and that his name was Ozur Toti.

"I have dwelt here," she said, "to learn sorcery from two Finns who are the wisest here in Finnmark. Just now they are gone on a hunt. Both want to marry me, and both are so clever that they can follow a track like dogs, both on open ground and on hard frozen snow. They run so well on skis that nothing can escape them, whether humans or animals; and whatever they shoot at they hit. In this way they have killed all men who have approached here. And if they become enraged the ground turns about as they look at it, and any living thing falls down dead. Now you must not encounter them, if you value your lives, unless I hide you here in the hut. And then we shall try if we can kill them."

They agreed to that, and she hid them. She took a linen sack which they thought contained ashes. She put her hand in it and strewed the contents about the hut, both outside and inside.

Shortly afterwards the Finns returned home. They asked who had been there. She said that no one had been there. The Finns thought it strange that they had followed tracks right to the hut but then did not find them. They kindled a fire and prepared their food. And when they had eaten their fill, Gunnhild made up

her bed. But the last three nights had passed in this wise that Gunnhild slept, but the others had kept awake with mutual jealousy. Then she said, "Come here now, and each of you lie on his side of me." They were glad to do so. She put an arm around the neck of both. They soon fell asleep, but she roused them. Then they soon fell asleep again, and so soundly that she was scarcely able to wake them. They fell asleep again, and now she was not able to wake them by any means; she even set them up, but they kept on sleeping. Then she took two large bags and placed them over their heads, tying them fast under their arms. Then she made a sign to the king's men, and they leapt forward, killed them, and dragged them out of the hut.

During the night there came such a tremendous thunderstorm that they could not proceed, but in the morning they went to their ship, taking Gunnhild along and bringing her to Eirík. Then Eirík and his men sailed south to Hálogaland. There, he summoned Ozur Toti and declared that he wanted to marry his daughter, and Ozur assented. So Eirík married her and took her along south with him.

Chapter 33. King Harald Partitions the Realm among His Sons

ca. 900 When King Harald was fifty years old, many of his sons were full grown, and some, dead. Many of them committed deeds of violence in the country and disagreed among themselves. They drove some earls of the king from their possessions, and even killed some. Then King Harald called a great assembly in the eastern part of the country to which he especially summoned the people in the Uppland districts. There he bestowed the title of “king” on all his sons and put this into the laws that each of his descendants was to inherit a kingdom after his father, and an earldom, each who was of his kin on the female side. He partitioned the land between them, giving Vingulmork, Raumaríki, Westfold, Thelamork to Óláf, Bjorn, Sigtrygg, Fróthi, and Thorgisl; and Heithmork and Guthbrands Dale he gave to Dag, Hring, and Ragnar. To the sons of Snœfrith he gave Hringaríki, Hathaland, Thótn and the districts adjoining. To Guthorm he had given the governance of Ranríki between the [Gaut Elf] River to the Svína Sound. As was written above, he had been assigned the defence of the land on the eastern boundary.

King Harald himself resided most often in the center of the country. Hrœrek and Guthröth were generally about the king in his following and had the income of large estates in Horthaland and Sogn. Eirík was with his father, King Harald, and him he loved most of all his sons and held him in highest estimation. To him he gave Hálogaland, North Mœr, and Raums Dale. North in the Trondheim District he gave the governance to Hálfðan the Black, Hálfðan the White, and Guthröth.

In each of these districts he gave his sons half of the revenue, reserving half for himself. Also, they were to occupy high-seats one step higher than earls, but one step lower than himself. But that seat, each of his sons coveted after his death; but Harald himself intended Eirík to occupy it, whereas the people of Trondheim favored Hálfðan the Black to have it, and the inhabitants of Vík and the Upplands, those [of the king’s sons] who resided among them.

This resulted again in great disagreement between the Brothers. But because each considered his share too small, they went on plundering expeditions as, for example, the one on which Guthorm was slain by Solvi Klofi in the mouth of the [Gaut Elf] River. After his fall, Óláf took over the dominion he had had. Hálfðan the White fell in Esthland, Hálfðan Hálegg, in the Orkneys. To Thorgisl and Fróthi King Harald gave warships, and they went on viking expeditions to the west, harrying in Scotland, Bretland, and Ireland. They were the first of the Norwegians who took possession of Dublin. We are told that Fróthi was killed

by a poisonous drink, but Thorgísl was king over Dublin for a long time until he was betrayed by the Irish and was slain.

Chapter 34. Eirík Kills Rognvald and Eighty Sorcerers

Eirík Bloodyaxe had the mind to lord it over all his brothers, and King Harald was agreeable to that. He and Eirík were together for a long time. Rognvald Rettilbeini was in possession of Hathaland. He learned magic and became a sorcerer. King Harald disliked sorcerers. In Horthaland there was a sorcerer called Vitgeir. The king sent word to him to cease practicing sorcery. He answered with this verse:

57. No harm that we (57.)
use wizardry,
beldames' bairns
and bonders,¹ we,
since Rognvald does,
Rettilbeini,
high-born Haraldsson
in Hathaland.

But when King Harald heard this said, Eirík Bloodyaxe with his consent proceeded to the Uppland District and to Hathaland. He burned his brother Rognvald in his hall, together with eighty wizards, and people praised the deed greatly.

Guthröth Ljómi during the winter went to visit his foster father, Thjóthólf of Hvinir. He had a fully manned skiff with which he intended to journey north to Rogaland. Then there came great storms. Guthröth was eager to start his journey and carried on badly about the delay. Then Thjóthólf spoke this verse:

58. Fare not ere the flat-of- (58.)
fleets² again grows smoother!
Crashing combers, Guthröth,
casts the open sea now.
Till abates the worst wind, do
wait here, honored chieftain!
Bide till better weather
be! Rages storm around Jathar.

Guthröth proceeded nevertheless, despite what Thjóthólf said. But when they rounded Jathar their ship sank under them, and all perished.

Chapter 35. Eirík Slays His Brother, Bjorn the Chapman

Bjorn, one of King Harald's sons, ruled at that time over Westfold, and most often resided in the town of Túnsberg. He engaged little in warfare. Many merchant ships frequented Túnsberg, both such from Vík and such from the northern part of the country, as well as ships from the south, from Denmark and Saxland. King Bjorn also owned merchantmen that sailed to other lands and thus acquired for himself things of value and other wares which he deemed he needed. His brothers called him a chapman or a merchant. Bjorn was a shrewd man of a calm disposition, and was considered to have the makings of a good ruler. He contracted a good and suitable marriage, and had a son called Guthröth.

Eirík Bloodyaxe returned from his expedition in the Baltic with warships and a great force of men. He demanded of his brother Bjorn that he should hand over to him the taxes and dues owing to King Harald from Westfold; whereas it used to be that Bjorn himself delivered to the king whatever was owing to him, or sent men to do so. And he insisted on doing that and refused to yield it up. Eirík on his part needed provisions, tents, and drinks. The brothers quarrelled doggedly about this, but Eirík got nothing for all that and left the town.

Bjorn likewise left the town in the evening and went to Sæheim. Eirík turned back during the night to catch Bjorn, and arrived there whilst the men were at table, drinking. Eirík surrounded the house they were in, but Bjorn came out, and they fought. Bjorn fell with many of his men. Eirík took much booty there and proceeded north with it.

The people of Vík were greatly incensed about this, and Eirík was much hated there. It was reported that King Óláf would avenge Bjorn if chance offered. King Bjorn lies buried in the Chapman's Howe at Sæheim.¹

Chapter 36. King Harald and Hálfðan Come to Terms

During the winter following, King Eirík sailed north to Mœr and was entertained at Solvi which lies on the land side of Agthaness. When Hálfðan the Black learned this, he went there with a force of men and surrounded the houses there. Eirík slept in an outlying house and escaped to the woods with four others; but Hálfðan burned down the farm with all the men inside. Eirík came to King Harald with these tidings. The king was greatly incensed. He collected a force and advanced against the men of Trondheim. When Hálfðan the Black learned this, he gathered an army and a fleet. He succeeded in collecting a large force and sailed out to Stath,¹ which lies on the land side of Thórsbjorg. King Harald on his part anchored his fleet outside of Reinsletta.

Then men tried to mediate between them. Guthorm Sindri was the name of a highly respected man. He was at that time with Hálfðan the Black, but before had been a follower of King Harald, and was a close friend of both. He was a great skald and had composed poems about both father and son. They had offered him a reward for that, but he had refused that and had requested instead that [each] should fulfill one wish [which he would make], and they had promised him that. He went to meet King Harald and tried to mediate between them, reminding both of their promises, and begged them to come to terms; and both kings honored him so highly that at his wish they came to an agreement. Many other influential men had supported him in this. They agreed on these terms: that Hálfðan was to retain the dominion he had had before, but was to let his brother Eirík be in peace. About these events the poetess Jórun composed some verses in her poem *Sendibit* [Biting Message].²

59. Harald, heard I, frowned on
your hardy venture, Hálfðan;
dubious seemed the deed of
doughty warrior to Fairhair.

(59.)

Chapter 37. The Birth of King Hákon the Good

Hákon Grjótgarthsson, earl of Hlathir, had under him the government of all districts of Trondheim whenever King Harald was in other parts of the country; and Hákon was the man in that province, who enjoyed the highest confidence of the king. After Hákon's fall his son Sigurth took over his dominion, becoming earl over Trondheim. He resided at Hlathir. Two sons of King Harald, Hálfðan the Black and Sigröth, were raised at his court. Before that they had been fostered by Sigurth's father Hákon. They were all about the same age. Earl Sigurth married Bergljót, the daughter of Earl Thórir the Silent. Her mother was Álof Árbót, a daughter of Harald Fairhair. Earl Sigurth was a man of exceeding wisdom.

Now when King Harald began to grow old, he often resided at the large estates he owned in Horthaland—at Alreksstath or Sæheim or Fitjar—or at those he had in Rogaland—at Útstein and at Ogvaldsness on the Island of Kormt.

When King Harald was almost seventy years old he begot a son with a woman called Thóra Morstrstong whose kin lived on the Island of Morstr. She was of a good family, being in kin with Hortha-Kári. She was a most beautiful and attractive woman. She was called the king's handmaid. There were many at that time who did service at the king's court, even though they were of noble birth, both men and women. It was the custom to choose most carefully the persons who were to sprinkle with water and to give a name to the children of noble birth.

Now when the time came that Thóra expected to give birth to her child, she wanted to travel to be with King Harald. He was at that time in Sæheim while she was on the Island of Morstr. So she sailed on a ship belonging to Earl Sigurth. At night they had anchored near the land; and there, on a slab of

920 rock at the head of the pier, Thóra gave birth to her child. It was a boy.

Earl Sigurth sprinkled the boy with water and called him Hákon after his father Hákon, earl of Hlathir. That boy soon grew to be handsome and of great size, and in much like his father. King Harald had the boy go with his mother, and they lived on the royal estates while the boy was small.

Chapter 38. King Æthelstān Offers King Harald a Sword as Symbol of Overlordship

Æthelstān was the name of the king who had at that time succeeded to the throne of England. He was called the Victorious and the True Believer. He sent emissaries to the court of King Harald with a message delivered in this wise. The emissary went up to the king, handing him a sword adorned with gold on hilt and haft and having its scabbard ornamented with gold and silver and set with precious stones. The emissary offered the king the sword hilt and spoke these words, “Here is the sword which King Æthelstān asks you to receive from him.” Then the king took hold of the haft, whereupon the messenger said, “Now you seized the sword in the fashion our king desired you would, and now you shall be his liegeman since you seized hold of his sword.” King Harald then understood that this was done in mockery; but he did not relish to be the subject of anyone. Yet, as was his habit, he bore in mind to control his temper whenever rage or fury would overcome him, and thus to let his anger blow off and look at matters dispassionately. So he did also now. He brought this up before his friends, and they all agreed on what to do; and first of all they decided to let the emissary fare home unharmed.

Chapter 39. King Harald Retaliates by Making King Æthelstān Accept Hákon as Foster Child

In the following summer King Harald dispatched a ship west to England, with Hauk Hábrók as skipper. He was a man of great mettle and a great favorite with the king. He gave him along his son Hákon. Then Hauk sailed west to England and proceeded to the court of King Æthelstān, whom he found in London. A feast was given there just then with great magnificence. When they arrived at the hall, Hauk instructed his men how they were to go about it when entering, that he who went in first was to be the last to go out; and all were to stand in a row in front of the king's table. They were to have their swords at their left side and so to arrange their outer garments that the swords could not be seen.

Then they went into the hall. They were thirty in number. Hauk went before the king and greeted him. The king bade him be welcome. Then Hauk seized the boy and placed him on Æthelstān's knee. The king looked at the boy and asked Hauk why he did this. Hauk answered, "King Harald bade you foster for him the son of his maidservant." The king flew into a rage and seized the sword at his side and drew it as though he would kill the boy. "You have set him upon your knee,"¹ said Hauk, "and you may murder him if you so wish, but in doing so you will not do away with all sons of King Harald." Then Hauk and all his men left the hall and made their way to their ship. They sailed out to sea as soon as they could make ready and returned to Norway and King Harald, and he was well pleased with the outcome, for people say that he is a lesser man who fosters a child for someone. In such dealings between the kings one could see that each one wanted to be superior to the other. But neither lost in dignity because of this, each being the supreme king of his own domains until his dying day.

Chapter 40. King Æthelstān Gives Hákon the Sword Quernbiter

King Æthelstān had Hákon baptized and instructed in the true faith and also taught good manners and all kinds of courtly ways. King Æthelstān loved him greatly, more than any one of his own kin, and so did all those who got to know him. In later times he was called Æthelstān's foster son. He was accomplished in all manner of skills, and was taller and stronger and handsomer than any other man. Also, he was clever, eloquent, and a good Christian. King Æthelstān gave Hákon a sword whose hilt as well as haft was of gold. Its blade was most excellent and with it Hákon cleft a millstone to its center, whence it was called Quernbiter. That was the best sword that ever was brought to Norway. Hákon wore it till his dying day.

Chapter 41. King Harald Decides on Eirík to Succeed Him

930 King Harald was now eighty years of age and got to be so infirm that he felt unable to journey about in the country and conduct the business of a king. Then he led his son Eirík to his high-seat and gave him the power over all the land. But when the other sons of King Harald learned of this, Hálfðan the Black occupied the king's high-seat and took over the government of the whole Province of Trondheim, and all the people agreed to that action. After the fall of Bjorn the Chapman, his brother Ólaf assumed the government of Westfold and fostered Bjorn's son Guthröth. Ólaf's son was called Tryggvi. He and Guthröth were foster brothers of nearly the same age. Both were youths of great promise and most energetic disposition. Tryggvi excelled all others in size and strength.

Now when the inhabitants of Vík learned that the people of Horthaland had made Eirík their overlord, they took Ólaf to be the overlord of the Vík District, and he assumed the power there. This incensed Eirík greatly. Two years later Hálfðan the Black died suddenly at a banquet in the Trondheim District, and people said that Gunnhild Kingsmother had suborned a witch to prepare a poisoned drink for him. Thereupon the people of Trondheim chose as their king Sigröth [another son of Harald by Ása].

Chapter 42. King Harald Dies and Is Buried in a Mound

933 King Harald lived three years after transferring to Eirík the sole government of the land. He resided then on the large estates he possessed in Rogaland or Horthaland. Eirík and Gunnhild had a son whom King Harald sprinkled with water and gave his own name, saying that he was to be king after his father Eirík. King Harald married most of his daughters to earls within his realm, and great families are descended from them. King Harald died of a sickness in Rogaland. He is buried in a mound at Haugar by the Karmt Sound. At Hauga Sound there stands a church, and close by the churchyard, to the northwest, lies the mound of King Harald Fairhair. West of the church there is the gravestone of King Harald—the one which lay over his resting place inside the burial mound, and that stone is thirteen and a half feet long and nearly two ells broad. The grave of King Harald was in the middle of the mound. There, [originally] one stone was placed at his head and another at his feet. The slab was placed above him, and loose stones were piled up around the grave. The gravestones which [originally] were inside the mound and have just been described, now stand there in the churchyard.

Men versed in history say that Harald Fairhair was of exceedingly handsome appearance, very strong and tall, most generous of his substance and extremely well liked by his men. He was a great warrior during the earlier part of his life. As to the great tree which his mother saw before he was born, men interpret that in this wise that it signified him. The lowest portion of the trunk was red as blood, but from there on up the stem was fair and green, and that betokened the flowering of his kingdom. And above that the tree was white, which signified that he would become old and hoary. The branches and twigs of the tree foretold about his offspring who were to spread over all the land; and all kings of Norway ever since his time are descended from him.

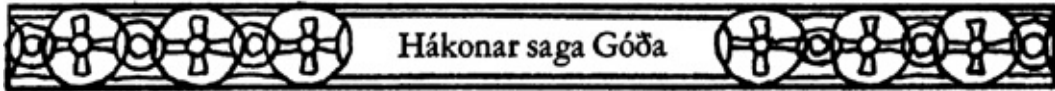
Chapter 43. Eirík Overcomes His Brothers Óláf and Sigröth

During the year following the death of King Harald King Eirík collected all the revenues owing to the king in the western districts, Óláf did the same in Vík, and Sigröth, their brother, those in the Trondheim District. Eirík was mightily displeased with this, and it was rumored that he would try with force to regain from his brothers the sole dominion over all the land which his father had given him. But when Óláf and Sigröth learned of this, they sent messages to one another and agreed on a day for meeting. In spring Sigröth came east to Vík, and the brothers met in Túnsberg remaining there for a while.

934 The same spring Eirík summoned a great force and a fleet and steered east to Vík. Eirík had so strong and favorable a wind that he sailed day and night, and that no news went ahead of his coming. And when he arrived at Túnsberg, Óláf and Sigröth with their forces issued forth and drew up their troops in battle array on the hills east of the town. Eirík had a greatly superior force and was victorious. Both Óláf and Sigröth fell there, and the burial mound of both of them is on the hill where they fell.

Thereupon Eirík proceeded about the Vík District, bringing it into his power, and remained there a long time during the summer. Tryggvi and Guthröth fled then to the Upplands.

Eirík was a large and handsome man, strong and of great prowess, a great and victorious warrior, violent of disposition, cruel, gruff, and taciturn. Gunnhild, his wife, was a very beautiful woman, shrewd and skilled in magic, friendly of speech, but full of deceit and cruelty. The following were the children of Eirík and Gunnhild. Gamli was the eldest, then Guthorm, Harald, Ragnfröth, Ragnhild, Erling, Guthröth, Sigurth Slefa. All of Eirík's children were handsome and promising.



The Saga of Hákon the Good

Chapter 1. Hákon Returns to Norway from England

Hákon, the foster son of Æthelstān, was in England at the time when he learned of the death of King Harald, his father. Then he made ready at once for his journey. King Æthelstān gave him a body of men and good ships, outfitting the expedition most magnificently. He arrived in Norway toward autumn.
934 Then he heard of the fall of his brothers, and also that King Eirík was in the District of Vík right then. Thereupon Hákon sailed north to Trondheim to seek Sigurth, the earl of Hlathir, the shrewdest man in all Norway. He was received well by him, and they entered into an agreement. Hákon promised him great power if he became king. They called together an assembly which was attended by many people, and at this assembly Earl Sigurth spoke in behalf of Hákon and counseled them to choose Hákon as their king. Thereupon Hákon himself arose and spoke. Then people said, one turning to another, that in him Harald Fairhair had been reborn.

Hákon began his speech by asking the farmers to give him the title of king, and also, to stand by him and lend him their support to maintain him in his kingship. On his part he offered to confirm all landholders in the possession of their ancestral estates and let them have the family homestead in which they lived [unentailed].

When they heard these particulars there was much applause; so much so that the whole host of farmers made acclaim and called out that they wanted to have him as their king. And so was done, and the people of the Trondheim District declared Hákon king over the whole land. He was fifteen at that time. He assembled a bodyguard and made his royal progress around the country. The news was brought to the Uppland districts¹ that the people of Trondheim had chosen as king one who in all respects was like Harald Fairhair, with the difference that Harald had made slaves of all the people in the land and oppressed them, whereas this Hákon wished everyone well and offered to return to the landholders their estates which King Harald had taken away from them. Hearing these tidings all became glad, and everyone told it to others, and it spread like wildfire all the way east to the very ends of the country. Many farmers travelled from Uppland to meet King Hákon, others sent messengers, still others, messages and tokens, all to the effect that they wanted to be his followers; and the king was grateful to them.



King Hákon addresses the assembly.

Chapter 2. Hákon Is Accepted as King in the Uppland Districts

At the beginning of winter King Hákon journeyed to the Uppland districts where he summoned assemblies; and all the people who could, crowded to see him, and in all districts he was accepted as king. Then he journeyed east [south] to the District of Vík. There he was joined by Tryggvi and Guthröth, his nephews, as well as by many others, who recounted to him the ill treatment they had suffered at the hands of Eirík, Hákon's brother. Eirík's unpopularity grew the greater the more all people wished to gain King Hákon's friendship and took courage to speak about what dwelled in their hearts. King Hákon bestowed the royal title on Tryggvi and Guthröth, together with the lands which King Harald had given their fathers. To Tryggvi he gave Ranríki and Vingulmork, and to Guthröth, Westfold. But because they were young and childish, he set noble and wise men to administer the land with them. He gave them [these] lands with the understanding, which had existed before, that they were to have the half of the taxes and revenues together with him. Toward spring King Hákon returned overland to Trondheim by way of Uppland.

Chapter 3. King Eirík Flees to England

935 King Hákon gathered a large army in the Trondheim District during the spring, procuring ships. The people of Vík also had a large force and meant to join Hákon. Eirík also levied troops in the center of the country, but with little success, because many prominent chieftains failed him, joining Hákon. And when he saw he had no means to resist Hákon's army, he sailed west across the sea with such troops as wished to follow him. First, he went to the Orkneys, and from there he led away a great force.

Then he sailed south to England, harrying along the Scottish coast wherever he touched land. He harried also in the northern parts of England.

King Æthelstān, the king of England, sent word to Eirík to the effect that he offered him a dominion in England, saying that King Harald, his father, had been a great friend of his and that he would take that into consideration with his son. Then messengers went between the kings, and special agreements were made that King Eirík was to have Northumberland in fief from King Æthelstān, and defend that land against Danes and other vikings. Eirík was to let himself be baptized, together with his wife and children and all the force that had followed him to England. Eirík accepted these conditions. Thereupon he was baptized, accepting the true faith.

Northumberland is called a fifth part of England. Eirík made his residence in York where, it is said, the sons of Lothbrók had resided. Northumberland was settled by Norwegians, chiefly after the sons of Lothbrók had conquered the land. Danes and Norwegians often harried there after they had lost control of the country. Many place names in that land have Scandinavian forms, such as Grimsby, Hauksfljót,¹ and many others.

Chapter 4. King Eirík Ravages the British Islands and Is Slain

King Eirík surrounded himself with many men. There were a great number of Norwegians who had sailed to the west with him, and they were augmented by many friends of his from Norway. His land was small in size, and therefore he always went on plundering expeditions in summer, harrying in Scotland, the Hebrides, Ireland, and Bretland [Wales], and thus gained wealth for himself.

940 King Æthelstān died from sickness. He had been king for fourteen years, eight weeks, and three days. He was succeeded by Eadmund, his brother. He did not care for Norwegians. He and King Eirík were no friends, and there was the rumor that King Eadmund would appoint another chieftain for Northumberland. But when King Eirík heard of that he went on a viking expedition to the west. From the Orkneys he had with him Arnkel and Erlend, the sons of Turf-Einar. From there he sailed to the Hebrides, and there were many vikings and warrior chieftains who joined his expedition. Then he first sailed to Ireland with all his forces, and took with him as many men from there as he could get. Thereupon he sailed to Wales and harried there. Then he sailed south along the English coast, harrying there as elsewhere, and all the people fled where he came. And because Eirík was a leader of great prowess and had a large army, he dared depend on his army to such an extent that he went far inland, harrying and recruiting men. Óláf was the name of the king whom Eadmund had appointed to protect that part of the country. He gathered a huge host and made a stand against Eirík, and there was a great battle. Many of the English fell, but when one fell, three came in his stead from inland. And toward the end of the day more Norwegians than English fell. Many died there, and at the close of that day King Eirík fell, together with five other kings. Their names were Guthorm and his two sons, Ívar and Hárek. Among the dead were also Sigurth and Rognvald. There fell also Arnkel and Erlend, the sons of Turf-Einar. There was a great slaughter of Norwegians. Those who escaped sailed to Northumberland and informed Gunnhild and her sons of these happenings.

Chapter 5. Queen Gunnhild Retires to the Orkneys

When Gunnhild and her sons learned that King Eirík had fallen after having harried in the land of the English king, they felt certain that they would not be allowed to stay there in peace. They made ready at once to depart from Northumberland with all the ships King Eirík had had and all the men who wanted to go with them. They had along with them also a huge quantity of valuables which had collected there from taxes in England, though some had been gotten by plundering. With their force they sailed north to the Orkneys and made their abode there for a while. At that time Earl Thorfinn Hausakljúf [Skullcleaver], the son of Turf-Einar ruled there. Then the sons of Eirík took possession of the Orkneys and of the Shetland Islands, laying them under tribute. They resided there in wintertime and made viking expeditions in the summers, harrying in Scotland and Ireland. Glúm Geirason¹ makes mention of this in these verses:

60. Thence, a stripling, steered the (60.)
steed-of-sea's bold reiner,
matchless mariner, to
make inroads on Skáney.²
Ravaging, the war-worker
wasted Scotland wholly,
sending, sword-hewn in battle,
sons of men to Óthin.
61. Irish hosts the hero (61.)
whelmed in bitter combat—
ravenous ravens he gladdened—
routing amain his foeman!
Reddened the Freyr-of-folklands,³
fearless, his broadsword with
gore—was grim fray won—of
gallant men, in Southland.

Chapter 6. King Hákon Pursues the Danes to Jutland

King Hákon, the foster son of Æthelstān, brought all Norway to submission after his brother Eirík had fled abroad. During his first winter in Norway, King Hákon sought out the western part of the country, thereafter residing north in the District of Trondheim. But because peace was not to be expected if King Eirík should cross the sea with his army, he kept with his forces in the middle of the country, in the Fjord and Sogn districts, in Horthaland and Rogaland. Hákon set Sigurth, the earl of Hlathir, to govern the entire District of Trondheim, as Sigurth, as well as his father Hákon, had done under King Harald Fairhair. But when King Hákon learned of the death of his brother, King Eirík, and that King Eirík's sons found no support in England he thought there was not much to be feared from them, and so one summer he journeyed east to Vík with his army. At that time the Danes were much given to harrying in the District of Vík and often did much damage there. But when they heard that King Hákon had arrived there with a large army, all of them fled; some south, to Halland, and some who were closer to Hákon took to the sea, sailing south to Jutland. But when King Hákon became aware of that he sailed after them with all his forces. Now when he arrived in Jutland and the population heard of that, they gathered an army to protect their country and prepared to resist King Hákon, and there was a great battle. King Hákon fought so valiantly that he advanced in front of his standard without either helmet or coat of mail. He was victorious and pursued the enemy far inland. As says Guthorm Sindri¹ in his *Hákonardrápa*:

62. Trod the king the track of
tiller-horses² with oar blades.
Fey Jutes felled he in the
fray-of-battle-maidens.³
Pursued the ravens'-sater
since their fleeing army.
To howling wolves the hardy
hero gave food aplenty.

(62.)

Chapter 7. King Hákon Is Victorious over Eleven Viking Ships

Then King Hákon led his forces south to Seeland, looking for the vikings. With two swift-sailing ships he proceeded into the Sound. There he found eleven viking ships and at once joined battle with them, and in the end came out as victor, clearing all the viking ships of their crews. As says Guthorm Sindri:

63. Sailed from the south toward (63.)
Selund's¹ green sea-nesses
the elbow-shower's-urger,² with
only two swift sail-ships,
when the liege eleven
long-ships cleared of Danish
crews—far-famed that fray—in
fierce-fought battle clashing.

Chapter 8. King Hákon Ravages Seeland, Scania, and Gautland

After that King Hákon harried far and wide in Seeland, plundering the people, killing some and leading others into captivity. From some he took a large ransom. He found no resistance then. As says Guthorm Sindri:

64. Selund overset the (64.)
sea-king with his power
as far as falcon freely
flies, wind blows—and Skáney.

Thereupon King Hákon sailed east along the coast of Scania, harrying everywhere and taking tribute and taxes from the land. He killed all the vikings he found, both Danes and Wends. Then he proceeded east along Gautland, harrying and exacting a large tribute from the land. As says Guthorm Sindri:

65. Gained the Gauts' subduer (65.)
gold and tribute from them.
Stirred the sea-nag's-steerer¹
Strife wherever he fared there.

In the fall, King Hákon returned with his force, having gotten an immense amount of booty. During the winter he stayed in Vík to defend it if Danes and Gauts made inroads there.

Chapter 9. King Hákon Appoints Tryggvi to Defend Vík

That same fall King Tryggvi Ólafsson returned from a viking expedition to the west, after harrying in Ireland and Scotland. In the spring King Hákon journeyed north and appointed King Tryggvi, his brother's son, to defend Vík against any incursions and to take possession of those lands in Denmark which King Hákon had laid under tribute during the preceding summer. As says Guthorm Sindri:

(66.) 66. The ring-dight-helmets'-reddener¹
rule gave to doughty Tryggvi
over Ónar's daughter's²
oak-grown eastern folk-land—
him who ere from Ireland,
eager for deeds, came on
sea-steeds o'er the swans'-road
sailing in force thither.

Chapter 10. Queen Gunnhild and Her Sons Take Refuge with King Harald of Denmark

At that time King Harald Gormsson ruled in Denmark. He was much incensed that King Hákon had harried in his land, and there was a rumor that the Danish king would take revenge; but nothing came of that immediately. But when Gunnhild and her sons learned that there was war between Denmark and Norway, they made ready to return to Norway. They gave Ragnhild, Eirík's daughter, in marriage to Arnfinn, the son of Thorfinn Hausakljúf. Earl Thorfinn reestablished himself in the Orkneys, and the sons of Eirík sailed away. Gamli Eiríksson was somewhat older than his brothers, but still not full-grown. Now when Gunnhild arrived in Denmark with her sons she went to the court of King Harald and found a good reception there. King Harald gave them revenues in his kingdom large enough to support themselves and their followers. He accepted Harald Eiríksson as his foster son and adopted him. He was brought up there at the court of the Danish king. Some of the sons of Eirík went on warlike expeditions as soon as they were old enough for that, acquiring possessions by harrying in the Baltic. At an early age they were handsome men, and ahead of their age in strength and accomplishments. Glúm Geirason makes mention of this in his *Gráfeldardrápa*:¹

67. Lands in the east the liege brought— (67.)
lavished he weapons on his
skalds—unscathed fought he
skirmishes—'neath his sway then.
The sword-play's-sire² made sheath-tongues³
sing; and doughty, gold-dight
warriors laid he low in
lusty games-of-Skogul.⁴

The sons of Eirík then turned with their fleet against Vík and harried there, but King Tryggvi had his forces ready and resisted them; and they fought many battles, with now one, now the other victorious, the sons of Eirík sometimes harrying in Vík, and Tryggvi, sometimes in Halland and Seeland.

Chapter 11. King Hákon's Character and Legislation

While Hákon was king in Norway good peace obtained for both farmers and merchants, so that no one harmed the other or his property. Abundance reigned both on sea and land. King Hákon was a most cheerful person, very eloquent, and most kindly disposed. He was a man of keen understanding and laid great stress on legislation. He devised the Gulathings Law with the help of Thorleif the Wise; and the Frostathings Law, with the advice of Earl Sigurth and other men from the Trondheim District who were accounted wisest. But the Heithsævis Law¹ had been given by Hálfðan the Black, as mentioned before. King Hákon held his Yule celebration in the Trondheim District. Earl Sigurth had made a banquet ready for him at Hlathir. In the first night of Yule, Bergljót, the earl's wife, gave birth to a boy child. On the day after, King Hákon sprinkled that boy with water, giving him his own name. He grew up to be a man, powerful and of mark. Earl Sigurth was a close friend of King Hákon.

Chapter 12. King Eystein Sets the Dog Saur over Trondheim

Eystein, the King of the Uppland districts, who by some is called the Powerful, but by some, the Evil, [had, in times long before that] harried in the Trondheim District and conquered the counties of Eynafylki and Sparbyggja District and set his son——¹ over them. But the people of Trondheim killed him. Then King Eystein made another expedition against Trondheim, harrying far and wide, and subduing it. Then he offered the people of Trondheim the choice whether they would rather have as king over them his thrall, whose name was Thórir Faxi, or the dog called Saur. They chose the dog, thinking that under him they would rather have their own way. By magic they had put into the dog the understanding of three men. He barked twice but spoke every third word. A neckband was fashioned for him, and also a chain of silver and gold. And whenever the ways were muddy his followers carried him on their shoulders. A high-seat was prepared for him, and he sat on a hill, as kings do, and lived on the Inner Island,² residing at the place called Saur's Hill. It is told that the cause of his death was this that wolves attacked his flock, and his followers urged him to defend his sheep; and so he came down from his hill to fight the wolves, and they promptly tore him to pieces.

Many other strange things King Eystein did to the people of Trondheim. Owing to this warfare and tumult many chieftains fled the country, and many people abandoned their homes. Ketil Jamti, the son of Earl Onund of Sparabú, went east over the Keel,³ together with a great many others, taking along their livestock. They cleared the forests and cultivated a large district. Later, this was called Jamtaland. Ketil's grandson was Thórir Helsing. On account of some slayings he left Jamtaland and journeyed west through the forests that are there, establishing himself, and many followed him. That is now called Helsingjaland. It extends as far as the sea to the east. [Before that] the Swedes had cultivated Helsingjaland in its eastern part along the sea.

At one time when King Harald Fairhair cleared his way to dominion [in Norway], again a great multitude of people fled the country, both from Nauma Dale and Trondheim, and still more settlements were established east in Jamtaland. Some went all the way to Helsingjaland. The people from Helsingjaland traded with Sweden and were subject in all respects to Sweden; but the people of Jamtaland were nearly in the middle [between Norway and Sweden], and no one paid much attention to that before Hákon arranged for peaceful agreements and trading with Jamtaland and made friends of the

chieftains there. Thereafter they came west to meet him and promised obedience and tribute to him, swearing allegiance to him because they had heard only good about him. They preferred to attach themselves to him, rather than to the Swedish king, because they were of Norwegian descent; and he established laws and statutes for them. So did all those of Helsingjaland who had their kin north [west] of the Keel.

Chapter 13. King Hákon Sets About Christianizing Norway

King Hákon was a confirmed Christian when he arrived in Norway. But since the land was altogether heathen and much idolatry prevailed, and also because there were many great chieftains and he considered that he much needed their help and the friendship of the people, he adopted the course of practicing Christianity secretly, keeping Sundays and fasting on Fridays. He had it established in the laws that the Yule celebration was to take place at the same time as is the custom with the Christians. And at that time everyone was to have ale for the celebration from a measure of grain, or else pay fines, and had to keep the holidays while the ale lasted. Before that, Yule was celebrated on midwinter night, and for the duration of three nights. It was his plan that when he had firmly established himself and had the whole country in his power, that he then would have the gospel preached. He proceeded at first in this fashion that he coaxed those who were dearest to him into becoming Christians. As a result, what with his popularity, many let themselves be baptized, and some stopped making sacrifices. During most of the time he resided in Trondheim, for that was the part of the country with the most resources.

But when King Hákon considered that he had the support of some men wielding power enough to uphold Christianity, he sent to England for a bishop and other priests. And when they arrived in Norway, King Hákon made it known that he would have the gospel preached in the whole country. But the people of Mør and Raums Dale referred the matter to the people of the Trondheim District to decide. At that time King Hákon had some churches consecrated and appointed priests for them. And when he came to Trondheim he summoned an assembly with the farmers and urged them to adopt Christianity. They made answer, saying that they would refer the matter to the Frostathing Assembly¹ and expressed the wish that all should come there who belonged to the various districts around the Trondheimsfjord: they would then decide about this difficult matter.

Chapter 14. The Heathen Yule Celebration Described

Sigurth, earl of Hlathir, was a most ardent heathen worshipper, as had been Hákon, his father. Earl Sigurth maintained all sacrificial feasts there in Trondheim on the king's behalf. It was ancient custom that when sacrifice was to be made, all farmers were to come to the heathen temple and bring along with them the food they needed while the feast lasted. At this feast all were to take part in the drinking of ale. Also all kinds of livestock were killed in connection with it, horses also; and all the blood from them was called *hlaut* [sacrificial blood], and *hlautbolli*, the vessel holding that blood; and *hlautteinar*, the sacrificial twigs [aspergills]. These were fashioned like sprinklers, and with them were to be smeared all over with blood the pedestals of the idols and also the walls of the temple within and without; and likewise the men present were to be sprinkled with blood. But the meat of the animals was to be boiled and to serve as food at the banquet. Fires were to be lighted in the middle of the temple floor, and kettles hung over them. The sacrificial beaker was to be borne around the fire, and he who made the feast and was chieftain, was to bless the beaker as well as all the sacrificial meat. Óthin's toast was to be drunk first—that was for victory and power to the king—then Njorth's and Frey's, for good harvests and for peace. Following that many used to drink a beaker to the king. Men drank toasts also in memory of departed kinsfolk—that was called *minni* [memorial toast].

Sigurth was a most open-handed man. He did what brought him much fame—he made a great sacrificial banquet at Hlathir, defraying all outlays himself. This is mentioned by Kormák Ogmundarson¹ in his *drápa* in honor of Sigurth:

68. Bring not there your beer, vat-(68.)
brewed, to lord free-handed,
nor fare with baskets filled with
food.—*The gods tricked Thjatsi.*²
All shun to fall foul of
fender-of-the-temple,³
fain to be the famed one's
friend.—*Fought Gram*⁴ *for riches.*

Chapter 15. Ásbjorn of Methalhús Opposes the King

King Hákon came to the Frostathing Assembly, and a very large number of farmers attended it. When they met, King Hákon made a speech. He began by saying that it was his bidding and his request, addressed to freeholders and husbandmen alike, of high and low estate, and so to all the people, young men and old, rich and poor, women as well as men, that all should let themselves be baptized and believe in one God, Christ, the son of Mary, and stop all idolatry and heathen worship; that they should keep holy every seventh day, abstaining from work, and fast every seventh day.



Ásbjorn of Methalhús answers the king.

But no sooner had the king proposed this to the people than there was a great muttering. The farmers complained that the king wanted to deprive them of their livelihood, that they could not cultivate the land in that fashion. But the working men and thralls thought they could not work unless they had food. They said, too, that it was a failing of King Hákon's, as it was of his father and their kinsmen, that they were stingy of food, even though they were generous in giving gold.

Ásbjorn of Methalhús answered the king and said that he would not be baptized.

Asbjorn of Methainus in Gaular Dale stood up to make answer to what the King had proposed, and spoke as follows.

“It was our thought, King Hákon,” he said, “the time you had held our first assembly here in the Trondheim District and we had chosen you king and received from you the title to our ancestral possessions, that very heaven had come down to earth; but now we don’t know what to think, whether we have regained our liberty or whether you are going to make us thralls again with the strange proposal that we should abandon the faith our fathers have had before us, and all our forefathers, first in the time when the dead were burned, and now in the age when the dead are buried. And they were better men than we, and yet this faith has served us very well. We have put so much trust in you that we have let you have your way about all the laws and statutes of our land. Now it is our will, and all the farmers are agreed on this, to obey the laws you have given us here at the Frostathing Assembly and to which we consented. We all want to follow you and to have you be our king so long as one of us farmers who are at the assembly now is alive, if you, sir king, will observe moderation and ask only that of us which we can give you and which is within reason.

“But if you mean to pursue this so high-handedly as to contend against us with force and compulsion, then all of us farmers have made up our minds to desert you and choose another leader, one who will help us freely to have the faith we wish to have. Now you, sir king, shall decide on one of these alternatives before the assembly disperses.”

The farmers gave loud acclaim to this speech and said that it was this they wanted.

Chapter 16. Earl Sigurth Mediates between the King and the Farmers

When silence was restored, Earl Sigurth made this answer: “It is the intention of King Hákon to agree with you farmers, and to let nothing stand between him and your friendship.” The farmers said that it was their wish that the king should make sacrifice to procure for them good crops and peace, as his father had done. Thereupon the muttering ceased and they ended the assembly.

Afterwards Earl Sigurth talked with the king and warned him that he should not refuse altogether to do as the farmers would have it—that nothing else would do: “As you yourself could hear, sir king, this is the will and imperious demand of the chieftains and thereby of all the people. In good time we shall devise some way or other, sir king, to accomplish this [*i.e.* your aims].” And the king and the earl were agreed on this course of action.

Chapter 17. Hákon Is Forced to Participate in the Sacrifice

In fall, at the beginning of winter there was a sacrificial feast at Hlathir, and the king attended it. Before that, if present at a place where heathen sacrifice was made, he was accustomed to eat in a little house apart, in the company of a few men. But the farmers remarked about it that he did not occupy his high-seat when there was the best cheer among the people. The earl told him that he should not do that; and so it came that the king occupied his high-seat [on this occasion].



Earl Sigurth persuades the king to yield.

But when the first beaker was served, Earl Sigurth proposed a toast, dedicating the horn to Óthin, and drank to the king. The king took the horn from him and made the sign of the cross over it.

Then Kár of Grýting said, “Why does the king do that? Doesn’t he want to drink of the sacrificial beaker?”

Earl Sigurth made answer, “The king does as all do who believe in their own might and strength, and dedicated his beaker to Thór. He made the sign of the hammer over it before drinking.” People said no more about it that evening. Next day when people had seated themselves at the tables, the farmers thronged about the king, saying that now he must eat the horse meat.¹ That, the king would not do under any condition. Then they asked him to drink the broth from it. He refused to do that. Then they asked him to eat the drippings from it. He

would not do that, either, and they came near to making an attack on him. Earl Sigurth said he would help them come to an agreement, asking them to cease their tumult; and he asked the king to gape with his mouth over the handle of the kettle on which the smoke of the broth from the horse meat had settled, so that the handle was greasy from it. Then the king went up to it and put a linen cloth over the handle and gaped with his mouth over it. Then he went back to his high-seat, and neither party was satisfied with that.

Chapter 18. The People of Trondheim Destroy Three Churches

In the winter following, the Yule feast was prepared for the king at Mærin. But when Yuletime approached, the eight chieftains who had most to do with the sacrifices in the whole Trondheim District arranged for a meeting between them. The four of them were from the outer parts of the Trondheim District: Kár of Grýting, Ásbjorn of Methalhús, Thorberg of Varness, Orm of Ljoxa; and from the inner parts of the Trondheim District, Blótólf of Olvishaug, Narfi of Staf in Vera Dale, Thránd Haki of Eggja, Thórir Beard of Húsabœ on the Inner Island. These eight men engaged themselves that the four from the outer districts were to destroy the Christianity [there was], and the four of the inner districts were to force the king to sacrifice. The men from the outer parts sailed with four ships south to Mœr, killed three priests, and burned down three churches, then returned. But when King Hákon and Earl Sigurth came to Mærin with their troops, the farmers were there in very great numbers. The first day at the banquet the farmers thronged in upon him and asked him to sacrifice, or else they would force him to. Then Earl Sigurth mediated between them, and in the end King Hákon ate a few bits of horse liver. Then he drank all the toasts the farmers poured for him without making the sign of the cross. But when the banquet was finished, the king and the earl forthwith proceeded to Hlathir. The king was much put out and immediately left the Trondheim District, saying that he would come another time and with greater forces and then repay the people of Trondheim the hostility they had shown him. Earl Sigurth besought the king not to bear down on them for this and said that it would not do for him to make rash vows of vengeance or to harry people within his kingdom, least of all in the Trondheim District which had the most resources. The king was so enraged that no one durst speak to him. Leaving the Trondheim District he went south to Mœr, and resided there during the winter and the spring. But as summer approached he gathered an army, and it was rumored that he would proceed with it against the people of Trondheim.

Chapter 19. The Sons of Eirík Invade Norway but Are Repulsed

At that time King Hákon had gone on board his fleet, and he had a great force. Then came to him the information from the southern part of the country that the sons of King Eirík had come to Vík from Denmark and that they had driven King Tryggvi Ólafsson from his ships at Sótaness in the east of the country. They had harried far and wide in Vík, and many had sworn allegiance to them. Now when the king learned all this he considered that he needed help and sent word to Earl Sigurth and other chieftains from whom he could expect support, to come to him. Earl Sigurth joined King Hákon with a very large force. In it were all those men from Trondheim who in the winter had done most to compel the king to sacrifice. By the intercession of Earl Sigurth they were all reconciled with the king. Thereupon King Hákon sailed south along the land. But when he came south around Stath Promontory, he learned that the sons of Eirík had arrived in North Agthir; and then both hosts advanced against each other and met at the Island of Kormt. Both armies went on shore and fought on Ogvaldsness. Both sides were of very great strength. It was a fierce battle. King Hákon went to the attack with vigor where stood King Guthorm, the son of Eirík, with his troops, and they exchanged blows. There fell King Guthorm, and his banner was cut down, and a great many of his men fell too. Then flight started in the ranks of the sons of Eirík. They fled to their ships and rowed away, having lost a great number. Guthorm Sindri makes mention of this:

69. Battle-slain men above, the (69.)
breaker-of-armrings let then
sword-blades sing their strident
song on the ness of Ogvald.
There the Frey-of-flashing-
firebrands-of-combat¹
left for dead the doughty
din-of-shields' awakener.²

King Hákon embarked on his ships and pursued the sons of Gunnhild on their eastward flight. Both fleets sailed the fastest they could till they came to East Agthir, when the sons of Eirík made for the open sea and sailed south to Jutland. Guthorm Sindri makes mention of this:

70. Oft the elbow's-twanger's (70.)
heirs did feel the power of
bold—in my mind I bear it—

Baldr-of-keen-edged wound-snakes.³

Kept the steerer-of-keels his
craft at sea, while fled the
ill-starred kinsmen all of
Eirík, pursued by him.

Then King Hákon returned north to Norway. But the sons of Eirík remained in Denmark for a long time.

Chapter 20. King Hákon Sets the Ship-Levies and Orders Beacons Installed

After this battle King Hákon incorporated into the laws for all the land along the seas, and as far inland as the salmon goes upstream, that all districts were divided into “ship-levies”; and these he parcelled out among the districts. It was stated in the laws how many ships there were in every district, and how many large ones were to be furnished when a general levy was called; and a general levy was enjoined whenever a foreign army was in the land. Along with this it was ordered that whenever there was a general levy, beacons were to be lit on high mountains, so that one could be seen from the other. It is said that news of the levy travelled from the southern-most beacon to the northernmost borough in seven nights.

Chapter 21. Peace Prevails in Norway

The sons of Eirík were constantly engaged in viking expeditions in the Baltic, but sometimes they harried in Norway as was written above. But King Hákon ruled in Norway and was greatly beloved. There were good crops in the land and peace prevailed.

Chapter 22. The Sons of Eirík Approach without Warning

954 When Hákon had been king over Norway for twenty years the sons of Eirík came from the south out of Denmark with a large army. A great part consisted of men who had been with them in their viking expeditions, yet many more were Danish troops which Harald Gormsson had furnished them. They had a strong favorable wind, sailing from Vendil, and arrived at Agthir. Then they continued north along the land, sailing day and night. But the beacons had not been kindled because it was the custom that they were kindled starting from the east along the land, but the approach of the enemy had not been sighted there in the east. Another reason was that the king had placed severe fines on the men responsible if beacons were kindled for no good reason. [It had so happened that when] warships and vikings had harried outlying islands, the people had often thought they were the sons of Eirík. Then the beacons had been kindled and there was a great rush to arms in all the land. [Each time, however,] the sons of Eirík had returned to Denmark, not having been reinforced by any Danish troops; and sometimes the invaders were other vikings. This had greatly enraged the king since it caused labor and expense and nothing was gained by it. The farmers also complained when their interests were concerned, whenever it happened.

And this was the reason that no news went ahead of the approach of the sons of Eirík before they arrived north in Úlfa Sound. There they remained anchored for seven days. Then the news about it was carried north by the inland way over the neck of land¹ and spread about Mœr. King Hákon at that time was in South Mœr on the island called Fræthi,² on his estate called Birkistrand, and had no troops about him except his bodyguard and the farmers who had been guests at his entertainment.

Chapter 23. King Hákon Seeks Egil Ullserk's Advice

Men bearing the information came to King Hákon, telling him that the sons of Eirík lay with a great force south of Stath. Then he had called to him those men who were reputed wisest in that district and asked their advice whether he should give battle to the sons of Eirík, notwithstanding that the odds were greatly in their favor, or withdraw to the north and collect a greater force.

Among them there was one farmer, called Egil Ullserk [Wool Shirt]. He was very old then, but had been larger and stronger than anyone else and a great warrior. For a long time he had borne the standard of King Harald Fairhair. Egil answered the king's speech in this fashion:

“I was in some battles with your father, King Harald. Sometimes he fought against a large force, and sometimes against a smaller one; but he always was victorious. Never did I hear him invite the advice of friends to flee. Nor shall we give such advice, sir king; because we think we have a fearless leader. You shall have our trusty support.”

Many others, too, stood by his speech. And the king also said that he too was more inclined to give battle with such forces as he had at hand. So that course of action was taken. Then the king had the war-arrows carried in all directions and assembled as much of a force as he could get. Then Egil Ullserk said, “That have I feared for some time, whilst we had this long peace, that I might die of old age on the straw inside my house; but I would rather die in battle, following my chieftain. Maybe that this will now be the case.”

Chapter 24. The Battle on Rastarkálf Plain

The sons of Eirík sailed north past Cape Stath as soon as they had a favorable breeze. And when they had passed Stath they learned where King Hákon was, and they proceeded against him. King Hákon had nine ships. He was anchored north of Fræthar Hill in Féey Sound, and the sons of Eirík anchored south of the hill. They had more than twenty ships. King Hákon sent a messenger to them, asking them to disembark and [saying] that he had marked off a battlefield for them on Rastarkálf. At that place there is a level plain of large extent, and above it, a long and rather low hill. There the sons of Eirík disembarked and went north over the neck of land below Fræthar Hill and onto the Rastarkálf Plain.

Then Egil spoke to King Hákon, asking him for ten men with ten standards. The king gave them to him. Thereupon Egil with his men went up along the slope. Now King Hákon proceeded to the plain with his troops, set up his standard and drew up his forces in battle array. He said, “We shall have an extended line of battle so they cannot surround us, even though they have more men.” This they did. There ensued a great and very sharp engagement. Then Egil had his ten standards set up, and so arranged it with the men carrying them that they should advance as close as possible to the brink of the hill, but with a long interval between each of them. This they did and advanced as close as possible to the brink of the hill, as though they intended to attack the sons of Eirík in the rear. Those who stood highest in the rank of Eirík’s men observed that many standards were being rushed forward and overtopped the hill, and thought that a great host would be following [the standards] to attack them in the rear and come between them and their ships. Then there was much shouting, one telling the other what was happening, and soon their ranks broke in flight. When the sons of Eirík saw that, they fled, too. King Hákon pursued them vigorously, and there was a great slaughter.

Chapter 25. King Gamli Makes a Last Stand

When Gamli Eiríksson had got on top of the ridge he turned about and saw that no more of a host was pursuing them than the one they had battled before, and that this was a stratagem. Then King Gamli had the trumpets blown, set up his standard, and rearranged his battle line. All the Norwegians in his force flocked about it, but the Danes fled to their ships. So when King Hákon and his troops came up to them, there followed a second bitter fight. By that time King Hákon was superior in numbers, and the outcome was that the sons of Eirík took to flight. They then retreated south over the ridge; but a part of their forces fled south to the hill, pursued by King Hákon. There is a level plain east of the neck of land on the west side of the hill, but steep cliffs descend west from it. Then Gamli's men retreated to the top of the hill, and King Hákon attacked them fiercely killing some; but others leapt over the cliff on the west side of the hill, and all of them perished. The king did not stop until they had slain every man's son there.

Chapter 26. Egil Ullserk and King Gamli Fall

Gamli, the son of Eirík, also fled from the ridge down to the plain south of the hill. There, King Gamli turned about once more and renewed the fight, and again some troops joined him. Then also all his brothers joined him with many men. Egil Ullserk was heading Hákon's men and made a strong onslaught, and he and King Gamli exchanged blows. King Gamli was severely wounded, but Egil fell also, and many with him. Then King Hákon came up with the troops that had followed him, and the battle was renewed. Again King Hákon pressed the enemy hard, cutting down men right and left and felling one after the other. As says Guthorm Sindri:

71. Fearful, the host of foemen (71.)
fled from the gold-dispender.
Went the warlike leader
well before the standards.
Nor did the shaft-shatterer
shield himself in war-fray,
he who in Hild's-tempest¹
hardiest was ever.

The sons of Eirík saw their men fall on all sides. Then they turned and fled to their ships. But those who before had fled to the ships had launched them into the water. Some of the ships, however, were left aground. Then all the sons of Eirík plunged into the water, together with the men who followed them. There Gamli Eiríksson died, but his brothers reached the ships and sailed away with all who survived and set their course to Denmark.

Chapter 27. King Hákon Buries the Fallen

King Hákon captured the ships belonging to the sons of Eirík that had run aground and had them dragged up on land. He had Egil Ullserk laid upon one of them, together with all those of his company who had fallen in battle, and had earth and stones heaped up around it. Also other ships King Hákon had dragged ashore and put in them the corpses lying on the battlefield; and these mounds can still be seen south of Frætharberg. Eyvind Skáldaspillir composed the following verse, after Glúm Geirason in one of his verses had made much of the fall of King Hákon: (72.) 72. Before, the king unfleeing, with

Fenrir's jaw-distender¹—
stout-souled men were stirred to
strife—shed Gamli's life-blood,
when that all of Eirík's
heirs he drove—his men now,
downcast, mourn the dear one's
death—into the water.

High stone monuments stand beside the burial mound of Egil Ullserk.

Chapter 28. *Eyvind Skáldaspillir Forewarns the King*

961 When King Hákon, foster son of Æthelstān, had been king of Norway for twenty-six years after his brother Eirík had fled the land, it so happened that he was in Horthaland and was entertained with a banquet at Fitjar on the Island of Storth. He had his bodyguard with him, and many farmers were there too. One day, in the forenoon, as the king sat at table, the watchmen outside reported that many ships came sailing from the south and would be at the island before long. Then everyone said that the king should be told that they thought a hostile force was approaching. But no one dared to tell the king that there was danger of hostilities, because he had warned that anyone who did that would be punished severely; and yet they thought it would never do to keep the king in ignorance of it. Then one of them went into the room [where the king sat] and asked Eyvind Finnsson [Skáldaspillir] to come out quickly, saying it was most urgent. Eyvind came out and immediately went to the spot where he could see the ships. He saw at once that a very considerable fleet was approaching and forthwith went back into the room before the king and said these words: 73. “Fleeting is time on the foreshore which to the feaster is long”

[Literally: Short is time for the traveller at sea, but long the time at the meal].

The king looked at him and said, “What’s in the wind?”

Eyvind spoke this verse:

74. Valkyrie’s-game,¹ avengers— (73.)
 avails not sitting still now—
 wish to awake ’gainst you,
 warring for death of Blood-Axe.
Not easy is it—yet thy
 honor wish I, sovran—
 take we our tools of war!—to
 tell of fight approaching.

The king said, “You are so gallant a fellow, Eyvind, that you are not likely to warn of danger approaching unless it is so.” Then the king had the table removed and went outside to look at the ships, and saw they were warships. Then he spoke to his men, asking their opinion, whether they should do battle with such forces as they had, or board their ships and sail away from them heading north. “It is evident,” the king said, “that we shall have to fight against much greater

odds than we did before, although we often thought we had to fight against much superior forces, when we had to do battle with the sons of Gunnhild.”

The men were not quick to make their decision. Then Eyvind spoke this verse:
(74.)

75. Nowise beseems it noble,
Njorth-of-roller-horses,²—
flinch not feebly—to lead our
fleet still farther northward,
now that steer their stout sea-
steeds the sons of Eirík—
grip we our gear of warfare—
'gainst us north from Denmark.

The king replied, “These are brave words, and after my own heart; yet I should like to hear the opinion of others about this business.” But when they thought they could gather what the king’s wishes were, many answered and said that they would rather fall honorably than flee from the Danes; also, that often they had fought victoriously when they had fought against greater odds. The king thanked them much for their words and asked them to arm themselves; and so they did. The king sheathed himself in his coat of mail and girded himself with the sword Quernbiter, put on his head a gilt helmet, took a halberd in hand, and had a shield at his side. Then he arranged his bodyguard in one battle array, together with the farmers, and raised his standards.

Chapter 29. The Sons of Eirík Make a Fresh Attack

Harald Eiríksson was at that time head of the sons of Eirík after Gamli had fallen. They had come with a great force north from Denmark. In company with them were their maternal uncles, Eyvind Skreya and Álf Askmathr [Skipper]. They were strong and valiant men and great warriors. The sons of Eirík steered their ships to the island, disembarked, and formed their battle array. And we are told that the odds were six to one in favor of the sons of Eirík.

Chapter 30. The Battle of Storth and the Poem Hákonarmál

By that time King Hákon too had put his men in battle array; and it is said that the king cast off his coat of mail before the battle started. As says Eyvind Skáldaspillir in his *Lay of Hákon*:¹

76. They² found Bjorn's brother (75.)
his byrnie donning,
under standard standing
the stalwart leader—
were darts uplifted
and spearshafts lowered;
up the strife then started.

77. Called on Háleygers (76.)
as on Holmrygers³
the earls' banesman
as to battle he fared;
a good host had he
of henchmen from Norway—
the Danes'-terror
donned his gold helm.

78. Threw off his war-weeds, (77.)
thrust down his mail-coat
the great-hearted lord,
ere began the battle.
Laughed with his liege-men;⁴
his land would he shield,
the gladsome hero
'neath gold helm standing.

King Hákon chose men for his bodyguard especially for their strength and bravery, as had done King Harald, his father. Among them was Thórálf the Strong, the son of Skólm, and he went by the side of the king. He was armed with helmet and shield, a halberd, and the sword called Fetbreith. It was said that King Hákon and he were of equal strength. Thórth Sjáreksson⁵ makes mention of this in the *drápa* he composed about Thórálf:

79. There where the hardy roller- (78.)

horses'-steerers forth, for
slaughterous sword-play eager,
sallied, on Storth in Fitjar,
the doughty dart-storm's-urger
dared, helm-clad, sword-girt, and
naught fearing, to fight next to
Norway's king's side in combat.

And when the opposing forces met there was a furious and bloody fight. When the men had hurled their spears, they took to their swords. King Hákon, with Thórálfr at his side, advanced beyond the standard, cutting down men right and left. As says Eyvind Skáldaspillir:

80. Cut then keenly (79.)
the king's broadsword
through foemen's war-weeds
as though water it parted.
Clashed then spear-blades,
cleft were bucklers,
did ring-adorned war-swords⁶
rattle on helmets.

81. Were targes trodden (80.)
by the Týr-of-shields⁷
with hard-footed hilt-blade,
and heads eke, by Northmen;
battle raged on island,
athelings reddened
shining shield-castles
with shedded life-blood.

King Hákon was easily recognized—more easily than other men. His helmet glittered as the sun shone upon it. He was the target of all. Then Eyvind Finnsson took a hood and drew it over the king's helmet.

Chapter 31. King Hákon Is Wounded by an Arrow

Eyvind Skreya then called out aloud, “Hides now the king of the Norwegians, or has he fled—else where is the gold helmet now?” Thereupon Eyvind forged ahead, together with Álf, his brother, striking down men on both sides and acting like men possessed.

King Hákon called out aloud to Eyvind, “Keep going as you are headed, if you want to find the king of the Norwegians.” As says Eyvind Skáldaspillir:



King Hákon advances against the Danes.

82. Bade the valkyries’-weather-
wooer¹ Eyvind Skreya—
good to men, but to gold not—
go forward as headed,
“if, far-famed sea-fighter,
find thou wouldst in battle
the wise and wealth-dispending,
warlike king of Norway.”

(81.)

Nor was it long before Eyvind got there and raised his sword and swung at the king. Thórálf thrust his shield against him so that Eyvind stumbled. But the king seized his sword, Quernbiter, with both hands and struck Eyvind on his helmet and cleft it and his head down to the shoulders. Then Thórálf slew Álf the

Skipper. As says Eyvind Skáldaspillir:

83. Saw I the wand-of-wounds² which (82.)
wielded Norway's ruler,
with both his hands when he
hewed down treacherous Skreya.
Fearless, the foe of Denmark
famous cleft the scalp-hills³
of many mail-clad Danish
mariners with sword gold-hilted.

After the fall of these two brothers King Hákon forged ahead with such might that all opponents fell back before him. Then terror struck the hearts of the followers of the sons of Eirík and soon they took to flight. But King Hákon was in front of his men, pursuing the fleeing enemies closely and raining sword-blows. Then there flew an arrow, of the kind which is called *flein*,⁴ and struck King Hákon in the arm, in the muscle below the shoulder. And many say that Gunnhild's page, by the name of Kisping, ran forward in the confusion—calling out, "Make room for the king's slayer"—and shot the arrow at King Hákon. Some say, however, that no one knows who shot the arrow. And that may very well be, because arrows and javelins and all kinds of missiles flew as thick as a fall of snow. A great number of the Eiríkssons' force fell, both on the battlefield and on their way to the ships and also on the beach, and many leapt into the sea. A good many of these managed to reach the ships, as did all the sons of Eirík, and at once rowed away, with Hákon's men in pursuit. As says Thórh Sjáreksson:

84. Before his men the mainsworn's (83.)
murderer⁵—and thus should—
a long life men wished him—
land be warded—fought there.
Trouble arose, the time that
tight-fisted⁶—the king⁷ fell—
Gunnhild's son, short of gold, his
galleys steered from southward.
85. Wearily, wound-sore yeomen (84.)
worked on board the long-ships—
many men their death did
meet there—the sweeps pulling.

The warrior's⁸ worth was seen,—he
wolves gave food in battle—
when in strife so stern he
stood beside his master.

Chapter 32. King Hákon Bequeathes Norway to the Sons of Eirík

King Hákon boarded his warships and had his wound bandaged. But the blood flowed so profusely that it could not be staunched. And as the day wore on the king became faint. Then he said that he wished to proceed north to his estate at Alreksstath. When they arrived at Hákonarhella they anchored there, and by that time the king was at death's door. Then he called his friends to his side and told them his wishes about the disposition of the kingdom. His only child was a daughter, Thóra by name. He had no son. He requested them to send word to the sons of Eirík that they were to be kings over the land, but that they should exercise forbearance to his friends and kinsmen. "But even if I be granted to live," he said, "I would leave the country to abide among Christians and do penance for what I have sinned against God. But if I die here, among heathens, then give me such burial place as seems most fitting to you."

961 And a short while afterwards King Hákon died on the same slab of rock where he was born. King Hákon was mourned so greatly that both friends and enemies bewailed his death and declared that a king as good as he would not be seen again in Norway. His friends moved his body north to Sæheim in North Horthaland. There they raised a great mound and in it buried the king in full armor and in his finest array, but with no other valuables. Words were spoken over his grave according to the custom of heathen men, and they put him on the way to Valhalla. Eyvind Skáldaspillir composed a poem about the fall of King Hákon and how he was welcomed [in Valhalla]. It is called *Hákonarmál*, and this is the beginning of it:¹

86. Gautatýr² sent forth Gondul and Skogul (1.)
to choose among kings' kinsmen:
who of Yngvi's offspring should with Óthin dwell
and wend with them to Valholl.

[Follow the stanzas here numbered 76-78,80,81.]

87. Burned the wound-fires³ in bloody gashes, (7.)
were the long-beards³ lifted against the life of warriors—
the sea-of-wounds surged high around the swords' edges,
ran the stream-of-arrows⁴ on the strand of Storth-Isle.

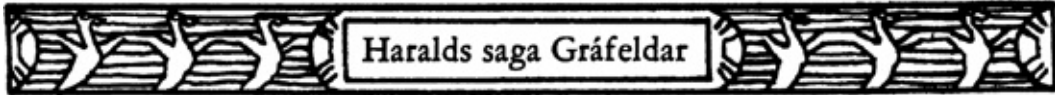
88. Reddened war shields rang 'gainst each other, (8.)
did Skogul's-stormblast⁵ scar red targes;

billowed blood-waves in the blast-of-Óthin⁵—
was many a man's son mowed down in battle.

89. Sat then the athelings with swords brandished, (9.)
with shields shattered and shredded byrnies:
not happy in their hearts was that host of men,
and to Valholl wended their way.
90. Spoke then Gondul on spearshift leaning: (10.)
“groweth now the gods' following,
since Hákon has been with host so goodly
bidden home with holy godheads.”
91. Heard the war-lord what the valkyries said, (11.)
high-hearted, on horseback—
wisely they bore them, sitting war-helmeted,
and with shields them sheltering.
Hákon said:
92. “Why didst, Geirskogul grudge us victory, (12.)
though worthy we were for the gods to grant it?”
Skogul said:
“ 'T is owing to us that the issue was won
and your foemen fled.
93. “Ride forth now shall we,” said fierce Skogul, (13.)
“To the green⁶ homes of the godheads—
to tell Óthin that the atheling will
come now to see him himself.”
94. “Hermóth and Bragi!” called out Hroptatýr:⁷ (14.)
“Go ye to greet the hero;
for a king cometh who has keenly foughten,
to our halls hither.”
95. Said the war-worker wending from battle— (15.)
was his byrnie all bloody:
“Angry-minded Óthin meseemeth.⁸
Be we heedful of his hate!
96. “All einheriar⁹ shall swear oaths to thee: (16.)
share thou the Æsir's ale,

thou enemy-of-earls!¹⁰ Here within hast thou
brethren eight,¹¹” said Bragi.

97. “Our gear of war,” said the gladsome king, (17.)
“we mean to keep in our might.
Helmet and hauberk one should heed right well.
’T is good to guard one’s spear.”
98. Then it was seen how that sea-king had (18.)
honored the ancient altars
since that Hákon hailed and welcomed,
all gods and heavenly hosts.
99. On a good day is born that great-souled lord (19.)
who hath a heart like his.
His times will aye be told of on earth,
as good and glorious.
100. Unfettered will fare the Fenris Wolf¹² (20.)
and ravage the realm of men,
ere that cometh a kingly prince
as good, to stand in his stead.
101. Cattle die and kinsmen die,¹³ (21.)
land and lieges are whelmed;
ever since Hákon to the heathen gods fared,
many a liege is laid low.



The Saga of Harald Graycloak

Chapter 1. The Sons of Eirík Take Possession of Norway

961 The sons of Eirík took possession of the kingdom in Norway after the fall of King Hákon. Among them, Harald was foremost, and he was also the oldest of them still living. Gunnhild, their mother, had a great share with them in the government of the country. At that time she was called Kingsmother. These men were chieftains in the country then: Tryggvi Óláfsson in the eastern part, Guthröth Bjarnarson in Westfold, Sigurth Hlathjarl [earl of Hlathir] in Trondheim; and the sons of Gunnhild were in possession of the western part during the first year. Then there were negotiations between the sons of Gunnhild on the one hand, and Tryggvi and Guthröth on the other, and they came to the agreement that, under the sons of Gunnhild, the latter two were to have in their possession the same share of the realm as they had had before under King Hákon.

There was one Glúm Geirason, a skald with King Harald and a man of great prowess. After the fall of Hákon he composed this verse:

102. Well hast avenged, Harald— (85.)
hapless foemen to their
graves have gone—your brother
Gamli, fighting bravely,
dark-hued since hawks-of-Ygg¹ on
Hákon's corpse have battened—
glaives from grievous wounds were
gory—beyond the ocean.

This verse became very popular; but when Eyvind Finnsson learned of it he recited the verse which is written down above:

103. ² Before, the king unfleeing, with (86.)
Fenrir's jaw-distender—
stout-souled men were stirred to
strife—shed Gamli's life-blood,
when that all of Eirík's
heirs he drove—his men now,
downcast, mourn the dear one's
death—into the water.

And this verse also was often recited. But when King Harald heard that, he declared this was a deed worthy of death on the part of Eyvind, until mutual friends made peace between them on condition that Eyvind should become his

friends made peace between them, on condition that Eyvind should become his skald as before he had been King Hákon's. There was close kinship between them, as Eyvind's mother, Gunnhild, was the daughter of Earl Hálfdan; and her mother, again, was Ingibjorg, a daughter of King Harald Fairhair. Then Eyvind composed a verse about King Harald:

104. Little did you, liege-lord, (87.)
let yourself be daunted
when bows were bent, and on
byrnies crashed the hail of arrows,
where the whetted sword-blades
whined, naked, all gory,
and with your hands, Harald,
hawks-of-carnage³ you sated.

The sons of Gunnhild resided for the most part in the western districts, for the reason, on the one hand, that they considered it risky to dwell too close to the people of Trondheim and Vík, who had been the staunchest friends of King Hákon; and on the other, that there were many men of influence in both provinces. Then there were negotiations between the sons of Gunnhild and Earl Sigurth, for else they would receive no revenues from the Trondheim District; and the result was that the kings on the one hand and the earl on the other, came to the agreement, which they confirmed with oaths, that Earl Sigurth was to have the same domains, under the overlord-ship of the kings, as he had had before under King Hákon. Thereupon they considered that peace was established between them.

All the sons of Gunnhild were held to be avaricious, and it was rumored that they hid valuables in the ground. About this, Eyvind Skáldaspillir composed these verses:

105. Upon our hands had we, (88.)
whilst that Hákon lived, ample
seed-corn sown on Fýri's
swale,⁴ thou Ullr-of-combat.⁵
Now the Norsemen's foe has
niggardly hidden all
Fróthi's-mighty-maiden's-
meal⁶ in Thór'smother's⁷-bosom.

(89.)

106. Shone upon the shields and shafts of Hákon's skalds, the while he fared here, Fulla's-fillet⁸ in abundance.
Now the river's riches⁹ ruddy—such the mighty one's behest—are wholly hid in Thór's dam's body.

When King Harald had been reliably informed about these verses, he summoned Eyvind to appear before him. And when Eyvind came, the king berated him and called him his enemy, “and it is ill becoming in you,” he said, “to play me false, because you have sworn me allegiance.” Then Eyvind recited this verse:

107. One beloved lord was, (90.)
liege, mine—one, before thee,¹⁰
nor wish I, thane, a third one:
throngs me now my old age.
True was I to my dear lord—
two masters never served I.
I but fill your flock, sire:¹¹
feeble I am with age now.

King Harald fixed his judgment thus in this matter: Eyvind owned a large and valuable gold ring which was called Moldi. It had been dug out of the ground long ago. This ring, the king said, he would have, and there was no other choice for Eyvind. He spoke this verse:

108. Should I, ship's keen steerer, (91.)
share thy favor henceforth:
would that well befit thee,
warrior, ruling Norway,
seeing I give thee this goodly
golden arm ring, dragon's-
lair's rich treasure, liege, which
long had owned my father.

Then Eyvind departed for his home, and we are not told that he came before King Harald's presence anytime afterwards.

Chapter 2. Of the Sons of Gunnhild

The sons of Gunnhild had been baptized in England, as is written above. But when they entered upon the government in Norway they had no success in converting the inhabitants, and all they accomplished was to destroy heathen fanes and to break up sacrifices, and this brought them much enmity. There came bad seasons in their time because there were many kings, and each had his henchmen about him. They required much for their upkeep, and they were most rapacious and did not abide by the laws King Hákon had established except when it suited them. They were all very handsome men, strong and of great stature, and accomplished in bodily skills. As says Glúm Geirason in the *drápa* composed about Harald, the son of Gunnhild: (92.) 109. Skills twelve had he who scattered
Skylding gold and often
first and foremost was in
fiercest storm of battle.

Often the brothers were together, but at times each one by himself. They were cruel and courageous, great warriors and often victorious.

Chapter 3. Gunnhild Plots against Earl Sigurth

Gunnhild Kingsmother and her sons often conferred and took counsel about the government of the country. And one time Gunnhild asked her sons, “What are your intentions about ruling in Trondheim? You bear the title of kings, as have done your ancestors, but you have few troops and little land, and there are many of you to share it. Tryggvi and Guthröth have sway in Vík, and they do have some claim to it because their forebears ruled there, but Earl Sigurth has the mastery in all districts of Trondheim, and I don’t know what reason there exists for your letting an earl take the power over so great a territory from you. It seems strange to me that every summer you go on viking expeditions to other countries but allow an earl in your own land to take your inheritance from you. Your father’s father, Harald, after whom you are called, would have thought little of depriving an earl of land and life when he won all of Norway and ruled it afterwards until he grew old.”



Queen Gunnhild incites her sons.

Harald replied, “It isn’t as easy to kill Sigurth as to slaughter a kid or a calf. Earl Sigurth is of high birth and has many friends. He is well liked and shrewd. I feel sure that if he anticipates trouble from us, all the people of Trondheim will stand by him. And then there would be an ill outcome to whatever we undertook against him. Nor do I think any of us brothers would relish coming into the power of the men of Trondheim.”

Then Gunnhild said, “Then we shall proceed another way with our business and we will have a little more than I at Harald and Erling’s expense in North Man this fall

and go a little more slowly. Let Harald and Erling remain in North Moor this fall. I shall go with you. Then all of us together shall try and see what will come of it." And they followed this plan.

Chapter 4. Grjótgarth Is Won Over by Harald

A brother of Earl Sigurth was called Grjótgarth. He was younger by a great deal and of lesser rank, neither did he have the title of earl. Still he had a company of men and was on viking expeditions during the summer, acquiring possessions. King Harald sent messengers into the Trondheim District to present Earl Sigurth with gifts and protestations of friendship, with the message that King Harald wanted to maintain with him the same kind of friendship as Earl Sigurth had had with King Hákon. This was followed by an invitation to the earl to visit King Harald, when they were to confirm their friendship. Earl Sigurth bade the messengers welcome and thanked them for the friendship offered him by the king, but said that he could not visit King Harald because of the press of things he had to do. However he sent with them gifts of friendship and kind and fair words in return for his offer of friendship; and with that they departed.

Then they sought out Grjótgarth and delivered the same message, offering him the friendship of King Harald, with good gifts and an invitation to visit him. And when they departed they had Grjótgarth's promise that he would visit the king.

And on the day agreed upon, Grjótgarth came to the court of King Harald and Gunnhild. He was received there in the most friendly way and treated as a close friend, in such fashion that he was present when special arrangements and many secret affairs were dealt with. Finally they came to speak about Earl Sigurth, and in the way the king and the queen had previously agreed upon. They brought up before Grjótgarth how the earl had kept him in low estate; but if he were to join forces with them, the king said, then Grjótgarth should be his earl and have the domains that Sigurth had had. In the end they agreed on these terms: that Grjótgarth was to have spies out to find when it would be most advantageous for them to set upon Earl Sigurth, and then he was to let King Harald know. After these arrangements were made, Grjótgarth returned home with good gifts from the king.

Chapter 5. Earl Sigurth Is Surprised and Slain by Harald and Grjótgarth

In the fall Earl Sigurth journeyed to Stjóra Dale where he was entertained; and from there he went to Ogló¹ to be entertained there. During the time he harbored suspicion of the kings, the earl always kept himself surrounded by many followers. But because a friendly exchange had taken place between him and King Harald he now did not have so large a company about him. Grjótgarth then informed King Harald that a more opportune chance might not offer to take the earl by surprise. That very same night the kings Harald and Erling sailed into the Trondheimfjord with four ships and many troops, steering in the night by starlight. Then Grjótgarth joined them, and late at night they came upon Earl Sigurth at Ogló, where he was being entertained. They set the house on fire and burned it down with the earl and all his company inside, then early that same day they sailed out of the fjord, proceeding south to Mœr, where they stayed for a long time.

Chapter 6. A Peace Is Concluded between Earl Hákon and the Sons of Gunnhild

Hákon, the son of Earl Sigurth, was in the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord when he learned what had happened. Immediately everybody rushed to arms in all the Trondheim shires. Every ship which was fit for war service was launched. And when these forces were assembled they chose for earl and leader Hákon, the son of Earl Sigurth. With this fleet they sailed out of the Trondheimfjord. When the sons of Gunnhild heard of this they journeyed south to Raums Dale and South Mær. Then both armies kept posted about the location of their enemies.

963 Earl Sigurth was slain two years after the fall of King Hákon. As Eyvind Skáldaspillir says in his *Háleygjatal*:¹

110. And Sigurth, (93.)
who to swans-of-
Farmatýr²
food provided,
was laid low
by the liege-lords,
Eirík's sons,
on Ogló farm.

111. And the Earl (94.)
iron-hearted,
free-handed,
by fire was felled,
kindled by
king's scions who
in his trust
betrayed him foully.

Earl Hákon with the help of his kinsmen for three years maintained his power in the Trondheim districts, so that the sons of Gunnhild had no revenue from that province. He fought some battles with the sons of Gunnhild in which many men were slain. Of this Einar Skálaglamm³ makes mention in his poem *Vellekla*, which he composed about Earl Hákon:

112. And the gladsome giver of (95.)
gleaming arm rings launched his

broad-spread fleet for battle, nor
brooked delay, 'gainst foemen.
And the hardy whittler of
Hethin's red-moon-of-battle⁴
lifted arms to allay their
lust for making trouble.

113. Nor was it needful to urge the (96.)
Njorth-of-valkyries'-game⁵ to
start the storm-of-flying-
steel to gladden ravens:
shaking from shield the hail of
shafts sent by his foemen,
the enemy of evil-doers
oaken-hearted lived on.

114. Frays full many fought the (97.)
far-famed warrior, ere he, at the Æsir's will, could
oust his foes from Eastland.⁶

Still further Einar tells how Earl Hákon avenged his father:

115. Praises I sing of peerless (98.)
prince's revenge on his
father Sigurth's slayers:
sword he lifted in victory.

116. Rained he showers of shrilling (99.)
shafts on faithless hersar,
ushering into Óthin's
honored hall these heroes.
And the steerer of storm-tossed
steeds-of-Atli⁷ oft did
Leifi's-weather launch 'gainst
luckless men of Harald.

As time wore on, friends of both mediated between them, arranging a settlement; because the farmers grew weary of harrying and warfare within the land. And with the help and counsel of influential men an agreement was reached between them, to this effect that Earl Hákon was to retain the same dominions in Trondheim as had had Earl Sigurth, his father; and the kings, the same dominion as had had King Hákon before them, and that peace was

confirmed with binding oaths. Then Earl Hákon and Gunnhild were on the best of terms, though at times they schemed against each other and tried who could get the better of the other. So three more years passed. During that time Earl Hákon was in quiet possession of his lands.

Chapter 7. King Harald is Given a Sheepskin Cloak

King Harald most often dwelled in Horthaland and Rogaland, as did several of his brothers. Frequently they dwelled in the Harthanger District. One summer a seagoing ship, owned by Icelanders, arrived from Iceland. It had a cargo of sheepskin cloaks. They steered into the Harthangerfjord, because they had heard that a great multitude was gathered there. But when people came to bargain with them, no one wanted to buy the sheepskins. Then the skipper sought out King Harald, because they were acquainted, and told him about his difficulty. The king said he would go see them, and so he did. King Harald was a kindly disposed man and of a very cheerful disposition. He arrived there with a fully manned skiff and looked at their wares. He asked the skipper, "Will you give me one of your cloaks?"

"Gladly," said the skipper, "and several, if need be." Then the king took one of the sheepskin cloaks and hung it over his shoulders, whereupon he boarded the skiff again. But before they rowed away every one of his men had bought a sheepskin. A few days later such a multitude came there who all wanted to buy the cloaks that not a half of them got any. Then the king was called Harald Gráfeldr [Graycloak].

Chapter 8. The Birth of Earl Eirík

One winter Earl Hákon journeyed to the Uppland District where he was entertained, and there he slept with a woman of low birth; and after a while the woman was with child. And when it was born it proved to be a boy. It was sprinkled with water and given the name of Eirík. The mother brought the child to Earl Hákon and declared that he was its father. The earl had the boy brought up by a man called Thorleif the Wise. He lived in Methal Dale. He was a powerful man, wealthy, and a close friend of the earl. Soon Eirík grew to be a promising youth, of very handsome appearance, tall and strong at an early age. The earl showed little regard for him. Earl Hákon also was exceedingly handsome, not of tall stature but very strong, and a man of many accomplishments, shrewd, and a great warrior.

Chapter 9. King Harald and King Guthröth Have a Falling Out

One fall Earl Hákon journeyed to the Uppland District. And when he arrived in Heithmork he was met by King Tryggvi Óláfsson and King Guthröth Bjarnarson. Guthbrand of the Dales also came there. They had a meeting and conferred long and in secret; and they came to the agreement that they were to be mutual friends. Then they parted, each one returning to his own dominions.

Gunnhild and her sons learned about this, and they suspected that some treason against them was planned. They often conferred with one another. And when spring came, King Harald and King Guthröth, his brother, made it known that they planned to go on a viking expedition in summer, either to the west or to the east, as they were accustomed to do. They collected troops and launched their ships, preparing to start.

At their parting banquet, men drank heavily, and much was spoken over their drinks. Finally, they engaged in a matching of men, and they got to talking about the kings themselves. Someone said that King Harald was the foremost among the brothers in all respects. That made Guthröth furious, and he said he was in no wise inferior to Harald, and added that he was ready to test that. Soon both of them were so furious that they challenged one another and took to their weapons. But others who were wiser and less intoxicated checked them and went between them. Thereupon each boarded his ships, and there was little expectation that they would keep together. Guthröth sailed east [and south] along the land; but Harald steered out upon the high sea, announcing that he meant to sail west across the sea. But once he got outside the island belt he steered east along the land in the open sea. King Guthröth sailed the fairway within the islands and on across the Foldfjord. From there he sent word to King Tryggvi inviting him to join them and go freebooting into the Baltic during the summer. King Tryggvi was inclined to do so and gave a favorable answer. Learning that Guthröth had but a small fleet he joined him with one skiff. They met at Veggir, west of Sótaness. But when they went to confer with one another, King Guthröth's men fell upon and slew King Tryggvi and twelve men with him. He is buried at a place now called Tryggvi's Cairn.

Chapter 10. King Harald Slays King Guthröth Bjarnarson

King Harald for the most part sailed the outer course. He steered into the Foldfjord [Óslófjord] and arrived at Túnsberg during the night. There he learned that King Guthröth [Bjarnarson] was being entertained not far away inland. King Harald and his troops came there at night and surrounded the house. Guthröth and his followers issued out of it, and there was a short fight before King Guthröth fell with many of his men. Then King Harald returned and joined King Guthröth, his brother. Together they subdued all of the District of Vík.

Chapter 11. Harald Flees from the Sons of Gunnhild to Sweden

King Guthröth Bjarnarson had married an excellent woman of good birth. They had a son whose name was Harald. He was sent to Hrói the White, a king's steward in Grenland,¹ to be fostered by him. Hrói's son was Hrani the Widely-Travelled. He and Harald were of about the same age and were foster brothers. After his father Guthröth's fall Harald who was called Grenski [the Grenlander] fled first to the Uppland District, together with his foster brother Hrani and a few men. There he stayed for a while with kinsmen of his. The sons of Eirík searched diligently for the men who were bound by agreements with them,² and most of all for those who could be suspected of rising against them. Harald's kinsmen and friends advised him to leave the country. Then Harald the Grenlander went east to Sweden and looked for a place on board a ship to join men who wished to go on a viking expedition to acquire possessions. Harald was a most accomplished man.

Tósti was the name of a man in Sweden, one of the noblest and most powerful there of those who were not of princely birth. He was a great warrior and had been for a long time on viking expeditions. He was called Skoglar-Tósti. Harald the Grenlander joined his company, following Tósti in his expeditions in summertime; and Harald was esteemed highly by everybody. In the winter following, Harald stayed with Tósti. Sigríth was the name of Tósti's daughter, a handsome and very haughty young woman. Later on she was married to the Swedish king, Eirík the Victorious, and their son was Óláf of Sweden, who afterwards ruled that country. Eirík died of a sickness at Uppsala, ten years after the fall of Styrbjorn.

Chapter 12. Earl Hákon Avoids the Sons of Gunnhild

The sons of Gunnhild collected a great force in Vík and sailed north along the land, summoning troops and ships from every district, and gave it to be understood that they were steering north to Trondheim against Earl Hákon. The earl was informed of this and collected troops and procured himself ships. And when he heard how great a fleet the sons of Gunnhild had, he proceeded south to Mœr, ravaging the countryside and killing many men. Then he sent back his 'army of Trondheim farmers, and himself harried in both North and South Mœr and in Raums Dale. He had his spies out all the way south of the headland of Stath, to inform himself about the fleet of the sons of Gunnhild. And when he heard that they had anchored in the Fjord District,¹ waiting for favorable winds to sail north of Stath, he sailed south, rounding that promontory far out to sea, so that his sails could not be seen from the land, then proceeded east [south] along the land far out to sea, and got to Denmark, from where he made his way east into the Baltic, harrying there during the summer. The sons of Gunnhild sailed north to Trondheim with their fleet and stayed there a long time, collecting all the tribute and revenues. And as the summer wore on, Sigurth Slefa and Guthröth settled down there while Harald and his other brothers, together with the troops they had levied during the summer, returned to the east.

Chapter 13. Earl Hákon Regains His Possessions

In the fall, Earl Hákon sailed to Helsingjaland where he drew up his ships [for winter], then travelled overland through Helsingjaland and Jamtaland, then west over the Keel till he arrived in Trondheim. At once men began to gather about him, and he procured ships. But when the sons of Gunnhild learned this they embarked on their ships and sailed out of the [Trondheim] fjord. Earl Hákon proceeded to Hlathir and resided there during the winter, while the sons of Gunnhild remained in Mær; and each of the two parties made descents on the other, killing many people. Earl Hákon held onto his dominions in Trondheim and resided there most often in the winter, but in summer he sometimes marched east over to Helsingjaland, got his ships ready, and sailed into the Baltic on viking expeditions. But sometimes he resided in Trondheim and had an army on foot, and then the sons of Gunnhild could not maintain their power north of Stath.

Chapter 14. King Sigurth Rapes Klypp's Wife and Is Slain by Him

One summer Harald Graycloak sailed with his fleet north to Permia, harried there, and had a great battle with the Permians on the bank of the Dvína River in which Harald was victorious and killed many people, whereupon he plundered the land far and wide and acquired an immense amount of property. Glúm Geirason makes mention of this:

117. Eastward saw I the athelings' (100.)
awer redden his broadsword
where Permian folk, frightened,
fled their burning dwellings.
Good fame got him youngish
gold-bestower on Dvína's
banks, in fiercest battle
braving the storm-of-arrows.

King Sigurth Slefa came to the estate of the hersir Klypp, the son of Thóρθ Hortha-Kárason, a powerful chieftain of noble birth. Klypp was not at home at the time, but Álof, his wife, gave the king a good welcome, entertaining him with a banquet at which there was much drinking. Álof, the wife of Hersir Klypp, was the daughter of Ásbjorn and the sister of Járn-Skeggi who dwelled north in Yrjar. Hreithar was the brother of Ásbjorn and the father of Styrkár, the father of Eindrithi, the father of Einar Thambar-skelfir. In the night the king went to Álof's bed and lay with her against her will. Then he departed. Later in fall King Harald and his brother Sigurth travelled up to Vors and summoned the farmers there to an assembly. At the assembly the farmers attacked them and wanted to kill them, but they escaped and left that place. King Harald went to the Harthanger District, and King Sigurth, to Alreksstath. And when Hersir Klypp learned that, he and his kinsmen gathered together and fell upon him. Vémund Volubrjót headed them. And when they came to the farm they made for the king. Klypp ran the king through with his sword, and he died; but in the same moment Erling the Old slew Klypp.

Chapter 15. Earl Hákon Again Seeks Refuge in Denmark

King Harald Graycloak and his brother, King Guthröth, collected a large army from the eastern part of the country, and with it proceeded north to Trondheim. As soon as Earl Hákon learned that, he gathered troops and sailed south to Mær to harry there. His father's brother, Grjótgarth, was charged to defend the land for the sons of Gunnhild. He summoned a force, as the kings had bidden him to. Earl Hákon sailed against him and gave him battle, and there fell Grjótgarth, and two earls with him and many men. Einar Skálaglamm makes mention of this: (101.) 118. Hardy Hákon did with

helmet-hail¹ o'ermaster—
waxed therewith the wine of
Way-Farer²—his enemies:
overbold, three athelings,
earls' sons, in Thrótt's-showers³—
glory gained thereby the
gallant earl—dropped lifeless.

Thereupon Earl Hákon sailed into the open sea and by the outer course south along the land. He finally came to Denmark and journeyed to the court of Harald Gormsson, the king of Denmark, who welcomed him, and there he stayed that winter. At the court of the Danish king there was also a man called Harald. He was the son of Knút Gormsson and the nephew of King Harald. He had just returned from a viking expedition on which he had been for a long time and had gotten an immense amount of property. He was called Gold-Harald, and he thought himself well entitled to succeed to the throne of Denmark.

Chapter 16. King Erling Is Slain by the Farmers

King Harald and his brothers sailed north with their fleet and into the Trondheimfjord, and met no resistance. They levied tribute and taxes and exacted all the king's revenues, making the farmers pay large contributions, because the kings had received little income from the Trondheim District for a long time, since Earl Hákon had resided there with many troops and had been embroiled with the kings.

In the fall King Harald proceeded to the southern provinces, together with those troops who came from there; but King Erling remained behind with his force. He had still many claims outstanding against the farmers and made hard conditions for them, but the farmers grumbled menacingly and were ill pleased with their losses. And in the winter the farmers gathered a large force and proceeded to where King Erling was being entertained, and attacked him. And there King Erling fell, and many of his men.

During the time when the sons of Gunnhild ruled in Norway there were bad seasons, and they became worse the longer they ruled, and the farmers attributed that to the kings, and also complained that they were grasping and treated the farmers harshly. It went so far that the people in all parts hardly had any grain or fish. In Hálogaland there was such famine and starvation that scarcely any grain grew there. The snow lay in all parts in midsummer, and the cattle had to stay in their stalls. As Eyvind Skáldaspillir said in a verse, once he came out and snow was falling fast:

119. It snows on Svolnir's yokemate.¹ (102.)
So, like the Finns, have we
our bud-eaters² bound in
barn in middle summer.

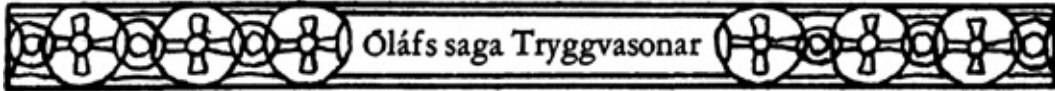
Eyvind composed a *drápa* about all Icelanders,³ and they rewarded him by each farmer giving him a silver coin, and this was three pennies of silver in weight and white when scratched. But when the silver was collected at the Althing,⁴ it was decided to have a smith purify the silver. Later on, a cloak fibula was made of it, and after the smith had received his reward⁵ the fibula weighed fifty marks. This fibula they sent to Eyvind, but Eyvind had it cut into pieces and bought himself cattle for it. And in the spring there arrived a school of herrings at a certain outlying fishing station. Eyvind manned a rowboat with his man servants and tenants and rowed to the place where the herring had drifted. He

spoke this verse:

120. Let us row our restless (103.)
roller-horse from northward,
for our hunger to haul the
herring-school tail-feathered,
and see if, gracious Gerth-of-
gold-rings,⁶ the sea-silver⁷
dipped from the deep by men with
dragnets, could be sold us.

And all his money had been so entirely spent to buy the cattle that he had to buy the herrings with his arrows. He spoke this verse:

121. A clasp I got, as goodly (104.)
gift sent me from Iceland,
which for a herd of cattle
wholly I dispended.
Then I sold for sea-fish—
seasons bad did cause this—
nearly all my arrows.
Erstwhile was I richer.



The Saga of Ólaf Tryggvason

Chapter 1. Queen Ástríth Flees and Gives Birth to Óláf

Ástríth was the name of King Tryggvi Ólafsson's wife. She was a daughter of Eirík Bjóthaskalli whose home was at Oprostathir.¹ He was a powerful chieftain.

968 Now after Tryggvi's fall Ástríth fled secretly with all the possessions she could carry with her. She was accompanied by her foster father, called Thórólf Lousebeard, and he never left her. But other faithful friends of hers went to find out what could be learned about her enemies and where they were.

Ástríth was with child by King Tryggvi. She had herself rowed out on a lake, and with few other persons hid herself on a small island. There she bore her child, a boy. And when he was sprinkled with water he was given the name Óláf after his grandfather. There she kept in hiding during the summer, but when the nights became darker and the days grew shorter and the weather cooler, Ástríth started out again, accompanied by Thórólf and only a few others. They went through inhabited places only at night, so that they met with no one. And one day in the evening they arrived at the estate of Oprostathir where dwelled Eirík, Ástríth's father. They proceeded cautiously. Ástríth sent men to the farm to inform him [about her], and he had them led to a small building and set the table for them with the best food. But after Ástríth's companions had stayed there a short while, they left her. And she remained behind with two servant women and her son Óláf, Thórólf Lousebeard, and his six year old son Thorgísl. And there they stayed during the winter.

Chapter 2. Queen Gunnhild and Her Sons Inquire about Ástríth

After the slaying of King Tryggvi, Harald Graycloak and his brother Guthröth went to the estates Tryggvi had owned; but Ástríth was gone, and they could learn nothing about her. They heard the rumor that she was pregnant with the child of King Tryggvi. In the fall they journeyed north, as was mentioned before; and when they met their mother Gunnhild they told her about all that happened on the expedition. She inquired closely concerning Ástríth, and they told her of the rumors they had heard. But because of the fact that the sons of Gunnhild that same fall and the winter following had clashes with Earl Hákon, as was mentioned above, no search was made that winter for Ástríth and her son.

Chapter 3. Queen Ástríth Eludes Her Pursuers

In the spring following, Gunnhild sent spies to the Upplands and throughout Vík to find out what might be the facts about Ástríth. And when they returned they were able to tell her that Ástríth most likely was with her father Eirík and presumably brought up there the child she had with King Tryggvi. Then Gunnhild at once sent men well equipped with horses and arms, thirty in number, with Hákon, a friend of Gunnhild and a man of great power, as leader. She ordered them to journey to Oprostathir, the estate of Eirík, take possession of the son of King Tryggvi, and bring him to her. The men went on their way. But when they had come close to Oprostathir, some friends of Eirík caught sight of them and in the evening informed him about the approach of the men who had been sent. Then right away the same night Eirík got Ástríth ready to depart and with good guides sent her east to Sweden to Hákon the Old, a friend of his and a man of power. They left early in the night, and toward evening of the next day came to the district called Skaun, where they saw a large farm. They went up to it and asked for quarters during the night. They did not say who they were and wore poor clothes. The farmer there, whose name was Bjorn Eitrkveisa, a rich man but of evil nature, drove them away. So the same evening they journeyed to another settlement near by, called Vizkar. The farmer there, Thorstein by name, gave them shelter and entertained them well during the night, so they slept in good beds.

Chapter 4. Farmer Thorstein Hides Ástríth

Hákon and the men with him came to Oprostathir early in the morning and inquired about Ástríth and her son. Eirík told them she was not there. Hákon and his men searched the farm, remaining there a long time during the day, and obtained some information about where Ástríth had gone. They rode the same way and late in the evening came to Bjorn Eitrkveisa in Skaun and stayed there overnight. Hákon asked Bjorn if he could tell them anything about Ástríth. He said that some persons had come there that day who had asked for shelter—“but I drove them away and they are likely to have gotten quarters somewhere else in the settlement.”

One of Thorstein’s workmen in the evening came out of the forest and to Bjorn’s farm, because it was on his way. He observed that guests had come there and learned on what errand they were, and he informed farmer Thorstein. And when two thirds of the night had passed, Thorstein roused his guests and roughly told them to be on their way. And when they had set out and were outside the farm, Thorstein told them that Gunnhild’s men were at Bjorn’s and that they had come to look for them. Ástríth and her companions begged him for help, and he gave them a guide and some provisions. The guide led them into the forest to a pond with a small island in it overgrown with reeds. They had to wade out to the island, and there they hid in the reeds.

Early the next day Hákon left Bjorn’s farm and rode through the settlement, inquiring after Ástríth wherever he came. And when he arrived at Thorstein’s place he asked if they were there. Thorstein said that there had been persons there, but that at daybreak they had set off again eastward into the forest. Hákon asked Thorstein to go with him since he knew [all] the paths and hiding places. Thorstein went with them, but when they came into the forest he led them in a direction opposite to where Ástríth was. They sought them all day but did not find them. Then they returned and told Gunnhild about the result of their expedition. Ástríth and her companions went on their way and finally came to Hákon the Old in Sweden. There, Ástríth and her son Óláf remained for a long time and were well taken care of.

Chapter 5. Hákon the Old Refuses to Surrender the Boy Óláf

Gunnhild Kingsmother learned that Ástríth and her son were in Sweden. Thereupon she again sent Hákon with a goodly company east to Eirík, the king of Sweden, with noble gifts and a message of friendship. The messengers were well received and shown all honor. Then Hákon brought up his message before the king, which was that Gunnhild requested the king to support him in having Óláf Tryggvason return with him to Norway, because “Gunnhild wants to have him as her foster son.” The king supplied him with men, and they rode to the estate of Hákon the Old. Hákon with many friendly words prayed [to have] Óláf go with him. Hákon the Old replied politely, saying that his mother was to determine whether he should go; but Ástríth refused most determinedly to let him.

The messengers departed and told King Eirík what had passed. Thereupon they made ready to return home, but requested the king again to give them a force to take the boy away, whether or not Hákon the Old consented. And again the king furnished them a company of men. The messengers arrived at the estate of Hákon the Old and demanded that the boy should go with them. But when they received a negative answer they used high words, threatening violence, and flew into a rage. Then a certain thrall, called Bursti, ran forward and wanted to strike Hákon, and they narrowly escaped being beaten by the thralls. Thereupon they journeyed home to Norway and told Gunnhild how they had fared, and also that they had seen Óláf Tryggvason.

Chapter 6. Vikings Capture Ástríth and Óláf

Sigurth was the name of Ástríth's brother, a son of Eirík Bjóthaskalli. He had been abroad a long time, staying in the east with King Valdamar in Gartharíki,¹ where Sigurth was held in high esteem. Ástríth was eager to go there to join her brother Sigurth. Hákon the Old gave her a goodly retinue and outfitted her very well. She travelled with some merchants. By then she had been two years with Hákon the Old, and Óláf was three years old. And when they sailed east
971 across the Baltic they were attacked by vikings from Esthonia. They captured both men and goods, killing some and dividing others among them as thralls. There, Óláf was separated from his mother, and Klerkón, an Esthonian, got him as his share, together with Thórólf and Thorgísl. Klerkón thought Thórólf too old to be a thrall, nor able to do slave work, and killed him; but the boys he took with him and sold them to a man called Klerk, in exchange for a good goat. Still a third man bought Óláf, purchasing him for a good cloak or garment. His name was Réás, his wife's Rékón, and their son's Rékóni. Óláf was there for a long time and treated well as the farmer loved him greatly. Óláf stayed six years in Esthonia as an exile.

Chapter 7. Sigurth Ransoms Óláf

Sigurth Eiríksson came to Esthonia, being sent there by King Valdamar of Hólmgarth to fetch from that land the tribute due to the king. Sigurth travelled in great state, accompanied by many men and with much money. In the market place he saw a boy of great beauty, and surmised that he probably was a foreigner there, and asked him about his name and kin. He gave his name as Óláf, and said his father was Tryggvi Óláfsson, and his mother, Ástríth, daughter of Eirík Bjóthaskalli. Then Sigurth understood that the boy was his sister's son. He asked the boy how he had got there, and Óláf told him all that happened to him. Sigurth asked him to come with him to farmer Réás' place. And when he arrived there he bought both boys, Óláf and Thorgísl, and took them with him to Hólmgarth, without letting it be known of what kin Óláf was, and maintained him well.

Chapter 8. The Queen of Gartharíki Takes Óláf under Her Protection

One day Óláf Tryggvason was standing in the market place, where there was a great multitude. He recognized Klerkón there, the man who had killed his foster father, Thórólf Lousebeard. Óláf had a small axe in his hand and struck Klerkón's head with it so that it sank into his brain, and ran home at once to his quarters and told his kinsman Sigurth about it. Sigurth took Óláf speedily to the residence of the queen and told her what had occurred. Her name was Allógíá. Sigurth asked her to help the boy. Looking at the boy she answered that so handsome a boy must not be killed, and summoned a troop to come to her palace, fully armed.

There was such excellent protection by law in Hólmgarth that anyone who killed a person who had not forfeited his life, also should lose his. So according to their custom and laws all the populace rushed to find what had become of the boy. Then they were told that he was in the queen's palace and that a fully armed guard was stationed there. Then the king was informed of what had taken place, and he approached with his guard, unwilling to have it come to a fight. He managed to bring about, first a truce and then a compromise. He adjudged fines which the queen then paid. From that time on Óláf stayed with the queen, and she was very fond of him.

The law obtained in Gartharíki that persons of royal blood were not allowed to reside there except by permission of the king. Then Sigurth told the queen of what kin Óláf was and for what reasons he was there—that he could not stay in his own country on account of his enemies, and asked her to talk about this with the king. She did so, requesting the king to help this king's son, considering what hardships he had undergone. And her intercession effected it that the king agreed and took him into his protection and maintained him in a fashion befitting a king's son.

977 Óláf was nine years old when he came to Gartharíki, and stayed there with King Valdamar another nine years. He was strikingly handsome, very tall and strong, and excelled all others in the accomplishments which are told about Norwegians.

Chapter 9. Earl Hákon Befriends Gold-Harald

Earl Hákon Sigurtharson was with Harald Gormsson, the Danish king, during the winter after fleeing from the sons of Gunnhild. He was filled with such great concern, that winter, that he took to his bed and often was sleepless. He ate and drank only enough to keep up his strength. It was at that time he sent some of his men secretly north to his friends in Trondheim, instigating them to kill King Erling if opportunity offered, and telling them that he meant to return to his lands at the beginning of summer. That very winter the men of Trondheim killed Erling, as is written above.

There was close friendship between Hákon and Gold-Harald. The latter revealed his designs to Hákon. Harald told him he planned to reside on the land and no longer on board his warships. He asked Hákon whether he thought King Harald would be willing to share his kingdom with him if he made that demand.

“I should think,” said Hákon, “that the king of Denmark would not refuse you any of your just claims. But you will find out more certainly about this if you bring it up before the king himself. I do not expect that you will obtain the kingdom unless you lay claim to it.”

Soon after this conversation Gold-Harald spoke to King Harald in the presence of many men of influence, friends of both. On that occasion Gold-Harald demanded of King Harald that he should let him have the half of the kingdom, as his birth entitled him to in Denmark. When he heard this demand King Harald waxed most furious and said that no one had asked King Gorm, his father, to be half-king of the Danish realm, nor Hortha-Knútt [Harde-Canúte], his father’s father, nor Sigurth Serpent-in-the-Eye, nor Ragnar Lothbrók;¹ and he flew into such a passionate rage that no one dared speak to him.

Chapter 10. King Harald of Denmark Asks Earl Hákon for Advice

Then Gold-Harald was more dissatisfied than ever, having dominion no more than before and, moreover, the wrath of the king. Then he came to his friend Hákon again, telling him of his troubles and asking him for his good advice, if he had any, so that he might obtain dominion, and telling him that he had thought of trying to gain possession of the realm by force. Hákon urged him not to utter such speech lest anyone should get to hear it.

“Your very life depends on it. Consider with yourself how much you might be able to accomplish. To execute such dangerous undertakings requires that a man be bold and undaunted and not hesitate to use fair means or foul, so that he may accomplish what he has set out to do. But it is risky to embark on a great enterprise and then to abandon it abjectly.”

Gold-Harald replied, “I mean to urge my claim in such fashion that I shall not hesitate to kill the king with my own hands, if opportunity offers, because he wants to deny me the power which by rights is mine.” With that they concluded their conference.

Then King Harald approached Hákon about the matter and told the earl of the claims Gold-Harald had made to the kingdom and of the answer he had given him—that he would under no condition yield up a part of his dominion; “but if Gold-Harald intends to persist in his claims I shall have no compunction to have him killed; because I suspect evil intentions on his part if he will not desist.”

The earl answered, “In my opinion Harald has gone so far in declaring himself that he is not likely to drop the matter. I expect that if he starts hostilities in the land, many will support him, mostly because of the popularity of his father. But it would be most unfortunate for you to kill your kinsman, for all would say he was innocent as matters stand now. Neither would I advise you to make yourself a lesser king than was your father, Gorm, who greatly increased his dominions and in no wise diminished them.”

Then the king said, “What, then, would be your counsel, Hákon? Shall I neither share the realm nor rid myself of this apprehension?”

“Let us meet again in a few days,” said Earl Hákon. “I shall in the meantime consider this difficulty and come to some decision.” Thereupon the king left, together with all his men.

Chapter 11. King Harald Invites Harald Graycloak to Denmark

Earl Hákon now again brooded a great deal and was concerned about plans, and allowed only a few to be in the house with him. A few days later King Harald came to speak with the earl. The king asked if he had thought about the matter they had touched on.

“I have,” replied the earl. “I have been wakeful about it both day and night ever since, and I have come to the conclusion that you should retain and govern all the realm which your father had and you inherited from him, and give Harald, your kinsman, power over another kingdom which may confer distinction on him.”

“What realm is that,” asked the king, “which I may let Harald have a title to if I keep undivided possession of Denmark?”

The earl replied, “Norway. The kings there mistreat all people of the land. Everyone there, as might be expected, hates them.”

The king said, “Norway is a large country with a hardy people, and difficult to attack with an army from abroad. That was our experience when [King] Hákon defended the land: we lost many men and won no victory. Besides, Harald Eiríksson is my foster son whom I have adopted.”

Then the earl replied, “I have known for a long time that you have lent your support to the sons of Gunnhild; but they have repaid you with nothing but ill. We shall be able to get hold of Norway in a much easier way than by fighting for it with the entire Danish army. Send messengers to your foster son Harald and offer him to have from you that land in fief which they had before in Denmark. Summon him here to meet you. And then Gold-Harald can in a short time win the realm of Norway from King Harald Graycloak.” The king said that it would be called dastardly to betray one’s own Danish foster son. “A preferable alternative would the Danes call it,” said the earl, “to kill a Norwegian viking rather than one’s own nephew.” They debated this a long time until finally they came to an agreement about this.

Chapter 12. Harald Graycloak Accepts the Invitation to Denmark

Gold-Harald again came to speak with Hákon. The earl told him that he had labored in his interest to such good purpose that there were great hopes that he might seize hold of the kingdom of Norway with little effort. “And then,” he said, “we shall maintain our friendship. I can be of great help to you in Norway. Get possession of that kingdom first. King Harald is a very old man now, and he has only one son, whom he has little love for and who is illegitimate.”¹

The earl urged the matter on Gold-Harald until the latter was well taken with it. And they all often discussed this—the king, the earl, and Gold-Harald. Then the Danish king sent messengers north to Norway to the court of Harald Graycloak. They travelled in great state and were well received by King Harald. They delivered this message that Earl Hákon was in Denmark nigh to death and almost out of his mind; also that King Harald of Denmark invited his foster son Harald Graycloak to visit with him; offering to him the revenues which he and his brothers had had in Denmark before, and [suggesting] that he should meet him in Jutland.

Harald Graycloak laid this proposition before Gunnhild and others of his friends, and there were many different opinions about it. Some thought there was something suspicious about a journey such as was proposed for them. But the most of them urged him to undertake it, because at that time there was such a famine in Norway that the kings hardly managed to feed their followers. It was then that the fjord where the kings resided most often received the name of Harthanger.² The season in Denmark was fairly good, so people thought they might get provisions from there if King Harald received fiefs and revenues there. So before the messengers departed it was decided that King Harald would sail to Denmark in the summer, to meet with the king of Denmark and receive of him what had been offered.

Chapter 13. Earl Hákon Plans Gold-Harald's Death

976 In the following summer King Graycloak sailed to Denmark with three warships. One was captained by Hersir Arinbjorn from the Fjord District.

King Harald sailed from Vík to the Limfjord and anchored at Háls. He was told that the Danish king would be there very soon. But when Gold-Harald learned of his arrival, he sailed to that place with nine warships. Before, he had equipped that force to go on a viking expedition. Earl Hákon likewise had equipped his ships for the same purpose. He had twelve ships, all of large size. And when Gold-Harald had sailed away, Earl Hákon said to the king,

“Now I don't know but we shall row on a levy of war and yet will have to pay a fine for not obeying the summons. Very likely Gold-Harald will now kill Harald Graycloak. And then he is likely to be the king in Norway. Do you believe he will be faithful to you, once you have given him such power? Because this winter he said to me he would kill you if chance offered. Now I shall win Norway for you and slay Gold-Harald if you pledge me your faith that I shall have no difficulty in being reconciled with you for that deed. I shall then become earl under you, confirming that by oaths, and with your support win Norway for you and afterwards possess myself of the land under your suzerainty and pay you tribute; then you will be a greater king than your father if you have dominion over two nations.” The king and the earl agreed on these terms. Thereupon Hákon departed with his fleet to search for Gold-Harald.

Chapter 14. Gold-Harald Fells Harald Graycloak

Gold-Harald arrived at Háls in the Limfjord and immediately challenged Harald Graycloak to do battle with him. And although Harald had a smaller force he straightway disembarked and made ready for the fight, putting his troops in battle array. And before the hostile forces met, Harald Graycloak incited his troops with fiery words to draw their swords, and at once ran forward to the head of his column, mowing down people right and left. As says Glúm Geirason in his *Gráfeldardrápa*:

122. Words unwavering spoke the (105.)
war-play's royal urger
gallant, who with gore his
glaive reddened in battle.
Hardy Harald bade his
henchmen draw from scabbard—
well that pleased the warriors—
wound-snakes for bloody combat.

There fell King Harald Graycloak. As says Glúm Geirason:

123. Harald, fond of horses, (106.)
had to lie, the roller-
steed's-steerer, on the spreading
strands of Eylimi's inlet.¹
Fell the fire-of-rivers²
free-handed giver at Háls thorp.
Caused the cunning double-tongued
comrade of kings³ this slaying.

With him fell most of Harald's men. Hersir Arinbjorn fell there. Fifteen years
976 had then passed since the death of Hákon, Æthelstān's foster son, and
thirteen, since the death of Sigurth, earl of Hlathir. Priest Ari Thorgilsson
says that Earl Hákon resided thirteen years on his patrimony in Trondheim
before the fall of Harald Graycloak, and that during the last six years of Harald
Graycloak's life Hákon and the sons of Gunnhild fought one another, with one
or the other fleeing the land.

Chapter 15. Earl Hákon Defeats and Hangs Gold-Harald

Shortly after the fall of Harald Graycloak, Earl Hákon encountered Gold-Harald and gave battle to him. Hákon was victorious, Gold-Harald was captured, and Hákon had him hanged on a gallows. Thereupon Hákon sought out the king and had little difficulty in achieving a reconciliation with him about the killing of his kinsman Gold-Harald. Thereupon King Harald summoned an army from all over his kingdom and sailed abroad with six hundred [720] ships. Along with him were Earl Hákon and Harald of Grenland, the son of King Guthröth, and many other chieftains who had fled from their possessions in Norway to escape the sons of Gunnhild. Coming from the south, the Danish king sailed his fleet into Vík, and the people all swore allegiance to him. When he arrived at Túnsberg a great multitude went over to him, and King Harald gave to Earl Hákon all the troops that had joined him in Norway, and bestowed on him the government of Rogaland, Horthaland, Sogn, the Fjord District, South Mør, Raums Dale, and North Mør—these seven districts King Harald bestowed on Earl Hákon to govern, with the same stipulations under which Harald Fairhair had given them to his sons; with this exception, however, that Hákon was to have possession, there and in Trondheim, of all royal estates and revenues. He was also to have the royal revenues he needed if an enemy invaded the land. To Harald of Grenland he gave Vingulmork, Westfold, and Agthir to Lithandisness,¹ together with the title of “King” and let him in every way have the same power as before him his kinsmen had had and Harald Fairhair had given his sons. Harald of Grenland was eighteen years at the time, and later on became a man of importance. Thereupon King Harald of Denmark returned to his country with all his Danish troops.

Chapter 16. Gunnhild and Her Sons Flee Norway

Earl Hákon sailed north along the land with his fleet. Now when Gunnhild and her sons learned of these happenings they tried to collect a force, but were not successful. They resorted to the same plan as before and sailed west across the sea together with all those who would follow them, going first to the Orkneys, where they remained for a while. Before that time the sons of Thorfith Hausakljúf, Hlothvir and Arnvith, Ljót and Skúli, had ruled there as earls.

Earl Hákon took possession of all the land and resided in Trondheim that year. As says Einar Skálaglamm in his poem of *Vellekla*:

124. Shires seven the silken (107.)
 circlet's¹ wearer—startling
 turn things took then—blameless
 to his earlship added.

In the summer, when Earl Hákon sailed along the land from the south and the people of the land swore him allegiance, he commanded that throughout his dominions all people were to maintain the heathen temples and the sacrifices [in them]; and he was obeyed. As is said in the poem *Vellekla*:

125. High the prince bade hold all (108.)
 holy places in honor,
 eke the fanes, 'mong folk far-
 famed, which had been ravaged
 ere the thewful Thór-of-shields² with
 thin-edged wand-of-wounds had—
 guided was he by godheads—
 gained the rule of Norway.

126. And the glorious godheads (109.)
 go back to their offerings.
 Furthers that the folkland's
 far-famed warshield-reddener.³
 Now grows the earth as erstwhile;
 as before, again now
 stand, undisturbed, in their
 stead the blessed Æsir.

127. Under the earl lies now (110.)

all the land of Norway
north of Vík; so widely
wields his power Hákon.

The first winter Hákon ruled over Norway, shoals of herring came near land all over the country, and during the fall before, the grain had matured wherever it had been sowed. And in the spring farmers provided themselves with seed corn, so that most of them could sow their fields, and a good season was promising.

Chapter 17. King Ragnfröth Invades Norway

King Ragnfröth, a son of Gunnhild, and Guthröth, another son—these alone were still living of the sons of Eirík and Gunnhild. As says Glúm Geirason in his *Gráfeldardrápa*:

128. Half my hopes of riches (111.)
have now vanished, since in
dart-storm¹ Harald died, the
doughty war-lord, lately.
But I know that both his
brothers—have full many
pinned their hopes for pelf on
princes twain—will help me.

After he had been one winter in the Orkneys, Ragnfröth outfitted an expedition and then sailed east to Norway with select troops and large ships. When he arrived in Norway he learned that Earl Hákon was in Trondheim. Then Ragnfröth steered north around Cape Stath and harried in South Mær, and some people swore him allegiance; as often happens when bodies of warriors pass through a land, when those who are exposed to danger seek help, each where he thinks most likely.

Earl Hákon learned that there were hostilities south in Mær. Then he procured ships and sent round the war-arrows. He got ready the fastest he could and sailed out of the fjord with a goodly force. He met Ragnfröth in the northern part of South Mær, and gave battle to him at once. He had a larger fleet but smaller ships. There was a hard fight, and Ragnfröth had the upper hand. They fought about the forecastles, as was the custom then. There was a current in the sound, and all the ships drifted to landward. The earl also had his ships rowed stern foremost to where he thought it best to go on shore. And when the ships touched bottom, the earl with all his troops left the ships and drew them up on land so that their foes should not be able to pull them into the water. Then the earl put his troops in battle array on land and taunted Ragnfröth to come ashore. Ragnfröth laid his ships alongside the land, and the two forces shot at each other for a long time. Ragnfröth did not choose to go on land, and with that they parted.

Ragnfröth steered his fleet south around Stath Headland, because he was afraid of the land troops if [many of them] joined Earl Hákon. But the earl did not wish to do battle with him because he considered the difference in the size of

ships too great against himself. So in the fall he sailed north to Trondheim, but King Ragnfröth had sway over all the land south of Stath—the Fjord District, Sogn, Horthaland, and Rogaland. He had many followers about him
978 during the winter. And when spring set in he summoned a levy and got a large force together. He went about all these districts to procure troops, ships, and the provisions he needed.

Chapter 18. Earl Hákon Puts Ragnfröth to Flight

When spring came, Earl Hákon summoned troops from all the northern part of the country. A great force came to him from Hálogaland and Naumu Dale; and also from Byrtha to Stath he was joined by troops from all lands along the sea. Reinforcements came to him from all the Trondheim districts as well as from Raums Dale. It is said [in poems] that he had troops from four folk. Seven earls followed him, and together they had a huge number of men. As is said in *Vellekla*:

129. Thereupon the prince, the (112.)
peace of Mær's defender,
salty waves did sail to
Sogn, eager for battle.
Out of the folklands four, the
Frey-of-Hethin's-stormblast¹
led forth all the levy—
lay that in his purpose.

130. Eke on their swift sail-steeds (113.)
seven raven-gladdening
hersar hurried, joining
Hákon, to the conflict.
Rang all Norway's realm when
reddeners-of-bucklers²
clashed in carnage—bloody
corpses floated past headlands.

With all this force Earl Hákon rounded Cape Stath, sailing south. Then he heard that King Ragnfröth with his fleet had moved into the Sogn District. So he proceeded there and encountered Ragnfröth. The earl moved his ships to the land and marked out a battlefield³ for King Ragnfröth, choosing his ground. As is said in *Vellekla*:

131. Waged the wide-famed chieftain (114.)
war-play, slaughtering many.
Again then Hákon gathered
galleys, his sword to redden.
Bade the buckler's-destroyer
beach the rudder-horses,

and in order of battle
endlong 'rayed his warriors.

Then there was a very great battle. Earl Hákon had a much larger force and was victorious. This happened on Thinganes, where Sogn and Horthaland meet. King Ragnfröth fled to his ships, but he lost three hundred [360] of his men. As is said in *Vellekla*:

132. Stern the struggle, ere the (115.)
stalwart bonders' leader
under eagles' beak could
eftsoons thrust⁴ three hundred.
Seaward sailing then his
sloops of war, the active
gold-dispender grim—a
gain was that—his foes dogged.

After this battle King Ragnfröth fled from Norway, and Earl Hákon restored the country to peace and let the great army which had been under his leadership during the summer return north, but himself remained there that fall and winter.

Chapter 19. Earl Hákon's Children by Thóra

Earl Hákon had married Thóra, daughter of Skagi Skoptason, a man of high rank. She was an unusually beautiful woman. Their sons were Svein and Heming. Bergljót, their daughter, later married Einar Thambarskelfir. Earl Hákon was a great lover of women and had many children. One of his daughters was named Ragnhild. He gave her in marriage to Skopti Skagason, brother of Thóra. The earl loved Thóra so much that he favored her kinsmen above all others; and especially Skopti, his son-in-law, he valued most of all her relatives. The earl assigned great revenues to him in Mær; and whenever they were on an expedition by sea, Skopti was to moor his ship next to the earl's, and no one was to presume to moor his ship between them.



Earl Hákon's ships at anchor during the night.

Chapter 20. Earl Eirík Slays Skopti Skagason

One summer when Earl Hákon had summoned a fleet, Thorleif the Wise was the skipper of one of his ships. Eirík, who was by then some ten or eleven years old, was on board with him. And when they dropped anchor in harbors in the evening, Eirík would have it that they should choose their berth next to the earl's ship. But when they arrived south in Mœr, Skopti, the earl's son-in-law, joined them with a well-manned warship. And when rowing toward the fleet, Skopti called out to Thorleif to move out of the place where they were moored to make room for his ship. Eirík replied quickly, requesting Skopti to find another berth. Earl Hákon overheard this—that his son Eirík thought himself so important that he did not care to yield to Skopti—and he called out at once, demanding that Thorleif remove his ship, or else it would be worse for them and that they might expect a drubbing.

When Thorleif heard this he called to his men and bade them undo the hawsers [with which they had made fast to the earl's ship], and they did so. Then Skopti moved in the space he was accustomed to occupy next to the earl's ship.

Whenever the two met, Skopti was to inform the earl of all happenings, and the earl was to tell him if he had heard of them before him. He was called Tidings-Skopti.

In the following winter Eirík stayed with his foster father Thorleif, but early in spring Eirík procured for himself a company of men. Thorleif gave him a skiff with fifteen rowers' benches, and with all equipment, tenting, and provisions. Then Eirík sailed out of the fjord and south to Mœr. Tidings-Skopti, with a skiff with fifteen rowers' benches, and all manned, was travelling from one of his estates to another. Eirík steered up to him and gave battle. There Skopti fell, but Eirík gave quarter to the men who were still living. As says Eyólf Dáthaskáld¹ in his *Bandadrápa*:

133. Fell the young prince, fearless—
fatal was that battle—
late at eve on the enemy;
equal were their forces,
when the wound-flame's wielder,²
war-play eager—oft he
wolves fed on the flesh of
fallen foe—slew Skopti.

(116.)

134. Hardy hoard-dispender³ (117.)
hastened death for Hákon's
steward—bloody the struggle—
stoutly battled Skopti.
Was then the wayfaring
wealth-bestower slain by
sovrán's scion in combat.
*Seized the land by gods' will.*⁴

Then Eirík sailed south along the land and finally arrived in Denmark. There he sought King Harald Gormsson at his court, and stayed with him during the winter. But in spring the Danish king sent Eirík north to Norway after bestowing on him the title of “earl” and the revenues of Vingulmork and Raumaríki, under the same conditions as the vassal kings had had before. As says Eyólf Dáthaskáld:

135. Few of the folklord's years were, (118.)
fight-filled—hear my poem—
spent on his sea-serpent⁵
sleek in southern waters,
ere the athelings, ever
eager for storm-of-arrows,
had the young helm-clad
hero rule over folk-lands.

Earl Eirík in time became a great chieftain.

Chapter 21. Óláf Tryggvason Leaves Hólmgarth

All this time Óláf Tryggvason was in Gartharíki, greatly favored by King Valdamar and loved by the queen. King Valdamar made him chieftain over the troops which he dispatched to defend his country. Óláf fought some battles, and the command of this army was in good hands. He himself kept a company of warriors, given him by the king, at his own expense. Óláf was very free-handed with his men and thus became popular. But as often happens when foreigners gain power or acquire such great fame, beyond that got by men of the country, he was envied by many for being greatly favored by the king and no less by the queen. Many warned the king against giving Óláf too much power, “because, if he will lend himself to inflict harm on you or the land, a man with such achievements and so popular is most risky for you to have. Nor, for that matter, do we know what he and the queen are always talking about.”¹

It was often the custom of powerful kings to let their queens have half their bodyguard, maintaining them at their own expense, and for that purpose [to let them] have such revenues and taxes as were needed. That was the case also with King Valdamar; the queen had a bodyguard no smaller than that of the king, and they vied with each other to obtain men of prominence, both wanting to get hold of such.

It so happened that the king came to believe such words which people addressed to him, and he became somewhat cool to Óláf, showing displeasure. As soon as Óláf discovered that, he told the queen about it, and also that he was eager to go to the northern lands; also, that his kinsmen had had dominion there before and that he thought it likeliest that he would prosper most there. The queen bade him to go if he so pleased and said that he would be considered a man of distinction wherever he was. Thereupon he prepared to leave. He

986 boarded a ship and sailed out into the Baltic. And as he sailed west he touched on Borgundarholm,² where he made a descent and harried. The men of the country rushed down to the strand and gave battle to him, but Óláf was victorious and got much booty.

Chapter 22. Óláf Tryggvason Marries Princess Geira

While Óláf lay with his ship by Borgundarholm he experienced a sharp gale with strong seas and could not hold himself there, so he sailed south to Wendland,¹ where he found a good harbor. He proceeded peaceably and stayed there for some time. Búrizláf² was the name of the king of Wendland. His daughters were Geira, Gunnhild, and Ástríth. At the place where Óláf had landed, Princess Geira had sway and power, and a man called Dixin had most to say with her. And when it was learned that unknown men had landed there who were of lordly appearance and were peaceably inclined, Dixin went to meet them, bringing a message from Queen Geira to the effect that she would offer winter quarters to the men who had come there; because summer was well-nigh past and the weather was severe, with hard storms. And when Dixin met them he soon was aware that their chieftain was a man distinguished both in appearance and by birth. Dixin told them that the queen invited them to her court with an offer of friendship. Óláf accepted that invitation and proceeded to Queen Geira's court to spend the winter there. They took a great liking to one another; so much so that Óláf asked for Princess Geira's hand, and it was decided that Óláf was to marry her that winter. Then he became the governor of that country with her. Hallfróth Vandræthaskáld³ mentions this in the *drápa* which he composed about King Óláf:

136. On the island Óláf (119.)
arrows with blood colored—
why should that be hidden?
Hólmgarth also felt him.⁴

Chapter 23. Earl Hákon Retains the Tribute to Denmark

Earl Hákon ruled over Norway and paid no tribute, for the reason that the king of Denmark forgave him all the tribute which was due to him from Norway, because of the trouble and expense the earl had been put to in defending his country against the sons of Gunnhild.

Chapter 24. King Harald Summons Earl Hákon to Aid Him against Emperor Otto

At that time Otto¹ was emperor in Saxland. He sent word to King Harald of Denmark, demanding that he should let himself be baptized and adopt the true faith, together with the people he ruled, or else he would move against him with his army. Thereupon Harald had the defences of his land put in order. He had the Danavirki² maintained and his warships made ready for action. Then he sent messengers to Earl Hákon in Norway requesting him to join him early in the spring with all the forces he could muster. So in spring Earl Hákon
988 summoned a levy in all his dominions, and a great force it was; and with it he sailed to Denmark to join the king of Denmark. The king received him most graciously. Many other chieftains were with the king of Denmark at that time in order to lend him support, so he had a huge force.

Chapter 25. Óláf Harries in the Baltic

As was set down before, Óláf Tryggvason had been in Wendland during the winter. During that season he proceeded to those districts in Wendland which had been subject to Queen Geira, but had at that time forsworn all allegiance to her and refused to pay tribute. Óláf harried there, killing many, burning the houses down for others, and took much booty, subduing these shires, whereupon he returned to his stronghold.

Early in spring Óláf got his ships ready and sailed out to sea. He sailed along the coast of Scania and went on land there [to harry], but the men of the country gathered and fought him. Óláf was victorious and took much booty. Then he sailed east to the Island of Gotland. There he captured a merchantman which was owned by men from Jamtaland. They offered stout resistance. In the end, Óláf cleared the ship of men, killing many, and took all their goods. A third battle he had on Gotland, where Óláf was the victor and took much booty. As says Hallfröth Vandræthaskáld:

137. Erstwhile, the fanes'-flouter¹
felled in battle—early
was he wont to war-play—
Wends and Jamts in the Baltic.
Mortal was to many
men of Gotland he who
the stern storm-of-spears did
stir on shores of Scania.

(120.)

Chapter 26. Earl Hákon Helps Defend the Danavirki

Emperor Otto drew together a great army. He had troops from Saxony, Franconia, and Frísia, from Wendland King Búrizláf had joined him with many troops; and in that force there was, in company with him, Óláf Tryggvason, his son-in-law. The emperor had a large force of knights, and an even greater one of foot soldiers. Also from Holstein he was joined by a large army. King Harald sent Earl Hákon and the Norwegians with him south to the Danavirki, there to defend his land. As is said in *Vellekla*:

138. Eke 'neath the nimble-footed (121.)
nags-of-Áli¹ fared he
early in din-of-darts with
Denmark's king to battle.
Helm-clad, Sigurth's son and
Sogn's lord and the Horthar's,²
sailed over the salt waves
south to join the Danish.

139. And toward winter would the (122.)
wealth-dispending Danish
folk-king test the troth of
tough-minded Earl Hákon,
when the breastwork's builder³
bade the doughty fighter
guard the goodly ramparts
'gainst the Saxons' onrush.

Emperor Otto proceeded with his army from the south to the Danavirki, but Earl Hákon with his troops defended the wall of the fortification. The Danavirki is disposed in this fashion: two fjords penetrate the land, each from its side; and between the heads of these fjords the Danes had constructed a great fortified wall of stone and turf and timbers, and dug a broad and deep moat outside of it, and there were strongholds in front of the gates of the fortification. A great battle began. In *Vellekla* this is said about it:

140. Not easy was't to enter (123.)
into breastwork by him⁴
defended, fiercely though the
foeman stormed against it,

when with Franks and Frisians
fared the battle-urges⁵—
had the roller-steed's rider
raised a host—from southward.

Earl Hákon stationed troops in all strongholds, but the greater part of his forces he disposed along the walls to put up a defence where the attack was heaviest. Many in the emperor's army fell there, and they were not able to take the stronghold. Then the emperor desisted and tried no longer there. As is said in *Vellekla*:

141. Fray most fierce arose, when (124.)
foemen, shield 'gainst shield, clashed.
Stalwart steerer-of-sea-nags
stood his ground 'gainst Southrons.
Promptly the prow-steed's-rider⁶
put to flight the Saxons.
There it was he threw back
throngs of the assailants.

After this battle Earl Hákon returned to his ships, intending to sail back north to Norway, but he had contrary winds. So he remained anchored in the Limfjord.

Chapter 27. King Harald and Earl Hákon Are Baptized

Emperor Otto then withdrew with his army to the Slé[fjord]. There he gathered a fleet and moved his troops across the fjord into Jutland. When Harald, the king of Denmark learned of that he advanced against him with his army. A great battle arose, and in the end the emperor won the victory, and the Danish king fled to the Limfjord, where he rowed over to the Island of Mársey. Thereupon messages were interchanged between emperor and king, and an armistice was set and a meeting between them arranged to take place on the Island of Mársey. Then Poppo, a holy bishop, preached the faith to King Harald. He bore a glowing iron in his hand, and showed his hand unburned to King Harald. Thereupon King Harald let himself be baptized, together with the whole Danish army.

Before, when King Harald was settled on the Island of Mársey, he had sent messengers to Earl Hákon to come to his support. And the earl had arrived at the island when the king had let himself be baptized. Then the king sent him word to come to him, and when they met, the king forced the earl to accept baptism. So Earl Hákon and all the men who had accompanied him were baptized. Then the king gave him priests and other learned men along and commanded that the earl was to have all the people in Norway baptized. Thereupon they parted. Earl Hákon sailed to the mouth of the fjord and there waited for a favorable breeze. And when a breeze arose which he thought would carry him out to sea, he set ashore all learned men and sailed out to sea.

The wind veered to southwest and west, and the earl then sailed east [north] through the Eyrar Sound,¹ harrying on both sides. Then he crossed over to Scania and harried wherever he landed. And when he arrived at the Gauta Skerries² in the east, he anchored and made a great sacrifice. Then two ravens came flying, croaking loudly. Then the earl believed that Óthin had accepted the sacrifice and that it was a propitious time to fight. He burned all his ships and went up on land with all his troops and proceeded, harrying wherever he came.



Earl Hákon puts the clerics on land.

Then Earl Óttar who ruled over Gautland advanced against him. There was a great battle. Earl Hákon was the victor, and Earl Óttar and many of his men fell. Earl Hákon went about Gautland, both east and west, harrying everywhere, until he arrived in Norway, when he took the way overland north till he arrived in Trondheim. This is related in *Vellekla*:

142. Asked he then the oracle, (125.)
up on land he wended.

Got him the god-of-war³ for
game-of-swords a day set.
And the rampart-reddener
ravens twain saw flying.
Would the shield-shatterer
shorten the lives of Gautar.

143. Fought the earl, where ere this (126.)
atheling under Sorli's

house⁴ never had harried,
high-souled, storm-of-arrows.
Farther from the swans'-road
fared no man 'neath gold-dight
helmet: Hákon through the
whole of Gautland wended.

(127.)

144. Battlefields with bloody
bodies covered were by
god-descended scion of
sea-kings. Got Óthin the fallen.
Who can doubt but deities
deign to govern his life-course.

Chapter 28. Óláf Tryggvason Returns to Wendland with King Búrizláf

Emperor Otto returned to his realm of Saxland. He and the king of Denmark parted in friendship. It is said that Emperor Otto became godfather to Svein, the son of Harald, and bestowed his name upon him and had him baptized with the name of Otto Svein. King Harald of Denmark held fast to the Christian faith till his dying day. King Búrizláf then returned to Wendland, and with him, Óláf, his son-in-law. Of this battle Hallfröth Vandræthaskáld makes mention in his *Óláfsdrápa*:

145. The steerer-of-sea-steeds then (128.)
steel-clad warriors in Denmark
from sarks of mail severed,
south of Heithabýr Town.¹

Chapter 29. Óláf Tryggvason Reverts to the Viking Life

990 Óláf Tryggvason had been three years in Wendland when his wife Geira was stricken with a disease which brought about her death. This grieved Óláf so that he liked it no longer in Wendland. So he procured himself warships and again went on viking expeditions, harrying first in Frísia and then in Saxland and even in the land of the Flemings. As Hallfróth Vandræthaskáld says [in his *Óláfsdrápa*]:

146. Slew oft Tryggvi's scion (129.)
Saxon warriors—food he
furnished wilding wolves by
weapon-thing¹—in Southland.
Far and wide the foe of
Frisians gave the witch's-
steed² dark blood to drink, by
dealing many the death-blow.

147. He who helps men's strife to (130.)
halt,³ killed many on Valkeren,⁴
and with Flemings' flesh he
fattened hungry ravens.

Chapter 30. Óláf Harries in the British Islands

After that, Óláf Tryggvason sailed to England, harrying far and wide in that land. He sailed all the way north to Northumberland and harried there. From there he sailed north to Scotland and harried there far and wide. Then he set his course to the Hebrides, where he had some battles. From there he sailed south to the Isle of Man and had some engagements there. He also harried far and wide in Ireland. Then he sailed to Wales, harrying that land far and wide, and also the country called Cumberland. From there he sailed west [south] to Valland [France] and harried there. Thereupon he steered east [north], intending to reach England. Then he arrived at the Scilly Islands, which lie in the sea west of England. As says Hallfróth Vandræthaskáld:

148. Difficult to deal with (131.)
did he prove to the English;
the arrow-storm's urger
awed the Northumbrians.
Wasted the wolves'-feeder
widely Scottish folklands.
The gold-ring-giver reddened
glaives boldly on Man Isle.

149. The bender-of-the-bow then let (132.)
British islanders perish,
Irishmen eke—was he
eager ever for glory.
Smote he those on Celtic
soil who dwelled—the ravens'
hunger dwindled—hewed eke
hordes of Cymric peasants.

Óláf Tryggvason passed four years on viking expeditions after leaving Wendland and before arriving at the Scilly Islands.

Chapter 31. Óláf Tryggvason Meets a Hermit and Is Converted

When Óláf Tryggvason was anchored in the Scilly Islands he heard that on one of the islands there lived a soothsayer who prophesied future events which to many seemed to come true. Óláf grew curious and wished to test the prophecies of this man. He sent to him one of his handsomest and tallest men, attiring him most splendidly, and bade him say that he was the king, because Óláf had become famous in all lands for being handsomer and more stately and taller than any other man. After having left Gartharíki he had not used his own name but called himself Óla and given out that he was from Gartharíki.

But when this messenger came to the soothsayer and said he was the king, he received this answer: “You are not the king, and I give you the advice to be faithful to your king.” Nor did he say more to this man. The messenger returned and related this to Óláf, and Óláf was all the more eager to meet this man after hearing that he had answered in this wise, and he doubted no longer that he was a prophet. Then Óláf himself sought him out and spoke with him and asked what he would prophesy concerning whether he would attain a kingdom or be fortunate otherwise. The hermit replied with a holy prophecy.

“You will become a famous king and work famous deeds. You will bring many men to the true faith and baptism, and in so doing benefit both yourself and many others. And lest you doubt my answer, let this be a token: when you come to your ships you shall encounter a traitor band, and that will lead to fighting, and you will put to death some of the band, and you will yourself receive a mortal wound and be borne on your shield to the ship. But you will recover from this wound within seven days and be baptized soon thereafter.”

Thereupon Óláf returned to his ships, and there he met a hostile band aiming to kill him and his crew, and it all turned out as the hermit had predicted—Óláf was borne wounded to his ship and, too, he recovered in seven days. Then Óláf believed that this man had told him the truth and that he was a real prophet, from whatever source he had the gift of prophecy.

Then Óláf again visited this man, spoke about many things with him, and asked him whence he had this wisdom that he could foretell the future. The hermit said that it was the god of Christian men himself who let him know all he was anxious to know. He told Óláf of many miracles of God, and persuaded Óláf to be baptized; and so Óláf and all his men were baptized there. He
993 remained there for a long time, learning about the true faith, and took with him priests and other learned men from there.

Chapter 32. Óláf Defeats Alvini and Marries Gytha

In the fall Óláf sailed from the Scilly Islands to England and anchored in some harbor. He proceeded peaceably, for England was Christian, and he too was a Christian. A summons had gone about the land that all men should come to the assembly. And when the assembly met, there came to it a certain queen called Gytha. She was the sister of Óláf Kváran who was a king in Ireland [with his seat] in Dublin.¹ She had been married in England to a powerful earl. He had passed away, and she maintained herself in the earldom after him.

There was a certain man in her dominions called Alvini, a great champion, who challenged others to single combat. He had asked her in marriage, but she answered that she meant herself to choose the man living in her dominions whom she would marry; and the assembly had been called for the purpose of letting Gytha make her choice of a mate. Alvini had met there, arrayed in most splendid garments, and there were many others there in fine apparel.

Óláf had come there, dressed in his workaday clothes, with a fur cloak over them. He and his company stood apart from the others. Gytha walked about, looking at everyone who seemed to her of manly deportment. And when she came to where Óláf stood and looked up into his face, she asked him who he was. He gave his name as Óla. “I am a foreigner here,” he said.

Gytha said, “If you care to marry me I will choose you.”

“I shall not refuse that,” he said. He asked what her name was, and what her kin and origin.

“I am,” she said, “the daughter of a king in Ireland. I was married in this country to the earl who had sway here. And since he passed away I have ruled here. There have been men who have asked for my hand, but no one to whom I would be married. My name is Gytha.” She was young and handsome.

They discussed this matter and came to an agreement between them. Óláf betrothed himself to Gytha. This displeased Alvini greatly. But it was the custom in England that if two men contended about a matter, it should be decided by single combat. Alvini challenged Óláf Tryggvason to single combat to settle this matter, and they agreed on a time for the fight. They were to have twelve men on either side. When they met, Óláf told his men to do as he did. He had a big battle-axe, and when Alvini was about to hew at him with his sword he knocked the sword out of his hands, and with another blow he felled Alvini. Then Óláf bound him fast. And all of Alvini’s men fared thus—they were knocked down, tied, and led to Óláf’s quarters. Thereupon he ordered Alvini to leave the land

and not to return, and took possession of all his property. Then Óláf married Gytha and resided in England, but at times in Ireland.

Once Óláf was in Ireland on some warlike expedition with his fleet. And when they required to make a raid on the shore for food, some men went on land and drove a great number of cattle down to the shore. Then a farmer ran after them and prayed Óláf to let him have the cows he owned, and Óláf told him he could have his cows if he recognized them, "but don't delay us." The farmer had with him a large cattle dog. He pointed him into the flock, where many hundred cattle were being driven. The dog circled the whole herd and drove away as many cows as the farmer said he owned, and they all bore the same mark, so they believed that the dog had recognized them properly, and they thought the dog marvellously clever. Then Óláf asked the farmer if he would give him the dog.

"Gladly," said the farmer. Óláf right away gave him a gold ring in return and promised him his friendship. That dog was called Vígi and was a most outstanding dog. Óláf kept him for a long time afterwards.

Chapter 33. King Harald Gormsson Is Discouraged from Invading Iceland

Harald Gormsson, king of Denmark, learned that Earl Hákon had renounced Christianity and had harried far and wide in the Danish realm. Then he levied troops and sailed to Norway. And when he came to the domain ruled by Earl Hákon he harried there and laid all the land waste. At last he came to the islands called Solundir.¹ Only five farms remained un-burned in Lær Dale in the Sogn District, and the people all fled into the mountains and forests with all the possessions they could take along. Then the king of Denmark had the intention to sail with his fleet to Iceland to avenge the insult which all Icelanders had heaped on him. It had been put into the laws in Iceland that a lampooning verse about the Danish king be composed for every head in the land. The reason for this was that when a vessel owned by Icelanders was shipwrecked in Denmark, the Danes appropriated all the cargo, calling it goods drifted ashore. And it was a bailiff of the king, called Birgir who was responsible for that. Lampooning verses were composed about him and the king. Among them is this one:

150. South of the sea when Harald (133.)
set upon the mare-horse,
wax-soft was his limb and
weak, though he a stallion.
Was base, mare-like² Birgir
banned from the isle by land-wights
angrily eying him—
all the world did see that.

King Harald bade a warlock to journey to Iceland and find out what he could tell him. He went in a whale's-shape. And when he came to Iceland he proceeded west and north around it. He saw that all mountains and hills were full of land-wights, some big and some small. And when he came to the Vápnafjord he swam into the fjord, intending to go ashore there. Then a big dragon came down the valley, followed by many serpents, toads, and adders that blew poison against him. Then he swam away, heading west along the land, all the way to the Eyjafjord, and he entered into that fjord. Then there flew against him a bird so large that its wings touched the mountains on either side of the fjord, and a multitude of other birds besides, both large and small. Away he backed from there, swimming west around the land and then south to the Breithafjord and entered that fjord. Then came against him a big bull, wading out into the water

and bellowing fearfully. A multitude of land-wights followed him. Away he backed from there, swimming around Reykjaness, and intended to come ashore at Víkarsskeith. Then came against him a mountain giant with an iron bar in his hand, and his head was higher than the mountains, and many other giants were with him. From there he swam east along the whole land—“and there was nothing but sands and a harborless coast,” he said, “with a tremendous surf to seaward; and the sea between the lands is so wide that it is not feasible to sail there with warships.”

At that time there dwelled Brodd-Helgi in the Vápnafjord District, Eyólf Valgertharson in the Eyjafjord District, Thórth Gellir in the Breithafjord District, and Thórodd the Priest in the Olfus District.

Thereupon the king of Denmark sailed his fleet south along the land, and then to Denmark. But Earl Hákon had all the land cultivated again and paid no more tribute to the king of Denmark afterwards.

Chapter 34. Of King Svein Forkbeard and the Jómsvíkings

Svein, the son of King Harald, who later was called Forkbeard, demanded a share of the kingdom from his father; but then it was as before, that King Harald would not divide the Danish realm into two parts and did not give him any part of his dominion. Then Svein procured himself warships and indicated that he would go on a viking expedition. And when his troops were gathered and he had been joined by Pálna-Tóki¹ of the Jómsvíkings, Svein sailed to Seeland and into the Isafjord. There, King Harald lay moored with his fleet, making ready to go on a sea expedition. Svein gave him battle, and it was a severe engagement. Then support arrived for King Harald, so that Svein was overpowered and fled. In the battle King Harald received mortal wounds. Thereupon Svein became king of Denmark.

At that time Sigvaldi ruled as earl in Jómsborg in Wendland. He was the son of King Strút-Harald, who had ruled the province of Scania. Heming and Thorkel the Tall were the brothers of Sigvaldi. Another chieftain over the Jómsvíkings was Búi the Stout of Borgundarholm and his brother Sigurth. There was also Vagn, the son of Áki and Thorgunna, and sister's son of Búi. Sigvaldi had taken King Svein captive and brought him to Jómsborg in Wendland and compelled him to make peace with Búrizláf, the king of the Wends, with him, Earl Sigvaldi, as the umpire. Sigvaldi was married to Ástríth, a daughter of King Búrizláf. If he would not, Sigvaldi said, he would deliver him up to the Wends. But the king knew that they would torture him to death, and therefore he agreed to the peace the earl would arrange. The earl decreed that King Svein should marry Gunnhild, another daughter of King Búrizláf, and King Búrizláf should marry Thyra, the daughter of Harald and sister of King Svein; that both of them should retain their own kingdom, and that there should be peace between their countries. After that, King Svein returned to Denmark with Gunnhild, his spouse. Their sons were Harald and Knút [Canúte] the Powerful. At that time the Danes constantly threatened to proceed with a fleet to Norway against Earl Hákon.

Chapter 35. The Vows of Svein and the Jómsvíkings

994 King Svein arranged a great feast, requesting the presence of all the chieftains in his realm. He intended to honor his father Harald with a funeral feast, and enter into his inheritance. Shortly before that also Strút-Harald of Scania and Véseti of Borgundarholm, the father of Búi the Stout, had passed away. Then the king sent word to the Jómsvíkings that Earl Sigvaldi and Búi and their brothers should come and inherit from their fathers at this funeral feast which the king made. The Jómsvíkings came to the feast with all their most valorous men. They had forty ships from Wendland, and twenty from Scania. A very great multitude was assembled there.

On the first day of the banquet, before King Svein ascended the high-seat of his father, he drank to his memory and made the vow that before three years had passed he would have invaded England with his army and killed King Æthelred or driven him from his country. All who were at the funeral feast were to drink that memorial toast. The chieftains of the Jómsvíkings were served the biggest horns with the strongest drink there was. When that memorial horn had been emptied, then all were to drink a memorial toast to Christ, and the Jómsvíkings were always served with the fullest horns and the strongest drink. The third memorial toast was brought to [Archangel] Michael, and all drank that. Then Earl Sigvaldi drank a horn in memory of his father, making the vow that before three years had passed he would have invaded Norway and killed Earl Hákon or else driven him from his country. Thereupon Thorkel the Tall, his brother, vowed that he would follow Sigvaldi to Norway and not flee from battle while Sigvaldi was still fighting. Then Búi the Stout vowed that he would sail to Norway with them, and not flee from a battle with Earl Hákon. Then his brother Sigurth vowed that he would go to Norway and not flee while the greater part of the Jómsvíkings were still fighting. Then Vagn Ákason vowed that he would follow them to Norway and not return before he had killed Thorkel Leira and gone to bed with Ingibjorg, his daughter. Many other chieftains made vows of various kinds. That day the men drank at the funeral feast, but on the morning following when the Jómsvíkings were sober again, they thought they had said too much and they consulted together and took counsel how they should go about their expedition, and they decided to get ready the soonest possible, and equipped both their ships and crews. All this became widely known throughout the lands.



Earl Sigvaldi makes a vow at the *arvel*.

Chapter 36. Earl Eirík Joins Earl Hákon

Earl Eirík, the son of Hákon, learned of this. At that time he was in Rau-mariki. He assembled troops at once and proceeded to the Uppland districts and thence north over the mountains till he arrived in Trondheim where he met his father, Earl Hákon. Thórth Kolbeinsson¹ makes mention of this in his *Eiríksdrápa*:

151. And from the south proceeding, (134.)
sea-steeds many with warriors—
feared the wealthy farmers
for their lives—sailed northward.
Learned then the liege-lord that
launched were to the southward,
o'er worn rollers, warships
withy-bound² from Denmark.

Chapter 37. The Earls Gather Their Forces

Earl Hákon and Earl Eirík had the war-arrows sent about all the Trondheim districts, and despatched messengers to South and North Mœr, to Raums Dale, and also north of Naumu Dale and Hálogaland, summoning a total conscription of both men and ships. As is said in the *Eiríksdrápa*:

152. Masted merchantmen and (135.)
many warships and galleys
let the prince—my poem
prosper—float on the waters,
the time the shield-shatterer
sheltered—numberless were
long-ships on the lee-shore
launched—his father's country.

Earl Hákon immediately sailed south to Mœr to reconnoiter and collect more troops while Earl Eirík gathered the army together and moved it south.

Chapter 38. Geirmund Forewarns Earl Hákon of the Approach of the Jómsvíkings

The Jómsvíkings steered their fleet to the Limfjord, whence they sailed out to sea with sixty ships, sighting land at Agthir and at once continuing north to Rogaland. They took to harrying as soon as they came to Earl Hákon's dominions, and thus proceeded north along the land, plundering all the while.

There was a man called Geirmund who with some few men was sailing with a swift skiff. He made land in Mœr where he found Earl Hákon. He went in and stepped before the earl as he sat at table and informed the earl that a fleet had come to the land south of there from Denmark. The earl asked if he could show proof of that. Geirmund lifted up his one arm on which the hand was cut off at the wrist, and said that this was his proof that a hostile force had invaded the land. Thereupon the earl inquired more closely about this army. Geirmund said that they were the Jómsvíkings, and that they had slain many and plundered far and wide. "And they sail fast and push on hurriedly. I expect that it will not be long before they appear here." Then the earl rowed into and out of all fjords, travelling day and night, and reconnoitering inland from the Eith Peninsula, and from there south in the Fjord District, and also north where Eirík lay with his fleet; as is mentioned in the *Eiríksdrápa*:



Geirmund brings the news of the approach of the Jómsvíkings.

153. Overawing the foe, the
earl against Sigvaldi's
higher prows opposed his
planked fleet of small vessels.
Shook the shafts of oars, but
shield-shatterers quaked not,
saters of ravens, slitting
sea-waves with their oar-blades.

(136.)

Earl Eirík proceeded south with his fleet as fast as he could.

Chapter 39. The Old Farmer Deceives the Jómsvíkings

Earl Sigvaldi sailed his fleet north around Cape Stath, mooring first by the Herey Islands. The country folk whom the Jómsvíkings encountered never told them the truth about the whereabouts of the earls. The Jómsvíkings harried wherever they went. They anchored outside of Hoth Island, went on land, harried and brought to their ships both people and cattle, killing the men able to bear arms. But on their way down to the ships they met an old farmer right close to Búi's men. The farmer said, "You don't act like warriors, driving cows and calves down to the beach, when you could make a bigger catch, and kill the bear, since you are near the bear's lair."

"What is the fellow saying?" they said. "Can you perhaps tell us about Earl Hákon?"

The farmer said, "Yesterday he rowed into the Horundarfjord with one ship or two, there weren't more than four in any case, and he didn't know anything about you."

Búi and his men at once ran to the ships, letting go of all their booty. Búi said, "Let us make good use of what we have just heard, and let us be first in the victory." And once aboard the ships they straightway rowed out to sea. Then Earl Sigvaldi called out to them and asked what they had learned. They said that Earl Hákon was inside the fjord. Then the earl cast the cables off his ships and they rowed north around the island of Hoth and then into the fjord past the island.

Chapter 40. The Battle Array of the Hostile Forces

Earl Hákon and his son, Earl Eirík, were moored in Hallkels Inlet. Their total forces were assembled there. They had one hundred and fifty [180] vessels and had learned by that time that the Jómsvíkings had anchored outside of the Island of Hoth. Then the earls rowed north to look for them, and when they came to the place called Hjorunga Bay they encountered them. Then both sides arrayed their forces for battle. The banner of Earl Sigvaldi was in the center of the fleet. Against it, Earl Hákon pitted himself for the battle. Earl Sigvaldi had twenty ships, and Hákon, sixty. In the force of Earl Hákon there were the chieftains Thórir Hart of Hálogaland and Styrkár of Gimsar. One wing [of the Jómsvíkings'] fleet was headed by Búi the Stout and his brother Sigurth, with twenty ships. Against him was arrayed Earl Eirík, the son of Hákon, with sixty ships. Under him were these chieftains: Guthbrand the White from the Upplands and Thorkel Leira, a man from Vík. In the other wing [of the Jómsvíkings' fleet] lay Vagn Ákason with twenty ships; and he was faced by Svein, the son of Hákon, with Skeggi of Upphaug in Yrjar and Rognvald from Ærvík on Stath with sixty ships. As is said in the *Eiríksdrápa*:

154. Forth to the fray the Danish (137.)
fleet over the ocean—
along the land sailing
long ways—swiftly glided,
with vessels the victorious
vassal of Danes¹ in battle
cleared of many men in
Mœr—were their corpses warm still.

And as Eyvind Skáldaspillir also says in his *Háleygjatal*:

155. Little joy (138.)
had lords of Danes
as toward morn
met together
their fleet with
the folk-warder's,
from the south
who sailed toward them,
and his fleet,
fast advancing,

sword-thing urged
with athelings.

994 Then the fleets clashed together, and there began a most savage battle,
with great loss of life on either side, but with much greater loss on the
part of Hákon's; because the Jómsvíkings fought boldly, fiercely, and
hard, shooting right through the shields; and there was such a shower of missiles
which struck the earl that his coat-of-mail was shot to pieces and became
useless, so that he cast it off. Of this, Tind Hallkelsson² makes mention:

156. Far else fared it than when (139.)
fair arm-ring-dight maiden—
waxed the din of weapon-thing
wild—a bed for the earl made,
when his gleaming, goodly byrnie,
gashed by gale of javelins
cast—cleared were then ships of
crews—he had to throw off.

157. Asunder on the sands was (140.)
slit from the earl by arrows—
't was seen by seat-fellows—
Sorli's³ ring-woven byrnie.

Chapter 41. The Battle of Horundarfjord

The Jómsvíkings' ships were larger and higher above the water, but both armies pushed their attack most vigorously. Vagn Ákason attacked Svein Hákonarson's ship so furiously that Svein had his men back water and they were about to flee. Then Earl Eirík rowed his ship forward in the battle array against Vagn. Then Vagn let his ship drop back, and then the ships were in the same position as at first. Then Eirík retired to his line, but by that time his men had backed away and Búi had cut the hawsers [that tied the ships together during the battle] and was about to pursue them. Then Earl Eirík laid his ship broadside to that of Búi, and there ensued a most violent hand to hand fight, with two or three of Eirík's ships attacking Búi's one.

Then a storm sprang up, with a hail shower so violent that every hailstone weighed one ounce. Then Sigvaldi cut the hawsers [that connected his ship with the others] and turned about, intending to flee. Vagn Ákason shouted to him not to flee, but Earl Sigvaldi paid no attention to what he said. Then Vagn hurled a spear at him and struck the man who sat by the rudder. Earl Sigvaldi rowed away with thirty-five ships, but twenty-five remained behind.

Then Earl Hákon laid his ship broadside to Búi's, so that blows rained on his crew hard and fast. Vígfús Víga-Glúmsson lifted up a sharp-pointed anvil that lay on the floorboards on which someone had riveted the hilt of his sword. He was a man of tremendous strength. He lifted the anvil with both hands and hurled it at the head of Áslák Hólmskalli, so that the point sank into his skull. No other weapons had been able to hurt him before, and he had slashed right and left [with his sword]. He was Búi's foster father and his forecastleman. Another forecastleman was Hávarth the Hewer, a man of great strength and bravery.



The hailstorm during the battle of Hjorunga Bay.

In this fight Eirík's men boarded Búi's ship and advanced toward the raised afterdeck of it. Then Thorstein Midlong slashed across Búi's forehead cleaving his visor. That made a very big wound. Búi with one sword blow to his side cut Thorstein in two. Then Búi took up two chests full of gold and called out aloud: "Overboard, all Búi's men," and leapt overboard with his chests, and many of his men then leapt overboard; though some were slain on the ship because it was not easy to obtain quarter. Thereupon the whole of Búi's ship was cleared of men from stem to stern and, following that, one ship after the other. Then Earl Eirík laid his ship alongside that of Vagn. There was a terrific defence, but in the end his ship was cleared of men and Vagn made captive, together with thirty others, and brought ashore shackled.

Then Thorkel Leira went up to them and said, "You made the vow, Vagn, that you would kill me, but now it seems more likely to me that I shall kill you." Vagn and his men all sat together on a log. Thorkel wielded a big axe and hewed down the man who sat on the end of the log.

Vagn and his companions were tied in such fashion that a rope was slung around the feet of all of them, leaving their arms free. Then one of them said, "Here I have a dagger in my hand, and I shall stick it in the ground if I am conscious when my head is chopped off." He was beheaded, and the dagger dropped from his hand.



Sigurth Búason, Thorkel Leira, and Earl Eirík.

Next to him sat a handsome man with long and fine hair. He swept his hair forward over his head and stretched out his neck, saying, “Don’t sully my hair with blood.” A man took hold of his hair with a firm grip. Thorkel swung his axe, but the viking swiftly jerked his head back, so the man holding his hair was forced forward, and the axe fell on both his hands, shearing them off, so that the axe struck the ground.

Then Earl Eirík came up and asked, “Who is this handsome man?”

“They call me Sigurth,” he said, “and I am said to be the son of Búi. Not yet are all Jómsvíkings dead.”

Eirík said, “You are truly likely to be the son of Búi. Would you have quarter?”

“That depends on who offers it,” said Sigurth.

“He offers,” said the earl, “who has the authority to do so—Earl Eirík.”

“Then I accept,” said he. Thereupon he was released from the rope.

Then Thorkel Leira said, “If, earl, you want to give quarter to all these men, then at least Vagn Ákason shall never escape with his life”—and ran forward with axe swung on high; but the viking Skarth hurled himself down in the rope, falling before Thorkel’s feet, and he fell flat over him. Then Vagn grabbed the axe, swung it aloft and dealt Thorkel his death blow.

axe, swung it aloft and dealt THORKEI HIS DEATH BLOW.

Then the earl said, "Vagn, would you have quarter?"

"I would," he replied, "if you give it to all of us."

"Release them from the rope," said the earl; and so was done. Eighteen had been killed and twelve received quarter.

Chapter 42. Earl Eirík Gives Ingibjorg to Vagn in Marriage

Earl Hákon and many others were sitting on a log. Then a bowstring twanged on Búi's ship, and the arrow hit Gizur of Valdres, a landed-man¹ of the earl's. He was sitting next to the earl, dressed splendidly. Then men boarded that ship and found there Hávarth the Hewer, standing on his knees by the railing, for his feet had been lopped off. He had his bow in his hand. And when the men came aboard the ship, Hávarth asked, "Who fell from the log?" They told him it was a man called Gizur. "Then my luck was less than I could have wished," he said. "A big enough piece of bad luck as it is," they said, "and you shall not cause more," and killed him. Then they went over the scene of battle and carried away the spoils for distribution. Twenty-five of the Jómsvíkings' ships had been cleared of men. As says Tind:

158. Wounds the warrior dealt to (141.)
Wendish host² with bloody
sword—with savage bite it
sundered bones—in battle,
ere of their crews could clear the
combat-urges—was it
fraught with fearful danger—
five and twenty longships.

Thereupon the earls dismissed their army. Earl Hákon was extremely ill-pleased that Eirík had given quarter to Vagn Ákason. It is told that Earl Hákon had in this battle sacrificed his son Erling to gain the victory, and that the hailshower followed the sacrifice, and that it was then the Jómsvíkings suffered most loss of life.

Then Earl Eirík journeyed to the Uppland districts and to his own possessions, and with him Vagn Ákason. Then Eirík gave Vagn Ingibjorg, the daughter of Thorkel Leira, in marriage, and presented him a good man-of-war with all equipment and procured him a crew. They parted as excellent friends. Then Vagn sailed home south to Denmark and later became a famous man from whom many important persons are descended.

Chapter 43. King Harald of Grenland Is Slain by Sigríth

As set down before, Harald of Grenland was king in the Westfold District. He married Ásta, the daughter of Guthbrand Kúla. One summer, when Harald of Grenland had gone on a viking expedition to the Baltic to acquire possessions, he came to Sweden. At that time Óláf the Swedish was king there. He was the son of King Eirík the Victorious and Sigríth, a daughter of Skoglar-Tósti. Sigríth was widowed then and owned many and large estates in Sweden. Now when she learned that Harald of Grenland, her foster brother, had come ashore not far away, she sent messengers to him, inviting him to a banquet. He did not delay long and came with a large company of men. They were entertained splendidly there. The king and the queen sat in the high-seat and drank together in the evening, and all his men were entertained most lavishly. In the evening, when the king sought his bed he found it decked with covers of costly stuff and made up with sheets of precious material. There were few persons in those lodgings. And when the king had undressed and gotten into bed, the queen came to him and herself poured out a beaker for him, enticing him much to drink, and treating him in the most ingratiating way. The king was dead drunk, and so was she. Then the king went to sleep, and the queen also lay down.

Sigríth was an exceedingly clever woman and prescient about many things. Again in the morning following, the entertainment was of the best. But then it happened, as generally is the case, when men have drunk to excess, that on the following day most of them go slow about drinking. But the queen was gay, and she and the king talked with one another. She said that she valued her possessions and the dominion she had in Sweden no less than his kingdom and his possessions in Norway. The king became displeased with her utterances. He grew cool about everything and prepared to leave in great ill humor; but the queen was in a most cheerful mood and said farewell to him, presenting him with lordly farewell gifts.

995 In the autumn following, Harald returned to Norway and remained in rather poor spirits. When summer came he sailed into the Baltic again with his fleet. He steered to Sweden and sent word to Queen Sigríth that he wished to see her again. She rode down to the coast to meet with him, and they spoke together. He soon came to the point, asking her if she would marry him. She said that he was insincere in proposing that, because he was so well married that he should be well satisfied. Harald replied that Ásta was, to be sure, a good woman and worthy, “but she is not as highborn as I am.”

Sigríth said, “It may well be that you are of nobler birth than she. But I should think that the good fortune of both of you reposes with her.”¹ Few more words were exchanged between them before the queen rode away.

King Harald remained behind in heavy spirits. He made ready to ride inland to meet Queen Sigríth again. Many of his men advised against that, but he proceeded nonetheless with a numerous company of men and arrived at the estate belonging to the queen. That same evening another king came there. He was Vissavald from Gartharíki in the east. He came to ask her in marriage. Both kings and their retinue were housed in a large and ancient hall furnished in the same manner. Plentiful drink was served there in the evening. It was so potent that all became dead drunk and that both their bodyguards and the watch posted without fell asleep. Then Queen Sigríth had them assailed in the night with both fire and sword. The hall burned, together with the men inside, and those who got out were slain. Sigríth said that in this way she was going to break kingly habits of the habit of visiting her to ask her in marriage. In after times she was called Sigríth the Haughty. The battle with the Jómsvíkings occurred the year before that.

Chapter 44. The Birth of Saint Óláf

When Harald had gone ashore, Hrani was left behind with the ships as commander of the force which remained. And when they learned that Harald had been put to death, they left at once and returned to Norway with this news. Hrani went to see Ásta and told her what had happened on their expedition, but also for what purpose Harald had gone to meet Queen Sigríth. When Ásta had learned of these tidings she immediately journeyed to the Uppland District to be with her father. He received her well. Both were greatly incensed about Harald's plans for marriage in Sweden and that he had meant to leave her. Ásta, the daughter of Guthbrand, in summer gave birth there to a boy child. He was sprinkled with water and given the name Óláf. It was Hrani who sprinkled him. During his first years the boy grew up there with Guthbrand and his mother Ásta.

Chapter 45. Earl Hákon's Power and His Licentiousness with Women

Earl Hákon ruled over all of Norway facing the sea, and his domination extended over sixteen districts. And ever since Harald Fairhair had instituted the order that there should be an earl over every district, this was maintained for a long time afterwards. Earl Hákon had sixteen earls under him. As is said in [Einar Skálaglamm's poem] *Vellekla*:

159. Where else has it e'er been (142.)
heard before that sixteen
earls did under one great
earl rule all of Norway?
Unfading spreads the fame o'er
four corners of heaven
of wealth-dispending, warlike
weapon-thing's bold urger.

During the time Earl Hákon ruled over Norway there were good harvests, and a good peace reigned within the land among the farmers. For the greater part of his life the earl was popular with them. But as time wore on it occurred very often that he became licentious in his intercourse with women. He went so far as to abduct the daughters of powerful chieftains and to have them brought to his residence, where he lay with them for a week or two before sending them home. This brought him the bitter resentment of the kinsmen of these women, and the farmers began to murmur menacingly, as is the wont of the people of Trondheim if anything displeases them.

Chapter 46. Earl Hákon Sends Thórir Klakka to Inveigle Óláf Tryggvason

Earl Hákon heard a rumor that there was a man to the west beyond the sea who called himself Áli, and that he was there regarded as a man of royal race; and from the accounts of some men the earl conceived the suspicion that this man might perhaps be of a Norwegian royal race. He was told that Áli said that his kinsfolk lived in Gartharíki. Now the earl had heard that Tryggvi Óláfsson had had a son who had gone east to Gartharíki and had there been brought up by King Valdamar, and that this son was called Óláf. Also, the earl had made many inquiries about this man, and now he suspected that this same man had got to the lands in the west.

There was a man called Thórir Klakka, a great friend of Earl Hákon, who had been on viking expeditions for a long time, and occasionally on trading journeys and had a wide acquaintance with countries and people. This man Earl Hákon sent west across the sea, bidding him to undertake a trading journey to Dublin, which at that time was done by many, in order to find out who this man Áli was; and if he found out for sure that it was Óláf Tryggvason or someone else of royal Norwegian race, he was to get the better of him by some treachery, if he could.

Chapter 47. Óláf Tryggvason Converts the Orkneys and Sails to Norway

So then Thórir journeyed west to Dublin in Ireland, and there made inquiries about Áli. The latter was at the court of King Óláf Kváran, his brother-in-law. Then Thórir managed to get to speak with Áli. Thórir was a man of clever speech. And when they had talked together for a very long time, Áli began to ask about matters in Norway, first about the kings in the Upplands, who of them were still living and what regions they ruled over. He also asked about Earl Hákon and how popular he was in the country. Thórir said, “Earl Hákon is so powerful a man that no one dares to oppose him; but the reason for that is that there is no one else to look to. To tell you the truth, I know the frame of mind of many men of importance and also of the people, and that they would be most eager and more than willing to have some king of the race of Harald Fairhair rule there; but we do not know of any such, and chiefly because we have learned that it does not avail to fight Earl Hákon.” And when they had discussed this often, Óláf revealed his name and descent to Thórir and asked his advice and what he thought would happen if he came to Norway—whether he believed that the farmers would accept him as king. Thórir urged him most strongly to undertake that, praising him and his accomplishments highly.

As a result, Óláf longed much to journey to the land of his fathers, and finally sailed east with five ships; at first, to the Hebrides. Thórir was in his company. From there, he sailed to the Orkneys. At that time Earl Sigurth Hlothvisson was anchored with one warship in Ásmundar Bay in the Island of Rognvaldsey,¹ intending to sail over to Caithness. Óláf steered his fleet east toward the islands and anchored there, as the Pentland Firth was not navigable [because of a storm].

As soon as Óláf learned that the earl was moored not far from him, he requested him to come and confer with him. And when the earl came it was not long before the king commanded him to accept baptism, together with all his people, or else suffer death at once; and the king said he would devastate the islands with fire and flame, and lay the land waste unless the people accepted baptism. And seeing the pinch he was in, the earl chose to be baptized. Then he and all those with him were christened. Thereupon, the earl swore allegiance to the king, giving him his son as hostage. He was called Whelp or Hound, and Óláf took him along to Norway.

Then Óláf sailed east across the sea and sighted land at the Island of Morstr, which was the first place for him to come ashore and where he had mass sung in a tent. In after times a church was built in that same place.

a tent. In after times a church was built in that same place.

Thórir Klakka told the king that it was most advisable for him not to let anyone know who he was and not to let any news be spread of his whereabouts, but to move on the earl as fast as possible so as to surprise him unprepared. King Óláf did so, travelling north day and night with every favorable breeze and without the people of the country becoming aware who he was. And when he arrived north at Agthanes he had learned that Earl Hákon was in the Fjord District and also that he had had a clash with the farmers. But when Thórir heard that, he found out that things had taken a turn very different from what he had thought; because after the battle with the Jómsvíkings all the people of Norway had been ardent friends of Earl Hákon because of the victory he had won, and thereby freeing all the country from hostilities. But now it happened unfortunately [for him] that a great chieftain had come to the land while the farmers had fallen out with him.

Chapter 48. Earl Hákon Takes Refuge in a Pigsty at Rimul

Earl Hákon was being entertained at Methalhús in Gaular Dale, and his ships lay anchored at Viggja. A certain man called Orm Lyrgja lived at Býness and was a farmer who wielded great influence. His wife was Guthrún, daughter of Bergthór of Lundar. She was called Lundasól [the Sun of Lundar] and was a most beautiful woman. The earl sent his thralls to Orm to fetch Orm's wife Guthrún and bring her to him. The thralls delivered their message, and Orm asked them first to eat the evening meal [with them]. But before they had eaten their fill, there had come to Orm's farm many men from the neighborhood to whom Orm had gotten word. And then Orm refused to let Guthrún go with the thralls. Guthrún told the thralls to say to the earl that she would not come to him unless he sent Thóra of Rimul to fetch her. This was a wealthy lady and one of the earl's mistresses. The thralls declared that another time they would come in such fashion as to make the farmer and his wife shortly rue this. They used threatening language but then departed. Orm sent the war-arrows four ways around the settlement, requesting all to arm themselves and attack and kill Earl Hákon. He also sent word to Halldór at Skerthingstethja, who in his turn sent out the war-arrows.

A short time before that, the earl had taken the wife of a man called Brynjólf, and that deed had aroused immense resentment, so that people were near rising in a body. After the war-arrows has been sent around, a great host of men collected and marched to Methalhús. But the earl was informed of it and with his men left the farm and retreated into a deep valley which is now called Earl's Dale, and hid there.

A day later the earl learned about the plans of the farmers. They had barricaded all the roads, rather thinking that the earl had gone to his ships, which were headed by Erlend, his son, a most promising young man. But when night approached, the earl dismissed his followers, ordering them to proceed to Orkn Dale by way of the forests—"No one will harm you if I am not by. Send word to Erlend to sail out of the fjord and [tell him] we shall meet in Møer. I shall know how to hide from the farmers." Then the earl left with one thrall called Kark. The Gaula River was covered with ice, and the earl drove his horse into it, leaving his cloak lying there.

Both entered a cave which later was called Earl's cave. Then they fell asleep. And when Kark awoke he told the earl his dream—that a black and ugly man went by the cave, and that he was afraid he might enter it. But this man told him that Ulli was dead. The earl said that this probably meant that Erlend had been

slain. Then Thormóth Kark fell asleep again and was restless in his sleep, and when he awoke, he told his dream, that he saw that same man come down again [to them] and that he asked him to tell the earl that now all ways of retreat were barred. Kark told the earl his dream, and he feared it meant that he had but a short time to live.

Then he arose and they went to the farm Rimul. There he sent Kark in to Thóra, asking her to come out secretly to him. This she did, and welcomed him. The earl asked her to hide him for some days until the farmers had dispersed. “They will search for you here,” she said, “both inside and outside my house, because many know that I would gladly help you all I can. But there is one place here on my farm where I would not be likely to look for a man such as you are, and that is the pigsty.”

They went up to it. The earl said, “Here we shall bed us down. The main thing is to save one’s life.” Then the thrall dug a deep pit, carrying the dirt away and then covering the excavation with timbers. Thóra told the earl the news that Óláf Tryggvason had entered the fjord and slain his son Erlend. Thereupon the earl and Kark went down into the pit, and Thóra covered it with timbers and swept dirt and dung over it and drove the swine over it. That pigsty was beneath a big boulder.

Chapter 49. The Thrall Kark Murders Earl Hákon

Óláf Tryggvason sailed into the fjord with five warships, whilst Erlend, the son of Earl Hákon, with three warships rowed toward him from within the fjord. But when the ships approached each other, Erlend suspected hostilities and rowed toward land. Now when Óláf saw the warships coming toward him out of the fjord he thought it was Earl Hákon and bade his crews row after them as fast as they could. But when Erlend and his men had nearly reached the land they ran aground and leapt overboard, trying to get ashore. Óláf's ships followed in hot pursuit. Óláf saw an unusually handsome man take to swimming. He seized the tiller of his rudder and hurled it at that man. The blow struck Erlend, the earl's son, on the head, breaking his skull. That was his death. Óláf and his men killed many there; some escaped by flight, and to some they gave quarter, and from them they learned what had happened [in the land]. Óláf was told then that the farmers had driven away Earl Hákon and that he had fled and that his followers had spread to all the winds.

Then all farmers came to see Óláf, and both he and the farmers were glad to meet, and right away agreed on their common purpose. The farmers chose him king over them, and all resolved to search for Earl Hákon. They marched up Gaular Dale, because all thought it most likely that the earl was at Rimul if he was on any farm; for Thóra was his most intimate friend in that valley. They went there and searched for the earl without and within and did not find him. Then Óláf had a meeting [with the people] outside in the farm yard. He stood on the great boulder beside the pigsty and spoke to them and promised he would both honor and endow with riches the man who would kill Earl Hákon.

This was heard by both the earl and Kark. They had a light with them. The earl said, "Why are you so pale and sometimes as black as the earth? Is it that you will betray me?"

"No," said Kark.

"We were born in one and the same night," said the Earl, "and it is not likely that much time will elapse between our deaths."

King Óláf left as evening approached. And when it became night, the earl kept awake, but Kark fell asleep and carried on in his dream. Then the earl waked him and asked him what he had dreamed. He said, "I dreamed I was at Hlathir and Óláf Tryggvason laid a golden necklace about my neck."

The earl answered, "That signifies that Óláf will put a blood-red ring about your neck when you meet him. So have a care. But by me you will always be

treated well, as I have done always, so do not betray me.” Then both stayed awake, as though each watched the other. But toward daybreak the earl fell asleep and soon he carried on in his sleep, and so badly that he bent down heels and neck as though he meant to rise, and uttered a loud and dreadful cry. But Kark grew frightened and alarmed. He took a big knife from his belt and cut the earl’s throat, then slashed it clean through, and that was Earl Hákon’s death. Then Kark cut off the earl’s head and ran away with it. Next day he entered the estate at Hlathir and presented the earl’s head to King Ólaf. He also told about what had happened between Earl Hákon and him, as was written above. Thereupon King Ólaf had him led away and beheaded.

Chapter 50. The Heads of Earl Hákon and Kark Are Stoned

Then King Ólaf and a multitude of farmers with him went to the Island of Nitharhólm¹ taking with them the heads of Earl Hákon and of Kark. This island was at that time used for putting to death thieves and evildoers, and a gallows stood there. The king had the heads of Earl Hákon and of Kark fastened to it. Thereupon the whole multitude came with great shouts and stoned them, saying that they should fare thus like every other villain. Then they sent men up to Gaular Dale who hauled away Hákon's trunk and burned it. There was such fierce hatred against Earl Hákon among the Tronders that no one might call him by any other name than the evil earl. And that name stuck to him for a long time. But the truth of the matter is that he had many qualifications for leadership: first, an exalted lineage, and therewith shrewdness and sagacity to use his power, briskness in battle as well as a lucky hand in winning the victory and slaying his enemies. As says Thorleif Rauthfeldarson:²

(143.) 160. Hákon, heard we under
heaven no doughtier earl than
thou—but greater grew thy
glory from wars—to govern.
Athelings nine to Óthin—
feeds the raven on flesh of
fallen men—spread far thy
fame aye—thou didst send forth

Earl Hákon exceeded everyone in generosity, and it was great in fortune that a chieftain such as he should have died as he did. But the reason for this was chiefly that the time had come when heathen worship and idolators were done away with and Christianity took their place.

Chapter 51. Óláf Tryggvason Is Accepted as King over Norway

996 In the general assembly in Trondheim, Óláf Tryggvason was chosen king over all the land, as Harald Fairhair had been. On that occasion all the multitudinous crowd of people would not have it otherwise than that Óláf Tryggvason should be king. Thereupon Óláf went about the whole country and was given the oath of fealty. All the people of Norway swore allegiance to him, even those chieftains in the Uppland districts and in Vík who before had held their lands in fief from the King of Denmark. They now became King Óláf's men and held their lands from him. Thus he made his royal progress about the country the first winter and the summer thereafter.

Earl Eirík, the son of Hákon, and his brother Svein, as well as other kinsmen and friends of theirs fled the land, seeking refuge in Sweden with King Óláf of Sweden, and were welcomed there. As says Thórh Kol-beinsson:

161. Curber of outlaws!¹ Cut short
caitiff traitors a little
while since—harsh is fate oft—
Hákon's, thy father's, life-span,
what time Tryggvi's kinsman²
to this land came, which the
atheling³ erst had conquered,
over the sea from Westlands. (144.)

162. Much in mind had Eirík—
more than thought was—' gainst the
sower-of-wealth:⁴ certes
such was to be looked for.
Wrothly sought the Swedish
sovrán's help—durst no one
hinder that—the Thronders
thane.⁵ That tribe proved stubborn. (145.)

Chapter 52. Lothin Redeems Queen Ástríth from Bondage

There was a man called Lothin. He was from Vík, and both rich and well born. Often he went on trading journeys, and sometimes, on viking expeditions. One summer Lothin went on a trading journey in the Baltic with only one ship, laden with much merchandise. He sailed to Esthonia and there attended markets during the summer. And when there was a market, all kinds of wares were brought there, and many bondwomen were there for sale. Lothin saw a woman there who had been sold as a slave. And when he looked at the woman he recognized her and knew her to be Ástríth, the daughter of Eirík, who had been King Tryggvi's wife, though she looked different from what she had done when last he saw her. She was pale and peaked and poorly clad. He went up to her and asked how matters stood with her. She replied, "It is bitter to tell you about it. I am sold as a slave, and brought here to be sold." Then they recognized each other, and Ástríth knew him well. Then she begged him to buy her and take her home with him to her kinsfolk.

"I shall do so under one condition," he said. "I shall take you to Norway if you will marry me." Now since Ástríth was in dire straits at the time, and also because she knew that Lothin was a man of high lineage, brave and rich, she promised him this to ransom herself. Thereupon Lothin bought Ástríth and took her home to Norway with him and married her there with the consent of her kinsmen. Their children were a son, Thorkel Nose, and their daughters, Ingiríth and Ingigerth. The daughters of Ástríth with King Tryggvi were Ingibjorg and Ástríth. The sons of Eirík Bjóthaskalli were Sigurth, Karlshofuth, Jóstein, and Thorkel Dyrthil. They all were men of worth and wealth and had their estates in the eastern part of the land. There were two brothers who lived east in Vík, one called Thorgeir, the other Hyrning. They married the two daughters of Lothin and Ástríth.

Chapter 53. Óláf Tryggvason Proclaims Christianity in Norway

When Harald Gormsson, the king of Denmark, had been baptized he sent the order over all his kingdom that all were to take the baptism and accept the true faith. He followed up this command himself and used his power and inflicted punishment if nothing else helped. He had sent two earls to Norway with a great force. Their names were———. ¹ They were to proclaim Christianity in Norway. That succeeded in Vík, where people were subject to King Harald, and many of the people were baptized. Now after Harald's death his son, Svein Forkbeard, made incursions in Saxland, Frísia, and finally, in England. But those in Norway who had accepted Christianity reverted to heathen sacrifices as before and as the people in the north of the land did.

Now when Óláf Tryggvason had become king in Norway, he resided a long time in Vík during the summer. There, many of his kinsmen and relations by marriage came to him. Many had been great friends of his father and welcomed him heartily. Then Óláf called his maternal uncles, Lothin, his stepfather, and his relatives Thorgeir and Hyrning, to a conference with him, and with the greatest earnestness laid before them the matter they themselves should take hold of, together with him, and then further with all their strength; which was, to preach the Gospel throughout the kingdom. And he said he would succeed in christening all of Norway or else die. "I shall make you all great and powerful men, because I put most trust in you because of our kinship or other affinity." They all agreed to this and to do what they could and follow him in all that he proposed, together with all those who would follow their counsel.

Very soon King Óláf made it clear to all the people that he would proclaim Christianity in all his realm. And the first to agree to this order were they who before had accepted the faith. They were also the most powerful of those who were present at the time, and all others followed their example. Then all who dwelled in the eastern part of Vík were baptized, whereupon the king proceeded north in Vík and commanded all to accept Christianity; but those who spoke against it he punished severely, killing some, maiming others or driving them out of the country. As a result, all the dominions which King Tryggvi, his father, had ruled as well as those which had been subject to Harald of Grenland, his kinsman, now accepted Christianity as Óláf ordered; so that during the summer and the following winter everyone in Vík was baptized.

Chapter 54. The Men of Horthaland Are Warned of the King's Coming

997 Early in spring King Ólaf with a large force proceeded to the outer reaches of the [Fold]fjord and then north [west] to Agthir. And wherever he assembled with the farmers he ordered all to be baptized, and all accepted Christianity, because no one among the farmers dared to rebel against the king; so people were baptized wherever he came.

There were many and prominent men in Horthaland descended from Hortha-Kári. He had had four sons. One was Thorleif the Wise; another, Ogmund, the father of Thórólf Squinter, the father of Erling of Sóli; the third, Thórth, the father of the Hersir Klypp who killed Sigurth Slefa, the son of Gunnhild; the fourth, Olmóth, the father of Áskel, the father of Áslák Fitjaskalli. That family was at that time the largest and noblest in Horthaland. Now when these kinsmen learned of the tidings—that the king was proceeding westward along the land with a large force, breaking down the old dispensation, and that men underwent punishment and had to submit to harsh conditions if they went against him—they agreed on meeting together to take counsel, because they knew that the king would soon be upon them; and they determined that all of them would proceed to the Gulathing Assembly with a numerous force and there come to a meeting with King Ólaf Tryggvason.

Chapter 55. The Resistance to Óláf's Missionary Efforts in Rogaland Collapses

King Óláf on arriving in Rogaland at once called for an assembly. But when the summons came to the farmers they assembled together in great numbers, all armed. And when they had gathered they conferred and took counsel, and selected the most eloquent in their midst, to make answer to King Óláf at the assembly and oppose him; and they agreed they would refuse to submit to lawlessness, even though the king commanded them.

Now when the farmers came to the assembly and deliberations were to begin, King Óláf arose and at first spoke gently to the farmers. Still, it was plain from his speech that he meant them to become Christians. He asked them with fair words to agree to that; but in the end he added that those who opposed him and would not comply with his demands would feel his wrath and suffer punishment and stern conditions wherever he could reach them.

Now when the king had finished speaking, then arose one of the farmers who was the most eloquent and had been chosen to answer King Óláf. But when he was about to speak he had such a fit of coughing and such difficulty with breathing that he could not utter a word and sat down again. Then another farmer arose with the intention not to fail in his reply, even though the first spokesman had not been so successful. But when he began he stammered so much that he did not get a word out. Then all those who listened fell to laughing, and he sat down. Then the third one got up to speak against King Óláf. But when he started to speak he was so hoarse and husky that no one understood what he said, so he sat down. Then no one of the farmers undertook to speak against the king. And as the farmers got no one to oppose the king, there was no resistance to him, and the end was that all agreed to the king's demands. Then all the people at the assembly were baptized before the king departed.

Chapter 56. Ástríth Refuses to Marry Erling Skjálǫsson

King Óláf with his troops proceeded to the Gulathing Assembly, because the farmers had sent him word that they would make reply to his demands there. But when both parties had arrived at the assembly, the king insisted on first conferring with the chieftains of the land. And when they were all gathered, the king voiced his intentions and requested them to have themselves baptized according to his command.

Then replied Olmóth the Old, “We kinsmen have discussed this matter between us, and we all shall follow one course. If it be so, sir king, that you intend to compel us kinsmen to break our laws and to subdue us by force, we shall oppose you with all our might; and then let him obtain victory who can. But if on the contrary you will do something to the advantage of us kinsmen, then you will attain your aim so well that we will give you our complete allegiance.”

The king said, “What would you have me do so that we come to a fair agreement between us?”

Then Olmóth said, “First this, that you marry your sister Ástríth¹ to Erling Skjálǫsson, our kinsman, whom we consider the most promising of all young men in Norway.” King Óláf replied that to him that match would seem a good one, adding that Erling was of high birth and seemed indeed most eligible, but that Ástríth herself would have to give her consent. Then the king discussed this with his sister.

“Little do I benefit,” said she, “from being a king’s daughter and a king’s sister if you wish me to marry a commoner. I would rather wait some years for another match.” And with that they ended their discussion.

Chapter 57. Ástríth Consents to Marry Erling

King Óláf had one of Ástríth's hawks taken and its feathers plucked, whereupon he sent it back to her.¹ Then Ástríth said, "Angry is my brother now." Then she arose and went to the king. He made her welcome. Then Ástríth said that it was her wish that the king was to act in her behalf as he thought best.

"I had thought," said the king, "that I would obtain the power to raise to high estate in this land whom I will." The king then had Olmóth, Erling, and all their kinsmen called to him to discuss the matter of this marriage; and in the end Ástríth was betrothed to Erling. Thereupon the king had the assembly meet and bade the farmers accept Christianity. And then Olmóth and Erling were the leaders in speaking for this matter, important to the king, as well as all of their kinsmen. No one dared to oppose him. Then all the people there were baptized and converted.

Chapter 58. The Nuptials of Erling Skjálgsson

Erling Skjálgsson celebrated his wedding in the summer, and it was attended by a very great multitude. King Ólaf was there too. He offered Erling an earldom. Erling answered thus, “My kinsmen have been hersar [barons]. I do not wish to have a title higher than they. But this would I accept of thee, sir king, that you let me be the greatest of this title in the country.” The king granted him that. And at their parting King Ólaf assigned to Erling, his brother-in-law, the lands south of the mouth of the Sognfjord and east [south] to Cape Lithandisness [Lindesness], under the same conditions as Harald Fairhair had granted his sons, as was written above.

Chapter 59. The King Christianizes the Western Districts

In the fall of the same year King Óláf summoned an assembly representing four district meetings to be held on Dragseith [Isthmus] on the peninsula of Stath. To it were to repair people from Sogn, the Fjord districts, South Mær, and Raums Dale. The king proceeded there with a very large following from the eastern part of the land and also the force which had joined him in Rogaland and Horthaland. And when King Óláf came there he bade people to be baptized, as he had in other places. But because the king had the support there of a large army, they were alarmed. In the end the king offered them two alternatives: either to accept Christianity and be baptized, or else to fight it out with him. But since the farmers saw no chance to fight the king they decided on having all the people christened.

Thereupon King Óláf with his army proceeded to North Mær and converted that district to Christianity. Then he sailed into the [Trondheim] fjord to Hlathir and had the temple there dismantled and all the property and all the decorations removed from it and from the idol. He took a large gold ring from the temple gates which Earl Hákon had had constructed, whereupon he had the temple burned down. But when the farmers learned of this they sent the war-arrows about all the districts, summoning an army and intending to attack the king.

King Óláf then sailed his fleet out of the fjord, steering north along the land with the intention of going to Hálogaland and christening it. But when he arrived at Bjarnaurar, he learned that the people of Hálogaland had collected an army and meant to defend their land against him. The chieftains of their forces were Hárek of Thjóttá, Thórir Hart of Vágar, and Eyvind Kinnrifa. When King Óláf learned that he turned about and sailed south along the land. And when he had rounded Stath Promontory he proceeded more leisurely, yet managed to get all the way to Vík at the beginning of winter.

Chapter 60. King Óláf Wooes Queen Sigríth

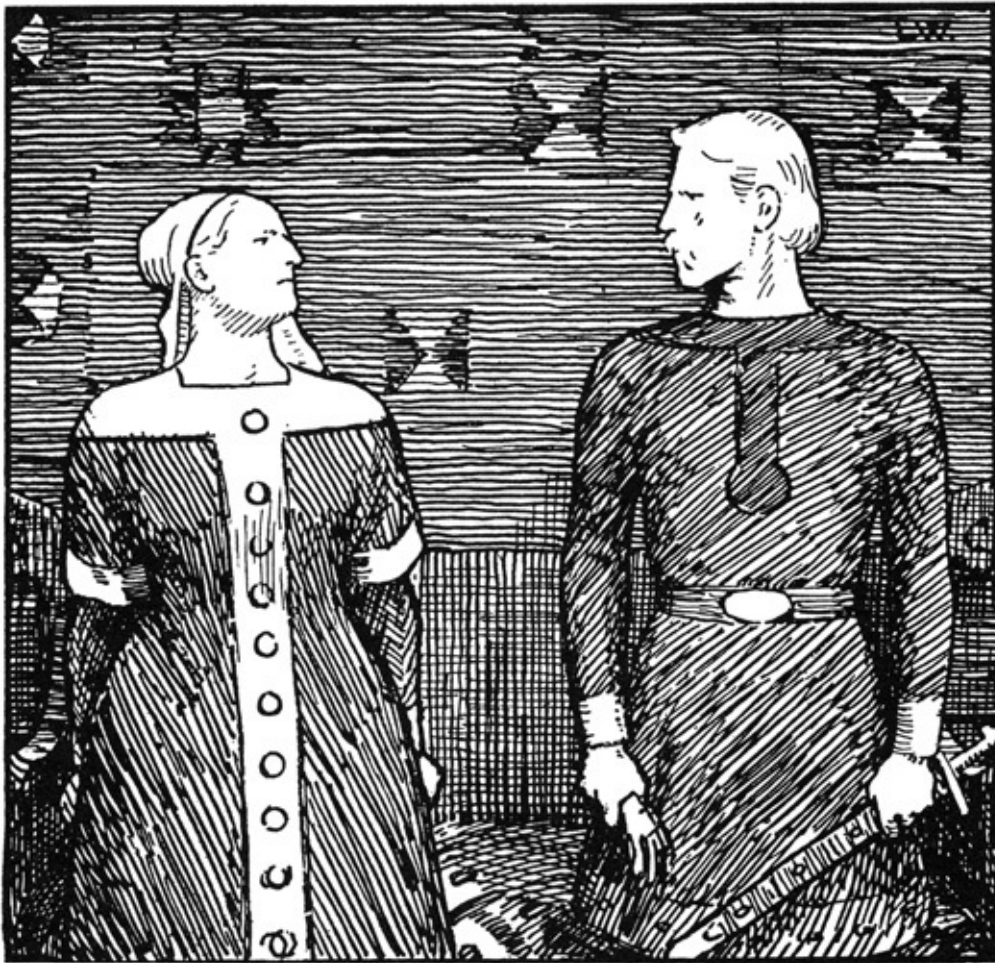
Queen Sigríth of Sweden, who was called the Haughty, resided on her estates. That winter messengers went between King Óláf and Queen Sigríth, and through them King Óláf asked for the hand of Queen Sigríth. She received his suit favorably, and the betrothal was definitely agreed on. Thereupon King Óláf sent Queen Sigríth the large gold [arm] ring which he had taken from the temple gate at Hlathir. It was considered a splendid possession. Their meeting to arrange matters for the wedding was to be in the spring following at the boundary [on an island] in the [Gaut Elf] River.

Now [as to] this ring which King Óláf had sent Queen Sigríth and which was so greatly valued by all—with the queen there were two smiths, brothers. And when they held the ring in their hands and weighed it and talked secretly together, the queen had them called to her and asked them why they laughed in their sleeves about the ring. They would not say. Then she told them by all means to let her know what they had noticed. They said that the ring was counterfeit. Then she had the ring broken in two, and there was seen to be copper inside it. Then the queen was furious and said that Óláf would defraud her in more things than that.

That same winter King Óláf journeyed up to Hringaríki to christen the people there. Ásta, the daughter of Guthbrand, had soon after the death of Harald of Grenland married a man called Sigurth Sýr [Sow], who was king of Hringaríki. He was the son of Hálfðan, who was the son of Sigurth Hrísi [Bastard], a son of Harald Fairhair. At Ásta's residence there lived Óláf, her son with Harald of Grenland. While young he was brought up by Sigurth Syr, his stepfather. Now when King Óláf Tryggvason came to Hringaríki to christen the people, Sigurth Sýr and Ásta, his wife, had themselves baptized together with her son ⁹⁹⁸Óláf, and Óláf Tryggvason became the godfather of Óláf Haraldsson. He was three years old at the time. Then King Óláf journeyed back to Vík and dwelled there during the winter. That was the third year of his being king in Norway.

Chapter 61. Queen Sigríth Refuses Baptism

998 Early in spring King Óláf journeyed east to Konungahella for the meeting with Queen Sigríth. And when they met they discussed the matter which had been broached in winter, that they were to marry; and matters went very well. Then King Óláf said that Sigríth should be baptized and accept the true faith. She replied in this wise: “I do not mean to abandon the faith I have had, and my kinsmen before me. Nor shall I object to your belief in the god you prefer.”



Then Sigríth said, “This may well be your death!”

The King Óláf became very angry and said hastily, “Why should I want to marry you dog of a heathen?” and slapped her in the face with the glove he had in his hand. Whereupon he arose, and she too.

Then Sigríth said, “This may well be your death!” With that they parted. The king returned north to Vík, and the queen east to Sweden.

Chapter 62. The King Has the Warlocks Burned

King Óláf then proceeded to the town of Túnsberg and held an assembly there at which he proclaimed that all those who were known to be guilty of practicing magic and sorcery or who were warlocks must leave the country. Then the king had a search made in that neighborhood for such persons, and summoned them to his presence. Among those who came was a man called Eyvind Kelda. He was the grandson of Rognvald Rettelbeini, a son of Harald Fairhair. Eyvind was a sorcerer and exceedingly skilled in wizardry. King Óláf had all these people put in one room and entertained well with strong drink. And when they were drunk he had the house fired, and it burned down with all those inside, except that Eyvind Kelda escaped through the louver and got away. And when he had got a long ways he encountered people who intended to journey to the king, and he bade them tell the king that Eyvind Kelda had escaped and that he would never after get into the clutches of King Óláf and that he would behave as he had done before in practicing his sorcery. And when these men came before King Óláf they told him what Eyvind had bidden them. The king was greatly vexed that Eyvind was not dead.



The sorcerers die on the skerries.

Chapter 63. Eyvind Kelda and Other Warlocks Are Drowned

Toward spring King Óláf sailed out along the [Fold]fjord, visiting his large estates, and sent messengers about all the Vík District that he would collect troops in summer and journey north with them. Then he proceeded north [west] to Agthir. And as Lent approached, he sailed to Rogaland and by Easter-Eve arrived at Ogvaldsness on the Island of Kormt. There, the Easter repast was prepared for him. He had with him close to three hundred [360] men. The same night Eyvind Kelda approached the island with a warship fully manned with warlocks only and other kinds of sorcerers. Eyvind left his ship together with his crew and began to exert his spells. He made such a cover of darkness with fog that the king and his people should not be able to see them. But when they came close to the building on Ogvaldsness it became bright day. And then matters turned out differently from what Eyvind had intended: then the same darkness he had produced with his magic enveloped him and his followers so that they could not see any more with their eyes than with the back of their heads and went about in circles. But the king's watchman saw them but did not know what band it was, and told the king. He and all his followers arose and put on their clothes. And when he saw Eyvind and his band he ordered his men to arm themselves and go up to them to find out who they were. And when the king's men recognized Eyvind they captured him and his crew and led them to the king. Then Eyvind told him about his doings; whereupon the king had them taken out to skerries which were covered with water at high tide and bound them there. Thus Eyvind and all his companions lost their lives. That place was thereafter called Skrattasker [Sorcerers' Skerries].

Chapter 64. Óthin Visits the King

It is told that one evening when King Óláf was being entertained at Ogvaldsness an old and very wise-spoken man came in. He wore a hood coming low down over his face and was one-eyed. This man had things to tell of every land. He engaged in conversation with the king, and the king found much pleasure in his talk and asked him about many things. The guest had an answer to all his questions, and he stayed up long in the evening with him. Then the king asked him whether he knew who had been the Ogvald after whom the ness and the estate were named. The guest answered that Ogvald had been a king and a great man of war and had worshipped a cow more than anything else, and that he had her with him wherever he went, and that he thought it salutary always to drink her milk. “King Ogvald fought with a king named Varin, and in that battle King Ogvald fell. He was then interred here in the mound close to the estate, and memorial stones were raised for him which still stand here. And in another place close to here the cow was buried.” Such tales he told, and many others, about kings and other stories of olden times.

When they had sat thus a long time in the night, the bishop reminded the king that it was time to retire, and the king did so. But when he was undressed and had got into bed, the guest sat down on the footboard and still talked a long time with the king, and no sooner had he said one thing than the king longed to hear more. Then the bishop said to the king that it was time to go to sleep. The king did so, and the guest left the room. A short time afterwards the king awoke and asked after the guest and ordered that he be called to him, but the guest was nowhere to be found.

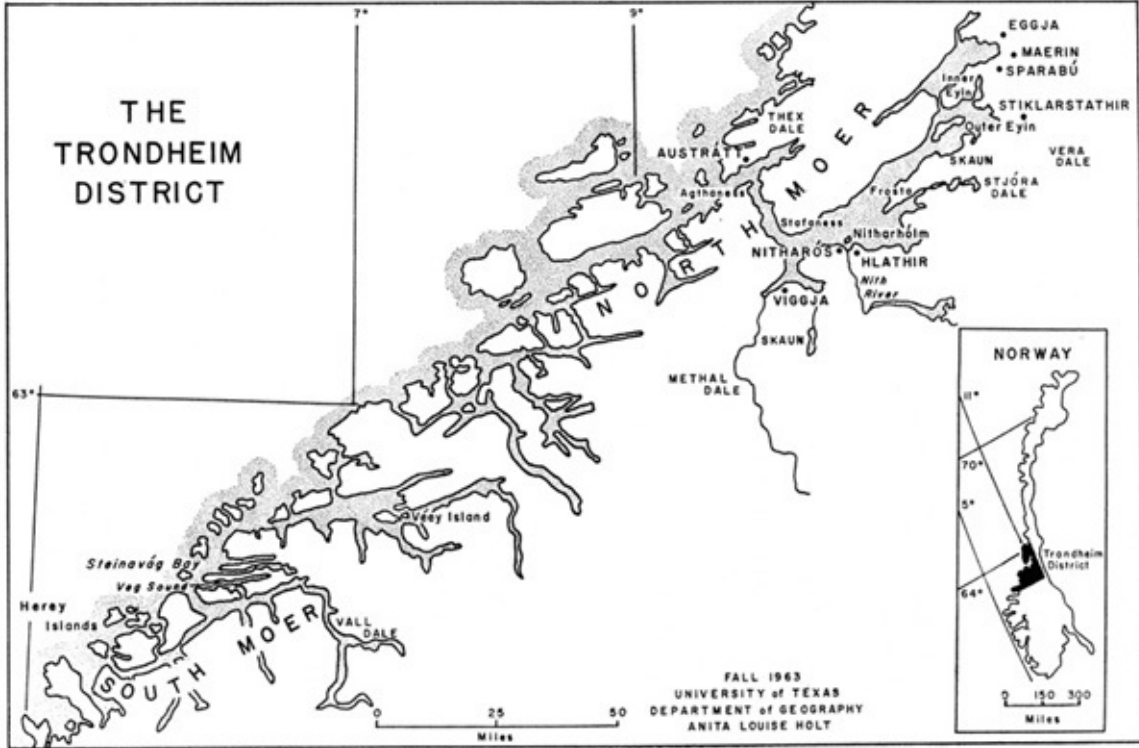
On the morning following, the king had the cook called before him and also the man who attended to the drink and asked them if any stranger had come to see them. They said that when they were about to prepare the meal some man they did not know approached them and said that they were preparing marvellously poor meat for the king’s table. And then he gave them two fat and thick sides of beef, which they boiled, together with other meat. Then the king said they were to destroy all that food—that this had probably not been any human but Óthin, the god heathen men had long worshipped, and that he was not going to succeed in deceiving them.

Chapter 65. The People of Trondheim Reject the King's Attempt to Christianize Them

In the summer King Óláf gathered numerous troops from the eastern part of the country, and with that force proceeded north to Trondheim, anchoring first at Nitharós.¹ Then he sent out messengers² about all the fjord to call an assembly, summoning the men of eight districts to Frosta; but the farmers changed their token into war-arrows and called together both free men and thralls in the whole province of Trondheim.

Now when the king arrived at the assembly, he found there the host of farmers all armed. And when the meeting was opened, the king spoke to the people and bade them accept Christianity. But when he had spoken but a little while, the farmers called out and asked him to cease, saying that otherwise they would set upon him and drive him away. “Thus we did to Hákon, the foster child of Æthelstān, when he demanded that of us, and we do not value you higher than him.”

And when King Óláf perceived the angry disposition of the farmers and observed that they had so large a force that resistance was impossible, he yielded in his speech as if to agree with the farmers, and said, “I desire that we come to an agreement such as we had before. I wish to journey to where you celebrate your greatest sacrifice and there see what is your accustomed faith. Then let us decide on what faith we shall adopt, and agree on that, all of us.” And as the king spoke gently to the farmers their mood softened and all their discussion thereafter proceeded peaceably and in a conciliatory spirit; and it was finally decided that there should be held a midsummer sacrifice inside the fjord at Mærin, and that all the chieftains and influential farmers should attend it as was the custom; and King Óláf was to come there too.



Chapter 66. Járnskeggi Is the Leader of the Farmers

There was a powerful franklin called Skeggi. He was called Járnskeggi [Ironbeard]. He dwelled at Upphaug in Yrjar. Skeggi was the first to speak against King Óláf at the assembly and also was of most influence among the farmers opposing Christianity. Thus stood matters when the assembly dissolved. Then the farmers went home, and the king, to Hlathir.

Chapter 67. The King Forces the Farmers to Accept Christianity

King Óláf moored his ships in the Nith River. He had thirty ships, with a picked and numerous crew. The king himself often resided at Hlathir with his retinue. And when the time approached for the sacrifices at Mærin, King Óláf arranged for a big feast at Hlathir and sent messengers into the inner fjord district to Strind and up into Gaular Dale and into Orka Dale, inviting chieftains and other farmers of importance. And when the banquet was all prepared and those invited had arrived, there was good entertainment the first evening, and drink was served very liberally, and the men grew very drunk. But afterwards during the night everyone slept in peace.

On the morning after, when the king was dressed, he had mass sung for himself; and when it was finished he had the horns blown to summon men for a meeting. Then all his crews left their ships and came to the assembly; and when it opened, the king arose and spoke as follows:

“We had an assembly at Frosta, and there I bade the farmers to let themselves be baptized, but they bade me on the contrary to come to sacrifice with them, as had done Hákon, the foster son of Æthelstān. Then we agreed that we should meet in Mærin and there make a great sacrifice. But if I am to sacrifice with you, then I shall have a sacrifice made which is the greatest ever made, and sacrifice humans. And I shall choose for that, not thralls or evildoers, but the noblest of men as sacrifice to the gods. I shall choose for that Orm Lygra¹ of Methalhús, Styrkár of Gimsar, Kár of Grýting, Ásbjorn and Thorberg of Ornes¹,¹ Orm of Lyxá, Halldór of Skerthingstethja”—and he named still another five most prominent men, saying that he would sacrifice them to obtain a good season and peace; and then he had his men immediately attack them. But when the farmers saw that they did not have a sufficient force to fight the king, they asked for quarter and offered to submit to his terms. Then they came to the agreement that all the farmers who had come were to let themselves be baptized and to promise the king upon oath to hold fast to the true faith and to abolish all sacrifices. The king kept all these men by him at the feast until they had delivered their sons or their brothers or other close kinsmen as hostages to the king.

Chapter 68. King Óláf Attends the Sacrifice at Marín

King Óláf with all his troops proceeded to the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord. And when he reached Mærin, all the chieftains of the Trondheim District who most opposed Christianity had arrived together with all the rich farmers who before had maintained the sacrifices in that place. There was a great multitude, just as there had been at the Frostathing Assembly. Then the king asked the assembly to meet, and both parties came there all armed. And when the assembly met, the king made a speech in which he asked the people to accept Christianity. Járnskeggi answered his speech as representative of the farmers. He said that it was the wish of the farmers as it had been before that the king should not break the laws. "It is our wish, sir king," he said, "that you make the sacrifice as other kings have done here before you." The farmers shouted approval, saying they wanted everything done as Skeggi had said. Then the king replied that he would go into the temple and see what their custom was when they sacrificed. The farmers were well pleased with that, and both parties went to the temple.

Chapter 69. King Óláf Destroys the Idols

King Óláf now entered the temple, accompanied by a few men and some of the farmers. And when the king came to where the gods were, he found Thór sitting there as the most honored of all the gods, adorned with gold and silver. King Óláf lifted up the gold-adorned rod he held in his hand and struck Thór, so he fell from his pedestal. Then the king's men ran up and shoved all the gods from their pedestals. And while the king was inside, Járnkeggi was killed outside in the front of the temple door, and the king's men did that. And when the king had rejoined his force he offered the farmers two alternatives—either to accept Christianity or to go to battle with him. But after Skeggi's death there was no leader among the farmers to raise the standard against King Óláf. So they chose the alternative to go to the king and to do what he bade them. Then King Óláf had all the people that were there baptized, and demanded hostages from the farmers to make certain they would hold fast to Christianity. Thereupon King Óláf let his men go about through all the districts of Trondheim, and then no one made opposition to Christianity, so that all the people in the Trondheim District were baptized.

Chapter 70. King Óláf Finds the Town of Nitharós

King Óláf returned with his army to Nitharós. Then he had houses built on the bank of the Nith River, decreeing that there was to be a market town there. He gave people lots to build themselves houses on and had the royal residence erected above a small inlet there. In the fall he had all furnishings [and provisions] requisite for a winter residence brought there, and maintained a very considerable force at that place.

Chapter 71. Guthrún Attempts to Assassinate the King

King Óláf arranged for a meeting with the kinsmen of Járnkeggi and offered them atonement, and many men of prominence appeared to make a claim. Járnkeggi had a daughter called Guthrún. It was finally agreed upon that King Óláf was to marry her. And when the marriage was celebrated King Óláf and Guthrún mounted the same bed. And in the first night as they lay together, no sooner had the king fallen asleep but she drew a knife and was about to thrust it into him. But the king became aware of it. He wrested the knife from her, got up out of bed, and went to his men and told them what had happened. Guthrún also took her clothes, as did all the men who had come there with her. They left the place, nor did Guthrún ever after lie in the same bed with King Óláf.

Chapter 72. The Ship Crane Is Built

That same fall King Óláf had a large warship built on the spit by the Nith River. It was a swift-sailing ship, and he employed many artisans for building it. And toward the beginning of that winter the ship was finished. It had thirty rowers' benches, was high in stem and stern, but not large otherwise. That ship the king called the Crane. After the slaying of Járnskeggi his body was brought out to Yrjar, and he lies buried in Skeggi's Howe near Austrátt.

Chapter 73. Thangbrand Is Sent to Iceland to Convert It

997 When King Óláf Tryggvason had been king of Norway for two years, there was at his court a Saxon priest called Thangbrand. He was a man of great overbearing and much inclined to violence, but otherwise a good cleric and a brave fellow. However, because of his turbulent ways the king did not want to have him about him and entrusted him with the mission to journey to Iceland and convert that land to Christianity. He was given a merchantman, and it is told of his journey that he made land in Iceland in the South Álptafjord in the Eastfjord District and stayed with Hall of Sítha during the winter following. Thangbrand preached Christianity in Iceland, and owing to his eloquence Hall let himself be baptized, together with his household and many other chieftains; but there were far more who opposed him. Thorvald Veili and the skald Vetrliði¹ composed scurrilous verses about Thangbrand, and he killed both. Thangbrand stayed two years in Iceland and had slain three persons before leaving.

Chapter 74. Sigurth and Hauk Refuse Baptism

There were two men, one called Sigurth and another, Hauk. Both were from Hálogaland and travelled much as merchants. One summer they had sailed west to England; and when they returned to Norway they sailed north along the land; and in North Mør they encountered the fleet of King Ólaf. Now when the king was told that some men from Hálogaland had arrived there who were heathen, he had the skippers called to him and asked them if they would let themselves be baptized, but they said they would not. Then the king approached them in a number of ways, without avail. Then he threatened them with death or torture, but it had no effect on them. So he had them put in irons and had them along with him for some time, in chains. The king often spoke to them, but it was of no use; and one night they disappeared without anyone hearing about them or knowing how they had got away. But in the fall they showed up with Hárek of Thjóttá, who received them well and had them stay with him during the winter in high favor.

Chapter 75. Sigurth and Hauk Abduct Hárek

One fine day in spring Hárek was at home, and only a few persons had remained behind with him. It seemed very dull to him. Sigurth then asked him if he would like to go rowing a bit for amusement, and Hárek liked the suggestion. So they went down to the shore and pulled out a boat with six oars. Sigurth went to the boatshed and brought out the sail and the tackle belonging to the boat as they often were accustomed to when sailing for amusement. Hárek stepped into the boat to put the rudder in place. Sigurth and his brother were fully armed just as it was their custom to go about on the estate of the franklin. Both were unusually strong men. But before they stepped into the boat they threw into it some casks with butter and a chest full of bread; and between them they carried a large keg of ale into the boat. Then they rowed-away from land, and when they had come a short ways from the island the brothers hoisted the sail while Hárek steered.

Soon they were at some distance from the island. Then the two brothers went aft to where Hárek sat. Sigurth said to Franklin Hárek, “Now you shall have to choose one of these alternatives: either to let us two brothers decide where we shall go, or have us tie you hand and foot, or else kill you.” Hárek understood how matters stood. He was a match for no more than one of the brothers if both had been equally well armed. So he chose what seemed to him the most acceptable of these alternatives, which was, to let them decide their course. He confirmed that with oaths and gave them surety about it.

Thereupon Sigurth took the helm and steered south along the land. The brothers took care not to meet anyone, and they had a most favorable breeze. They did not stop before making the Trondheimfjord in the south and finally Nitharós, where they went to King Óláf’s court.

Then the king summoned Hárek to a conference and bade him accept baptism. Hárek refused to do that. The king and Hárek discussed this many a day, sometimes in the hearing of many, sometimes in private, but could come to no agreement.

Finally the king said to Hárek, “I want you to journey home now, I shall not harm you for the nonce. The reason for that is, first, that there is much kinship between us, and second, that you might say I got hold of you by trickery. But I want you to know for sure that I intend to sail north your way in summer and pay a visit to you people of Hálogaland. And then you will find out whether I can punish them who refuse Christianity.” Hárek declared himself well pleased

that he could get away from there, the sooner the better. King Ólaf procured Hárek a good skiff with ten or twelve oarsmen and had that boat provisioned as best could be. The king gave Hárek a crew of thirty men well-equipped and hardy.

Chapter 76. Eyvind Kinnrifa Is Tortured to Death by King Óláf

Hárek of Thjóttá left the town as soon as he could, but Hauk and Sigurth remained with the king and had themselves baptized. Hárek sailed his way until he arrived home in Thjóttá. He sent word to Eyvind Kinnrifa, his friend, to tell him that Hárek of Thjóttá had met King Óláf and had not let himself be cowed to accept Christianity. For another thing, his messengers were to tell him that King Óláf intended to come against them with a fleet during the summer. Hárek said they would have to be on guard for that and asked Eyvind to come to see him as soon as possible. And when this message was delivered to Eyvind he understood there was ample reason to take counsel against being at the mercy of the king. So Eyvind departed as fast as he could on a swift boat with only a few men. And when he arrived at Thjóttá, Hárek made him right welcome, and they both straightway left the farm to have a talk together. But when they had talked but a short while, the men of King Óláf who had brought Hárek north, made Eyvind prisoner and led him away to the ship. Then they departed with Eyvind, and continued on their way till they arrived in Trondheim and found the king in Nitharós. Then he was brought to King Óláf. The king bade him to let himself be baptized like others. But Eyvind refused. The king with kind words urged him to accept Christianity, both he and the bishop giving him many reasons for so doing. But Eyvind would not budge. Then the king offered him gifts and great revenues, but Eyvind refused all. Then the king threatened him with torture or death. Still Eyvind would not budge. Thereupon the king had a basin full of live coals brought in and put on Eyvind's belly, and soon his belly burst.

Then Eyvind said: "Take the basin away. I want to say a few words before I die." And that was done.

Then the king asked, "Will you now believe in Christ, Eyvind?"

"No," he said, "I cannot accept any baptism. I am a spirit brought to life in human shape by the sorcery of Finns, my father and my mother could have no child before." Then Eyvind died. He had been a great sorcerer.

Chapter 77. Hárek of Thjóttá Is Baptized

999 In the spring following, King Óláf had his ships and their crews well equipped. He himself took over the Crane. He had then a numerous and picked force. And when he was ready he sailed out of the fjord and proceeded north around Cape Byrtha, continuing north to Hálogaland. And wherever he made land he held an assembly, at which he bade all to be baptized and accept the true faith. No one durst oppose him, and wherever he fared all the land was made Christian. King Óláf was entertained by Hárek in Thjóttá. He and all his followers were baptized then. At their parting, Hárek made the king fine presents and swore him allegiance, against receiving grants and the dues accruing to a steward [of the king].

Chapter 78. Rauth the Strong and Thórir Hart Are Defeated by the King

Rauth the Strong was the name of a farmer who lived at Gothey in the Sálptifjord. He was a man of great wealth and had many workers. He was a man who had much power. A great number of Finns followed him whenever he needed them. Rauth was much given to making sacrifices and was a great sorcerer. He was a close friend of Thórir Hart, a man who was mentioned before. Both were powerful chieftains. Now when they learned that King Ólaf was coming from the south to Hálogaland with an army, they gathered troops, made a levy of ships, and had a great force. Rauth owned a large dragon ship with gilded head. That vessel had thirty rowers' benches and was large in proportion. Thórir Hart also had a large ship. With this force they headed south against King Ólaf, and when they met, they offered battle to him. It was a fierce combat, and many fell, most in the army of the men of Hálogaland. Their ships were cleared, and then terror and fright got the upper hand among them.

Rauth rowed out to sea with his dragon ship and soon hoisted his sail. He always had a favorable wind, wherever he wished to sail, and that was owing to his witchcraft. To be brief about the matter, he sailed back to his home on Gothey.

Thórir Hart fled to the land, where he [and his crew] abandoned their ships and were pursued by King Ólaf and his men, who also left their ships, following on their heels and killing them. The king, there too, was foremost as always where such exploits were called for. He caught sight of Thórir Hart fleeing. Thórir was an exceedingly swift runner. The king ran after him, accompanied by his hound Vígi. The king called out to him, "Vígi, get the hart!" Vígi ran after Thórir and jumped on him. Thórir stopped. Then the king hurled his spear at Thórir. Thórir gave the dog a great wound with his sword, but at the same moment the king's spear pierced Thórir under his arm so that it came out on the other side. There Thórir expired; but Vígi was borne wounded to the ship. King Ólaf gave quarter to all those who asked for it and consented to be baptized.

Chapter 79. Sorcery Prevents King Óláf's Fleet from Entering the Sálptifjord

King Óláf sailed north with his fleet along the land, baptizing all the people wherever he came. And when he arrived at the Sálptifjord in the north, he intended to enter it to find Rauth, but a furious squall and fierce gale swept out from the fjord, and the king lay there for a week, with the same tempestuous blast coming out of the fjord, whilst on the outside there was a favorable wind to sail north. Then the king sailed all the way north to Omth, where all the people accepted Christianity. Then the king reversed his course and steered south again. But when he approached the Sálptifjord from the north, squalls and spume again issued from it. The king lay there several nights while the same weather continued. Then the king spoke with Bishop Sigurth and inquired whether he knew what course to pursue. The bishop replied that he would try and see if God would lend him his might to overcome this fiendish power.

Chapter 80. Bishop Sigurth Overcomes Rauth's Magic

Bishop Sigurth put on all his vestments and went forward to the prow of the king's ship, had tapers lit and incense borne. He set up a crucifix on the stem of the ship, read the gospel and many other prayers, and sprinkled holy water all over the ship. Then he told them to take the tent coverings off and to row into the fjord. The king then had the order to go out to all the other ships to row behind his. And when they started rowing the Crane, she entered the fjord, and the rowers felt no wind blowing on them; and in the space left by its wake there was perfect calm, and the spoo-drift receded on both sides, so that the mountains were hidden by it. Then one ship followed the other in that calm. Thus they proceeded all day, and then during the night, and shortly before daybreak arrived at Gothey. And when they approached Rauth's estate they saw his large dragon ship floating on the water near land.

King Ólaf straightway went up to the buildings with his troops. They attacked the loft in which Rauth slept, forced it open, and entered. Then Rauth was seized and bound. The others inside were either killed or taken prisoner. Then the king's men went to the hall in which slept the housecarls of Rauth, killing some, and capturing or manhandling others.

The king had Rauth brought before him and bade him take the baptism. "In that case," said the king, "I shall not deprive you of your property, but rather be your friend if you show yourself worthy of it." Rauth cried out against him and said he would never believe in Christ, and he uttered much blasphemy. Then the king became enraged and promised him a most terrible death. Then the king had him tied with his back to a beam with a stick as gag between his teeth to keep his mouth open. Then he had a snake put before his mouth but it wriggled away, because Rauth blew against it. Then the king had the hollow stem of an angelica-stalk put into his mouth—though some say the king had his trumpet put into his mouth—and inserted the snake into it, then applied a glowing iron bar without. Then the snake wriggled into Rauth's mouth and throat and gnawed its way out through his side. From that Rauth died.

King Ólaf took from there a great amount of riches in gold and silver and other valuables, weapons and many kinds of precious things. And all the men who had followed Rauth, the king had baptized, but those who would not, he had killed or tortured. Then King Ólaf seized the dragon ship Rauth had owned, and steered it himself, because it was a much larger and finer ship than the Crane. Its stem had a dragon's head on it, and on its stern, a crook shaped like a tail; and both sides of the neck and all the stern were gilded. That ship the king called the

Serpent, because when the sail was hoisted it was to look like the wing of a dragon. That was the finest ship in all Norway.

The islands where Rauth lived are called Gylling and Hæring, and the name for all of them is the Gothey Islands; and the Gothey Current¹ is in the north between them and the mainland.

King Óláf converted all the district about that fjord, then proceeded south along the land, and on that journey much happened which has been set down in accounts—how trolls and evil spirits taunted his men and sometimes even himself. But we would rather write about how King Óláf introduced Christianity in Norway and in the other countries to which he brought the faith. King Óláf that same fall returned to Trondheim, steering to Nitharós, where he prepared to spend the winter. The next matter which I shall have written deals with Icelanders.

Chapter 81. The Icelanders in Nitharós Vainly Attempt to Avoid the King

999 That same fall there came to Nitharós from Iceland Kjartan,¹ the son of Ólaf, who himself was the son of Hoskuld and the nephew, by his daughter, of Egil Skallagrimsson. Kjartan has been called the most promising man ever born in Iceland. In Nitharós there were also Halldor, the son of Guthmund of Mothruvellir; Kolbein, the son of Thórth Freysgothi and the brother of Flosi of the Burning;² and as the fourth, Sverting, the son of Rúnólf the Gothi.³ All these men were heathen as well as many others, some influential, others less so. There had also come from Iceland some excellent men who had been converted by Thangbrand, such as Gizur the White, the son of Teit Ketilbjarnarson—his mother was Álof, the daughter of Hersir Bothvar, the son of Víkinga-Kári. Bothvar's brother was Sigurth, the father of Eirík Bjóthaskalli, the father of Ástríth who was King Ólaf's mother. Another Icelander was Hjalti Skeggjason. He was married to Vilborg, the daughter of Gizur the White. Hjalti also was a Christian, and King Ólaf received him and Gizur, his kinsman, well, and they stayed at his court.

Now those Icelanders who commanded ships and were heathen, sought to be on their way as soon as the king was in the town, because they had been told that the king forced everyone to accept Christianity; but the weather was against them, and they drifted back to Nitharhólm. The following men were the skippers of these ships: Thórarin Nefjólffsson, the skald Hallfróth Óttarsson,⁴ Brand the Generous, and Thorleik Brandsson. King Ólaf was told that there were Icelanders in several ships, heathen all, who wanted to avoid meeting him. Then the king sent messengers to them, forbidding them to leave the country and commanding them to put into town. They did so, but did not carry any of their goods on shore.

Chapter 82. Kjartan and Bolli Are Baptized

Now came Michaelmas. The king had it observed strictly and had mass sung solemnly. The Icelanders approached and listened to the beautiful singing and the ringing of the bells. And when they returned to their ships, everyone remarked on whether he had liked the proceedings of the Christians. Kjartan spoke favorably about them, but most of the others had no taste for them. But, as the saying goes, “many are the king’s ears.” The king was told about this, so straightway the same day he sent a messenger to Kjartan and bade him come to him. Kjartan went to the king together with some few men. The king received him in kindly fashion. Kjartan was an unusually tall and strong man, very handsome, and spoke well. When they had exchanged but a few words, the king bade Kjartan become a Christian. Kjartan said he would not refuse to if thereby he could gain the friendship of the king. The king promised him complete friendship, and so they came to an agreement between them. On the following day Kjartan was baptized, together with Bolli Thorláksson, a kinsman of his, and their entire crew. Both Kjartan and Bolli were the guests of the king whilst they were in their baptismal robes, and the king showed them great kindness.

Chapter 83. The Skald Hallfröth Accepts Baptism

One day King Ólaf was walking in the Street¹ with some followers when several men met them, and the man at their head greeted the king well. The king asked that man what his name was, and he gave it as Hallfröth. The king said, “Are you the skald?”

He replied, “I can compose poetry.”

Then the king said, “I am sure you will want to be baptized and there-after be my man?”

He replied, “Then I shall make this one condition for being baptized, that you, sir king, yourself be my godfather. I will not be baptized by anyone else.”

The king said, “I shall do that.” Then Hallfröth was baptized, and it was the king who held him during the baptism.

Thereupon the king asked Hallfröth, “Will you now be my man?”

Hallfröth said, “Before, I was a retainer of Earl Hákon. Now I do not want to enter your service or that of any other chieftain, unless you promise me this, that you will not drive me out of your company, whatever may happen to me.”

“I have been told this about you, Hallfröth,” said the king, “that you are not so wise or so gentle in your ways, and I suspect that you may do something which I will under no condition put up with.”

“Kill me then,”² said Hallfröth.

The king said, “A troublesome skald you are, but my man you shall be.”

Hallfröth replied: “What will you, sir king, give me if you bestow this name of ‘Troublesome Skald’ on me?”³ The king gave him a sword, but one without a scabbard.

The king said, “Now compose a stanza about this sword, and let the word ‘sword’ occur in every line.” Hallfröth recited this verse:

163. A sword of swords this, which (146.)
sword-rich now did make me.
Sword-some will’t now seem to
sword-bearing brave warriors.
No worse off for swords were I—
worth am I three swords now—
with the sword if, sire,

seemly sheath be given.

Thereupon the king gave him a scabbard. From the poems of Hallfróth we have gathered the information and true facts which are told about King Ólaf Tryggvason.

Chapter 84. All Icelanders at the Court Are Baptized

999 That same fall Thangbrand the priest arrived from Iceland at King Óláf's court and told him that his mission had not been so successful, that the Icelanders had composed lampoons about him, and that some had wanted to kill him. He considered it unlikely that that land would ever be Christian. The king became so furiously angry that he had the trumpets sounded to summon all Icelanders then in the town, and said that all were to be killed. But Kjartan, Gizur, and Hjalti, as well as the others who at that time had been baptized, went before the king and said, "You will not want to go back on your word, sir king, because you have been saying that there is no man, however much he has done to provoke your wrath, who will not be pardoned by you if he will let himself be baptized and will give up heathenish ways. Now all Icelanders here are willing to let themselves be baptized; and we shall find ways and means to bring it about that Christianity is accepted in Iceland. There are here many influential men's sons from Iceland, and their fathers are likely to afford us great help in this matter. But Thangbrand proceeded there, as he did here with you, with overbearing, and committed manslaughter, and people there would not stand for that." Then the king began to listen to what they had to say. And then all Icelanders who were there were baptized.

Chapter 85. King Óláf Tryggvason's Character and Accomplishments

King Óláf was in all bodily accomplishments the foremost of all the men in Norway of whom we are told. He was stronger and more agile than anyone else, and many stories are told about that. One of these is that he climbed the Smalsarhorn¹ and fastened his shield on top of the mountain; and another, that he helped down one of his followers who had before him climbed the mountain, and now could get neither up nor down. The king went up to him and on his arm carried him down to even ground. King Óláf could walk along the oars outside the Serpent while his men rowed. He could juggle with three daggers, with one always up in the air, and he always caught them by the hilt. He wielded his sword equally well with either hand, and hurled two spears at the same time. King Óláf was of a most cheerful disposition and full of fun. He was friendly and affable, impetuous in all matters, exceedingly generous, and a fine dresser. He exceeded everyone in bravery when in battle. When angered he was very cruel, inflicting tortures on his enemies. Some of them he burned with fire, some he let wild dogs tear to pieces, others he had maimed or cast down from high cliffs. For these reasons he was beloved by his friends and feared by his enemies. And he had such success, because some out of friendship and good will did what he wanted done, and some, because of their fear of him.

Chapter 86. Leif Eiríksson Joins the King's Court

Leif, the son of Eirík the Red, the man who first settled in Greenland, had that summer come from Greenland to Norway. He went to the court of King Óláf, received the baptism, and stayed with King Óláf during the winter.

Chapter 87. King Guthröth Eiríksson Is Slain

Guthröth, one of the sons of Eirík Bloodyaxe and Gunnhild, had been raiding in the British Islands ever since he fled from Earl Hákon. But this
999 summer of which we have just written, when King Ólaf Tryggvason had been ruler of Norway for four years, Guthröth came to Norway with many warships. He had sailed from England; and when he expected to sight land in Norway, he steered south along the land to where there was less chance of meeting King Ólaf, and sailed south [east] toward Vík. And as soon as he made land he began to harry and to force people into submission, requiring them to acknowledge him as king. But when the people of the country saw that a large army had descended upon them, they begged for peace and expressed their willingness to come to an agreement. They offered King Guthröth to have an assembly called and rather accept him as king than to suffer the depredations of his army; and there was to be a respite until the assembly could gather.



Guthröth Eiríksson's men harry in Vík.

Then the king demanded a contribution in food for the time until the assembly met. But the farmers preferred to entertain the king as long as he needed it until then. And he accepted that alternative and went about the country, being entertained, together with part of his force, while part of it guarded his ships. But when Hyrning and Thorgeir, King Ólaf's relatives by marriage learned of this, they gathered a force and procured ships and then sailed north to Vík, and one night came to the place where King Guthröth was being entertained. They attacked it with fire and arms; and King Guthröth fell there, together with most of his company. But those of his force who had remained on the ships were

either slain or escaped, fleeing every which way. Then all the sons of Eirík and Gunnhild were dead.

Chapter 88. The Long Serpent Is Defaced and Then Improved by Thorberg

The winter following, when King Ólaf had returned from Hálogaland, he ordered a large ship built underneath the Hlathir Cliffs which was much larger than any other ship then in the country, and the stocks on which it was built still exist and can be seen. Thorberg Skafhogg was the name of the man who fashioned the stem and stern of the ship, but many others were engaged in its building, some fitting the timbers together, some shaping it with their adzes, some riveting the nails, some transporting the timber. All parts were wrought very carefully. The vessel was both long and broad, stood high out of the water, and was constructed of big timbers. And when they were fashioning the gunwales on it, Thorberg was obliged to go home on a necessary errand and stayed there a long time. And when he returned, the ship had bulwarks of full height. In the evening the king straightway went with Thorberg to inspect the ship and see what had been done, and everyone declared that they had never seen a ship as large and handsome. Thereupon the king returned to the town.



The Long Serpent.

Early next morning the king again went to the ship together with Thorberg. The workmen had already arrived there, but all stood about and did nothing. The king asked what was the matter. They said that the ship was ruined, that somebody had gone from the stem to the raised afterdeck and had given the uppermost course of the ship's side one damaging blow after the other. The king then went closer and saw that it was true. Then he spoke at once and vowed that

if he found out who because of jealousy had ruined the ship, that man should die. “But he who can tell me who did it shall be handsomely rewarded.”

Then Thorberg said, “I can tell you, sir king, who did this.”

“I would not have expected,” said the king, “anyone else to be so lucky as to be able to tell me who did it.”

“I shall tell you, sir king,” he said, “who has done it. I did it.”

Then the king said, “In that case you are to repair the ship so that it is as good as before. Your life depends on it.” Then Thorberg went to work with his adze, with the result that all traces of the damage inflicted disappeared. Then the king and all the others declared that the ship looked far better on that side which Thorberg had cut out. Then the king bade him do so on both sides, and offered him thanks for what he had done; whereupon Thorberg was made chief builder until the ship was completed.

It was constructed as a dragon ship, on the model of the Serpent which the king had taken along from Hálogaland; only it was much larger and more carefully wrought in all respects. He called it the Long Serpent, and the other one, the Short Serpent. The Long Serpent had thirty-four compartments. The head and the tail were all gilt. And the gunwales were as high as those on a seagoing ship. This was the best ship ever built in Norway, and the most costly.

Chapter 89. Earl Eirík Hákonarson Harries in the Baltic

995 Earl Eirík Hákonarson, his brothers, and many other prominent kinsmen of theirs had fled the country after the death of Earl Hákon. Earl Eirík journeyed to Sweden to join the court of Óláf, the king of Sweden, where he was received well. King Óláf gave the earl the freedom of the country and large revenues so he could maintain himself and his men well. This is mentioned by Thóρθ Kolbeinsson [in these verses]:¹

164. Curber of outlaws! Cut short
caitiff traitors a little
while since—harsh is fate oft—
Hákon's, thy father's, life-span,
what time Tryggvi's kinsman
to this land came, which the
atheling erst had conquered,
o'er the sea from Westlands. (147.)

165. Much in mind had Eirík—
more than thought was—'gainst the
sower-of-wealth: certes,
such was to be looked for.
Wrothly sought the Swedish
sovrán's help—durst none
hinder that—the Thronders'
thane. That tribe proved stubborn. (148.)

A great number of people who had fled Norway from King Óláf Tryggvason joined Earl Eirík. Then Earl Eirík determined to procure himself ships and undertake a warlike expedition to obtain property for himself and his company. First he sailed to Gotland, where he lay for a long time during the summer, waylaying merchantmen sailing to land, or vikings. Now and then he went up on land, raiding far and wide along the coast. As is said in the *Bandadrápa*:²

166. Hard frays many more the
mail-clad lord, besides these,
fought—that have we found out—
*Fray-loving Earl Eirík*³—
he who harried Gotland's
hapless shorelands often (149.)

far and wide with fury.
furthered storm-of-arrows.

Later on Earl Eirík sailed south to Wendland, and there, before [the headland of] Staur,⁴ he encountered some viking ships and gave battle to them. Eirík was victorious and slew the vikings. As is told in the *Bandadrápa*:

167. His stem-horses at Staur, the (150.)
strengtheners of men anchored—
ordered thus the atheling.
Eager for the fray, the—⁵
Slit the sea-gull-of-wounds,⁶ at
sword-contest fierce, men's
bodies on island's edges—
earl rules land god-warded.

Chapter 90. Earl Eirík Marries the Daughter of King Svein Forkbeard

997 In the following autumn, Earl Eirík returned to Sweden and remained there another winter. But in spring the earl readied his force and sailed into the Baltic. And when he came to the realm of King Valdamar he began to harry and to kill people, and to burn down everything where he went, thus laying the land waste. He reached Aldeigjuborg¹ and beleaguered it until he conquered that town, killing many there, and breaking down and burning the entire town. Thereupon he went about Gartharíki, raiding far and wide, as is told in the *Bandadrápa*:

168. Waste laid then the warrior— (151.)
waxed battle thereafter—
Valdamar's land and lieges
likewise with sword and fire.
Didst Aldeigja level,
dreaded leader—such news
heard we for sure—when you
harried east in Garthar.

Altogether, Earl Eirík was engaged in these expeditions during five summers. When he left Gartharíki he raided throughout Athalsýsla and Eysýsla,² where he took four galleys from the Danes and killed all their crews; as is told in the *Bandadrápa*:

169. Heard have I how the (152.)
hardy blood-wand³ wielder
fought in the firth 'twixt islands.
*Fray-loving Earl Eirík—*⁴
Cleared then of their caitiff
crews four Danish warships,
learned we, fiercely fighting.
—furthered storm-of-arrows.

170. Battle gave ye 'gainst the (153.)
Gautar, in their stronghold
afterward ye entered.
Eager for the fray, the—
Went the god-of-war⁵—to

wights he gave no surcease—
into all the districts.
earl rules land god-warded.

After passing one winter in Sweden Earl Eirík journeyed to Denmark. There he went to the court of Svein Forkbeard, the Danish king, and asked for the hand of Gytha, his daughter; and upon his agreeing to that, Earl Eirík married her. And a year later they had a son who was called Hákon. During the winters Earl Eirík sometimes sojourned in Denmark and sometimes in Sweden, but in summer he went on warlike expeditions.

Chapter 91. King Svein Forkbeard Marries Sigríth the Haughty

King Svein of Denmark was married to Gunnhild, a daughter of King Búrizláf of Wendland. But in the times of which we have just written, it happened that Queen Gunnhild took sick and died; and a short time afterwards King Svein married Sigríth the Haughty, the daughter of Skoglar-Tósti and the mother of Óláf, king of Sweden. With these bonds of relationship there came great friendship between the two kings and also with Earl Eirík Hákonarson.

Chapter 92. Princess Thyri Is Wed to Búrizláf But Escapes to Norway and Marries Óláf

Búrizláf, the king of the Wendish, complained to Earl Sigvaldi, his son-in-law; that the agreements had been broken which Earl Sigvaldi had arranged between him [Búrizláf] and King Svein. Búrizláf was to have received in marriage Thyri, daughter of Harald and sister of King Svein; but that union was not effected because Thyri absolutely refused to be married to a heathen king who also was old. Now King Búrizláf told the earl that he would insist on having that agreement kept, and asked the earl to journey to Denmark and bring him Queen Thyri.

Earl Sigvaldi did not put this aside but travelled to the court of Svein, the king of Denmark, and brought this matter up before him; and the earl was so successful in his arguments that King Svein put into his hands his sister Thyri. In her train were some women and her foster father, Ozur Agason, a man of influence, as well as some other men. It was in the agreement between the king and the earl that the properties in Wendland formerly owned by Queen Gunnhild, should pass into the possession of Thyri, together with other large properties which were to be her dowry. Thyri wept bitterly and went most reluctantly. And when the earl and his company arrived in Wendland, King Búrizláf celebrated his marriage with Queen Thyri. But she was among heathens and she would not have any food or drink from them; and this went on for seven days.

But one night Queen Thyri and Ozur escaped to the woods in the darkness of the night. To make a long story short, they got to Denmark. But there Thyri did not dare remain at any price because she knew that if King Svein, her brother, was informed that she was there, he would quickly deport her back to Wendland. So they continued by stealth till they came to Norway, and there Thyri did not stop till she arrived at the court of King Óláf. He made them welcome, and they stayed there and were hospitably entertained.

Thyri told the king about her troubles and asked him for advice and help, requesting that she might stay in his kingdom. Thyri was a well-spoken woman, and the king was pleased with her words. He observed that she was handsome, and bethought himself that she would be a good match. He broached the matter to her and asked whether she would marry him. Now seeing the difficulties she was in and from which she believed it would be very hard to extricate herself; and on the other hand considering how advantageous a match this was, to be

married to so noble a king, she asked him to decide for her and [said] that she would follow his advice. And the outcome of their talk was that King Óláf received Queen Thyri in marriage. The celebration of it was held the same fall when the king had returned from Hálogaland in the north.

King Óláf and Queen Thyri dwelled in Nitharós during the winter. But in the spring following, the queen complained frequently to King Óláf, weeping bitterly, that she had such large possessions in Wendland, whereas she had no property there in Norway as befitted a queen. At times she would beg the king with sweet words to regain her possessions for her, saying that King Búrizláf was so great a friend of King Óláf that he would let King Óláf have all he wanted as soon as they met. But when the friends of King Óláf learned of what she said, they all of them counselled against this undertaking.

We are told that one day early in the spring when the king was walking in the Street, he met a man in the market place who had [for sale] many stalks of angelica¹ remarkably large for so early in the spring. The king took along with him a large stalk and went to where resided Queen Thyri. She was sitting in her room and wept when the king entered. The king said, “Look at this large stalk of angelica for you.”

She struck at it with her hand and said, “Larger gifts bestowed Harald Gormsson, and was less afraid to leave his country and redeem his possessions than you are; and that was shown when he came here to Norway and laid waste most of this land and took possession of all revenues from it; but you don’t dare to proceed through the Danish realm for fear of King Svein, my brother.”

At this, King Óláf sprang to his feet and exclaimed in a loud voice, “Never shall I stand in fear of King Svein, your brother; and if ever we meet he shall have to give way.”

Chapter 93. Óláf Readies His Fleet to Retrieve Thyri's Possessions in Wendland

A short time thereafter King Óláf summoned an assembly in the town, in which he made known to all the people that he would levy men and ships for war in summer from all the country, and that he demanded a contribution to this levy from every district, both in ships and men. And he made known how many ships he wanted from the Trondheim District. Thereupon he sent messengers both north and south along the land, and both along the coast and inland, and summoned troops. He launched the Long Serpent and all other ships he had, both large and small. He himself steered the Long Serpent. And when men were chosen for the crews, they were so carefully picked that no one on the Long Serpent was to be older than sixty or younger than twenty, and it was a picked crew both as to strength and valor. Chosen were first of all the bodyguard of King Óláf, because it consisted of picked men as to strength and prowess, both Norwegians and foreigners.

Chapter 94. The Crew of the Long Serpent

Úlf the Red was the name of the man who carried the standard of King Óláf and was forecandleman on the Serpent. Other commanders were Kolbjorn the Marshal, Thorstein Oxfoot, Víkar of Tíundaland, a brother of Arnljót Gellini. The following were in the forepart of the ship: Vak Raumason of Álfheim, Bersi the Strong, Án the Marksman of Jamtaland, Thránd the Strong of Thelamork and his brother Óthyrmir. The following were from Hálogaland: Thránd the Squinter, Ogmund Sandi, Hlothvir the Long from Saltvík, Hárek the Keen. Then these men hailed from the inner reaches of the Trondheimsfjord: Ketil the Tall, Thorfinn Eisli, and Hávarth with his brothers from Orka Dale. The following were in the middle compartment of the vessel: Bjorn of Stuthla, Thorgrím Thjóthólfsson from Hvinir, the foster brothers Ásbjorn and Orm, Thóρθ from Njartharlog, Thorstein the White of Oprostathir, Arnór of Mær, Hallstein and Hauk from the Fjord District, Eyvind Snake, Bergthór Bestil, Hallkel of Fjalir, Óláf the Manly, Arnfinn from Sogn, Sigurth Knife, Einar and Finn of Horthaland, Ketil of Rogaland, and Grjótgarth the Brave. In the compartment before the mast (?) were Einar Thambarskelfir—he was not considered to be up to the mark because he was only eighteen—Hallstein Hlífaron, Thórólf, Ívar Smetta, Orm Neck-of-the-Woods. And many other, very eminent men were on the Serpent though we cannot furnish their names. Eight men were in [each] half-compartment in the Serpent, and each one was picked. Thirty men were in the forward compartment. It was said that the select body of men on the Serpent excelled other men in comeliness, strength, and prowess no less than the Serpent did other vessels. Thorkel Nose, the king's brother, steered the Short Serpent. Thorkel Dyrthil and Jóstein, maternal uncles of the king, were in command of the Crane; and both of these ships were well staffed. King Óláf had eleven large ships from Trondheim, besides twenty-oared and smaller vessels.

Chapter 95. Gizur the White and Hjalti Skeggjason Are Commissioned to Christianize Iceland

Now when King Ólaf had his army nearly ready to leave Nitharós, he divided the people in all the districts around the Trondheimfjord into prefectures and stewardships. Then he sent Gizur the White and Hjalti Skeggjason to Iceland to
1000^P proclaim Christianity there, and with them a priest called Thormóth and several other ordained men, but kept with him as hostages four Icelanders that seemed to him the noblest: Kjartan Ólafsson, Halldór Guthmundarson, Kolbein Thórharson, and Sverting Rúnólfsson. And we are told about the mission of Gizur and Hjalti that they arrived in Iceland before the meeting of the Althing and journeyed to the assembly; and at this assembly Christianity was adopted in Iceland by law, and all the people were baptized.

Chapter 96. Leif Eiríksson Is Sent to Convert the Greenlanders

That same spring King Óláf commissioned Leif Eiríksson to Greenland to preach Christianity there, and he sailed there that summer. At sea he rescued the crew who were marooned on a wreck; and on the same journey he discovered Wineland the Good. He arrived in Greenland in the summer, and in his company were a priest and some clerics. He went to stay in Brattahlíth with Eirík, his father. People afterwards called him Leif the Fortunate. But his father Eirík said that the two things balanced each other—that Leif had rescued that crew and that he had brought the hypocrite to Greenland. By that he meant the priest.

Chapter 97. King Óláf Sails to Wendland

King Óláf proceeded south along the land with his fleet. Then he was joined by many friends of his, powerful men who were ready to go with the king on his expedition. The first among them was his brother-in-law, Erling Skjálgsson, with the large man-of-war he owned. It had thirty rowers' benches, and its crew was a select one. The king was joined also by his relatives, Hyrning and Thorgeir, each of whom steered a large ship. Many other men of power followed him. When he left Norway he had sixty warships, and with them he sailed south through the Eyrar Sound past Denmark, and arrived in Wendland, where he arranged for a meeting with King Búrizláf. When the kings met they discussed the possessions King Óláf laid claim to, and all went amicably between them, and there was promptness shown about agreeing to the claims King Óláf preferred. King Óláf remained long there during the summer and met many of his friends.

Chapter 98. The Alliance between King Svein Forkbeard, King Óláf of Sweden, and Earl Eirík

As was written above, King Svein Forkbeard had married Sigríth the Haughty. Sigríth was King Óláf's bitterest enemy, because King Óláf had broken the agreement with her and had slapped her face, as was written above. She constantly incited King Svein to wage war against King Óláf Tryggvason, saying that sufficient reason for that was having shared Thyri's, King Svein's sister's, bed "without asking your permission; nor would your forebears have stood for that." Such pleadings Queen Sigríth often made, and succeeded so well that King Svein was persuaded to follow her advice. And early in spring King Svein sent messengers east to Sweden to the court of Óláf, king of Sweden, his stepson, and Earl Eirík, informing them that Óláf, king of Norway, had called out an army and intended to sail to Wendland in the summer. The messengers furthermore were charged to request the Swedish king and Earl Eirík to levy troops and with them join King Svein, when they all together were to give battle to King Óláf. The king of Sweden and the earl were quite ready to join this enterprise. They gathered a large fleet in Sweden and with it sailed south to Denmark, arriving there after King Óláf had sailed east [south]. Halldór the Unchristened¹ mentions this in the poem he composed about Earl Eirík:

171. South from Sweden Óláf (154.)
summoned mighty forces.
Swiftly the kings'-cower²
came, eager for battle.
Willingly would all the
wielders-of-steel-blue-broadswords—
gorged the gulls-of-fray³ on
gore—then follow Eirík.

The king of Sweden and Earl Eirík proceeded to join the Danish king, and then they altogether had an immense army.

Chapter 99. Earl Sigvaldi's Treachery

After summoning his army King Svein sent Earl Sigvaldi to reconnoiter about the movements of King Ólaf Tryggvason and to contrive to bring about an encounter between him, King Svein, and King Ólaf Tryggvason. So Earl Sigvaldi betook himself to Wendland and to Jónsborg, where he sought out King Ólaf Tryggvason. Much friendship was shown between the two, and the earl managed to win the king's confidence. Ástríth, the wife of the earl and daughter of King Búrizláf, was a great friend of King Ólaf [Tryggvason], chiefly because of their former relationship, when King Ólaf had as wife her sister, Queen Geira. Earl Sigvaldi was a shrewd and resourceful man. And as he came to know the plans of King Ólaf, he managed to delay his sailing west [north] with a great number of reasons. But the troops of King Ólaf chafed much at that—they wanted to return home, and lay there all ready to sail, with a favorable breeze to be expected. Earl Sigvaldi secretly received the message from Denmark that the fleet of the Danish king had arrived from the east [? west], that Earl Eirík also had readied his forces, and that these chieftains were about to approach Wendland from the east. It was agreed between them that they were to await the coming of King Ólaf near the island called Svólth,¹ and that the earl [Sigvaldi] was to manage it so that they would encounter King Ólaf there.

Chapter 100. King Óláf with His Fleet Leaves Wendland

Then a rumor spread in Wendland that King Svein of Denmark had mustered an army, and there was a report that he intended to encounter King Óláf in battle. But Earl Sigvaldi said to the king, "It cannot be the intention of King Svein to enter into battle with you with only the Danish fleet, considering the large force you have here. But if you entertain any suspicion of hostilities against you, I shall join you with my fleet; and it has always hitherto been regarded as a point of main strength to have Jómsvíkings supporting the troops of chieftains. I shall provide you with eleven well-manned ships" The king agreed to that. A light and fair breeze was blowing. Then the king gave the order to cast off the cables and to give the trumpet signal for departure. Then the sails were hoisted. The smaller vessels made better headway and sailed out to sea leaving the others behind.

The earl kept near the king's ship and called out to them, asking the king to follow his lead. "I know exactly," he said, "where it is deepest in the straits between the islands, and you may require that for those large ships of yours." Then Earl Sigvaldi headed the fleet with his ships. He had eleven ships, and the king followed in his wake with his large ships. He also had eleven ships. But all the rest of his fleet had sailed out to sea. Now when Earl Sigvaldi approached Svólth from seaward a skiff came rowing toward them. Men on it told the earl that the fleet of the king of Denmark was moored in the harbor close by. Then the earl lowered the sails on his ships and they rowed up to the island. As Halldór the Unchristened says:

172. With seventy sails and one then (155.)
sailed the long-ship's-steerer¹
from the south—his sword the
sovrán reddened, battling—
since the sea-steeds'-reiner²
summoned ships from Skáney—
broken were oaths that bound them
both—to aid in combat.

Here we are told that King Óláf and Earl Sigvaldi had seventy-one ships when they proceeded from the south.

Chapter 101. The Allies Watch the Approach of Óláf's Fleet

Svein, the king of the Danes, Óláf, the king of the Swedes, and Earl Eirík were at that place then, with their combined forces. It was fair weather with bright sunshine. All the chieftains now went up on the island, together with some bodies of men. They saw very many ships out at sea, and presently they saw a large and handsome ship sailing along. Then both kings said, "That is a large ship and a mighty beautiful one. That is likely to be the Long Serpent." Earl Eirík answered that this was not the Long Serpent; nor was it. It belonged to Eindrithi of Grimsar.

A short time afterwards they saw another ship which was much larger than the first. Then King Svein said, "Afraid is Óláf Tryggvason now, since he dares not sail with the dragon head fastened on his ship."

Then Earl Eirík replied, "This is not the king's ship. I know that ship and its sail, because it is striped. It is Erling Skjálgson's. Let it sail on. It is better for us to have a hole and gap in King Óláf's fleet than [to fight] that ship which is so well outfitted."

A while after they saw and recognized Earl Sigvaldi's ships, and they steered toward the island where they were. Then they saw three ships come sailing, one of them a large vessel. Then King Svein bade his men go on board his ships, saying that this was the Long Serpent. But Earl Eirík said, "They have many other large and stately vessels beside the Long Serpent. Let us wait still."

Then a great many exclaimed, "Earl Eirík does not want to fight now and avenge his father. It is a big shame, which will be noised abroad, that we lie here with such a large fleet and let King Óláf sail out to sea right past us."

And when they had talked about that for a while, they saw four ships come sailing, one of them a huge dragonship, all ornamented with gold. Then King Svein arose and said, "On high the Serpent is going to bear me this evening. That ship I mean to steer." Then many said that the Serpent was a marvelous, big, and handsome ship, and that it was a grand thing to have so beautiful a ship built.

Then Earl Eirík said in the hearing of several men, "Even though King Óláf did not have any bigger ships than that one, King Svein would never get it away from him with the Danish fleet alone."



The allied kings see Ólaf Tryggvason's ships sail by.

Then the crews hurried to the ships and removed the ship awnings. But while the chieftains were talking about this, as put down above, they saw three huge ships come sailing, and a fourth one last, and that was the Long Serpent. But as to the other two ships which had sailed past and which they thought were the Long Serpent, the first of them was the Crane, and the next, the Short Serpent. But when they saw the Long Serpent, they all recognized it, and no one contradicted that on it sailed Ólaf Tryggvason.¹ They boarded their ships and made ready for the attack.

It was agreed among the chieftains—King Svein, King Ólaf, and Earl Eirík—that each one was to have a third of Norway if they cut down King Ólaf Tryggvason, and that he who first boarded the Serpent was to have all the booty to be got on it; also, that each of them was to have the ships they themselves cleared of their crews. Earl Eirík owned a mighty big ship which he was accustomed to take on his viking expeditions. It had a beak [or ram] on the upper part of the prow, fore and aft, and below that heavy iron plates as broad as the beak itself, which went down to the waterline.

Chapter 102. King Óláf Decides to Fight the Allied Fleet

When Sigvaldi and his flotilla rowed up to the island, Thorkel Dyrthil on the Crane, and the other skippers on the vessels following him, observed that the earl with his ships steered toward the island. Then they also lowered their sails and rowed in his wake and called out to him, asking why he did so. The earl said that he wanted to wait for King Óláf—“and it looks as if we may expect a fight here.” Then they let the ships drift until Thorkel Nefja came up with the Short Serpent together with the three ships following him, and they were given the same information. Then they lowered their sails, letting their ships drift, and waited for King Óláf. And when the king sailed up to the island, the entire enemy fleet rowed out into the sound in front of them. When King Óláf’s men saw that they begged the king to sail along and not engage such a huge host in battle.

The king answered aloud as he stood high upon the raised stern deck, “Lower the sail! Let not my men think of fleeing. I have never fled in battle. May God dispose of my life, but I shall never flee.” They did as the king commanded. As says Hallfróth:¹

173. Tell I will the warrior’s (156.)
words which at the sword-thing,
fearless, spoke the spear-shafts-
speeder to his liege men:
Bade the enemies’-awer not
ever think of flight—his
dauntless words no doubt will
dure forever—in battle.

Chapter 103. King Óláf and His Forecastlemen Have Words

King Óláf had the trumpets blown for all his ships to gather. The king's ship was in the middle of the battle array, with the Short Serpent on one side, and the Crane on the other. And when they began to lash the ships together stem to stem and stern to stern, they did so also with the Long Serpent and the Short Serpent. But when the king saw that, he called out aloud and ordered the big ship to be placed farther forward and not let it be the hind-most of all ships of the fleet. Then replied Úlf the Red, "If the Serpent is to be placed forward by as much as it is longer than other ships, then those in the fore-castle will have to bear the brunt of the fight."

The king said, "I was not aware that I had a fore-castleman who was both red and afraid."¹

Úlf said, "Just don't you defend the raised afterdeck more with your back² than I shall the fore-castle." The king had a bow in his hands and laid an arrow on the bowstring, aiming at Úlf.

Úlf said, "Shoot the other way, sir king, where there is more need. Whatever I do, I do for you."

Chapter 104. King Óláf Scans His Opponents

King Óláf stood on the poop of the Serpent, high above the others. He had a gilt shield and helmet, and was thus easily distinguishable from others. He wore a short red kirtle over his coat of mail. And when King Óláf saw that the [enemy] forces gathered together and the standards were raised for the chieftains, he asked, “Who is the leader of the fleet facing us?” He was told that it was King Svein Forkbeard with his Danish force. The king replied, “We have no fear of those cravens. There is no courage in the Danes. But who is the chieftain whose standards I see there on the right of them?” He was told it was King Óláf with his Swedish army. King Óláf said, “Better it would be for the Swedes to stay at home and lap their sacrificial bowls¹ than attack the Serpent and encounter our weapons. But whose are those large ships that lie on the larboard side of the Danes?”

“There,” they said, “is Earl Eirík Hákonarson.”

Then King Óláf replied, “Very likely he considers he has a bone to pick with us, and we may expect a smart fight with that force: they are Norwegians like us.”

Chapter 105. The Battle Begins

Now the kings rowed to the attack. King Svein laid his ship against the Long Serpent, but King Ólaf of Sweden from the outside pushed his prows against the outmost ship of King Ólaf Tryggvason from the sea side while Earl Eirík did so on the opposite side. Then began a hard battle. Earl Sigvaldi moved his ships to and fro and did not participate in the battle. As says Skúli Thorsteinsson¹—he was in Earl Eirík’s force at that time: (157.)

174. When young, the Frisians’ foe² I
followed, and eke Sigvaldi—
fame I gathered—but gray have
grown since—where sang arrows,
the time by Svolph Sound we
swords did redden, and in
din-of-darts³ we met our
doughty foe there head-on.

And still further, Hallfróth has this to say about these events: (158.)

175. There, I think, for sure the
thane, for fray ever-ready,
much did miss the help of
men from Trondheim⁴ in battle.
Alone the fearless folk-king
fought the valiant rulers—
deathless are such doughty
deeds—and the earl as third foe.

Chapter 106. King Óláf Defeats the Danes and the Swedes

This was the bitterest and most murderous battle. The men stationed in the forecastle of the Long Serpent, the Short Serpent, and the Crane hurled anchors and grappling hooks onto the ship of King Svein, and they were able to attack them from above. They cleared of their crews all the ships they could hold onto, but King Svein and the men who managed to escape fled onto other ships and thereupon retired out of range of arrow shots; and this force behaved just as King Óláf Tryggvason had predicted.

In their place Óláf, the king of the Swedes, now moved to the attack, and no sooner did they come near the large ships [of King Óláf Tryggvason] than they fared like the others, losing many men and some ships, and so retired from the fight.

Now Earl Eirík brought his ship Barthi alongside the outermost ship of King Óláf, cleared it of its crew, and straightway cut the hawsers connecting it with the other ships, then attacked the ship next to it, and fought till that was cleared too. Then the men of the smaller ships took to seek refuge on the large ships. But the earl cut the hawsers of each ship as soon as it was cleared of its crew. And now the Danes and the Swedes approached within shooting distance from all sides around King Óláf's ships. But Earl Eirík steadily moved alongside and fought at close quarters; and as men fell on his ships, others, Danes and Swedes, stepped in their places. As says Halldór (the Unchristened):

176. Raged bitter brands a long time— (159.)
broken was the peace then—
whined the hurtling javelins'
hail—round the Serpent.
Forward followed him¹ in
fray slaughterous, say they,
south of the sea by Svolph Isle,
Swedish men and Danish.

Then there was most furious fighting and great carnage; and in the end all ships of King Óláf's were cleared of men, excepting the Long Serpent. On it had taken refuge all of his men who were still able to fight. Then Earl Eirík laid his ship Barthi alongside the Serpent, and there was hand to hand fighting. As says Halldór:

177. Yester-year at Svolph, as (160.)

ye have heard, pressed sorely—
smote keen wands-of-wounds there—
was the king's Long Serpent,
broadside when his Barhi,
boarded high, Earl Eirík—
loot won that lord in battle—
laid 'gainst Fáfnir's² bulwarks.

Chapter 107. The Men on the Long Serpent Offer a Sharp Defence

Earl Eirík stood in the compartment in front of the raised stern-deck where men had formed a shield-castle. The battle raged with blows of swords and axes and with thrusts of spears, and everything was hurled that could be called a weapon. Some shot with bows, others hurled javelins. There was such a shower of weapons directed against the Serpent that the men could hardly protect themselves with their shields, since javelins and spears flew so thick; because battleships attacked the Serpent on all sides. King Óláf's men fought so furiously that they jumped on the railings in order to reach and kill their foes with swordblows; but many [of these] did not approach the Serpent so closely as to engage in close combat. But most of Óláf's men leapt overboard, acting as though they were fighting on level ground, and sank with their arms. As says Hallfróth:

178. Sank down from the Serpent, (161.)
sorely wounded in spear-fight,
many, nor sharp shots could
shun in storm-of-arrows.
Ne'er, though steer it a stalwart,
stout-souled king hereafter,
where'er it haply sail, will
have such crew the Serpent.

Chapter 108. Of Einar Thambarskelfir

Einar Thambarskelfir was on the *Serpent* in the compartment forward of the stern. He shot with bow and arrow. He was the best shot anywhere. He shot at Earl Eirík, and the arrow hit the top piece of the rudder above the earl's head and sank in all the way up to the socket. The earl looked at it and asked if they knew who was the archer; but straightway there came another arrow, and so near to the earl that it passed between his side and his arm and went into the head-board behind him so that the point came out on the other side of it. Then the earl said to the man some call Finn—some say he was Finnish—he was a great archer, “Shoot that big man in the forward compartment!” He shot, and the arrow struck the bow of Einar in the middle, at the moment when Einar drew his bow for the third time, and the bow burst in two.

Then said King Óláf, “What cracked there with such a loud report?”

Einar answered, “Norway out of your hands, sir king.”

“Hardly so great a break,” said the king. “Take my bow and shoot with it”—and he flung his bow over to him.

Einar took the bow and at once drew the head of the arrow behind it and said, “Too soft, too soft is the king's bow,” and threw the bow behind him, took up his shield, and fought with his sword.



“Too soft, too soft is the king's bow.”

Chapter 109. King Óláf Tryggvason Is Wounded

King Óláf Tryggvason stood on the raised afterdeck of the Serpent during the day, and most often shot with his bow, but sometimes he hurled javelins, generally two at a time. He looked forward on his ship and saw his men wield their swords and hew again and again, but noticed that their swords did no execution, and he called out aloud, “Why do you wield your swords in such slack fashion, because I see they don’t cut?”

A man made answer, “Our swords are dull and much dented.” Then the king went down into the forward compartment and undid the high-seat box. From it he took many sharp swords and handed them to his men. But when he reached down with his right arm, it was seen that blood ran down out of the sleeve of his coat of mail. No one knows where he was wounded.

Chapter 110. The Last Defence on the Long Serpent

The strongest defence on the Serpent, and the most deadly, was made by the men in the forward compartment and those in the forecastle. There were both the pick of the men and the highest gunwales. Now when the crew amidships had fallen and only few men were still standing by the mast, Earl Eirík attempted to board the Serpent, and managed to get up on it with fourteen others. Then Hyrning, King Ólaf's brother-in-law, with a company of men, fell upon him, and there ensued the most furious fight, with the result that the earl had to fall back and get down into his ship Barthi; and of the men who had followed him, some fell and some were wounded. Of this Thóρθ Kolbeinsson makes mention:



Eirík's men board the Long Serpent.

179. Helmeted host's shields were
wholly with blood covered—

.....

.....¹

Fame got him in fiercest
fray, with blue sword slaughterous,
Hyrning: as the heavens
high will it last forever.

(162.)

Then there was another terrific fight, and many of the Serpent's crew were cut down. And as the ranks of the defenders on the Serpent grew thin, Earl Eirík

again tried to board the Serpent. And again the resistance was fierce. When the men in the forecastle of the Serpent saw [Earl Eirík's attack] they came aft and turned against him, giving him a stiff reception. However, since so many of the Serpent's crew had fallen that there were gaps between the defenders along the gunwales, the earl's men began to climb aboard in many places. But all those still able to stand up on the Serpent retreated aft to where the king was. Then, as says Halldór the Unchristened, Earl Eirík urged on his men: (163.)

180. Urged the gladsome earl his
iron-hearted troops—while
all of Óláf's men ran
aftmost—to the onset,
round when his rudder-horses²
ringed—waxed then the din of
battle about the gold-ring-
breaker³—the Long Serpent.

Chapter 111. King Óláf Tryggvason Leaps Overboard

Kolbjorn the Marshal went up on the raised afterdeck to join the king. Their garments and arms were much alike. Kolbjorn also was an unusually tall and handsome man. A fierce battle was still raging in the forward compartment. And because so great a host of the earl's men had come aboard the Serpent—as many as there was room for—and because his ships surrounded the Serpent on all sides and there was but a small band of defenders against so many, even though they were both strong and brave, most were cut down in a short while. But both King Óláf himself and Kolbjorn leapt overboard, each on his side.

The earl's men had surrounded the Serpent with small skiffs and killed those who leapt overboard; and when the king himself had leapt into the sea they wanted to take him prisoner and bring him to the earl. But King Óláf held his shield over his head when he plunged into the sea, whereas Kolbjorn the
1000 Marshal held his beneath himself to protect himself against the spears hurled from the vessels below them; and so he fell into the sea with the shield under him, so that he did not sink as quickly, and he was captured and hauled up into a skiff, and they believed he was the king. He was brought before the earl, and when the earl saw that it was Kolbjorn and not King Óláf he was given quarter. At that moment all those of King Óláf's men who were still alive leapt overboard from the Serpent; and Hallfróth relates that Thorkel Nefja, the brother of the king, was the last of them all to leap overboard:

181. Reft of men, the ruler—
 raged the storm-of-arrows—
 saw the Serpents twain, the
 swift Crane eke, float crewless,
 ere that Thorkel, eager
 aye for war, unfallen,
 dauntless foiled his foes and
 fled his ship by swimming.

(164.)

Chapter 112. Rumors of King Óláf's Survival

As was set down before, Earl Sigvaldi had joined King Óláf in Wendland [before sailing]. He had ten ships beside the one on which were the men of Princess Ástríth, his wife. Now when King Óláf had leapt overboard, the whole army [of his enemies] shouted “victory”; whereupon the earl [Sigvaldi] and his men lowered their oars and rowed to join the battle. Of this Halldór the Unchristened makes mention:

182. Wide-spread, Wendish ships to (165.)
weapon-thing then hurried—
grimly, Garms-of-shields¹ there
gaped, thin-mouthed 'gainst warriors.
Din was on deep sea-ways.
Dun eagles slit corpses.
Fiercely fought the warlord.
Fled the host of enemies.

But the Wendish ship on which were Ástríth's men rowed away and back to Wendland; and it was soon said by many that King Óláf probably had cast off his mail-coat under water and dived out of sight of the warships, and then swum to the Wendish ship, and that Ástríth's men had brought him to land. And there are many [other] stories told later by some men about King Óláf's adventures. But Hallfróth has this to say:

183. I little know if our liege-lord (166.)
laud I should in poem—
him who fed the hungry
hawks—whether dead or living,
seeing that men for sooth do
say both of our chieftain:
hearsay has it he's wounded.
Hard to know what the truth is.

But howsoever that be, King Óláf Tryggvason never thereafter returned to his kingdom in Norway. Yet Hallfróth has this to say:

184. A worthy warrior told me (167.)
(one who fought with Óláf)
that the liege of landsmen
lived still, the son of Tryggvi.

Out of storm-of-steel, they
state, had come King Ólaf.
Wide of the mark I ween them:
worse than that by far is't.

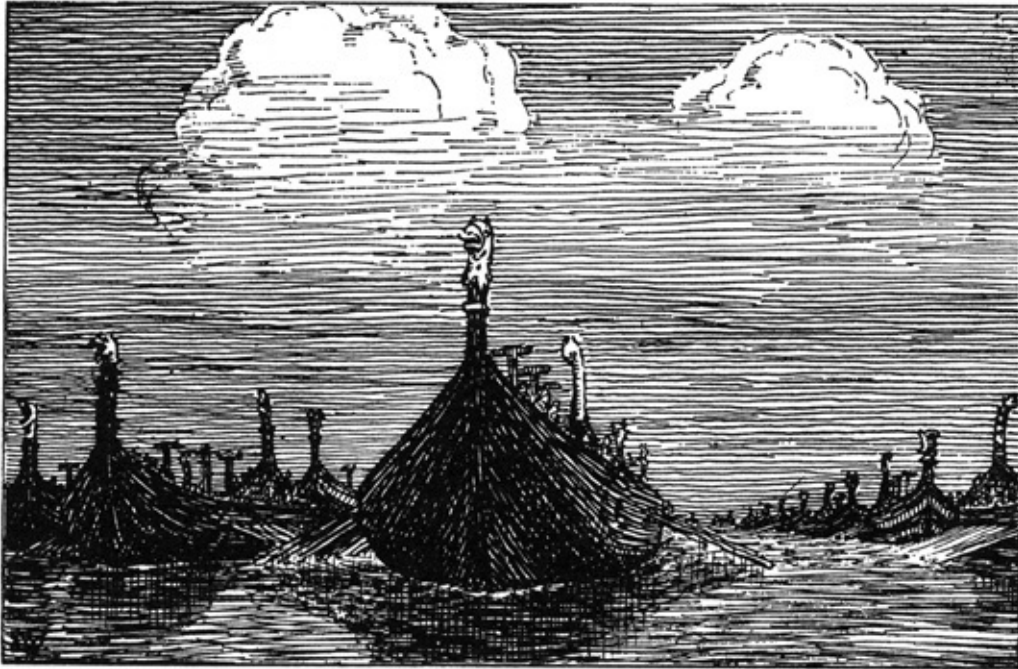
And also this:

185. Hardly could have happened, (168.)
when that Eirík fought him
on the Serpent—Óthin's
ale I have drunk²—fiercely,
that the beloved, lavish
lord—unlikely seems it—
scatheless could have 'scaped such
skirmish nor met his death there.

186. Still some stalwart men have (169.)
steadfastly told me, how that,
weapon-wounded, scaped the
warlord out of battle.
The truth is told now, how—no
trust I put in empty
rumors—the ruler died in
ruthless struggle in Southland.

Chapter 113. The Earls Eirík and Svein Are Given the Rule of Norway

After the battle Earl Eirík took possession of the Long Serpent and much booty, and sailed away with it when the battle had ended. Thus says Halldór:



The victors return from the battle of Svólth.

187. Thither on Long Serpent (170.)
sailed the helm-clad chieftain¹—
bore it a bold crew—to
baleful storm-of-arrows.
After the battle, however,
eagerly took it over
Heming's high-born brother²—
hot raged sword-fight on it.

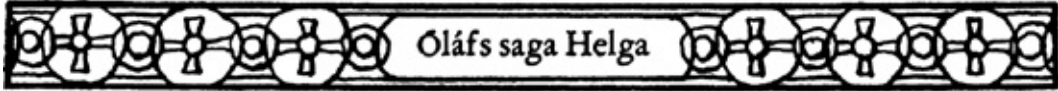
Svein, a son of Earl Hákon, was at that time betrothed to Hólmfríth, a daughter of King Óláf of Sweden. Now when the realm of Norway was divided between Svein, the king of Denmark, Óláf, the king of Sweden, and Earl Eirík, then King Óláf's share comprised four districts in Trondheim, both parts of Mœr, Raums Dale, and Ranríki in the east, from the Gaut Elf River to Svína Sound. All this, King Óláf conveyed to Earl Svein under the same conditions under which vassal kings or earls had held land from suzerain kings. Earl Eirík

took over four districts in Trondheim, also Hálogaland, Naumu Dale, the Fjord districts and Fjalir, Sogn, Horthaland, Rogaland, and Agthir all the way south to Lithandisness. As says Thóρθ Kolbeinsson:

188. I know that, not counting (171.)
noble Erling, most hersar—
aye I praise the earl—with
Eirík were linked in friendship.
Once the battle was won, they
wielded power from Veiga³—
sword-play raged at Svolph Isle—
south to Agthir and farther.

189. Loved all men the liege, and (172.)
liked to be his subjects.
Watch, he would, said the ruler,
well over all in Norway.
Svein,⁴ men from the Southland
say, is dead, his folklands—
few men does fate spare mis-
fortunes—lie deserted.

Then King Svein of Denmark again had possession of the Vík District as he had had before, but granted Earl Eirík Raumaríki and Heithmork. Svein Hákonarson was given an earldom by Óláf of Sweden. Earl Svein was the handsomest man in peoples' memory. Earl Eirík and Earl Svein were both baptized and accepted the true faith; but during the time they ruled over Norway they let everyone do as he pleased about the keeping of Christianity, whereas they kept well the old laws and all customs of the land, and they were greatly beloved and governed well. Earl Eirík had most to say of all his brothers in matters dealing with the administration of the country.



Saint Óláf's Saga

Chapter 1. Óláf Is Brought Up at the Estate of Sigurth Sýr

Óláf, the son of Harald of Grenland, was brought up in the establishment of Sigurth Sýr, his stepfather, and his mother Ásta. Hrani the Widely-Traveller lived with Ásta and was Óláf Haraldsson's foster father. Óláf soon grew to be an accomplished man, handsome and of middle height. Soon, too, he became clever and eloquent. Sigurth Sýr was a most efficient farmer who always kept his men busy, and he himself often went out to see to the fields, the meadows, and the cattle, as well as to the craftsmen and others who were busy with this or that.

Chapter 2. Óláf Mocks Sigurth Sýr

One day, when King Sigurth wanted to ride [on an errand], there was no one home on the farm. He called his stepson to saddle a horse for him. Óláf went to the goat house, took out the largest he-goat that was there, led him forth, and laid the king's saddle on him, then went and told the king he had a riding-horse ready for him. Then King Sigurth came out and saw what Óláf had done. He said, "It is clear that you don't care to obey my requests. Very likely your mother thinks it more fitting that I make no more requests of you which are distasteful to you. It is quite evident that we two are not of the same disposition. Very likely you are more proud minded by far than I." Óláf made no reply but went his way laughing.

Chapter 3. Of Óláf's Appearance and Character

As he grew up, Óláf Haraldsson was not of tall stature, but of middle height and of stout frame and great strength. His hair was of light chestnut color and his face, broad, of light complexion, and ruddy. His eyes were unusually fine, bright and piercing, so that it inspired terror to look into them when he was furious. Óláf was a man of many accomplishments. He was a good shot, an excellent swimmer, and second to none in hurling spears. He was skilled and had a sure eye for all kinds of handicraft work, whether the things were made for himself or others. He was nicknamed Óláf the Stout. He was bold and ready in speech, mature early in all ways, both in bodily strength and shrewdness; and he endeared himself to all his kinsfolk and acquaintances. He vied with all in games and always wanted to be the first in everything, as was proper, befitting his rank and birth.

Chapter 4. Óláf's First Viking Expedition

Óláf Haraldsson was twelve years when he went on board a warship for the first time. Ásta, his mother, got Hrani, who was called the King's Foster Father, to take charge of the crew, together with Óláf, because Hrani had often before been on viking expeditions. When Óláf took over ship and crew, the men gave him the title of "king," as it was the custom that warrior-kings on a viking expedition, if of royal birth, were forthwith called kings, even though they had no land to govern. Hrani sat by the helm, and therefore some say that Óláf was [only] an oarsman. Still he was king over the crew. They sailed first east [south] along the land, and first to Denmark. So says Óttar the Black¹ in a poem on King Óláf:

190. Young still, yet you, Óláf, (1.)
used early to warlike
deeds, impelled to Denmark
dauntlessly your sea-steeds.
From the north but newly—
knowledge have I of your
progress—cam'st thou, peerless
princeling, seeking glory.

Chapter 5. Óláf Ravages Sweden

And toward fall he sailed east to Sweden and there began to harry and burn all the countryside, for he thought he had good cause to repay the Swedes for having deprived his father of life. Óttar the Black says in clear words that he at that time departed from Denmark and sailed to the east:

191. Onward east ye sailed with (2.)
oar-dight roller-horses.
Linden shields ye lifted,
liege, on your ships' gunwales,
hoisted sails and seized the
sea-stirrers,¹ too, sometimes.
The main's mighty swells by
many oars were parted.
192. Fear befell the people (3.)
forthwith at your coming.
sovrán. Sithen didst in
Sweden redden nesses.

Chapter 6. Óláf's First Battle

That fall, Óláf had his first battle at Sóta Skerry, which is in the Swedish skerries. There he fought with vikings. Their leader was called Sóti. Óláf had a much smaller force, but bigger ships. He stationed his ships between breakers on hidden rocks where it was difficult for the vikings to attack. But Óláf's men drew the ships which lay nearest up to them with grappling irons and cleared them of their crews. The vikings retired after losing many men. The skald Sigvat¹ tells about this engagement in the poem in which he recounted the battles Óláf had fought:

193. Bore his long ship,² launched from (4.)
land, the youthful scion of
royal forebears: feared all
folk his wrath thereafter.
Much do I remember
men's great deeds, as first when
in the east he sated
eagles by Sóta Skerry.

Chapter 7. Óláf Escapes from Lake Mælaren

King Óláf sailed then east along Sweden, thereupon steered into Lake Mælaren, harrying on both shores. He rowed all the way up to Sigtúnir and made fast his ships close to Old Sigtúnir.¹ The Swedes say one can still see the stone wall Óláf made for the head of his piers. But when fall approached, King Óláf learned that Óláf, the king of the Swedes, had collected a great army, and also, that he had laid an iron chain across Stokk Sound² and guarded it with a force of men. The Swedish king thought that King Óláf would wait till the lake froze over, and that his force was negligible as he had few men. Then King Óláf sailed to Stokk Sound and found he could not get out. There was a stronghold on the east side of the sound, and an army, south of it. And when they learned that the Swedish king had gone on board his ship and had a great fleet, King Óláf had his men dig a channel through [the low land of the peninsula of] Agnafit, out to the sea. Heavy rains fell at the time.

Now all the rivers and creeks in [that part of] Sweden drain into Lake Mælaren, but there is only one outlet from it to the sea, and that is narrower than many a river. Now when there is heavy rain together with the thawing of the snow, then the waters descend so violently that a torrent flows through Stokk Sound and Lake Mælaren rises so high that it floods the surrounding country.

Now when the channel [Óláf had dug] reached the sea, the water rushed out in a torrent. Then King Óláf had the rudders on his vessels shipped and the sails hoisted to the top. There was a stiff breeze. They steered with the oars, and the ships went swiftly over shallow places, and all of them got out into the sea unscathed. But the Swedes came to Óláf, the king of Sweden, and told him that Óláf the Stout had got out to sea. The Swedish king strongly berated those who should have seen to it that Óláf did not escape. That channel has since that time been called King's Sound. It cannot be navigated by large ships except at a time when the waters are most torrential.

Some relate that the Swedes became aware of Óláf's having dug the channel through the neck of land and that the water was rushing out; also, that the Swedes came up with an army, intending to keep Óláf from getting out. But the waters undermined the banks on both sides, which fell and took with them many people, so that a great many drowned. But the Swedes contradict all this and say it is all nonsense that anyone perished there.

In the fall King Óláf sailed to the Island of Gotland and made ready to harry there. But the people met together and sent messengers to the king, offering him

tribute from the land. That the king accepted. He took the tribute and dwelled there during the winter. Thus says Óttar:

194. Tribute-taker, thou didst (5.)
teach the Goths to fear you,
so they did not dare to
draw their swords to ward them.
Fled the islanders—few are
fearless more than thou art.
Wolf-brood's hunger, hear I
hero, in the east thou satedst.

Chapter 8. Óláf Defeats the Men of Ösel

Here we are told that as soon as spring arrived, King Óláf sailed east to Eysýsla¹ to harry. He went up on land, but the men of Eysýsla came down to the shore and fought with them. King Óláf was victorious there, he pursued them, harried, and devastated the land. We are told that at first, when King Óláf arrived in Eysýsla, the farmers offered to pay tribute. But when they arrived with the tribute he marched against them with his troops fully armed; and then it turned out otherwise than the farmers had expected; for they had come down to the shore, not with the tribute, but rather, all armed, and gave battle to the king, as was told before. As says Sigvat the Skald:

195. It befell afresh—nor was (6.)
foulest treason hidden—
that Óláf arrow-thing² must
urge on sacked Eysýsla.
Their lives, liege-lord, to their
legs they owed who away ran
nor, wincing, waited there for
wounds where they were stationed.

Chapter 9. Óláf Makes Good His Retreat from Finland

Afterwards he sailed back to Finland, harried there, and invaded the country, and all the people fled into the forests, emptying their homes of all property. The king [and his men] went far inland and through some forests, until they came to some valley settlements, called Her Dales. There they found little property and no people. The day wore on, and the king returned toward his ships. But when they passed through the forest, they were attacked fiercely from all sides with arrow shots. The king bade his men protect themselves as best they could and advance against the enemy, but that was difficult as the Finns hid behind trees. And before the king left the forest behind, he had lost many men, and many were wounded before he reached the ships late in the evening. During the night, the Finns with their witchcraft made a furious gale and a storm at sea. But the king bade his men weigh anchor and hoist the sails and cruise before the land during the night. And then, as often afterwards, the king's luck prevailed over the magic of the Finns. During the night they cruised along the Balagarth Shore¹ and from there out to sea. The army of the Finns followed them on land as the king sailed outside. As says Sigvat:

196. Stern was the third storm-of-steel (7.)
 , what time the king in
 Her Dale forest fought the
 Finnish hordes in combat.
 But in the east the ocean's
 ebb-shore parted the vikings.
 Past Balagarth's beaches
 beat the liege's sea-stags.²

Chapter 10. Óláf Wins a Battle against Vikings

Then King Óláf sailed to Denmark. There he met Thorkel the Tall, the brother of Earl Sigvaldi, and Thorkel joined him, because he was at that time all ready to set out on a warlike expedition. So they sailed south along the coast of Jutland, and at a place called Suthrvík¹ they won a battle over many viking ships. Such vikings that always were at sea and commanded a large force, had themselves called kings though they had no lands to rule over. King Óláf gave battle to them, and it was a hard one, but he won the victory and much booty. As says Sigvat:

197. Began, a fourth time, Gondul's (8.)
game² Óláf to play there;
and great glory, heard I
gained him the folk-ruler,
when 'twixt prideful princes
peace was rudely broken
asunder there in sedgy
Suthrvík, known in Denmark.

Chapter 11. Óláf Battles the Frisians

Then King Óláf sailed south to Frísia and hove to before the coast of Kinnlimi¹ in heavy weather. Then the king disembarked with his men, but the people of the land came riding against them and fought them. So says Skald Sigvat: (9.) 198. A fifth fray, hard on helmets, hadst thou, thieves' subduer—² thy boats' bows the storm did buffet—off Kinnlimi's shoreline, when gallant foemen galloped grimly 'gainst the ruler's vessels, and he advanced with vigor to give them battle.

Chapter 12. King Æthelred Seeks to Regain England

Svein Forkbeard, the king of Denmark, was at that time in England with an army of Danes. He had been there for some time and had the land of King Æthelred in his possession. The Danes had by then conquered most of England, and it had come so far that King Æthelred had fled the country and sought refuge in Valland [France] to the south. The same fall when Ólaf had arrived in England, it happened that King Svein had suddenly died at night in his bed; and it is rumored among the English that Edmund the Holy had killed him in the same fashion that Mercurius the Holy slew Julian the Apostate.¹ And as soon as Æthelred, the king of the English, had learned that he returned speedily to England. And arriving in his country he sent word to all who would enter into his pay to join him to regain possession of the land. Then a great multitude of men came to his colors, among them King Ólaf with a large company of Norwegians. They first attacked London from the Thames, but the Danes held the fortified town. On the other side of the river is a large market town, called Súthvirki [Southwark]. There the Danes had made large preparations, digging a great dyke, and behind it had erected a wall with timbers, stone, and turf, and kept a large force inside. Æthelred tried to storm the fort, but the Danes defended it, and King Æthelred accomplished nothing.

There was a bridge over the river between the fortified town and Súthvirki, broad enough for two carts to pass one another. On this bridge there were fortifications, both towers and bulwarks of palisades on the downstream side, high enough to reach to a man's middle. And under the bridge piles were rammed into the bottom of the river. And when an attack was made, the force on the bridge stood there along all its length and defended it.

King Æthelred was greatly concerned how he might win the bridge. He called all the leaders of his army into a conference and sought counsel from them how they might destroy the bridge. Then King Ólaf said he would try with his company if the other chieftains would assist him. At that conference it was decided that they should move their forces up against the bridge. Then every leader made ready his troops and his ships.

Chapter 13. Óláf Breaks Down London Bridge

1009 King Óláf had great wicker-work shields made of tough tree roots and soft wood, and had houses built of wands taken apart and brought upon his ships so that they reached over their sides. Then he had props put under them, both so strong and so high that it was easy to fight under them, and stout enough to resist rocks thrown from above. And when the fleet was ready, they rowed upstream to the attack. But when they approached the bridge, such a hail of arrows and huge rocks met them that neither helmets nor shields protected them and the very ships were greatly damaged. Then many beat a retreat. But King Óláf and his force of Norwegians rowed up close to the bridge and fastened cables around the piles which supported the bridge; then with all their ships [they] rowed downstream with all their might. The piles were dragged along the bottom until they tore loose from the bridge. But because an armed host stood thick on the bridge and there were great heaps of both stones and weapons on it, as soon as the piles were broken from under, the bridge gave way and many fell into the river, whilst all the others fled from the bridge, some into the town and some to Súthvirki. Thereupon [Æthelred's army] attacked Súthvirki and conquered it. But when the people in the town saw that the river Thames was won so that they could not hinder ships from proceeding up into the land, then they were seized with terror of the ships, gave up the town to King Æthelred, and acknowledged him as king. Thus says Óttar the Black:



King Óláf breaks London Bridge.

Bridge's towers, thou Óthin's
-storm-of-steel's keen urger,
striving to win England.
Were shields by shafts in battle
shattered, as the olden—
fiercely raged the fighting—
far-famed swords were shivered.

And still further he composed this verse: (11.)

200. Landedst, and land gavest,
liege-lord, to Æthelred.
Much did need thee, mighty
man of war, the sovrán.
Hard the fight you fought, ere,
feeder-of-wolves, came with you
Edmund's sire, who ere had
England in peace governed.

Sigvat also mentions these events: (12.)

201. Certes, the sixth fray, thou
sword-play-urger, was when
Óláf broke the oaken
English Bridge of London.
Smote the Frankish swords, but
sallies made the vikings.
Some of them in Southwark's
sodden fields had quarters.

Chapter 14. Óláf Aids Æthelred to Regain England

1010 King Óláf was with King Æthelred during the following winter. They fought a great battle on Hringmara Heath¹ in Úlfkelsland—that was the land ruled by Úlfkel Snilling [the Hero]. Óláf and Æthelred were victorious. As Skald Sigvat says:

202. Even a seventh time Óláf (13.)
urged a bloody sword-thing²
in the land of Úlfkel,
as I heard it told me.
Hringmara Heath full was—
high were piled the dead—of
Ella's offspring,³ whom the
heir of Harald⁴ battled.

Óttar also has this to say about this battle:

203. Liege-lord, then learned I that (24.)
laden was with corpses
Hringmara Heath all bloody,
when that inland you battled.
Bowed and overborne, king,
by you, country-folk of
England, awed, submitted
or else fled off headlong.

At that time large parts of England were brought under the sway of King Æthelred; still the Company of the Thingmen⁵ and the Danes occupied many strongholds, and wide stretches of land were still held by them.

Chapter 15. Óláf Conquers Canterbury

King Óláf was leader of the army when it marched to Canterbury and fought till the place was overcome. They killed a host of foemen there and burned the castle. As says Óttar the Black:

204. Onset made you, Yngvi's-(15.)
heir,¹ on princely chieftains:
generous king, you captured
Canterbury in the morning.
Fiercely burning, firebrands
fell into houses, nor didst,
liege-lord, learned I, spare the
lives of luckless burghers.

Sigvat counts this as the eighth battle of King Óláf:

205. Wot I that the warrior, to(16.)
Wends a terror, strongly
an eighth time 'gainst earthworks
onset made and won them.
Nor could Canterbury's
keepers hold back Óláf
who the prideful Partar²
plunged into greatest sorrow.

King Óláf had under him the defence of England and with his warships sailed along the land, and anchoring in Nýjamótha³—the Company of the Thingmen occupied that place—fought a battle, from which King Óláf emerged as victor. As says Skald Sigvat:

206. Scatheless, in that skirmish(17.)
scalps red he gave the English.
Dark-red billowed blood on
blades in Nýjamótha.
Now have I nine battles
named for thee, king of Norway.
Danes fell where the deadly
dart-storm raged 'gainst Óláf.

Then King Óláf marched about far and wide in the land, exacting tribute or
else harrvins. As says Óttar:

207. English hosts could hardly
hamper, king, thy progress
when thou tookst the traitors'
toll without forbearance.
Gold they often gave to
gracious lord grudgingly.
Treasures great at times were
taken aboard thy vessels.

(18.)

King Óláf remained there three years at a stretch.

Chapter 16. Óláf Captures the Stronghold of Hól

1016 In the spring of the third year King Æthelred died. His two sons, Eadmund and Eadward, took over the kingdom. Then King Óláf traversed the sea to the south and had a battle in the Hringsfjord and conquered the stronghold of Hól¹ which vikings had occupied. He levelled it. As says Skald Sigvat:

208. Tidings tell I of the (19.)
tenth stern storm-of-targes,²
fought by the folk-warder
fair Hrings' fjord withinside.
At Hól he broke the high-on
headland-towering stronghold
vikings owned: they asked not
oftener for such issue.

Chapter 17. Óláf Wins Battles in Western Europe

King Óláf continued west [south] with his fleet to Grislupollar¹ and fought victoriously with vikings before Williamsby. As says Sigvat:

209. Liege, the eleventh battle— (20.)
lost great chiefs their lives there—
wont to weapon-thing, you
won in Grislupollar.
Worthy William's castle—
wild the fray—before, were
helmets hewed in combat
hard, to tell you shortly.

Next he had a battle in the Fetlafjord to the west, as says Sigvat:

210. Tawny she-wolves' teeth a (21.)
twelfth time the king reddened,
fey when in Fetlafirth men
fell, slain by the chieftains.

From there King Óláf sailed all the way south to Seljupollar² and fought a battle there. He conquered the castle called Gunnvaldsborg³—it was large and old—and there he captured the earl who was in command there, called Geirfith. Then he had a meeting with the townspeople and imposed a ransom on them for freeing the earl—twelve thousand gold shillings; and that sum was paid by the townspeople as he had demanded. As says Sigvat:

211. A thirteenth time the Throanders' (22.)
thane did win a battle
south in Seljupollar,
sithen, with great carnage,
when to ancient stronghold
early at morn he marched, and
gallant Earl Geirfith of
Gunnvaldsborg made captive.

Chapter 18. Óláf Dreams That He Will Be King of Norway Forever

Thereupon King Óláf proceeded with his fleet west into Karlsá [Harbor], harried there and had a battle. Now when King Óláf lay in Karlsá [Harbor] waiting for a favorable breeze to sail to Norva Sound [the Strait of Gibraltar] and thence to Jerusalem, he dreamed a remarkable dream—that a man of commanding appearance, handsome but also terror-inspiring, approached him and spoke to him, bidding him give up his intention of proceeding further out into the world. “Return to your own possessions, because you shall be king of Norway forever.” He understood this dream to mean that he would be king in the land, and his descendants kings after him for a long time.

Chapter 19. Óláf Harries in Western France

Obeying this vision he turned back and anchored in Peituland [Poitou] where he harried and burned the market town called Varrandi.¹ Of this, Óttar makes mention: (23.)

212. War-loving prince, you plundered
Peita while still youthful.
In Túska²land you tested
targes stained and sturdy.

Still further Sigvat says this: (24.)

213. From the south the sovran
sailed up Leira³ River
to where spears were splintered,
speeding eager for battle.
Varrandi was by vengeful
vikings, far from the seashore,
burned wholly—thus is hight a
hamlet there in Peita.

Chapter 20. The Earls of Normandy

1013 King Óláf had been on this warlike expedition west in France for two summers and one winter. By that time thirteen years had passed since the fall of King Óláf Tryggvason. There ruled then in France two earls, William and Robert. Their father was Richard, earl of Rouen. They ruled over Normandy. Their sister was Queen Emma who had been married to King Æthelred of England. Their sons were Eadmund and Eadward the Good, Eadvig and Eadgar. Richard, earl of Rouen, was the son of Richard, the son of William Longspear; and he was the son of Earl Ganger-Hrólf who conquered Normandy. He was the son of Rognvald the Powerful, earl of Mœr, as is written above. From Ganger-Hrólf are descended the earls of Rouen. They called themselves for a long time kinsmen of the Norwegian chieftains and considered themselves such for a long time. They always were the greatest friends of the Norwegians, and all Norwegians who wanted to come there had a friendly welcome with them. In the fall, King Óláf arrived in Normandy, remaining there in peace during the winter in Signa [Seine].

Chapter 21. Einar Thambarskelfir Regains His Power

After the fall of Ólaf Tryggvason, Earl Eirík gave quarter to Einar Thambarskelfir, the son of Eindrithi Styrkársson. Einar journeyed north to Norway with the earl. It is said that Einar was a man of enormous strength and the best archer that ever lived in Norway; and his hard shooting excelled that of all other men. With a blunt-headed arrow he could shoot through a raw oxhide suspended from a beam. He was a most skilled runner on skis, a great athlete, and most courageous. He was of noble kin and wealthy. Earl Eirík and Earl Svein gave Einar their sister, Bergljót, the daughter of Hákon, in marriage. She was a woman of strong personality. Their son was called Eindrithi. The earls gave Einar great revenues in Orka Dale, and he became the most powerful and influential man in the Trondheim District and was a close friend and strong supporter of the earls.

Chapter 22. Erling Skjálgrsson's Character and Power

Earl Eirík was ill-pleased that Erling Skjálgrsson had so large a dominion, and [so he] took possession of all the royal revenues which King Ólaf [Tryggvason] had granted to Erling. But Erling collected, as always before, all the revenues in Rogaland; thus the tenants often had to pay their taxes twice, or else he would ruin their fields. The earl got but little revenue from fines, because his stewards could not maintain themselves there; and the earl did not go to be entertained on farms unless he had a strong force with him. This is mentioned by Sigvat:

214. Erling, Ólaf's kinsman,¹ (25.)
ably kept at a distance
the earls, awing them, over
Ólaf who had triumphed.
Then the farmers' -friend gave,
fair-dight, his other sister,
Ingibjorg, to Úlf's sire,²
evermore to cherish.

Earl Eirík did not care to fight Erling, for the latter had many and influential kinsmen and was powerful and popular. He always proceeded with a large host of retainers, much as though it were a royal bodyguard. During the summers Erling often went on raiding expeditions and amassed property, because he maintained the magnificent establishment he was accustomed to, although he at that time had fewer revenues, and less advantageous ones than in the times of King Ólaf [Tryggvason], his brother-in-law.

Erling was a very handsome man, exceedingly tall and strong, most skilled in arms, and in all bodily accomplishments much resembling King Ólaf Tryggvason. He was a shrewd man, most ambitious in all respects, and a great man of war. This is mentioned by Sigvat:

215. Not anyone but Erling, (26.)
other stewards among, had
fought as many frays, ne'er
faltering, ever victorious.
Briskness showed he in battle,
being the first to plunge in,
our liberal lord, but
last from it retiring.

This has always been said that Erling was the noblest of all landed-men in

THIS has always been said, that Erling was the noblest of all landed-men in Norway. The following were the children of Erling and Ástríth: Áslák, Skjálg, Sigurth, Lothin, Thórir, and Ragnhild, who married Thorberg Árnason. Erling always had about him ninety or more freedmen, and both in winter and summer there was served a measure of drink at the morning meal; but at the evening meal there was no limit. And when the earls [Eirík and Svein] were near he had two hundred [240] or more men about him. He never travelled except with a boat of twenty rowers' benches and a full crew. Erling had a large warship with thirty-two rowers' benches and correspondingly large. He used it for viking expeditions or else for going to appointed meetings, and on it were two hundred [240] or more men.

Chapter 23. Erling's Management of His Estates

Erling always kept at home thirty thralls beside other servants. He assigned his thralls their daily work, but let them have their leisure afterwards, and gave permission to everyone who wanted to do so to work for himself in the twilight or at night. He gave them fields to sow grain on and let them have the produce to use for themselves. He set on each his value and the price for his emancipation. Many bought their freedom the first or second year, and all who had it in them freed themselves within three years. And with that money Erling bought himself other servants; and those whom he had freed, he assigned to the herring fishery or else to some other occupation. Some would clear forests and set up their homes there, but all he helped to prosper.

Chapter 24. Earl Eirík Joins King Knút in England

1012 When Earl Eirík had ruled Norway for twelve years, there came to him a message from Knút [Canute], king of Denmark, his brother-in-law, bidding him to proceed with him west to England with his fleet, for the reason that Eirík had acquired much fame by his warlike deeds, having won the victory in two battles which were reputed to have been the hardest in the northlands, the one in which Earl Hákon and Eirík had fought against the Jómsvíkings; the other, when he had battled King Óláf Tryggvason. This is mentioned by Thóρθ Kolbeinsson: (27.) 216. Fain would I praise more feats of fame, done by the atheling, helmeted, gladsome, when that high lords of England called him, as in duty bound to bring them badly needed aid—I grasp the princes' purpose—promptly there to join them.

The earl did not care to think long about this request of the king but set out immediately, leaving behind his son, Earl Hákon, to guard Norway under the guidance of Einar Thambarskelfir, his brother-in-law, who was to govern for Hákon who at that time was only seventeen.

Chapter 25. Earl Eirík Battles and Dies in England

Eirík joined King Knút and was with him when he conquered London. Earl Eirík had a battle west of London in which he felled Úlfkel Snilling. As says Thórh:

217. Gave the gladsome arm-ring-(28.)
giver battle west of
London; for the land fought
lordly steerer of sea-steeds.
Awful blows got Úlfkel;
over heads of thingmen
bluish blades flashed out there.
Bothn's-dear-flood¹ master.

1013 Earl Eirík remained one year in England, and fought several battles.
In the fall following he intended to make a pilgrimage to Rome, but died there in England of a loss of blood.

Chapter 26. King Knút Wins the Power Over All England

King Knút fought many battles in England with the sons of King Æthelred of England, with varying success. He had arrived in England the summer Æthelred died. Thereupon King Knút married Queen Emma. Their children were Harald, Hortha-Knút, and Gunnhild. King Knút came to an agreement with King Eadmund. They were to divide England between them. In the same month Heinrek Strjóna murdered King Eadmund. Thereupon King Knút drove all the sons of King Æthelred out of England. As says Sigvat:

218. ¹ Soon all of (29.)
Æthelred's sons
Knút vanquished
or cast out else.

Chapter 27. The Sons of Æthelred Enlist Óláf's Aid

The same summer that the sons of King Æthelred of England sought refuge with their maternal uncles in Rouen in France, Óláf Haraldsson arrived from his viking expedition in the west; and all of them remained in Normandy that year and concluded an alliance, stipulating that King Óláf was to have Northumberland if they succeeded in winning England from the Danes. Thereupon in the fall King Óláf sent his foster father Hrani to England in order to enlist troops, and the sons of Æthelred furnished him with tokens to their friends and kinsmen, whilst King Óláf gave him a great amount of money to attract men to their colors. And Hrani spent the winter in England and secured the allegiance of many men of influence, because people were more willing to have a king of their own country to rule over them. Yet the power of the Danes in England had grown so great at that time that all the people there had become subject to them.

Chapter 28. The Sons of Æthelred Cannot Cope with the Power of Knút

In the spring they all, King Óláf and the sons of King Æthelred, sailed east [north] and landed at a place called Jungufurtha.¹ There they disembarked their troops and went up to the stronghold. They found many there who had promised them assistance. They conquered the castle and killed a great number. But when King Knút's generals learned this they collected troops, and soon had such a large force that the sons of King Æthelred did not have the power to hold out against them and chose rather to withdraw west [south] to Rouen. Then King Óláf parted company with them, not wanting to go to France. He sailed north along the English coast all the way up to Northumberland. He anchored in the harbor called Fyrir Valdi [before the Wolds]² and fought a battle there with the townsmen in which he gained the victory and much booty.

Chapter 29. Óláf Returns to Norway

King Óláf left his warships behind there and equipped two merchantmen for sailing thence, and on them he had two hundred and twenty [260] men, all furnished with full mail, a picked crew. In the fall he sailed north, and at sea they experienced violent gales which put them in great peril; but because they had a good crew and the luck of the king with them, everything turned out well. As says Óttar:

219. Ready made you merchant-(30.)
men twain to sail eastward.
With danger oft you dallied,
dauntless peer-of-Skjoldungs.¹
Would the savage sea have
sunk your merchant ships if,
warrior, worser crew had
wielded oars aboard them.

And still further:

220. Ye feared not nor flinched, as ye(31.)
fared o'er the wide ocean.
Abler crew will not ever
heir of war-lord come by.
Towering breakers oft tested
tackle and ship, ere that
mighty king, you made the
midway coast of Norway.

In this verse we are told that King Óláf made land in the middle of
¹⁰¹⁴Norway's [west] coast. The name of the island on which they first
touched land is called Sæla,² beside the Promontory of Stath. Then the
king said that he believed that it was a lucky day for him since they had made
land at Sæla [luck] in Norway and remarked that it most likely was a good omen
that it had happened so. Then they went upon the island. There the king slid with
one foot on a patch of clay, but steadied himself on the other knee. Then he said,
“Now I fell.”

Then Hrani said: “You fell not, sire; you set fast foot on the land.”

The king laughed and said, “That may be, if God so wills.” Then they boarded

their ships again and sailed south to Úlfa Sound.³ There they learned that Earl Hákon was south in Sogn and that he was expected to come north as soon as there was a favorable breeze; also that he had only one ship.

Chapter 30. Óláf Upsets Earl Hákon's Ship and Exiles Him

When he had come south of Fjalir, King Óláf steered his ships out of the usual course and into the Sauthunga Sound¹ and then anchored. The ships lay on either side of the sound and had a thick cable stretched between them. At that very time Earl Hákon Eiríksson rowed toward the sound with a fully manned warship. They believed that the two ships in the sound were merchantmen, and so rowed on into the sound between them; whereupon King Óláf's men hauled up the cable right under the keel of the earl's ship, using windlasses. And as soon as it took hold, the stern turned up and the stem plunged down, so that the sea fell in over the gunwale of the forepart, swamping the ship, which then overturned. King Óláf fished up Earl Hákon and all those they managed to reach and capture, some they killed and some were drowned. As says Óttar:

221. Tookst thou, ravenous raven's (32.)
ring-dight feeder, youthful
Hákon's handsome roller-
horse, and all his crew eke.
Hither didst thou, hero,
hie thee, while quite young still;
nor could the earl, crestfallen,
keep thee from thy own land.

Hákon was brought up into the king's ship. He was the handsomest man they had ever seen. His hair was abundant and fair as silk, and fastened about his head with a golden fillet. He sat down by the mast. Then said King Óláf, "It is certainly true what is said about your kin, that you are of handsome appearance. But luck has deserted you now."

Hákon replied, "It is not that luck has deserted us. It has long been the case that now the one, now the other of two parties have lost out. Thus as between your kin and mine, victory has been, now yours, now ours. I am but little over the years of childhood. Nor were we prepared to defend ourselves, we never suspected that an attack would be made on us. It may be that we are more successful another time."

Then King Óláf replied, "Has it not entered your mind, earl, that events have taken such a turn that in the future you may have neither victory nor defeat?"

The earl said, "This is in your power, sire, to decide this time."

Then said King Óláf, "What will you do on your part, earl, if I let you go where you will hale and unharmed?" The earl asked what he demanded. The

where you will, here and elsewhere. The earl asked what he demanded. The king said, "Nothing else but that you leave the land and thus give up your dominion and swear oaths that you and your kin will henceforth not fight against me." The earl made answer to the effect that he would do so. And then Earl Hákon swore with oaths that he would never after fight against King Ólaf, nor defend Norway by warlike measures against him nor attack him. Thereupon King Ólaf gave him and all his men quarter. The earl received back the ship he had had before, and they rowed away. This is mentioned by Skald Sigvat:

222. Declared the king, of fame most (33.)
covetous, that needs in
Sauthung Sound, the ancient,
seek he must Earl Hákon.
There, the thewful ruler
that earl met who, although
youthful, had to no one yielded
yet in rank and high birth.

Chapter 31. Earl Hákon Joins the Court of King Knút

After this encounter the earl got himself ready the quickest he could to leave the country, and sailed west to England. There he met King Knút, his maternal uncle, and told him all how matters had gone between him and King Ólaf. King Knút made him most welcome. He appointed him a member of his bodyguard and gave him much power in his dominions. Earl Hákon now remained with Knút for a long time.

When Svein and Hákon had governed Norway, they came to an agreement with Erling Skjálgsson, which was sealed by Áslák, a son of Erling's, marrying Gunnhild, a daughter of Earl Svein. Erling and Áslák both were to have all those revenues which King Ólaf Tryggvason had given Erling. Then Erling became a close friend of the earls and they confirmed that by binding oaths.

Chapter 32. Ásta Prepares for Óláf's Homecoming

King Óláf the Stout sailed east [south] along the land and in many places had meetings with the farmers; and many swore allegiance to him, but some who were relatives or friends of Earl Svein opposed him. For this reason, King Óláf proceeded east to Vík as fast as he could and steered his force there. When he arrived in Westfold, he drew his ships ashore and then proceeded inland. Many people welcomed him there who had been acquaintances or friends of his father. Thereabout in Fold resided also many of his kinfolk. In the fall he went inland to visit his stepfather, King Sigurth, and arrived there early one morning. And when King Óláf drew near to the estate, some servant men ran up to the house and into the [living] room. Within sat Ásta, the mother of King Óláf, together with some other women. The men told her about King Óláf approaching and that he could be expected forthwith.

Ásta immediately arose and ordered both men and women to bestir themselves and put everything in the best possible order. She had four woman servants take [down] the [cloth] ornaments of the room and quickly decorate [the walls] with tapestries and also the benches. Two man servants put straw on the floor, two set up the dressers for the decanters, two set the table, two brought in the viands. Still another two she sent off, two bore in the ale, and all others, women and men, went out into the courtyard. The two who had been sent off, looked up King Sigurth and brought him his robes of state and also his horse with gilt saddle and the bridle all set with enamel and precious stones and gilt. Four men she sent four ways into the district to invite all chieftains to come to the banquet she was preparing to welcome her son. All the others in the establishment she ordered to put on their best clothes, and to those who had no clothes that were suitable, she lent clothes befitting them.

Chapter 33. Ásta's Messengers Find King Sigurth in the Fields

King Sigurth was out in the fields when the messengers came to him to tell him the news and inform him of all the preparations Ásta had made. There were many men with him. Some were cutting the grain, some bound it in sheaves, some carted the grain to the barn, some stacked it on ricks or piled it. And the king, together with two other men, now went about on the field, now to the place where the grain was piled up. Concerning his apparel we are told that he wore a blue kirtle and blue leggings, and shoes which were laced high up on his calf; also, a gray cloak with a wide gray hood and a veil about his face.¹ He had a staff in his hand topped by a gilt silver ferrule with a ring in it.

As to what manner of man King Sigurth was, we are told that he was a hard worker, a good husbandman who managed his property and farm, attending to household matters himself. He was not given to display, and was rather taciturn. He was one of the wisest men then living in Norway, and the richest in chattels. He was of a peaceful disposition and not aggressive. Ásta, his wife, was open handed and of a proud disposition. Their children were these: Guthorm was the eldest, then came Gunnhild, then Hálfðan, then Ingiríth, then Harald.

Those sent out to Sigurth spoke as follows: "This message were we to deliver from Ásta, that it appeared to her to be of the greatest importance that you behave in a lordly fashion; and she prayed that in this business you should comport yourself more like Harald Fairhair in your behavior than like Hrani Thinnose, your maternal grandfather or like Earl Nereith the Old, even though the latter were exceedingly wise."

The king replied, "Important news you bring me, and much stress you put on it. A great to-do Ásta made before about people who were less closely related to her; and I see that she is still of the same mind. She certainly bestirs herself about this business with much energy, if only she will see her son off in the same grand fashion as she now welcomes him. It would seem to me that, if things are to proceed in this fashion, then those who take such hazards are little concerned about either their goods or their life. This man, King Óláf, will have to contend with overwhelming odds, because against him and his ambitions, if he persists in them, he has the enmity of both the king of Denmark and the king of Sweden."

Chapter 34. Ásta and Sigurth Welcome Óláf

After King Sigurth had said this, he sat down and had his men pull off his shoes and instead put on his feet cordovan boots and fasten on them golden spurs. Then he took off his cloak and kirtle and dressed himself in garments of costly material, with a scarlet cloak over it. He girded on his sword, put a gilt helmet on his head, and mounted his horse. He sent his workmen into the district and had thence thirty men, all well-dressed, who rode back to his estate with him. And when they came riding into the courtyard in front of the living quarters, he saw on the other side of the courtyard the standard of King Óláf advancing, with Óláf under it, and a hundred [120] men in his company, all well accoutered.

Then the men were given quarters in the various buildings. From his horse King Sigurth welcomed his stepson King Óláf and his company and invited him into the house for a banquet; but Ásta went up to her son, kissed him, and asked him to stay with her, telling him that he was welcome to share all with her, both land and people. King Óláf graciously thanked her for her offer. She took him by the hand and led him into the room and to the high-seat. King Sigurth assigned men to take care of their clothing and to feed grain to their horses, then went to his high-seat. This feast [of welcome] was made with the greatest magnificence.

Chapter 35. Óláf Divulges His Plans

Now on a certain day, when King Óláf had not been there so very long, he asked King Sigurth his stepfather, his mother Ásta, and his foster father Hrani to have a private conference with him. Then he spoke as follows.

“As you know,” he said, “I have returned to Norway after having been away for a long time. And all that time my men and I have had nothing for our support but what we gained in warfare, risking in many places both life and soul. Many a man through no fault of his own has been deprived by us of his property, and some, of their lives, too, while foreigners dispose of the possessions which my father, and his father, and one after the other of our kinsmen owned, and to which I am entitled. Nor are they satisfied with that, but have appropriated what has belonged to our kinsmen who in direct line are descended from Harald Fairhair. To some they give a share of it, to others, nothing at all. Now I shall disclose to you what has been in my mind for a long time, which is that I mean to regain my paternal inheritance; nor shall I go to see either the king of Denmark or the king of Sweden to ask them any favor, although they have for some time called their own what was the heritage after Harald Fairhair. Rather, to tell you the truth, do I intend to seek my patrimony at the point of the sword and request for that purpose the support of all my kinsmen and friends and of all those who will go with me in this business. And I shall pursue this claim to the effect that either I shall take possession of all that dominion which they took from King Óláf Tryggvason, my kinsman, or else fall in the land of my fathers.

“Now I shall expect of you, kinsman Sigurth, and of the other men in this land who are born to possession of ancestral property according to the laws given by Harald Fairhair, that you will not be so devoid of pride as not to wish to rise and do away with this disgrace to our family and that you will risk your all to support him who is willing to be your leader in restoring the power of our family. But whether or no you are willing to show your manhood in this business, I know the temper of the people and that all would be eager to escape servitude under foreign chieftains as soon as they have the confidence that this can be accomplished.

“I have not broached this matter to anyone before, because I know you are a wise man and can judge best how to proceed in this business—whether we should talk this over secretly with some men or forthwith bring it up publicly before all the people. I have [already] shown my teeth to our enemy by capturing Earl Hákon. He has fled the country now, after giving me by solemn agreement that part of the realm which he possessed before. So now I consider it will be

easier to fight Earl Svein alone than when both were there to defend the land against us.”

King Sigurth made this reply: “These be matters of no little importance you are revolving, King Ólaf. And which, so far as I can judge, bear witness more to your ambition than to your foresight; and indeed it was to be expected that there would be a big difference between my unpretentious ways and your grandiose plans; because even when you were scarcely out of childhood, you were full of ambition and overbearing in everything that concerned you. And now you have won much experience in battles and have adopted the ways of foreign chieftains. Now I know that if you have gone so far in this matter, it will be useless to try to stop you. For that matter, it is only natural that it must weigh heavily on the minds of men who have the spirit of enterprise that all the race of Harald Fairhair and his kingdom have fallen to such low estate. But I will not be bound by any promises before I know the views and the measures of the other kings in the Uppland districts. Now it is well that you have informed me of your intentions before you make them known to all the people. I shall promise you my good offices with the kings and also with other chieftains and countrymen. Likewise, I shall put my property at your disposal to further your enterprise. But as to making this known to the people, I don’t care to do so before ascertaining what success may be expected, and what support gotten, for this great undertaking; because I shall want you to consider that you will engage in no small undertaking, if you enter into a contest with Ólaf, king of Sweden and with Knút, who now is king in both England and Denmark; and you will have to take strong measures if you expect any success. Yet I don’t think it unlikely that you will have good support, because the people are fond of new measures. That was the case before, when Ólaf Tryggvason came here and all welcomed him, yet he did not live to have the royal power for long.”

At this point Ásta spoke as follows: “So far as I am concerned, my son, I will tell you that I rejoice in you, and all the more, the more you prosper. I shall spare nothing I have to further your progress, though I can help little with my counsels. But if I had the choice, I would rather have you become supreme king of Norway, even though you lived to rule no longer than Ólaf Tryggvason, than be no more of a king than Sigurth Sýr and die of old age.”

After these words had been spoken, they broke off the conference. King Ólaf remained there for a while with all his followers. On alternate days King Sigurth served them at table, either with fish and milk or with meat and ale.

Chapter 36. Sigurth and the Uppland Kings Debate Whether to Aid Ólaf

In those days there were many kings in the Upplands who ruled over shires, and most were descended from the race of Harald Fairhair. Two brothers, Hrørek and Hring, ruled over Heithmork; and Guthröth, over Guthbrands Dale. A king also ruled in Raumaríki, and there was another who governed Thótn and Hathaland. In the Valdres District, too, there was a king. King Sigurth had arranged for a meeting with the district kings at a place in Hathaland, to which meeting came also Ólaf Haraldsson. And there Sigurth brought up before them the designs of his stepson Ólaf, and asked for their support, both as to troops, advice, and their consent, recounting to them how necessary it was for them to throw off the yoke which the Danes and Swedes had laid upon them, and that now there was a man who would lead them in these plans. And he recounted before them the many deeds of prowess Ólaf had performed in his journeys and expeditions.

Then King Hrørek spoke as follows: “True it is that the kingdom of King Harald Fairhair has fallen on evil days since no one of his race is supreme king in Norway. Now people in this land have tried to help themselves in this way and that. King Hákon, the foster son of Æthelstān, was king, and all liked him well. But when the sons of Gunnhild ruled over the country, all hated their tyranny and injustice, and people preferred to have foreign kings rule over them and be more independent, because foreign chieftains generally resided far away and did not care much what faith people had but [only] levied such tribute from the country as they decreed. And when Harald, the king of the Danes, and Earl Hákon fell out, then the Jómsvíkings harried in Norway. And then all the people rose up against them and made an end of these hostilities. Thereupon some encouraged Earl Hákon to hold the land against the Danish king and defend it with might and main. But as soon as he considered himself to be in complete possession of the land through the support of the people, he became so hard and tyrannical against them that they would not stand for that, and the people of Trondheim killed him themselves and elevated to the kingship Ólaf Tryggvason, who was by birth entitled to the crown and in all respects fit to be king. All the commoners were inordinately eager to have him as king over them and to raise anew the dominion of which Harald Fairhair had had possession. But as soon as Ólaf thought he had complete power, no one could maintain his independence against him. He proceeded with harshness against us small kings, exacting from us all the tribute Harald Fairhair had taken here, and more still; and people were

even less independent of him insofar as no one was his own master as to what god he was to believe in. And now he has been taken from us we have maintained friendly relations with the Danish king and have had his complete support in all demands we need to make, and our independence and an easy existence within our land, and no tyranny. Now, so far as my opinion is concerned I wish to say that I am well pleased with matters as they are. I don't know whether my condition will be improved if my kinsman becomes king over the land. And if that isn't the case, then I don't mean to have any share in these plans."

Then Hring, his brother, spoke as follows: "I shall tell you my opinion. It would seem preferable to me, granted I have the same power and properties, that a kinsman of mine be king over Norway, rather than foreign chieftains and if our race could rise again in our country. But as to this man Ólaf, I surmise that his fate and his good luck will decide whether or no he will obtain the power here in Norway; and if he does become absolute ruler, then it seems it will be advantageous for him who has a stronger claim on his friendship. At present he has in no wise greater power than any of us; and less, insofar as we have some lands and power at our disposal and he has none. Neither are we by birth less entitled to the royal title. Now we want to be such strong supporters of his that we do not begrudge him the highest rank in this country and aid him to that end with all our power. Why should he not reward us well for that and bear it long in mind, if he is indeed so great a hero as I believe him to be and all call him? If I am to prevail, then let us take that risk and join him as our friend."

Thereupon, one after the other of the chieftains got up and spoke; and the end of the discussion was that the majority was ready to make common cause with King Ólaf. He pledged them his true friendship and an increase in their privileges, once he was supreme king in Norway. Thereupon they pledged adherence to their agreement with oaths.

Chapter 37. Óláf Is Accepted as King of Norway

After that, the kings summoned an assembly, and there Óláf made known to the people these plans and the claim he had to the succession. He asked the farmers to accept him as king of the land, promising them in return maintenance of the ancient laws and to defend them against foreign armies and chieftains. His speech was long and eloquent, and it was well received. Then the kings arose, one after another, all supporting his cause and what Óláf had said. And as a result, Óláf was given the title of king over all Norway, and the land was adjudicated to him according to the laws of the Uppland District.

Chapter 38. Óláf Forces the People of Methal Dale to Acknowledge Him

Thereupon King Óláf forthwith started on his royal progress, bidding people prepare for his entertainment wherever there were royal estates. First he visited about Hathaland and then proceeded north to Guthbrands Dale. Then it went as Sigurth Sýr had predicted: so many came to join his colors that he considered he needed but half their number—and by that time he had almost three hundred [360] men—so that the entertainments agreed upon were inadequate, because it had been the custom for kings to go about the Uppland District with sixty or seventy followers, but never with more than one hundred. So the king travelled fast, staying only one night in the same place. And when he arrived at the mountains to the north, he started on his passage over them till he arrived at their northern side. Descending, he arrived in Upp Dale and stayed there during the night. Then he traversed the Upp Dale Forest and came out in Methal Dale, where he called for an assembly and summoned the farmers to come to meet him. Thereupon he spoke at the assembly, demanding that the farmers should recognize him as king, promising them in turn to maintain the rights and laws such as King Óláf Tryggvason had given them. The farmers were not strong enough to go counter to him, and the end was that they acknowledged him, confirming the agreement with oaths. Nevertheless they had sent messengers down to Orka Dale and also to Skaun who reported about King Óláf and told all they knew about him.

Chapter 39. Einar Thambarskelfir Prepares to Resist Óláf

Einar Thambarskelfir had an estate at Skaun, and when the news came to him about King Óláf's proceedings, he at once sent the war-arrows in all directions, summoning both freedmen and thralls to come fully armed and bidding them to defend the land against King Óláf. These war-arrows went to Orka Dale and to Gaular Dale, and troops gathered there from all directions.

Chapter 40. Óláf Persuades the People of Orka Dale to Acknowledge Him

King Óláf with his force proceeded down to Orka Dale. He proceeded very quietly and peacefully. And when he arrived at Grjótar, he encountered the host of farmers, more than seven hundred [840] strong. Then the king drew up his men in battle array, thinking that the farmers were going to fight him. But when the farmers saw that they also began to array themselves in battle order, but this was not so easy for them, for it had not been decided beforehand who was to be their leader. And when King Óláf noticed that there was confusion among the farmers, he sent Thórir Guthbrandsson over to them; and he told them that King Óláf did not want to fight them. He pointed out twelve of the most influential men among them and asked them to come to meet with King Óláf. And the farmers agreed to that and came forward across a ridge to where stood the king's men in battle array.

Then the king said, "You farmers have done well to give me a chance to talk with you, because I want to tell you about my business here in the region of Trondheim. First of all I know you have heard that Earl Hákon and I had an encounter, this summer; and it ended with his giving me all the dominion he had had in the Province of Trondheim, which as you know comprises the Districts of Orka Dale, Gaular Dale, and Strind, and the Islands. And I have witnesses here who were present when the earl made this pledge to me and who heard the words of the oaths and all the stipulations made between us. I shall offer you the laws and the securities which King Óláf Tryggvason offered to you before me."

He spoke at length and eloquently, and in conclusion offered the farmers the alternative, either to accept him and give him their allegiance or else to do battle with him. Thereupon the farmers returned to their people and reported to them what the king had told them. They then counselled with all the people which of the alternatives to take. And though they debated this for a while between them, in the end they chose to swear allegiance to the king, and that was agreed upon with oaths on the part of the farmers.

Thereupon the king arranged for his further progress, and the farmers entertained him as he went along. He made his way down to the seashore and there procured ships. He had two warships, one a vessel with twenty rowers' benches, given him by Gunnar of Gelmin, the other, also with twenty rowers' benches, given him by Lothin of Viggjar. A third ship, of the same description, was gotten from Angrar at Ness. That estate had been a possession of Earl Hákon and was managed by a steward by the name of Bárth the White. The king

~~_____ was managed by _____ by the name of _____ the _____~~
had [also] four or five skiffs, and with all these he proceeded quickly into the
Trondheimfjord.

Chapter 41. Earl Svein Eludes Óláf

At that time Earl Svein was at Steinker¹ at the head of the Trondheimfjord and was preparing for a Yuletide banquet there. There was a market town there. Einar Thambarskelfir had learned that the people of Orka Dale had sworn allegiance to King Óláf. Then he sent messengers to Earl Svein. They went first to Nitharós and there took a rowing skiff that belonged to Einar, then rowed into the upper reaches of the fjord and arrived late one day at Steinker and reported this news to the earl, telling him all about King Óláf's proceedings. The earl had a warship which rode tented on the fjord outside the town. He forthwith had his movable property, the clothing of his men, and food and drink as much as the ship could hold, brought on board in the evening; thereupon they set out immediately that same night and at dawn arrived at Skarn Sound. There they saw King Óláf rowing into the fjord with his fleet. Then the earl turned toward the land at Masarvík. A dense forest grew there, and they moored the ship so close to the wooded slope that the leaves and branches of the trees hung down over the ship. Then they felled trees and placed them in the water on the outside so that the ship could not be seen for the leaves. It was not yet full daylight when the king rowed into the sound past them. It was a wind-still day. The king rowed into the sound past the island. But as soon as they could not see one another, the earl rowed out into the fjord and kept going till he reached Frosta Peninsula where they landed. That was in the earl's territory.

Chapter 42. Earl Svein Confers with Einar Thambarskelfir

Earl Svein sent messengers to Gaular Dale for Einar, his brother-in-law; and when the two met, the earl told Einar what had taken place between him and King Ólaf, and said that he wanted to collect a force and advance against King Ólaf and fight it out with him. Einar answered him as follows: “Let us proceed cautiously and find out with the help of spies what King Ólaf’s plans are. Let him find out about us only that we are keeping quiet. Maybe then, if he does not find out about our collecting troops he will settle at Steinker for Yule, because there are plenty of provisions there now. But if he does find out that we are collecting troops, he is likely to steer out of the fjord, and then he will escape us.” It was done as Einar counselled. The earl journeyed up to Stjóra Dale to be entertained there by the farmers.

Now when King Ólaf arrived at Steinker, he took away all the provisions intended for the banquet and had them carried to his ships, to which he added a merchantman, taking along both food and drink, and hurried away the fastest he could, rowing all the way to Nitharós. There, King Ólaf Tryggvason had laid the foundations of a market town, as was written above. But when Eirík came to rule the land, he had favored Hlathir, where his father had established his headquarters, and neglected the buildings which Ólaf had erected on the banks of the Nith River, so that some had collapsed and others still stood but were rather uninhabitable. King Ólaf steered his ships up the Nith River and immediately had those houses repaired which still stood and had those raised up which had fallen. He put many men to work to do that, and then had both the drink and the victuals moved into the houses, intending to celebrate Yule there. But when Earl Svein and Einar learned that they changed their plans.

Chapter 43. The Skald Sigvat Joins King Óláf

There was an Icelander called Thóρθ Sigvaldaskáld. He had for a long time been the retainer, first of Earl Sigvaldi, and then of Thorkel the Tall, the earl's brother; but after the fall of the earl he had become a merchant. He had met King Óláf when he was on his viking expedition in the west, and became his retainer, following him afterwards. He was with the king at the time. Sigvat was the son of this Thóρθ and had been fostered by Thorkel at Apavatn. But when he was almost full grown, he had left the country in the company of some merchants. That fall this ship arrived in the Trondheim District, and the men were quartered in the surrounding country. The same winter King Óláf arrived in the Trondheim District, as is told above. And when Sigvat heard that his father was there with the king, he went to the king, met his father Thóρθ, and dwelt there for some time. Sigvat had at an early age become a good skald. He had composed a poem about King Óláf and asked the king to listen to it. The king said he did not want to have poems composed about himself and that he did not understand skaldship. Then Sigvat spoke this verse:

223. List to my song, sea-steed's-(34.)
sinker thou, for greatly
skilled at the skein am I—
a skald you must have—of verses;
and even if thou, king of
all Norway, hast ever
scorned and scoffed at other
skalds, yet I shall praise thee.

As a reward for his verse, King Óláf gave Sigvat a ring weighing four ounces. Sigvat became a member of King Óláf's bodyguard. Then he spoke this verse:

224. Lief I was, my liege, and(35.)
loath nowise, to accept your
gracious gift—I did so
gladly—and be your courtier.
Hero, a faithful housecarl
hast thou gained in me, and
I—excellent trade!—an
open-handed master.

Earl Svein had that fall taken half of the landing tax¹ as had been the custom before; for Earl Eirík and Earl Hákon had half of these as well as other revenues

from the District of Trondheim. Now when King Ólaf had arrived there, he commissioned his men to collect half of the landing tax from the Icelandic merchants. But they went up to the king [to complain about having to pay twice], and asked Sigvat to intercede for them. Then he went before the king and spoke this verse:

225. Not unwilling warriors may (36.)
ween me to beg for pelf now—
often before from you
Fáfnir's treasure had I.
Forgive the land tax, gold-ring-
giver, half of it, e'en though
for my own ship I have
asked you for that favor.

Chapter 44. King Óláf Evacuates Nitharós

Earl Svein and Einar Thambarskelfir gathered a large army and proceeded to Gaular Dale over the mountains toward Nitharós. They had nearly twenty hundred [2400] men. Some followers of King Óláf were on Gaular Ridge as a mounted guard. They became aware of the army marching down Gaular Dale, and brought the news to the king at midnight. King Óláf arose immediately and had his men awakened. They went on board their ships at once, carrying with them all their clothes, their weapons, and all else they managed to take, and then rowed out of the river. No sooner were they gone but the earl's army marched into the town. They removed all the provisions intended for the Yule banquet and burned down all the houses. King Óláf sailed out of the fjord and to Orka Dale, where he disembarked; and from there he marched up Orka Dale Valley till he came to the mountains, and then over the mountains to [Guthbrands] Dale. About this, that Earl Svein burned down the town of Nitharós, we are told in the *flokk*¹ which was composed about Klæng Brúsason:

226. Burned the liege's lodgings— (37.)
laid them low the fire, while
singed the men hot smoke and
cinders—down to the River.

Chapter 45. Óláf Collects Troops in the Uppland Districts

1015 Then King Óláf marched south down Guthbrands Dale, and from there to Heithmork. There he spent all the time in midwinter, being entertained [by the farmers]; but when spring approached he collected an army and proceeded to Vík. He had with him a large following from Heithmork which the kings had procured for him. Many landed-men went with him from there, among them Ketil Kálf of Hringuness. Also from Raumaríki King Óláf had reinforcements. King Sigurth Sýr, his stepfather, joined him with a large host of men. Then they proceeded toward the sea, procured themselves ships, and outfitted themselves in Vík. They had a large and well-equipped crew. And when they were ready they set out for Tuns-berg.

Chapter 46. Earl Svein Collects Troops against Óláf

Earl Svein collected troops all about the Trondheim District immediately after Yule, summoning a levy, and also made ships ready. At that time there was in Norway a great number of landed-men. Many of them were powerful and so high-born as to be in direct descent from royal or earls' families, and they were also very rich. Whoever governed the country, whether kings or earls, depended on them, because in every district it was these landed-men who had the greatest influence with the farmers. Earl Svein was good friends with these landed-men, and so it was easy to collect troops. Einar Thambarskelfir, his brother-in-law, was in his company, and so were many other landed-men, and also many who before had sworn allegiance to King Óláf, both landed-men and farmers. As soon as they were ready they sailed out of the fjord, steering south along the land and collecting auxiliaries from every district. And when they arrived south, outside of Rogaland, Erling Skjálgsson joined them with a large fleet, and a great many landed-men! with him. When all were together the fleet sailed east to Vík. It was toward the end of the Lenten Season when Earl Svein entered the Vík District. The earl steered his fleet past Grenmar and anchored at Nesjar.

Chapter 47. King Óláf Makes Ready for Battle

About this time, King Óláf steered his fleet out of the fjord and there was but a short distance between the two fleets. They became aware of each other on the Saturday before Palm Sunday. King Óláf had the ship which was called Karlhofthi [Man's Head]. As a figurehead it had a king's head carved on its prow. He himself had carved it; and such a figurehead was in Norway for a long time afterward fixed on the prows of ships steered by chieftains.



The king has the trumpets blown.

Chapter 48. Óláf Addresses His Men before Battle

On Sunday morning, as soon as dawn broke, King Óláf arose and dressed. Then he went on land and had the trumpets blown for all his army to go on land. Then he spoke to the army and made it known to all that he had learned that only a short distance separated them from Earl Svein.

“Now let us prepare and be ready to meet them, because in a little while we shall encounter them. Let men arm themselves now, and let everyone make ready for the fight both himself and his place in the ship to which he is assigned, so that all are ready when I have the trumpets blown for us to start. Then let us row close together, let no one start before the whole fleet starts, and let no one remain behind when I row out of the harbor; because we cannot know whether we shall find the earl where he is moored now, or whether he is coming to look for us. But if we encounter him and the battle starts, then let our men gather our ships together and be ready to fasten them one to the other. Let us remain on the defensive at first and save our missiles and not waste them by throwing them into the sea to no good. But when the battle is on in earnest and the ships have been tied together, then fight for all you are worth, and let everyone show his manhood.”

Chapter 49. The Battle of Nesjar

King Óláf had on his ship a hundred [120] men, all in coats of mail, with French helmets on their heads. Most of his men had white shields, with the holy cross inlaid on them with gold, but some had it drawn on them with red or blue color. He also had the front of all helmets marked with a cross in chalk. He himself had a white standard with a dragon figured on it.

Thereupon he had mass said for himself. He went on board his ship and told the men to have refreshments of food and drink, then had the trumpets sounded for the fleet to leave harbor. And when they arrived before the harbor where the earl's fleet had anchored, they found his force armed and about to row out of the harbor. And when they saw the king's fleet, they began to fasten their ships together, to raise their standards, and to prepare for battle. When King Óláf saw that, he rowed to the attack. The king laid his ship beside the earl's, and the battle began. As says Skald Sigvat:

227. Onset made then Óláf, (38.)
anchored as in the harbor
Svein's fleet lay—the salty
sea grew red with wound-dew.
Urged the keen-eyed king the
combat 'gainst the earl's men
ruthlessly—with ropes their
readied ships they fastened.

In this verse we are told that King Óláf proceeded to do battle, and that Svein remained in the harbor, waiting for him. Sigvat the Skald was in that battle, and right soon in the summer after it he composed the *flokk* which is called *Nesjavísur*. In it we are told fully about these happenings:

228. Heard we have, great warrior, (39.)
how that you for combat
near to the earl, east of
Agthir, laid Karlhofthi.

The battle was most bitterly fought, and for a long time it seemed uncertain what the outcome would be. Many fell on both sides, and a great many were wounded. As says Sigvat:

229. Need there was none to urge to (40.)
noise-of-swords the earl's men,

nor to egg on Óláf,
eager ever for battle;
for either host was apt to
undergo—nor were they
ever—the loss of life or
limb—worse bestead in combat.¹

The earl had a greater force, but the king had a picked crew on his ship who had been with him in his expeditions and, as stated above, were so splendidly equipped that every man wore chain mail. They suffered no wounds. As says Sigvat:

230. Gladly saw I the glorious (41.)
gold-ring-dealer's men there
busked in cold steel byrnies—
bated not the sword-din;
but my black hair hid I,
benchmate, 'gainst the flight of
arrows—armed thus were we—
under a French helmet.

But when men on board the earl's ships began to fall and a number were wounded, the ranks of warriors along the sides of the ships grew thin.

Chapter 50. King Ólaf Hails Fleeing Bersi

Then King Ólaf's men prepared to board them. His standard was carried up onto the ship next to the earl's, and the king himself advanced with it. As says Sigvat:

231. Strode 'neath golden standard (42.)
stalwart men of Ólaf
up upon the earl's ship
after their brave leader.
Not was it as though to thewy
thanes before the battle
mead were borne by modest
maidens on the sea-steeds.

A sharp struggle took place there, and many of Svein's men fell, and some leapt overboard. As says Sigvat:

232. Straightway stormed we on their (43.)
steeds-of-Atli¹ briskly—
were shields by red blades shattered—
shrilly whined the arrows.
Overboard—on the brine dead
bodies many floated—
wounded warriors leapt and
weltered in the billows.

And still further:

233. With blood our bucklers, which were (44.)
brought there white, our fighters,
as could be seen, colored
crimson in fierce onset.
O'er gangway our gallant leader—
gore he gave the ravens—
boldly—blades were dulled there—
boarded foeman's galley.

Then many more men began to fall on the earl's side. Then the king's men attacked the earl's ship and came close to boarding it. But when the earl saw how matters stood, he called on the men in the bow to cut the hawsers [with which his ship was tied to the others] and cast it loose, and they did so. Then the

king's men threw grappling hooks on the beak of the warship and so held them fast. Then the earl commanded his forecastlemen to chop off the beak, which they did. As says Sigvat:

234. Bade then Svein lop the blackish (45.)
beak upon his warship—
before, full-nigh he was to
fall into our power—
when, to gladden greedy
gulls-of-Óthin²—still the
birds had their fill of bloody
bodies—they lopped the ship's beak.

Einar Thambarskelfir had laid his ship alongside of the earl's ship. They heaved an anchor onto the bow of the earl's ship and thus they all got away on the fjord. Thereupon all of the earl's fleet fled and rowed out on the fjord.

Bersi, the son of Skáldtorfa,³ was stationed in the middle on Earl Svein's ship; and when it drifted away from the fleet, King Óláf called out aloud when he recognized Bersi, for he was easily recognizable, being exceptionally handsome and excellently equipped as to weapons and clothes, "Fare you well, Bersi."

He replied, "All hail to you, king."

So says Bersi in the *flokk* which he composed when he fell into the power of King Óláf and sat in chains:

235. "Depart in peace," thou didst, (46.)
prince, bid me, the poet;
and I said the same to
seasoned tree-of-combat.⁴
Unwillingly these words in
weapon-thing returned I
as from the Fáfñir's-treasure's-
foe⁵ I had received them.

236. Seen have I Svein tested (47.)
since we fared together—
sang loud polished swords—in
serious conflicts, ruler.
Never on shipboard shall I,
should whate'er betide me,

in fiercest fray tested
follow a better master.

237. Crouch I shall not, King, nor
crawl before thee—rather,
let us ready, liege, a
large ship, this year—and so
turn my back on true and
tried friends and aggrieve them.
Young when I was I held dear
him who was your enemy.

(48.)

Chapter 51. Earl Svein Decides to Flee the Country

As some of the earl's men fled up on land, some asked for, and received, quarter. Then Svein and his fleet rowed out of the fjord. The chieftains laid their vessels alongside each other and discussed matters between them, and the earl sought the advice of the landed-men. Erling Skjálǫsson counseled that they should sail north, collect troops, and renew the battle with King Ólaf. But because they had lost so many troops, most of them urged that the earl should leave the country and repair to the king of Sweden, his brother-in-law, and there gather troops; and Einar gave his support to this counsel, because it seemed to him they did not have a sufficient force to do battle with King Ólaf. So they separated, the earl sailing south outside Fold and Einar Thambarskelfir with him. Erling Skjálǫsson and many other landed-men who did not want to flee their possessions proceeded north to their homes. During the summer Erling kept a great number of men about him.

Chapter 52. King Ólaf Disregards Sigurth Sýr's Counsel

King Ólaf and his men saw that the earl and his followers had laid their ships together. Then King Sigurth Sýr urged him to attack the earl and fight it out with him. King Ólaf said he wanted to ascertain first what course the earl would pursue, whether he would try to keep his fleet together or whether they would part company. Sigurth said that Ólaf would have his way—“but I very much fear that, with your disposition and your willfulness, you will be long at making sure of the loyalty of these bigwigs, used as they are from of old to go straight counter to their chieftains.”

Neither did it come to an attack. They soon saw that the earl's fleet scattered. They lay there for several nights and divided the booty. Then the skald Sigvat spoke these verses:

238. Many a minister-of-(49.)
murderous battle, ween I,
but now who from the north came,
ne'ermore will wend homeward:
sank from the sea-steeds many a
sailor down to the bottom:
Svein forsooth we met at
sea in fierce-fought combat.

239. Will not, as yester-year, the(50.)
young maidens of Trondheim
twit and taunt us, though our
troops fewer, that we fought not.
Much rather will they mock at
men who fell on their noses—
we sullied the sea with gore of
slain hosts—in that battle.

And still further:

240. Grew the stem-nag-steerer's¹(51.)
strength—Earl Svein, you found that—
e'er since Uppland chieftains
Ólaf chose as liege-lord.
Heard we have that men from
Heithmork District can do

more than—wands-of-wounds we
wielded—drink king's ale-cups.

King Ólaf at parting gave King Sigurth Sýr, his stepfather, presents, as also to the other chieftains who had supported him. To Ketil of Hringuness he gave a swift-sailing ship with fifteen rowers' benches, which Ketil took up through the Raum Elf River all the way to Mjors Lake.

Chapter 53. King Óláf Establishes His Residence in Trondheim

King Óláf sent out spies to ascertain where the earl had gone; but when he learned that the earl had left the country, he proceeded west along the coast of Vík. Then many joined his host and he was acknowledged as king at the assemblies. Thus he proceeded all the way to Cape Lithandisness. Then he learned that Erling Skjálǫsson had collected many troops. So he did not tarry in North Agthir, because a fresh fair wind sprang up. He sailed the fastest he could north to the District of Trondheim, because there he considered was the greatest power of the country, to see if he could lay his hands on it while the earl was out of the country. But when King Óláf arrived in Trondheim, he found no opposition against him, and he was acknowledged as king there. He resided in Nitharós in the fall and prepared to make his winter residence there. He had the royal quarters erected there and laid the foundations of Saint Clement's Church at the place where it now stands. He marked out sites for homes and gave them to farmers and merchants and others he liked and who wanted to build there. He kept many men about him, for he did not trust the Tronders to be loyal to him if the earl should return. That was specially plain in the case of the inhabitants of the interior regions of the district. Neither did he receive any revenues from there.

Chapter 54. King Óláf of Sweden Aids Earl Svein

Earl Svein first journeyed to King Óláf of Sweden, his brother-in-law, and told him about his encounter with Óláf the Stout and asked the advice of the Swedish king how he should proceed. The king said that he could stay in his land, if he so desired and have at his disposal a dominion befitting his station. “As another alternative,” he said, “I shall let you have sufficient troops to reconquer Norway from Óláf.” The earl chose the latter, because he was urged by all of the many men who had large landed possessions in Norway and who had followed him. And after deliberating about the measures to be taken, they agreed on proceeding by the landway, the following winter, through Helsingjaland and Jamtaland and on to Trondheim; for the earl had great hopes that the people living about the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord would be loyal to him and best support him with troops if he arrived there. Yet they decided on first going on a raiding expedition to the eastern Baltic that summer to procure booty.

Chapter 55. Earl Svein Dies in Sweden

Earl Svein proceeded with his force east to Gartharíki and harried there. He remained there during the summer, but when fall approached he returned to Sweden with his troops. At that time he contracted the sickness which brought on his death. After the earl's death the troops that had followed him returned to Sweden, and some went to Helsingjaland and from there to Jamtaland till at last after going west over the Keel they arrived in Trondheim, and spread the tidings which had occurred during their journey; and then the news of Earl Svein's death was confirmed.

Chapter 56. The King of Sweden Vows to Regain Norway

Einar Thambarskelfir and the troop which had followed him during the winter joined the court of the Swedish king and they were given a cordial welcome. Many other men were there also who had followed the earl. The king of Sweden was much put out with Óláf the Stout for having occupied the country tributary to him and driving out Earl Svein. To repay him, the king promised Óláf the strongest retribution as soon as he was able to. He said that Óláf [the Stout] would not dare to be so bold as to take possession of the dominion the earl had had. And many of the Swedish king's men agreed with him.

But as soon as the people of Trondheim were certain that Earl Svein was dead and could no longer be expected back in Norway, then all the people turned their allegiance to King Óláf, and many men from the interior of the district came to him to swear allegiance and become his men; and some sent word and tokens of their submission to him. Then in the fall he went into the interior of the province and had the farmers meet him in an assembly. In every shire there he was accepted as king. Thereupon he returned to Nitharós. He had all the royal revenues brought there and prepared to have his winter quarters there.

Chapter 57. King Óláf's Residence in Nitharós

King Óláf had a royal residence built in Nitharós. In it there was a large hall for his retinue, with doors at both ends. The king's high-seat was in the middle of the hall. Next to him sat Grímkel, his court bishop, and next to him, his other priests; and on the other side sat his councillors. Opposite to the king, on the other high-seat, sat his marshal Bjorn the Stout, and next to him sat the "guests."¹ Whenever men of importance came to see the king, they were well taken care of. Fires were lit [on the floor] on such occasions when the ale was drunk. He appointed men to serve in various capacities, as was the custom of kings. He had about him sixty retainers and thirty "guests," and gave them wages and laws. In addition he had thirty housecarls who were to do such work in the [royal] household as was needed, and to provision it. He had also many thralls. In the [royal] estate there was also a large hall for the retainers to sleep in. There was also a large room which the king used for meetings with his retainers.

Chapter 58. King Óláf's Character and Ways

It was the habit of the king to rise betimes in the morning, to put on his clothes and wash his hands, then to go to church and listen to the matins and morning mass, then to go to meetings and reconcile people, or else to deal with other matters such as seemed needful to him. He gathered at his court men both of high and of low degree, and all who were of keen understanding. He had often recited in his presence the laws which Hákon, the foster son of Æthelstān, had given to the Trondheim District. He changed laws with the advice of the wisest men, taking away or adding as seemed best to him. The Christian code of laws he gave in accordance with the advice of Bishop Grímkel and other priests, laying great *stress* on abolishing heathendom and ancient practices such as seemed to him contrary to the spirit of Christianity. In the end the farmers agreed to the laws the king gave. As says Sigvat:

241. Do thou, liege-lord, lay down (52.)
laws for all the land that
may prevail among all
men and stand forever!

King Óláf was well-mannered, of an agreeable disposition, a man of rather few words, open-handed, [yet also] eager to have possessions. At that time there was at the king's court the skald Sigvat, as was said above, together with several other Icelanders. King Óláf inquired carefully of them how the Christian faith was kept in Iceland; and it appeared to him to be in a bad case, for they told him about their manner of holding to the Christian precepts—that it was permitted in their laws to eat horse meat and expose children, as is done by heathens, and of still other customs that comported ill with Christianity. They also told the king of many of the great chieftains who lived in Iceland. Skapti Thóroddsson was at that time the lawspeaker there. He inquired of men who were best informed concerning the customs of people in countries round about. Most often he asked how the Christian faith was kept both in the Orkneys, in the Shetland and the Faroe Islands; and his inquiries revealed that not everything was as it should be. He often talked about such matters, and also about the laws and ordinances [of these countries].

Chapter 59. The Emissaries of the Swedish King Attempt to Levy Tribute in Norway

That same winter there came from Sweden in the east emissaries from King Óláf of Sweden. Two brothers headed them, Thorgaut Skarhi and Ásgaut the Steward, and they had with them twenty-four men. And when they arrived in Vera Dale, after crossing the Keel, they called the farmers to a meeting with them and spoke to them demanding the revenues and taxes due to the king of Sweden. The farmers discussed the matter and agreed between them to pay the taxes as required by the Swedish king provided King Óláf [the Stout] demanded no taxes from them on his account, but they said they would not pay taxes to both. The messengers departed, going down the valley, and in every meeting they had with the farmers they received the same answer but no money. Thereupon they went to Skaun, where they called the farmers together, demanding the taxes there also, and all went as before. Then they proceeded to Stjóra Dale and summoned the farmers, but they declined to come. Then the messengers understood that they would get nowhere with their errand. So Thorgaut wanted to return east. But Ásgaut said, “It seems to me we have not been successful in the king’s business. I wish to go to the court of King Óláf the Stout, considering that the farmers leave everything to his decision.”

He prevailed, and they proceeded to the town and took lodgings there. Next day they went to the king—he was sitting at table—greeted him, and informed him that they came on an errand from the king of Sweden. The king requested them to come again the day after. Next day, when the king had heard mass he went to his assembly hall and had the men sent by the Swedish king called for and bade them deliver their message.

Thorgaut spoke up, explaining first on what errand they had been sent, and then relating what answer the people of the inner districts of Trondheim had given them. Finally, he asked the king to deliver his decision what the outcome of their errand to these parts was to be.

The king answered, “During the times earls governed the land here it was only natural that the people should be subject to them, because they were entitled by birth to power over the people here. Yet it would have been better even if the earls had shown obedience and given service to the kings who were entitled to have dominion in this land, rather than to bow down to foreign kings and rise in rebellion against their rightful kings and dethrone them. But as to the King Óláf of the Swedes who makes claims to Norway, I do not know what just right he has to do so. But this we shall remember. how many men we have lost through

him and his kinsmen.”

Then Ásgaut replied, “It is not to be wondered that you are called Óláf the Big-Mouthed,¹ because with great haughtiness you answer the message of such a chieftain. You do not understand how heavy for you to bear will be the wrath of the king, for such it has proved to those who had greater power than you appear to me to have. But if you obstinately insist on holding onto your kingdom, it would be best for you to come to his court and become his vassal; in which case I shall join you in praying him to let you have this kingdom as a fief.”

Then the king replied in a calm voice, “I shall give you a different counsel, Ásgaut. Return now east to your king and tell him that early in spring I shall get ready to journey east to the boundary which from of old has separated the realm of the king of Norway from that of the king of Sweden. Let him also come there if he desires to arrive at an agreement to let each of us have the dominions he is entitled to by birth.”

Thereupon the emissaries left and went back to their lodgings and made ready to leave, but the king went to table. Then they returned to the king’s residence, and when the doorkeepers saw that, they told the king. He told them not to let the messengers in—“I will not speak with them,” he said. Thereupon the messengers left. Then Thorgaut said that he and his men would return to Sweden, but Ásgaut said that he meant to execute his errand. Then they separated, and Thorgaut journeyed to Strind; but Ásgaut with eleven other men travelled up through Gaular Dale and then south to Orka Dale, intending to proceed south to Mær and there carry out the king of Sweden’s business. But when King Óláf became aware of that, he sent his “guests” after them. They found them on the ness by Stein, took them captive, and led them back to Gaular Ridge. There they raised gallows and hanged them there, in plain sight of the common passageway on the fjord. Thorgaut learned of this before leaving the Trondheim District. Thereupon he travelled all the way back till he came to the king of Sweden and told him what had happened to them on their expedition. The king became furious when he heard this account, and used strong language.

Chapter 60. King Ólaf Inculcates the Christian Commandments

1016 At Easter the following year King Ólaf summoned troops in the Trondheim District, preparing to sail to the eastern part of the land. At the same time a vessel bound for Iceland got ready to sail from Nitharós. Then King Ólaf sent word and tokens to Hjalti Skeggjason, requesting him to see him, and by him sent word to Skapti the Lawspeaker and to other men who had most to do with the laws in Iceland, that they were to take out of the laws such parts as seemed to him most at variance with Christianity. Together with this request he sent friendly greetings to all their countrymen.

The king sailed south along the land, stopping in every district, holding meetings with the farmers. And at every meeting he had the Christian laws read and also the commandments that went with them. He straightway abolished many evil customs and heathen rites among the people; for the earls had kept well the old laws and rights of the land, but concerning the observance of Christianity they had let everyone do as he pleased. The situation then was this that in nearly all settlements along the seashore people were baptized, though most of them were ignorant of the Christian commandments; but in the remote valleys and the mountain settlements people were for the most part altogether heathen; because whenever people were allowed to do as they pleased, the faith which they had learned in childhood became fixed in their minds. But those men who would not be moved by the words of the king concerning the keeping of Christianity he threatened with harsh punishment, whether they were men of influence or humble folk.

Ólaf was accepted as king everywhere, at every general assembly, and no one opposed him. When he was moored in Karmt Sound, messages passed between him and Erling Skjálgrsson about coming to an agreement; and the place for their coming to terms was arranged to be on Hvitingsøy Island. And when they met they talked man to man about terms. Then it seemed clear to Erling from the words of the king to him that he had been misinformed about King Ólaf. Erling claimed all those possessions which Ólaf Tryggvason, and then the earls Svein and Hákon had bestowed on him, “and then I shall be your vassal and loyal friend,” he said.

The king replied, “It would seem to me that it would be no worse for you to accept from me possessions as large as you received from Earl Eirík, the man who had killed so many of your people. But I shall let you be the most outstanding man in the land, even though I mean to deal out the various possessions as I see fit and not make it appear as though you landed-men were

entitled by birth to what is my patrimony and as though I had to buy your submission at many times its worth.”

Erling had no mind to ask the king for the smallest favor, because he saw that he was not easily won over. He also perceived that there were only two alternatives for him to choose, the one, not to come to an understanding with the king and risk the consequences; the other, to leave the matter entirely up to the king. And he chose the latter course, much though it went against his disposition. So he said to the king, “You are likely to be served best if I do so of my own free will.” With that they concluded their discussion.

Afterwards, Erling’s kinsmen and friends came to him, begging him to yield and proceed with circumspection, and not be overbearing. “You are always likely to be the most important of all landed-men in Norway,” they said, “both on account of your own ability and of your kinsfolk and great wealth.” And Erling considered that this was wholesome advice and given with the best intentions. He followed it, and swore an oath of fealty to the king, under the terms which the king was to impose. After that they parted and were reconciled, at least nominally. Thereupon Óláf continued on his way east along the land.

Chapter 61. King Óláf Finds and Fortifies the Town of Sarpsborg

As soon as King Óláf's arrival in Vík became known, the Danes who had stewardships from the king of Denmark departed and sailed to Denmark, not wishing to bide the coming of King Óláf. And the king proceeded up along the fjord, holding meetings with the farmers. All the people submitted to him. He appropriated all the royal revenues and resided in Vík during the summer. From Túnsberg he sailed east across the fjord and all the way east to Svína Sound. There began the realm of the king of Sweden. He [the king of Sweden] had set stewards over those parts, Eilíf the Gaut over the northern part, and Hroí Skjálgi over the eastern part all the way to the Gaut Elf River. The latter had kinsfolk on both banks of the river and large estates on the island of Hísing. He was a powerful man and immensely wealthy. Eilíf also was a man of high birth. When King Óláf and his fleet arrived in Ranríki, he summoned the inhabitants to an assembly, and those who lived on the island or near the sea attended it. And when they were met, Bjorn the Marshal made a speech in which he asked the farmers to accept Óláf as king, as had been done in other districts of Norway.

Brynjólf Úlfaldi [the Camel] was the name of an influential yeoman. He arose and spoke as follows: "We farmers know which is the boundary from of old between the kings of Norway, of Sweden, and of Denmark. The Gaut Elf River has formed it from Lake Vænir to the sea; in the north, the Forest District to the Eithaskóg region, and from there the Keel all the way north to Finnmark. We know also that now this, now that, power has made inroads on the other's land. The Swedes have for a long time had possession of the land all the way to Svína Sound.¹ Yet, to say the truth, I know many men are inclined to think it would be better to be subject to the king of Norway, but they don't have the courage to acknowledge that. The realm of the Swedish king extends both east and south of us; while it is to be expected that the king of Norway will soon depart to the north to where the greatest strength of his land lies, and then we shall not have the power to fight the Gautar. Now it is up to the king to counsel us wisely. We would be ready enough to be his subjects."

After the assembly was over, Brynjólf at the invitation of the king stayed with him during the evening and likewise the day after. They discussed many things between them privately. Thereupon the king departed for the eastern part of Vík.

Now when Eilíf learned that the king was there, he had spies report on his whereabouts. Eilíf had thirty men, who were his followers. He was stationed above in the settlements toward the forest, and here had with him a gathering of farmers. Many farmers joined King Óláf, and some sent messages of friendship.

Then men went between King Ólaf and Eilíf bearing messages from the farmers to both, beseeching them earnestly to arrange for a meeting and somehow maintain the peace between them. They told Eilíf that if they did not heed the king's commands they could expect harsh treatment from him and said they would support Eilíf [with troops] at such a meeting. Then the decision was reached that Eilíf and his men should come down [to the coast] and there hold a meeting with the farmers and the king.

Thereupon the king sent Thórir the Long, the chief of his "guests," together with eleven others, to Brynjólf. They wore coats of mail under their kirtles and hoods over their helmets. The day after, the farmers in a great body came down to the seashore together with Eilíf. Brynjólf was there in his company and Thórir too was along.

The king moved his ships to where a certain cliff projected into the sea. He went up on it with his troops and settled on top. Above it was a level place and that was occupied by the army of the farmers, and Eilíf's men formed a shield castle around him.

Bjorn, the king's marshal, made a long and clever speech, representing the king. But when he sat down, Eilíf arose and started to speak. In the same instant Thórir the Long stood up, drew his sword, and struck Eilíf on the neck so that his head flew off. At that all the farmers' host started up, and the troop of Gautar took to flight. Thórir and his men killed some of them. But when the multitude had calmed down and the noise subsided, the king arose and called out that the farmers should sit down. They did so. Much was spoken on that occasion, but in the end the farmers submitted to the king and swore allegiance to him, and he on his part promised not to desert them and to remain there until he and Ólaf, the king of the Swedes, settled their difficulties between them.

After that, King Ólaf subjected the northern districts [of Ranríki] to his sway, and in summer proceeded all the way to the Gaut Elf River, collecting all the revenues due to the king along the coast and around the islands. But as the summer wore on he returned north to Vík and rowed up into the Raum Elf River to where there is a great waterfall, called Sarp.² North of this fall a peninsula juts out into the river. There King Ólaf had a small wall of stones, turf, and wood built across the peninsula, and a moat dug on the outside of it. He built a large stronghold of earth there and within it he laid the foundation of Saint Mary's Church. He had also sites for other buildings marked off and got other men to build there. In the fall he had the provisions necessary for dwelling there during the winter brought up and resided there that winter with a great host, but also had

his men in all districts. He forbade all movements of herring and salt from Vík to Gautland. And these wares the Gautar could ill do without. He arranged a great Yule celebration and asked to it farmers of wealth from all districts.

Chapter 62. King Óláf Rewards Eyvind Úrarhorn and Brynjólf Úlfaldi

There was a man called Eyvind Úrarhorn [Uroxborn] whose kin resided in East Agthir. He was a man of much importance and of noble descent who went on raiding expeditions every summer, sometimes to the west, sometimes to the Baltic, or south to Frisia. He owned a swift-sailing ship with twenty rowers' benches and a good crew. He had been in the battle of Nesjar, supporting King Óláf. And when they parted, the king promised him his friendship, and Eyvind, his assistance wherever the king needed it. Eyvind attended the Yule banquet King Óláf gave and received goodly gifts from him. Brynjólf Úlfaldi was there also and as a Yule gift received a sword with gold ornaments from the king, together with an estate called Vettaland,¹ which is a large manorial possession. Brynjólf composed a verse which ends like this: (53.) 242. A sword gave me the sovran, and Vettaland.

At the same time the king gave him the title of landed-man; and Brynjólf remained the king's trusted friend all his life.

Chapter 63. The Tribute from Jamtaland Is Collected by King Óláf of Sweden

That same winter Thránd the White of Trondheim went east to Jamtaland to collect the revenues for King Óláf the Stout. But after he had done so, emissaries of the Swedish king came upon him and killed Thránd with his eleven companions, taking the revenues and delivering them to the king of Sweden. King Óláf learned of this and was greatly put out about it.

Chapter 64. The District of Vík Is Firmly Christianized

King Óláf had the Christian laws proclaimed in Vík as in the more northern parts of the country, and with good success, because the Christian ways were much better known to the people of Vík than to people in the northern parts, since a great many merchants came there, both summer and winter, Danes as well as Saxons. Also the people of Vík kept up merchant journeys to England, to Saxland, to the land of the Flemings, or to Denmark; and some engaged in freebooting expeditions and had their winter quarters in Christian lands.

Chapter 65. Hrói Skjálgi Is Slain

In the spring King Óláf sent word to Eyvind to come to him. They spoke in private for a long time. Then Eyvind straightway made ready to go on a raiding expedition. He sailed south along the coast of Vík and made fast in the Eikrey Islands outside of the Island of Hísing. There he learned that Hrói Skjálgi had gone north to the Island of Orthost and had there collected revenues and war contributions, and that he was expected back south at that time. Thereupon Eyvind rowed into the Hauga Sound, and met Hrói who came rowing from the north, and they met in the sound and fought together. Hrói fell there, with nearly thirty of his men, and Eyvind took all the possessions Hrói had acquired. Thereupon Eyvind sailed into the Baltic and remained on freebooting expeditions all summer long.

Chapter 66. Guthleik Is Robbed of His Cargo by Thorgaut

There was a man called Guthleik Gerzki [of Gartharíki]. His kinfolk lived in Agthir. He was a seafaring man and a great merchant, wealthy, and one who carried on trade with various countries. Frequently he travelled east to Gartharíki, for which reason he was called Guthleik Gerzki. That spring Guthleik readied his ship, intending to journey east to Garthar. King Ólaf sent word to him that he wanted to see him. And when Guthleik arrived, the king said he wanted to go into partnership with him, and asked him to buy for him those valuable things which are hard to get in Norway. Guthleik said that this would be done according to his wishes. Thereupon the king caused to be paid out to him as much money as he thought was required.

In the summer Guthleik sailed into the Baltic. They lay to for some time at the Island of Gotland. Then it happened, as often is the case, that not everyone [of the crew] held his tongue and so the people of the land got to know that on that ship was the partner of Ólaf the Stout. In summer Guthleik travelled to Hólmgarth¹ in the east, and there bought splendid costly stuffs which he intended for the king's robes of state, and also costly pelts and expensive tablecloth. In the fall, when Guthleik returned from the east, they had headwinds, and they lay anchored a long time at the Island of Eyland. Thorgaut Skarthi had learned by his spies about Guthleik's journey, and he fell upon them there with a warship and fought with them. They defended themselves for a long time, but as the odds were great against them, Guthleik fell with many of his crew, and many were wounded. Then Thorgaut took possession of all goods and the precious things meant for King Ólaf. Thorgaut and his men divided the booty equally among themselves, but the precious objects the Swedish king was to have—"and that is," said he, "a part of the tribute which is owing to him from Norway." Thorgaut then sailed east [west] to Sweden.

The news about this spread fast. Somewhat later, Eyvind Úrarhorn arrived in Eyland, and when he learned what had happened, he sailed east [west] in pursuit of Thorgaut. They met in the Swedish skerries and fought a battle. There Thorgaut fell with most of his men who did not leap overboard. Then Eyvind took all they had taken from Guthleik, also the precious things intended for King Ólaf. Eyvind returned to Norway in fall, and delivered to King Ólaf the precious things belonging to him. The king thanked him much for what he had done and assured him again of his friendship. At that time King Ólaf had been
1017 king in Norway for three years.

Chapter 67. King Óláf Allies Himself with Earl Rognvald

That same summer King Óláf raised a general levy, and again sailed east to the [Gaut Elf] River, where he lay anchored during the summer. Messages were sent between King Óláf, Earl Rognvald, and Ingibjorg, the daughter of Tryggvi, who was the earl's wife. She applied herself with great zeal to assisting King Óláf. She was very determined in following this up, the reason being both her feeling of close kinship with King Óláf and the fact that she never forgot what part the Swedish king had in the fall of Óláf Tryggvason, her brother, and that because of this he considered he had a claim on Norway. Through her the earl was persuaded to become a great friend of King Óláf, and the result of it was that a meeting was arranged between the king and the earl at the [Gaut Elf] River. There they discussed many matters, especially the hostile relations between the king of Norway and the king of Sweden; and both declared, as was true, that for both inhabitants of Vík and the Gauts it was ruinous that there was not the chance of peaceful trading between the two countries; and at the end they concluded a peace between them till the following summer. At parting they interchanged gifts and assured each other of their friendship. Thereupon the king returned north to Vík, receiving the royal taxes all the way to the [Gaut Elf] River. And all the people submitted to him. King Óláf of Sweden was so furious with Óláf Haraldsson that he declared that no one should dare to call him by his right name in his hearing. They called him "that fat man" and vilified him whenever he was mentioned.

Chapter 68. Óláf Commissions Bjorn the Marshal to Go to Sweden

The farmers in Vík between them declared there was only one way out of their difficulty, and that was that the kings should come to an agreement and make peace between them. They said they were ill bestead to have the kings harry on one another. But no one dared to bring this complaint up boldly before the king. So they prayed Bjorn the Marshal to speak for them to the king and ask him to send messengers to meet the Swedish king and to offer to come to some agreement. Bjorn was reluctant and begged to be excused; but many of his friends entreated him to do so. At last he promised to speak about this to the king, but said he suspected the king would resent yielding to the Swedish king even in one point.

That summer, Hjalti Skeggjason arrived in Norway from Iceland in response to the request of King Óláf. He immediately repaired to the court of King Óláf. The king received him cordially and asked him to stay at his court, assigning him a seat at table next to Bjorn the Marshal, so they became comrades at table and soon good friends.

One time when King Óláf was at a meeting between his troops and the farmers to discuss matters of government, Bjorn the Marshal spoke as follows: “What are your intentions, sire, concerning the clashes between you and Óláf, the king of Sweden? Now both parties have lost men through the other, but there is no decision either way, any more than before, who is to have what part of the realm. You have resided one winter and two summers in Vík and turned your back on all the land north of here. Men who have possessions and hereditary property in the north are tired of staying here. Now it is the wish of the landed-men and others of your followers, and also of the farmers, that there be made a decision. And because there is now a truce, and peace terms are agreed on with the earl and the West Gautar, who sit nearest to us, the people consider it wise that you send emissaries to the king of Sweden to offer a reconciliation on your part; and many who are with the Swedish king are likely to support that, because it is to the advantage of the inhabitants of either land.”

Bjorn’s speech received the hearty approval of all. Thereupon the king said, “The counsel which you have just now given, Bjorn, very likely was given with yourself in mind; so you shall go on this mission. If it is a good idea it will redound to your credit; but if your life is endangered by it, then you yourself will bear the blame. For that matter, it is your duty in assemblies to voice what are my intentions.” Thereupon the king arose, went to church, and had a high mass

sung for himself, then he sat down at table.

The day after, Hjalti said to Bjorn, "Why do you look so downcast, man? Are you sick or are you incensed at someone?" Thereupon Bjorn reported what he and what the king had said, and declared this was a dangerous mission. Hjalti said, "Kings should be served in such fashion that the men [who do their errands] derive great honor therefrom and are valued more highly than others. But often they are in danger of their lives, and they must be reconciled to either outcome. But the king's good luck may do wonders. And if everything goes well you may reap great honor from this enterprise."

Bjorn said, "You take it lightly. I suppose you will wish to go with me, for the king said that I should have my own following with me on that journey."

Hjalti said, "Assuredly I shall go with you if that is your wish, for I shall have difficulty in finding another bench mate if we two part company."

Chapter 69. Bjorn Journeys to Gautland

A few days later, when King Óláf was at a meeting, Bjorn appeared before him, together with eleven other men. He told the king that they were ready to go on his mission, and their horses stood outside saddled. “I now desire to know,” said Bjorn, “what message I am to deliver, and what plan you have devised for us.”

The king replied, “You are to deliver to the Swedish king these my words: that I want to establish peace between our lands according to the boundaries which Óláf Tryggvason had before me, and that this be confirmed by fixed agreements so that neither of us shall transgress these boundaries. But as to the men who were slain, it will be of no use to bring that up if we are to be reconciled, for the king of Sweden could not make up with money for the loss of men we have suffered through the Swedes.”

Then the king arose and left the hall with Bjorn and his men. He took a finely adorned sword and a finger ring and handed them to Bjorn. “This sword I shall give you. It was given me this summer by Earl Rognvald. You are to proceed to him and deliver to him these my words: that he is to help you with his counsel and his support so that you may accomplish your errand. You will have done well if you can hear what the Swedish king will say, whether yea or nay. But this finger ring you are to give Earl Rognvald. He will recognize these tokens.”

Hjalti went up to the king and saluted him—“now we very much require that you give us your luck along on this journey,”¹ and he bade the king farewell. The king asked him where he was going. “With Bjorn,” he said.

The king said, “That will be of advantage on this journey that you go along, because your luck has stood the test many a time. Be assured that I shall lay this matter to my heart, if this perchance will help, and confer my luck on you and all of you.”

Bjorn and his companions rode on their way, and arrived at the court of Earl Rognvald. There they were received well. Bjorn was a man of mark, known to many both by his aspect and by his voice, and to all who had seen King Óláf; for Bjorn arose at all meetings to speak for the king. Ingibjorg, the earl’s wife, went up to Hjalti and kissed him. She knew him, for she had been with Óláf Tryggvason, her brother, when Hjalti was at his court. And there was some relationship between the king and Vilborg, Hjalti’s wife [as follows]: Eirík Bjóthaskalli, the father of Ástríth, King Óláf Tryggvason’s mother, and Bothvar, the father of Álof, the mother of Gizur the White, Vilborg’s father, were

brothers, and both the sons of Víkinga-Kári, a landed-man of Vors.

Now then the emissaries of King Ólaf enjoyed the hospitality of the earl. One day Bjorn and his men had a conference with the earl and Ingibjorg, when Bjorn spoke of his mission and showed the earl his tokens.

The earl asked, “What have you done, Bjorn, that the king desires your death? You stand mighty little chance of being successful with your mission; in fact, I am thinking that there is no one who can deliver such a message to the Swedish king and escape with his life. King Ólaf, the Swedish king, is by far too high and mighty for anyone to dare to mention before him matters against which he has set his face.”

Bjorn replied, “Nothing has happened for King Ólaf to harbor a grudge against me; but he entertains plans, both for himself and his men which may appear dangerous to those who are apprehensive how things will turn out. But so far all his plans have turned out well, and we expect that will be the case in the future. Now I will tell you for sure that I shall go to see the Swedish king and not turn back before I have had him hear the message which King Ólaf enjoined me to bring up before him—unless death prevent me or I am made captive so that I cannot manage to approach him. I shall do so, whether or no you mean to further the message of the king.”

Then Ingibjorg said, “I shall tell you quickly what my mind is about this business; and that is, earl, that you should do all in your power to support this message of King Ólaf’s, so that it is brought up before the king of Sweden, whatever his answer. Even if we expose ourselves to the wrath of the Swedish king and endanger all our possessions and dominion, yet I would rather risk that than have it known that you put off the message of King Ólaf because you were afraid of the Swedish king. You have the ancestry, the support of kinsmen, and all the energy required to be free to have your say here in Sweden concerning all that is seemly and will appear to all worth hearing, whether many listen or few, great or little, and even if the king himself listen.”

The earl gave this answer: “It is not hard to see what you are driving at. Now let it be that you have your way in this matter and that I promise these emissaries of the king to help them so that they may succeed in bringing up their errand before the Swedish king, whether he likes it or no. But I mean to have my way how to manage this; and I don’t care to be rushed by Bjorn or any other man when such difficult matters are at stake. I desire that they remain here with me until such time when it will seem to me most likely to attend successfully to this business.” But when the earl had given them to understand that he would aid them and lend them his support, Bjorn thanked him cordially and said he would

follow his advice. Bjorn and his company tarried there at the earl's for a very long while.

Chapter 70. The Skald Hjalti Proceeds to Sweden

Ingibjorg was exceedingly kind to them. Bjorn spoke to her about his errand, and considered it bad that the journey should be postponed so long. Both they and Hjalti often spoke about this. Then Hjalti said, "I shall proceed to the king, if you so wish. I am not a Norwegian, so the Swedes will not have anything against me. I have heard that some Icelanders are at the court of the Swedish king and are treated well. They are acquaintances of mine, Gizur the Black, the king's skald, and Óttar the Black. I can then make inquiries and find out from the temper of the Swedish king whether this business is as hopeless as is made out now or whether there exist any other means to deal with it. Then I could act as occasion arises."

This seemed to Ingibjorg and Bjorn a mighty wise plan, and they came to a fast agreement about it. Then Ingibjorg made preparations for Hjalti's journey. She gave him two Gautish men along and instructed them to be at his service, both to wait upon him and to be ready to go on his errands. She gave him twenty marks of weighed silver for travelling expenses, and also a message and tokens to deliver to Ingigerth, the daughter of King Óláf, enjoining her to further his business in every way and do whatever he might require of her.

Hjalti departed as soon as he was ready. And when he arrived at the court of King Óláf, he sought out Gizur and Óttar immediately. They greeted him joyfully and straightway went to the king with him, and told the king that a compatriot of theirs had arrived who was one of the most honored in that land, and asked the king to receive him well. Then the king ordered Hjalti and his companions to join his court. Now when Hjalti had been there some time and had made acquaintances, he was greatly honored by all. The skalds were often in the king's presence, because they were free-spoken. Often during the day they were seated in front of the king's high-seat, Hjalti among them. They paid him their highest respects in all matters. So he also became acquainted with the king, who spoke quite frankly with him and asked him about happenings in Iceland.

Chapter 71. The Skald Sigvat Accompanies Bjorn

Before leaving, Bjorn had requested the skald Sigvat to accompany him—he had at that time been attached to the court of King Ólaf; but people had not been eager to join them on that journey. The friendliest relations existed between Bjorn and Sigvat. The latter spoke this verse: (54.)

243. Fond I was of former
friendly marshals all who
crowd about our keen-eyed
king, seeking his favor.
Bjorn, thou brand-reddener,
boons thou didst procure me
oft from the folk-warder,
for thou hadst the skill to.

And when they rode up into Gautland, Sigvat spoke these verses:

244. ¹ Light my mind was, lord, and (55.)
mirthful, when on firthways
with glorious king the gusty
gales did shake our sail-ships:
in glee, swiftly, our sea-steeds
o'er sounds of Lister bounded
at will, with the wind bellying
the wings of heeling keel-birds.²

245. Tented, in summer-time, and (56.)
tethered, our sea-wethers³
rode at anchor, floating
before the good land's shore line:
now, in fall, when on rollers
Ræfil's-horses⁴ are coursing,
we wretches must ride to Sweden,
restless, as the king requested.

And when they rode up into Gautland late in the evening, Sigvat spoke this verse:

246. Hungry, my horse on long road (57.)
hastens, at twilight coursing—

stars gan stream out—forward,
the straw scenting, to our quarters.
Through brooks splashing, my black steed
bears me swiftly, warily,
at wane of day, from men far,
in ditch though stumbled he, pitching.

Then they rode into the market town of Skara and through its Street to the earl's residence. He spoke this verse: (58.)

247. Readily will look the ladies
and lasses, as we are passing
by the road, on the dust of our riding
fast, up to Rognvald's castle.
Spur we to speed our horses
sprightly, so maidens high-born
and fair from the hall may hear us
whisk by as we gallop briskly.

Chapter 72. King Óláf of Sweden Refuses to Come to Terms

One day Hjalti went before the king, accompanied by the skalds. Then Hjalti spoke as follows: “As you know, sir king, I have come here to your court, and I had a long and difficult journey. But ever after I crossed the sea and heard of your royal splendor, it seemed foolish to return without having seen you and your grandeur. Now it is the law between Iceland and Norway that Icelanders when arriving in Norway must pay land-dues. And when I had crossed the sea, I appropriated the land-dues of all aboard. But because I know that yours by rights is the power over Norway, I travelled hither to bring you these land-dues.” And he showed the king the silver and poured into the lap of Gizur the Black ten marks of silver.



The king of Sweden flies into a rage.

The king said, “No one has brought us the like of that from Norway for some time. I give you my cordial thanks that you have gone to such pains to bring us the land-dues, rather than pay them to our enemies. However, I would that you accept this money as a gift from me, together with my friendship.” Hjalti thanked the king effusively.

From that time on Hjalti became great friends with the king, and often talked with him. The king thought that he was a wise and well-spoken man, as was the

case. Hjalti told Gizur and Óttar that he was sent to Ingigerth, the king's daughter, with tokens to bespeak her support and friendship, and requested them to arrange it so that he could talk with her. They said that would be an easy matter for them, and one day went to her quarters. She sat there drinking in the company of many persons. She welcomed the skalds, for she knew them well. Hjalti brought her the greetings of Ingibjorg, and told her that she had sent him there for her support and friendship, and showed her the tokens. The king's daughter received his greetings graciously and said he should be welcome to her friendship. They sat there a long time during the day, drinking together. The princess asked Hjalti about many matters and requested him to come to her often to speak with her. He did so, and often came to talk with the king's daughter, and told her in confidence of the journey of Bjorn and his company and asked her what she thought about how the Swedish king might react to the plan of concluding a peace between the two kings. The princess said it was her opinion that there was no use trying to have the king make a truce with Óláf the Stout—that the king was so incensed at him that he would not tolerate even having his name mentioned.

One day Hjalti sat by the king, talking with him. The king was in excellent humor and quite drunk. Then Hjalti said to the king, "All manner of splendor one can see here. I have actually got to see what I often heard told, that no king in the Northlands has the magnificence you have. It is a pity that it is so long and difficult a journey to come here—first the great expanse of ocean, and then it is not safe to travel through Norway for people who want to come here on friendly errands. Why is it that attempts are not made to reconcile you with Óláf the Stout? I have heard a great deal said about it in Norway and also in West Gautland, that all would be eager to have peace established; and I was told reliably that the king of Norway has remarked that he was eager to come to an agreement with you; and I know that the reason for that is that he realizes that he has much less power than you. Also, I heard it said that he intended to ask in marriage Ingigerth, your daughter, and that this would also be most conducive to a lasting peace. He is also a most distinguished person, according to what I have heard trustworthy men say."

Thereupon the king replied, "You must not say that, Hjalti! But I shall not blame you for what you have said, because you don't know what you are to guard against: that fat man no one here in my court may call king, and he is of much less account than many consider him to be, and you will be of the same opinion when I tell you that this alliance by marriage is in no wise fitting; for I am the tenth king in Uppsala, our kinsmen following one the other and having

been sole kings over the Swedish realm and over many other large countries, and all having been kings over other kings in the north. But in Norway are but small settlements, and those scattered. Kinglets have ruled there, and Harald Fairhair was the greatest king in that land, and he fought against the district kings and made them subject to his rule. He knew his limitations and did not covet any of the dominions of the Swedish king. For that reason the Swedish kings let him be in peace, and also because they were akin. But when Hákon, Æthelstān's foster son, was [king] in Norway, he remained in peace until he made depredations in Gautland and Denmark, but then a force was gathered against him, and he lost life and kingdom. The sons of Gunnhild also were cut off as soon as they showed disobedience to the king of Denmark. Thereupon Harald Gormsson [the king of Denmark] added Norway to his dominions and levied tribute from it. And yet King Harald Gormsson seemed to us less powerful than the kings of Uppsala, because our kinsman, Styrbjorn, subdued him, and Harald became his vassal. Yet Eirík the Victorious got the upper hand of Styrbjorn when they tried conclusions between them. Now when Óláf Tryggvason came to Norway and called himself king, we did not put up with that. Svein, the king of Denmark, and I banded together and slew him. Now I have taken possession of Norway, and with no less power than [in the cases] you have just heard of, and with as much justice as if I had waged war against and been victorious over the king who ruled there before. You may judge, sensible as you are, that it is far from my intention to yield up possession of that realm to that fat man. It is strange that he does not remember how he escaped by the skin of his teeth out of Lake Mælaren when we had him shut in. I should think that he had other things in mind [that time], if he got away with his life, than to pick a quarrel with us Swedes. And now I forbid you, Hjalti, ever again to mention these matters to me."

It seemed to Hjalti most unlikely to get the king to listen to any proposals of a reconciliation. So he gave that up and talked about other matters. A little later, when talking with Princess Ingigerth, he related to her the discussion he had had with the king. She said that a reply such as that was to be expected from him. Hjalti requested her to say a good word to the king [about these matters] and said that was likely to help. She replied that the king would not listen, whatever she said; "but I shall mention it," she said, "if you want me to." Hjalti said he would be grateful to her for that.

One day, Princess Ingigerth was talking with her father, and when she noted that the king was in a cheerful frame of mind she said, "What are your intentions about your differences with Óláf the Stout? Many people are complaining about that trouble. Some claim they have lost property, some, that they have lost

relatives through the Norwegians. And no one of your subjects is safe in Norway as matters lie. It was quite uncalled for that you claimed dominion in Norway. That country is poor and travelled with difficulty, and the people there are not to be trusted. Its inhabitants want anyone but you as their king. If I had anything to say, you would cease to claim possession of Norway, and rather fight in the east to regain the dominion which the former kings of Sweden had and which but a short time ago our kinsman Styrbjorn conquered, and leave his patrimony to Óláf the Stout and come to an agreement with him.”

The king replied furiously, “So that is your counsel: that I give up my claim to Norway and let you marry Óláf the Stout? No,” he said, “nothing will come of that! On the contrary, this winter at the Uppsala Assembly I shall announce to all Swedes that there will be a general levy before the ice goes off the lakes. I shall proceed to Norway and lay waste that land with fire and sword and so repay them for their treachery.” And the king became so enraged that she could not put in a word. So she went her way.

Hjalti had been watching for her and went up to her and asked how matters had turned out with the king. She replied that it had gone as she had anticipated, and she could not put in a word edgewise, in fact, that the king had uttered threats against [her]; and she begged him never to touch on that subject again before the king.

Often, when Ingigerth talked with Hjalti, they came to speak of Óláf the Stout. He told her frequently about him and his ways, praising him all he could, but sticking to the truth; and she appeared ready to be convinced. And one time when they talked together, Hjalti said, “Would I have permission, Princess, to speak out about what is in my mind?”

“Speak freely,” she said, “but to me alone.”

Then Hjalti said, “What answer would you give if Óláf, the king of Norway, sent men to you to ask for your hand?”

She blushed and, after some hesitation, answered with composure: “I have not made up my mind about that, because I don’t think I shall have occasion to answer such a question; but if Óláf is indeed in every way as you make him out to me, I could not ask for a better husband, unless you have given me too flattering a description of him.”

Hjalti said he had in nowise made him out a better man than he was. They talked about this very frequently. Ingigerth begged Hjalti to be careful not to speak about this in the presence of other people—“Because if the king gets to hear of this he would be incensed against you.”

Hjalti informed the skalds Gizur and Ottar about this matter, and they thought it a most excellent plan if it could be brought to a happy issue. Óttar was a free-spoken man and a great favorite with the chieftains. He quickly took up the matter with the princess and recounted to her the good qualities of the king just as Hjalti had done. All three, the princess, Hjalti, and Óttar frequently discussed the matter. And after they had talked about it many times and Hjalti had assured himself about the outcome of his mission, he sent away the two Gauts who had been his attendants and had them return to the earl with the letters which Princess Ingigerth and he sent to the earl and Ingibjorg. Hjalti also gave a hint about the talks he had had with Ingigerth and what her answer had been. The messengers arrived at the earl's court shortly before Yule.

Chapter 73. King Óláf Enforces Christianity in the Uppland Districts

At the time King Óláf had sent Bjorn and his company east to Gautland, he despatched other men to the Uppland District with the message that entertainment was to be made for him, and that he intended to journey about the Upplands that winter; because it had been the custom of the former kings to do so every third winter. So he began his progress in fall from Borg.¹ First, the king journeyed to Vingulmork and ordered his progress so as to have himself entertained close to the Forest Settlements, and summoned all inhabitants to meet him, and most particularly those who lived farthest from the main centers. He investigated how Christianity was being kept, and when he considered that there was need of improvement, he taught them the right faith. And he laid such stress on it that if he found anyone who did not want to abandon heathendom, he drove him out of the land. Some he had maimed, having their hands or feet lopped off or their eyes gouged out, others he had hanged or beheaded, but left no one unchastised who refused to serve God. And thus he proceeded in all that district. Always he punished both the mighty and the humble. He provided priests for the people, placing these as closely together among the settlements as he thought best. In this way he proceeded about the entire district. He had about him three hundred [360] armed men when he entered the District of Raumaríki. Soon he found that the practice of Christianity became less the farther he proceeded into the interior of the country. Yet he persisted in the same fashion, converting all the people to the right faith and chastising severely those who refused to obey his commands.

Chapter 74. The Kings of Uppland Take Counsel Together

Now when this was reported to the king who then ruled over the Province of Raumaríki, it seemed to him that a difficult situation was arising; for every day there came to him many, both men of importance and lowly folk, who complained about this. The king bethought himself of journeying to Heithmork to meet King Hrørek, because he was considered the wisest of the kings then ruling there. And after discussing this matter between them, they agreed on sending word north to King Guthröth in the Dales,¹ as well as to Hathaland and the king who ruled there, bidding them to come to Heithmork and have a meeting with them. They did not delay this, and the five kings met in Heithmork at a place called Hringisakr.² The fifth of them was Hring, the brother of Hrørek. The kings first of all talked about this in private. The one from Raumaríki was the first to speak, and he told about the proceedings of Óláf the Stout and the trouble he was causing, executing some and maiming others, driving some out of the land and mulcting all who opposed him, and that he travelled about the country with an army and not with the force the laws permitted. He also told them that he had fled there from these hostilities, and that many other men of influence had fled from their rightful possessions in Raumaríki. “But though we now are closest to that trouble, it will not be so long before you will be exposed to the same thing, and therefore it is wisest that we discuss, all of us, what is to be done.”

After he had concluded, the kings turned to Hrørek for his opinion. He spoke as follows: “Now that has come to pass which I suspected would happen when we met in Hathaland and you all were intent on raising Óláf up above all of us, and that is, that he would prove hard for us to manage as soon as he had achieved sole power in the land. Now there are two alternatives to choose from: either we all go to him and let him have all the say in the matter—and that would seem to me best for us; or else we rise up against him before he proceeds thus further throughout the land. Because even if he has some three or four hundred men about him, that is not too great a force for us to cope with if we all agree on one plan. However, most often men are less successful, when several of them are equally powerful than one who is uncontested leader of his force; and therefore it is my advice not to risk pitting our luck against that of Óláf Haraldsson.”

After him the other kings spoke their minds, some advising against, and some urging [that they make head against King Óláf], and they came to no decision, holding that either course had disadvantages. Then Guthröth, the king of Guthbrands Dale, spoke up as follows: “It seems strange to me that you cannot

come to a decision in this business, thoroughly afraid of Óláf as you are, five kings, and no one of us of less high birth than Óláf. A short while ago we aided him in his fight against Earl Svein, and it is with our support that he has possessed himself of this country. But if he now begrudges each of us the little power we have had hitherto, and tyrannizes and oppresses us, then I will say for my part that I shall seek to avoid becoming thrall to this king; and I call that one of you not to be a man who is afraid to cut him off if he ventures into our power here in Heithmork, because that I can tell you: we never shall be free men while Óláf is alive.”

And after this incitation they all inclined to his counsel. Thereupon Hrørek said, “If we follow this plan it appears necessary that we make our alliance so strong that no one breaks faith with the other. I suppose that you mean to attack Óláf when he comes here to Heithmork for a meeting which was agreed upon. In that case I will not place any confidence in you if some of you at that time are north in the Dales and others, somewhere in Heithmork. If this plan is agreed upon by us, then I want all of us to stay together day and night till it is carried out.”

The kings agreed to this, and they kept together. They had a banquet prepared for them at Hringisakr, and there they drank in turns, but had spies out in Raumaríki, in such fashion that they had some leave when others returned, so that they were informed, day and night, of Óláf’s movements and of how many men he had.

King Óláf rode to visitations throughout Raumaríki in the same manner as was said above. But whenever there were not sufficient means in a place to entertain so many men, he ordered the farmers there to add to the provisions so as to prolong the visitations wherever he considered it necessary to stay a longer time; but in some places he stayed a shorter time than, planned, and so his progress was faster, up to Lake Mjors, than was intended.

Now when the kings had confirmed their plan between them, they sent messengers and summoned landed-men and farmers from all districts to meet with them. And when they arrived, the kings met them in private, revealing to them their plans and agreeing on a day for coming together to execute them. On that day each of the kings was to bring three hundred [360] men. Then they let the landed-men go back in order to gather their troops and meet with the kings on the day agreed upon. This plan suited most of the men; still, as the saying goes, everyone has a friend even among his enemies.

Chapter 75. King Óláf Captures the Uppland Kings

At this meeting there was also Ketil from Hringuness. When he came home in the evening, he ate supper, then he and his housecarls dressed and went down to the lake where there was the skiff which King Óláf had given him. They launched the ship—all they required was in the boathouse—took to the oars, and rowed out into the lake. Ketil had with him forty men, all well armed. Early the next morning they arrived at the end of the lake. Then Ketil went on, together with twenty men, leaving the others to guard the boat. King Óláf was at that time at Eith¹ in upper Raumaríki. Ketil arrived there when the king was leaving church after matins were sung. He received Ketil right well. Ketil said he must speak with the king immediately, so the two talked together. Thereupon Ketil told the king what were the kings' plans and all their intentions which he had got to know for certain.

As soon as the king had learned this, he called his men together, despatching some into the settlements and bidding them to gather and bring up to him riding horses. Others, he sent to the lake to collect all the rowboats they could get hold of and have them ready for him. Then he went to church and had mass sung for himself, then sat down to table right away. And when he had eaten he got himself ready in all haste and proceeded to the lake. Then he himself boarded the skiff, together with as many as the skiff could hold, and all the others got into whatever boats were there. When evening wore on they set out from land, in a perfect calm, and rowed up the lake. The king had nearly four hundred [480] men with him. Before dawn he arrived at Hringisakr. The watchmen were unaware of the approach of the troops until they stood before the buildings. Ketil and his men knew exactly in which quarters the kings slept. All these the king had surrounded and watched so that no one could escape, and then waited for daylight. The kings had no men to defend them. They were all taken prisoner and brought before the king.

King Hrœrek was a shrewd and determined man, so King Óláf did not think he could be trusted even if he came to some agreement with him. He had him blinded in both eyes and had him with him, but ordered the tongue of Guthröth, the king of Guthbrands Dale, cut out. Hring and two others he made swear him oaths to leave Norway and never return. As for landed-men or farmers guilty of this treachery, some he drove out of the country, some he had maimed, and with some he made his peace. Of these events speaks Óttar the Black:

handed out just sentence
on churlish landed chieftains
charged with treachery 'gainst thee.
For foul treason, folk-king,
fitting reward thou gavest
to Heithmork heathen thanes who
heinously betrayed thee.

249. Out hast, arrow-storms' fast (60.)
urger, driven—no wise
could they match thy might—the
mainsworn thanes from Norway.
Fled then from thee, as is
full well known, all chieftains.
The tattling tongue of him you
trimmed then who dwelled northmost.

250. Now you govern—God did (61.)
give you, king, great victory—
lands which lieges five had
lately ruled between them.
Broad is, east to Eith,² your
ancestral land. Never
war-play-urger under
welkin ruled a larger.

Then King Ólaf subdued to his sway the lands these five kings had had, and took hostages from landed-men and farmers, and money, in the place of entertainment, from the Dales to the north and far and wide in Heithmork, then returned to Raumaríki and from there west to Hathaland. That winter Sigurth Sýr, his stepfather passed away. Then King Ólaf returned to Hringaríki, where his mother Ásta prepared a great banquet to greet him. After that Ólaf was sole king in Norway.

Chapter 76. King Óláf Tests His Young Half-Brothers

We are told that when King Óláf was at this banquet, his mother Ásta brought forward her children to show to him. The king set on one knee his brother Guthorm, and on the other, his other brother, Hálfðan. The king looked at the boys, frowning on them, and showing an angry countenance. Then the boys whimpered. Thereupon Ásta led up to him her youngest son, called Harald. He was three years old then. The king frowned down on him. But he faced him [fearlessly]. Then the king took the boy by his hair and tugged it. The boy grabbed the king's mustache and twitched it. Then the king said, "You are likely to be vindictive when you grow up, kinsman."

Another day the king, accompanied by his mother, was walking about the estate. They approached a certain pond, and there were the boys, Guthorm and Hálfðan, her sons, engaged in play. They had made big farmhouses and barns, with many cattle and sheep, and played with them. Not far from there at a muddy bend of the pond, there sat Harald and played with chips of wood, and had many of them floating on the water. The king asked him what they were. He replied they were his warships. Then the king laughed and said, "It may well be, kinsman, that the time will come when you will be in command of ships."

Then the king called Hálfðan and Guthorm to come to him. He asked Guthorm, "What would you most like to have, kinsman?"

"Fields," he replied.

The king said, "How large a field would you like to have?"

He answered, "I would like to have this whole point of land sown with grain every summer." There were ten farms on it.

The king answered, "A great deal of grain might be grown there." Then he asked Hálfðan what he would most like to have.

"Cows," he replied.

The king asked, "How many cows would you like to own?"

Hálfðan replied, "So many that when they were watered they would stand thickly around the whole pond."

The king answered, "You both want to own big farms, just like your father." Then the king asked Harald: "And what would you most like to have?"

"Housecarls," he replied.

The king asked, "And how many?"

“So many that they would eat up all of my brother Hálfdan’s cows at a single meal.”

The king laughed and said to Ásta, “In him you are likely to bring up a king, mother.” We are not told what else they said.

Chapter 77. Of the Divisions of Sweden and Their Laws

At the time when heathendom still prevailed in Sweden, it was an old custom there that the main sacrifices were held at Uppsala in the month of Góí [15th of February till the 15th of March]. Sacrifices were to be made at that time for peace and victory for the king, and people from all over Sweden were to resort there. At that place and time also was to be the assembly of all Swedes, and there was also a market and a fair which lasted a week. Now when Christianity was introduced, the general assembly and the market were still held there. But at present, when Christianity is general in Sweden and the kings have ceased residing at Uppsala, the market has been shifted to meet at Candlemas [February 2nd]; and thus has it been ever since, but now it lasts only three days. The general assembly of the Swedes is there, and they resort to it from all over the land.

Sweden is divided into many parts. One part is West Gautland, Vermaland, the Forest Districts, and contiguous areas. That is so large a dominion that under the bishop presiding over it there are eleven hundred churches. Another part of the country is East Gautland, which contains another bishopric. With it go the islands of Gotland and Eyland, and all together that constitutes a much larger bishopric. In Sweden proper there is a province called Suthrmanland which forms one bishopric. Then there is Vestmannaland, also called Fjathryndaland, which forms one bishopric. A third part of Sweden [proper] is called Tíundaland; a fourth, Áttundaland; a fifth, Sjáland and the region contiguous to it in the east along the sea. Tíundaland is the best and most populous district in Sweden [proper], and there is the residence of the king and also the seat of the archbishop, as is the “Uppsala treasure,” as the Swedes call the possessions of the Swedish king.

Every part of the country has its assembly and its own laws about many things. In every legal district there is a lawspeaker, and he has the greatest power among the farmers, because whatever he decides to be the law stands. And whenever the king or an earl or bishop travel about the country and hold an assembly with the farmers, then the lawspeaker makes answer for them, and they all go by him in such fashion that even the most powerful chieftains hardly dare to come to their meetings unless the farmers and their lawspeaker permit them. But whenever there is a conflict in their laws, then the Uppsala laws prevail; and all the other lawspeakers have a lower rank than the one who functions for Tíundaland.

Chapter 78. Earl Rognvald Discusses Plans with Princess Ingigerth

At that time there lived in Tíundaland the lawspeaker called Thorgný. And his father's name was Thorgný Thorgnýsson. His forefathers had been lawspeakers in Tíundaland during the lives of many kings. Thorgný was an old man at that time. He had a large retinue about him. He was called the wisest man in all Sweden. He was a kinsman of Earl Rognvald and the latter's foster father.

Now it behooves us to tell about the men who arrived at the court of Earl Rognvald, sent west by Princess Ingigerth and Hjalti. They related their message to Earl Rognvald and Ingibjorg, his wife, and told them that the princess had often brought up before the king of Sweden the matter of reconciliation between him and King Ólaf the Stout, and that she was a great friend of King Ólaf, but that the Swedish king became furious whenever she mentioned King Ólaf, and that as matters stood she could see no hope of reconciliation between the two. The earl told Bjorn what information had come to him from the east; but Bjorn insisted that he would not turn back before having met the king of Sweden, and said that the earl had promised to go with him to the court of the Swedish king.

Now the winter wore on, and right after Yule the earl made ready for the journey, accompanied by sixty men, with Bjorn and his companions among them. The earl journeyed east all the way to Sweden [proper], and as he got into that country, he despatched his men ahead of him to Uppsala with word from him to Princess Ingigerth that she should come out to Ullarokr¹ to meet him. She had great estates there. And when this message came to the princess, she did not delay but made ready to travel with a great retinue, with Hjalti among them. But before his departure he went into the presence of King Ólaf and spoke as follows: "All hail to thee, king! Truth to say, I have not anywhere seen such splendor as surrounds you here. I shall tell about that wherever I come later. Sire, I pray that you be my friend."

The king answered, "Why do you seem so eager to be off? Where are you bound?"

Hjalti answered, "I shall ride to Ullarokr in company with your daughter Ingigerth."

The king said, "Fare you well, then. You are a wise and well-mannered man, well-trained to be among chieftains." Thereupon Hjalti departed.

Princess Ingigerth rode to her estate in Ullarokr and there had a great banquet prepared to welcome the earl, and when he arrived there he was received graciously. He remained there several days, during which time the princess and

he discussed many matters, and especially the relation between the king of Sweden and the king of Norway. She told the earl that it seemed unlikely to her that a reconciliation could be brought about. Thereupon the earl said, "What would you say, kinswoman, if Óláf, the king of Norway, asked for your hand? It would seem to me to be an effective way to bring about such reconciliation if an alliance by marriage between the kings took place; but I don't care to proceed in this matter if I know it is against your wishes."

She replied, "My father will most likely look out for me [in selecting a spouse]; but among all my other kinsfolk I would most gladly follow your advice in matters of importance. Now, how advisable would you consider [such a marriage]?" The earl encouraged her strongly and enumerated a great many important considerations that spoke for King Óláf, and told her many particulars about the events which had taken place recently, when King Óláf had captured five kings in one morning and deprived them all of their possessions, adding them to his dominions. They discussed this for a long time and came to a perfect agreement. Thereupon the earl made ready to depart, and Hjalti travelled with him.

Chapter 79. Thorgný the Lawspeaker Promises to Help Earl Rognvald

One day at evening time Earl Rognvald arrived at the estate of Thorgný the lawspeaker. That was a large and stately establishment. A great many men were outside [in the courtyard]. They made the earl [and his company] welcome and took care of their horses and their baggage. Then the earl entered the living room. There were a great many people inside. An old man sat in the high-seat. Bjorn and his fellows had never seen so large a man. His beard was so long that it came down to his knees and spread over his whole chest. He was handsome and looked distinguished. The earl approached and greeted him. Thorgný gave him a friendly welcome and invited him to the seat he usually occupied; so the earl seated himself on the opposite side of the table, facing Thorgný. They remained there several days before the earl broached his business.¹ He requested Thorgný to go to his conference room with him. Bjorn and his companions went with the earl.

Then the earl began and related how Óláf, the king of Norway, had sent his men east to conclude a peace, and he dwelled long on what difficulties there had been for the West Gautar in the hostilities between them and Norway. He told also about Óláf, the king of Norway, having sent emissaries to him—these were the men—and he had promised them to accompany them to the court of the king of Sweden. He further said that the Swedish king was so exercised about the matter that he would not allow anyone to bring it up. “Now the fact is, foster father,” said the earl, “that I cannot manage this business without help. For this reason I have come to see you, and from you I expect good counsel and your aid.”

Now when the earl had done speaking, Thorgný was silent for a while. But when he spoke he said this: “You behave strangely. You are eager to have princely rank, but as soon as you run into any difficulty you do not know how to help yourself and have no forethought. Why did you not consider, before promising to go on this expedition, that you had not the power to oppose King Óláf? It would seem to me not less honorable to be a farmer and be free to say what one pleases, even to the king’s face. Now I shall attend the Uppsala Assembly and support you so that you may speak to the king without fear and say what you please.” The earl thanked him for this promise. He dwelled with Thorgný until both rode to the Uppsala Assembly. A huge multitude was there. King Óláf also was there with his retinue.

Chapter 80. Thorgný Compels the King of Sweden to Come to Terms

The first day that the assembly met, King Ólaf sat on his throne, with his retinue about him. On the other side of the assembly there sat Earl Rognvald and Thorgný, and in front of them, the earl's followers and the housecarls of Thorgný, and behind him and all around in a circle stood the multitude of farmers. Some of them occupied rising ground and hills to listen to the proceedings from there.



Thorgný the Lawspeaker at the Uppsala Assembly.

Now when the communications from the king had been made known, as was the custom at assemblies, and this part of the proceedings was finished, then Bjorn the Marshal stood up by the seat of the earl and said aloud, "King Óláf sent me here for the purpose of offering to the king of Sweden peace and that boundary which has from of old been between Norway and Sweden." He spoke so loud that the Swedish king could hear him well. Now when the king of Sweden heard Bjorn mention King Óláf, he thought that this man was dealing with some business of his [the king's]; but when he heard him speak of peace and the boundary between Sweden and Norway, then he understood from which side the wind blew. Then he jumped up and shouted that that man should hold his peace and that such talk was of no use.

Thereupon Bjorn sat down. But when silence was restored, the earl got up to speak. He told about the message of Óláf the Stout and his offer to make peace with Óláf, the king of Sweden, and also that the West Gautar urged King Óláf to conclude a peace with the Norwegians. He mentioned what difficulties the West Gautar had in having to do without all those commodities from Norway which they required to sustain themselves; also that they were exposed to the attacks and forays of the Norwegians whenever the king of Norway gathered troops to make war on them. The earl also mentioned that Óláf, the king of Norway had sent ambassadors to them for the purpose of asking for the hand of Ingigerth, his daughter.

When the earl had ceased speaking, the king of Sweden arose. He was altogether set against making peace, and reproached the earl bitterly and harshly for being so bold as to come to any agreements and make peace with that fat man and to become his friend. He called him guilty of high treason against himself and said he deserved to be driven from his dominions. He said that all this resulted from the promptings of his wife Ingibjorg and that it was the worst possible counsel he could have gotten from the evil desires of such a wife. He spoke long and harshly, again referring in hostile fashion to Óláf the Stout.

When he sat down, there was at first silence. Then arose Thorgrný. And when he arose, all farmers arose who had been seated before, and those who had been standing in other places crowded forward and wanted to hear what Thorgrný had to say. At first there was much noise of the multitude and their weapons. But when silence was restored, Thorgrný spoke as follows:

"Different is now the disposition of the Swedish kings from what it was before. Thorgrný, my father's father, remembered Eirík Emundarson, king in Uppsala, and related this about him that when he was in his best years he had a

levy every summer and proceeded to various lands, subjecting to his sway Finnland and Kirjálaland, Eistland and Kurland¹ and wide reaches of other lands in the east. And one may still see the fortifications and other great works which he made [there]; and he was not so haughty that he did not listen to men who had important business to discuss with him. Thorgný, my father, was a long time with King Bjorn, and he knew his way of dealing with men. And while Bjorn lived, his dominion flourished and in nowise decreased. His friends found him easy to deal with. I myself can remember King Eirík the Victorious, for I was with him in many warlike expeditions. He increased the dominion of the Swedes and defended it valiantly. It was easy to approach him with advice. But the king whom we now have lets no one presume to talk to him except about what he himself wants done; and on that alone he is intent, but lets lands tributary to him defect from him through his lack of energy and enterprise. He has the ambition to keep the dominion of Norway in his power which no other Swedish king ever coveted before, and that causes trouble to many. Now it is the will of us farmers that you make peace with Óláf the Stout, the king of Norway, and give him your daughter Ingigerth in marriage. Now if you intend to regain those lands in the east which your kinsmen and forbears have possessed there, then we shall all follow your leadership to do so. But if you will not do as we say, we shall set upon you and kill you, and not tolerate from you lawlessness and hostility. That is what our forbears did: at the Múlathing² they plunged five kings into a well because they were swelled up with the same arrogance as you show against us. Say now right quickly what you decide to do.

Thereupon the people clashed their weapons together and made a great din [in approval of Thorgný's speech]. Then the king arose and said that he would follow the will of the farmers in all matters, that all Swedish kings had done so and let the farmers take counsel with them in all they wished. Then the murmuring of the farmers stopped.

Thereupon the chieftains [present], the king, the earl, and Thorgný conferred together and concluded peace and came to an agreement, on the part of the Swedish king, on the terms suggested by the king of Norway. At the same assembly it was decided that Ingigerth, the daughter of King Óláf, was to marry King Óláf Haraldsson. The king left it to the earl to arrange for the betrothal, giving him complete charge of the marriage arrangements, and they parted at the assembly after settling matters in such fashion.

When the earl departed for home, he met with Princess Ingigerth and they talked together about this matter. She sent to King Óláf a gown of costly material much embroidered with gold and having silken ribbons. The earl

journeyed back to Gautland, together with Bjorn. Bjorn remained there only a short while before returning to Norway with his company. And when he rejoined King Ólaf and told him of the outcome of his mission, the king expressed his great gratitude to him for his undertaking that journey and said that Bjorn indeed had been fortunate to accomplish his mission in such a state of hostilities.

Chapter 81. Hrærek Plots to Kill King Ólaf

1018 As spring approached, King Ólaf travelled down to the sea, had his ships made ready, summoned his forces, and at the beginning of spring proceeded along the Vík coast all the way to Cape Lithandisness, and from there to Horthaland. He sent word to his landedmen, calling upon all the most powerful men in the districts to journey with him, and preparing his expedition in the most sumptuous fashion, to meet his betrothed. The celebration of his marriage was to be in fall, and in the east, at the boundary by the Gaut Elf River.

King Ólaf had with him blind King Hrærek. When his wounds were healed, King Ólaf got two men to wait on him and had him sit in the high-seat by his side. He maintained him as to food and clothes in no wise worse than he had maintained himself before. Hrærek was taciturn and answered gruffly and curtly when spoken to. It was his custom to let his page lead him about every day away from people. He beat the page, and when he ran away from him, he told King Ólaf that this youth refused to serve him. Then King Ólaf changed the servants, but everything went as before, that no servants would stay with King Hrærek.

Then King Ólaf got a man called Svein to wait on Hrærek and watch him. He was a kinsman of King Hrærek and before had been one of his followers. Hrærek persisted in his crabbedness and solitary walking. But whenever he and this Svein were by themselves, Hrærek was cheerful and talkative. At such times he called to mind many things from earlier days and what had happened when he was still king and recalled his earlier life and also, who had changed all that and deprived him of his power and happiness and made him a beggar. "But this seems to me the hardest of all to bear," said he, "that you and other kinsmen of mine who gave promise to be manly fellows, now are such degenerates as not to care to avenge the disgrace that has been brought on our kin." And such lamentations he often indulged in. Svein replied that they had to deal with men of very great power, whereas they themselves had but little. Hrærek said, "What is the use of my living so long, in disgrace and mutilated; except for the possibility that I, a blind man, might avenge myself on those who overcame me when I was asleep. Luck favoring, we may kill Ólaf the Stout. He fears not for his life now. I shall devise a plan, and I would not hesitate to put my hands to use if I could; but that I cannot because of my blindness. And for that reason you must fall upon him. But I predict for certain that no sooner is Ólaf killed than his kingdom will fall into the hands of his enemies. And then it may be that I become king, and then you shall be my earl." And so persuasive was he that

Svein consented to follow this evil advice.

The plan was that when the king made ready to attend evening mass, Svein would stand outside in the gallery [of the hall] with a naked short sword under his cloak. But when the king came out of the hall he walked faster than Svein had expected and he looked the king in the face. Then he grew pale as a sheet, and his hands dropped. The king perceived his fright and said, "How now, Svein? Would you betray me?" Svein threw off his cloak, cast away the sword, and fell at the king's feet and said, "All is in God's power and yours, sire."

The king bade his men seize Svein and put him in irons. Then the king had Hrœrek's seat moved to the other dais.¹ To Svein he gave his life and exiled him. Then the king assigned Hrœrek to other lodgings to sleep in than those he used himself. Many of the king's retinue slept in the same quarters as he did. He got two of them to be with Hrœrek day and night, men who had followed King Óláf for a long time and of whose fidelity he had proof. We are not told that they were men of high birth. King Hrœrek alternately kept his silence for many days so that no one got a word out of him, and then again he was so merry and of good cheer that these men found entertainment in everything he said. At other times he spoke much but uttered only evil. Also, sometimes he drank everyone under the table so that all near him were helpless; but most often he himself drank but little. King Óláf had given him plenty of money for his subsistence. Often before going to sleep in his lodgings he had several small kegs of mead brought in and treated all the men who slept there, and thus became popular with them.

Chapter 82. Finn the Little Joins the Men Guarding Hrørek

There was a man called Finn the Little, of Uppland origin, though some say he was Finnish. He was of unusually small stature, but extraordinarily fleet so that no horse could overtake him. He was also a fast runner on skis and an excellent shot. He had long been in the service of King Hrørek and had often gone on errands for him that required fidelity. He knew all paths in Uppland and also was acquainted with many men of influence there. Now when King Hrørek was put under guard of a few men, Finn joined their company and most often associated himself with valets and men servants; and every time he could, he went to serve King Hrørek and frequently spoke with him. But the king did not care to talk to him for any length of time in order not to arouse suspicion. But as spring wore on and the king and his men journeyed down to the Vík District, Finn disappeared from the troops for some days. Then he returned again and stayed with them for a while. And so it went often, and no attention was paid to it because there were many hangers-on among the troops.

Chapter 83. Hrœrek's Escape is Detected by Sigvat

1018 King Óláf arrived at Túnsberg before Easter and resided there a long time during the spring. Many merchant ships came to the town, both Saxons, Danes, and men from Vík in the east and from the northern parts of the land. There was a great multitude there. Harvests had been good that year and there were many drinking bouts.

One evening King Hrœrek had come to his quarters very late. He had drunk a great deal and so was very merry. Then Finn the Little came there with a keg of mead spiced with herbs and of the strongest kind. Then Hrœrek gave drinks to all who were in the room until all fell asleep in their bunks. Finn had gone his way. A light burned in the place. Then Hrœrek roused the men who used to follow him, saying he wanted to relieve himself. They took a lantern with them as it was pitch dark outside. There was a large privy in the yard built on posts, and there were stairs up to the door. Now when Hrœrek and the men sat there they heard a voice call out, "Cut down the blackguard!" Then they heard a crash and a thump as though something fell.

King Hrœrek said, "Those fellows must be dead drunk to be fighting each other. Go quickly and separate them." They hurried and ran out. But when they got on the stairs the one coming down last was cut down first, but both were killed. It was King Hrœrek's men who were there, led by Sigurth Hít, his standard bearer, with eleven others, and Finn the Little among them. They dragged the bodies up between the houses and took hold of the king and led him along. They jumped into a skiff they had brought with them and rowed away.

The skald Sigvat slept in the lodgings of King Óláf. He and his page got up in the night and went out to the large privy. But when they were about to return, coming down the stairs, Sigvat slipped and fell on his knee. In so doing he put out his hands and felt something wet on them. He said, "I am thinking that the king has given us so much to drink this evening that we are unsteady on our legs," and he laughed. But when they got back to their lodging where there was a light the page asked Sigvat, "Have you skinned yourself, or why are you bloody all over?"

He replied, "No, I did not skin myself, but this may signify that something has happened here." Then he roused Thórth Fólason, the king's banner bearer, who was his bedfellow. Both went out with a lantern, and soon found the blood. They looked further and soon discovered the corpses and recognized them. They also saw a big tree-stump with big gashes in it. Afterwards they understood that this was done as a ruse to lure the slain men out

was done as a ruse to take the slain men out.

Sigvat and Thóρθ agreed between them that it was important that the king be informed as soon as possible about this. They sent a page at once to the lodgings occupied by King Hrørek. There, all men were asleep, but the king was gone. He roused the men in the room and told them what had happened. They got up and right away came down into the yard where the bodies lay. But although they understood the importance of King Ólaf's being at once informed of what had happened, no one dared to wake him.

Then Sigvat said to Thóρθ, "Which would you rather, comrade, wake the king or tell him what has happened."

Thóρθ replied, "For no consideration would I dare to wake him, but I shall tell him what happened."

Then Sigvat said, "There is much left of the night, and it is well possible that before daybreak Hrørek has found him a hiding place so that he may not easily be located later. But they are not likely to have gotten far, because the bodies are still warm. Let not that shame befall us that we don't let the king know about this foul play. You, Thóρθ, go up into his lodgings and wait for me there."

Then Sigvat went to the church, roused the verger, and bade him ring the bell for the souls of the king's men who had been killed and mentioned their names. The verger did as he was told. But at this tolling the king awoke and sat up. He asked if it was time for matins. Thóρθ made answer, "The bells toll for something worse. Dreadful things have occurred: King Hrørek has disappeared, and your two followers have been killed." The king then inquired into the particulars of what had happened, and Thóρθ told him all he knew.

Then the king got up and had the trumpet blown for a gathering of his retinue. And when all were assembled, the king appointed men to go out in every direction from the town and look for Hrørek on sea or land. Thórir the Long took a skiff and set out with thirty men, and when dawn came they saw two small skiffs in front of them. But when they saw each other they rowed with all their might. King Hrørek was aboard [one of the skiffs] with thirty men. And when the king's men caught up with them, Hrørek's crew turned in toward land and all jumped ashore except the king. He seated himself in the stern and bade them farewell and well met again! Thereupon Thórir and his crew made for the land. Then Finn the Little shot an arrow, and it struck Thórir in the middle and killed him. Sigurth's crew escaped into the woods, but Thórir's men took his body and also King Hrørek, and brought both back to Túnsberg. Thereafter King Ólaf himself guarded King Hrørek. He had him carefully watched, taking great precautions against any treachery of his. He had men guarding him day and

night. King Hrørek was as merry as could be, so no one could detect that he was not well pleased with everything.

Chapter 84. Hrœrek Attempts King Ólaf's Life in Church

1018 On Ascension Day [May 15th] King Ólaf went to high mass. The bishop went in procession around the church, leading the king, and when they re-entered the church, the bishop led the king to his seat on the north side of the choir. Next to him sat King Hrœrek, as he was accustomed to. He held his outer garment in front of his face; and when King Ólaf had seated himself, King Hrœrek laid his hand on his shoulder and pressed it. Then he said, "You are wearing a garment of costly material now, kinsman."

King Ólaf replied, "There is a great festival today to remind us that Jesus Christ ascended to heaven [on this day]."

King Hrœrek answered, "I do not comprehend, and I cannot make up my mind about what you say of Christ. Much of what you say seems to me rather incredible. Yet many a strange thing has happened in the olden times."

Now when the mass began, King Ólaf arose and held up his hands over his head, bowing to the altar, when his outer garment slid from his shoulders. Then King Hrœrek started up quickly and briskly and thrust at King Ólaf with a dagger of the kind which is called *ryting*. The blow pierced the upper garment by his shoulders since the king had bent forward. The clothes were slashed a good deal, but the king was not wounded. Now when King Ólaf had perceived Hrœrek's lunge at him, he leapt forward onto the floor. King Hrœrek again thrust at him with his dirk. He missed him and called out, "Flee you now, Ólaf the Stout, before me, the blind man?" The king bade his men take him and lead him out of the church, and that was done.

After this occurrence people urged King Ólaf to have Hrœrek killed—"It is," they said, "altogether too great a trial of your luck, sire, to have him by you and spare him, whatever wickedness he perpetrates; and he is bent upon it day and night to take your life. And if you send him off, we don't know the man capable of watching him so he won't escape. But if he does get away, he is bound to raise a force against you and do much harm."

The king made this answer, "True it is that many a man has suffered death for fewer misdeeds than Hrœrek; but I am unwilling to ruin the victory I gained over the kings of the Upplands, the time I captured five in one morning and so managed to gain all their kingdoms without having to deprive any one of them of life, because they all were kinsmen of mine. Still, I wonder if Hrœrek will not put me to the necessity of having him killed." The reason Hrœrek had laid his hand on the shoulder of King Ólaf was to find out whether he wore his mail coat.

Chapter 85. Thórarin Loses His Wager with the King

There was a certain man called Thórarin Nefjólfsón. He was an Icelander whose kin lived in the northern quarter of the land. He was not of high birth, but he had a keen mind and was ready of speech. He was not afraid to speak frankly to men of princely birth. He had been on long journeys as a merchant and had been abroad for a long time. Thórarin was exceedingly ugly, and particularly his limbs. He had big and misshapen hands, but his feet were uglier even by far. At the time when the occurrences told above took place. Thórarin happened to be in Túnsberg. King Ólaf knew him and had spoken to him. He was getting the merchantmen he owned ready for sailing to Iceland in the summer. King Ólaf had invited Thórarin to stay with him for a few days and used to converse with him. Thórarin slept in the king's lodgings.

One morning early the king awoke while other men were still asleep in the lodgings. The sun had just risen, and the room was in broad daylight. The king observed that Thórarin had stuck one of his feet outside of the bed clothes. He looked at the foot for a while. Just then the other men in the lodging awoke.

The king said to Thórarin, "I have been awake for a while, and I have seen a sight which seems to me worth seeing, and that is, a man's foot so ugly that I don't think there is an uglier one here in this town." And he called on others to look at it and see whether they thought so too. And all who looked at it agreed that this was the case.



Thórarin shows the king his ugly feet.

Thórarin understood what it was they talked about and said, “There are few things so unusual that their likes cannot be found, and that is most likely to be true here too.”

The king said, “I rather warrant you that there isn’t an equally ugly foot to be found, and I would even be willing to bet on that.”

Then Thórarin said, “I am ready to wager with you that I can find a foot here in town which is even uglier.”

The king said, “Then let the one of us who is right ask a favor from the other.”

“So let it be,” replied Thórarin. He stuck out his other foot from under the bed clothes, and that one was in no wise prettier than the other. It lacked the big toe. Then Thórarin said, “Look here, sire, at my other foot. That is so much the uglier for lacking a toe. I have won.”

The king replied, “The first foot is the uglier because there are five hideous toes on it, whilst this one has only four. So it is I who has the right to ask a favor of you.”

Thórarin said, “Precious are the king’s words. What would you have me do?”

He answered, “That you take Hrœrek to Greenland and deliver him to Leif Eiríksson.”

Thórarin answered, “I have never been to Greenland.”

The king said, “For a sailor such as you—now is the time for you to sail there if you have never been there before.”

Thórarin was slow at first to answer about this business, but when the king rather insisted, Thórarin did not decline altogether and spoke as follows: “I shall let you, sire, hear the wish I had meant to ask you if I had won the wager. It is that you grant me to be one of your retinue. And if you grant me that, then I would be more bound to be ready to execute what you demand of me.” The king granted him his wish, and so Thórarin became a member of his retinue.

Thereupon Thórarin got his ship ready, and when about to sail, he was given King Hrœrek in his keeping. At parting from King Óláf, Thórarin said, “Now supposing, sire, that, as is not unlikely and often does happen, we do not manage to make Greenland but are driven to Iceland or other lands—how shall I dispose of this king in a manner not to displease you?”

The king replied, “If you come to Iceland, you are to put him in the hands of Guthmund Eyólfsson or of Skapti, the lawspeaker, or else some other chieftain who wishes to have my friendship and my tokens, [assuring him of that]. But if you come to other lands nearer to us, then make sure that Hrœrek never gets to Norway alive; but do that only if there is no other possibility.”

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When Thórarin was ready and there was a favorable breeze, he sailed outside all the skerries and islands, and rounding Cape Lithandisness made for the open sea. He did not soon have a favorable breeze but took good care not to approach the land [in Norway]. He sailed south of Iceland, close enough to have indications of it, and then west around it into the Greenland Sea. Then he had fierce storms and heavy seas, but as the summer wore on he made Iceland about the Breithafjord. Thorgils Arason was the first of the chieftains to meet
1019 them. Thórarin told him about the message and the tokens of friendship from King Óláf which were to be his if he was willing to accommodate King Hrœrek. Thorgils took this in good part and invited King Hrœrek
1020 to stay with him; and he stayed with Thorgils Arason during the winter. However, he did not like it there and asked that Thorgils take him to

Guthmund, saying he thought he had heard that at Guthmund's there was the most sumptuous living in Iceland and that he [really] was sent to him.

1021 Thorgils did as he asked and got men to take him to Guthmund at

Mothruvellir. Guthmund received him favorably because of the message of the king, and he stayed with Guthmund another winter. Then he did not like it there any longer. Thereupon, Guthmund got him lodging at a small farm which is called Kálfskin, and there were few people on that farm. There, Hrørek passed a third winter and said that of all places he had been to, since losing his kingdom, he liked that one best because he was most honored there by all. The summer after, Hrørek contracted a sickness which brought about his death. We are told that he is the only king who is buried in Iceland. Thórarin Nefjólfsson thereafter for a long time engaged in voyages, but once in a while stayed with King Óláf.

Chapter 86. King Konofogor Defeats Earl Einar

The same summer that Thórarin sailed to Iceland with Hrørek, Hjalti Skeggjason also journeyed to Iceland. When they parted King Ólaf saw him on his way with tokens of friendship. During the same summer Eyvind¹⁰¹⁸ Urarhorn went on a viking expedition to the west, and in fall came to the court of Konofogor [Connor], a king of Ireland. Earl Einar of the Orkneys and this king of Ireland encountered each other in the Úlfreksfjord¹ in fall, and there was a great battle. King Konofogor had a much larger force and carried off the victory, and Earl Einar fled on one ship and thus returned to the Orkneys in fall, having lost most of his crew and all the booty they had made. The earl was mighty ill-pleased with the result of his expedition and attributed his defeat to the Norwegians who had been in the battle on the side of the Irish king.

Chapter 87. King Óláf of Sweden Defaults on His Agreement

Now we shall have to resume our story where we left off before, when King Óláf went on his bridal journey to fetch his betrothed, Ingigerth, the daughter of Óláf, king of Sweden. King Óláf [of Norway] had a large and choice following. There were in his company all the chieftains he could lay hold of; and every one of these leaders had a picked body of men chosen both for high birth and accomplishments. That following was appointed admirably, both as to ships, weapons, and clothing. They proceeded east to Konungahella. But when they arrived there, nothing was to be seen of the Swedish king. Nor had any men come on his behalf. King Óláf remained at Konungahella for a long time during the summer and made many inquiries as to what could be learned of the whereabouts of the Swedish king or of his intentions; but no one was able to tell him for certain.



King Óláf's expedition to fetch his bride.

Then he sent messengers to Earl Rognvald in Gautland to find out whether he knew what was in the wind to cause the Swedish king not to come to the meeting agreed upon. The earl said he did not know—"but if I do hear," he said, "I shall at once despatch my messengers to King Óláf and let him know what is at the bottom of this and if there is any other cause for this delay than the press of business as often is the case and may be the reason why the journey of the Swedish king is delayed more than he intended."

Chapter 88. Of the Children of King Óláf of Sweden

Óláf Eiríksson, the king of Sweden, first had a mistress, called Ethla, who was the daughter of an earl of Wendland. Before that, she had been abducted, hence was called the king's handmaid. The names of their children were Emund, Ástríth, Hólmfríth. They had still another son, born on the day before Saint Jacob's Mass. When the boy was to be baptized, the bishop had him called Jákob. That name ill-pleased the Swedes. They said that no Swedish king had borne that name. All of King Óláf's children were handsome and well-endowed. His queen was of an imperious temperament and hated her stepchildren. The king sent his son Emund to Wendland where he was brought up with the kinsfolk on his mother's side. He did not maintain his Christianity for any length of time. Princess Ástríth was fostered in West Gautland on the estate of an excellent man named Egil. She was a beautiful woman, well-spoken, of pleasant manners and modest ways, generous of her substance. And when of age she often was with her father and liked by everybody.

King Óláf [of Sweden] was of an imperious nature and difficult to deal with. He was exceedingly incensed that the people had risen up in a body against him at the Uppsala Assembly and had imposed hard terms on him; and he blamed that most on Earl Rognvald. He did not allow any preparations to be made for the bride's journey as had been agreed upon in the winter, [when it had been decided] that he was to give in marriage his daughter Ingigerth to Óláf the Stout, the king of Norway, and to proceed with her in summer to the boundary of his land. But as time wore on, many people wondered what intentions the king had and whether he would stick to the covenant with the king of Norway or break the agreement and thus also the peace. Many were distressed about this, but no one was so bold as to dare to ask the king about this. But many complained about this to Princess Ingigerth and prayed her to make sure what might be the king's intentions. She replied, "I am unwilling to talk with the king about his business with Óláf the Stout, because there is no love between them. He gave me a cross answer the one time I did plead for Óláf the Stout." All this gave Princess Ingigerth much concern. She was distressed and dejected, and she wondered greatly what might be in the king's mind. She suspected then that he might not want to live up to his agreement with the king of Norway, because people observed he grew furious every time Óláf the Stout was called king.

Chapter 89. King Óláf of Sweden Boasts of His Hunting

Early one day the king rode out to hunt with his hawks and his dogs, and his men along with him. And when they slipped their falcons, the king's hawk in one flight killed two heath cocks, and three in another. The dogs retrieved and brought back every bird that came down. The king spurred his horse after them and himself took the game from them. He boasted much about this and said, "Most of you will have a long way to go before you make a haul like this." They agreed about that and said that no king was likely to have as much luck in the sport as he.

Thereupon the king and his companions rode home in high spirits. The princess was walking outside of her bower and when she saw the king riding into the courtyard she went up to him and greeted him. He returned her greeting, laughing with pleasure, and right away showed her the birds and told her of his hunting. He said, "Do you know of any king who ever made such a catch in so short a time?"

She answered, "That is a good morning's hunt, sire, to have brought down five woodcocks; but a greater catch it was when in one morning Óláf, the king of Norway, caught five kings and took possession of all their lands."

When he heard this he leapt down from his horse and turning to her said, "I want you to know, Ingigerth, that however great your love for that fat man, you shall never marry him nor he you. I shall marry you to some chieftain with whom I can be friends. But I can never be the friend of the man who has robbed me of my dominions and has done me much harm pillaging and killing my subjects." With that they parted, each going his own way.

Chapter 90. King Óláf of Norway Is Advised Not to Avenge Himself

Princess Ingigerth now was certain about what the intentions of King Óláf were, and at once sent messengers to West Gautland to inform Earl Rognvald of what the Swedish king meant to do, that all the agreements with the king of Norway were broken, and that the earl and other men of West Gautland should be on their guard, because hostilities might be expected on the part of the Norwegians. And when the earl heard these tidings he despatched messengers to all parts of his domain, warning people to be on guard in case the Norwegians planned on incursions. Other messengers he despatched to King Óláf the Stout, telling him of what he had learned and informing him that he meant to keep the agreements and friendship with him. He also requested him not to make incursions into his domain.

But when the message reached King Óláf [of Norway], he became very furious, and also distressed, and for some days people could not get a word out of him. When that had passed he called a council of his retinue.

The first one to arise to speak was his marshal, Bjorn, and he related how, the winter before, he had journeyed east to conclude peace, and how Earl Rognvald had made him welcome. He also told how crossly and reluctantly the Swedish king had entered into these negotiations. "And such agreements as were made," he said, "were due more to the numerous following and power of Thorgný and the support of Earl Rognvald than to the goodwill of the Swedish king. And therefore I think we can take it for certain that it is the king who has gone back on the agreement and that the earl is not to be blamed for it. Him we found to be a sincere friend of King Óláf. Now the king desires to know what the chieftains and other retainers think he should do, whether to invade Gautland with the forces we now have and harry there, or whether other counsels are to prevail." He spoke both at length and eloquently.

Thereafter many men of influence expressed their opinions, and at last all agreed that no invasion should be made, for this reason: "Though we have a large force, there are here collected men of importance and might; but for warfare, young men eager to gather wealth and honor are no less well suited. Also, it is the habit of men of weight, when about to engage in battle or warfare, to have with them many men to go ahead of them and protect them, whereas those who have few possessions often give better account of themselves in battle than they who have been brought up in wealth."

Yielding to their arguments the king decided to dismiss the levy. He gave everyone permission to journey home and made known that next summer he

everyone permission to journey home, and made known that next summer he would have a levy from all the land and advance against the king of Sweden to avenge this breach of promise. All were pleased at that. Then King Ólaf journeyed north through Vík and that fall settled in Borg. And there he had brought together all provisions he needed for the winter, and remained there during the winter with a large retinue.

Chapter 91. Sigvat Arranges for King Óláf's Marriage to Ástríth

There were divided opinions about Earl Rognvald. Some said he was a true friend of King Óláf, but others doubted that and thought that [if he wished to] he could have enough influence with the Swedish king to make him keep to his word and agreement with King Óláf the Stout. Sigvat the Skald was a great friend of Earl Rognvald and often touched on that when talking with King Óláf. He offered to visit Earl Rognvald for the king and try to find out what the latter had learned about the Swedish king and see if any agreement could be brought about. The king was pleased with this proposal, because he liked to talk frequently with his confidants about Princess Ingigerth.

Toward the beginning of winter Sigvat the Skald with two companions set out from Borg, travelling east through the Forest Districts to Gautland. And before parting with King Óláf he spoke this verse:¹

251. Hail now, hero; bide thy (62.)
halls within until I
come again to give thee
good news of thy true love.
I pray that, prince—long live thy
praise—that thou mayst keep both
lands, liege-lord, and eke thy
life. My verse is ended.

252. Said is now what to say did, (63.)
sovrán, matter most; though
in my mind are many
more things which concern thee.
God may grant you power,
gladsome lord—such is my
wish—to rule the realm which
rightfully you are born to.

Then they travelled east to Eith² and had some difficulty crossing the river in an oaken boat, and just managed to get to the other bank. Sigvat spoke this verse:

253. I dragged that dory—for we (64.)
dreaded to turn back wet—
all the way to Eithar.

Almost we upset it.
May trolls take that crazy
tiller-horse: there was not
ever seen a sorrier
sea-buck.³ I was lucky.

Then they travelled through the Eithaskóg Forest. Sigvat spoke a verse:

254. Wearily we went our (65.)
way—and that is certain—
through Eithar forest onward,
all of thirteen miles then.
Blisters and sores, I swear, were
seen on the soles of us king’s men.
Fast we fared that day, though
footsore, to our quarters.

Then they journeyed through Gautland and in the evening came to a farm called Hof. There they found the door barred, so they could not enter. The people of the house declared it was “holy” there, so they turned away from there. Sigvat spoke this verse:

255. At dark to Hof we drifted. (66.)
Doors were barred; so outside
stood I, knocking, and stoutly
stuck my nose in, plucky.
Gruffly answer they gave us:
“Get you gone!” And threatened
us all: ’t was heathen-holy.
To hell with all those fellows!

Then he went to another farm. There the woman of the house stood in the doorway and told them they could not come in there, saying that they had the sacrifice to the elves⁴ there. Sigvat spoke this verse:

256. “Wreak his wrath will Óthin, (67.)
wretch,” said a witchlike gammer.
“Keep out,” quoth she, “nor further
come; for we are heathen.”
“Also,” this ancient beldame
added, she who forbade me
foot to set in, the slattern,

“sacred to elves we are making.”

The next evening he came to three farmers, all called Olvir, and they all drove him away. Sigvat spoke this verse:

257. Moreover, now three knavish
namesakes—not much fame they
gained thereby—against me
gruffly turned, the ruffians!
I fear that from their doorsteps
forthwith all the worthless,
flinty fellows hight Olvir
felly will expel us. (68.)

Then they journeyed on, that same evening, and came to a fourth farmer who was reckoned to be the most considerable man in the neighborhood. He too drove them away. Sigvat spoke these verses:

258. To find that flinger then of
finger-gold,⁵ as all called the
fellow forth we sallied,
food seeking and other good things.
Through a door’s chink the boorish
churl but eyed us, surly:
if best you call him—Christ! then
curses on the worst one! (69.)

259. Aye missed we in the east, in
Eith-wood yonder wandering,
the ale that all had drunk at
Ásta’s farm, without asking:
Sakse’s son⁶ we lacked, his
sincere words so winsome:
four times was I turned out,
told I was unwelcome. (70.)

And when they arrived at Earl Rognvald’s, the earl said they [must have] had a toilsome journey. Sigvat spoke these verses:

260. Friends, on our hands had we
a hard task when asked us
the sea-king-of-the-Sognings.⁷ (71.)

“Proceed to the earl in Sweden.”
Ordered us to folk-warder,
word to bear from fjord-land.
Nor have we spared us hardships
heavy, nor moil and toiling.

261. Weary were we from tiring (72.)
ways—the earl I praised e'er—
threading the thick Eith Woods
this way to the feasting.
Nor need you think us thankful,
thrust as we were by blustering
dolts from their doors with scolding,
dastards! on way to your castle.

Rognvald gave Sigvat a gold arm ring. A woman said he at least had some reward [for his journey], with those black eyes of his. Sigvat spoke this verse:

262. This band my bonny Icelandic (73.)
black eyes through the trackless
forest wastes from westward,
wench, led to these benches.
And, o'er steep rocks stepping,
these sturdy feet, unerring
have trod, tender maiden,
till we came to this village.

But when Sigvat returned to King Óláf and stepped into the hall he spoke this verse, looking at the walls:

263. Our king's hall is hung with (74.)
helmets and eke with mailcoats
of hirth-men back from harrying—
hall and eke the wall-posts.
No better found, nor fitter
furnishings than those byrnies,
a king, nor comelier hangings
could find: thy hall is goodly!

Then he told about his journey and spoke this verse:

264. Let your hirth give hearing (75.)
how, wielder-of-power,

out of word-hoard, of hardships
rehearsed are these verses.
From the swan's-road⁸ to Sweden
set I out, and little
sleep I had since, riding
ceaselessly to eastward.

But when he was speaking with the king, he spoke this verse:

265. I clung fast, king, as I (76.)
came at last to famous
Earl Rognvald, to my errands
all, thy words recalling.
In his demesne and manor
many a time with the thane I
held converse: he's beholden
wholly to thee, Óláf.
266. "Thou shalt," said he, "shelt'ring, (77.)
shield them who, wielder-
of-Norway's-power, come near you
anon, sent by Rognvald.
And likewise, belike if,
Lister's-king, to eastward
o'er the main at thy commanding
men shall fare to Rognvald."⁹
267. Thy false friends from elsewhere (78.)
folk-warder, aye spoke of
turning traitor to Norway,
as, trothless, Eirík's kin urged them.
To tell the truth: not well couldst
retain the land from Svein which thou tookst, if so forsook thee
the son of Úlfr,¹⁰ for money!
268. The son of Úlfr, King Óláf, (79.)
said that he was ready
to mediate 'twixt you speedily,
mighty one, with troth plighted:
mayhap to settle matters
if minded and inclined to

forgive and forget, fore'er, all
grievances, thou thieves'-foe.

¹¹ Toward winter the skald Sigvat with two companions left Borg and travelled east through the Forest District and so to Gautland; and on this journey people often shut their door upon them. One evening he came to three farmers, and they all drove him away. Afterwards Sigvat the Skald composed the *Verses on a Journey to the East* about his experiences.

Sigvat the Skald arrived at Rognvald's residence and was hospitably entertained there for a long time. After a while he learned through letters from Princess Ingigerth that emissaries of King Jarizleif¹² from Hólmgarth in the east had come to Ólaf, the king of Sweden, to ask Ingigerth, his daughter, in marriage for Jarizleif; and also, that King Ólaf had taken to that proposal in a most enthusiastic fashion.

It was at this time that Ástríth, daughter of King Ólaf [of Sweden], came to the court of Earl Rognvald. Then a great banquet was made [in her honor]. Sigvat soon became acquainted with the princess. She knew about him and his family, because the skald Óttar, Sigvat's nephew, had long been a favorite of King Ólaf of Sweden. They had many conversations together. Earl Rognvald asked whether King Ólaf of Norway might be inclined to have Ástríth in marriage. "And if he is," he said, "then I wager that for that marriage we will not need the consent of the king of Sweden." And Princess Ástríth was of the same opinion.

Following this, Sigvat and his companions returned and arrived in Borg at the king's court shortly before Yule. Sigvat immediately told King Ólaf the news which he had heard. At first, the king was very dejected when Sigvat told him about King Jarizleif's suit. He said that he had suspected only ill from the Swedish king—"if only we can repay him so he will remember it!"

But as time wore on, the king asked Sigvat much about affairs in Gautland, and Sigvat told him much about the beauty and cleverness of Princess Ástríth and that everybody there said she was in no wise inferior to her sister Ingigerth. The king listened to that with pleasure. Sigvat related to him all the conversations he had had with Ástríth, and the king liked all that very well and observed, "The king of Sweden will hardly imagine that I would dare to marry his daughter without his consent." But they did not talk about this matter to others, though King Ólaf and Skald Sigvat frequently discussed it. The king asked Sigvat particularly what he knew about Earl Rognvald and "how is he disposed toward us?" Sigvat assured him that the earl was a most faithful friend of King Ólaf. Then Sigvat spoke this verse:

of King Ólaf. Then Sigvat spoke this verse:

269. Fast shalt, hero, hold with (80.)
him, and shoulder to shoulder
stand; for to aid thee, always
Earl Rognvald bestirs him,
working for thy welfare,
war-lord, night and day eke.
Thy best friend in the east he's
been, all by the green sea.

1019 After the Yule festival Thórth Skotakoll, the nephew of Skald Sigvat, and one of Sigvat's pages secretly departed from the king's court and journeyed east to Gautland. Both had in the preceding fall journeyed there with Sigvat. And when they arrived at the court of the earl they showed him the tokens Sigvat and he had agreed on when departing. They also produced those tokens which King Ólaf himself had sent the earl in confidence. Thereupon immediately the earl set out, together with Princess Ástríth. They had with them nearly a hundred [120] picked men of the earl's retinue and the sons of influential farmers; and their equipment was most magnificent, both as to weapons, garments, and horses. They rode north to Sarpsborg in Norway, arriving there at Candlemas (February 2).

Chapter 92. King Óláf Celebrates His Marriage with Ástríth

There, King Óláf had made all preparations. The choicest beverages obtainable were held ready, and everything else was of the best. He had also summoned to his court many men of influence from the [surrounding] districts. And when the earl arrived there with his company, the king made him most welcome. They were given roomy and good quarters, with excellent furnishings and with servants and others who saw to it that nothing was lacking which could contribute to the festivities. And when these had lasted several days, the king, the earl, and the princess conferred together, and as a result they came to the decision that Earl Rognvald betrothed Ástríth, the daughter of Óláf, king of Sweden, to Óláf, king of Norway, with the same dowry as had been agreed upon for her sister Ingigerth. And the king was to furnish Ástríth with the same bridal gifts as had been promised her sister Ingigerth. Thereupon the festivities were continued with the marital banquet of King Óláf and Queen Ástríth, celebrated with the greatest pomp; whereupon Earl Rognvald returned to Gautland. At their parting the king presented the earl with great and noble gifts, and this close friendship persisted during the life of both men.

Chapter 93. Princess Ingigerth Marries King Jarizleif

In the following fall the emissaries of King Jarizleif came to Sweden out of Hólmgarth in the east. Their errand was to claim the fulfilment of the agreement made by King Óláf [of Sweden] in the preceding summer to give his daughter Ingigerth in marriage to Jarizleif. She made this answer, “If I am to marry King Jarizleif, then I demand as my bridal gift Aldeigjuborg Castle and the earldom belonging to it.” The emissaries from Gartharíki assented to this on behalf of their king. Then Ingigerth said, “If I am to go east to Gartharíki, then I shall choose a man from Sweden whom I judge most suitable to go with me. I shall also make the condition that there in the east he is to have a rank not lower than here and in particular no fewer rights or a lesser dignity than he has here.” The king as well as the emissaries assented to this. The king pledged himself to do so, and the emissaries likewise. Then the king asked Ingigerth whom in his kingdom she wanted to have go with her. She replied, “It is my kinsman, Earl Rognvald Úlfsson.”

The king answered, “I have decided to repay Earl Rognvald in different coin for the treason against his king, going as he did to Norway with my daughter and giving her as a concubine to that fat man, whom he knew to be our greatest enemy; and for that he shall hang this summer.”

Ingigerth requested her father to keep the pledge he had given her; and she achieved by her entreaties that the king agreed to let Rognvald depart in peace out of Sweden, but not ever to show himself to him or return to Sweden while he, Óláf, was king. Thereupon Ingigerth sent messengers to the earl, informing him of this agreement and appointing a place of meeting with her. And the earl set out straightway for East Gautland, where he procured ships and proceeded with his retinue to where he was to meet Princess Ingigerth. Then they all together journeyed east to Gartharíki in the summer. Then Ingigerth was married to King Jarizleif. Their sons were Valdamar, Vissivald,¹ and Holti the Bold. Queen Ingigerth bestowed on Earl Rognvald the castle of Aldeigjuborg and the earldom belonging to it. Earl Rognvald lived there for a long time. He was a man of great renown. The sons of Earl Rognvald and Ingibjorg were Earls Úlf and Eilíf.

Chapter 94. Earl Emund's Parables

There was a man from Skara called Emund. He was the lawspeaker in West Gautland and a man of great shrewdness and eloquence. He was of noble origin, had many kinsmen, and was very rich. He was considered a guileful person and not to be relied on. He was the most powerful man in West Gautland after the earl had left. Now in the spring, when Earl Rognvald had departed, the
1019 Gautar held an assembly and there they frequently discussed what the king of Sweden might intend [concerning them]. They were informed that he was angry with them for having befriended King Óláf of Norway, rather than be at odds with him. Also, he made accusations against those who had accompanied his daughter Ástríth to Norway. Some were of the opinion that they should seek the support of the king of Norway and offer him their services. Others warned, saying that the West Gautar did not have the power to contend with the Swedes. “But the king of Norway is too far removed,” they said, “because his chief resources are at a great distance from us. It will be wiser for us to send men to the king of Sweden and try to reach some agreement with him. But if we can’t attain that, then we can have recourse to seek the support of the king of Norway.”

Then the farmers requested Emund to go on this mission, and he assented, and with thirty men journeyed till he came to East Gautland. Many of his kinsmen and friends lived there. He was well received there and talked with the wisest men about the trouble they were in. And all were agreed that the way the king behaved toward them was against all law and decency. Thereafter Emund journeyed to Sweden [proper] and there discussed the matter with many men of influence, and they came to the same conclusion. He continued on his journey until one day at evening he arrived in Uppsala. There they took good lodgings and stayed overnight.

The next day Emund sought an audience with the king as he sat at a meeting with a great many men about him. Emund went before him, bowed, and saluted him. The king looked at him, greeted him, and asked him about news.

Emund replied, “The news from us Gautar is of but little importance. But this we consider news that Atti the Fool from Vermaland this winter went up into the forest on his skis and with his bow. Him we consider a great hunter. In the mountains he gathered so many squirrel pelts that he had filled his ski sled with as many as he could drag after him, and then he returned from the woods. Then he saw a squirrel up in a tree. He shot at it but missed it. Then he grew furious. He abandoned the sled and ran after the squirrel. But the squirrel always jumped

to where the woods were thickest, sometimes it went among the roots of the trees, sometimes up into the branches, and then it would sail between the branches to another tree. And when Atti shot at it, the arrow would fly too high or too low; but he never lost sight of that squirrel. He became so intent on this chase that he hunted the squirrel all day long, but never did bag it. And when it began to grow dark he threw himself down on the snow, as he was accustomed to, and lay there during the night. Then there came a snowstorm. Next day Atti went to look for his ski sled. But he never found it again and so returned home empty-handed. This is my news, sire.”

The king said, “Small news this, if there is not more to tell.”

Emund replied, “Something else happened a short time ago which might be called news. It is that Gauti Tófason proceeded down the Gaut Elf River with five warships; and when he lay before the Eikrey Islands, five big Danish merchantmen appeared. Gauti and his men quickly conquered four of the ships without losing a man and gathered a lot of booty; but the fifth ship escaped out to sea and got up sail. Gauti gave chase with one ship and at first began to gain on them. But then the wind got stronger, and the merchant ship then went faster and disappeared out at sea. Then Gauti wanted to return, but a storm came on, and he suffered shipwreck at Hlésey Island, losing all his property and the greater part of his crew. Meanwhile his companions were to wait for him in the Eikrey Islands. Then the Danes came at them with fifteen merchantmen, killed them all, and took all the goods they had gotten before. Thus their greed was repaid.”

The king said, “This is important news and worth telling. But what is your errand here?”

Emund replied, “I come, sire, to seek a solution of the difficulties arising through our laws differing from the Uppsala laws.”

The king asked, “What is it you want to complain about?”

Emund said, “There were two men, of noble family, of equal birth but not equal as to property and disposition. They quarreled about lands, and each did damage to the other, and most he who was the more powerful of the two, until their quarrel was settled and judged in the general assembly. Then he who was the most powerful had to pay a fine. And as a first payment he substituted a gosling for a goose, a pig for a hog, and instead of a mark of burnt gold he paid out half a mark of gold and the other half in clay and mud, besides threatening retribution on him who got this payment for his debt. How would you judge this case, sire?”

The king replied, "Let him pay in full what he was ordered to, and threefold to his king. And if that is not paid within the year he is to leave all his possessions as an outlaw, half his property going to the royal coffers, half to him whom he was to repay."

Emund submitted this decision to all those men there who were of the greatest influence, and referred it to the laws valid at the Uppsala Assembly. Thereupon he saluted the king and went his way. Then others brought their complaints before the king, and he sat till late in the day, adjudicating their affairs. But when he sat down at table he asked what had become of Emund the Lawspeaker. He was told that he was in his lodgings. Then the king said: "Fetch him, he is to be my guest today."

Then delicacies were brought in, and after that there came in jesters with harps and fiddles and other musical instruments, and then drinks were served. The king was in a most cheerful mood and had many eminent men as his guests, and had quite forgotten about Emund. The king drank during the remainder of the day, then slept the night through. But in the morning, when he awoke, he remembered what Emund had spoken of the day before. And when he was clad, he had his advisers summoned. King Ólaf had about him twelve of the wisest men who, together with him, sat in judgment about difficult matters, though that was not easy since the king was ill-pleased if the judgments were not according to justice;¹ and it was useless to contradict him. When they were met, the king spoke and bade Emund the Lawspeaker to be called there. His messenger returned and said, "Sire, Emund the Lawspeaker rode away yesterday as soon as he had eaten."

Then the king said, "Tell me, good chieftains, what was the meaning of the legal question Emund put to me?"

They answered: "Sire, you will probably have found out by yourself if he meant something else than he said."

The king said, "The two men of noble extraction he talked about who had been at odds, one being the more powerful, and each inflicting damage on the other, by them he meant me and Ólaf the Stout."

They replied, "So it is, sire, exactly as you said."

The king said, "A decision was made at the Uppsala Assembly in the matter between us. But what was his meaning when he said that unfair payment was made in giving a gosling for a goose, a pig for a hog, and half clay for gold?"

Arnwith the Blind answered, "My lord, red gold and clay are most unlike, but there is more difference than that between a king and a thrall. You promised

Óláf the Stout your daughter Ingigerth. She is of royal birth in all her kin and of Uppland Swedish lineage, which is noblest of all in the North, for it is descended from the very gods. But Óláf has now married Ástríth; but though she is a king's child, her mother is a servant maid, and Wendish at that. There is a great difference between two kings when one of them is content with such a deal and is grateful for it. Now it is only to be expected that a Norwegian is not the equal of an Uppsala king. Let us all be thankful that this is acceptable, for the gods have for a long time taken much loving care of their favorites though there now be men who are negligent in their belief in them."

They were three brothers: Arnvith the Blind, his eyesight was so poor that he was scarcely able to bear arms, though he was a most valiant man. The second was Thorvith the Stammerer, he could not manage to say two words together, but was an exceedingly bold and determined man. The third was Freyvith the Deaf, he was hard of hearing. They all were powerful and wealthy men, of noble race, wise, and much respected by the king.

Then the king said, "What could be the meaning of what Emund said about Atti the Foolish?" No one gave answer, each looking at the other. The king said, "Come now, say it!"

Then Thorvith the Stammerer said, "*Atti*: quarrelsome, covetous, malicious; *dælskr*: foolish."²

Then the king said, "At whom is this insult aimed?"

Then said Freyvith the Deaf, "Sire, people would speak more plainly if you gave them your permission."

The king said, "Go on then, Freyvith, you have my permission."

Then Freyvith spoke as follows: "My brother Thorvith, who is called the wisest of us, says that all this—*Atti* and quarrelsome, *dælskr* and foolish—refers to one and the same person. He calls him so who is so weary of peace that he covets trumperies, without getting them, while passing up matters of great importance. Now I am to be sure deaf; still so many have spoken out that I can readily perceive that both men of power and commoners are displeased with your not keeping your promise given to the king of Norway and, worse still, your going back on the decision rendered by all the people at the Uppsala Assembly. You will not need to fear either the king of Norway or the king of Denmark, or anyone else, as long as the Swedish army will follow you; but if all the people with one accord turn against you, then we, your friends, can see no help that will avail you."

The king asked, "What was the meaning in this attempt to prevent the daughter from

The king asked, "Who are the leaders in this attempt to wrest the country from me?"

Freyvith made answer, "All Swedes desire to have the old laws and their full rights. Consider, my lord, how many of your chieftains are present here to take counsel with you. I dare say there are six of us here whom you call your counsellors; but all others have ridden and departed into the countryside, there to meet in assembly with the people. And, to tell you the truth, the war-arrows have been cut and sent about all the country, and a criminal court has been summoned. All three of us brothers have been asked to join this movement, but no one of us wants to be called a traitor to his king, for that our father never was."

Then the king said, "What way is there out of this difficulty? I have run into great trouble. Advise me now, good chieftains, how I may keep my kingship and my paternal possessions, for I don't want to fight against all embattled Swedes."

Arnvith the Blind replied, "Sire, it would seem advisable to me that you ride down to Árós³ with all the troops that will follow you and there go aboard your ships and proceed to Lake Mælaren. Then summon the people to have a meeting with you. And do not behave with obstinacy but offer them to abide by the laws and the established rights of the country, and let them stop sending the war-arrows. It probably will not have gone far over the land, because only a short time has passed. Send men whom you trust to meet with the men who have a hand in these doings and see if this discontent can be allayed."

The king said that he would follow that advice. "I wish," he said, "that you three brothers would go on this errand, because I trust you most among my men."

Then Thorvith the Stammerer said, "I shall remain behind, let Jákob [your son] go. That is necessary."

Then Freyvith said, "Let us do as Thorvith says. He does not wish to part with you in this dangerous situation. But Arnvith and I shall go."

King Óláf followed this counsel and proceeded to his ships and steered into Lake Mælaren where he was soon joined by a great multitude. But Freyvith and Arnvith rode to Ullarakr, together with Jákob, the king's son, but concealed the fact that he was along. They soon became aware that the men were rushing to arms and that troops were gathering, and that the farmers were holding meetings day and night. Now when Freyvith and his brother encountered their friends and kinsmen there, they said they would join their troop, and that offer was joyfully accepted. Then they forthwith turned to the brothers for guidance and troops

gathered around them, but all were agreed in saying that they would no longer have Óláf as king over them and that they would not stand his lawlessness and arrogance in not wanting to listen to what anyone said, even though great chieftains told him the truth.

Now when Freyvith saw the indignation of the people he recognized the precariousness of the situation. So he had meetings with the great chieftains of the land and spoke to them in this wise: “It would seem to me that if this important business of deposing Óláf Eiríksson is to go forward, then we men from Uppland Sweden should take the lead. It has always been the custom in this country that what the chieftains of the Uppland Swedes had agreed upon between them, that counsel was adopted by the people in other parts of the country. Our forefathers did not need to accept the advice of the West Gautar as to how the country was to be governed. So now do not let us be such weaklings as to need Emund to tell us what to do. I would that we stand together on that, all of us kinsmen and friends.” All were agreed and considered the point well made. After that all the multitude joined the union agreed on between the chieftains of the Uppland Swedes. It was headed by Freyvith and Arnvith.

But when Emund learned this, he suspected that his plan was not going to be successful. So he had a meeting with the brothers to discuss the matter. Then Freyvith asked Emund, “What think you [about] who is to be king if we put Óláf Eiríksson to death?”

Emund replied, “He who seems to us best fitted, whether he be of chieftainly race or no.”

Freyvith answered, “We Uppland Swedes do not wish that in our days the crown go from the line of the ancestors of our ancient kings while there is such good choice as we have. King Óláf has two sons, and we desire one of them to be king. But there is a great difference between them. The one is born in wedlock and of Swedish race on both sides whereas the other is the son of a servant woman herself half Wendish.”

This opinion was received with loud acclaim, and all wanted Jákob for king. Then Emund said, “You Uppland Swedes have the power to decide, this time; but I will tell you what will happen later, and that is that some of you who now insist on the Swedish crown continuing to go to men of the ancient line, that you will yourselves live to agree to it’s going to a different line,⁴ and that will [indeed] be of more advantage [to our country].”

Thereupon the brothers Freyvith and Arnvith had the king’s son, Jákob, brought before the assembly and had him given the title of king. At the same time the Swedes gave him the name Onund and that name he bore till his death

and the Swedes gave him the name Onund, and that name he bore till his death. At this time he was ten or twelve years old. Then King Onund chose for himself followers and chieftains to have about him, and all of them together had as great a force as he considered needful. Then he gave the assembled farmers leave to return to their homes.

Following this, messengers went between the two kings, after which they arranged to meet personally and concluded an agreement, as follows: Óláf was to be king over the land as long as he lived. Also he was to keep the peace and the agreements made with the king of Norway, as well as with all others who were involved in these affairs. Onund was also to be king and have as large a portion of the land as was agreed upon between father and son, but was to take the part of the farmers if King Óláf engaged in anything the farmers would not stand for.

Then emissaries were sent to Norway and King Óláf with the message that he should come with his fleet to a meeting with the Swedish king at Konungahella and also, that the Swedish king desired to confirm the peace between them. And when King Óláf learned of this message he was, as before, eager to maintain the peace, and so sailed with his fleet to the place agreed upon. The king of Sweden arrived there, and when son-in-law and father-in-law met they confirmed the peace and the agreements between them. Óláf, the king of Sweden, was affable then, and mild tempered.

Thorstein the Learned says that there was a settlement on the Island of Hísing which had alternately belonged to Norway and to Gautland. So the kings agreed between them to draw lots and throw dice for this possession. And he was to have it who threw the highest. Then the Swedish king threw two sixes and said that it was no use for King Óláf to throw. He replied, while shaking the dice in his hand, "There are two sixes still on the dice, and it is a trifling matter for God, my Lord, to have them turn up." He threw them, and two sixes turned up. Thereupon Óláf, the king of Sweden, again threw two sixes. Then Óláf, the king of Norway, cast the dice, and one six showed on one of them, but the other split in two, so that six and one turned up; and so he took possession of the settlement. Nothing else is told about this meeting, and the kings parted with their differences made up.

Chapter 95. King Óláf Is Sole Ruler of Norway

After the events told above, King Óláf returned with his force to Vík. He first went to Túnsberg and resided there for some little time, then journeyed north and, in fall, all the way north to Trondheim, where he prepared his winter quarters and remained during the winter. Then Óláf was absolute king over all the realm Harald Fairhair had had, and all the more so since he was sole ruler in the land. Because he had then obtained by peaceful means and by agreements that territory which had belonged to the king of Sweden; but that portion which had been under the king of Denmark he took over by force and ruled it like any other [province]. Knút, king of Denmark, at that time ruled both Denmark and England, and himself resided for the most part in England, placing chieftains to govern in Denmark and making no claims on Norway.

Chapter 96.¹ Of the Orkney Earls

We are told that in the days of Harald Fairhair, king of Norway, the Orkneys were settled, which before had been a haunt of vikings. Sigurth was the name of the first earl in the Orkneys. He was the son of Eystein Glumra and the brother of Rognvald, Earl of Mœr. And after him, his son Guthorm ruled for one year. After him, Turf-Einar succeeded to the earldom. He was the son of Earl Rognvald, and was earl and a man of power for a long time. Hálfðan Longshank, a son of Harald Fairhair, attacked Turf-Einar, driving him out of the Orkneys, but Einar returned and slew Hálfðan on the island of Ronaldshay. Thereupon King Harald came to the Orkneys with a fleet, and Einar fled to Scotland. King Harald made the people of the Orkneys give up their allodial rights, after which the king and the earl came to the agreement that the earl should swear an oath of allegiance to the king and have his land in fief from him; but he was to pay no taxes since the land was greatly ravaged. The earl paid the king sixty marks of gold. Thereupon King Harald harried Scotland, as is told in the poem called *Glymdrápa*.²

After Turf-Einar, his sons Arnkel, Erlend, and Thorfinn Skullcleaver ruled the islands. In their days Eirík Bloodyaxe came over from Norway and the earls became his liegemen. Arnkel and Erlend died on warlike expeditions, but Thorfinn ruled over the lands and lived to be an old man. His sons were Arnfinn, Hávarth, Hlothvir, Ljót, and Skúli. Their mother was Gréloth, a daughter of Dungath, the earl of Caithness. Her mother was Gróa, a daughter of Thorstein the Red. During the latter days of Earl Thorfinn the sons of [Eirík] Bloodyaxe came over from Norway, fleeing from Earl Hákon, and they harried cruelly in the Orkneys.

Earl Thorfinn died of a sickness. After him his sons were rulers over his lands, and there are many stories told about them. Hlothvir survived them all and was sole ruler. His son was Sigurth the Stout, who inherited the earldom. He was a powerful man and a great warrior. In his days Óláf Tryggvason came from a viking expedition to the west. He anchored his ships in the Orkneys and took Earl Sigurth prisoner on the island of Ronaldshay. He had cast anchor there with one ship. King Óláf then offered the earl as a ransom to be baptized and adopt the true faith, to swear allegiance to him, and to proclaim Christianity in all the Orkney Islands. As a hostage, King Óláf took along his son, called Hundi or Whelp. From there Óláf sailed to Norway and became its king. Hundi remained with King Óláf for some years, and died in Norway. Thereafter, Earl Sigurth

terminated his allegiance to King Óláf. He then married a daughter of Melkólm,³ the king of Scotland, and their son was called Thorfinn. There were also the older sons of Earl Sigurth, Sumarlithi, Brúsi, and Einar Wrymouth. Five years, or four, after the fall of Óláf Tryggvason, Earl Sigurth proceeded to Ireland, leaving his older sons to rule the islands. His son Thorfinn he sent to his father-in-law, the king of Scotland. On this expedition Earl Sigurth fell in the Battle of Clontarf.⁴

When the news of that reached the Orkneys, the brothers Sumarlithi, Brúsi, and Einar were chosen as earls, and they divided the islands between them into three parts. When Earl Sigurth fell, his son Thorfinn was five years old. When the news of Sigurth's fall came to the king of Scotland he gave his kinsman Thorfinn the districts of Caithness and Sutherland. He bestowed the title of earl on him and appointed men to govern his lands for him. Earl Thorfinn was precocious in his youth and matured early. He was tall and strong, of ugly visage; and as he grew up it became clear that he was reckless, hard, cruel, and very shrewd. This is mentioned by Arnór the Earls' Skald⁵ in this verse:

270. Ne'er in the world so wide, to (81.)
ward his land 'gainst foes, was
man braver born than Einar's
brother, nor one younger.

Chapter 97. Earl Einar Takes Possession of Two Thirds of the Orkneys

The two brothers, Einar and Brúsi, were unlike in temperament, Brúsi was gentle, very peaceable, wise, eloquent, and greatly loved by all. Einar was obstinate, reserved and unfriendly, covetous, and avaricious, and a great warrior. Sumarlithi was similar to Brúsi in disposition. He was the oldest of the brothers and the most short-lived of them. He died of a sickness. After his death, Thorfinn made claims to his portion of the Orkneys. Einar replied that Thorfinn had Caithness and Sutherland, the dominions their father Sigurth had had before him. He called that much more than a third of the Orkneys and was unwilling to let Thorfinn have that share. Brúsi, however, had no objections as far as he was concerned—“and I don’t covet more of the lands,” he said, “than the third part, which I possess by rights.” Then Einar took possession of two thirds of the islands and thus became a powerful man with many troops. He often went on viking expeditions during the summer and had a great levy of men in his lands; but he was not always so successful in making booty on these expeditions. Then the farmers became impatient about this burden; but the earl nevertheless harshly persisted in all his impositions and would hear of no opposition, for he was a most overbearing man. Then there resulted in his dominions a famine from the burdens and expense which the farmers had borne, whereas in the portion Brúsi had there was an excellent good season and the farmers lived an easy life, so he was popular.

Chapter 98. Feud between the Orkney Earls

There was a powerful and rich man called Ámundi. He lived in Sandvík at Hlaupandanes on the island of Hrossay [Pomona]. His son's name was Thorkel, and he was of all men in the Orkneys the most accomplished. Ámundi himself was a very wise man and one of the most respected in the islands. One spring Earl Einar again called for a levy, as he was accustomed to. But the farmers complained bitterly about it. They brought their grievances before Ámundi and prayed him to say a good word for them with the earl. He answered, "The earl is self-willed," and held that it would be of no use to entreat him about this or any other thing. "As it is, the earl and I are good friends, but I think it would be dangerous if we fell out, considering our different dispositions. I shall do nothing about it," he said.

So they went to Thorkel to talk about this. He was unwilling to do anything about it, yet on their urging him he promised [to speak to the earl]. Ámundi considered that Thorkel had been too hasty about giving his promise. Now when the earl called a *thing*, Thorkel spoke on behalf of the farmers, begging the earl to spare the farmers [further] impositions, and told him how hard they were put to it. The earl gave a favorable answer, saying he regarded Thorkel's wishes highly. "I had intended to set out with six ships, but now I shall have no more than three. However, Thorkel, be sure not to make any more such pleas in the future." The farmers thanked Thorkel much for his help.

The earl went on a viking expedition and returned in fall. But in the following spring the earl made the same requisitions as he was wont to make and called for a meeting with the farmers. Then Thorkel spoke again and requested the earl to spare the farmers. To that the earl made an angry reply and said that the lot of the farmers should be all the worse for his intercession. And he grew so furious and wrathful that he said that another spring they would not both be alive at the assembly. With this, the meeting came to an end.

But when Ámundi learned what had passed between Thorkel and the earl he begged Thorkel to go abroad, and he sailed over to Caithness to Earl Thorfinn. Thorkel remained there for a long time and devoted himself to the earl since (the latter) was young. Thereafter he was called Thorkel the Foster Father and became a man of renown.

There were a number of influential men who fled their ancestral possessions in the Orkneys because of Earl Einar's harsh rule. Most of them fled to Caithness and Earl Thorfinn, but some fled from the Orkneys to Norway, and still others to various lands. Now when Earl Thorfinn was grown, he sent a

same rulers, to various lands. Now when Earl Thorfinn was grown, he sent a message to Earl Einar, his brother, demanding from him that portion of the Orkneys which he considered was his; and that was a third of the islands. Einar was by no means willing to diminish his rule. Now when Thorfinn learned that, he ordered a levy of troops in Caithness and proceeded toward the islands. As soon as Earl Einar became aware of this, he gathered a force, intending to defend his lands. Earl Brúsi also collected troops, and went out to meet them to bring about some agreement between them; and the agreement was made that Thorfinn was to have the third part of the Orkneys which was his by right. But Brúsi and Einar laid their shares together. Einar was to rule over them alone, but if one of them should die before the other, then the survivor was to take possession of the whole. But that covenant did not seem equitable, since Brúsi had a son, called Rognvald, but Einar was sonless.

Thereupon Earl Thorfinn assigned men to guard his share of the Orkneys while he himself most often was in Caithness. During the summer Earl Einar most often harried in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

One summer, when Earl Einar harried in Ireland, he had a battle in the Úlfreksfjord with Konofogor, a king of Ireland, as was written above,¹ and there suffered a great defeat, losing many men. The summer following,
1019 Eyvind Úrarhorn sailed east from Ireland, intending to make Norway, but he encountered stormy weather and strong counter currents and so put into Ásmundarvág [Osmundwall] and lay there for some time weatherbound. When Earl Einar heard of that he sailed there with a large fleet, caught Eyvind and had him killed, but gave quarter to most of his men. They sailed to Norway in the fall, sought out King Óláf, and told him about the slaying of Eyvind. The king did not say much about it [at that time], yet people noticed that he felt he had suffered a great loss and that this was done mostly to spite him. He generally said little when matters ran counter to his interests.

Earl Thorfinn sent Thorkel Foster Father to the islands to collect the taxes due him. Earl Einar had laid the blame mostly on Thorkel for the restitution to Thorfinn of his share in the islands. Thorkel hurried back to Caithness and told Earl Thorfinn that he had got wind of Earl Einar's intention to put him to death, but had been warned by friends and kinsmen. "Now I have the choice," he said, "either of risking an encounter with the earl and let it come to a decision between us, or else to put a greater distance between us and go to a place where his power can't reach me."

The earl encouraged him to journey east to Norway to see King Óláf. "You will be shown high honor," he said, "wherever you meet chieftains; and I know

the disposition of both of you, yours and the earl's,² and that it will not be long before you come to blows." Then Thorkel got ready for the journey and in fall sailed to Norway and there went to the court of King Ólaf, where he stayed during the winter, in high favor. The king frequently conversed with Thorkel, because he seemed to him a wise man, as indeed he was, and an outstanding person. The king observed that in his conversation he made a great distinction between the earls, speaking highly about Thorfinn but very ill about Earl Einar.

1020 And early in spring the king sent a ship across the sea with a message to Earl Thorfinn, requesting him to visit the king in Norway. Nor did the earl delay about accepting this invitation, since assurances of the king's friendship went with it.

Chapter 99. Earl Brúsi Reconciles the Opponents

So Earl Thorfinn sailed east to Norway to meet the king, and was received graciously. He stayed there for a long time during the summer. And when he made ready to return, King Ólaf presented him with a warship which was large and well-made and provided with full rigging. Then Thorkel the Foster Father joined the earl [in Norway], and the earl gave him the ship on which he had come east that summer. The king and the earl parted as the closest friends.

Earl Thorfinn arrived in the Orkneys in fall. At the time Earl Einar learned that, he had many men about him and was aboard his ships. Then Earl Brúsi met both his brothers and induced them to come to an agreement. And he succeeded in reconciling them again and confirming their pact with oaths. Thorkel the Foster Father was to be reconciled and bound in friendship with Earl Einar. It was agreed that each of them should entertain the other with a feast, and the earl, to begin with, was to be the guest of Thorkel in Sandvík. And when the earl came there, he was given the noblest entertainment. But he was in ill humor. A great hall was there with doors at both ends.

The day the earl was to depart, Thorkel was to accompany him to the entertainment [at the earl's hall]. Thorkel sent out men on the way they were to take, to reconnoiter; and when they returned, they reported to Thorkel that they had found three ambushes with armed men—"And we believe," they said, "that some treachery is afoot." Now when Thorkel heard that, he tarried about getting ready, and collected his men about him. The earl urged him to get ready, saying it was time to ride away. Thorkel replied that he had much to attend to, and sometimes went out, sometimes in. Fires burned on the floor. [Finally] he entered by one door, together with a man called Hallvarth, an Icelander from the Eastfirths District. He closed the door after him. Thorkel went in front of the fire to where the earl sat. The earl said, "Are you not ready yet?"

Thorkel replied, "Now I am ready," and with that he struck at the earl's head so that he slumped to the floor.

Then the Icelander said, "I never yet saw people so much at a loss what to do, that you don't drag the earl away from the fire," and he drove [the point of] his battle-axe under the earl's neckbone and tossed him up on the dais. Both he and Thorkel hurriedly left by the door on the opposite side from where they had entered. There outside stood Thorkel's men all armed.

Earl Einar's men took hold of him, but he was dead already. They all were perplexed and did not think of avenging him. Also, things had happened so

quickly, and no one had expected that of Thorkel, because all thought it was agreed on, that the earl and Thorkel were to be friends. Moreover most of the men in the hall were unarmed, and many, good friends of Thorkel from earlier times. It just was so fated that, of the two, Thorkel was to live longest. Thorkel had no smaller force on the outside than the earl's men.

Thereupon Thorkel boarded his ship and the earl's men departed. Thorkel on that very day sailed east at once. It was after the beginning of winter, but he managed to make Norway safely, and straightway went to see King Ólaf, by whom he was received in friendly fashion. The king approved of what Thorkel had done, and the latter stayed with him during the winter.

Chapter 100. Earl Brúsi Appeals to King Óláf for Help

After the fall of Earl Einar, Earl Brúsi took over that part of the lands which before had belonged to Earl Einar, because it was known to many what agreements existed between the brothers Einar and Brúsi [when they shared the rule between them]. But to Thorfinn it seemed most just that each of them had half of the islands, whereas Brúsi during that winter held two thirds of the lands. In the spring following, Thorfinn made a claim to half of the lands, but Brúsi did not consent to that. They met together to debate the matter. Friends of both tried to make them come to an agreement, with the outcome that Thorfinn would not be satisfied unless he obtained half of the islands. He also said that Brúsi did not require more than a third, considering his disposition. Brúsi replied, "I was satisfied with having that third part of the lands which I inherited from my father. Nor did anyone make a claim on it. But now I have fallen heir to another third after my brother according to the agreements made with him. And although I may not be able to contend with you, brother, yet I mean to take other measures than thus yield up to you what rightfully belongs to me." And with that they broke up the meeting.

But as Brúsi saw that he did not have the power to stand on an equal footing with Thorfinn, because the latter had a much larger dominion and, besides, had the support of the king of Scotland, his maternal grandfather, Brúsi decided to leave his lands, together with his son Rognvald, aged ten years then, and journey east to meet King Óláf. And when they met, he was well received by the king.

The earl laid his case before him, explaining how the dispute between the brothers came about, and prayed the king to lend him support so that he could maintain himself in his possessions, offering in return his fullest friendship. In his reply the king began by stating that Harald Fairhair had taken possession of all the allodial rights in the Orkneys, and that the earls since that time had held these lands in fief, but never as their own property.

"And as proof of this," he said, "[you know] that when Eirík Bloodyaxe and his sons were in the Orkneys, the earls yielded him homage. And when Óláf Tryggvason, my kinsman, came there, your father, Earl Sigurth, swore him allegiance. Now I have come into the complete inheritance of King Óláf. [As a condition for helping you] I shall stipulate that you swear allegiance to me, when I shall give you the islands in fief. Then, if I give you my backing, we shall see whether that which the king of the Scots gives your brother Thorfinn, is of more avail to him. But if you will not accept this condition, then I shall seek to regain

the possessions and allodial rights which our kinsmen and ancestors had there west.”

The earl fixed in his mind what the king had said, and brought it up before his friends, asking their advice which of the king’s conditions he should accept—whether he should make his peace with King Óláf and become his vassal—“but I am not sure what will happen to me, when the king and I part, if I refuse; because the king made clear his claim to the Orkneys. And what with his great resources and the fact that I am here [in his power], it is a small matter for him to do with me what he pleases.” And though the earl saw disadvantages in either condition, he accepted the alternative of placing both himself and his dominions under the suzerainty of the king. Thereupon King Óláf took from the earl the power and government of all his inherited possessions. He became his vassal, and they confirmed that with oaths.

Chapter 101. King Óláf Forces Earl Thorfinn to Become His Vassal

Earl Thorfinn learned that his brother Brúsi had gone east to meet King Óláf and obtain support from him. But because Thorfinn [himself] had previously been to see King Óláf and had won his friendship he thought he stood well with him. He also knew he had many spokesmen there who would plead his case. Nevertheless he expected that there would be more of them if he went there himself. So Earl Thorfinn determined to make ready in all haste to sail east to Norway, believing that there would be little difference between the time he and Brúsi [got to Norway] and that the latter's business would not be concluded before he, Thorfinn, met with the king.

But it turned out differently from what he had expected, because when he came to see King Óláf, the business between the king and Brúsi had been concluded and the agreement settled. Nor did Earl Thorfinn, before seeing the king, know that Brúsi had given up the hereditary right to his possessions. And when he met King Óláf, the latter raised the same claim to overlordship in the Orkneys as he had done with Earl Brúsi, and demanded the same of Thorfinn: that he should agree to hand over to the king that share of the land which he had had before. The earl answered the king quietly and with composure, saying that he cared greatly for the friendship of the king toward him—"and in case you consider, sire, that you require my support against other chieftains, you have every claim to it from before. However, it will not do for me to swear allegiance to you, because I am already the earl of the king of Scotland and tributary to him."

Now when the king found evasiveness in the earl's reply to his demands, he spoke as follows: "If you, sir earl, will not swear allegiance to me, then there is the alternative that I assign the man to rule the Orkneys whom I choose. And it is my wish that you promise on oath that you make no claims on these lands and let them be in peace whom I set over them. But if you will accept neither of these alternatives, then he who will rule the lands can expect hostilities from you. And then you need not be surprised if there is a clash between us." In his answer the earl requested to be given time to consider the matter, which the king did, leaving the earl time to advise with his men what to decide. Thereupon the earl asked the king to let him have time till the following summer and allow him to cross the sea to the west, for the reason that his counsellors were at home and that he was still a youth. But the king required him to make his decision then and there.

At that time Thorkel the Foster Father was at the court of the king. He sent a

man secretly to Earl Thorfinn and begged him, whatever he had in mind, not to think for a moment of parting with the king without having made his peace with him, as he now was in the power of the king. With warnings such as these the earl understood that probably the only choice he had was to let the king decide, that time. Nor did it seem advantageous to have no hope of regaining his ancestral possessions and to make a pledge to let persons who had no rights by birth enjoy them in peace. But because he deemed it impossible to get away, he chose to swear allegiance to the king and become his man, just as Brúsi had done.

The king observed that Thorfinn was a much prouder minded man than Brúsi and resented more than he this humiliation, and so trusted him less than Brúsi. The king saw that Thorfinn might expect the support of the king of Scotland in case he chose to break this agreement. Shrewd as he was, the king discerned that Brúsi only reluctantly entered into any agreement, promising nothing but what he meant to keep; whereas Thorfinn, once he had decided which alternative he would choose, gladly assented to all terms nor refused any which the king made, to start with. But the king suspected that the earl would not adhere to all.

Chapter 102. Earl Thorfinn and Thorkel Are Reconciled

When King Óláf had reflected on this whole matter, he had the trumpets blown for an assembly to be attended by as many as possible, and had the two earls called to be present. Then the king said, "I shall now make known to everybody the agreement between myself and the Orkney earls. They have now consented to my taking possession of the Orkneys and Shetland, and have sworn fealty to me and confirmed that by oaths; and now I shall bestow on them that land in fief: Brúsi is to have one third, Thorfinn, another, just as they had had them before. But that third which Einar Wrymouth had shall fall to my share for the reason that he killed Eyvind Úrarhorn, my follower, companion, and dear friend. I shall administer that part of the land as I consider best. That too I want to stipulate with you, my earls, that you agree to take compensation from Thorkel Ámundason for the slaying of your brother Einar. I desire that you let me be the judge between you if you agree to that." And the earls agreed to that as they had to all the king said. Then Thorkel came forward and put the award into the king's hands; whereupon the assembly broke up.

King Óláf adjudged the compensation for the slaying of Earl Einar to be the same as for three landed-men; but because of the offence committed [by Einar], one third of the payment was to be forgiven. Thereupon Earl Thorfinn asked the king for leave to depart; and no sooner did he obtain that but he made ready in the greatest haste.

One day, when Thorfinn was all ready [to sail] and was drinking on his ship, Thorkel Ámundason suddenly stepped up to him and laid his head on the earl's knees and bade him do with him as he pleased. The earl asked him why he did so, "We are already at peace according to the king's judgment. Stand up, Thorkel!"

He did so; then he said, "The peace between us which the king made, I shall adhere to so far as Brúsi is concerned; but as between us, it is for you to decide. To be sure the king has adjudged to me my possessions and the right to live in the Orkneys. Yet I know your disposition and that it is unsafe for me to be in the islands unless I have your assurance, sir earl. I shall be willing to bind myself," he added, "never to come to the Orkneys, whatever the king says about it."

The earl was silent, and it was a long while before he spoke: "If you so prefer, Thorkel, that I be the judge in this business between us, rather than rely on the king's judgment, then I shall make that the first condition for our reconciliation that you go with me to the Orkneys, stay with me, nor part from me except by my permission and consent: also that you have the obligation to defend my land

my permission and consent, also that you have the obligation to defend my lands and perform such labors as I decide on, as long as both of us live.”

Thorkel said, “Let that be in your hands, sir earl; that, as well as everything else which it is in my power to do.” Thereupon Thorkel by oath confirmed all the earl wished him to. As to the compensation [for Einar], the earl remarked that he would talk about that later. But he made Thorkel give solemn assurances [that he would do as stipulated]. Thereupon Thorkel forthwith got ready to go with the earl, and they sailed at once; nor did they and the king ever meet again.

Earl Brúsi remained behind and allowed himself more time to get ready. And before he departed, the king had a meeting with him and spoke as follows: “It would appear to me, earl, that I can depend on your loyalty when you are west across the sea. I intend that you shall have the same two thirds of the islands to govern as you had before. I do not wish you to be a man of less power, being my man now, than you were before. But I shall assure myself of your allegiance by your leaving your son Rognvald here with me. I shall see to it then that, having my support and two thirds of the islands, you can well maintain yourself and keep what is yours by rights, against your brother Thorfinn.” Brúsi accepted with thanks being given two thirds of the islands. Thereafter he remained in Norway but a short while before sailing to the Orkneys, where he arrived in fall.

¹⁰²¹Rognvald, Brúsi’s son, remained behind at King Óláf’s court. He was an exceptionally handsome youth with abundant hair, yellow as silk. He soon was tall and strong and most accomplished both as to intelligence and courtly bearing. He remained a long time with King Óláf. All this is mentioned by Óttar in the *drápa* which he composed about King Óláf:

271. Properly do you, peerless prince, hold onto forbears’
might; therefore ’tis meet that
men of Shetland obey you.
From eastlands¹ no one ever
awed like you and, warlike
youth, brought under yoke the
yeomen of western islands. (82.)

Chapter 103. Earl Thorfinn Takes Over the Defence of the Orkneys

When the two brothers, Thorfinn and Brúsi, arrived west in the Orkneys, Brúsi took over two thirds of the islands to govern, and Thorfinn, one third. He was most often in Caithness and Scotland, and assigned his men to administer the islands, so Brúsi alone had to see to the defence of the islands. But in those days they were much exposed to raids, for both Norwegians and Danes were given to marauding on their viking expeditions to the west, and often touched on the Orkneys, either going or coming from the west, and made ness-raids. Brúsi mentioned this to his brother Thorfinn and that the latter took no measures to defend the Orkneys and Shetland Islands though he levied tributes and dues on his portion of them. Then Thorfinn offered Brúsi this alternative, that the latter should retain one third of the lands and let Thorfinn have two thirds, in return for Thorfinn's taking over the defence of the islands for both. And though this exchange did not come about all at once, yet we are told in the Earls' Saga¹ that it did and that, [as a result], Thorfinn had two thirds of the lands and Brúsi, one third, at the time Knút the Powerful had dominion in Norway and King Óláf had departed from his country.

Earl Thorfinn was the most eminent chieftain in the islands and of all Orkney earls had the greatest power. He took possession of the Shetland Islands, the Orkneys, and the Hebrides, besides wielding great power in Scotland and Ireland. About this speaks Arnór the Earls' Skald [in this verse]:

272. The ring-breaker obey all (83.)
brave men, from Thurso Bay to
Dublin—sooth I say—as
sovrán, following Thorfinn.

Thorfinn was a great warrior. He assumed his earldom when he was five years old and ruled more than sixty years. He died of a sickness in the latter days of Harald Sigurtharson. And Brúsi passed away in the days of Knút the Powerful, a short time after the fall of Holy King Óláf.

Chapter 104. Of Hárek of Thjóttá

Now we shall continue with two stories, beginning where we left off, at the point when Ólaf Haraldsson had made his peace with Ólaf, king of Sweden, and that summer when King Ólaf sailed north to Trondheim. During the fall 1019 he prepared for winter quarters in Nitharós and resided there during the winter. It was that winter when Thorkel the Foster Father, the son of Ámundi, stayed with King Ólaf, as was set down above. At that time King Ólaf inquired much how it stood with Christianity round about in the country; and he was informed that there was little of it north in Hálogaland. But it was far from being kept in Naumu Dale and in the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord.

There was a man called Hárek, who was the son of Eyvind Skáldaspillir. He lived on the island of Thjóttá in Hálogaland. Eyvind had not been a man of great wealth, but was of noble descent and most influential. On the island of Thjóttá there lived at that time many small farmers. Hárek first bought himself a farm there, not a very large one, then transported his possessions there. But in a few years he had all the farmers moved out who had lived there before, so that he owned the whole island himself, and erected there a large manorial residence. He soon waxed very rich. He was a man of excellent good sense, and most enterprising. By the chieftains he was held in the highest respect and [besides] counted himself as related to the kings of Norway, for which reason he was shown much esteem by the [great] chieftains of the country. Gunnhild, his father's mother, was the daughter of Earl Hálfðan and Ingibjorg, a daughter of Harald Fairhair. Hárek was rather advanced in age when [what we shall tell] happened. He was the man of greatest distinction in Hálogaland. He had had under him for a long time the trade with the Finns¹ and was the chief royal officer of the District of [Finn]mark. At times he had had that office alone, at others he had shared it with other men. He had not come to see King Ólaf, but messages and emissaries had passed between them, and their relations had been cordial. Now then, during the winter when King Ólaf resided in Nitharós, there passed messages again between the king and Hárek of Thjóttá. At that time the king made it known that in the following summer he intended to travel north to Hálogaland and all the way north to the land's end. But the people of Hálogaland had very divided opinions about this journey.

Chapter 105. King Óláfs Expedition to Hálogaland

1020 Now King Óláf equipped himself in spring with five ships and a crew of nearly three hundred [360] men; and when ready, he began his journey north along the land. When he arrived in the Naumu Dale District he called for a meeting with the farmers, and was acknowledged king at every assembly. And there as well as in other places he had the laws read to the people, by which they were commanded to maintain their Christianity, on pain of life and limbs or else of loss of all property for those who would not submit to the Christian laws. The king inflicted severe penalties on many, nor did he make any distinction between the powerful and the humble. He did not leave any district before all the people consented to maintain the holy faith. Most of the men of power, and many wealthy farmers, entertained the king. Thus he proceeded all the way north in Hálogaland. Hárek of Thjótta also entertained the king with a banquet attended by a great multitude, and it was a splendid one. At that time Hárek became a landed-man under King Óláf, whereupon the king bestowed upon him revenues such as he [Hárek] had had from the former chieftains of the land.

Chapter 106. Grankel Becomes King Óláf's Man

There was a man called Grankel or Granketil, a wealthy farmer, and rather advanced in age at the time. When young he had been on viking expeditions and had been a great warrior. He was a man of many accomplishments in the field of manly sports. His son was named Ásmund, and he was in every respect like his father or even excelled him. It was the opinion of many that as regards comeliness, strength, and manly sports he was the third most outstanding man in Norway, Hákon, the foster son of Æthelstān, being the first, and Óláf Tryggvason next. Grankel invited King Óláf to a banquet, and that was a magnificent feast. At their parting Ásmund gave the king splendid gifts as a proof of his friendship. The king invited Ásmund to come with him, insisting very strongly on it. And Ásmund on his part did not think he could refuse this honor. He joined the king's company, becoming his man, later on, and one of his closest friends.

King Óláf remained most of the summer in Hálogaland, visiting all communities and there baptizing all the people. At that time there lived a man on the Island of Bjarkey called Thórir the Hound—the most powerful man in the North. He became a landed-man of King Óláf. Many sons of powerful farmers joined the following of King Óláf. As the summer wore on the king returned south and, sailing into the Trondheimfjord, steered to Nitharós, where he settled for the winter. That same winter Thorkel Foster Father had come east from the Orkneys after killing Earl Einar Wrymouth. There was a bad season for grain in the Trondheim District that fall, after a long row of good seasons; and that bad season prevailed all over the northern part of the country, and worse the farther north one went. But in the eastern part of the country the grain crop was good, also in the Uppland districts. But in the Trondheim region people were saved by having much grain in storage.

Chapter 107. King Óláf Learns of Sacrifices in Trondheim

That fall, information reached King Óláf that the farmers in the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord had had great feasts at the beginning of winter, with much drinking. The king was told that all toasts were brought to the Æsir,¹ following old heathen custom. He was told that cattle and horses had been slaughtered and the pedestals [of the idols] reddened with their blood and that sacrifices were being performed for the purpose of improving the harvests. And the report was further that everybody considered it clear that the gods had become angered because the people of Hálogaland had let themselves be baptized. When the king learned of all this, he sent messengers to the Trondheim districts, summoning to him certain farmers whom he mentioned by name.

There was a man called Olvir of Egg after the farm on which he lived. He was a man with great influence and of noble descent. He was the leader of the farmers going to see the king. And when they arrived at the court, the king accused them of what was done. Olvir as the spokesman of the farmers replied that there had been no [sacrificial] feast that fall, but only drinking in company, or communal drinking bouts, and some entertainments between friends. “But as to what is told you,” he said, “about what is said when we people of Trondheim come together for drinking, all men of sense will guard against [believing] what is told them; but no one can be responsible for what fools and drunken people say.” Olvir was a man of ready speech, and not afraid to speak out. He defended the farmers against what had been reported of them. At the conclusion of the meeting the king said that the people from the inner districts of Trondheim themselves would have to bear witness as to how they stood in the faith; whereupon the farmers were given leave to depart for their homes, which they did as soon as they could.

Chapter 108. The King Is Told of Heathen Rites at Mærin

Later during the winter the king was told that the people from the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord had assembled in great numbers at Mærin and that there were big sacrifices made at midwinter for peace and a good season. Now as the king thought he had learned the truth of the matter, he sent men and a message into these districts, summoning the farmers to the town and again citing those who seemed to him most intelligent. Thereupon the farmers discussed the matter between them and spoke about this message. All those who had gone before were most unwilling to make the journey. But at the pleading of all the farmers Olvir made ready to go. And when he arrived in the town he went at once to see the king, and they talked together. The king accused the farmers of having had a midwinter sacrifice. Olvir replied that the farmers were not guilty of that. "We had Yule feasts, and social drinking all about the districts," he said. "The farmers do not want to make scant provision for Yule banqueting, and so there is much food and drink left over, and the men kept drinking that store for a long time afterwards. At Mærin there is a large estate with big houses, and there is a large settlement round about. And people consider it good entertainment to drink in a large company."

The king did not say much and rather showed his displeasure. He considered he knew that what he was told was far from the truth. He ordered the farmers to return—"but," he said, "I shall ascertain the truth, even if you conceal it and do not want to acknowledge it. But, whatever has been the case hitherto, don't do so again." Thereupon the farmers returned home and told how it had gone and that the king was rather angry.

Chapter 109. The King Arrives at Marin

1021 King Ólaf arranged for a great entertainment in the Easter season, to which he had invited many townspeople and also some farmers. But after Easter the king ordered his ships to be launched, and tackle and oars brought out. He had the ships decked and tented, and when so equipped he let the ships float by the piers. After Easter, King Ólaf despatched some men to Vera Dale.

There was a certain man by the name of Thóraldi who was the king's steward on his estate at Haug [in Vera Dale]. The king sent him word to join him in all haste. Nor did Thóraldi tarry, but at once travelled to the town together with the messengers. The king summoned him to talk with him in private and asked him how much truth there was in this. "I am told about the ways of the people in the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord, and is it true that they perform sacrifices? I want you to tell me what are the facts," the king said, "as you know them. You owe me that, for you are my man."

Thóraldi replied, "Sire, let me tell you first of all that I have brought hither to the town my two sons and my wife, and all the movable property that I could take along. Now if you want me to tell you the truth about this, I am at your command. But if I tell you the facts then you will have to look out for me."

The king said, "Tell me the truth about what I ask you, and I shall look out for you so you will suffer no harm."

"To tell the truth, sire, if you want the facts, in the interior of the Trondheim District nearly all the people are pure heathen in their belief, even though some few there are baptized. It is their custom to perform a sacrifice in the fall to welcome winter, a second at midwinter, and a third in summer to welcome its arrival. In this, the people of Eyin and those of Sparabú, of Vera Dale, and of Skaun participate. There are twelve men who take it upon themselves to arrange the sacrificial feasts; and this spring it falls to Olvir to make ready the feast. He is now busily engaged upon that at Mærin, and all provisions necessary for the feast are being brought there."

Now when the king had learned the truth, he had the trumpets blown to summon his troops and ordered them to board the ships. He appointed steersmen and also captains of the troops, and which troop was to be on each ship. All this was done quickly. The king had five ships and three hundred [360] men, and with these he proceeded up toward the head of the fjord. There was a favorable breeze, and the swift-sailing ships made good progress. No one had imagined

that the king would get there so quickly, but he arrived at Mærin during the night. The houses were at once surrounded. Olvir was captured and killed, together with many others. The king took all provisions and had them brought to his ships, along with all the properties, such as furniture, clothing, and valuables which had been moved there, and had them distributed as booty among his men. The king also had those men's homes ransacked whom he suspected to have had most part in these doings. Some were captured and put in chains, some escaped by flight, and many had their goods confiscated. Then the king summoned the farmers to a meeting. And because he had made many men of influence prisoner and had them in his power, their kinsmen and friends decided to swear obedience to the king; and no resistance was made to him at the time. He converted all the people to the right faith, placing priests there and erecting and consecrating churches. The king judged Olvir to have been slain for just cause and confiscated all his possessions. But as to the other men who seemed to him most guilty, some he had killed, some mutilated, some he drove out of the country, and some he mulcted. Thereupon the king returned to Nitharós.

Chapter 110. Of Árni Armóthsson and His Kin

There was a man called Árni Armóthsson. He was married to Thóra, the daughter of Thorstein Gallows. Their children were Kálf, Finn, Thorberg, Ámundi, Kolbjorn, Arnbjorn, Árni, and Ragnhild. She was the wife of Hárek of Thjóttá. Árni was a landed-man, powerful and prominent, a great friend of King Óláf. At the time, his sons Kálf and Finn were at the court of King Óláf, and highly regarded. The woman who had been married to Olvir at Egg was young and handsome, of noble ancestry and wealthy. A match with her was considered most excellent, but it was the king who had the disposition of her property in his hands. By Olvir she had two young sons. Kalf Árnason requested the king to let him marry Olvir's widow, and because of their friendship the king granted him that, together with all the possessions Olvir had had; whereupon the king made him a landed-man and procured him the stewardship for his rule in the District of Trondheim. Then Kálf became a great chieftain and was a man of exceding sagacity.

Chapter 111. The King Forces the Upland Districts to Become Christian

1021 By this time King Óláf had been seven years in Norway. That same summer the two Orkney earls, Thorfinn and Brúsi had come to him.

King Óláf took possession of their lands, as was written above. That summer also the king went about the districts of North and South Mœr, and about Raums Dale in fall. In the latter place he disembarked and proceeded to the Upland districts till he came to Lesjar. There he had all the most prominent men taken, both at Lesjar and Dofrar. And they all were compelled to become Christians or else suffer death or flee abroad if they were able. And they who let themselves be baptized surrendered to the king their sons as hostages for their good faith.

The king passed the night at a place called Bœjar in Lesjar, and left priests behind. Then he proceeded through Loru Dale and through Ljár Dale, arriving at a place called Stafabrekka. A river called Ótta runs through that valley, and there are fair settlements called Lóar on both sides of the river, and the king could see from one end of the settlement to the other. “Too bad,” he said, “to have to burn down so fine a settlement,” and he descended down the valley with his troops and stayed overnight at a farm called Nes, and the king was quartered in a loft where he slept by himself; and that stands there to this day, nor has any change been made in it since that time. The king remained there for five days, calling together an assembly, and summoning to it people both from Vági, Lóar, and from He Dale. He had his messengers proclaim that they had the choice, either to give battle to him and to suffer their places to be burned down, or to accept Christianity and deliver up to him their sons as hostages. Thereupon they went up to the king and submitted to him. But some fled south into the Dales.

Chapter 112. The King Negotiates with the People of Guthbrands Dale

Dala-Guthbrand [Guthbrand of the Dales] was the name of a man who ruled like a king over the Dales. In rank he was a hersir. Sigvat the Skald compared him to Erling Skjálgsson with regard to power and extent of his lands. About Erling, Sigvat composed this verse:

273. One great warrior, knew I, (84.)
was there, unto you like,
Guthbrand hight, who governed,
gold-rich, over Dalesmen.
Equal, I would say, is
either enemy-of-gold-rings.
Lies he who, 'mongst lair-hoards-
loathers,¹ thinks he is greater.

Guthbrand had one son of whom there will be mention. When Guthbrand learned that King Ólaf had come to Lóar and forced people to become Christian, he sent out the war-arrows, summoning all Dalesmen to meet with him at the farm called Hundthorp. And all came, an immense number; because nearby lies a lake called Log; so that the place can be reached by boat as well as by travelling on land. There Guthbrand held a meeting with them and said that a man called Ólaf had come to Lóar, “and means to bid us have a faith different from the one we have had, and to break in pieces all our gods, and says that he has a god by far greater and more powerful. It is a wonder that the earth does not burst asunder under him for daring to speak thus, or that our gods allow him to go about longer. But I think that if we bear Thór out from our temple, where he stands here in this farm and has always helped us, and if he sees Ólaf and his men, they will melt away, and he and his men become as nothing.”

Then all the people shouted approval and said that Ólaf would never get away alive if ever he came there, “and he will not dare to go farther south in the Dales,” they said. Thereupon they despatched seven hundred [840] men to be on the lookout at Breitha, and the leader of this force was the eighteen-year-old son of Guthbrand, accompanied by many other men of weight. They came to the farm called Hof and stayed there three days, when many joined them of those who had fled from Lesjar, Lóar, and Vági and would not receive baptism.

King Ólaf and Bishop Sigurth assigned priests to Lóar and Vági. Then they

proceeded over Vágarost² and descended to Sil, where they stayed overnight and learned that a great host was expecting them. Likewise the farmers at Breitha learned of the king's approach and prepared for battle against him. Now when the king arose he put on his armor and proceeded south along the Sil meadows and did not stop till he came to Breitha. There he saw before him a large host ready to do battle with him. Then the king put his men in battle formation, himself riding at their head, and addressed the farmers, bidding them receive Christianity. They answered, "You will get something else done today than to mock us," and raised their battle cry, striking their weapons against their shields. Thereupon the king's men ran forward and hurled their spears, but the farmers forthwith turned to flight and only few stood their ground. Then Guthbrand's son was captured. King Óláf gave him quarter and took him along with him. The king remained there for four days.



The farmers' army.

Then the king said to Guthbrand's son, "Go back to your father and tell him I shall be there soon."

He returned thereupon and told his father the sorry news that they had met the king and fought with him, "and our force right away took to flight," he said, "and I was captured. The king gave me quarter and bade me tell you that he will be here soon. Now we have here no more than two hundred men [240] of all the force we had before to do battle with him. So now I advise you, father, not to fight against this man."



King Ólaf addresses the farmers.

“[From your words],” said Guthbrand, “one can gather that all your courage has been beaten out of you. With little luck you left home, and this will be held up against you for a long time. And now you right away believe the wild fancies this man brings up; and he has [certainly] given you and your force a big discomfiture.”

The following night Guthbrand dreamed that a man approached him. There was a glory about him, and his appearance inspired fear, and he said to him, “Your son was not granted victory over King Ólaf, but you will fare even more ingloriously if you mean to give battle to the king, and you yourself and all of your troops will fall, and wolves will drag you about, and all of you, and ravens will rive your corpses.”

He was greatly terrified by this awful vision and told his dream to Thóρθ Paunchbelly, who was a chieftain over the Dales people. And he said, “I had the same vision.”

In the morning they had the trumpets blown to summon the troops for an assembly and said it was advisable to negotiate with that man who came from the north with a new message, and find out how much truth there was in what he proclaimed. Then Guthbrand said to his son, “Now you, together with twelve men, are to go back to this king who gave you quarter,” and this was done. And they approached the king and told him their message, that the farmers desired to negotiate with him, so as to make peace between the king and the farmers. The king was pleased with that, and they confirmed the truce with special agreements

ing was peace with us, and they confirmed the same with special agreement for the time their meeting lasted. They returned after settling this and told Guthbrand and Thóρθ that a truce had been made.

Thereupon the king proceeded to the farm which is called Lithsstathir and remained there five days. Then the king went to meet the farmers and negotiated with them. There fell a hard rain that day. Now when the assembly met, the king arose and said that the people at Lesjar, Lóar, and Vági had accepted Christianity and had destroyed their heathen houses of worship, “and they now believe in the true God who created heaven and earth and is omniscient.” Then he sat down.

Guthbrand replied, “We know not of whom you speak. Do you call him God whom neither you nor anyone else can see? But we have a god whom one can see every day, but he is not outside today because it is raining, and he will look terrifying to you and awe inspiring when you see him. I expect you will be seized with fear if he comes to the meeting. But as you say that your god is so powerful, let him bring it about that the weather will be cloudy tomorrow but with no rain, and let us then meet here.”

Thereupon the king returned to his quarters, and Guthbrand’s son with him as hostage, against another man from the other part. In the evening the king asked the son of Guthbrand how their god was made up. He answered that he was made in the image of Thór, “and he has a hammer in his hand and is of great size and hollow inside, and he stands on a kind of pedestal when he is outside. There is a profusion of gold and silver upon him. He receives four loaves of bread every day and also fresh meat.”

They went to bed then, but the king stayed awake during the night, saying his prayers. And when day broke, the king went to mass, and then to table, and from there to the assembly. The weather was such as Guthbrand had wanted. Then the bishop arose. He wore the chasuble and had the mitre on his head and the crozier in his hand. He preached the faith to the farmers, relating many a miracle God had performed, and concluded his speech eloquently. Thereupon Thóρθ Paunchbelly made this reply: “Much does that horned man say who has a staff in his hand with a crook like a ram’s horn on top. Now since you claim that your god performs so many miracles, then speak with him to let it be clear weather tomorrow before sunrise, and sunny, and let us meet then and either agree about this matter or else [afterwards] fight it out.” With that they parted for the time.

Chapter 113. The King Destroys the Image of Thór

Kolbein the Strong was the name of one of the followers of King Ólaf. His kinsmen lived in the Fjord District. He always went about armed, with a sword at his side and a big quarterstaff in his hand, of the kind called a club. The king told Kolbein to stay close by his side next morning. Then he bade his men, “Go down tonight to where the ships of the farmers are and bore holes in all, also ride off all the horses in the farms which you can find.” And so this was done. The king himself stayed awake with prayers all night, beseeching God to resolve this difficulty by His grace and mercy. And after he had heard mass, at break of day, he went to the assembly. And when he arrived there, some farmers had come. Then they saw a great crowd of farmers come up to the place of meeting who carried between them a big figure of a man all glistening with gold and silver. And when the farmers already at the place of meeting saw it, they all sprang up and bowed down before this idol. Then it was set down in the middle of the place of assembly. On one side of it sat the farmers, on the other the king and his troops.

Then Guthbrand of the Dales arose and spoke: “Where now is your god, king? I am thinking that he bears his chinbeard rather low, and it would seem to me that you boast less—and also that horned man whom you call bishop and who sits at your side—than you did yesterday; because now our god has come who rules over all and is looking at you with sharp eyes. And I see that you are filled with fear now and hardly dare raise your eyes to look at him. Now give up your idolatry and believe in our god who has all power over you.” And so he ended his speech.

The king said to Kolbein without the farmers observing it, “If so happens that they look away from their god while I speak, then you strike him with your club as hard as you can.”

Then the king arose and spoke: “You have said much to us, this morning. You think it strange that you cannot see our god, but we expect that he will soon come to us. You terrify us with your god who is blind and deaf and cannot save either himself nor others and cannot budge unless he is carried, and I expect that ill will befall him soon. And now look ye to the east, there comes our God now with great light.” Then the sun rose, and all farmers looked at the sun. And at that moment Kolbein struck at their god so he fell to pieces, and out jumped mice as big as cats, and adders, and snakes. This so frightened the farmers that they fled, some to the ships; but when they shoved them into the lake, the water

poured in and filled the boats so they could not board them. And those who ran for their horses could not find them.

Then the king had the farmers called to him, saying he would speak with them. So the farmers turned back and assembled together. The king arose and spoke as follows: "I don't know what all this tumult and running of yours is about. But now you can see what power your god has whom you clad in gold and silver and whom you fed with meat and other provisions, and behold now what creatures were benefited by it—mice and snakes, adders and toads. Ill bestead are they who believe in that sort of thing and will not desist from their folly. Take your gold and finery which is scattered over the meadow and bring it home to your women folks, and do not hereafter hang it on sticks or stones. Now there are two alternatives for you: either you accept Christianity or else do battle with me today, and let them have the victory whom the God we believe in wishes to have it."

Then arose Guthbrand and said, "Great damage have we suffered in our god. But, seeing that he was not able to help us, we shall now believe in the god you believe in." And then all accepted the Christian faith. Then the bishop baptized Guthbrand and his son, and left priests there. And they parted as friends who before had been enemies. And Guthbrand had a church built in the Dales.

Chapter 114. Raumaríki and the Sóleyar District Are Converted

Thereafter, King Ólaf proceeded to Heithmork, baptizing people there; for at the time he had taken the kings prisoner he did not trust himself to go about the country to any distance with but a small force. Hence but few people in Heithmork were Christians. But this time the king did not cease in his efforts till all Heithmork was Christian and consecrated churches were there and priests [to serve them]. Then he proceeded to Thótn and Hathaland, converting people to the true faith, and did not desist till all the people were baptized. From there he proceeded to Hringaríki, and all the people were converted there.

Now the Raumar heard that King Ólaf intended to come to their district, and they collected a large army and said to each other that they had not forgotten the harsh treatment he had meted out to them before, and declared that he was not going to do that again. So when King Ólaf advanced on Raumaríki, the gathered host of the farmers met him at the river called Nitja. They had a huge host of men. And when the two forces met, the farmers at once gave battle; but soon they had the worst of it. They fled right soon, and for their own good they were beaten and accepted Christianity. The king went all through that district, nor did he leave till all the people there had become Christians.

From there he proceeded east to the Sóleyar District and converted that settlement. The [skald] Óttar the Black came to him there and offered to become King Ólaf's man. Earlier that winter Ólaf, the king of the Swedes had died, whereupon Onund Ólafsson became their king. King Ólaf returned to Raumaríki when the winter was nearly ended. Then King Ólaf summoned a well-attended assembly at the place which later was the location for the Heithsævis Assembly.¹ He entered it into the laws that all men from the Uppland districts were to attend this assembly and that the laws enacted there were to apply to all the Uppland districts and as far in other places as has been the case since.

When spring approached he proceeded down to the sea, where he had his ships made ready, and then in spring sailed to Túnsberg. There he resided during the spring, while the town was most populous and wares were brought there from other countries. It had been a good season in all of Vík, and conditions were very favorable all the way to Cape Stath, but north from there famine conditions prevailed.

Chapter 115. The King and Einar Thambarskelfir Are Reconciled

In the spring King Óláf sent messages west through the District of Agthir, and all the way to Rogaland and Horthaland, that neither grain nor malt nor flour from these regions was to be sold abroad and that he would come there with his force in order to be entertained there as was the custom. This message went to all these districts, but the king remained in Vík during the summer and [in fact] proceeded east as far as the very boundary.

Einar Thambarskelfir had been at the court of Óláf, the king of Sweden, ever since his brother-in-law, Earl Svein, had died, and had become a vassal of the Swedish king, receiving large fiefs from him. But after the king's death Einar was eager to come to terms with Óláf the Stout, and there had been messages between them during the spring. And when King Óláf had moored his ships in the [Gaut Elf] River, Einar Thambarskelfir came to him, accompanied by a few men. Then the king and he discussed terms of a reconciliation between them, and it was agreed that Einar was to go north to Trondheim and repossess himself of all his properties as well as of the lands which Bergljót had brought him as her dowry. So Einar journeyed north while the king remained in Vík, where he resided for a long time at Borg during the fall and toward winter.

Chapter 116. Erling Skjálgrsson and Áslák

Erling Skjálgrsson maintained his power, so that from the Sogn Sea in the north to Cape Lithandisness in the east [south] his word prevailed among the farmers; but he had far fewer revenues from the king. Nevertheless he was so greatly feared that no one dared to oppose him. To the king it appeared that Erling had too much power.

There was a certain man called Áslák Fitjaskalli, high-born and powerful. Skjálgr, Erling's father, and Áskel, Áslák's father, were cousins. Áslák was a great friend of King Óláf, and the king had established him in South Horthaland, had given him a large fief and big revenues, and had told him to hold his own against Erling. But it did not go according to his wishes, as soon as the king was not near; for then Erling did what he pleased between them. He was in no way more pliable when Áslák tried to assert himself as his equal. And it went so far that Áslák could not maintain himself in his district. He went to see the king and told him about his dealings with Erling. The king requested Áslák to remain with him "until I meet Erling."

The king sent word to Erling to come to Túnsberg in the spring to see him. When they met, they had a conference, and the king said, "I am told that your power is so great, Erling, that there is no man from the Sogn Sea in the north to Cape Lithandisness who can be sure of his liberty from you. Many people live there who consider themselves entitled to their rights as against persons of no higher birth than they are. Now there is Áslák for example, your kinsman, who considers he has suffered indignities in his dealings with you. Now I do not know whether he himself is to blame for this or whether he is to suffer for it that I have placed him there to take care of my interests. But though I mention him particularly, many others make similar complaints to me, both the men who are my stewards and those who administer my estates and are to entertain me and my following."

Erling replied, "I shall quickly answer these charges," he said, "and deny that I have anything against Áslák or others because they stand in your service. But this I will admit that now, as has been the case for a long time, every one of my kinsmen wants to have more to say than the others. And I shall also acknowledge that I gladly submit to you, King Óláf, but that I find it hard to bow my head to Seal-Thórir, who is thrall-born on all sides, or to the likes of him as to extraction, even though you set so much store by them."

At this point, friends of both went between them, praying them to be reconciled. They said that no man lent greater support to the king than Erling. "If

reconciled. They said that no man lent greater support to the king than Erling, "if you let him be your sincere friend." On the other hand they admonished Erling to yield to the king, and that if he maintained his friendship with him it would be easy for him to do with the others whatever he pleased. Their conference ended with Erling retaining the same revenues he had before, and with all the accusations the king had raised against Erling being dropped. Also Skjálgr, Erling's son, was to be with the king. Thereupon Áslák returned to his estates, reconciled in a fashion with Erling. The latter also returned to his estates and maintained the same power as he had before.

Chapter 117. Ásbjorn Sails South to Buy Grain

There was a man called Sigurth Thórisson. He was the brother of Thórir Hound on Bjarkey Island. Sigurth was married to Sigríth, who was the daughter of Skjálg, and thus was Erling's sister. Their son bore the name of Ásbjorn. He was considered a man of very great promise in his youth. Sigurth had his residence at Thrándarness on the island of Omth.¹ He was exceedingly wealthy, a man of weight. He had not become a retainer of the king, for which reason Thórir Hound was considered the more eminent of the two brothers, for he was a landed-man of the king. But at home on his estate Sigurth was in no way a man of less importance. While heathendom still prevailed he was accustomed to have three sacrifices made every year, one at the beginning of winter, one in midwinter, and the third at the beginning of summer. And when he had adopted Christianity he still persisted in this way of holding feasts. So he had a great banquet in fall for friends, then a Yule feast in winter to which he invited a great many people; and at Easter too he had numerous guests. And in this way he continued as long as he lived. Sigurth died of a sickness. At that time Ásbjorn was eighteen. He inherited his father's estate and continued having three entertainments every year, like his father.

It was but a short time after Ásbjorn had entered into his inheritance when the seasons grew poorer and the harvest failed. Still Ásbjorn continued with his entertainments. It stood him in good stead that [at his place] there was a supply of grain and other provisions from earlier years which he could draw on. But when that year passed, the crops in the next year were in no wise better. Then Sigríth wished that the entertainments were discontinued, either some or all; but Ásbjorn would not. In fall he travelled to visit his friends and bought grain wherever he could obtain it, and was successful in some places. So he continued with his entertainments during the following year. But in the next spring little grain was sown because no seed corn was available. Sigríth spoke about diminishing the number of men-servants. That, Ásbjorn did not want to do, and he continued in all respects the same way that summer. It did not look promising for a good crop, that year either. In addition, the news came from the south that King Ólaf had forbidden grain, malt, and flour to be exported from the south to northern portions of the land.

Then it appeared difficult to Ásbjorn to provision his farm. So he hit upon the plan to set out a cargo boat he owned and which was a seagoing ship in size. It was a good vessel, with all its tackle shipshape. It was equipped with a striped sail. Ásbjorn made ready for the journey, and twenty men went with him. They

sailed south in summer, and we are not told of anything happening on their journey until they arrived in the Kormt Sound one day in the evening and cast anchor at Ogvaldsness. There, on the Island of Kormt, not far from the sea, there stands a large farm which [also] is called Ogvaldsness. That was a royal estate, an excellent farm, and it was run by Thórir Seal, the royal steward. Thórir was of low birth, but had become quite a man. He was a good worker, ready of speech, a very showy person, ambitious and headstrong, and he got along well since he had the king's support. He was rash in his speech and outspoken.

Ásbjorn and his crew were moored there during the night. In the morning after daybreak Thórir went down to the ship, and some men with him. He asked who was the master of that noble ship. Ásbjorn told him his name and mentioned who his father was. Thórir asked whither he was bound and on what errand. Ásbjorn told him that he wanted to buy grain and malt and that, as was the truth, a great famine prevailed in the north, "but we are told that here you had a good season. Would you, farmer, sell us grain? I see that there are big stacks of it here. It would be a great help for us not to have to journey farther."

Thórir answered, "I shall help you, so that you won't need to go farther for buying grain, either here or anywhere else in Rogaland. I may [as well] tell you that you might as well turn back nor sail farther, because neither here nor anywhere else will you obtain grain, because the king has forbidden the sale of grain to people in the north—so turn back, man from Hálogaland. That will be best for you."

Ásbjorn said, "If that is the case, as you say, farmer, that we cannot buy grain, then it is no less my errand to visit my kinsfolk at Sóli and see the homestead of my kinsman Erling."

Thórir said, "How closely are you related to Erling?"

Ásbjorn replied, "My mother is a sister of his."

Thórir said, "In that case it may be that I have spoken rashly, if you are the sister's son of the king of Rogaland."

Then Ásbjorn and his men cast off the tent covering of their ship and turned it seaward. Thórir shouted to them, "Farewell, now, and come back on your return." Ásbjorn said they would do so. They went their way and in the evening arrived at Jathar. Ásbjorn himself went on land with ten men while ten remained to guard the ship. And when Ásbjorn arrived at Erling's residence he was received well, for Erling was greatly pleased to see him. He seated him next to himself and asked him for all the news from the northern part of the country. Ásbjorn told him plainly about his errand [to these parts]. Erling said that was

unfortunate since the king had forbidden the sale of grain. “I do not know of any man here,” he said, “who would dare to break the king’s command. And I find it difficult to keep the friendship of the king because there are many who wish to ruin our friendly relations.”

Ásbjorn said: “It is hard to learn the truth. I was told when I was young that my mother was freeborn on all sides, and also that Erling at Sóli now was the most powerful of her kinsmen, but now I hear you say that you dare not, for fear of the king’s thralls, dispose of your grain as you please.”

Erling looked at him, grinning, and said: “Less do you people of Hálogaland know of the king’s power than we of Rogaland. At home you may be frank of speech, nor is that strange, considering your origin. But now let us drink first, kinsman, and let us see tomorrow what can be done about your business.”

They did so and were merry during the evening. The following day they discussed the matter again, and Erling said, “I have hit upon a plan concerning your purchase of grain. But are you particular with whom you deal, Ásbjorn?” He replied he did not care from whom he bought grain provided it was sold to him lawfully. Erling said, “I should think it likely that my thralls have enough for you to buy all you need. They are not bound by our laws and statutes as others are.” Ásbjorn said he would accept that. Then the thralls were informed about this [proposed] purchase. They produced their grain and malt and sold it to Ásbjorn. He loaded his ship as he had wanted to, and when he was ready to depart Erling accompanied him on his way with gifts of friendship, and they parted as dear friends.

Ásbjorn got a favorable wind and in the evening moored in the Kormt Sound near Ogvaldsness and remained there during the night. Thórir Seal was promptly informed of Ásbjorn’s coming and also, that his ship was deep-laden. Thórir summoned a force of men during the night, so that before daybreak he had sixty men. He went to see Ásbjorn as soon as there was enough light to see, and straightway boarded the ship. At that time Ásbjorn and his men had their clothes on, and he greeted Thórir. The latter asked what cargo Ásbjorn had in his ship. He replied that it was grain and malt. Thórir said, “In that case Erling as usual disregards as idle all edicts of the king, and still is not weary of opposing him in every respect, and it is strange that the king winks at all he does,” and he used violent language for a while. When he stopped, Ásbjorn said that the grain had been the property of Erling’s thralls. Thórir answered sharply that he was not fooled by his and Erling’s tricks. “And now, Ásbjorn, you will have to step on land, or else we shall heave you all overboard, because we don’t want to be crowded by you while we clear the ship.”

Ásbjorn saw he did not have enough men to fight Thórir, so he and his crew went up on land; but Thórir had all the cargo unloaded. When the ship was cleared, Thórir went through the ship. He said, “Wonderfully fine sails these people from Hálogaland have! Take the old sail from our cargo boat and give them that! It is good enough for them as they sail with an empty bottom.” So they did and exchanged the sails.

Ásbjorn and his men went their way, not being able to do anything about it. He sailed north along the land nor stopped till he reached home at the beginning of winter, and that journey became widely known. So Ásbjorn was relieved of all the trouble of preparing for feasting that winter.

Thórir [Hound] invited to his Yule entertainment both Ásbjorn, his mother, and all those they wanted to have along. But Ásbjorn declined and remained at home. It appeared that Thórir considered Ásbjorn to have reacted unhandsomely to his invitation. He made fun of his expedition. “There is,” he said, “a great difference between us kinsmen of Ásbjorn in the honor he does us, and he makes that plain, seeing the effort he put forth this summer to visit Erling and his kin; whereas now he disdains to come to me who lives next door to him! I don’t know but he fears that Seal-Thórir be there on every islet.” Such sayings of Thórir, and others like them, came to Ásbjorn’s ears. He was mightily displeased with his voyage, and all the more so now, hearing this mock and laughter made of it. He remained at home that winter, going to no entertainments.

Chapter 118. Ásbjorn Slays Thórir

Ásbjorn owned a warship. It was a swift-sailing ship with twenty rowers' benches and stood in a large boathouse. After Candlemas [February 2nd] he launched it, had the tackle brought out, and the vessel made ready. Then he summoned his friends, so he had nearly ninety men, all well armed. And when he was finished with his preparations and had a favorable breeze he sailed south along the land. On their journey, however, he had to wait rather long for favorable breezes. As they came south they sailed in the open sea rather than by the generally travelled fairway [within the skerries], whenever that was possible. Nothing happened on their journey before—on the evening of the fifth day after Easter—they arrived at the Island of Kormt, on its ocean side. That is a large island, long and for the most part not broad, and it lies on the outside of the fairway. On the land side there is a large settlement, but most of the island on the side facing the sea is uninhabited.

When they had stretched the awnings over the ship Ásbjorn said, "Now I want you to stay behind here and wait for me, but I shall go up on the island to reconnoiter and see how matters stand on the island, for we have no information about that." Ásbjorn was meanly clad and wore a long hood. He had a staff with a hook on it in his hand and was girt with a sword under his clothes. He went up on land and crossed the island. And when he came to a hill from which he could see Kormt Sound and the farm on Ogvaldsness he observed a great stir of men both on sea and land, and he noticed that all the people were going toward the farm on Ogvaldsness. That seemed strange to him.

Then he went up to the farm and the place where the servants were preparing food. Very soon he gathered from their talk that King Óláf had arrived there for his entertainment, and also that the king had sat down to table. Then Ásbjorn went up to the house [where people were eating], and when he came to the entrance hall he saw some people coming out, and others, going in, but no one took any notice of him. The door to the [dining] room stood open, and he could see Thórir Seal standing before the table where the high-seat was. It was late in the evening by then. Ásbjorn heard people ask Thórir what had happened between him and Ásbjorn, and also heard Thórir make a long story of it; and he thought Thórir plainly was onesided in his account. Then he heard a man ask, "How did Ásbjorn bear it when you cleared his ship?"

Thórir said: "He bore that with some composure, though not too well, when we cleared his ship; but when we took his sail he blubbered."

When Ásbjorn heard that he drew his sword quickly and rushed into the hall

When Ásbjorn heard that, he drew his sword quickly and rushed into the hall and straightway dealt Thórir a blow. It fell on his neck, the head dropped on the table before the king, and the body before his feet. The table cloths were all spattered with blood, both above and below. The king ordered Ásbjorn to be seized, which was done, and he was led out. Then the dishes and the table cloths were removed, and also Thórir's body, and everything stained with blood was swept clean. The king was in a towering rage but kept control of himself as was his habit.

Skjálǫg, the son of Erling, arose and went before the king. He spoke thus, "Now matters have come to such a pass that we must look to you, sire, as often has been the case, for a remedy of this situation. I shall offer to pay an indemnity so that this man may keep life and limbs; but I shall leave it to you to decide about all else."

The king replied, "Is it not true, Skjálǫg, that it is a deed deserving death for a man to break the peace at Easter; and again, that he killed a man in the king's lodgings; and third—which will seem to you and your father but a small matter—that he used my feet as the chopping block?"

Skjálǫg answered, "It is unfortunate, sire, that the deed seems hateful to you, for otherwise a good piece of work has been done. But if it is abhorrent to you, sire, and of grave import, then I expect, [to offset it], that I deserve much for my services to you. Many will say that this may well comport with your dignity."

The king replied, "Although I set great value on you, Skjálǫg, I shall not for your sake break the law and debase my royal dignity."

Thereupon Skjálǫg turned to go and left the room. Twelve men had been with him, and all of them followed him, and many others left with him. Skjálǫg said to Thórarin, the son of Nef jólf, "If you wish to keep my friendship, then do all you can that the man is not executed before Sunday."

Thereupon Skjálǫg and his men launched a skiff with oars which he owned, and rowed south with all their might and arrived at Jathar at daybreak. They forthwith went up to the farm and the loft in which Erling slept. Skjálǫg threw his weight against the door so that it broke from the hinges. With that, Erling and other people inside awoke. He was the first on his feet, grabbed his shield and sword, and running to the door he asked who it was that burst in that way. Skjálǫg told him and bade him unlock the door. Erling said, "I might have thought it was you, rushing about so witlessly; or is anyone pursuing you?" Then the door was opened.

Skjálǫg said: "Even though you may think I am headlong, I expect that Áshjorn, your kinsman, would not think I am going too fast, sitting as he does

...going, you know, we can not wait and going too fast, being as he was
north in Ogvaldsness in irons. And it is more manly to hurry to his aid.” Then
son and father exchanged a few words, and Skjálǫ told Erling all the
circumstances how Seal-Thórir was slain.

Chapter 119. Thórarin Delays Ásbjorn's Execution

King Ólaf seated himself again, after the room had been put in order, and he was in a towering rage. He asked what had been done about the slayer, and was told that he was kept outside on the porch under guard. The king said, "Why has he not been killed?" Thórarin Nefjólfs son replied, "Would you not call it murder, sire, to kill a man at night?"¹ Then the king said, "Put him in irons and kill him in the morning." Then Ásbjorn was put in irons and locked in a house during the night.

On the following day the king listened to matins. Thereupon he attended meetings and sat there till high mass. Then he went to mass, and as he left it he said to Thórarin, "Is the sun high enough now that Ásbjorn, your friend, can be hanged?"

Thórarin bowed to the king and said, "Sire, the bishop last Friday said that the king who has power over all suffered [great] trials; and also that he is blessed who does like him, rather than like them who condemned him to die or those who killed him. It is not long till morning now, and then it will be a week day on which all actions are permitted."

The king looked at him and said, "You shall have your way, he shall not be put to death today. Take him into your custody now and guard him; but be assured that your life is at stake if he escapes in whatsoever fashion."

Then the king went his way, and Thórarin went to where Ásbjorn sat in irons. Then Thórarin released him from his fetters and took him to a small room where he had food and drink given him. He told him what the king would do to him if Ásbjorn ran away. Ásbjorn assured Thórarin that he need not fear that. Thórarin sat there by him for a long time during the day and slept there at night.



The king walks through the lines of Erling's men.

On Saturday the king arose and went to matins. Then he attended meetings, to which many farmers had come, and they brought up many complaints. The king sat there for a long time during the day, and it was rather late when he went to high mass. Following that, the king sat down to table, and when he had finished eating he drank for a while before the tables were removed. Thórarin went up to the priest who had charge of the church and gave him two ounces of silver to ring the bell for the holiday as soon as the king's tables were removed.

Now when the king had drunk such time as seemed to him sufficient, the tables were removed, and the king said that the time had come for the thralls to bring out the slayer and execute him. At this moment the bell was rung for the holiday. Thereupon Thórarin went before the king and said, "Peace ought to be granted this man for the duration of the holidays even though he has done evil."

The king said, "You guard him, Thórarin, so that he will not escape." Then the king went to church for the nones,² while Thórarin continued sitting by Ásbjorn during the day. On Sunday the bishop came to Ásbjorn to shrive him, and gave him permission to attend high mass. Thereupon Thórarin approached the king and asked him to provide men to guard the slayer. "I now wish to have no more to do with him," he said. The king thanked him for what he had done and set men to guard Ásbjorn. They put him in irons. And when people went to high mass, Ásbjorn was led to the church. He remained standing outside with those who guarded him. The king and all the people heard the mass standing.

Chapter 120. Erling Skjálgrsson Is Reconciled with King Óláf

Now we must revert to what we told before, when Erling and his son Skjálgr took counsel what to do in this difficult situation. At the urging of Skjálgr and others of Erling's sons it was agreed on to collect troops and send out war-arrows. Soon a large force collected and embarked on ships, and when they counted the men they found they had nearly fifteen hundred [1800]. They sailed with that force and on Sunday arrived at Ogvaldsness on the Isle of Kormt. They went up to the buildings there with all their force and got there at the time the reading of the gospels was finished. They straightway went up to the church, freed Ásbjorn, and broke his chains.

Hearing all this tumult and clash of weapons, all who were outside fled into the church; and they who were inside looked out, all except the king. He stood there and did not look around. Erling and his men placed themselves on both sides of the street which led from the church to the [meeting] hall. Erling and his sons stood close to the hall. But when the clerics had finished singing the mass, the king forthwith left the church. He was the first to proceed through the line of men, and after him came one after the other of his men.

When the king arrived at the hall, Erling was standing in the doorway and bowed down before him and saluted him. The king made answer, praying God to help him. Then Erling spoke as follows: "I am told that my kinsman Ásbjorn has committed a grave offence, and it is unfortunate, now it is done, that you, sire, are displeased thereat. Now I have come for the purpose of offering to you for him reconciliation and compensation such as you yourself shall determine, against security for him of life and limb and permission to stay in the country."

The king answered, "It would appear to me, Erling, that you probably think that you now have the power to decide what is to be done about Ásbjorn. I do not see why you now act as though you were to offer compensation for him. I suppose you have collected an army for the purpose of deciding between us."

Erling replied, "It is you who are to decide, and decide in such fashion that we may part reconciled."

The king said, "Do you mean to overawe me, Erling? Is that why you have such a large force?"

"No," he replied.

The king said, "But if there is something else at the bottom of this, do not expect me to flee."

Erling said, "No need to remind me that up to now whenever we met I had but

Erling said, "No need to remind me that up to now whenever we met I had but a small force to oppose to yours. Now I shall not conceal from you what I have in mind; and that is, that we part reconciled, or else I do not expect that I shall risk meeting you again."

At this point Erling's face was as red as blood. The Bishop Sigurth stepped forth and spoke to the king: "Sire, I shall ask you, for God's sake, to obey me and be reconciled to Erling on the terms he has set, that this man have safety of life and limbs, but you yourself determine all conditions for a reconciliation."

The king said, "You decide!"

Then the bishop said, "You, Erling, give the king such assurances as he may choose, then let Ásbjorn give himself up to the king and ask for mercy." Erling gave assurances, which the king accepted. Then Ásbjorn gave himself up to the king's mercy and kissed his hand. Thereupon Erling departed with his force. There were no exchanges of courtesies between them.

Thereupon the king went into the [council] room with Ásbjorn and revealed the conditions for their reconciliation: "The first point for reconciliation between us two, Ásbjorn, is that you submit to the laws of the land in this, that he who kills a servant of the king shall take upon himself the same service, if the king so wills. And it is my will that you take upon yourself this stewardship which Seal-Thórir held and manage this my estate on Ogvaldsness." Ásbjorn said that it should be as the king wished, "yet I must go first to my estate and arrange matters there." The king was agreeable to that.

Thereupon the king proceeded to another entertainment arranged for him, and Ásbjorn joined his companions for the return journey. They had been anchored in a hidden cove during all the time Ásbjorn was away. They had got news of what had happened with him, and would not sail away before they knew for certain what the outcome was. Then Ásbjorn went his way and did not stop, that spring, till he reached his estate in the north. People now called him Ásbjorn the Slayer of Seal-[Thórir].

Now when Ásbjorn had been at home for a little while, he and his kinsman Thórir [the Hound] met and discussed matters. Thórir asked Ásbjorn about all the particulars of his journey, and Ásbjorn told him how it had been. Then Thórir said, "Then I suppose you think you have removed the humiliation of having been robbed, last fall?"

"Yes, I do," said Ásbjorn. "Or what do you think, kinsman?"

"That I shall tell you quickly," said Thórir, "your former journey south was a great humiliation [for you], yet it could be remedied to some extent; but this

journey has resulted in your and your kinsmen's shame if it comes to pass that you become the king's thrall and the equal of such a miserable wretch as Thórir Seal. Now behave like a man and rather remain here on your own estate. We, your kinsmen, shall support you so that you will never hereafter get into such straits again." To Ásbjorn this counsel seemed excellent; and before they parted, it was agreed upon that he should remain on his own estate and not go to see the king again or enter his service; and so he did and stayed at home on his estate.

Chapter 121. The King Converts the People of Vors and Valdres

After King Ólaf and Erling Skjálgsson had met on Ogvaldsness, disagreements arose anew between them, and they grew till there was full hostility between them. King Ólaf proceeded about Horthaland on his visitations during the spring, at which time he went up to Vors, because he had learned that people there were not firm in the faith. He held meetings with the farmers at a place called Vang. The farmers came there in great strength and fully armed. The king bade them become Christians, but the farmers offered him battle instead, and it went so far that both sides drew up their forces in battle array. Then it so happened that fear entered into the hearts of the farmers so that no one would stand first in the ranks, and the upshot was—and that was to their advantage—that they submitted to the king and received the baptism. The king did not depart from there before all had accepted Christianity.

One day as the king rode on his way and sang his psalms, he came right opposite the burial mounds.¹ He stopped and said: “Let these my words go forth to everybody, that I hold it advisable that never after should a king of Norway fare between these mounds.” And it is commonly reported that most kings have avoided doing so.

Then the king proceeded to the Ostrarfjord and came to his ships, whereafter he went north to Sogn District, where he held visitations during the summer. But as fall approached, he moved into the inner part of the fjord, then proceeded inland to Valdres. That valley was heathen still. The king travelled as fast as he could to the lake² and, taking the farmers by surprise, seized their boats and went aboard them with all his followers. Then he called for a meeting with the farmers, arranging for it to be so near the shore that he had complete access to the boats in case he thought he required it. The farmers came to the meeting with a great host, all armed. The king called on them to accept Christianity, but the farmers cried out against him, asking him to stop speaking, and right away made a great din, clashing their weapons together. But when the king saw that they would not listen to what he would teach them, and also that he had too great a host to contend with, he gave his speech a different turn and asked if there were any persons present at the assembly who had grievances against others, and whether they would like to have him arbitrate between them. It soon became clear from the talk of the farmers that many of them who had banded together to oppose Christianity had cases outstanding against others. But no sooner did the farmers begin to set forth their cases than every one of them tried to get others to

support his case, and with that the whole day passed. In the evening the assembly disbanded.

When the farmers had been informed that the king was proceeding through Valdres and that he had arrived in the settled areas, they had sent out the war-
arrows and summoned both free men and thralls, and had advanced with that
host against the king, so that far and wide the land was void of people. The
farmers held their ranks together when the meeting was disbanded. The king
became aware of that, and when he boarded his ships, he rowed straight across
the lake during the night. There he had his men enter the settlements and burn
and plunder, and on the day following they rowed from headland to headland,
burning all the settlements. But when the farmers who were gathered together
saw the smoke and fire rising from their houses, they dispersed [in a hurry], each
one leaving and trying to get home to find his home folk. But as soon as there
was a breach in their ranks, one after the other left till the whole host broke up
into small groups. But the king crossed the lake again and burned the
countryside on both shores. Then the farmers came up to him, begging for
mercy, and offered their submission. He gave quarter to everyone who came to
him asking it, and also spared their property. And then no one any longer
opposed becoming Christian. Then the king had all the people baptized and took
hostages from the farmers. The king remained there for a long time that fall and
had his ships drawn across the portage between the lakes.³ The king did not
much trust the farmers. He had churches built and consecrated, and placed
priests there to serve them. But when he expected the advent of freezing
weather, he went further inland till he arrived at Thótn. Mention is made by
Arnór the Earls' Skald of King Óláf having set fires in the Upplands, at the time
he composed a poem about the king's brother Harald:

274. Inborn is it, for the (85.)
Ynglings' scion—his wrath was
felt by Uppland folk—to
fire the farmers' houses.
Would not the wealthy yeomen—
woe was in the making—
listen to their liege-lord;
led they were to the gallows.

Thereupon King Óláf proceeded north through the Dales and over the
mountains and did not stop till he arrived in the Trondheim District and
Nitharós. There he prepared winter quarters and dwelt there during the winter.
This was the tenth winter that he was king.

Earlier, during the summer, Einar Thambarskelfir left the land, sailing first west to England, where he met his brother-in-law Hákon, with whom he remained for a while. Then he proceeded to the court of King Knút, from whom he received large presents. After that, Einar sailed south across the sea and made his way south to Rome, returning the following summer, when he repaired to his estates. King Óláf and he did not meet, that time.

Chapter 122. Magnús Is Given His Name by the Skald Sigvat

Álfhild was the name of a woman who was called the King's Hand-Maid. However, she was descended from a good family. She was very beautiful. She stayed at the court of King Ólaf. Now when spring came it so happened that 1024
Álfhild was with child, and the king's confidants knew that he most likely was the father of this child. One night Álfhild was in labor. Only a few persons were present, some women, a priest, and the skald Sigvat, but few others. Álfhild had a difficult delivery and was at death's door. She gave birth to a boy child, and for some time they did not know for sure whether the child was alive. But when the child drew breath, though very weakly, the priest bade Sigvat go to the king and tell him about it. He replied, "I dare not for any consideration wake the king, because he has forbidden everybody to wake him out of his sleep before he awakens himself."

The priest answered, "It is imperative that this child be baptized, for it seems unlikely that it will live."

Sigvat said, "I had rather risk your baptizing the child than that I wake the king; and I shall take on myself the responsibility to name it." And so they did: the boy was baptized and called Magnús.

The morning after, when the king was awake and dressed, he was told of what had happened. Then the king had Sigvat called to him and said, "How did you dare to have my child baptized before I knew of it?"

Sigvat answered, "Because I thought it better to give God two souls, rather than one to the devil."

The king said, "Just how was there danger of that?"

Sigvat answered, "The child was nigh to death, and if it had died a heathen it would have been the devil's, but now it is God's. For another matter I knew that, even though you were furious at me, nothing would be involved but my life; but if you will that I lose it because of this, then I expect that I shall be with God."

The king said, "Why did you baptize the boy to be called Magnús? That name does not run in our kin."

Sigvat answered, "I named him after King Karla-Magnús,¹ for him I knew to be the greatest man in the world."

Then the king said, "You are a man of great good luck, Sigvat. It is not to be wondered at that good fortune attends wisdom. But it is strange that, as sometimes happens, good luck attends unwise men, and unwise counsel turns

out to be fortunate.” And then the king was exceedingly glad. That boy was brought up and soon showed promise as he advanced in years.



Thórir the Hound with the spear, Sealkiller.

Chapter 123. Ásmund Grankelsson Slays Ásbjorn

That same spring King Ólaf assigned to Ásmund Grankelsson half of the stewardship of Hálogaland which Hárek of Thjóttá had had in its entirety, some of it for revenue, some as a fief. Ásmund owned a skiff with a crew of nearly thirty men, all well armed. When Ásmund arrived in the north, he and Hárek encountered one another, and Ásmund told him what the king had decided about the disposition of the stewardship, in proof of which he showed him the tokens of the king. Hárek said that the king had the power to decide who was to have the stewardship, “but the former rulers did not diminish our dominion to which we are entitled from the king by reason of our birth, and assign them to farmers’ sons who never before had such power in their hands.” And though it was clear that Hárek greatly disliked it, he let Ásmund take over the stewardship as the king had ordered.

Then Ásmund returned to his father’s estate, where he remained for a short while, then proceeded to his stewardship north in Hálogaland. And when he came north to Langey Island he found dwelling there two brothers, Gunnstein and Karli. Both were wealthy and men of great distinction. Gunnstein, the older of the brothers, managed the estate. Karli was a handsome man and one who loved a showy appearance, but both were accomplished in many things. Ásmund was well received by them and dwelled there for a time, gathering what revenues he could from the district. Karli talked with Ásmund about wanting to go south with him to meet King Ólaf and to endeavor to find a place among the king’s bodyguard. Ásmund encouraged him in this, promising him to say a word for him to the king so that Karli might attain what he wished. Then Karli prepared to accompany Ásmund.

Ásmund learned that Ásbjorn the Slayer of Seal, with the cargo ship he owned, manned with nearly twenty men, had sailed south to the meeting at Vágar,¹ and that he was at that time expected to be coming from the south. Ásmund and his men proceeded south along the land. They had contrary winds, though not strong ones. Ships came sailing toward them which belonged to the Vágar [fishing] fleet. In all secrecy they inquired concerning the whereabouts of Ásbjorn, and were told that he was probably on his way back from the south.

Ásmund and Karli shared one bunk and were the closest friends. One day as Ásmund was rowing along some sound, a cargo ship came sailing toward them. It was easily recognizable, having brightly painted bows, colored both white and red, and a sail of striped material. Then Karli said to Ásmund, “Often you have said that you were very eager to see Ásbjorn the Killer of Seal. I can’t tell one

ship from another if that isn't the one he is sailing on."

Ásmund replied, "Be so good, comrade, and tell me if you recognize him."

At that moment the ships ran alongside each other, and Karli said, "There he sits at the rudder, the Slayer of Seal, the one in a blue kirtle."

Ásmund answered, "I shall give him a red kirtle," and hurled a spear at Ásbjorn the Slayer of Seal. It struck him in the middle and went through him so that the spear stood fast in the head-board behind him. Ásbjorn fell down dead by the rudder. Then each vessel sailed on its way.

They brought Ásbjorn's body north to Thrándarness. There Sigríth had messengers sent to Thórir the Hound on the Island of Bjarkey. He arrived when the body of Ásbjorn had been prepared [for burial] according to their customs. And when Thórir and his men were about to depart, Sigríth chose gifts for her friends. And as she accompanied Thórir to his ship she said before parting with him, "The fact is, Thórir, that Ásbjorn, my son, followed your kindly advice. It was not granted to him to repay you for what it was worth. Now, though I am not able to do as well as he would have done, still I am minded to do what I can. Here is a gift I shall give you, and I wish it may serve you well." It was a spear. "Here is the spear that pierced my son Ásbjorn, with his blood still on it. It will help you to remember that it came from the wound you saw on Ásbjorn, your brother's son. It would be a manly deed if you parted with it in such fashion that it stood in the breast of Óláf the Stout. And now I say," she continued, "that you will be called by everyone a vile wretch if you do not avenge Ásbjorn." With that she turned away.

Thórir was so enraged at her words that he could not make answer, and so distracted was he that he did not let go of the spear and that he did not watch out for the pier, and he would have fallen in the water if men had not taken hold of him and supported him when he went aboard his ship. It was a spear of no great length, adorned with figures [runes?], which had a gold inlaid socket. Then Thórir and his men rowed off and back to Bjarkey.

Ásmund and his companions sailed on their way till they arrived in Trondheim in the south, and repaired to the court of King Óláf, where Ásmund told him of what had occurred on his journey. Karli became one of the king's bodyguard. Ásmund and he kept up their friendship. But the exchange of words between them before the slaying of Ásbjorn was not kept secret, because they themselves told the king about it. And here the saying proved true that everyone has a friend among his enemies. There were some who fixed this in their minds, and from them it reached Thórir the Hound.

Chapter 124. King Óláf's Achievements

As spring wore on King Óláf got his ships ready. Later in summer, he sailed south along the land, had meetings with the farmers, helped some to come to an agreement, and confirmed the land in the faith. He also collected the revenues due to the crown wherever he went. In the fall the king proceeded east all the way to the boundary. By that time King Óláf had Christianized all the larger settlements and had also regulated the laws over all the country. Moreover he had subjected the Orkneys to his rule, as was written above. Also, he had sent messages to friends he had made, both in Iceland, Greenland, and in the Faroes. King Óláf had sent to Iceland wood for churches and of it was built the church on Thingvellir [Plain], where the Althing is held. With it he sent the large bell which is still there. That was after the Icelanders had changed their laws and made them conform to the ones King Óláf had ordained. After that, many men of distinction came from Iceland and entered the king's service, men such as Thorkel Eyólfsson, Thorleik Bollason, Thóρθ Kolbeinsson, Thóρθ Barkarsson, Thorgeir Hávararson, and Thormóth Kolbrúnarskáld [Skald of Coalbrows].¹ King Óláf had sent gifts of friendship to many chieftains in Iceland, and they in return had sent him such things as were available there and which they expected would be acceptable to him. However, in this show of friendship by the king toward Iceland there dwelled some considerations which became plain later on.

Chapter 125. The Icelanders Refuse King Ólaf's Request for the Island of Grímsey

1024 King Ólaf that summer sent Thórarin Nefjólfsson to Iceland with his message. Thórarin steered his ship out of the Trondheimfjord at the same time as the king, and followed him south to Mær. Thereupon Thórarin sailed out to sea and had such a fresh fair wind that he reached land at Eyrar in Iceland in eight half-days. He straightway rode to the Althing, arriving there as men were assembled on the Mount of Laws, and went straight up to it. After the judicial decisions had been made, Thórarin Nefjólfsson spoke as follows: "I parted from King Ólaf Haraldsson four days ago. He gave me greetings hither to all the people, both men and women, the young as well as the old, the rich as well as the poor—both God's and his greetings—and bade me say that he will be your king if you will be his subjects, and both be friends and help one another in all things of good report." There was a favorable response to his speech, all saying that they would gladly be friends of the king if he would be a friend to them.

Thereupon Thórarin continued, "Together with his salutations, the king would in all friendship ask of the people of the Northern Quarter that they give him the island or skerry outside of the Eyafjord which they call Grímsey Island; against which he would give such good things from his own land which they would ask him for. He sent word to Guthmund of Mothruvellir to support this request, because he has been informed that Guthmund had most influence in those parts."

Guthmund replied, "I would gladly have the friendship of King Ólaf, and would consider that of greater advantage to me than the outlying skerry he asks for. However, the king has not been correctly informed that I have more influence in this matter than others, because it has recently been made into common pasture. Let there be a meeting about this of all those who have most use of the island."

Thereupon people went to their booths, and the men of the Northern Quarter had a meeting, where everyone gave his opinion. Guthmund favored the proposal and many others followed him. Then some asked why Einar, his brother, did not say anything about it. "It would seem to us," they said, "that he sees clearest in most matters."

Then Einar answered, "I am chary of my words about this business, because no one has asked me. But if you wish to have my opinion, then I would say that it were best for the people of our country not to subject themselves here to pay tribute to King Ólaf, nor to all those taxes such as he has imposed on

tribute to King Olaf, not to all those taxes such as he has imposed on Norwegians. And we would impose that bondage not only on ourselves but both on ourselves and our sons and all our people who live in this land; and that bondage this land would never be free or rid of. And though this king be a good one, as I believe he is, yet it is likely to be the case, as always hitherto, that when there is a change in the succession there will be some kings who are good and some who are bad. But if our countrymen would preserve their freedom, such as they have had ever since they settled here, then it would be best not to let the king get any hold here, whether it be a piece of land or our promises to pay fixed taxes, which might be interpreted as due from subjects. But I would consider it appropriate for those of us who wish to, to send the king gifts of friendship—hawks or horses, tents or sails or other things which are suitable for sending. That would be a good investment if it is repaid by friendship. But concerning the Island of Grímsey I would say this, that even if nothing is taken from it for supplying people with food, yet a host of men could find food there. And if some army from abroad [made it their base and] sailed from there with their warships, I think many a cotter would find himself in a predicament.”

And when Einar had spoken and made the state of affairs clear, then all the men were agreed that this should not come about, and Thórarin understood what the outcome of his mission would be.

Chapter 126. The Icelanders Debate Whether to Accept the King's Invitation

On the following day Thórarin went to the Mount of Laws and again spoke about his mission, beginning in this wise: “King Óláf sent word to his friends in this land, mentioning Guthmund Eyólfsson, Snorri the Priest, Thorkel Eyólfsson, Skapti the Lawspeaker, and Thorstein Hallsson. He sent word to you to this effect that you should come to see him and receive his offer of friendship.”

They answered this speech thanking the king for his invitation, and said that they would tell Thórarin their decision about that journey when they had taken counsel among themselves and their friends. But when the chieftains discussed the matter among themselves, everyone gave his opinion about this journey. Snorri the Priest and Skapti advised against the risk of all of them journeying to Norway at the same time, as they were the men who had most to say in governing the country. They said that this message rather roused their suspicion about what Einar had mentioned, that the king might consider some coercion against the Icelanders if he had the power. Guthmund and Thorkel Eyólfsson strongly urged them to yield to King Óláf's call and thought it might redound to their great honor. But after having debated the matter between them, they came to the decision that they themselves should not go, but each send a man in their stead whom they considered most fit for the journey. Having agreed on that, they parted at this assembly; and nothing came of any journey abroad during that summer.

Thórarin sailed back the same summer, and in fall went to see King Óláf and told him about the outcome of his mission, and also, that the chieftains would come to Norway, those to whom he had sent word, or else their sons.

Chapter 127. King Óláf Demands Tribute from the Faroe Islands

1027 That summer there came from the Faroes to Norway, at the invitation of King Óláf, Gilli the Lawspeaker, Leif Ozurarson, Thorálf from Dimon, and many other farmers' sons. Thránd in Gata made preparations to go, but when he was ready to leave, he had a heart attack which incapacitated him, and he stayed behind. Now when the Faroese came to see King Óláf, he called them together and met with them. Then he made clear to them the reason behind his requesting their coming, and told them he wanted to have tribute from the Faroes, and also that the people of the Faroes were to have the laws which King Óláf would give them. In this meeting it became apparent that the king wished to have assurances concerning this matter from the Faroese who had come, whether they would confirm this agreement with oaths, offering those of them who seemed to him most eminent to become his followers and to receive from him high rank and become his friends. But from the words of the king they inferred that there might be reason to suspect how matters would turn out for them if they would not submit to all the king demanded of them. And although there were several other meetings before the matter was settled, yet in the end the king obtained all that he demanded. They offered their submission to the king, Leif, Gilli, and Thórálf becoming members of his bodyguard, and all in their company swearing oaths to King Óláf that they would maintain in the Faroes the laws and statutes which he ordained for them and pay the tribute he imposed.

Thereupon the Faroese made ready to journey home. At their parting the king made friendly gifts to all those who had sworn fealty to him. They departed when finished with their preparations for the voyage. But the king also had a ship readied and equipped with a crew, and sent men with it who were to receive the tribute the Faroese were to pay him. They were delayed in their preparations; and of their journey we are told only that they never returned and that no tribute was brought back the summer following, because they had not made the Faroes. No one had come there to levy tribute.

Chapter 128. The King Arranges for the Marriages of Kinsmen and Friends

In the fall King Ólaf proceeded to Vík and sent word to the Uppland districts to prepare entertainment against his coming there, for he intended to proceed about the Uppland districts during the winter. Thereupon he started on his progress to these districts and remained there that winter at the entertainments, putting to rights such matters as appeared to him to need correction, and mending the practice of Christianity where it seemed to him called for.

When the king was in Heithmork, Ketil Kálf of Hringuness sued for the hand of Gunnhild, the daughter of Sigurth Sýr and Ásta, and thus King Ólaf's [half-] sister. The king thus had to give his consent and make provisions for this marriage. He did this gladly because he knew that Ketil was high-born and wealthy, wise, and a great chieftain. He had for a long time been a close friend of King Ólaf, as has been told above. For all these reasons the king was glad to consent to this marriage, and King Ólaf was present at the marriage feast.

From there he proceeded north to Guthbrands Dale and was entertained there. A certain man by the name of Thóρθ Gothormsson lived on the farm called Steig. Thóρθ was the most powerful man in the northern part of the Dale. And when the king and he met, Thóρθ sued for the hand of Isríth, the daughter of Guthbrand, who was the maternal aunt of King Ólaf; hence the king was responsible for giving his consent, and after the matter had been discussed, it was agreed that the match was acceptable, and Isríth was given in marriage to Thóρθ. Thereafter he became a sincere friend of King Ólaf, and with him, many other kinsmen and friends of his who followed his lead.

Thereupon King Ólaf returned south through Thótn and Hathaland, thence to Hringaríki and to Vík. In spring he journeyed to Túnsberg, remaining

1025

there for a long time while the fair and supplies were at their height.

Then he had his fleet put in order and had a great number of followers about him.

Chapter 129. The Ship Sent to the Faroes to Demand Tribute Disappears

This summer there came from Iceland, at the request of King Ólaf, Stein, the son of Skapti the Lawspeaker, Thórodd, the son of Snorri the Priest, Gellir, the son of Thorkel, Egil, the son of Sithu-Hall and brother of Thorstein. Guthmund Eyólfsson had died the winter before. These Icelanders at once at the earliest opportunity repaired to King Ólaf's court. And when they met the king they were made welcome and stayed with him as a group.

That same summer King Ólaf learned that the ship he had sent to the Faroes the previous summer to collect the tribute, had vanished and never made land so far as could be learned. Then the king equipped another ship with a crew to sail to the Faroes to collect the tribute. They got under way across the ocean, but nothing was heard of them afterwards, no more than the first. And there were many surmises what had become of these ships.

Chapter 130. King Knút Lays Claim to Norway

Knút [Canute] the Powerful, by some called the Old, at that time was king of England and of Denmark. He was the son of Svein Forkbeard, the son of Harald. Their line had ruled Denmark for a long time. Harald Gormsson, the grandfather of Knút had taken possession of Norway after the fall of Harald, the son of Gunnhild, and laid it under tribute, setting over it Earl Hákon the Powerful to defend the land. Svein, the son of Harald, and king of Denmark, ruled Norway and had set over it to defend the country, Earl Eirík, the son of Hákon. He and his brother, Svein Hákonarson, ruled over the land until Eirík had gone west to England at the bidding of Knút the Powerful, his brother-in-law. In his place, to govern his dominion in Norway, Eirík left Earl Hákon, who was his son and the sister's son of Knút the Powerful. Now when Ólaf the Stout came to Norway, he first of all captured Earl Hákon and deposed him, as was written above. Thereupon Hákon repaired to Knút, his maternal uncle, and stayed with him all the time to this point in our story.

Knút the Powerful had won England with battles and warfare, and had a long struggle until the people of the land were obedient to him. But when he had gained complete domination of the land he came to think of the claims he had on the dominion he did not have the governance of himself, and that was Norway. He considered that he possessed all of Norway as his inheritance; and Hákon, his sister's son, likewise considered that he had a claim on part of it, and that he had lost it dishonorably. One reason why Knút and Hákon had kept quiet about their claim to Norway was that, at first, when Ólaf Haraldsson came to the land, everybody to a man acclaimed him and wanted to have him as king over all the country. But afterwards, when men feared losing their independence through his power, some left the country. Very many men of influence, and also sons of powerful yeomen, had joined King Knút under various pretexts. And to every one of them who came to him and whom he wished to attach to himself, he gave handfuls of money. Also, at his court one could see much greater splendor than in other places, both as to the multitudes there every day, and as to other furnishings in the buildings he had and occupied himself. Knút the Powerful received tribute and taxes from the richest nations of the North; but in the same measure as he received more income than other kings, he also gave more than any other soveran. In all his lands there was such complete peace that no one dared to break it, and the people themselves enjoyed peace and their ancient laws. For these reasons he was greatly famed in all lands. And many of the men who came from Norway complained to Earl Hákon about the tyranny there, and some even to the king, [intimating] that they were inclined to revert to King

some even to the king, [implying] that they were inclined to revert to King Knút and the earl and from them receive back their liberties. These utterances pleased the earl, and he pleaded with the king, requesting him to find out whether King Ólaf would yield his kingdom to them or at least come to some terms to share it with him. There were many who pleaded for the earl in this matter.

Chapter 131. King Óláf Answers King Knút's Claim

Knút the Powerful sent ambassadors east to Norway, and they were splendidly equipped for the journey. They carried with them the letters and seal of Knút, king of England. In the spring they arrived at the court of Óláf Haraldsson, the king of Norway, in Túnsberg. But when the king was told that ambassadors had come from Knút the Powerful, he became angry and said that Knút was not likely to send ambassadors to him with any message likely to be of advantage either to him or to his adherents; and it was some days before the ambassadors were allowed to have an audience with the king. But when they received permission to have it they went before the king, producing the letters of King Knút, and read the message contained in them; which was that King Knút claimed as his possession all of Norway and that his forbears had that kingdom before him, but that because King Knút would offer peace to all lands he would not invade Norway if there was a chance to avoid that. However, if King Óláf Haraldsson wished to be king of Norway, then let him come to King Knút and receive his land in fief from him and swear loyalty to him and pay him such tribute as the earls did previously. Thereupon they produced their letters to the same effect.

King Óláf made reply as follows: "I have heard it told in old accounts that Gorm, the king of Denmark, was considered a great sovran, and he ruled over Denmark only. But the Danish kings who succeeded him have not been satisfied with that. And now it has come about that Knút rules over both Denmark and England, and in addition he has now brought under his sway a large part of Scotland. And now he makes claim to my patrimony. He should at last learn moderation in his ambition. Or does he wish to be sole ruler over all the lands of the North? Or does he mean to eat up all the cabbage of England himself? Let him do that before I tender my submission or bow to him in even one respect. Now you are to report to him these my words, that I mean to defend Norway by all means available to me while I live, and to pay no one tribute from my kingdom." After being given this answer Knút's ambassadors left, in no way pleased with the outcome of their mission.

The skald Sigvat had been at the court of King Knút who gave him a golden [arm] ring which weighed half a mark [four ounces]. At the same time there was at King Knút's court Bersi Skáldtorfuson,¹ and to him he gave two gold rings, each weighing half a mark, as well as an inlaid sword. Sigvat spoke this verse:

275. Gave us the glorious sovran

(86.)

guerdon bounteous, so that
both our arms, Bersi,
brightly shine with gold rings.
One mark or more he gave as
meed to you, a sword eke,
sharp-edged: my share is only—
surely God rules—a half mark.

Sigvat approached the ambassadors of King Knút to King Óláf and asked them much about what had happened. They replied to his questions and told them about their talk with King Óláf and also what the outcome was. They reported that he had given a truculent answer to their message. “And we do not know,” they said, “how he has the courage to refuse to swear allegiance to King Knút and journey to his court. Yet that would be the best thing he could do, because King Knút is so gracious that however much any chieftains have offended against him, he will forgive them as soon as they come to him and submit to him. Only a short while ago two kings came to him from Fife in Scotland in the north, and he gave up his wrath against them and bestowed on them all the lands they had had before, together with great gifts of friendship. Then Sigvat spoke this verse:

276. Princes twain did purchase (87.)
peace from Knút, they from
Fife in Scotland, fealty—
fie on them!—both offering.
Óláf the Stout not e'er to
any man in this world
bended his knee, bowing—
battles won he many.

The ambassadors of Knút went their way and had favorable winds across the sea. Then they repaired to King Knút and told him about the result of their mission, and also the final words King Óláf had spoken to them. King Knút made this reply: “King Óláf *gaesses* wrong if he thinks that I myself want to eat up all the cabbage in England. I would, rather, that he find out that there is more inside my ribs than cabbage only; because hostile measures shall issue henceforth from under my every rib-bone.”

That same summer there came to King Knút from Norway Áslák and Skjálg, the sons of Erling of Jathar, and they were well received by him, because Áslák was married to Sigríth, the daughter of Earl Svein Hákonarson. And Earl Hákon

Eiríksson and she were brother's children. King Knút gave the two brothers large revenues from his kingdom.

Chapter 132. Kings Óláf and Onund Form an Alliance

King Óláf summoned his landed-men to join him and collected many troops during the summer, because rumors were abroad that Knút the Powerful would come sailing from the west in summer. People believed they had it from [the crews] of merchantmen from the west that Knút was drawing together a large army in England. And as the summer wore on some affirmed, and others denied, that a fleet would be coming. King Óláf was in Vík during the summer and sent men to reconnoiter if King Knút would be coming to Denmark. In the fall King Óláf sent envoys east to Sweden to his brother-in-law, King Onund, to tell him about the message of King Knút and the claims he had made on Norway, adding that he thought that if Knút subdued Norway, Onund would not long rule Sweden in peace. It was advisable [therefore], that Onund and he concluded an alliance to oppose Knút. Then they would have sufficient forces to make head against King Knút. King Onund took King Óláf's advice in good part and sent him the reply that he would make common cause with him, in such fashion that each would lend assistance from his country to whoever needed it first. Moreover, in their negotiations they agreed to meet and deliberate on what measures to take. King Onund intended to journey through West Gautland in the following winter and King Óláf made ready to have his winter quarters in Sarpsborg.

King Knút the Powerful that fall sailed to Denmark and remained there during the winter with a great host. He was informed that envoys and messages had passed between the kings of Norway and of Sweden and that important plannings might have been involved. King Knút sent envoys to Sweden and to King Onund that winter, with large gifts and offers of friendship. They told Onund from him that he could well sit in peace, so far as his [Knút's] quarrel with Óláf the Stout was concerned, "for King Onund," he said, "and his kingdom shall be left in peace by me." Now when the envoys came before Onund, they presented to him the gifts King Knút had sent him and also tendered his friendship. King Onund received their message rather coolly, so that the envoys felt that King Onund was probably much inclined to friendship with King Óláf. On their return they reported to King Knút the outcome of their mission and that he could not expect the friendship of King Onund.

Chapter 133. Thórir the Hound Joins Karli and Gunnstein

During that winter King Ólaf resided in Sarpsborg and had many troops about him. He sent Karli of Hálogaland to the northern part of the land on his missions. Karli first journeyed to the Uppland District, then north over the mountains. He arrived at Nitharós and there took as much of the king's revenues as he was empowered to, and selected a ship which seemed to him fitting for the errand which the king had assigned to him; which was, to sail north to Bjarmaland.¹ The intention was that the king and he should be in partnership, each to have half of the revenue. Early in spring Karli steered his ship north to Hálogaland. Then Gunnstein, his brother, joined him. He had his own merchandise along. There were nearly thirty men on board, and straightway they sailed that same spring north to the Mork [Finnmark].

Thórir the Hound learned about that, so he sent word by messengers to the brothers informing them that he too intended to journey to Bjarmaland in the summer and that he wished to sail together with them and to have an equal share of their gain. The brothers in reply sent word that Thórir should take along twenty-five men, which was the number of their crew. They demanded that of the goods they acquired, an equal portion should be assigned to each ship, not reckoning the merchandise each of them had along.

Now when the messengers Thórir had sent returned, he had launched a large vessel, half warship, half merchantman, which he owned, and had it equipped. As crew for this ship he used his men-servants, nearly eighty in number. Thórir alone had command of this force and was also owner of all the earnings that might be got on the expedition. When ready to sail he steered north along the land and met Karli north at Sandvær.² Then they sailed together and had a favorable breeze.

When Thórir had joined them, Gunnstein said to his brother Karli that he thought Thórir rather strong in numbers; "and I consider," he said, "that it is more advisable that we turn back and do not travel in such fashion that Thórir has power over us, because I do not trust him."

Karli said, "I do not want to turn back; yet it is true that if I had known when at home in Langey that Thórir the Hound would join us with such a large crew, we would have taken more men along."

The brothers talked about this with Thórir, asking him how it was that he had far more men with him than was stipulated. He made this answer: "I have a large ship, requiring a large crew. It would seem to me that on a hazardous enterprise

such as this there never can be too many good men.”

During the summer they sailed, most of the time, as fast as the ships would travel. When there was a light breeze, Karli’s ship sailed faster, but when it freshened, Thórir caught up. Hence they rarely were together, yet never lost sight of one another. When they arrived in Bjarmaland they put into a market town, and dealings [with natives] began. All those who had merchandise along sold it at full value. Thórir acquired an abundance of grey furs as well as beaver and sable pelts. Karli also had a very great amount of wares along, with which he bought many furs.



Thórir’s men return to the ships with their booty.

When the market closed they left by way of the Vína [Dvina] River, and then the truce with the people of the land was declared to be at an end. Now when they were on the high seas, they called a meeting of the crews. Thórir asked them if they perhaps cared to go on inland and make booty. The men answered that they were eager to, providing there was a definite chance to acquire booty. Thórir said that booty could be got if everything went well, “but it is not unlikely that there is danger of life on such an enterprise.” They all said they would risk it if there was hope of making booty. Thórir said it was the custom of Bjarmaland that when a wealthy man died, all his movable property was divided between the dead man and his heirs, in such fashion that he would get half or a third of it, and sometimes less. And this property was to be carried into the woods, sometimes put into grave mounds, and covered with earth. Sometimes, houses were built for that purpose. Thórir told them to make ready for the venture in the evening. It

was agreed that no one was to leave the other in the lurch, and no one was to stay behind when the steersmen gave the signal to leave.

They left men behind to guard the ships, and the others went up on land. There they first found a level plain, then a big forest. Thórir headed them, followed by Karli and Gunnstein. Thórir bade the men proceed silently, “and rip some bark from trees so that one can see one tree [so marked] from the other.” They came to a large clearing, and in it was a tall wooden palisade with a gate in it which was locked. Six of the natives were set to guard the palisade every night, two of them every third part of it.

When Thórir and his men arrived at the palisade, the watchmen had gone home, and those who were to have the next shift had not yet come to keep guard. Thórir went up to the palisade and hooked his axe [over the top], then hoisted himself up and so got over the fence. By then Karli had got over it on the other side of the gate. Both came to the gate at the same time, removed the bars, and opened the gate. Then the men entered the enclosure.

Thórir told them, “In this enclosure is a mound, and in it is gold and silver all mixed up with earth. Let us go at it. But inside the yard there stands the god of the Permians who is called Jómali.³ Let no one be so bold as to plunder him.” Thereupon they went at the mound and took out of it as much gold and silver as they could and carried it away in their garments. Much earth stuck to it, as might be expected. Then Thórir told them to leave the place. He said, “Now you brothers, Karli and Gunnstein, lead the way, and I shall bring up the rear.” Then all left by the gate. Thórir turned back to Jómali and snatched the silver bowl from his lap. It was filled with silver coins. He poured the silver into his kirtle and inserted his arm in the handle of the bowl, then left by the gate. Meanwhile all the company had passed out of the enclosure when they became aware that Thórir had stayed behind. Karli turned back to look for him, and they met inside the gate. Karli saw that Thórir had the silver bowl with him. Then Karli ran up to Jómali. He saw that he had a thick necklace around his neck. Karli swung his axe and cut in two the thong with which the necklace was fastened in the back of Jómali’s neck. That blow was so violent that Jómali’s head came off. The crash was so loud as to seem a marvel to all. Karli snatched the necklace, and then they made off. But no sooner was the crash heard than the watchmen appeared in the clearing and blew their horns. Right soon then they heard trumpets in all directions. They rushed toward the forest and into it, and heard in the clearing behind them the shouts and the hue and cry of the Permians who had come up.

Thórir the Hound went last of all the company. Two men ahead of him carried a sack for him. In it was something resembling ashes. Thórir put his hand in it

and sometimes sowed the contents on their tracks behind them, at others he threw them forward over the company; and so they emerged from the forest onto the plain. They heard the army of the Permians pursuing them with shouts and evil-sounding howls. They rushed out of the forest after them on two sides, but at no time did the Permians or their missiles come so close as to do them any harm. From that they gathered that the Permians did not see them.

Now when they arrived at the ships, Karli and his men boarded his first, because they were first all along, but Thórir was farthest behind on land.

As soon as Karli and his company were aboard their ship they took down the tents and unmoored it, then hoisted sail, so their ship quickly gained the high sea; whereas Thórir and his men took a longer time, for their ship was less manageable. And when they got their sail up, Karli's ship was far from land. Then both sailed across the White Sea. The nights were still light, so they sailed both day and night until Karli one day in the evening put to shore by some islands, where they lowered the sail, cast anchor, and waited for the falling of the tide, because there was a strong current in the sea ahead of them. Then Thórir caught up with them. He also anchored. There upon they lowered a boat. Thórir stepped into it with some men and rowed over to Karli's ship. Thórir came on board of it. The brothers greeted him cordially. Thórir requested Karli to hand over to him the necklace. "I consider myself most entitled to have the valuables taken there, because it was owing to me that we escaped without danger to our lives. Whereas you, Karli, put us into the worst peril."

Karli replied, "King Ólaf is entitled to half of all that I gain on this journey. I intend him to have the necklace. Go to see him, if you care to, and then maybe he will let you have the necklace, in case he does not wish to have it because I took it from Jómali." Then Thórir said he wanted both parties to go up on the island to divide their booty. Gunnstein said that the tide was turning and that it was time to sail on. Then they pulled in their cables. When Thórir saw that, he stepped down into his boat and rowed to his ship.

By the time Thórir was able to hoist his sail, Karli and his men had theirs up and had sailed quite a ways. Then they sailed on in such fashion that Karli always was ahead, and both sailed with the utmost speed. So they proceeded till they came to Geirsver,⁴ where there is the first landing stage for ships from the north. There they both arrived early in the evening and moored their ships by the landing stage. Thórir's ship lay inside the harbor, Karli's more on the outside. Now when Thórir and his men had spread their awnings, he went up on land together with many other men. They went up to Karli's ship. By that time Karli's

crew had made ready [for the night]. Thórir hailed them and asked the skippers to come on land with him. So the two brothers did, accompanied by a few others. Then Thórir began as before, asking them to come on land and bring out for redistribution the goods they had taken as booty. The brothers said there was no necessity for that before they were back home; but Thórir insisted it was not the custom to delay the redistribution of the booty till returning home and depend on the honesty of the men.

They talked about this for some time but without being able to agree. Then Thórir turned to go; but when only a short way, he turned and told his followers to stay there. He called out to Karli. "I want to talk to you in private," he said. Karli walked up to him. But when they met, Thórir ran a spear through his middle so that it came out in the back. Said Thórir then, "Here you may recognize a man from Bjarkey, Karli. Also, I think, you ought to recognize the spear Seal's Avenger." Karli died at once as Thórir and his men returned to their ship.

Gunnstein and his men saw Karli fall. They ran up straightway, carried the corpse to their ship, then quickly removed the awnings and the gangplanks and rowed away from land, then hoisted the sail and made off. When Thórir and his men saw that, they also struck their tentings, working feverishly. But when they hoisted the sail, the rope extending from the top of the mast to the stem broke, and the sail fell down athwart the ship. This caused Thórir much delay before they could again raise the sail. By this time Gunnstein was a long ways off, before Thórir's ship could get up speed. He used both sail and oars, as did Gunnstein.

Thus they both hurried on, day and night, as fast as they could. It was a long time before Thórir could catch up, because as soon as they came to the region where there are many straits, Gunnstein's ship was quicker in making the turns. Yet Thórir finally gained on him, so that when Gunnstein arrived at Lengjuvik,⁵ he steered to the land and, abandoning the ship, ran up on land [with his crew]. A little later Thórir arrived there and ran up on land after them, giving them pursuit. A certain woman managed to help and hide Gunnstein. It is said that she was greatly skilled in magic. Thórir and his men returned to their ship. They took all the valuables from Gunnstein's ship, loaded it with stones, then took it out into the fjord, bored holes in it and sank it. Thereupon Thórir proceeded home to Bjarkey.

Gunnstein and his men at first moved stealthily, travelling by rowboats and at night, and lay still in daytime. They went on that way till they were past Bjarkey Island and out of Thórir's district. Then Gunnstein first returned home to Langev

Island, where he tarried only a short while before straightway journeying south. He did not stop till he arrived south in Trondheim. There he met King Ólaf and told him what had happened on his expedition to Bjarmaland. The king was greatly put out about this, and invited Gunnstein to stay with him, saying that he would seek to make amends for Gunnstein's grievance when the opportunity came. Gunnstein accepted that offer and remained at King Ólaf's court.

Chapter 134. King Óláf Proceeds to Horthaland

As was related above, King Óláf that winter resided east of Sarpsborg when Knút the Powerful was in Denmark. Onund, king of Sweden, that winter rode about West Gautland with an army of more than three thousand [3600] men, and messengers and messages went between the two kings. They made the agreement to meet the following spring at Konungahella. They delayed about the meeting, because they meant to find out before what were the intentions of King Knút. But as spring wore on Knút made his fleet ready to sail west to England, leaving behind him as ruler of Denmark Hortha-Knút [Harde-Canute], his son, and with him [as adviser], Earl Úlf, the son of Thorgils Sprakalegg. Úlf was married to Ástríth, daughter of King Svein and sister of Knút the Powerful. Their son was Svein, who later was king of Denmark. Earl Úlf was a most distinguished personage.

Knút the Powerful sailed west to England. As soon as the kings Óláf and Onund learned that, they came to the meeting agreed on and met in Konungahella by the [Gaut Elf] River. It was a joyful meeting, with great attestations of friendship, so that their relations were plain to everyone. They discussed many things between them, known to themselves alone, but some of which were put into effect later so as to become plain to everybody. At their parting, the two kings exchanged gifts and parted as friends.

Then King Onund proceeded inland to Gautland, but King Óláf, north to Vík, and later on to Agthir, and from there north along the land. He was becalmed for a long time in Eika Sound. There he learned that Erling Skjálǫgsson and the inhabitants of Jathar had gathered a large force.

One day some followers of the king talked about the weather and whether the wind was in the south or southwest and whether weather conditions were right for rounding Jathar. Most of them were of the opinion that they were not. Then Halldór Brynjólǫfsson replied. "It seems to me," he said, "that you would consider sailing conditions good enough to round Jathar if Erling Skjálǫgsson had prepared a reception for us at Sóli." Then King Óláf commanded the awnings to be taken off and the ships to be turned about. So was done, and they sailed that day past Jathar with an excellent breeze, and in the evening anchored by Hvítungsey Island. From there the king proceeded to Horthaland and was entertained there.

Chapter 135. Thóralf Is Slain

That spring a ship had sailed to the Faroes. On that ship were messengers carrying King Ólaf's orders that one of the men whom he had selected to be his attendants, whether Leif Ozuraron or Gilli the Lawspeaker, or Thóralf of Dimon, was to come to him in Norway. But when this message was brought to the Faroes, and personally to these men, they discussed among themselves what might be at the bottom of these orders; and they agreed in surmising that the king wished to inquire about just what was said to have happened in the islands, and which some held to be true, with respect to the disaster which had befallen the [previous] messengers of the king and their crews, of which not a man had been rescued. They came to the decision that Thóralf was to go.

He made ready for the journey and outfitted the cargo ship he owned with a crew. On that vessel were ten or twelve men. But when they were all ready to sail and were waiting for a favorable breeze, it happened, one fine day, that Thránd came into the living room of his house in Gata on the Island of Austrey, and there he found his two nephews, Sigurth and Thóρθ, both lying on the dais. They were sons of Thorlák. A third man there was called Gaut the Red, also a kinsman of theirs. They were all foster sons of Thránd, and doughty men. Sigurth was the oldest, and in most cases their leader. Thóρθ had a nickname, being called Thóρθ the Little, though he was exceedingly tall, besides being stout of frame and strong.

Then Thránd spoke as follows: "There is much change in the course of one's life. When we were young it was uncommon for men who were young and fit, to be lying or sitting [around] in good weather. To men of that time it would not have seemed likely that Thóralf of Dimon was a better man than you. But the cargo ship I own and that stands in the boathouse is getting so old now, I think, that its planks are rotting underneath the tar. Every shed here is full of wool, but it is not offered for sale. That would not be the case if I were some years younger."

Sigurth sprang up and called on Gaut and Thóρθ, saying he could not stand Thránd's reproaches. They left the house and, the men-servants joining them, went and launched the cargo boat, then had the wares brought out, and loaded the ship. Nor was there any lack of wares or of tackle at the place, so they got the ship ready within a few days. They had a crew of ten or twelve besides themselves. And both Thóralf and they started out with the same wind and always kept in sight of one another across the sea. They made land toward

evening at Hernar.¹ Sigurth anchored farther outside along the beach, but there was no great distance between them.

Then this happened: in the evening, when it had become dark, and Thóralf and his men prepared to go to sleep, Thóralf himself, together with another man, went up on land to relieve himself. And when about to return to the ship—as relates the man who accompanied Thóralf—a cloth was thrown over the companion’s head and he was lifted up off the ground. At the same time he heard a crash. Then he was carried off and knocked down. Below him was the sea, and he was flung into it. Yet he managed to come to land and went to the spot where Thóralf and he were separated, and there he found Thóralf dead, with his head cleft down to his shoulders. As soon as the crew found that out they carried his body aboard the ship and kept a wake over it during the night.

At this time King Ólaf was being entertained at Lygra,² and news of this happening was sent there. Then people were summoned by messengers, and the king came to the assembly. He had summoned the Faroese from both ships, and the crews of both were present. And when the session began, the king arose and spoke as follows: “Things have come to pass here which are of rare occurrence, and better so. A brave man has been killed here, and so far as we know, for no [just] cause. Is there perchance a man here who can tell us who has done this deed?” But no one spoke up. Then the king said, “I shall not conceal from you what I suspect, and that is that we must put the blame for this misdeed on the Faroese [themselves]. It would appear to me that Sigurth Thorláksson slew the man, and that Thóρθ the Little heaved the other man into the sea. I shall also add that I surmise the reason for their foul deed is that they did not want Thóralf to tell about the misdeeds he probably knew they had committed, to wit, what we have long suspected, the murder and mistreatment of my messengers.”

Now when the king ceased speaking, Sigurth Thorláksson arose. He said, “I have not spoken before at assemblies. So I believe people will not consider me ready of speech. Yet I think it very necessary to make some answer. I dare say that the speech the king made probably originated with men who are much less wise than he and of worse disposition, and it is plain that they mean to be hostile to us in all respects. It is wholly unlikely that I should want to be the killer of Thóralf, because he was my foster brother and my good friend. And even if circumstances had been different and there had been cause for hostility between Thóralf and me, I have wits enough about me to have dared to commit this crime at home in the Faroes rather than right here, sir king, where I am in your power. Now therefore I want to deny, both for myself and all my crew, any complicity in this deed. I will swear oaths upon that according to your laws. And if you

think more confirmation necessary, I offer to prove my innocence by undergoing the ordeal of carrying glowing iron. And I would want you yourself to be present when I clear myself.”

When Sigurth ceased speaking, many pleaded for him and requested the king to let Sigurth take the test for his innocence. They considered that Sigurth had spoken well and declared him not guilty of the misdeed attributed to him. The king said, “About this man one might have widely different opinions. If he is falsely accused in this he is likely to be a good man; but if the opposite is true, then he must be a man of unexampled audacity—and my guess is that the latter is the case. But I suppose he shall himself have to bear witness [of either].” And at the supplication of many the king allowed Sigurth to make pledge that he would undergo the ordeal. He was to return to Lygra the day following, and the bishop was to prepare for the ordeal. And so the meeting broke up. The king returned to Lygra, and Sigurth and his companions to their ship.

It soon began to grow dark with approaching night. Then Sigurth said to his crew, “To say the truth, we have got into great difficulties and have been basely slandered. This king is crafty and deceitful, and it is easy to see what will be our fate if he prevails; for first he had Thóralf slain and now wants to brand us as evildoers and criminals. It will be easy for him to falsify this ordeal. I would consider it dangerous to risk that with him. And now there is a light breeze from the mountains along the sound. I advise that we hoist our sail and make for the open sea. Let Thránd have his wool sold for him another summer. But if I get away, there is little expectation that I shall ever come to Norway again.” His crew thought that was a wise counsel. They hoisted the sail and made for the open sea the fastest they could during the night. They did not stop before they arrived in the Faroes and came home to Gata. Thránd was ill-pleased with their voyage. They answered him in kind, yet stayed with Thránd.

Chapter 136. The Icelanders Refuse to Pay Tribute to King Óláf

King Óláf immediately learned that Sigurth and his companions had taken themselves off; and heavy suspicions were voiced concerning their case. Now many who had before denied it said that it was most likely that Sigurth and his men were guilty. King Óláf did not say much about the case, but he thought he knew the truth of what before he had suspected. So he proceeded on his way, accepting the entertainment arranged for him.

King Óláf summoned for a conference the men who had come to him from Iceland: Thórodd Snorrason, Gellir Thorkelsson, Stein Skaptason, and Egil Hallsson. The king spoke to them as follows: “You mentioned to me this summer that you wanted to make ready and return to Iceland, but I had so far come to no final decision about that. Now I shall tell you what are my intentions. You, Gellir, I want to journey to Iceland if you will deliver my message there. But as to the other Icelanders here, no one of you is to return there until I learn how the message is accepted which you, Gellir, are to deliver there.”

When the king had voiced his intentions, those who were eager to travel [home] but had been forbidden, considered they were being meanly treated and that their condition was an ill one, amounting to their being deprived of their liberty. But Gellir got himself ready for the journey and in summer sailed to Iceland. He had with him the message of the king, that he requested the Icelanders to adopt the laws he had given in Norway; also, to pay him wergild for any subject of his slain [in Iceland]; also a poll-tax of one penny, worth one tenth of an ell of homespun. He furthermore promised them his friendship if they would assent to those conditions, or else hard terms whenever he would be able to enforce them.

The Icelanders deliberated for a long time about this matter, and finally it was agreed by all to refuse paying any taxes and all the imposts the king had demanded. And Gellir that same summer travelled to Norway and sought out King Óláf who was at Vík that fall after having come to the seashore from Gautland, as I expect will be told later in the saga of King Óláf. But as the season wore on, the king proceeded north to Trondheim, steering his fleet to Nitharós where he had preparations made to reside during the winter.

¹⁰²⁶ King Óláf resided in the town during the following winter. That was the thirteenth year of his reign.

Chapter 137. The Jamtalanders Decide to Pay Their Tribute to Sweden

A certain man was called Ketil of Jamtaland who was the son of Earl Onund of Sparabú in the District of Trondheim. He had fled the rule of King Eystein the Wicked, going east over the Keel. There he had cleared the forests and cultivated the land which is now called Jamtaland. A great number of people also fled to the east from Trondheim because of the troubles caused by King Eystein's laying the people there under tribute and setting over them as king his dog, called Saur. Ketil's grandson was Thórir Helsing, after whom Helsingjaland was named, because it was cultivated by him. Now when Harald Fairhair subjugated Norway, a great number of people in like manner fled the country, people both from Trondheim and Naumu Dale, when further settlements were founded in Jamtaland to the east. Some went all the way to Helsingjaland by the Baltic, and they became the subjects of the Swedish kings.¹

But when Hákon, the foster son of Æthelstān, was king of Norway, peace and trade were established between Trondheim and Jamtaland; and because of the popularity of the king the people of Jamtaland came to him, declaring their fealty to him and paying him tribute. He established their laws and statutes. They preferred his rule to that of the Swedish kings, because they were Norwegians by descent. And so did all those of Helsingjaland whose origin was north [west] of the Keel. And this relation lasted for a long time afterwards, until Óláf the Stout and Óláf, the king of Sweden, quarrelled about the division of lands between them. At that time the people of Jamtaland and Helsingjaland changed their allegiance to be under the king of Sweden, so that the boundary [between the kingdoms] ran from the Eith Forest in the east along the Keel all the way north to Finnmark. Then the king of Sweden levied tribute both from Helsingjaland and from Jamtaland. But King Óláf thought that, according to the agreement between him and the king of Sweden, the tribute from Jamtaland was to go in another direction, as had been the case of old. Yet [as a fact] for a long time the people of Jamtaland had paid their dues to the king of Sweden, and the stewards over them had come from there. So the Swedes would not have it any other way than that all the land east of the Keel belonged to the king of Sweden. It was then, as often is the case, that even though there was relationship and [even] friendship between kings, yet both of them would have all the lands they considered they had a claim to. King Óláf [the Stout] had sent word to Jamtaland that it was his will that the people there should declare their allegiance to him, or

else he would use force against them. However, they had decided that they wanted to be subject to the king of Sweden.

Chapter 138. Stein Slays Thorgeir and Seeks Refuge with Ragnhild

Thórodd Snorrason and Stein Skaptason were greatly dissatisfied that they were not permitted to travel as they pleased. Stein Skaptason was a very handsome man, greatly skilled in bodily accomplishments, a good poet, very fond of fine clothes, and most enterprising. His father, Skapti,¹ had composed a *drápa* about King Ólaf and had taught it to Stein. It was the intention that he should recite the poem to the king. Stein did not refrain from saying things in reproach of the king both in his speech and in verse. Both he and Thórodd were incautious in their speech and said that the king would fare worse than they who had sent their sons to him in good faith, whereas the king deprived them of their liberty. The king became furious [when he heard of this]. One day, when Stein Skaptason was in the presence of the king and asked for permission to recite the *drápa* which his father, Skapti, had composed about him, the king said, “First, Stein, I would hear you recite the poem you have composed about me.”

Stein replied that what he had composed amounted to nothing. “I am no skald, sire,” he said, “and even if I could indite a poem, it would seem of no importance to you just like other things about me.” And then Stein went his way, but he thought he knew what the king alluded to.²

Thorgeir was the name of one of the king’s bailiffs who managed an estate of his in Orka Dale. At the time, he was at the court and had listened to the conversation between the king and Stein. Not long after that, Thorgeir journeyed home. One night, Stein escaped from the town, and his page with him. They travelled across Gaular Ridge³ and continued on their way till they came to Orka Dale, arriving in the evening at the royal estate which Thorgeir managed. Thorgeir invited Stein to stay there for the night and asked what the purpose of his journey was. Stein asked him to let him have a horse and a sleigh. He saw that they had been bringing in the grain.

Thorgeir said, “I do not know about the nature of your journey, and whether you are travelling by the king’s permission. It seemed to me some little while ago that your exchange of words with the king was not very peaceful.”

Stein said, “Though I am not my own master as against the king, I shall not be so as against his thralls.” With that he drew his sword and killed the bailiff, then took the horse and bade his man jump on its back. Stein himself seated himself in the sleigh, and so they went their way, driving all the night. They journeyed on till they came down in Súrna Dale in Mœr. There they obtained passage over the fjord. They travelled as fast as they could, without telling people about the

slaying of Thorgeir, but calling themselves men in the king's employ. They received good help wherever they came.

One day in the evening they arrived at Gizki,⁴ the estate of Thorberg Árnason. He was not at home, but his wife, Ragnhild, the daughter of Erling Skjálgrsson, was. There, Stein got a cordial reception, for she had been very well acquainted with him from before.

It had been this way: when Stein had arrived from Iceland on the ship he owned himself, and made land at Gizki, anchoring by the island, Ragnhild was in the throes of childbirth and had a very difficult time. There was no priest on the island nor anywhere in the neighborhood. Then messengers were sent to the merchantman to inquire if perchance there was a priest on board. Now there was a priest on the ship, one called Bárth. He hailed from the Westfirch District [in Iceland] and was a young and not particularly learned man. The messengers requested this priest to go with them up to the house. It seemed to him that this might turn out to be a very difficult business as he was conscious of his ignorance, so he refused to go. Then Stein put in a word with the priest and asked him to go. The priest answered, "I shall go if you go with me. For then I shall have more confidence if I have you to advise me." Stein said he would be glad to do so.

Then they went up to the estate where Ragnhild lived. A short time thereafter she gave birth to a girl child which appeared very weak. So the priest baptized the infant while Stein held the babe during baptismal service. It was named Thóra. Stein gave the infant a gold finger ring.⁵ Ragnhild promised Stein her cordial friendship and told him to look her up if he thought he needed her help. Stein said that he would not hold any more girl children during baptism, and with that they parted. But now it had come to pass that Stein reminded her of her kind words and told her what had happened and that he had incurred the wrath of the king. She replied that she would assist him to the best of her ability and asked him to wait till Thorberg returned. Meanwhile she assigned him a seat next to her son, Eystein Orri. He was twelve years old at that time. Stein made presents to both Ragnhild and Eystein.

Thorberg had learned about Stein's doings before his return and was very much put out. Ragnhild went to speak with him, told him about what Stein had done, and asked him to take in Stein and do what he could to assist him. Thorberg said, "I have learned that the king has had a meeting summoned by arrow-message when he learned of the killing of Thorgeir and that Stein has been declared an outlaw; also, that the king is most furious. And I have more sense than to protect a foreigner and draw upon myself the wrath of the king. Let

Stein get himself gone from here at once.”

Ragnhild replied that both she and Stein would leave or else both stay. Thorberg asked her to go wherever she pleased. “I expect,” he said, “that though you go you will soon return, because nowhere else will you have as much to say.” Thereupon Eystein Orri, their son, came forward. He declared that he would not remain behind if Ragnhild departed. Thorberg said they showed much obstinacy and a hot temper in behaving in this fashion. “And it seems best to let you two have your way in this matter since it appears of such importance to you. But you take all too much after your family, Ragnhild, in not heeding what King Ólaf says.”

Ragnhild replied, “If you are afraid to lend Stein your assistance, then why not go with him to my father Erling, or else give him enough attendants along so that he may get there unharmed?” Thorberg replied that he would not send Stein there, “because Erling has trouble enough on his hands in his dealings with the king.”

Stein remained there during the winter. But after Yule messengers of the king came to Thorberg requesting him to report to him before Mid-Lent, and ¹⁰²⁷ they laid great stress on it. Thorberg brought this up before his friends, asking for their advice whether he should risk going to see the king, considering how matters stood. Most of them advised against it, holding it wisest to get rid of Stein before putting himself in the power of the king. Thorberg was more inclined to do the latter and not delay about getting started.

Some little time afterwards Thorberg looked up his brother Finn and brought the matter up before him, asking him to go along. Finn replied that he thought it unfortunate to have such a domineering wife that, on account of her, he did not dare to keep his pledge to his king. “Of course you have the choice whether or not to go with me,” said Thorberg, “but I am thinking that you will not, more out of fear than because of loyalty to the king.”

They parted in a dudgeon. Thereupon Thorberg looked up Árne Arnason, [another] brother of his, told him how matters stood, and asked him to go with him before the king. Árne said, “It seems strange to me that so wise and circumspect a man as you have got yourself in such an unfortunate situation as to call down upon yourself the wrath of the king when there was no need to. It would have been understandable if you had given aid to a kinsman or foster brother, but not at all that you have supported an Icelander outlawed by the king and thus endangered all your kinsmen.”

Thorberg said, “It is as the adage has it: there is a degenerate in every family.

His misfortune of my father I see very clearly: he was unlucky with his sons and had one finally who bears no resemblance to our kin and is devoid of any spirit. And if I did not think it a shame for our mother, I would never call you my brother.” With that Thorberg turned to go and journeyed home to his estate in a very despondent frame of mind. Then he sent word north to Trondheim to his brother Kálf, requesting him to come to meet him at Agthanes. And when the messengers found Kálf, without saying a word he promised to be there.

Ragnhild sent messengers east [south] to Jathar, praying her father, Erling, to send her troops. Erling’s two sons, Sigurth and Thórir, proceeded from there, each with a ship of twenty rowers’ benches and a crew of ninety men. And when they arrived at Thorberg’s place to the north he received them well and most joyfully. He readied a vessel with twenty rowers’ benches for the journey. And when they came to——⁶ they found moored there Finn and Árni, Thorberg’s brothers, with two vessels of twenty rowers’ benches. Thorberg gave his brothers a glad welcome and remarked that his incitation had taken effect on them. Finn replied that there had rarely been a necessity for it, so far as he was concerned. Then they proceeded north to Trondheim with all this fleet, and Stein with them. And when they arrived at Agthanes,⁷ they found there Kálf Árnason, and he had a ship with twenty rowers’ benches and a good crew. With his force they entered [the Trondheimfjord] and anchored at Nitharhólm during the night.

On the following morning they conferred together. Kálf and the sons of Erling were for entering the town with all their force and trust to luck how things would go; but Thorberg preferred to proceed gently, to start with, and offer [the king] conditions; and with that Finn and Árni agreed. They came to the conclusion that Finn and Árni, accompanied by a few men, should first have a meeting with King Ólaf.

The king had by then been apprised of the considerable force they had, and spoke harshly to them. Finn offered compensation for Thorberg and also for Stein. He offered the king the decision as to the amount of money he would exact for letting Thorberg stay in the country and retain his revenues, and for giving Stein assurance of life and limb. The king said, “It would seem to me that this attack of yours is made with the idea essentially that now you have power over me, half-ways or altogether. But I would have thought it most unlikely that you brothers would move on me with an army. I suspect that it is the people of Jathar [Erling and his kin] who have hatched this plan. It is no use to offer me money.”

Then Finn replied, “We brothers have not raised troops to carry on hostilities against you, sire; but on the contrary we would first offer our services to you, sir

king. But if you refuse, and intend to inflict harsh punishment on Thorberg, then we all shall, with the forces we have, proceed to join Knút the Powerful.” Then the king looked at him and said, “If you brothers would swear oaths to me that you will support me, within the country and outside of it, nor part with me except by my permission, and reveal to me any treachery brewing against me, then I will accept compensation from you brothers.”

Thereupon Finn returned to his forces and repeated to them the conditions the king had laid down. And then they discussed this among them. Thorberg said that so far as he was concerned he would accept the king’s offer. “I am loath to flee from my possessions,” he said, “and seek refuge with foreign princes. I consider it will always be an honor for me to follow King Ólaf and remain in his presence.”

Then Kálf said, “I do not care to swear oaths to the king, and would stay with the king only so long as I retain my revenues and my rank otherwise, and if the king promises me his friendship; and I would that we all agree on that.”

Finn replied, “I would advise that we let the king alone decide on terms between us.” Árni Árnason spoke thus, “If I am ready to assist you, brother Thorberg, even if you are ready to do battle with the king, I shall [certainly] not part with you if you take better counsel; and I would follow you and Finn in accepting such conditions as you consider wisest.”

Thereupon the three brothers Thorberg, Finn, and Árni, boarded a ship, rowed up to the city, and went before the king. Then this stipulation for their reconciliation was fulfilled in that the brothers swore the king oaths [of allegiance]. Following this, Thorberg sought to achieve a reconciliation of Stein and the king. The king said that Stein might proceed in peace, so far as he was concerned, and go wherever he pleased, “but I do not want him to be around me any more,” he said. Thereupon Thorberg and his brothers rejoined their force. Kálf then proceeded to [his estate at] Egg, but Finn joined the king. Thorberg and the rest of their troops returned to their homes in the south. Stein journeyed south with the sons of Erling; but in early spring he sailed west to England, where he joined the court of Knút the Powerful and remained with him for a long time in high favor.

Chapter 139. Thórir the Hound and Finn Árnason

When Finn Árnason had been with King Ólaf for a short time, one day the king summoned for a conference him and a number of other men with whom he was accustomed to discuss his intentions. The king spoke as follows: “The plan has taken shape in my mind that I intend this spring to levy from all the land forces of both men and ships, and with all the troops I can collect proceed against Knút the Powerful; because I know that the claims to my kingdom which he has made were not empty words. Now I shall want you, Finn Árnason, to carry my message north to Hálogaland and levy troops there. You are to summon a complete levy, both of men and ships, and this force you are to steer to Agthanes, where I shall meet you.” Thereupon the king detailed others [to do the same], sending some to the various districts of Trondheim, some to the south, so as to let this summons go over all the land.

Concerning Finn’s journey there is this to be said that he had a swiftsailing ship with a crew of nearly thirty men. And when all ready he sailed to Hálogaland. There he called meetings with the farmers, delivered his message, and demanded a levy. They had large ships in that district all ready for such an expedition. They responded to the king’s summons and got their vessels shipshape.

Now when Finn proceeded to the northern part of Hálogaland he called [the farmers] to assemblies and despatched some of his men to request the levy where he thought it was required, and also to Bjarkey, to Thórir the Hound. There as elsewhere he had his men demand a levy. And when the messengers of the king came to Thórir he made himself ready for the journey and manned with his housecarls the ship he had had the summer before on his expedition to Bjarmaland, which he had equipped entirely out of his own means.

Finn had all the men from northern Hálogaland assemble at Vágar. A great fleet came together there in spring, and all waited till Finn arrived from the north, among them also Thórir the Hound. Now when Finn arrived, he had the trumpets blown immediately for all the ships’ crews to meet together. At this meeting the men produced their weapons, and the levy from every district furnishing a ship-levy was examined. And when this had been done, Finn spoke as follows: “Thee, Thórir the Hound, I want to ask: what offer will you make to King Ólaf for the slaying of Karli, his follower, and for the robbery you committed when you took possession of the king’s property north in Lengjuvik? I am charged by the king to see about this business, and I now demand to know your answer.” Thórir looked about him and saw standing on both sides of him

many fully-armed men, and recognized among them Gunnstein and a multitude of other kinsmen of Karli. Then Thórir said, “Quickly I shall tell you my offer, Finn. I shall leave all to the king’s decision, whatever he has against me.” Finn answered, “Most likely now less honor is going to be shown you; because now it will be I who shall impose judgment if there is to be any reconciliation.” Thórir replied, “Even so I consider my case in excellent hands, and shall not refuse to submit to your judgment.”

Thereupon Thórir came forward to make pledge, and Finn gave his decision for all [Thórir had done]. He set forth these terms for compensation: that Thórir was to pay the king ten marks¹ in gold, and to Gunnstein and his kinsmen another ten marks, and for the robbery and destruction of property still another ten marks. “And it is to be paid at once,” he said.

Thórir said, “This is a huge fine.”

Finn replied, “Either you pay it or there will be no reconciliation.” Thórir said that Finn might allow him time to seek to borrow the amount from his followers. Finn ordered him to pay right away, and also to hand over the large necklace which he took off Karli’s dead body. Thórir said he did not take the necklace.

Then Gunnstein came forward and said that when Karli left him he wore the necklace, “but it was gone when we took up his body.”

Thórir said he had not thought about that necklace, “but even if I had any necklace it would be lying at home in Bjarkey.” Then Finn leveled the point of his spear against Thórir’s breast and told him to yield up the necklace. At which Thórir took the necklace off his neck and gave it to Finn.

Then Thórir went aboard his ship. Finn followed after him accompanied by many others, going to and fro [on the ship] and lifting up the floor-boards. Underneath them by the mast they discovered two barrels of such great size that they marvelled. Finn asked what was in them. Thórir said they held his drink.

Finn said, “Why don’t you give us some of it, partner, since you have such a lot of it?”

Thórir called to a man to pour some of it into a bowl. Then Finn and his companions were given the drink, and they found it excellent. Thereupon Finn ordered Thórir to pay out the money. Thórir went to and fro on his ship and spoke to one and the other of the men. Finn called out to him to come forward with the money. Thórir requested him to go on land, saying he would pay it there. Finn and his men did so; and Thórir followed him and paid out silver. Out of one purse he fetched ten marks of weighed silver. Then he produced many kerchiefs all knotted up. In some there was a mark of weighed silver, in others

REVENUES ARE KNOTTED UP. IN SOME THERE WAS A MARK OF WEIGHTED SILVER, IN OTHERS
half a mark or else a few ounces.

Then Thórir said: “This is borrowed money that various men have loaned me, because all the ready money I had on hand is gone.” Thereupon Thórir went back to his ship, and when he returned he paid out the silver little by little, and thus the day wore on.

Now as soon as the assembly came to an end, people went aboard their ships and prepared to depart. And those who were ready began to sail, so that most of them were on their way. Finn then perceived that the force about him was thinning, so his men asked him to get ready, too. By that time not even a third of the money had been paid. Then Finn said to Thórir, “It takes you a long time, Thórir, to make the payment. I can see you pay it out most grudgingly. So for the first we shall have to let it stand. You will have to pay the king the remainder.”² Then Finn stood up.

Thórir said, “I am glad, Finn, that our ways part; but I shall be willing to pay this debt in such fashion that neither you nor the king shall consider yourselves repaid insufficiently.”³ Then Finn boarded his ship and sailed after his fleet.

Thórir was slow in getting ready to leave the harbor. And when he had hoisted his sail he pursued a course through the West Fjord and then out into the open sea and south along the land in such fashion that the land was almost or altogether out of sight, and so he sailed south till he reached the North Sea and England. He proceeded to the court of King Knút who received him well. It was then seen that Thórir had with him an abundance of valuables and all the money he and Karli had taken in Bjarmaland. In the large barrels there was a false bottom, and the drink in between, and both the barrels were mainly filled with squirrel skins and beaver and sable furs. Thórir stayed with King Knút.

Finn Árnason with his fleet joined King Óláf. He told him about his expedition and also, that he believed Thórir had left the country and had sailed west to England to King Knút—“and I consider us well rid of him.”

The king said, “I believe Thórir is our enemy, and the farther [he is] from us, the better.”

Chapter 140. King Óláf Awards Judgment against Hárek of Thjóttá

Ásmund Grankelsson had passed that winter in his stewardship in Hálogaland, staying with his father Grankel. Seaward from their place is an outlying fishing station which was both a good seal hunting and fowling ground, and an excellent place for gathering eggs, and for fishing, and from of old it belonged to the farm Grankel owned. But Hárek of Thjóttá laid claim to it, and things had gone so far that for several years he had had all the produce from that island. But then Ásmund and his father thought they might have the support of the king for their just claims. So in spring they both went to Hárek, reporting to him the ¹⁰²⁷ decision, and showing him the tokens, of King Óláf, to the effect that Hárek should desist from his claims on the island. Hárek answered ill-naturedly, alleging that Ásmund had been to the king with such and similar wrong representations. “I have all the right on my side, and you, Ásmund, should learn to control your demands, even though you now are puffed up, believing you have the king’s support. And you will need it if you think you can contrive to kill some chieftains, after branding them as criminals, and rob us who hitherto had thought we could more than assert ourselves, even if it were against men of equal birth; whereas in fact you are very far from being of equal station.”

Ásmund made this answer: “There are many who have found out, Hárek, that you belong to a great family and are a man of great power yourself. You have taken unfair advantage of many. But now it looks as if you have to exercise your unjust dealings on others and not on us and not set the law at defiance in such fashion.” With that they parted.

Hárek sent out ten or twelve of his men servants in a large rowboat. They went out to the fishing station, made all kinds of haul, and loaded the boat with it. When they were about to leave, Ásmund Grankelsson came up with thirty men and ordered them give up all they had caught. Hárek’s men were rather slow to do so. Thereupon Ásmund attacked them, and it soon appeared who had the odds against him. Some of Hárek’s men were beaten, some wounded, and some were ducked in the sea, and all their catch was taken out of their boat and carried away by Ásmund’s men. Hárek’s men servants returned home after that had happened and told Hárek about it. He answered, “That is something altogether new. That has never occurred before that my men were beaten.” Nothing was done about it, and Hárek said no more about it and displayed a most cheerful mood.

In spring Hárek had a swift-sailing ship with twenty rowers’ benches got ready, manning it with his housecarls, and it was excellently equipped both as to

crew and fittings. With it Hárek in spring had joined the general levy. When he came to King Ólaf, he encountered Ásmund Grankelsson there. Then the king arranged a meeting between Ásmund and Hárek and got them reconciled. The case was submitted to the king's judgment. Then Ásmund produced witnesses to prove that the fishing station belonged to Grankel, and the king judged accordingly, so that the case was all one-sided. There was no compensation decreed for Hárek's housecarls, and the fishing station was awarded to Grankel. Hárek said it is in nowise humiliating to obey the judgment of the king, however the case might turn out later.

Chapter 141. Thórodd Escapes from Jamtaland

On the orders of King Óláf, Thórodd Snorrason had remained in Norway when, as was put down before, Gellir Thorkelsson had received permission to return to Iceland; and he stayed at the court of King Óláf, ill-pleased
1026 with not being allowed to travel wherever he wanted to. At the beginning of the winter during which King Óláf resided in Nitharós, he made it known that he meant to send emissaries to Jamtaland to collect the taxes. But men were unwilling to undertake that journey because the messengers King Óláf had sent before [for that purpose], Thránd the White and eleven others, had been killed, as was written above. And the people of Jamtaland had since that time remained loyal to the king of Sweden.

Thórodd Snorrason offered to undertake that mission, because he cared very little what might happen to him if only he could be his own master. The king accepted his offer, and Thórodd started with eleven others. They arrived east in Jamtaland and sought out a man called Thórar. He was lawspeaker there, and a man of the greatest distinction. They were well received there; and after having stayed there a short time they revealed their mission to Thórar. He replied that for an answer to it, other men and chieftains of the district were as responsible as he, and promised he would summon an assembly. So he did. The call for an assembly was sent out and many gathered for it. Thórar attended it while the emissaries remained at his place. Thórar laid the matter before the people, and they all agreed on not wanting to pay the king of Norway any tax. As to his emissaries, some wanted them hanged, others wanted to use them as sacrifices. It was decided to retain them there till the bailiffs of the king of Sweden arrived: they were then to decide about them as they saw fit, with the consent of the people of the district; but the messengers were to be given the impression that they were being well treated, and retained only because they were to wait for the tax to be brought in; and they were to be lodged, two in one place.

Thórodd and one other man stayed at Thórar's place. There was a great Yuletide entertainment there, with joint drinking. There were many farmers in that settlement, and they all drank together at Yuletide. There was another settlement not far away where lived a relation of Thórar, a powerful and wealthy man, who had a grown son. These relatives were to celebrate Yule at each other's place in turn, first at Thórar's. The two kinsmen drank to one another, and Thórodd, to the farmer's son. They held a drinking match, and in the evening a contest arose between the Norwegians and the Swedes, and following that, a matching of their kings, both those of former times and those still living;

and then there was a discussion of the hostilities between the two countries and the killings and depredations attending them.

Then the farmer's son said, "If our kings lost more men, the bailiffs of the king of Sweden will make up for that with the lives of twelve men when they arrive here from the south after Yule, and you poor men do not know why you are kept here." Thórodd considered what he was going to say to that while many grinned and used foul language about them and their king. Then, as the ale had its effect on the Jamtalanders, things became clear to Thórodd which he had not before suspected.

On the day following, Thórodd and his companion took their clothing and their weapons so that they had them handy; and later in the night when men were asleep they slipped away to the forest. Next morning when people became aware of their escape, they were pursued with bloodhounds that spotted them where they had hidden, and they were brought back to a small detached house in which there was a deep pit. They were put in there and the door was locked on them. They were given little food and they had no clothes except those they wore.

When it was middle of Yule, Thórar and all the freemen repaired to his relative where they were to be guests during the latter part of Yule. Thórar's thralls were left to guard the prisoners. Enough of the drink was left them, and they observed no moderation about it and in the evening straightway became drunk with it. Now when they felt themselves completely drunk, those who were to bring food to the men in the pit agreed with each other that the prisoners were not to lack food. Thórodd recited poems, and so entertained the thralls, and they declared him to be a capital fellow and gave him a real big candle and lighted it for him. Then those of them who had been inside the house went outside and called out loud to the others to go in; but both parties were drunk, so they locked neither the pit nor the house. Then Thórodd and his companion tore their cloaks into shreds, knotted them together, and made a knot on the end. This rope they threw up onto the floor of the house. There it wrapped itself around the foot of a chest and was fast there. They then tried to haul themselves up. Thórodd lifted his companion up to stand on his shoulders, whereupon he crawled up through the opening in the floor. He found plenty of rope in the house and let it down to Thórodd. But when he attempted to pull Thórodd up he found he did not have sufficient strength. Then Thórodd told him to throw the rope over the cross-beam of the house and make a loop on the end of it, and in it place enough stones and wood so as to more than outweigh him; and so he did. Then that weight went down into the pit, and Thórodd came up.

They got them all the clothes they needed in the house. There were some

reindeer skins there, and from these they cut the hoofs and tied them backward under their feet. Before they left they put fire to a large barn, then betook themselves off into the pitch-dark night. The barn burned down, and many another house in the settlement.

Thórodd and his companion traversed the wilderness all night, hiding during the day. They were missed in the morning. Then people went out in all directions with bloodhounds to look for them. But the dogs tracked their footprints back to the house, because they scented the reindeer hoofs and tracked the footprints in the direction shown by the hoofs, and nothing came of the search.

Thórodd and his companion travelled for a long time in the desert woods and one evening came to a small farm. They went in, and found a man and a woman sitting by the fire. The man gave his name as Thórir and said the woman sitting there was his wife. He also told them that he had settled there because he had to flee the village on account of a killing. Thórodd and his companion were well entertained, and they all ate by the fire. Afterwards a place for their bedding was made for them on the dais, and they lay down to sleep. The fire in the fireplace had not died down yet. Then Thórodd saw a man come in out of another house. He had never seen so large a man. That man wore a scarlet cloak with a gold lace border and was of a most stately appearance. Thórodd heard him reproach their hosts for taking in guests when they scarcely had enough to eat themselves. The woman of the house answered, "Don't be angry, brother, this has rarely happened before. Rather do you give them some help, because you are better able to do so than we." Thórodd heard that large man called Arnljót Gellini, and gathered that the woman of the house was his sister. Thórodd had heard Arnljót mentioned and that he was a wicked highwayman and evildoer.

Thórodd and his companion slept during the night, for they were tired from walking. But when two thirds of the night had passed, Arnljót came to them and told them to get up and make ready for the journey. So Thórodd and his companion got up quickly and dressed. They were given a breakfast. Then Thórir provided them both with skis. Arnljót made ready to go with them. He mounted his skis, which were both broad and long. But no sooner had he stuck down his ski pole but he was far ahead of them. Then he stopped for them and said they would get nowhere that way, and told them to get on his skis [behind him]. So they did. Thórodd stood close to him, holding onto Arnljót's belt, and his companion held onto him. Thereupon Arnljót ran as fast as though he were unencumbered.

When a third of the night¹ had passed they came to some place of shelter for

travellers. There they kindled a fire and prepared to eat. But while they ate, Arnljót warned them not to throw away any bit of food, whether bones or crumbs. Arnljót took a silver dish from out of his cloak and ate from it. When they had eaten their fill Arnljót hid their leavings, and then they prepared to go to sleep.

In one end of the house there was a loft up above the cross beams. Arnljót and the two others climbed up there and lay down to sleep. Arnljót had a large halberd whose socket was inlaid with gold and whose shaft was so long that with uplifted hands one could just reach the socket, and he was girded with a sword. They took both their weapons and their clothes with them into the loft. Arnljót told them to keep their peace. He lay on the outside [of where they lay] in the loft.

Shortly afterwards there came twelve men into the house. They were merchants who were travelling to Jamtaland with their wares. Now when they entered the house they were noisy with cheerful merriment and kindled big fires. And when they ate they threw all the bones away. Then they got ready to sleep and lay down on the dais by the fire. When they had slept but a short time, a big troll woman came to the house, and when she entered it, she swiftly swept everything together, bones and everything she thought edible and devoured it. Then she grabbed the man lying nearest to her, ripped him to pieces, and threw him on the fire. Then the others awoke as if from a bad dream, and jumped up; but she killed one after the other, so that only one survived. He ran in under the loft and shouted for help if there was anyone up there who could help him. Arnljót reached down, grabbed him by the shoulders, and pulled him up into the loft. Then the troll woman turned to the fire and took to devouring the men who were roasted. Then Arnljót got up, seized his halberd, and ran it through her between the shoulder blades so that the point came out at her breast. She reared up quickly, shrieked fiendishly, and rushed out of doors. Arnljót had to let go of his spear, and she took it out with her. Arnljót cleared away the corpses and set the door and the door frame back in the house, for she had broken out both when she ran out.

They slept through the remainder of the night, and when it dawned they arose and first ate their breakfast. When they had eaten, Arnljót said, "Now we shall have to part. You must now follow the sleigh tracks which the merchants made when they came here yesterday, but I shall be looking for my halberd. As a reward [for what I did for you] I shall take what seems will bring money of the things these men had along. You, Thórodd, shall deliver my greetings to King Óláf and tell him that he is the man I would most gladly meet. However, my

greetings will probably not seem of any value to him.” Thereupon he took up the silver dish, dried it with a towel and said, “Bring the king this dish and tell him this is my greeting.”

Then both he and Thórodd made ready to go on, and so they parted. Thórodd, his comrade, and also the man who had been the only one of his party to escape, went their way. Thórodd journeyed on till he found King Óláf in Nitharós and told him all that had happened to him. He also brought him the greetings of Arnljót and gave him the silver dish. The king remarked that he was very sorry that Arnljót had not himself come to see him, “and it is a great pity that such great misfortune should befall so brave and remarkable a man.” Thórodd afterwards stayed with King Óláf during the remainder of the winter and then received permission from him to return to Iceland in the summer following.

Chapter 142. Karl of Mær Offers to Collect the Tribute from the Faroes

1027 In spring King Óláf made ready to leave Nitharós, and a great force gathered to him both from the Trondheim districts and from the northern parts of the land. When finished with his preparations he first proceeded south to Mær with his force and collected the troops levied from there and from Raums Dale. Thereupon he sailed to South Mær. For a long time he tarried in the Herey Islands,¹ waiting for his levy, and often he held councils [with his advisors]; for much was brought to his attention which appeared to him to need consideration. At one of these council meetings he spoke about the loss of men he had suffered in the Faroes, “but the tribute which they promised to pay,” he said, “that is not forthcoming. Now I intend once more to send for the tribute.” The king addressed himself to various people about this matter, as to who was to undertake this journey; but the answers he got all came to the same: everyone excused himself from it.

Thereupon a man of tall stature and imposing appearance stood up in the council hall. He wore a red kirtle, had a helmet on his head, was girt with a sword, and had a large halberd in his hand. He spoke as follows. “In truth,” he said, “there is a great difference between the men assembled here. You have a good king, but he has poor men. You refuse a mission he requires of you, whereas you have previously received from him friendly gifts and things of value. As to myself, I have not till now been a friend to this king. And he has been hostile to me, alleging that he has reasons for so being. Now, sir king, I shall offer to go on this expedition unless you can find better men to do so.”

The king said, “Who is this manly fellow who made answer to my demand? There is a big difference between you and the other men here, since you offer to undertake this journey, whereas they excuse themselves who I thought were well fitted to undertake it. But I know nothing whatever about you, and I do not know your name.”

He made this answer, “My name is not difficult [to remember] sir king. I expect that you have heard of me before. I am called Karl of Mær.”

The king replied, “So it is, Karl, I have heard you mentioned before; and to say the truth there have been occasions when you would not have lived to tell of it if ever we two had met. But now I will show myself not a worse man than you, seeing that you offer me your aid, and shall give you in return my thanks and good will. You are to come to me, Karl, and be my guest today. Then we shall

talk about this matter.” Karl replied that he would.

Chapter 143. Karl Is Slain by Thránd's Kinsmen

Karl of Mœr had been a viking and a great pirate, and the king often had sent out men to catch him and make away with him. But Karl was of noble lineage, a man of great enterprise, an athlete, and resourceful in many ways. Now since Karl had agreed to go on this expedition, the king came to terms with him—in fact, grew to be his friend—and equipped him for it to the best of his ability. On his ship were nearly twenty men. The king gave him messages to his friends in the Faroes, and recommended Karl to Leif Ozuraron and Gilli the Lawspeaker to lend him their support and backing, if he needed it, and furnished Karl with tokens [to show his authority].

Karl departed at once when ready. He had favorable winds, and anchored at Thórshafn on Straumey Island. An assembly was called and was attended by many. Thránd of Gata came there with a large following, and also Leif and Gilli. They also had a large following. When they had set up their booths and got everything ready, they went forth to meet Karl of Mœr. There were friendly greetings between them. Thereupon Karl produced the message and the tokens of King Ólaf, and delivered his greetings of friendship to Gilli and Leif. They accepted them in good grace and invited Karl to their homes, offering to further his errand and give him such support as they were able to. He accepted that gratefully. Shortly afterwards Thránd came up and gave Karl a friendly welcome. “I am glad,” he said, “that such a splendid fellow has come to our land with business from our king to whom we all are bound in obedience. I will have it, Karl, that you come to my house to pass the winter, together with all your crew, to maintain the dignity of your position.” Karl replied that he had already decided to be a guest of Leif. “Otherwise,” he said, “I would gladly accept this offer.” Thránd remarked, “In that case great honor accrues to Leif from this. But is there anything else which I might do to help you?” Karl answered that it would be a great help if Thránd collected the tax in Austrey Island as well as in all the northerly islands. Thránd replied that it was no more than his bounden duty to render him that service in the king’s business.

Thereupon Thránd went back to his booth. Nothing else worth telling happened at that assembly. Karl went to Leif Ozuraron as his guest and stayed there the following winter. Leif collected the tax in Straumey Island and all the islands to the south of it.

In the spring following Thránd of Gata was ill with pains in his eyes, and besides had other ailments, yet he got ready to travel to the assembly as was his wont. And when he arrived at the assembly and his booth was tented over, he

had it covered with black material on the inside so that less light should come in. Now when several days during which the assembly met had passed, Leif and Karl with numerous followers proceeded to Thránd's booth. As they approached it they saw several men standing outside. Leif asked if Thránd was in the booth, and they replied that he was. Leif told them to request Thránd to come out. "Karl and I have some business with him," he said. But when they returned they said that Thránd had such pain in his eyes that he could not come out, "and he requested that you, Leif, come in."

Leif told his followers to proceed cautiously when entering the booth, not to crowd one another, "and let him come out first who enters last." Leif was the first to enter, Karl next, then his followers, and they went in all armed as if prepared to go into battle. Leif went in toward the black hangings and asked where Thránd was. Thránd answered and greeted Leif. Leif returned his greetings and then asked if he perchance had collected the tax in the north islands and whether the silver was going to be paid out. Thránd answered and said that he had not forgotten what Karl and he had talked about, and that the tax would be paid out. "Here is a purse for you, Leif, it is full of silver." Leif looked about him and saw only a few men in the booth. Some were lying on the dais, and a few were sitting up. Leif went up to Thránd to receive the purse, and carried it toward the front of the booth where it was light, poured it into his shield, rooted in it with his hand, and told Karl to look at the silver. They examined it for a while. Then Karl asked what Leif thought about it.



Karl of Mœr sits down to count the silver.

He replied, “It seems to me that all the bad money in the North Islands has been brought here.”

Thránd overheard that and said, “Don’t you like the silver, Leif?”

“No indeed,” he said.

Thránd said, “Why then our kinsmen prove to be perfect scoundrels whom you can’t trust about anything. I sent them this spring to collect the tax in the North Isles since I was not fit to do anything, this spring; and they have taken bribes from the farmers to accept such counterfeit money as can’t be given in payment. And it would be best, Leif, if you looked at that silver which was paid to me for ground rent.”

Thereupon Leif brought the silver back and received another purse, which he brought to where Karl stood. They looked that money over, and Karl asked Leif what he thought about it. He said that he thought that money was poor, but not so bad that it could not be given for debts about which there had not been a strict agreement, “but I don’t want to use this money for settling with the king.”

Then a man who was lying on the dais threw off the cloak covering his head and said, “There is truth in the adage ‘the older a man gets, the worse he grows.’ That is the case with you, Thránd, if you let Karl of Mœr repudiate your money all day long.” It was Gaut the Red who had spoken.

At these words of Gaut, Thránd jumped up and furiously reproached his kinsmen, using many hard words. And he ended by requesting Leif to hand him back the silver he had given him, “and here take the purse my renters brought me this spring. And though my eyesight is poor, one’s own hand is most trustworthy.”

Then a man who was lying on the dais raised himself on his elbow. It was Thóρθ the Little. He said, “It isn’t a few taunts we have to stand from that Mœr-Karl, and he ought to be repaid for it.”

Leif took the purse [Thránd had given him] and again carried it to Karl. They inspected the money in it. Then Leif said, “One does not need to look long at this silver. Here one coin is better than the other, and this money we want to have. Get a man, Thránd, to weigh it.” Thránd said he thought it was best if Leif saw to that for him.

Then Leif and those with him went out a short distance from the booth where they sat down to weigh the silver. Karl took off his helmet and poured the silver into it after it was weighed. They saw a man come up to them. He had a cudgel in his hand and a wide cowl on his head. He wore a green cloak, with linen breeches laced about his legs, and he was barefooted. He put down his cudgel on the ground and left it there, saying: “Look out, Mœr-Karl, that my cudgel won’t hurt you.”

Shortly afterwards a man came running and called out loud to Leif Ozurason to come at once to the booth of Gilli the Lawspeaker, that “Sigurth Thorláksson rushed through the tent flaps and has wounded one of the men in there mortally.” Leif sprang up at once and went to find Gilli. All of the men in his booth went with him, leaving Karl behind with a circle of Norwegians about him. Gaut the Red ran up and, with his [long-handled] axe, reached over their shoulders and inflicted a wound on Karl’s head. It was not a dangerous wound. Thóρθ the Little grabbed the club lying on the ground and with a blow of it on the head of the axe drove it into Karl’s brain. At that point a crowd of men poured out of Thránd’s booth. Karl was carried away dead.

Thránd decried the deed; still he offered compensation for his kinsmen. Leif and Gilli took up the action [because of the slaying of Karl], and nothing came of the compensation [by money payment]. Sigurth was declared outlaw for the wound inflicted on Gilli’s man, and so were Thóρθ and Gaut, for the slaying of Karl. The Norwegians got ready the ship in which they had come with Karl and sailed east to report to King Óláf what had happened ...¹ but nothing came of that because of the hostilities which at that time had arisen in Norway and of

which we shall tell presently. And that is the end of the story about King Óláf's demanding tribute from the Faroes. But there arose hostilities in the Faroes after the slaying of Karl of Mœr between the kinsmen of Thránd of Gata, on the one hand, and Leif Ozurason on the other, concerning which there exist long accounts.²

Chapter 144. The King Proceeds South along the Land with His Fleet

But now we shall tell about the happenings touched on before, namely King Óláf's sailing with his fleet after having ordered a levy from the land. All the landed-men from the north were with him except Einar Thambarskelfir. He had remained quietly at home on his estates ever since his return, and did not serve the king. Einar had immense possessions and maintained a magnificent standard of living even though he did not have any revenues from the king. With this fleet Óláf steered south around Cape Stath. There he was joined by a large force from the [various] districts. At the time, King Óláf had the ship which he had caused to be built the preceding winter. It was called Visund [Bison], and was a huge ship. As its figurehead it had the head of a bison, all gilded. The skald Sigvat makes mention of it [in this verse]:

277. Bore—its beak, with red gold
burnished—his noble warship,
Serpent the Long, the unswerving
son of Tryggvi¹ to battle.
Another ship did Óláf,²
oaken-planked and gold-dight
launch—the waves oft washed hard
Vísund's horns—on seashore. (88.)

Then the king sailed south to Horthaland. He learned that Erling Skjálgrsson had left the country with a large force and four or five ships. He himself had a large galley, and his sons, three ships of twenty rowers' benches each, and they had sailed west to join Knút the Powerful. King Óláf then proceeded east [south] along the land with a huge force. He made inquiries whether people knew anything about the plans of Knút the Powerful. They all knew that he was in England. However, King Óláf was told also that Knút had ordered a levy and intended to proceed to Norway. But because King Óláf had a large force and he could not obtain certain information where he should sail for an encounter with Knút, and also because his men considered it unwise to tarry in one spot with so large an army, he came to the decision to steer his fleet south to Denmark; and on that expedition he had with him all that force which he considered most warlike and best equipped, and gave the others leave to return home, as we are told in this verse:

278. With shaven oars Óláf (89.)

urges Vísund southward.
Cleaves the king of Sweden
crashing waves to northward.

Now then that part of his force returned home which he considered would give him the least reliable support. [After it had left] King Óláf had with him a large and well-equipped force. Composing it were most landed-men in Norway, excepting those who, as was said before, had left the country or had remained at home on their estates.

Chapter 145. King Óláf and King Onund Ravage Denmark

1027 With this fleet King Óláf sailed to Denmark, steering to Seeland, and when he arrived there he began to harry as soon as he came ashore. The people of the country were robbed, some killed, some taken prisoner, tied up, and brought to the ships. All fled who could, and there was no resistance. King Óláf ravaged the country thoroughly. Now when in Seeland, he was informed that King Onund Óláfsson had ordered a levy and with a large force was sailing around Scania from the east and was harrying there. It was evident now what plans he and King Onund had made, the time they lay at anchor in the [Gaut Elf] River and had agreed on a pact and mutual friendship; in effect, to resist King Knút. King Onund proceeded on his way till he met his brother-in-law, King Óláf. And when they met they announced, both to their forces and the people of the country, that they intended to subject Denmark to their rule, and they requested the people of the country to receive them [as kings]. And as often is the case when the people of a country are exposed to harrying and find no support for making resistance, most of them assented to all the conditions laid upon them in order to buy peace for themselves. So it came that many swore allegiance to the kings and submitted to them. They proceeded to subject the country far and wide to their rule or else they ravaged it. The skald Sigvat makes mention of this warfare in the *drápa* he composed about Knút the Powerful:

279. Was Knút under heaven—¹ (90.)

Heard I have that
Harald's scion² was
hardy in battle.
South o'er the sea
sailed his dragons
Óláf, the earls'
overlord mighty.

280. Carry the king² (91.)

keel-horses southward
with bellying sails
to Seeland's plain.
Onund another
army brings up
on great galleys

'gainst the Danish.

Chapter 146. King Knút Assembles a Great Fleet

King Knút had learned, west in England, that Ólaf, king of Norway, had called for a levy; also that he had sailed to Denmark with that large fleet and that there were hostilities in his dominions. Then Knút began to assemble a force. Soon a large army and a multitude of ships gathered together. Earl Hákon was second in command over his force. The skald Sigvat that summer arrived in England from Rútha [Rouen] in Valland to the west [south], together with a man called Berg. They had made a trading voyage there the preceding summer. Sigvat composed the *flokk* which is named *Vestrfararvísur* [Verses on a Journey to the West] whose beginning is as follows:

281. Berg, we remember many a (92.)
morning how I fast made
in Rúthaborg roadstead,
riding there at anchor.

Now when Sigvat arrived in England, he went at once to the court of King Knút, intending to request permission to journey to Norway. King Knút had issued an embargo on all merchant ships until he had equipped his force. Now when Sigvat arrived at the court, he went to the building in which the king resided. He found it barred, and stood outside for a long time. But when he got to speak with the king, he was given the permission to recite his poem as he had requested. Then he recited this verse:

282. Outside, asking, stood I (93.)
ere that—was the house door
locked—I was given leave to
lay my case before him;
when inside the hall, the
high-born lord of Denmark—
byrníe I often bore in
battle—granted my wishes.

But when Sigvat became aware that King Knút was preparing to go to war against King Ólaf, and when he knew how great was the force King Knút had, then he spoke this verse:

283. His whole force has Knút out, (94.)
Hákon eke: they threaten
our liege's life and kingdom—

loath would be his passing.
Keep thee, king, to the mountains:
Knút and the earls won't like that:
on the fells their fight would be
fairer, once he 'scaped hence.

Sigvat composed still other verses about the expedition of Knút and Hákon.
He also recited this verse:

284. Terms to make between them (95.)
toiled the noble earl oft,
with Óláf arguing 'gainst
agèd yeomen sharply.
Heads they hewed off more than
Hákon—great is Eirík's
kin—could cause them not to
clash again in fury.¹

Chapter 147. King Knút Arrives in Denmark

Knút the Powerful had got his army ready to depart from the country. He had a tremendous force and huge ships. He himself had a dragon ship so large that there were sixty rowers' benches in it. It had gilded figureheads. Earl Hákon had another dragon ship, with forty rowers' benches. It also had a gilded figurehead, and the sails on both ships had stripes of blue, red, and green. All their ships were painted above the water line, and all their equipment was of the best. They had many other ships, large and well equipped. The skald Sigvat mentions this in his *Knút's drápa*:

(96.) 285. *Was Knút under heaven.*

Heard from the east
the Danes' keen-eyed
king [of warfare].
From westward wended
well-rigged galleys,
the atheling bearing,

(97.) 286. *And bore in the breeze*

Ethelred's foe,
blue sails on yards
the dauntless sovran's
dragons aloft.
From the west coming,
the keel-stags sailed,
lashed by storms, to
Limfjord's shorelands.

We are here told that King Knút led this large fleet east from England and arrived with all his force intact in Denmark and anchored in the Limfjord. There they found a great gathering of people of the country.

Chapter 148. HorthaKnút Renounces His Royal Title

Earl Úlf, the son of Sprakalegg had been appointed to defend Denmark while King Knút was in England; and the king had entrusted to Earl Úlf his son, whose name was HorthaKnút. That was in the preceding summer, as was set down before. But the earl straightway alleged that, when they parted, King Knút had indicated his will that the Danes were to take HorthaKnút, his son, as king over the Danish dominions.

“He entrusted him to us for that purpose. Both I,” he said, “and many other chieftains and leaders of this country have frequently complained to King Knút that people thought it dangerous to be here without a king, seeing that former Danish rulers considered they had their hands full just being kings of Denmark. But in the olden days there were many kings over this realm. Yet [governing it] presents more difficulty now than before, because heretofore we have been so fortunate as to be spared the attacks of foreign potentates, whereas now we hear that the king of Norway plans to invade us, and we suspect that the king of Sweden may join him in such an attempt. And King Knút is in England now.”

And then the earl presented a letter bearing the seal of King Knút, confirming what he had stated. Many other chieftains supported him in this matter. And what with the pleadings of all of them, the people decided at this same assembly to elect HorthaKnút king. It was Queen Emma who had been the originator of this plan, and it was she who had had this letter written and sealed, having obtained the king’s seal by trickery. But he himself knew nothing about all this.

Now when HorthaKnút and Earl Úlf were informed that King Ólaf had come from Norway in the north with a large fleet, they proceeded to Jutland, because there is the center of greatest strength in the Danish dominions. They sent out the war-arrows and called together a great army. But when they learned that the king of Sweden had also arrived with an army, they considered they did not have a sufficient force to do battle with both. Then they kept the army they had gathered in Jutland [in readiness], intending to defend that part of the land against the kings. Their whole fleet they stationed in the Limfjord, and thus they waited for the arrival of King Knút. And when they learned that King Knút had come to the Limfjord from the west, they sent messengers to him as well as to Queen Emma, asking her to find out whether or no the king had taken amiss [what they had done] and to let them know.

The queen spoke with the king about the matter. She said that HorthaKnút, their son, would make amends for it according to the king’s pleasure, in case he had contravened his intentions. The king answered, saying that HorthaKnút had

had contravened his intentions. The king answered, saying that HorthaKnút had not done this on his own initiative. "It has gone," he said, "just as might have been expected, since he who is still a child, and foolish, wanted to be called king; and then when difficulties arose there was danger that all the country might be overrun and subjected by foreign leaders unless our army came to their rescue. Now if he wants to arrive at a reconciliation with me, then let him come to me and lay down that empty title and this letting himself be called king."

These same words the queen sent to HorthaKnút, together with her prayer not to tarry about coming. She added that, as was indeed the case, he would not get any support to oppose his father.

Now when this message came to HorthaKnút he sought the advice of the earl and other chieftains he had with him. But it was quickly apparent that so soon as the people of the land learned that Knút the Old had arrived, all the men of the countryside joined his colors, considering that in him lay all their security. Earl Úlf and those with him perceived that they had only two alternatives: either, to go to the king and submit to his decision, or else, to flee the country. But all urged HorthaKnút to go to meet his father; and so he did. And when they met, he knelt down to his father and laid the seal, which went with the royal title, in his lap. King Knút took HorthaKnút by the hand and assigned him a seat as high as that which he had had before. Earl Úlf sent his son Svein to the royal court—he was the son of Knút's sister. He sought quarter for his father and pleaded for a reconciliation with the king, offering to stay with him as a hostage for his father. Svein and HorthaKnút were of the same age. King Knút sent word to the earl, commanding him to collect his army and his ships and join the forces of the king. They would discuss a reconciliation afterwards. The earl did so.

Chapter 149. King Óláf Prepares a Stratagem

Now when King Óláf and King Onund learned that King Knút had arrived from the west with an unconquerable force, they sailed east around Scania, harrying and burning the countryside, then proceeded eastward around the land toward the realm of the king of Sweden. But as soon as the people [in Denmark] learned that King Knút had come from the west, they would hear of no more submission to the kings. The skald Sigvat makes mention of this:

287. The twain brave kings (98.)
could not ever
subdue stubborn
Denmark by war.
Then scathe much did
in Scania's plains
the foe of Danes.
foremost of princes.

Thereupon the two kings steered east along the land and cast anchor by a river called Áin Helga [Helgeå, "Holy River"], and remained there for a while. When they learned that King Knút was pursuing them with his fleet, they took counsel and hit on this stratagem that King Óláf with his force landed and went through the forests to the lake out of which the Áin Helga River flows. There at the outlet [from the lake] they made a dam of tree trunks and turf, thus damming up the water. Then they dug deep trenches, causing several creeks to flow together, thereby creating widespread marshes. And into the river bed they felled large trees. This work occupied them a number of days, with King Óláf having supervision of this stratagem while King Onund had command of the fleet. King Knút was informed of the whereabouts of the kings and of all the damage they had inflicted in his realm, and he moved against them where they lay anchored in the Áin Helga River. He had a huge force, half again as large as the combined force of both kings. The skald Sigvat makes mention of this:

288. Would not the prince— (99.)
people soon found out—
let his land be
laid waste resistless.
The Danes' buckler
brooked no rapine
but fended his folklands.

foremost of princes.

Chapter 150. The Battle off the Áin Helga River

One day toward evening King Onund's lookout men saw the fleet of King Knút approaching, nor were they far away. Then King Onund had the war trumpets blown. The crews thereupon took the tent coverings down and armed themselves, rowed out of the harbor and east along the land, then gathered their ships, bound them together, and made ready for battle. King Onund sent his lookout men running up into the country to find King Óláf and tell him what was happening. Then King Óláf had the dam breached, so that the river flowed along its old bed, and during the night went down to his own ships.

King Knút arrived in front of the harbor, and there saw where lay the fleet of the kings all ready to do battle. Then it appeared to him rather late in the day to give battle until his force could be ready for that, because his fleet needed much room at sea for sailing. There was a long distance between the foremost ship and the last, also between that one which was farthest to sea and the one nearest the land. The wind was nearly calm. But when the king saw that the Swedes and the Norwegians had left the harbor, he moved into it with the ships for which there was room. But the greater part of his fleet nevertheless lay outside at sea.

In the morning, when there was full daylight, a great many men of the Danish force were on land, some conversing, some disporting themselves. Then all of a sudden the waters came rushing down upon them with the swiftness of a cataract, and along with them, big trees which drifted against their ships, which suffered damage from them while the waters flowed over all the fields. The men who had gone ashore were drowned, many died also who were aboard the ships. And those who were able to do so cut their cables and drifted out to sea, and the ships scattered. The large dragon ship which bore the king himself was carried along with the current, nor was it easily turned with the oars, so it drifted out to where lay the fleet of King Onund. And when the Swedes recognized the ship they promptly surrounded it. But because the ship had high sides as though it was a fort and had a multitude of men on board, a picked crew, well armed and fearless, it was not so easily attacked. Nor was it long before Earl Úlf came up with his fleet, and then the battle began. Soon also King Knút's fleet approached from all sides. Then the kings Óláf and Onund saw that they had won as great a victory as fate allowed for the time being. They pulled out, stern first, and got themselves clear of the ships of King Knút, so the fleets separated. But because this attack had not gone the way King Knút had planned, his ships had not been maneuvered as was intended, and so no [further] attack was made. King Knút mustered his forces, re-arranged them, and prepared [for battle again]. But when

the fleets had separated and each proceeded by itself, the kings mustered their forces and found they had not suffered any loss of men. They also saw that if they waited till King Knút had re-arranged all the forces he had and then attacked them, that then the odds would be so great against them that there was little hope of their winning the victory, and that most certainly, in the event of a battle, there would be a very great loss of life. So they decided to row east along the land with all their ships. And when they saw that King Knút's fleet did not pursue them, they raised their masts and hoisted sail. Óttar the Black speaks about this encounter in the *drápa* he composed about Knút the Powerful:

289. To Swedes a setback gavest, (100.)
scion thou of Skjoldungs.
Didst batten on blood the wolfish
brood at Helgaá River.
Against two kings thou keptest—
quenched was the ravens' hunger
there—thy land. Of their lives were
lawless caitiffs in terror.

The skald Thórrh Sjáreksson¹ composed a memorial poem about Holy King Óláf, which is called the *Drápa of the Rood*, and in it this encounter is mentioned:

290. Egthirs'² ruler, Óláf, (101.)
onsets three had with the
Isle-Danes' ever watchful
arm-ring giver valiant.³
Sharply shot the Skanings'
shaft-storm-urger.³ Was not
Svein's great son³ faint-hearted
seen. Howled wolves o'er corpses.

Chapter 151. The Two Kings Deliberate on a Course of Action

King Ólaf and King Onund sailed east along the lands of the Swedish king, and in the evening of that day made land at a place called Barvík.¹ There they lay at anchor during the night. Now it could readily be seen [by the behavior of the Swedes] that they longed to get home. During the night a considerable portion of the Swedish fleet sailed east along the land, and they did not stop till each arrived in his home district. But when King Onund became aware of this at dawn, he had the trumpets sounded for a meeting. Then all the crews went up on land, and an assembly was held. King Onund spoke as follows. “The case is this,” he said. “As you, King Ólaf, know, this summer we all proceeded together and harried far and wide in Denmark. We acquired much booty but no land. During the summer I had three hundred and fifty [420] ships; but now there remain only a hundred [120] of them. Now it would seem to me that we cannot win much glory with a force no larger than this, even though you do have the sixty ships you had this summer. Now I consider it most advisable to return to my kingdom; for it is a good thing to drive home with all the cart in one piece. We have acquired wealth on this expedition and lost nothing. Now I shall suggest to you, brother-in-law Ólaf, that you come with me, and that we all stay together, this winter. Take of my kingdom as much as you think you need to support yourself and your company. And then let us, when spring comes, take such counsel as seems advisable. Or if you prefer to make your way through our dominions, you are welcome to do so, in case you wish to proceed overland to your kingdom.”

King Ólaf thanked King Onund for this friendly offer. “However, if I am to prevail,” he said, “we shall follow a different course; which is, to keep together the force left us now. In the beginning of summer, before leaving Norway, I had three hundred and fifty [420] vessels, but when I left it, I chose from all that fleet those troops which I considered fittest. With them I manned the sixty ships which I now have. Now it would seem to me, also with regard to your force, that those have run their way who had the least enterprise and on whom one could place least reliance. But here I see all your leaders and captains, and I know that all those troops which belong to the bodyguard are most skilled in the use of weapons. We still have a large force and such good vessels that we can well lie out at sea all winter, as kings have done before in time. Now King Knút will remain in the Áin Helga River but a short while, because there is not sufficient harbor room for the multitude of ships he has, and so he will pursue us eastward. In that case we shall draw away from him and soon acquire more support. But if

he returns to where there are harbors sufficiently large to accommodate his fleet, then, just as happened here [with us], many of his troops will most likely be eager to return home. And I expect we have done enough, this summer, so that the cotters, both in Scania and in Seeland, know what is awaiting them. The fleet of King Knút is likely to be scattered far and wide so that it won't be sure who will win the victory. Let us first of all find out what he intends to do." And King Óláf concluded his speech in such fashion that everybody concurred with him and the plan he advised was adopted. Spies were sent to find out about King Knút's movements, and meanwhile both kings lay at anchor.

Chapter 152. King Knút Abandons the Pursuit

King Knút saw that the king of Norway and the king of Sweden steered their fleets east along the land. Straightway he despatched troops landward and let them ride day and night, following the course of the fleet of the kings out at sea. Some of his recognizance detachments went forward as others returned, so King Knút every day was informed of the movements of the kings. There were spies in the [very] force of the kings. And when he learned that a large portion of their fleet had left them, he returned with his fleet to Seeland and anchored in the Eyrar Sound with all his force. Some of his ships were moored near Seeland, some near Scania.

King Knút rode to Hróiskelda¹ the day before Michaelmas, together with a large company of men. There his brother-in-law, Earl Úlf, had prepared a banquet for him. The earl treated his guests most liberally and was in exceedingly good spirits. The king was taciturn and rather glum. The earl spoke to him, addressing him on such topics as he expected the king would be most interested in. The king made little reply. The earl asked if he cared to play chess. He said yes. So they took the chess board and played.

Earl Úlf was quick spoken and ruthless, both in his talk and in all other matters, also a most enterprising man in his dominions. He was a great man of war, and there exists a long saga about him. He was the most powerful man in Denmark next to the king. His sister was Gytha, who married Earl Guthini [Godwine], the son of Úlfnath. Their sons were Harald, later the king of England, Earl Tóstig, Earl Valtheow, Earl Morkere, and Earl Svain. The name of their daughter was Gytha, whom King Eadward the Good of England married.

Chapter 153. King Knút Has Earl Úlf Slain

Now when they played chess, King Knút and Earl Úlf, the king made a false move, and the earl took a knight from him. The king put his figure back and said he was going to make a different move. The earl became angry, tossed the chess board down, rose, and went away.

The king said, “Are you running away, Úlf the Cowardly?”

The earl turned back by the door and said, “You would have run further in the Helgaá River if you had been able to. You did not call me Úlf the Cowardly then when I laid my ship alongside yours to help you when the Swedes beat you like dogs.” Thereupon the earl left the room and laid himself down to sleep.

Next morning, when the king put on his clothes he said to his page, “Go to Earl Úlf and kill him.” The man went and was gone for a while, then returned. Then the king said, “Did you kill the earl?”

He answered, “I did not, because he had gone to Saint Lucius Church.”

There was a certain man called Ívar the White, a Norwegian by birth. At that time he was one of the bodyguard of King Knút and groom of the chamber. The king said to Ívar, “You go and kill the earl!”

Ívar went to the church and into the choir, and there he ran his sword through the earl’s body. Earl Úlf died there. Ívar went to the king with the bloody sword in his hand. The king asked, “Did you kill the earl now?”

Ívar replied, “Now I killed him.”

“Then you did well,” said the king.

But after the earl was killed the monks had the church locked. The king was told that. He sent a man to the monks, ordering them to open the church and sing masses. They did as the king commanded. But when the king attended church he added large properties of land to the endowment of the church so that it comprises a large district, and later that place rose to great importance. For this reason these lands have ever since belonged to that church. Thereupon the king rode to the coast and his ships where he dwelled a long time during the fall with a huge force.

Chapter 154. The Two Kings Part Company

When King Óláf and King Onund learned that King Knút had sailed to the Eyrar Sound and lay there with his fleet, the two kings called for a council meeting. King Óláf spoke, and said that matters had turned out as he had surmised, that King Knút had not remained long in the Áin Helga harbor. “Now I expect that my surmise concerning our encounter will be borne out in other respects. He now has a small force, compared to what he had this summer; and he is likely to have one smaller still later on, because they will like no more than we to be lying out at sea on the ships later on in fall; and we may be granted the victory if we have sufficient perseverance and daring. That is the way it went this summer when we had a smaller force but they suffered loss of both life and property from us.”

Then the Swedes spoke up and said that it was not advisable to wait there for winter and frost to come—“even though the Norwegians would have us to. They do not know how much ice will form here, and often the sea freezes over during winter. We want to go home and not stay here any longer.” And there was murmuring among the Swedes, and all talked at once. They came to the decision that King Onund left with all his force, leaving King Óláf behind.

Chapter 155. King Óláf Performs His First Miracle

But as he lay anchored there, King Óláf often took counsel with his men. One night Egil Hallsson and a man called Tófi Valgautsson had to keep watch on the king's ship. The latter belonged to a family of West Gautland and was of noble birth. And as they were mounting guard they heard weeping and lamentation from where sat captives in their bonds. They were tied up on land for the night. Tófi said he could not stand to hear this wailing, and asked Egil to go with him to release these people and let them escape. So they did—they went up to them, cut their bonds, and let all of them escape. There was great indignation about that. The king, too, was so furious that they stood in danger of life and limb. Later on, when Egil fell sick, the king for a long time refused to go and see him, even though many asked him to. Then Egil was very sorry for what he had done to incur the king's wrath, and begged him for forgiveness. At last the king granted that. He laid his hands on Egil's side where it hurt and said his prayers over it, and straightway it stopped hurting. After that Egil recovered. Later, Tófi was reconciled with the king. We are told that, in order to achieve that, he was to get his father to come to King Óláf. Valgaut was a rank heathen. He became a Christian through the words of the king and died as soon as he had been baptized.

Chapter 156. King Knút Bribes King Óláf's Subjects

Now when King Óláf had spoken with his men, he sought the advice of the chieftains as to what course to take now. But there was little agreement on that among them. Some called that ill-advised which to others seemed a good idea, and they debated the matter for a very long time. Spies of King Knút were constantly among them and got to speak with many men. They promised money and the friendship of King Knút; and many allowed themselves to be won over and bound themselves to swear allegiance to King Knút and to support him if he landed in Norway. With many, this came out later, though at first it was kept secret. Some took money right away, and some were promised rewards later. Besides there were a great many who had already received large gifts from him; because that is to be said of King Knút that everyone he got to know and who seemed to him to be a man of some mettle and inclined to attach himself to him, got his handfuls of money from him. Because of that he became immensely well regarded. He was especially liberal to foreigners, and the more so the more distant the lands they came from.

Chapter 157. King Óláf Decides to Take the Landway Home

King Óláf frequently met with his men to seek their advice. And when he noticed that everyone had his own opinion, he suspected that there were some who would seem to give counsel contrary to what appeared most advisable, and he was not quite sure whether everyone was to be trusted in his allegiance to him. Many urged him to take advantage of a favorable wind and sail to Eyrar Sound and then north to Norway. They declared the Danes would not dare to attack them even though they lay there with a great fleet. But the king was so shrewd that he saw that such a course was not feasible. He also recalled that disaster had overtaken Óláf Tryggvason when with a small fleet he offered battle to a large fleet that lay in wait for him, thinking the Danes would not dare to fight. He also knew that there were a great number of Norwegians in the army of King Knút. So the king suspected that those who advised him to take that course might be more friendly inclined to King Knút than to himself; and he made this decision that he told all men who would follow him to get ready to travel the land-way through Gautland and to Norway. “But our ships,” he said, “and all heavy goods we cannot take along with us I shall send east to the king of Sweden for him to have in safe-keeping for us.”

Chapter 158. Hárek of Thjóttá Passes Through the Danish Fleet

Hárek of Thjóttá made answer to King Óláf's speech and spoke as follows: "It is easily seen that I cannot travel on foot to Norway. I am an old man, heavy, and little accustomed to marching. Also, I am reluctant to part with my ship. I have bestowed so much care on that ship and its equipment that I am unwilling to let my enemies get hold of it."

The king answered, "Go with us, Hárek. We shall carry you along if you cannot walk." Then Hárek spoke this verse:

291. Set I have my mind on (102.)
sailing hence upon my
wave-tossed water-horse-of-
war, rather than walking,
even though without, in
Eyrar Sound, with warships
famous Knút—know folk me
fearless—lie in waiting.

Then King Óláf made ready for his journey. The men wore their usual apparel and carried their weapons, and all the horses they could get were loaded with packs of clothing and chattels. The king sent some of the crews with their ships to Kalmar. There they had the ships drawn ashore and all the tackle and other property taken care of.

Hárek did as he had said: he waited for a favorable breeze, then sailed west around Scania till, going west, he came to Halar,¹ and that was toward evening. There was a fresh favorable wind. Then he lowered the sail and the mast and took off the vane. The entire ship above the waterline he had covered with gray hangings and let a few men ply the oars forward and aft, but most men he had sit low in the ship. King Knút's watchmen observed it and discussed between themselves what kind of ship that might be, and guessed that it carried a load of salt or herring, since they saw few men aboard and few oars being plied. It seemed to them gray and untarred and as though faded by the sun. Also they saw that it sat very low in the water.

But as soon as Hárek had gone some distance in the Sound and past the fleet, he raised the mast and hoisted the sail and set up the gilded weather vane. The sail was white as driven snow and had red and blue stripes. Then King Knút's men saw that and told him that most likely King Óláf had sailed past them. But

King Knút replied that King Óláf was too shrewd a man to sail through the fleet of King Knút with only one ship, and gave it as his opinion that this probably was Hárek of Thjóttá or somebody like him. And it is thought that King Knút knew about Hárek's passing through and that Hárek would not have proceeded thus if there had not been assurances of friendship between King Knút and him. And this was considered evident later, when the friendship between King Knút and Hárek became known to everybody. When sailing north about Vethrey Island² Hárek composed this verse:

292. Ladies of Lund shall not (103.)
laugh and think I dare not—
nor Danish maids make mock of
me—luff we round this island!—
sail the open sea, and
seek my home, this fall, o'er
leagues of Fróthi's-flat-land³
faring, in the Northlands.

Hárek continued on his journey and did not stop until he arrived in Hálogaland in the north and at his estate of Thjóttá.

Chapter 159. King Óláf's Return to Norway

King Óláf started on his journey, proceeding first through Smáland, and arrived in West Gautland. He proceeded peacefully and quietly, and the people of the country gave them good furtherance. So the king journeyed on till he arrived in Vík. Then he continued north in Vík till he arrived at Sarpsborg. There he remained and had his winter quarters prepared for him. He gave permission to most of his troops to return home, but kept as many of the landed-men about him as he thought wise, among them all the sons of Árni Armóthsson. Them he honored most highly. At that time he was joined by Gellir Thorkelsson who had come the previous summer from Iceland, as was set down before.

Chapter 160. Sigvat Is Accepted Back into the King's Graces

The skald Sigvat had been with the king a long time, as I have said before, and the king had appointed him as his marshal. Sigvat was not ready of speech in prose, but skaldship was so easy for him that he spoke verse as readily as though it were ordinary speech. He had been on merchant voyages to France, and on this journey he had touched on England and met Knút the Powerful and received permission from him to proceed to Norway, as was related before. And when he arrived in Norway, he forthwith went to see King Ólaf, whom he found at Borg, and appeared before him as he sat at table. Sigvat greeted him. The king looked at him, saying not a word. Then Sigvat spoke this verse:

293. Home have I come hither— (104.)
hear my words, O ruler,
and let all men mark them—
thy marshal, from his journey:
say now, what seat hast thou,
sea-king—though all thy hall is
lief to me aye, liege-lord—
allotted to me 'mongst thy warriors?

Then the old adage proved true, that “many are the king’s ears.” The king had heard all about Sigvat’s journeys and that he had met King Knút. King Ólaf said to Sigvat, “I don’t know whether you intend to continue as my marshal. Have you not become King Knút’s man?” Sigvat spoke this verse:

294. Knút did ask me oft if (105.)
I, ring-giver, would be
loyal to him as liege-lord
like to gladsome Ólaf;
but answered I to him that
ill—and the truth spoke I—
it seemed to serve two kings.
My saying that many can witness.

Then King Ólaf said that Sigvat should occupy the same seat he was accustomed to have. Sigvat soon again became the same favorite [with the king] as he had been before.

Chapter 161. King Knút Suborns Many Norwegians

During the summer, Erling Skjálǫgsson and all his sons had been in the army of King Knút and in the same company with Earl Hákon. And there was also Thórir the Hound occupying a high rank. Now when King Knút learned that King Ólaf had taken the land route to Norway, he dissolved the levy and gave all men permission to find them a place to pass the winter in. There was at this time a numerous body of foreigners, both of Englishmen and Norwegians, and of men from several lands who had joined his army during the summer. In the fall Erling Skjálǫgsson journeyed to Norway with his troops and at his departure received large gifts from King Knút. Thórir the Hound remained with King Knút. Together with Erling went emissaries of King Knút who carried on their persons an immense sum of money. During the winter they went far and wide about the country, paying out the rewards King Knút had promised men in the preceding fall for supporting him; and they also gave money to many others whom they thus managed to make friendly to the cause of King Knút. They had help from Erling for travelling through the land. The result was that a great many were induced to be friendly to King Knút, promising him their services and also to make resistance to King Ólaf. Some did so openly, but by far the most kept that secret from the general public. King Ólaf learned about all this, for there were many who could tell him about it, and it was common talk in his court. Sigvat the Skald spoke this verse:

295. With open purses Ólaf's (106.)
enemies go about there,
pelf off'ring for the prince's
priceless head shamefully:
hardly 'scapes black hateful
hell pain the wight who his
good lord gives away for
gold—and he deserves it!

and Sigvat still further spoke this verse:

296. Sad reward received they, (107.)
selling their lord foully:
hied they to fiery hall of
hell instead of heaven.

And it was frequently mentioned there how ill it became Earl Hákon to lead an army against King Ólaf, considering that he had spared his life, the time he

had him in his power. But Sigvat was a great friend of the earl, and when he heard the earl blamed, he spoke this verse:

297. More heinous guilt on their heads would (108.)
heap the ruler's henchmen
than Earl Hákon even,
if for pelf they sold him.
Not beseeming are suchlike
slurs against the king's men.
More befitting by far were't
for us all to be blameless.

Chapter 162. King Óláf Decides on a Visitation to the Uppland Districts

1028 King Óláf had arranged for a great Yule celebration, to which many chieftains had come. On the seventh day of the Yule [January 1st] the king was walking outside, accompanied by only a few men. Sigvat was with the king day and night, and he was with him also then. They entered a certain house where the treasures of the king were kept. He had made ample preparations, as was the custom, and brought together his valuables in order to make presents to his friends on the eighth day of Yule. There stood in the house a number of gold-inlaid swords. Then Sigvat spoke this verse:

298. Stand there, stored, gold-hilted (109.)
stained swords; and I praise them.
Best, though, to have the hero's
wholehearted good favor.
But scorn would not the skald, if,
scatterer-of-goldrings—
of yore long years I was with
you—a sword were given him.

The king took a sword and gave it to him. Its hilt was wound with gold [wire], and the guards were inlaid with gold. That was a precious piece of property. But the gift provoked some envy, as appeared later.

Immediately after Yule, King Óláf began his journey to the Uppland districts, because he had a great many men about him, but no revenues had come to him from the north that fall, for he had required a levy during the [preceding] summer and [on its equipment] he had spent all he could afford. Nor were there any ships to transport his troops north. Also, he had only such news from the north that he considered there would be trouble unless he came with a large company. For this reason the king resolved to travel through the Uppland districts. Now a sufficient time had not elapsed since his last progress there as was stipulated in the laws or had been the custom of the kings. But when the king arrived there, landed-men and powerful farmers invited him to stay with them and thus lightened his expenses.

Chapter 163. Bjorn Accuses the People of Eystri Dale of Theft

There was a certain man called Bjorn, of Gautish family. He was a friend of Queen Ástríth, [well] acquainted with her, and slightly related to her. She had procured for him a stewardship and overseership in Upper Heithmork. He also had under him the governance of the Eystri Dales [Eastern Dales]. King Óláf did not like him, nor was he popular with the farmers. Moreover there had occurred large thefts of cattle and swine in the settlement in which Bjorn had authority. Bjorn called an assembly and there inquired about the animals that had disappeared. He declared those men most likely to have perpetrated such misdeeds who lived in forest districts far from other folk. He was referring to the people who lived in the Eystri Dales. That district was much scattered, inhabited along water courses or in clearings in the forests, but only in a few places were there large settlements.

Chapter 164. Dag Reveals Bjorn's Thefts

Rauth [Red] was the name of a man who lived in the Eystri Dales. His wife bore the name of Ragnhild, and their sons were called Dag and Sigurth. They were all most capable persons. They were amongst those present at this assembly and defended the people of the Dales against such accusations. To Bjorn they appeared to give themselves great airs and to show [too much] finery in their weapons and clothes. Bjorn taunted the brothers, saying that it was not unlikely that it was they who had done such things. They denied this; and with that the assembly came to an end.

A short time afterwards King Ólaf arrived at Bjorn the Steward's place with his followers to be entertained there. Then this same complaint was brought up before the king which had been brought up at the assembly. Bjorn said that to him the sons of Rauth appeared the most likely to have caused this loss. Then they were sent for, and when they came before the king he declared they did not look like thieves and he exonerated them from this charge. They invited the king to visit their father and be entertained there for three days with all his company. Bjorn advised against his journeying, there, but the king went nevertheless.

At Rauth's place a magnificent reception was arranged for him. Then the king asked to what family Rauth and his family belonged. Rauth said he was a Swede, rich, and of high birth, "but I eloped from there," he said, "with this woman with whom I have lived ever since. She is the sister of King Hring Dagsson."¹ Then the king recollected the family connection of both. He found that both father and sons were exceedingly intelligent people and asked them what skills they had. Sigurth said that he could interpret dreams and tell what time of the day it was even though he saw neither sun, moon, nor stars. The king tried him out in this skill, and it was as Sigurth had said. Dag declared he had the skill to be able to tell the good and the bad in every person he met if he decided to observe him and reflect about it. The king bade him tell what fault of character he could see in him. Dag gave him such answer as the king acknowledged to be correct.

Thereupon the king asked him what fault of character Bjorn, his steward, had. Dag said that Bjorn was a thief, and also told him where on his place Bjorn had hidden both the bones, horns, and hides of the cattle he had stolen that fall. "He committed all the thefts," he said, "which occurred this fall and of which he has accused others." Dag told the king exactly where he should search. And when the king departed from Rauth's estate, he was given noble parting presents. The sons of Rauth accompanied the king. First, the king went to Bjorn's place and found that everything was as Dag had told him. Then the king drove Bjorn out of

the country, and it was only owing to the queen that he kept life and limbs.

Chapter 165. Thórir Admits Having Been Bribed

Thórir, the son of Olvir of Egg and also the stepson of Kálf Árnason and the sister's son of Thórir the Hound, was a very handsome, as well as a tall and strong, man. At this time he was eighteen years old. He had made a favorable marriage with a wealthy woman from Heithmork. He was exceedingly popular and gave promise to be a chieftain. He invited the king and his followers to be entertained at his estate. The king accepted this invitation and journeyed to Thórir's estate, where he found a handsome reception. The entertainment there was most excellent, and all the guests there were served most liberally, and all the provisions were of the best. The king and his men remarked between them how proper everything was, and they did not know what they liked most, Thórir's accommodations, the house furnishings, the table service, the drink, or the man who furnished all this. Dag did not say much about it all.

King Ólaf was accustomed to have frequent consultations with Dag, and asked him about various matters; and the king found everything Dag said to be true, whether it concerned past or coming events. Therefore the king placed great confidence in what he said, and so the king [one day] requested Dag to speak with him in private, and talked to him about a great many things; and finally he remarked what a fine man Thórir was to make such excellent entertainment for them. Dag said little about that but allowed all the king said to be true. Then the king asked Dag what faults of character he detected in Thórir. Dag replied that he thought Thórir might be of good disposition if he was such as everyone thought he was. The king requested Dag to be more specific, saying that he owed him that. Dag answered, "In that case, sire, would you grant me that I attend to the revenge if I discover the fault of character [in Thórir]?" The king replied that he did not care to have others speak in judgment for him, but requested Dag to reply to what he had asked. Dag answered, "Precious are the sovran's words. That fault I find in Thórir's character which may be found in many: he is too avaricious."

The king asked, "Is he a thief or a robber?"

Dag answered, "No, not that."

"What else, then," the king asked.

Dag answered, "This he did for money that he became a traitor to his king. He has accepted money from Knút the Powerful to kill you."

The king replied, "How will you prove that?"

Dag said. "On his right arm above the elbow he wears a thick gold ring which

King Knút has given him but which he will let no one see.” After that they spoke no more, and the king was most furious.

When the king sat at table and the men had drunk for a while and were very merry, while Thórir went about, serving the people, the king had Thórir called before him. He came up to the king’s table and rested his elbows on it.

“How old a man are you, Thórir?” asked the king.

“I am eighteen years old,” he replied.

The king said, “A big man you are for your age, Thórir, and a fine fellow.” Then the king put his hand around Thórir’s right arm and stroked it above the elbow.

Thórir said, “Gently, sire! I have a boil on my arm.” The king held on to his arm and felt something hard underneath.

The king said, “Haven’t you heard that I am a healer? Let me see that boil.” Then Thórir saw that it would not do to conceal it any longer and took off the ring and showed it to the king. The king asked whether it was a gift from King Knút. Thórir said he would not deny it.

The king had Thórir seized and put in chains. Then Kálf came forward and asked for mercy, offering money for him. Many supported him and offered compensation. The king was so furious that no one dared to address him. He declared that Thórir was to have the same sentence [of death] which Thórir had intended for him, and had him killed afterwards. But that deed created the greatest ill-will, both there in Uppland Province and to no less degree north in the Trondheim District where Thórir had most relatives. And Kálf felt very keenly the slaying of this man, because Thórir in his youth had been his foster son.



Thórir reveals the ring given him by King Knút.

Chapter 166. Thórir's Brother Is Slain by King Óláf

Grjótgarth, the son of Olvir, was the older brother of Thórir. He also was a most influential man and had a body of men about him. At that time he was also in the Heithmork District. And when he learned of the slaying of Thórir he made attacks on where he knew the king's men were, or his property, and between these attacks he kept himself in the forests or other hiding places. Now when the king learned about these hostilities he sent out spies to find out where Grjótgarth kept himself, and he discovered his whereabouts. Grjótgarth had taken shelter for the night not far from where the king sojourned. Immediately, King Óláf set out at night and arrived there at dawn and surrounded the house where Grjótgarth and his men slept. They awoke, hearing the noise of men and the clashing of arms. They straightway seized their arms, and Grjótgarth ran out into the entrance hall. He asked who commanded this force, and was told that it was King Óláf. Grjótgarth asked if the king could hear what he said. The king stood in front of the door. He said Grjótgarth could say what he pleased, "I can hear what you say.'

Grjótgarth said, "I shall not ask for quarter." He rushed out, with his shield over his head and a bare sword in his hand. He did not see clearly, because it was still quite dark. He thrust at the king but hit Arnbjorn Árnason. The blow struck him under his coat of mail and went into the abdomen, and that was his death. Grjótgarth, too, was slain at once, and most of his company. After this occurrence the king journeyed back south to Vík.

Chapter 167. King Óláf Sends for the Ships Left in Sweden

Now when King Óláf arrived in Túnsberg he sent messengers into all shires, who were to demand troops and a levy for the king. He had but few ships at that time, and these were only small vessels belonging to farmers. Now troops in good numbers came to his colors from the [neighboring] shires, but few from any distance; and it soon became apparent that the farmers had abandoned their loyalty to the king. King Óláf sent a company east to Gautland for his ships and the goods they had left behind them in fall. But the progress of these men was slow, because it was no easier then to proceed past Denmark than it was in the fall, because King Knút had levied an army from all the Danish dominions and had no less than twelve hundred [1440] ships.

Chapter 168. Sigvat Advises the King to Flee

It was learned in Norway that Knút the Powerful was gathering an invincible army and intended to sail with all his force to Norway to subdue it. But when this was noised abroad, troops became all the more difficult for King Óláf to enroll, and he received little support from the farmers after that. This was a matter which was discussed frequently among his men. Then Sigvat spoke this verse:

299. Summons the sire of England (110.)
sea-steeds from all shires;
but few and frail—yet little
fears the king—our vessels.
Loath it were, if lieges
left this king for pelf and
troopless, selling their troth like
traitors to the enemy.

The king held meetings with his bodyguard, and at times called an assembly of all his troops, and asked them for advice as to what plan of action seemed to them most expedient. “We do not need to conceal from you,” he said, “that King Knút intends to invade the country this summer, and he has a large army, as you are likely to have heard, whereas we have only a small one just now, in comparison with his, and the people of the country are not proving loyal to us.” To this speech of the king the men he turned to made different answers. Here we are told what Sigvat said:

300. Flee we might our foes, though (111.)
fear I being upbraided
by the king and called a
coward and be mulcted.
Friends though fail the ruler—
false friends show their hand now—
each man owes it himself to
act for his own safety.

Chapter 169. Hárek of Thjóttá Avenges Himself on Grankel

This same spring it occurred in Hálogaland that Hárek of Thjóttá called to mind that Ásmund, the son of Grankel, had robbed and beaten his servants. The twenty-oared ship Hárek owned was afloat in front of his estate, all tented and decked. He had the word spread that he intended to sail south to Trondheim. On a certain evening Hárek boarded his ship with all his servants, eighty in number. They rowed during the night and arrived at Grankel's estate when dawn broke. They surrounded the houses, attacked them, and set them on fire. Grankel burned to death inside, together with his men, but some were killed outside. Altogether, thirty people lost their lives there. After having accomplished this, Hárek returned to his estate. Ásmund [at that time] was at King Óláf's court. Neither did anyone in Hálogaland demand compensation of Hárek for his deed nor did he offer any.



Túsberg in the time of Saint Óláf.

Chapter 170. King Knút Subdues Norway

Knút the Powerful gathered his fleet and sailed to the Limfjord. And when all his preparations were made, he steered to Norway with all his force. He proceeded swiftly and did not stop at any place east of the [Ósló]fjord but cut across the Folden [Ósló]fjord. He dropped anchor at [the] Agthir [coast] and summoned assemblies. The farmers came down to the coast and had meetings with King Knút. And there Knút was accepted as king over all the land. He appointed men to be his stewards and took hostages from the farmers [to assure himself of their loyalty]. Not anyone opposed him. King Óláf was in Túnsberg at the time Knút's fleet had sailed past the mouth of the Foldenfjord. King Knút proceeded north along the land. There came to him people from the districts near by and all pledged allegiance to him. King Knút lay anchored for some time in the Eikunda Sound. There Erling Skjálgsson joined him with a large force, and King Knút promised Erling that he was to have all the land to govern between [the Headland of] Stath and Rýgjarbit.¹ Thereupon King Knút proceeded on his way; and to be brief, he did not stop before arriving in the Trondheim District, heading to Nitharós. Then he called for an assembly of the eight districts [of Trondheim], and at this assembly Knút was elected king of all Norway. Thórir the Hound had come from Denmark with King Knút and was present [at this assembly]. So was Hárek of Thjóttá who had just arrived there. Thórir and he became landed-men under King Knút and confirmed their loyalty with oaths. King Knút gave them large revenues and the right to trade with the Finns, and on top of that, bestowed large gifts on them. All landed-men who swore allegiance to him he endowed with both revenues and chattels, giving them greater power than they had had before.

Chapter 171. Einar Thambarskelfir Is Restored to Power

King Knút had by this time brought all of Norway under his sway. He then called for assemblies, which were attended numerously by both his army and the people of the country. Then King Knút made it known that he would bestow on his kinsman, Earl Hákon, all the land which he had won on this expedition. Thereupon he led Hortha-Knútt, his son, to the high-seat by his side, bestowing upon him the title of king, and therewith the realm of Denmark. King Knút demanded hostages from all landed-men and great freeholders, taking their sons or brothers, or else near kinsmen of theirs, or persons most dear to them and who seemed to him most fitting to be hostages. By so doing he made sure of their loyalty to himself, as was said before.

No sooner had Earl Hákon regained his power in Norway, than his brother-in-law, Einar Thambarskelfir, joined forces with him. He laid hold of all the revenues he had had before when the earls ruled the land. King Knút bestowed large gifts on Einar and bound him with a great show of friendship to himself; and he promised that Einar should be the greatest and most eminent man in Norway, barring those of princely race, while he wielded power over the land. He added that to him Einar seemed most fit to hold the highest dignity, by reason of his birth—both he and his son Eindriði—excepting only the earl [Hákon]. Einar set great prize on these promises, and on his part swore loyalty to him [Knút]. Then Einar again became a man of great power.

Chapter 172. Thórarin Composes the “Head Ransom”

There was a certain man called Thórarin Loftunga [Praise-Tongue]. He was of Icelandic origin, was a great poet, and sojourned much at the court of kings and other chieftains. He was at the court of King Knút the Powerful and had composed a *flokk* [a minor poem without a refrain] about him. But when the king heard that Thórarin had composed a *flokk* about him, he was furious and commanded him to recite a *drápa* before him on the following day when he, the king, sat at table. And if he failed to do so, Thórarin would have to hang for his temerity, for having composed a petty *drápa* about him, King Knút. Thereupon Thórarin composed a refrain and inserted it in his poem, to which he added some verses or stanzas. And this is the refrain:¹

301. As Christ the heavenly kingdom, (112.)
Knút defends his country.

Knút rewarded him for his poem with fifty marks of silver. This *drápa* is called “Head Ransom.” Thórarin composed still another *drápa* about King Knút which is called *Tög-drápa*.² In that *drápa* we are told of this expedition of King Knút, when he sailed from Denmark in the south to Norway, and this is one of the sets of verses:

302. *Knút neath the sun.*³ (113.)
My courtly friend
in strength with his fleet
did fare thither.
Out of the Limfjord
my liege-lord steered
a fleet of frigates
fair-dight and numerous.

303. Feared Agthir’s folk (114.)
the feeder-of-ravens’
coming greatly,
though cowed not easily.
With gold was garnished
our great lord’s dragon.
To see it was better
than being told of it.

(115.)

304. And outside Listi
light-footed sea-steeds
coal-black darted
past Deer-Head Ness.⁴
Eikunda Sound
to the south of it
with surf-hogs was
wholly covered.
305. ‘Round high Hjornagli⁵ (116.)
hurriedly scudded
Knút’s free housecarls,
carrying full sail.
Stately ’round Stath the
stags-of-the-sea fared:
the warriors’ fleet was
wondrously dight.
306. Slender sail-ships (117.)
swiftly advancing
bore long hulls there
bravely past Stim.⁶
Sturdily strode thus
steeds-of-eelhome⁷
so that north to Nith⁸
neared the king’s fleet.
307. Gave to his nephew (118.)
niggardly nowise,
the Jutes’ overlord
all of Norway;
and to his son the
scion-of-Skjold gave,
the dusky-ones’⁹ feeder,
Denmark wholly.

Here we learn that for the poet actuality exceeded the telling with regard to King Knút’s expedition; because Thórarin prided himself on having been on this expedition when Knút sailed to Norway.

Chapter 173. King Knút Sails South

The men whom King Ólaf had sent east to Gautland after his ships sailed with those which seemed seaworthy to them. The others they burned, but had along with them the equipment and other goods belonging to the king and his men. They sailed west as soon as they learned that King Knút had departed north to Norway, steering east [north] through Eyrar Sound and continuing to Vík, where they met King Ólaf and delivered to him his ships. He was in Túnsberg at the time, and when he learned that King Knút was proceeding north along the land, he sailed into the Óslófjord and into the expanse of water called Drafn, where he stayed until King Knút's fleet had sailed south again. On his journey south along the land, Knút held assemblies in every district, and in every district they swore him allegiance and gave him hostages. He sailed east across the Foldenfjord to [Sarps]borg and held an assembly there, and there as everywhere the land surrendered to him. Then King Knút sailed south to Denmark, having won Norway without shedding a drop of blood. So then he ruled over three great countries. As says Hallvarth Háreksblesi¹ in a poem he composed on King Knút:

308. Over England governs— (119.)
all the better is the
peace for that—the peerless
prince, and over Denmark.
Also has the onset-
Óthin,² the warlike ruler,
he who hawks' and ravens'
hunger sates, won o'er Norway.

Chapter 174. King Óláf and Erling Have Recognizance of Each Other

As soon as King Óláf learned that King Knút had sailed south to Denmark, he steered his ships to Túnsberg. Thereupon, with all those who would follow him, he proceeded from there with thirteen ships along the coast of Vík, but received few reinforcements, whether of men or goods, except from those who lived on islands or outer headlands. So the king did not proceed inland but picked up what lay in his way of men and chattels. He saw that he had lost his land through treachery. Then he proceeded whenever the wind was favorable. That was at the beginning of winter, and they had to wait long for favorable breezes. For a long time they lay anchored in the Soley Islands,¹ and there they learned the news from merchants who came from the north that Erling Skjálgsson had collected a large force in Jathar. His warship floated before the land ready to sail, and there was a great number of other ships belonging to the farmers. They were skiffs, boats for fishing with nets, and large rowboats. The king proceeded west with his force and for a while lay anchored in Eikunda Sound. Then both had recognizance of each other, and Erling drew together as many reinforcements as he could.

Chapter 175. Erling Skjálgrsson Pursues King Óláf

1028 At Thomasmás [December 21st], before Yule, the king left harbor early at dawn. There was a very good, stiff breeze, and with it he sailed north, rounding Jathar. The weather was rainy, with drifting fog, now and then. News travelled the landway over Jathar that the king was skirting the land on the sea side. And as soon as Erling became aware that the king came sailing from the east he gave the horn signal for all his men to come down to the ships. Then all his men boarded the ships and prepared for battle. But the king's fleet swiftly rounded Jathar and made for the inner passage. There he intended to enter the fjords and recruit chattels and men. Erling sailed after him with a large force and a great number of ships. His ships sailed swiftly since they had on board nothing but the crews and their weapons. Erling's own warship sailed much faster than the other vessels, so he had its sail furled to wait for the others. Then Óláf perceived that Erling and his fleet were catching up with him, for the king's ships were heavily laden and water-logged since they had been in the water all summer and fall and also that winter. He considered that there would be great odds against him if he were to fight all of Erling's fleet at once. So he had the word passed from ship to ship to lower the sails, but gradually, and reefing them from below, and so was done.¹ Erling and his men observed that. Then Erling called out to his ships to sail faster. "You see," he said, "that their sails are lowered, and [yet] they are pulling away from us." Then he had the sail of his galley unfurled, and then she leapt forward fast.

Chapter 176. The King Overcomes Erling by a Ruse

King Ólaf steered his ships in toward and behind the Island of Bókn, so that the fleets lost sight of each other. Then the king ordered his men to lower the sails and row into a narrow sound which opens there, and there all his ships gathered. A rocky headland projected beyond them. All the crew then armed for battle. Erling sailed toward the sound, and before he knew it he encountered the whole royal fleet rowing at him. Erling's men lowered the sail and seized their arms. But the king's force surrounded them on all sides. Then there began a most violent battle, and soon Erling's men fell thickly. Erling stood on the raised afterdeck of his ship. He was helmet clad, with his shield before him, and had his sword in his hand.

The skald Sigvat had remained behind in Vík, and there learned of these tidings. He was a great friend of Erling's and had received presents from him and had been his guest. Sigvat composed a *flokk* about Erling's fall, and this stanza occurs in it:

309. Out shoved Erling then his (120.)
oaken warship—he who
reddened ravens' talons—
ready to fight King Ólaf.
Side by side his vessel
sithen came to lie 'mong
whelming hosts—when hand to
hand they fought—of others.

Then Erling's force was overcome, and as soon as men came to close quarters and the king's men began to board Erling's warship, everyone fell at his post. The king himself strode forward, dealing hard blows. As says Sigvat:

310. Eager for war, Ólaf (121.)
endlong the ship went fighting.
Thick lay the fallen on floor-boards.
Fell the fray at Tungur.¹
With red blood ran the sailors'-
road² north of broad Jathar.
Gushed warm gore from deep wounds—
grimly fought the sea-king.

So complete was the slaughter of Erling's crew that not a single man was left standing at the end except he alone. Men neither asked for quarter nor would

standing at the end except he alone. Men neither asked for quarter nor would they have received any if they had asked. Neither was there a chance for flight, because vessels lay all about Erling's warship. We are told reliably that no man attempted to flee. As says Sigvat still further:

311. All of Erling's crew fell— (122.)
outside Bókn Isle cleared his
warship's deck the wily
warlord—north of Tungur.
Alone on stern stood up,
stouthearted, the son of
Skjálǫg as, far from friends, he
fought full long 'gainst many.

Then Erling was attacked both from the mast of his own ship and from other ships. There was a large space on the raised afterdeck, elevated very high above the other ships, and no one could assail it except by bowshots or, in a fashion, by spear thrusts, and Erling warded them all off. He defended himself so nobly that no one could remember any one man having stood off the attack of so many so long; and never did he attempt to escape nor did he ask quarter. As says Sigvat:

312. Quarter from the king's men (123.)
cried down Skjálǫg's avenger³
steadfastly, though the storm-of-
steel was nowise bated:
greater hero hardly
harbors ever sithen
the wide welkin-bottom⁴
washed by salty sea waves.

King Ólaf at that moment was advancing aft from the mast and saw how Erling defended himself. The king then accosted him and spoke thus, "You are facing us today, Erling."

He replied, "Face to face should fight eagles." These words are mentioned by Sigvat:

313. "Face to face," said Erling, (124.)
"fight the eagles"—he who
fended his father's lands 'gainst
foes, nor e'er desisted—
when out at Útstein⁵ he with

Óláf spoke. Before, he
eager was to urge to
onset sharp against him.

Then the king said, “Will you swear allegiance to me, Erling?”

“That I will,” he said. Then he took off his helmet and laid down sword and shield and went forward toward the mast. The king pricked him on his chin with the point of his axe and said, “A mark he shall bear, the betrayer of his king.” At that moment, Áslák Fitjaskalli rushed forward and with his axe struck Erling on the head so that it pierced his brain, and that was his death.

Then King Óláf said to Áslák, “Wretch that you are, to strike him down. With that blow you struck Norway out of my hand.”

Áslák said, “Bad it is, sir king, if you consider that I harmed you with that blow. I had thought I would strike Norway into your hand with it. But if I have harmed you, sir king, and if I have earned your displeasure by my deed, then I am indeed in an evil plight because I am likely to have earned the ill-will and hate of so many men by it that I shall rather need your support and friendship.” The king said that so it should be.

Thereupon the king ordered every man to return to his ship and make ready as fast as possible to continue on their journey. “We shall not,” he said, “rob the slain here. Let each keep what he has gotten.” Thereupon the men boarded their ships and made ready to be off the fastest they could. But just as they were ready to proceed, the ships of the farmers’ fleet swept into the sound from the south. Then it happened, as is often the case when men suffer a strong blow and lose their leaders, that they also lose their initiative, being without leadership. None of the sons of Erling were there. Nothing came of the attack of the farmers, and the king sailed north on his way. The farmers took the body of Erling, prepared it for burial, and brought it home to Soli, together with all who had fallen. Erling’s loss was bitterly lamented, and it has been the general opinion of men that Erling Skjálgrsson had been the noblest and most powerful of men in Norway, excepting only those of princely rank. Sigvat composed also this verse [about him]:

314. Erling fell; that outcome
Óláf caused—his death not
ever met more manful
man—and gained the victory.

(125.)

No other man I know in
Norway—too soon died he—
high-souled who upheld in
his short life such great worth.

We are told also that Áslák [in slaying Erling] had been guilty of the murder of a kinsman, which was altogether uncalled for:

315. Has gallant Áslák grievous (126.)
guilt of kinsman's slaying
heinous: the Horthars'⁶ warder
high-born slew he, foul deed!
May one not deny the
needless deed. Should kinsmen
born forbear in haste the
blood to shed of kinsmen.

Chapter 177. The King Escapes Northward

Of Erling's sons, some were north in the Trondheim District with Earl Hákon, some north in Horthaland, some in the Fjord District where they gathered a force. Now when Erling's fall was reported, the news of it went together with a levy east [south] in the District of Agthir, and also of Rogaland and Horthaland. A very great number of men gathered, and with the sons of Erling pursued King Óláf to the north. After the battle with Erling he sailed north in the sound, and by that time most of the day was gone. It is told that then he composed this verse:

316. Ill the pale man's plight, on (127.)
pallet who lies to-night in
Jathar—fiercely fought we—
fed were hungry ravens.
Ill-starred altogether
the earl's attempt to rob me—
love of land¹ oft brings a
loath fate—his ship I rided.

Thereupon the king proceeded north along the land with his fleet. He received correct information about the gathering of farmers. Many landed-men were with King Óláf—all the sons of Áрни were with him. This is mentioned by Bjarni Gullbrárskáld² in the poem he made about Kálf Árnason:

317. Wast, Kálf, when warlike Óláf (128.)
waged battle 'gainst Erling—
known I make thy mettle to
men—at Bókn in Norway.
Goodly meat thou gavest
Gríthr's-steed³ at Yule-tide.
Foremost stood'st in strife where
stones were hurled and javelins.

318. 'Scaped none from the skirmish (129.)
scatheless. Erling was captured.
Bathed were in blood many
black ships north of Útstein.
Clear it is, the king was
craftily reft of his kingdom.
Fell his lands to his foes. Their

force was greater, learned I.

King Ólaf proceeded till he had rounded Cape Stath, and anchored in the Herey Islands.⁴ There he learned that Earl Hákon had a great army in Trondheim. Then the king sought the advice of his men. Kálf Árnason urged him strongly to proceed to Trondheim and offer battle to Earl Hákon even though the odds were great against him, and many supported him in this counsel, but some were against it. So the decision was left to the king.

Chapter 178. The King Retreats into the Totharfjord

Afterwards King Ólaf steered into Steinavág Bay and anchored there for the night. But Áslák Fitjaskalli steered his ship to Borgund for the night. [As it happened], Vígleik Árnason lay anchored there; and in the morning, when Áslák was about to board his ship, Vígleik attacked him, wanting to avenge Erling. And there Áslák fell.

Certain men, belonging to the king's court, who had been at home during the summer came to him from the north, from Frekeyar Sound,¹ and told him that Earl Hákon and many landed-men in his company had come to Frekeyar Sound in the evening with a great host, "and want to kill you." The king sent some of his men up on a mountain which rises there; and when they had climbed it, they saw in the north, in the direction of Bjarney Island, a great fleet approaching from the north with many ships. They returned to the king and told him about the force approaching from the north. The king himself lay there with twelve ships. Then he had the trumpets blown, the tents were taken off the ships, and they took to the oars. And when they were about to leave the harbor, the farmers' fleet came sailing from the north rounding the Thrjótshverf headland with twenty-five ships. Then the king steered behind the Island of Nyrfi and past the Hundsver Islands, and when he was abreast of Borgund, a ship came out toward them—it was the one Áslák had commanded. And when they met King Ólaf they told him what had happened and that Vígleik Árnason had slain Áslák Fitjaskalli because he had killed Erling Skjálǫsson. The king was much depressed about that, yet could not delay proceeding, because hostilities threatened, and sailed into Veg Sound and past the village of Skot. There, part of his fleet, with Kálf Árnason and many other landed-men and skippers among them, parted with him and joined Earl Hákon.

But King Ólaf kept on his course and did not stop till he entered the Totharfjord, where he stopped at Vall Dale, leaving his ships. By that time he had five left, which he laid up there, having sails and equipment taken care of. Then he set up his tents on the spit which is called Sult [Hunger], where there are fair meadows. And there he raised a cross nearby on the spit.

A farmer lived at Møerin whose name was Brúsi and who was chieftain of that valley. Brúsi came down to the shore, together with many other farmers, to meet King Ólaf, and they made him welcome, as was fitting, and he responded in friendly fashion to their reception. The king asked if it was possible to proceed inland through that valley and to Lesjar. Brúsi told him that there was a scree in the valley, called Skerfs Scree. "and that is passable neither for men nor horses."

King Óláf replied, “We shall have to risk it, farmer. It will go as God pleases. Come here tomorrow, with your horses, and let us see then how things will go when we come to the scree, whether there is any way to get over it with horses or with men.”

Chapter 179. The King Makes His Way over the Mountains

When day broke the farmers came down to the shore with their horses, as the king had asked them to. Then they packed their belongings and clothes on the horses, and all the men went on foot, as did the king. He walked until he came to a place called Krossbrekka, and when he had climbed to the top of that slope he sat down to rest for a while, and as he looked down upon the fjord he said, "A toilsome road have they laid out for me, my landed-men, who have shifted their allegiance and but now were my friends and had my full confidence."

Two crosses now stand where the king sat. Then the king mounted a horse and rode up the valley, not stopping till they came to the scree. Then the king asked Brúsi whether there was any chalet above it where they could stay. He said that there was. So the king set up his tent and stayed there during the night. But in the morning the king bade the men go to the scree and try whether they could make their way over it. They went up to it while the king remained behind in his tent. In the evening they returned, both the king's men and the farmers, and said they had toiled hard and had not been able to get on, and that no path could ever be made over it.

They remained there another night, and the king stayed up praying all night long. And as soon as day dawned, he bade his men go to the scree and try again if they could make their way over it. They went reluctantly, saying they could not get any way.

When they had departed, the man who had charge of the provisions came to the king and informed him that there was no more food than two neats' carcasses, "but you have four hundred men in your company and a hundred farmers." Then the king ordered all kettles to be put over the fires and to put into each one a bit of the meat; and this was done. And the king went up to them and made the sign of the cross over them, and bade him prepare the food.

The king then went to the Skerfs Scree, where men were to make a path. But when he came there he found all of them sitting down as they had grown tired by their toil. Then Brúsi said, "I told you, sire, but you would not believe me, that this scree is impassable." Thereupon the king laid down his cloak and said that they all should try again; and so they did. And then twenty men moved boulders wherever they wanted, whereas before a hundred men could not budge them, and a path was made by midday so it could be travelled by humans and horses with pack-saddles as easily as if it were on level ground.

Thereupon the king returned down to where the provisions were, which place

now is called Ólaf's Slabs. There is also a spring near by, and the king washed his hands in it. And now if the livestock in the valley fall ill and drink of its water, they recover. Thereupon the king and all those with him sat down to eat. When he had eaten his fill he inquired whether there was any chalet in the valley above the scree and near the mountain where they could pass the night. Brúsi said, "There are some chalets called Grœningar, but no one can stay there during the night on account of the trolls and noxious spirits that haunt the place." Then the king said that they should proceed, saying that he would pass the night at this chalet.

Then the man who managed the provisions came to him and said that there was a superabundance of food, "and I don't know where it is from." The king thanked God for his gift and had burdens of food made up for the farmers, some of whom went down back into the valley [from there].

The king passed the night at the chalet. And in the middle of the night, when the men were asleep, a hideous voice was heard near the milking pen that spoke: "King Ólaf's prayers now burn me so," said that evil spirit, "that I can't remain at my own house and home and I must flee now and never come back to this chalet."

But in the morning, when his men awoke the king proceeded up to the mountains and said to Brúsi, "Let a farm be established here, and he who lives here shall always have enough to support him, for the grain here shall never be damaged by frost neither above the farm nor below it." Thereupon King Ólaf proceeded over the mountains and arrived at Einbúi,¹ where he stayed during the night.

At this time Ólaf had been king of Norway for fifteen years, including that one when both Earl Svein and he were in the country, and the one of which we are telling. Yuletide was past when he abandoned his ships and came on land as was told above. This period of his kingship was written first by Ari Thorgilsson the Priest, called the Learned, who was both veracious and endowed with a fine memory, and also was so old a man that he remembered [some of these events]; and [he] had accounts from men who themselves were so old that, having lived so long, they could remember these events—as he himself has told us in his books, naming the men from whom he had his information. But it is generally accepted that Ólaf had been king of Norway for fifteen years before he fell. However, those who reckon so, count in that winter Earl Svein still was ruling in Norway; because after that, Ólaf was king for the following fifteen years.

Chapter 180. King Óláf Leaves Norway but Vows to Return

After King Óláf had spent a night at Lesjar, he travelled day after day with his company, first to Guthbrands Dale, and from there south to Heithmork. It was seen then who were his friends, as they remained with him when those who had served him with less devotion left him and some even turned against him and became outspoken enemies, as was apparent later. In the case of many men from Uppland districts it became clear that the king's putting Thórir to death had made bad blood, as was said above. King Óláf gave leave to go home to many of his men who had farms and children to take care of, because they felt uncertain what safety would be given the property of those who left the land with the king.

He revealed to his friends that it was his intention to leave the country, for Sweden at first, and then to make up his mind what he meant to do or where he would go; but he told his friends to consider it likely that he intended to return to his land and regain his kingdom if God granted him to live so long. He said it was his expectation and hope that all the people of Norway would again be bound in allegiance to him. "And I should think," he said, "that Earl Hákon would have power over Norway for only a short time; nor would that seem strange to many a one, seeing that he was not lucky in his dealings with me before. And few are likely to believe it, though I say so, that I expect that Knút the Powerful will be dead within a few years' time, and all his power gone, and that his kinfolk will not regain power if all goes as I have foretold."

When the king ceased speaking, his followers made ready to resume their journey. Then the king, with all the company that followed him turned east to the Eith Forest. There were with him there Queen Ástríth, their daughter, Úlfhild, and his son, Magnús; also, Rognvald Brúsason, the sons of Árni—Thorberg, Finn, and Árni—and still other landed-men. He had picked troops. Bjorn the Marshal received leave from him to return to his home. So he returned to his estate, as did many other friends of the king, with his permission. The king enjoined them to inform him of what happened [in his absence] that he should know. Whereupon he resumed his journey.

Chapter 181. The King Makes His Way through Sweden to Gartharíki

We are told about the journey of King Ólaf that, on his way east from Norway, first he travelled through the Eith Forest to Vermaland and from there to Vatsbú¹ and then through the forest that lies in the way, until he came to Næríki. A powerful and wealthy man lived there, called Sigtrygg. Ívar was the name of his son, who afterwards became a man of importance. King Ólaf remained there with Sigtrygg during the spring. But when summer approached, the king prepared to leave and procured ships. He departed that summer, nor stopped till he arrived in Gartharíki in the east and sought out King Jarizleif and his consort Ingigerth. Queen Ástríth and Princess Ifhild remained behind in Sweden, but he had with him his son Magnús on his journey east. King Jarizleif made King Ólaf welcome, offering to have him stay there and giving him enough land to support his company. King Ólaf accepted that and remained there.

We are told that King Ólaf led a pure life and was diligent in his prayers to God all the time he lived; but when he found his power diminishing and his opponents waxing strong, he concentrated all his mind on serving God. Then no other concerns kept him from that, nor such efforts as he had before been busy with. Because during the time he was king he had labored with what he considered most requisite, first, to pacify the land and to keep it from being oppressed by foreign chieftains; then to convert the people of the land to the true faith, and also, to give them laws and statutes. This last he did for the sake of proper justice and to punish them who were bent on evil. It had been fixed custom in Norway for the sons of landed-men or powerful franklins to take ship and acquire goods by harrying, both inside and outside the country. But after Ólaf became king he gave it peace by abolishing all plundering within the land. And if he could catch those guilty of that, nothing would do but the guilty ones lost life or limbs, and neither the entreaties of men nor the offers of money availed them. As says the skald Sigvat:



King Ólaf travels through the Eith Forest.

319. Gold they offered often, (130.)
after they were caught who
preyed on the peaceful; which the
prince refused to take, though:
their scalp with their skull—nor
'scaped a one of them—thus should
folk be fended—bade the
fair-dealing king be lopped off.
320. Maimed he, who filled with meat the (131.)
maws of wolves, the tribe of
thieves and thugs and pirates.
Thus he stopped their looting.
Had the kindly king each
caitiff thief—thus was the
peace kept by the prince—de-
prived of hands and feet eke.
321. Proof was seen of the prince's (132.)
power when that the ruler
had the mane shorn² of many

mischief-working vikings.
His might showed Magnús' sire in
many hard-won contests.
Freehanded Óláf's fame was
furthered by his victories.

He let punishment go over both the great and the small. But that seemed presumptuous to the people of the land, and a hate against him arose among them who had lost kinsmen through a just verdict of the king, even though there was good cause for it. That was the reason for the revolt against King Óláf that they would not stand for his exercising justice. But he would rather renounce his kingship than abandon right judgment. Nor was he justly accused of being stingy to his followers. He was most generous toward his friends. But the reason people became hostile to him was that he seemed to them harsh in inflicting punishment; whereas King Knút offered them huge sums of money. But the great chieftains were seduced by his [Knút's] promising each of them rank and power. An additional reason was that people in Norway were eager to accept Earl Hákon, because he had been most popular among the people of the land when he still was ruler.

Chapter 182. Jokul Takes Over the Bison

Earl Hákon had sailed with his fleet from Trondheim and steered south to Møer against King Ólaf, as was written above. And when he sought refuge in the fjords, the earl followed him there. He was joined then by Kálf Árnason and seven others who had parted with King Ólaf. Kálf was given a good welcome by the earl. Thereupon the earl steered to where the king had drawn his ships up on land, in the Totharfjord in Vall Dale, and took possession of them. He had them floated again and put into shape. Then lots were cast as to who was to captain them. There was in the earl's company a certain man called Jokul. He was an Icelander and the son of Bárth Jokulsson of Vats Dale. It fell to his lot to command the Bison, which had been King Ólaf's ship. Jokul composed the following verse:

322. Loath I am not, by lot though— (133.)
 little shall women hear me
 whine—the stanch sea-steed I,
 storms though bode,¹ shall govern,
 which Ólaf owned, he whom
 all called the Stout, and who
 himself this very summer
 suffered defeat, good women.

Shortly to tell of what happened much later: Jokul fell in with King Ólaf's force on the Island of Gotland² and was captured. The king had him led forth to be beheaded, and a wand was twisted in his hair by which a man held him fast. Jokul sat down on a bank, and a man came up to behead him. But when Jokul heard the whistle of the blow he suddenly stood up, and the axe struck him on the head, inflicting a deep wound. The king saw that it was mortal, so he ordered to let him be. Jokul sat up and composed this verse:

323. Weary me sore wounds, nor (134.)
 worse befell me ever:
 from a gaping gash there
 gushes red blood freely.
 Maimed with mortal wound, yet
 manfully shall I bear me.
 His wrath upon me wrecks the
 regent helm-clad of Norway.

Then Jokul died.

Chapter 183. Kálf Árnason Is Promised the Rule of Norway

Kálf Árnason travelled north with Earl Hákon to Trondheim. The earl invited him to be his guest and become his man. Kálf said that he would first go to Egg where his estate was and later on come to a decision; and so he did.

When he came home, he soon discovered that his wife, Sigríth, was in an exceedingly virulent frame of mind. She reckoned up the injuries she claimed she had received from King Ólaf—first, that he had caused her [first] husband, Olvir, to be killed, “and now, since that,” she said, “my two sons. And you, Kálf, were present at their execution and I would have least expected that of you.” Kálf replied that it was much against his will that Thórir was executed.

“I offered money to reprieve him,” he said. “But when Grjótgarth was executed, I lost my own brother, Árnbjorn.”

She said, “It is good that you had to bear that from the king, because it is likely that him you will wish to avenge, even though you do not care to avenge the wrongs done to me. You saw, when your foster son Thórir was killed, how little the king thought of you then.”

Harangues such as this one she constantly made to Kálf. He often replied to her angrily; still in the end he gave in to her representations and promised to swear loyalty to Earl Hákon if the latter would increase his income. Sigríth sent word to the earl, informing him how it stood with Kálf. And as soon as the earl got to know that, he sent a message to Kálf, to the effect that he should come to the town in order to agree on terms. Kálf did not delay and shortly travelled to Nitharós where he had a good welcome from the earl, and discussed matters with him. They agreed on all points, and in the end Kálf swore fealty to the earl against receiving great revenues from him.

Thereupon Kálf returned to his estate. His authority then reached all the way into the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord. Now as soon as spring approached, Kálf got ready a ship he owned and, sailing out to sea, he steered it west to England, because he had learned that early in spring King Knút had sailed from Denmark to England. Before that, King Knút had given an earldom in Denmark to Harald, the son of Thorkel the Tall. Kálf Árnason went to the court of King Knút as soon as he landed in England, as says Bjarni Gullbráarskáld:

324. Forthwith the folk-warder¹
fared to the east o'er salt wave.
Would he then, weary of

(135.)

war, make his way to Garthar.²
Not used am I to utter
untruths about men's doings:
slow you were not since, to
seek out Knút after parting.³

And when Kálf came into the presence of King Knút, he was given a cordial welcome, and they discussed matters between them. Among other things, King Knút requested Kálf to engage himself to oppose Ólaf the Stout in case he sought to return [to his land]. “Then I shall give you an earldom and let you govern Norway. But as to my kinsman Hákon, he is to join me [then], and that will be best for him, for he is a man so loyal to his oath that I believe he would not hurl one spear at King Ólaf if ever they met.” Kálf listened to what King Knút said, and became eager to be elevated to princely rank. So the agreements between him and King Knút were confirmed. Thereupon Kálf made ready to journey home, and at their parting King Knút presented him with valuable gifts. This is mentioned by the skald Bjarni:

325. Ow'st thou the English ruler, (136.)
earl's offspring, most noble
gifts; and greatly didst thy
goal advance in this business.
London's lord assigned thee
land ere thou didst leave him,
eastward sailing—nor is thy
honor little—but lately.

Afterwards Kálf returned to Norway and his estate.

Chapter 184. Earl Hákon Perishes at Sea

Earl Hákon left the country that summer and sailed west to England, and when he arrived there, King Knút made him welcome. The earl had a bride there in England, and he had come in order to fetch her, intending to celebrate his marriage in Norway; and he had gone to England to procure such materials as he thought would be hardest to get in Norway. In fall he made ready for the journey home but was delayed rather long. He sailed finally, but the short and long of that voyage is that his ship went down with all on board. Some say that the ship had been seen in the evening north of Caithness in a bad storm, with the wind blowing out of the Pentland Firth. Those who believe this say that the ship probably got caught in the “Swelchie.”¹ So much is sure, that Earl Hákon was lost at sea with all aboard that ship. The same fall merchants said that news was spread about Norway that the earl was believed to have been drowned. Anyway, this all knew—that he did not return to Norway that fall so the land then was without a ruler.

Chapter 185. Bjorn the Marshal Accepts King Knút's Bribe

Bjorn the Marshal had remained at home since parting with King Ólaf. Bjorn was widely known, and soon the news spread that he had settled down for good. Earl Hákon and other men ruling the country had heard of that, so they sent men with messages to Bjorn; and when they arrived, Bjorn gave them a good welcome. Later on, Bjorn asked the messengers what their business was, and he who was their spokesman replied, bringing to Bjorn the greetings of King Knút, Earl Hákon, and several other chieftains; “moreover,” he said, “King Knút has heard a great deal about you and that you have for a long time been a follower of Ólaf the Stout and a great enemy of King Knút. He regrets that, because he wants to be your friend as well as that of all other outstanding men, as soon as you drop your hostility to him. And it is your only choice to turn for protection and friendship to where it is found most plentifully and where all men in the northern lands are pleased to find it. You who have followed Ólaf can see now how he has parted with you. All of you are helpless against King Knút and his men, you who harried in his land last summer and killed his friends. Seeing that, you ought to be grateful that the king offers you his friendship; and indeed it would be more fitting for you to ask for it and offer money [for what you have done].”

When he ceased speaking, Bjorn answered and said, “I now want to remain at home in peace on my estate and not serve any chieftains.”

The messenger replied, “Men like you ought to serve kings. I can tell you that you have two alternatives open to you: either to depart from your property as an outlaw, as your partner Ólaf now is doing; or else—and that will seem the better part—to accept the friendship of King Knút and Earl Hákon and become their man and swear fealty to them—and here is your payment for that”—and with that he poured out English silver from a big purse.



Knút's emissary bribes Bjorn the Marshal.

Bjorn was an avaricious man. He was greatly distressed, and grew silent when he saw the silver, pondering what decision to make, for he hated to leave his possessions and considered the restitution to kingship in Norway of King Óláf very unlikely. And when the emissary observed that Bjorn coveted the money he threw down two heavy gold [arm] rings on the table and said, "Take the money now, Bjorn, and swear allegiance. I promise you that this is little money compared to what you are likely to receive when you join King Knút." But what with the large amount of money, the fair promises, and the large presents, Bjorn was overcome by his avarice. He accepted the money and then swore the oath of allegiance to King Knút and Earl Hákon, whereupon the emissaries departed.

Chapter 186. Bjorn Repents and Journeys to King Óláf

Bjorn the Marshal heard the news according to which Earl Hákon had lost his life. Then he changed his mind, repenting that he had broken his faith with King Óláf. He considered himself released then from the agreement entered into as to obedience to Earl Hákon, and he thought that now there was some hope of King Óláf regaining the kingdom if he returned to Norway, seeing the land was without a leader. So he quickly made ready to depart with a few men, and then travelled day and night—on horseback where he could, and by ship where occasion demanded; nor did he stop till in winter during the Yuletide he arrived east in Gartharíki and found King Óláf. And the king was overjoyed when he saw Bjorn. Then the king was informed of many events which had taken place north [west] in Norway. Bjorn told him that the earl had perished and so the land was without a head. The men who had followed King Óláf from Norway and had possessions, kinsmen, and friends there were glad to hear this news, for homesickness greatly inclined them to return home. Bjorn told the king much besides which he was eager to learn. Then the king inquired about his friends and whether they maintained their loyalty to him.

Bjorn answered that they had behaved in very diverse ways. Thereupon Bjorn arose and fell at the king's feet and embraced his knee, and said, "I am altogether in God's power and yours, sir king. I have accepted money from Knút's men and swore them oaths of allegiance; but now I will follow you and not part with you whilst both of us live."

The king answered, "Stand up quickly, Bjorn. We two shall be reconciled. Make your peace with God in this matter. I can see that most likely there are few in Norway now who remain loyal to me, if men like you fail me. True it is that people there are in great difficulty while I am so far away, and are exposed to hostilities from my enemies."

Bjorn informed the king what men had been the chief ones to band together to make opposition to him and his followers. He mentioned particularly the sons of Erling in Jathar and other kinsmen of theirs, Einar Thambarskelfir, Kálf Árnason, Thórir the Hound, and Hárek of Thjóttá.

Chapter 187. The King Ponders Whether to Return to Norway

Ever since King Óláf arrived in Gartharíki he was greatly concerned, contemplating what plan he should follow. King Jarizleif and Queen Ingigerth had invited King Óláf to take up residence with them and establish himself in the realm which is called Vúlgaría¹ which is a part of Gartharíki where people were heathen. King Óláf considered whether to accept that invitation; but when he consulted his men about this, they all dissuaded him from establishing himself there and urged him to try to return north [west] to his own kingdom. The king also deliberated whether to lay down the royal title and make pilgrimage to Jerusalem or other holy places and submit to holy orders. But most often he considered whether there was any possibility of his regaining his dominion in Norway. And as he was pondering this he called to mind that during the first ten years of his rule all things had gone well and prospered for him, but that later matters had become difficult and gone wrong and that when he had tried his luck everything went against him. So now he was doubtful if it was wise to trust his luck so much as to proceed with a small band against his enemies, seeing that one and everybody had united to oppose him. Such anxious thoughts he often entertained; and he referred the matter to God, praying that He would give some visible sign, so that he might see what were best to do. He revolved that in his mind and was uncertain what to do, because he could easily see the dangerous risk in what he proposed to undertake.

Chapter 188. The King Is Encouraged by a Dream

One night Óláf lay in bed and was awake long during the night, thinking anxiously about his plans; and when he grew tired, thinking so much, he lapsed into sleep, but so light a sleep that he seemed to be awake and to see all that was going on in the house. He saw a man stand before his bed. That man was tall and dignified and was arrayed splendidly. It occurred to the king that this was Óláf Tryggvason. The man spoke to him: “Are you much distressed about what you should do and what plan to follow? It seems strange to me that you are cudgeling your brains about this, and also, that you have considered laying down the royal crown which God has bestowed upon you; and likewise, that it is your intention to stay here and receive a dominion from foreign kings unknown to you. Rather, go back to your own kingdom which you have rightfully inherited and governed long with the support God has given you, nor let your inferiors inspire you with fear. It is the mark of a king to conquer his enemies or else honorably to suffer death in battle, together with his men. Or are you perchance in doubt whether you have the right on your side in the struggle between you [and your enemies]? You certainly should not conceal the truth from yourself. For this reason you may boldly seek to recover your land, because God will bear witness for you that it is your own.”



“It will be Monday tomorrow, sire!”

And when the king awoke he thought he caught a glimpse of the man as he disappeared. But from that time on he hardened in his resolve, and vowed then to pursue his purpose to return to Norway, as indeed before he had been most eager to do. And he found that all his men were of the same mind. He bethought him that the land would be easy to win back, being without a leader, as he had been informed. He considered that if he came there himself, many would again be willing to follow him. And when the king revealed these plans to his men, all were pleased to learn them.

Chapter 189. The King Miraculously Heals a Boy

We are told that when King Óláf was in Gartharíki, the son of a well-to-do widow had a boil in his throat which grew so bad that the boy could not swallow any food, so it was thought he would die. The mother of the boy went to Queen Ingigerth, for she was acquainted with her, and showed her the boy. The queen said she did not know of any remedy. “Go to King Óláf,” she said. “He is the best healer here; and ask him to lay his hands on the boy’s sore, and bring him my greetings if he will not do so otherwise.”

She did as the queen told her, and when she found the king she told him that her son was not expected to live because of the boil in his throat, and prayed him to lay his hands on the boil. The king said he was no physician. She said that the queen had told her to go to him, “and she bade me greet you and request that you apply the remedies that you know of, and she said that you were the best physician in this place.” Then the king laid his hands on the boy’s throat and felt of the boil until the boy moved his mouth. Then the king took some bread, broke it, and placed it on his palm in crosswise, then put it into the boy’s mouth, and he swallowed it down. From that time on all the soreness left his throat. In a few days he had altogether recovered. His mother was very glad, and so were other kinsfolk and acquaintances of the boy. The common opinion was then at first that King Óláf had such good healing power in his hands as is ascribed to such persons who excel in the art of having healing hands; but later, when it became known that he performed miracles, this was taken to be a true miracle.

Chapter 190. The King Does Penance for Breaking the Sabbath

It so happened one Sunday that King Óláf sat in his high-seat at table and was so busy with his thoughts that he was not aware of the lapse of time. He had a knife in his hand and cut chips from a piece of wood. A page stood before him, holding a drinking vessel. He saw what the king was doing, and gathered that he was thinking of other matters. He said, "It will be Monday tomorrow, sire." The king looked at him when he heard these words and became aware then of what he had done. Then the king asked that a candle be brought to him. He swept all the shavings which he had cut into his hand, then set them on fire and let them burn his palm; from which one could gather that from that time on he would strictly observe the laws and commandments, nor do anything but what he knew was right.

Chapter 191. Jarizleif and Ingigerth Promise to Help King Óláf

After King Óláf had made up his mind that he meant to return to his own land he brought the matter up before King Jarizleif and Queen Ingigerth. They tried to dissuade him from that undertaking, saying that in their dominions he could have such rule as he thought befitted him, and begged him not to deliver himself into the power of his enemies with so small a band as he had there. Then King Óláf told them the dream he had and also that he thought it God's will. And when they found that the king had made up his mind to return to Norway, they offered him all the assistance they could give to further his journey if he would accept it of them. The king thanked them with fair words for their good will, saying that he would gladly accept from them what he needed for his expedition.

Chapter 192. King Óláf Departs for Sweden

Right after Yule King Óláf began with his preparations. He had with him there nearly two hundred [240] men. All these, King Jarizleif provided with horses and such equipment as they required. And when ready, King Óláf departed, conducted honorably on his way by King Jarizleif and Queen Ingigerth. His son Magnús he left in the keeping of the king. Then King Óláf journeyed west, first by the frozen rivers, all the way to the sea. And when spring came and the ice broke up, they got their ships ready, and with the first favorable breeze set sail and had a good journey. King Óláf steered his ships to the Island of Gotland, and there he got news both from Sweden and Denmark and also all the way from Norway. Then the truth of the report that Earl Hákon had perished was confirmed and that Norway thus was without a ruler. Then the king and his men felt hopeful about their expedition. They sailed from there as soon as they had a favorable breeze and steered a course to Sweden. The king conducted his force into Lake Mælaren and all the way up to Árós [Uppsala], from where he sent messengers to Onund, the king of Sweden, to arrange a meeting with him. King Onund was glad to hear from his brother-in-law and journeyed to meet King Óláf as had been arranged. Together with him came also Queen Ástríth, accompanied by the men who had gone with her. There was a joyous reunion of them all, and the king of Sweden gave a kind reception to King Óláf, his brother-in-law, when they met.

Chapter 193. Thórir and Hárek Prepare against the King's Return

Now to tell what events took place in Norway at that time. Thórir the Hound had had the privilege of trading with the Finns [Lapps], those two years, and had been in the mountains for a long time during both winters, acquiring a great wealth [of furs]. He had many kinds of dealings with the Finns. He had there made for him twelve cloaks of reindeer skin charged with so much witchcraft that no weapon could penetrate them, less even than a coat of chain mail. And during the second spring Thórir had the warship he owned got ready and manned it with his housecarls. He called for an assembly of the farmers and demanded a levy from even the most northerly district, gathering a great body of troops, and in spring proceeded south with this force. Hárek of Thjóttá also collected a great body of armed men. In this expedition there were many other chieftains, but these two were the most eminent. They announced that this army was to advance against King Óláf and defend the land against him, should he come from the east.

Chapter 194. Einar Thambarskelfir at King Knút's Court

Ever since the death of Earl Hákon became known, Einar Thambarskelfir had the greatest authority in the outer districts of Trondheim. He considered that he and his son Eindrithi had most claim on the possessions and chattels of the earl, and he called to mind the promises and the professions of friendship for him on the part of King Knút when they had last met. Then Einar had a great ship he owned made ready, and boarded it himself with a numerous company; and after all the preparations had been made, he steered south along the land and then west across the sea; nor did he stop till he arrived in England, where he immediately sought out King Knút. The king gave him a good welcome. Then Einar made known to the king what he came for—that he wished him to redeem the promises he had made, that Einar was to be given princely rank and authority over Norway if Earl Hákon did not have to be considered. King Knút replied that matters had taken a different turn. “I have now sent emissaries with my tokens of authority to my son Svein in Denmark announcing to him that I have designated him to be king in Norway. But I wish to retain my friendship with you. You are to have such an advance in rank as you are entitled to by reason of your birth, to be a landed-man and have great revenues so as to stand higher than other landed-men, to the same degree as you excel them in other respects.”

Then Einar understood how matters stood. He made ready to return home; but as he now knew the intentions of the king and also foresaw that there would not be much peace in the land in case King Óláf arrived from the east, it occurred to him that it might be a wise course not to be in too great a hurry about his return journey; because if it came to a fight with King Óláf he might not have an increase in power any more than before. So he set sail only when he was good and ready, and arrived in Norway only when those events had come to pass which during that summer were of greatest importance.

Chapter 195. The Leaders Learn of Óláf's Return

The chieftains in Norway had sent out spies, east to Sweden and south to Denmark, who were to report if King Óláf was coming from Gartharíki in the east. And they were informed by messengers travelling as fast as they could, that Óláf had landed in Sweden. As soon as that was confirmed, war summons went about all the land, with request for a complete levy, and an army gathered. As to the landed-men of Agthir, Rogaland, and Horthaland, they divided their forces, some proceeding north, some east, thinking that an army was required on either side. The sons of Erling in Jathar, together with all the forces stationed east of them headed east, and they were the leaders for that force; whereas Áslák of Finney, Erlend of Gerthi, and the landed-men north of them proceeded northward. All those mentioned had sworn King Knút oaths to do away with King Óláf if opportunity offered.

Chapter 196. King Óláf's Friends Gather Forces

But when it became known in Norway that King Óláf had arrived in Sweden from the east, all friends of his who wished to support him gathered together. The one of the highest rank among them was Harald Sigurtharson, the [half-] brother of King Óláf. He was fifteen years old at the time, tall and of full-grown appearance; and there were many other prominent men. Altogether they had collected some six hundred [720] men when they proceeded from the Uppland District and headed east to Vermaland through the Eith Forest. Then they journeyed east through the forests to Sweden [proper], inquiring [on their way] as to the whereabouts of King Óláf.

Chapter 197. King Onund Lends Óláf His Support

King Óláf was in Sweden during the spring and had men reconnoiter from there what [the conditions] were north in Norway, and received the uniform report that he would encounter armed opposition if he came there; and the men who arrived from the north warned him earnestly against advancing on that side. But he had made up his mind as he had before to do so. He asked King Onund what support he would give him to regain his land. King Onund made this reply, that the Swedes had small desire to join in a military expedition against Norway. “We know,” he said, “that the Norwegians are hardy and great fighters and that it is dangerous to try to invade their country. I shall tell you right away what I shall furnish you. I shall let you have four hundred [480] men, and you may pick from my bodyguard good fighters, well equipped for warfare. Moreover I shall give you permission to go about my land and take along all those willing to follow you.” King Óláf accepted these conditions and made ready to start on his expedition. Queen Ástríth and Princess Úlfhild remained behind in Sweden.

Chapter 198. King Óláf Advances through Sweden

Now when [King Óláf] started on his expedition he was joined by the troop the Swedish king furnished, which amounted to four hundred [480] men. The king proceeded by the route the Swedes pointed out for him. They headed inland to the forests, and arrived in the district called Járnberraland.¹ There they were joined by the troops which had come from Norway to meet them, as was told before. Among them was Harald, the king's [half-] brother, and many others of his kinfolk, and it was a most joyful reunion. By that time their troops numbered twelve hundred [1440] men.

Chapter 199. Dag Hringsson Joins the King's Forces

There was a certain man called Dag who, we are told, was a son of King Hring—the one who had been exiled by King Ólaf—and people say that Hring was the son of Dag, the son of Hring, [who was] a son of Harald Fairhair. Dag was a kinsman of King Ólaf. Father and son had settled in Sweden and had been given a domain to rule there. In the spring when King Ólaf had arrived in Sweden, coming from the east, he sent word to Dag, his kinsman, to the effect that Dag should join him with all the troops he could muster; and in case he was successful in regaining Norway, then Dag was to have a dominion in no wise smaller than his ancestors had had. Now when this message came to Dag he was well pleased. He longed greatly to return to Norway and there repossess himself of the lands his kinsmen had had before. He quickly responded, promising to come. Dag was a man quick both in speech and in action, of a very impetuous disposition, most valorous, but not a man of much discernment. He got together an army of nearly twelve hundred [1440] men, and with this force he proceeded to join King Ólaf.

Chapter 200. King Óláf Arrives in Jamtaland

The king sent word to the people of the country, and [particularly] to such men as liked to gain possessions and the revenues which the enemies of the king were enjoying, to join and follow him. King Óláf then moved his army through forest districts and sometimes through desert places, and often over large lakes. A multitude of men joined the king's force, forest dwellers and some highwaymen. Many places where he stayed over night have since then borne the name of Óláf's Booths. He did not stop till he arrived in Jamtaland, from whence he proceeded north [west] to the Keel. In the settled districts his army travelled mostly in scattered bands, so long as they did not expect any hostile opposition. And whenever they thus divided, the host of Norwegians followed the king, whereas Dag with his force went another way and the Swedes, still another.

Chapter 201. Gauka-Thórir and Afra-Fasti Offer Their Services

There were two men, one called Gauka-Thórir, the other, Afra-Fasti. They were highwaymen and evil robbers. They had with them thirty men of the same kind as themselves. These two brothers were bigger and stronger than other men, and they did not lack daring and courage. They learned about this army which proceeded through the land, and said to each other that it might be a good plan to join the king and follow him to his land and there go to battle with him and so try their prowess, because they had never before been in a battle in which troops were drawn up against each other in battle-array, and they were very curious to see how the king arrayed his troops. This plan was much to the liking of their comrades, and they made their way to where the king was. And when they arrived there, the whole gang went before the king, fully armed. They greeted him, and he asked who they might be. They gave their names and said they were from that part of the country. Then they told him on what errand they came, and offered to join the king.

The king said that it seemed to him that it might be a good thing to have the service of men like these. "I am inclined," he said, "to accept the service of men like these. But are you Christians?"

Gauka-Thórir answered, saying that he was neither Christian nor heathen. "Nor have we fellows any other belief than trust in our own power and success, and that proves to be enough for us."

The king replied, "A great pity that men of such prowess do not believe in Christ, their maker."

Thórir answered, "Is there, sir king, in your company any Christian, who has grown to greater height than my brother and I?"

The king asked them to let themselves be baptized and accept the true faith, "and then you may follow me," he said. "In that case I shall give you high rank; but if you do not want to, then go back to what you have been doing."

Afra-Fasti answered, saying he would not accept Christianity, and they turned away then. Then Gauka-Thórir said, "It is a great shame that this king rejects our services. That has never happened to me that I was not accepted as an equal with other men. I shall not go back with that shame on me." Thereupon they joined company with other men from the forests and followed the troops. And so King Óláf pursued his way toward the Keel.

Chapter 202. King Óláf's Vision

When King Óláf crossed the Keel from the east he proceeded, descending westward, [till he came to a spot] where one can look over the land. Many of his troops went ahead of the king, and some came on behind him. He rode alone, keeping his pace, and spoke to no one. Thus he rode for a long time during the day, looking neither to right or left. Then the bishop rode up to him and asked what he was thinking about since he kept so silent—because [otherwise] the king always was cheerful and talked much with his men on his journeys, keeping all near him in good spirits. Whereupon the king answered in deep thought, “Strange sights I have had a while ago. I beheld [all] Norway as I looked westward from the mountains. It then came to my mind that many a day I had been happy in that land; and then I had a vision: I saw all districts of Trondheim, and then all of Norway; and as long as that vision lasted I saw ever farther, until I saw all the world, both land and sea. I recognized clearly the places I had before been to and seen. And as clearly I saw places I had not seen before—some that I had heard about as well as such that I had not heard spoken of, both places inhabited and uninhabited, as far as the world extends.” The bishop said that this vision was a holy one and most remarkable.

Chapter 203. Farmer Thorgeir Flekk's Field Is Trampled by the King's Army

Later, as the king was descending from the mountains, a certain farm lay in their way, called Súl, which is in the upper reaches of the district of Vera Dale. And when they approached the farm they saw fields lying along their way. The king requested his men to proceed carefully and not to ruin the farmer's fields. And the troops that were with the king heeded that; but those who came later did not pay any attention to his command and ran over the field so as to tread down all the grain. The farmer who lived there was called Thorgeir Flekk. He had two nearly fullgrown sons. Thorgeir made the king welcome, offering him all the help he could afford. The king accepted that gratefully and then asked Thorgeir for information about how matters stood in the country and whether there was any gathering of troops against him. Thorgeir told him that a large army had been mustered in the Trondheim District and that it had been joined by landed-men from the south as well as from the north from Hálogaland, "but I do not know whether they intend to proceed against you [here] or in some other place." And then he complained to the king about the damage done him by the careless behavior of the king's men, trampling over and treading down all his fields.



Gauka-Thórir and Afra-Fasti meet the king.

The king said that it was a great pity that such damage was done him. Then the king rode up to the field and saw that the whole field had been flattened. He rode around it and then said, "I do expect, my man, that God will repair the

damage done you, and I believe this field of yours will be restored in a week's time." And [indeed] the field recovered excellently, as the king had said.

The king remained there over night, and next morning continued on his way. He requested that farmer Thorgeir should go with him, but when he offered his two sons instead, the king said they should not go with him. But the youths insisted. The king told them to remain behind, but when they would not be restrained, the followers of the king wanted to bind them. When the king saw that, he said, "Let them go along, they will return [home]." And it came to pass just as the king had said.

Chapter 204. Gauka-Thórir and Afra-Fasti Are Baptized

Thereafter the army moved on to Staf; and when they came to the Staf quagmires the king ordered a halt. By that time he had had the report confirmed that the farmers were advancing against him, and also that he then would have to expect a battle soon. Then the king reviewed his troops and had them counted. It appeared that in this army there were nine hundred [1080] men who were heathens. As soon as the king got to know that, he requested them to let themselves be baptized, saying that he did not want heathens with him in battle. "We shall not," he said, "put our trust in numbers, but shall put our trust in God, because [only] by his power and grace shall we be victorious. I do not want to mix heathens with my men."

Now when the heathens heard the king's words they consulted with one another, and in the end four hundred [480] men let themselves be baptized. But five hundred [600] refused to accept Christianity, and that troop returned to their homes.

Then the two brothers, Gauka-Thórir and Afra-Fasti advanced with their gang, and again offered the king to follow him. He asked them whether they had been baptized yet. Gauka-Thórir replied that they had not. The king requested them to have themselves baptized and accept the true faith or else leave. Then they turned aside and discussed among themselves what they should do. Then Afra-Fasti said, "If you want my opinion, I don't care to turn back. I shall take part in the battle and stand on either side, and I don't care on whose." Gauka-Thórir answered, "If I go to battle I want to stand on the king's side, for he needs help most. And if I am to believe in some god, what difference is it to me whether I believe in the White Christ or some other god? So now it is my advice that we let ourselves be baptized if the king thinks that it is of such great importance, and then let us go to the battle with him." All were agreed, so they went to the king and told him they were ready to be baptized. Then they were baptized by the priests and confirmed by the bishop. The king took them into the fellowship of his bodyguard and told them they were to stand under his banner in the battle.

Chapter 205. The King Orders His Men for Battle

By that time King Ólaf had learned for certain that he would shortly meet the farmers in battle. But when he had mustered and counted his troops he found he had more than three thousand [3600] men, which was considered a large army. Then the king addressed his troops in this wise:

“We have a large army and one well equipped. And now I will tell you what our battle formation is to be. I shall have my standard advanced in the middle of our force, and with it are to go my bodyguard and my retainers, and also the men who joined us from the Uppland districts, then too the troops that joined us from the Trondheim District. To the right of my standard is to stand Dag Hringsson, together with all the men he had with him to follow us. He is to bear another standard. To the left of my detachment shall be placed all that force which the king of Sweden furnished us and all those who joined our ranks from Sweden. They are to carry the third standard. I shall request all men to arrange themselves in groups so that kinsmen and acquaintances stand together, because then everyone will best shield his comrade if they know one another. We shall put a mark on all our host and set a war token on our helmets and shields by drawing on them with chalk the holy cross. And when we enter battle we shall all of us have one battle cry, ‘Forward, forward, Christ’s men, cross men, king’s men!’ Having smaller forces we shall have to thin out our ranks, for I do not propose to let them surround us with their [superior] numbers. Let men now arrange themselves in detachments and then let these form ranks, so that everyone may know his station and watch whether he is [too] far from the standard under which he is to fight. Let us now maintain our rank and file and let the men have their weapons about them day and night until we know where the battle is to be between the farmers and us.”

After the king had addressed them they drew themselves up in battle array, arranging themselves as he had indicated. Thereupon the king conferred with the captains of the detachments. By that time some men had arrived whom the king had sent out into the district to ask for the farmers’ support. They had this to tell about the settlements they had visited, that far about there was a great dearth of fighting men—they had all gone to join the army of the farmers; and where they did find men, few cared to follow them. But most of them gave this as their answer that they remained at home because they did not want to join either side, and neither fight against the king nor against their kinsmen. So the messengers had got but a few to join them.

Then the king asked his men for advice as to what seemed to them most

expedient. Finn [Árnason] answered the king as follows. “I shall tell you,” he said, “what would be done if I had my way. We would harry all districts with fire and sword, rob the farmers of all their possessions and burn down all settlements so completely that there would not be left a hut standing, and thus repay the farmers for betraying their king. I should think that many a one of them would leave their ranks if he saw smoke and flames rise from his houses at home and they did not know for sure what was happening to their children and wives and old folks, their fathers and mothers and other kinsfolk. I expect,” he added, “that if any of them take to breaking ranks, their lines will soon thin out; because it is the way of farmers that they like the newest way of doing things best.”

When Finn had finished speaking, many voiced their approval. Some liked the idea of making booty, and all thought the farmers deserved to suffer damage and also, as Finn had said, that many of them would break ranks. Then Thormóth Kolbrúnarskáld spoke this verse:

326. Burn all buildings with the (137.)
birches-sorrow,¹ and people,
since with sword the farmers
seem to guard their homesteads;
let fire fall in brambles,
flames consume the homes—if
I had ought to say—of
all rebellious Thronders.²

Now when King Óláf perceived the violence with which his army was bent [on following Finn’s advice], he asked for silence and then spoke as follows:

“[Indeed] have the farmers deserved that we treat them as you wish. They know that I have done such things as to burn down their homes and have punished them severely in other ways. I did that when they had abandoned the true faith and resumed making heathen sacrifice and would not stop doing so though I warned them. At that time we had to vindicate God’s right. Now this treachery against me, their king, deserves a lesser punishment, even though they are faithless to me and even though this is unseemly in people who pride themselves on being men of honor. So now I am rather more entitled to show forgiveness when they misbehave against me than when they transgressed against God. Therefore it is my will that you proceed peacefully and refrain from plundering. First I wish to have a meeting with the farmers. And if we come to an agreement, it is well; but if they go to battle against us, then we face two

possibilities: if we fall in battle, then it is best we do not proceed to the field of battle with plundered goods in our hands; but if we are victorious, then the goods of those who fought against us will fall to our share. Because then some of them will fall and some will flee, and in either case will have forfeited all their possessions. Then it will be fine to go to the great estates and grand farm houses; but they will be of no use to anyone once they are burned down. Likewise more plundered goods are ruined than put to use. Let us now proceed in separate groups through the settlements and take along with us all the men capable of bearing arms we can get. The troops may also butcher cattle and lay their hands on other foods which they require, but let them do no other damage. I should like to see the spies of the farmers' army killed if you can get hold of them. Dag and his force are to take the northern route down along the valley, but I shall proceed on the main-travelled road. Then let us meet in the evening and let us all camp together during the night."

Chapter 206. The King's Skalds Are Placed within the Shield-Castle

We are told that when King Ólaf drew up his men in battle array, he formed some into a shield-castle to protect him in battle, and for that purpose chose the strongest and most valiant. Then he called up his skalds and ordered them to enter the shield castle. “You are to be here,” he said, “and witness all that will happen here. Then you will not need to be told, but can tell of it yourselves and compose verses about it later on.” Thormóth Kolbrúnarskáld was there, also Gizur, the foster father of Hofgartha-Ref, and the third was Thorfinn Mouth.¹ Then Thormóth said to Gizur, “Don’t stand so close, comrade, that skald Sigvat won’t find room when he comes. He will want to stand before the king, nor will the king like to have it otherwise.”

The king overheard that and answered, “You don’t need to taunt Sigvat for not being here. Often he has fought bravely along with me. He is likely to pray for us right now, and we may yet have great need of that.”

Thormóth said, “It may well be, sire, that you stand in great need of prayers, right now; but thin would the lines be around your standard if all your bodyguard were now on pilgrimage to Rome. And true it is that we complained about no one having a chance to speak to you because of Sigvat.”

Afterwards the three discussed matters between them and said it would be a good thing to compose some memorial verses about the events which were likely to happen soon. Then Gizur spoke this verse:

327. Farmers’ daughters shan’t find me (138.)
faint of heart, as we king’s men
busk us now for baleful
battle—shall that be told of—
wise warriors though do
warn of Hethin’s-leman.²
Steadfast let us stand with
stalwart king in the east³ here.

Then Thorfinn Mouth spoke another verse:

328. Dark it grows as draws near (139.)
deadly storm-of-arrows.
Vow the vengeful folk of
Vera Dale death to Ólaf.
Guard we our gallant ruler!

Gorge we the hungry wolf-brood!
Fell we Thronders in Thund's-fierce-
thing⁴—we urge that—of-arrows!

Then Thormóth spoke this verse:

329. Draweth nigh the dreaded (140.)
dart-storm, arrow-sender!
Quake nor cringe, ye dauntless
king's-men—waxeth sword-din:
whether now we hence do
hie us, giving ravens—
fore-ordained our fate is—
food, or lie on battlefield.

These verses were promptly committed to memory by the [king's] men.

Chapter 207. The King and His Forces Sleep in the Open

Thereafter the king set out, going down along the valley. He selected a place for passing the night, and there all his troops gathered and slept out in the open during the night under their shields. As soon as day broke, the king mustered his troops, and they proceeded down the valley. Then a great many farmers came to the king, joining his colors; and all reported the same thing—that the landed-men had gathered an overwhelming host and intended to do battle with the king.

Then the king took [a purse containing] many marks of silver and handed it to a farmer, saying, “This money you are to safeguard, and parcel out later, donating some of it to the churches, some to priests, and some to the poor, for the lives and souls of those who will fall in battle fighting against us.”

The farmer said, “Is this money to be given for the salvation of the souls of your men, sire?”

The king replied, “This money is to be given for the souls of those men who stand on the side of the farmers and will fall by the weapons of our men. But as to those who are on our side in the battle, we shall be saved, all of us.”

Chapter 208. The Skald Thormóth Recites the Lay of Bjarki

During the aforesaid night, when King Ólaf lay in the midst of his troops, he stayed awake for a long time, praying to God for himself and his men, and slept but a short while. Toward morning sleep overcame him, and when he awoke, day broke. The king thought it was rather early to wake the army. Then he asked where the skald Thormóth was. He happened to be near and asked what the king wanted of him. The king said, “I would have you recite some lay for us.” Thormóth arose and spoke in a very loud voice so that all the army could hear him. He chanted the “Old Lay of Bjarki,”¹ of which this is the beginning:

330. Day has come, (141.)
the cock shakes his wings.
'tis time for thralls
to take to their tasks.
Awake, ye friends,
be wakeful ever,
all ye best men
in Athils'² court.

331. Hár the hard-gripping, (142.)
Hrólf the bowman,
men of noble line
who never flee:
I wake you not to wine
nor to women's converse,
but rather to Hild's
hard game of war.

Then the troops awoke. And when he had finished the men thanked him for it and were exceedingly pleased with it. They thought it well-chosen and called the poem the “Housecarls' Exhortation.” The king thanked him for his entertainment. Then he gave him a gold [arm] ring weighing half a mark. Thormóth thanked the king for his gift and said, “A good king we have; but it is not easy to see now how long he will live. It is my prayer, sire, that we may not be parted, whether dead or alive.”

The king replied, “We shall all go the same way, so long as I prevail, if you wish not to part with me.”

Then Thormóth said, “I expect, sire, whether now there be peace or war, to stand close by you while I have the chance, and whatever we learn of the

stand close by you while I have the chance, and whatever we learn of the whereabouts of Sigvat with his sword Golden Hilt.” Then he spoke this verse:

332. Stay would I still with thee, (143.)
steerer-of-ships, till other
skalds thou hast—but when dost
hope they come?—and fend thee:
gladly would I, gallant—
greedy wolves we batten—
wielder-of-the-wound-snake,³
with thee live and die eke!

Chapter 209. Harald, the King's Half-Brother Insists on Staying for the Battle

King Ólaf moved his army down along the valley. Dag with his company went by another way. The king did not stop on his march till he arrived at Stiklarstathir. Then they saw the array of the farmers. Their ranks were scattered and their numbers were so great that all paths were crowded with men, and in many places large detachments moved together. They [the king's troops] caught sight of a company of men descending the Vera Dale. They had been reconnoitering and approached closely to the army of the king and were not aware of it before they were so close that they could recognize one another. That was Hrút of Vigg, with thirty men. Then the king ordered his bodyguard to fall upon Hrút and kill him. The men were quick to do this. Then the king said to the Icelanders in his flock, "I have heard it said that it is a custom in Iceland for farmers to have to give their man servants a sheep to slaughter in fall. Now I will give you a ram to slaughter."¹ The Icelanders were not slow to accept the challenge and, with other men, at once fell upon Hrút. Both he and all those with him were slain.

When the king arrived at Stiklarstath he took up a position and halted his army. He ordered his men to dismount and prepare for battle, and they did as they were told. Then they were placed into formation and the standards were set up. By that time Dag and his troops had not arrived yet, so his wing did not materialize.

Then the king ordered the men from Uppland to come up and advance the banners.

"It seems advisable to me," said the king, "that my brother Harald be not in this battle as he is still only a child."

Harald answered, "By all means I shall take part in it, and if I am so weak as not to be able to wield a sword, then I know what to do: let my hand be tied to the haft. No one is more minded than I to strike a blow against those farmers. I mean to be with my comrades," We are told that Harald on this occasion spoke this verse:

333. Ward I shall the wing—and (144.)
worthy will my mother
hold that—which I stand on,
hardily reddening targes.

Fearful is not of foemen
farmers' spear-thrusts youthful
warrior where will wage men
weapon-thing² most murderous.

And Harald had his will to be in the battle.

Chapter 210. Thorgils Hálmuson Promises to See to the King's Burial

There was a certain man called Thorgils Hálmuson, a farmer who lived at Stiklarstathir. He was the father of Grím the Good. Thorgils offered the king his help to be in the battle with him. The king thanked him for his offer, “But I wish, [friend] farmer,” said the king, “that you be not in the battle. I would rather you helped our men after the battle to bind their wounds and give burial to those who fall in it; so that, [friend] farmer, if so happen that I fall in this battle, you perform the last rites for my body, unless you be forbidden to do that.” Thorgils promised the king to do as he was bidden.

Chapter 211. The King Exhorts His Troops

Now when King Óláf had drawn up his troops in battle array he spoke to them, saying that they should take heart and advance boldly. “If it comes to battle,” he said, “we have a stout and large army; so that, even if the farmers do have a somewhat larger force, fate will decide the outcome. I want you to know that I shall not flee out of this battle. I shall either be victorious or else fall in it. I pray to God that that will come to pass which He deems is best for me. Therefore let us put our trust in this that we have a more righteous cause than the farmers and also that God will restore us to our possessions after this battle, or else reward us with a much greater recompense for the loss we suffer here than we can ourselves wish for. But if I be granted to address you after the battle, then I shall enrich everyone of you according to his deserts and according to how he comports himself in the battle. Then, if we are victorious, there will be a plenty, both of land and chattels, to divide between you of the possessions now in the hands of our enemies. Let us attack most briskly at the very start, because then there will be a quick decision if the odds are against us. Victory will be ours if we rush at them swiftly, but fortune will not be with us if we fight till we are tired so that we are unstrung because of weariness. We are likely to have fewer reserves than they for pushing forward while the others [merely] defend themselves or rest. But if we rush at them so hard that those in the front ranks turn, then one will tumble on top of the other, and their defeat will be greater the more there are of them,” Now when the king ceased speaking, there was a great acclaim of his harangue, and one fired the other.

Chapter 212. Thóρθ Fólason Bears the King's Standard

Thóρθ Fólason carried King Ólaf's standard. So says Skald Sigvat in the memorial *drápa*¹ he composed about King Ólaf and provided with a burden from the Story of Creation:

334. That time, heard I, Thóρθ did— (145.)
thickened the storm-of-arrows—
stanch hearts stood there together—
stalwartly fight with Ólaf.
High he held the standard—
help he did not grudge—for
keen-eyed king; nor failed in
combat Ogmund's brother.²

Chapter 213. King Óláf's Accouterment

King Óláf was armed thus: on his head he had a gilded helmet, and his shield was white, inlaid with the holy cross in gold. In his hand he had the halberd which now stands by the altar in Christ Church.¹ He was girt with the sword called Hneitir, an exceedingly keen weapon whose haft was wound with gold. He wore a coat of chain mail. Skald Sigvat makes mention of this:

335. Foemen many felled the (146.)
fearless king, the Stout hight,
in burnished byrnie as to
battle he strode, much daring;
whilst warlike Swedes waded—
waxed the sword-din—sent from
the east, with bold lord banded—
blood-streams. Truth I tell you.

Chapter 214. King Óláf's Dream

Now when King Óláf had drawn up his troops in battle array, the army of the farmers was still far away. So the king told the men to sit down and take a rest. And he himself sat down, together with all his troops, and they sat at a comfortable distance one from the other. He leaned down and laid his head on Finn Árnason's lap. Then sleep overcame him, and he slept for a while. Then they saw the farmers' army approaching. They were moving toward the king's troops and had raised their banners. It was a huge host of men. Finn waked the king and told him that the farmers were advancing towards them.

And when the king awoke he said, "Why did you wake me and not let me have my dream out?"

Finn replied, "You are not likely to dream anything more fitting than to be awake and make ready to fight the host that is moving against us. For do you not see how near the crowd of farmers is to us?"

The king answered, "They are still so distant that it would have been better if I had kept on sleeping."

Then Finn said, "What then did you dream, sire, that you think it better if I had not waked you?"

Then the king told him his dream—that he thought he saw a high ladder and that he mounted it up into the air so far that the heavens opened before him, so tall was the ladder. "I had come to the topmost rung," he said, "when you waked me."

Finn said, "This dream does not seem to me so good as it might seem to you. I should think this signifies your death, unless it be only some dream phantasm that occurred to you."

Chapter 215. Arnljót Gellini Joins the King's Ranks

One other thing happened after King Ólaf had arrived at Stiklarstathir a certain man came to him. But that alone was not so strange, because many came to him from the surrounding country. The novelty was this that this man was not like the other men who at that time had come to the king. He was so tall that no one else in height came up to his shoulders. He was of very handsome appearance and fair-haired. He was well-armed. He had a fine helmet and a corselet of chain mail and a red shield, and was girt with a beautifully adorned sword. In his hand he carried a large spear inlaid with gold, with a shaft so thick that it filled your hand.

This man approached the king, greeted him, and asked whether the king would accept his service. The king asked him what was his name, his extraction, and from what part of the country he hailed. He answered, "I have kinsfolk in Jamtaland and Helsingjaland. My name is Arnljót Gellini. Let me first of all recall to your mind that it was I who aided your men whom you had sent to Jamtaland to fetch your tribute there. I entrusted them with a silver dish which I sent you as a token that I wished to be your friend." The king then asked him whether or no he was a Christian. He said concerning his faith that he believed in his own power and strength.

"That belief has so far sufficed me; but now I mean rather to believe in you, sire."

The king replied, "If you will believe in me, then you must believe what I shall teach you. This you are to believe, that Jesus Christ created heaven and earth and all human beings; and that after death all shall go to him who are good and have the right faith."

Arnljót replied, "I have heard the White Christ spoken of, but I do not know what is his function and where his dominion lies. Now I shall be willing to believe all you tell me. I shall entrust myself to you altogether."

Thereupon Arnljót was baptized. The king taught him all of the faith which seemed most necessary for him to know. He assigned him to the front rank and to stand before his banner. There stood also Gauka-Thórir and Afra-Fasti with their band.

Chapter 216. The Army of the Farmers

We have to tell now, from the point where we turned aside, how the landed-men and farmers had gathered an unconquerable army as soon as they learned that the king had departed from Gartharíki in the east and had arrived in Sweden. And when they heard that the king had come from the east to Jamtaland and intended to proceed from there across the Keel to Vera Dale they moved this army to the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord and there gathered together everyone, free men as well as thralls, and then proceeded up the Vera Dale. They had so great a host that there was no one who had ever seen so large a force gathered in Norway. And as is apt to be the case in such a large army, there were all kinds of people in it. There were a goodly number of landed-men and a great multitude of powerful farmers, yet the great mass was made up of cotters and laborers. And the main part of it consisted of men gathered in the Trondheim Districts. That army was violently enraged against the king.

Chapter 217. Of Bishop Sigurth

As was written above, Knút the Powerful had subdued all of Norway and had set Earl Hákon to rule it. As bishop for his court he had given him a priest called Sigurth.¹ He was of Danish origin and had long been with King Knút. This bishop was a man of vehement temper and unusual eloquence. He gave King Knút all the support he could, and was most hostile toward King Ólaf. This bishop was in the farmers' army and often spoke to them, urging them strongly to make resistance to King Ólaf.

Chapter 218. Bishop Sigurth Harangues the Farmers

Bishop Sigurth spoke at a meeting of the council [of the farmers], attended by a great multitude. He made the following speech: “A great multitude has gathered here now, so great that there is hardly a chance of ever seeing a greater host of men born here in this poor land. And this great host should stand you in good stead. There is sufficient need for that if this Óláf still insists on wanting to make war on you. Already in his youth he accustomed himself to rob and kill men, and in so doing went about far and wide. And finally he turned to this land and began by making enemies of the best and most powerful men, King Knút [among them], whom all are in duty bound to serve. He took possession of this land which is tributary to him [Knút], and the same he did to King Óláf of Sweden; and he drove Earl Svein and Earl Hákon from their inherited possessions. But most ruthlessly he treated his own kin, driving all kings out of the Uppland provinces; though to be sure that was justified in some measure, because earlier they had broken faith with King Knút and abandoned their allegiance to him while supporting this Óláf in all his evil designs. Then their friendship came to an end, as was to be expected. He inflicted mutilations on them, and appropriated their dominions, and thus he destroyed all princely races in the land. And you probably know how he later dealt with the landed-men: the most prominent ones he killed, while many had to flee the country for him. Also, he has fared far and wide about this country with robber hordes, burned the countryside, and killed and robbed the people. Who, indeed, is here of men of mark who does not have to avenge himself on him for great losses he inflicted on him? Now he comes with an army of foreigners, most of whom are people from the woods, highwaymen, or other robbers. Do you think he is likely to be gentle with you now, coming with this rabble when [before] he committed such depredations when all who followed him warned him against that? I consider it advisable for you to remember the words of King Knút—what he counseled you to do in case Óláf tried to regain the land, how you should maintain the liberty, which King Knút promised you: he bade you resist and drive off such gangs of bandits. Now is the time for you to make head against them and strike down these miscreants for eagle and wolf [to feed on], letting everyone lie there where he is cut down, unless you would rather drag their corpses into the woods or rock piles. Let no one be so bold as to move them into churches, because they are a pack of vikings and evil-doers.” And when he stopped speaking, the men made great acclaim, and said they would do as he had counseled.



Bishop Sigurth addresses the farmers.

Chapter 219. Hárek and Thórir Refuse the Leadership of the Farmers

The landed-men who had gathered there had a meeting and discussed arrangements as to how the line of battle should be drawn up and who should be in command of the army. Then Kálf Árnason spoke up and said that Hárek of Thjóttá was the man best suited to be in command of this array, “because he is of the line of Harald Fairhair. The king is greatly incensed at him for the slaying of Grankel, and he will be most dangerously exposed if Ólaf regains his power. Also Hárek is most experienced in warfare and a man of great ambition.”

Hárek replied that men in their prime were better suited [to be the leader]; “but I am now an old man,” he said, “and infirm and little fitted for battle. Also, I am a kinsman of Ólaf, and though he may lay little stress on that in his relations with me, yet it is not seemly for me to be more prominent in this battle than anyone else in our company. But you, Thórir, are well suited to be our leader in fighting against King Ólaf. Also, you have sufficient reason for so doing. Not only do you have to take revenge on him for the slaying of your kinsmen but also for his driving you from all your possessions as an outlaw. Additionally, you have promised King Knút as well as your kinsmen to avenge Ásbjorn. Or do you think you will ever have a better chance than now to avenge yourself on Ólaf for all the wrongs he has done you?”

Thórir answered him as follows: “I do not trust myself to bear the standard against King Ólaf or to be made the leader of this army. It is the Thronanders who have the greatest host here. I know their overweening pride and that they are not likely to obey me or any other from Hálogaland. But there is no need to remind me of the wrongs I have to repay Ólaf for. I remember the loss of [kins]men, for Ólaf took the lives of four men, and all distinguished by birth and high worth; my brother’s son Ásbjorn, Thórir and Grjóttgarth, my sister’s sons, and their father, Olvir; and I owe it to each of them to avenge them. Now as to myself, I have chosen eleven of my housecarls who are briskest; and I think that we will not need fear comparison with others when it comes to exchanging blows with Ólaf, if chance offers to do so.”

Chapter 220. Kálf Árnason Cautions the Leaders of the Farmers

Then Kálf Árnason spoke up, “We shall have to be on our guard lest the business we are engaged in does not end with mere talk, now that this army has been gathered together. We shall need to do more if we are to do battle with King Ólaf than having everyone shirk the responsibility for undertaking a difficult job; because we may well expect that, even though Ólaf possibly has a smaller army compared with ours, it has a fearless leader and all his troops can be counted on to be loyal to him. Now if we are somewhat nervous—we who should by all means be the leaders of our force—and will not encourage and exhort the troops, nor lead them, then the great mass of the army will straightway lose heart, and everyone will take to looking out for himself. And though a great army is gathered here, we are likely to be put to a severe test when we meet King Ólaf and his troops in battle; and we are certain of defeat unless we, their leaders, be brisk and the whole army rush forward with one accord. And unless that is the case, then it would be best for us not to risk battle; and then the other alternative will evidently be for us to take our chance at Ólaf’s mercy; and he was harsh when he had less cause to be so than now. Yet I know that there are men in his army that I could count on for obtaining quarter if I sought it. Now if you are agreed, then you, brother-in-law Thórir, and you, Hárek, shall put yourselves under the standard we shall all raise and also follow. Let us all be brisk and keen in the business we have undertaken, and let us advance against them with our army of farmers in such a fashion that they will not detect any fear in us. And that will inject courage in the hearts of everybody if we proceed cheerfully to put our troops in battle order and fire their hearts.”

When Kálf had finished they all were agreed with him and said they would do as he would have them. Then all were agreed to have Kálf as leader of the troops and have him station everyone as he thought fit.

Chapter 221. The Battle Array of the Farmers

Kálf set up the standard and stationed his housecarls under it, and with them, Hárek of Thjóttá and his company. Thórir the Hound and his men stood in front of the standards at the head of the formation. And a chosen band of farmers was on both sides of Thórir, men who were the keenest and best armed. This, [the center of the army], was both long and deep, and in it were men from Trondheim and Hálogaland. To the right of this formation there was placed another, and at the left side of the center stood the men from Rogaland, Horthaland, Sogn, and the Fjords, and there was set up the third standard.

Chapter 222. Thorstein the Shipbuilder Vows Vengeance on King Ólaf

There was a certain man called Thorstein the Shipbuilder. He was a merchant and a great artificer, a big and strong man, of great energy in all matters, and also one who had committed many manslaughters. He had had a falling out with the king, and the king had taken from him a new and large ship which Thorstein had built. It was on account of Thorstein's deeds of violence and as a weregild that the king had exacted this. Thorstein had joined the farmers' army. He went in front of the lines to where stood Thórir the Hound and said, "I want to be in this company, Thórir, right by you, because if Ólaf and I meet I mean to be the first to strike him, if I manage to get close enough to him, and thus repay him for his seizing my ship, one of the best among trading vessels." Thórir and his men received him into their ranks.

Chapter 223. Kálf Árnason Exhorts the Troops

Now when the battle order of the farmers was established, the landed-men spoke to them, exhorting the troops to watch their position, where each one was stationed, beneath which standard was his place, how far from his banner or how near to it. They asked the men to be alert and quick to take their places when the trumpets sounded and they heard the signal, and then keep step; because they still had to advance their army a very long distance, and there was a chance that their lines might break during the march. Then they fired the spirits of the troops. Kálf said that all men who had a grievance against King Óláf and a revenge to exact against him were to advance under those standards which were to meet those of Óláf, and be mindful of the wrongs he had done them—they would not ever have a better chance to avenge themselves for what he had inflicted on them, and thus liberate themselves from the oppression and thralldom he had subjected them to. “A coward he,” he said, “who does not fight most bravely, because the men who stand against you [all] have been offenders against the law, and they will not spare you, given the chance.” There was a tremendous acclaim given his speech, and men fired one another throughout the army.

Chapter 224. The Rearguard of Both Armies Lags

Thereupon the farmers with their army proceeded to Stiklarstathir. There stood King Óláf with his army. At the head of their troops marched Kálf and Hárek with their standard. Now when the armies met, fighting did not start right away, because the farmers delayed the attack for the reason that their troops by no means had advanced equally, so they waited for the detachments that had lagged. Thórir the Hound with his company brought up the rear, because he was assigned to see to it that no troops stayed behind when the battle cry was heard and the armies were in touch with one another, and so Kálf and his men waited for Thórir. The farmers had this watchword to urge themselves on to battle: “Forward, forward, farmer folk.”

King Óláf also made no attack to begin with because he was waiting for Dag and his troops. Then the king saw Dag and his men coming. We are told that the farmers had no less than hundred times a hundred [14,400] men. As says Sigvat: (147.) 336. Heavy my heart that Óláf had a small force only from the east: unfalt’ring, firmly gripped he his sword-hilt. Had by half the enemy’s henchmen greater numbers. Checked that the warriors’ chieftain. Chide I no one for faint heart.

Chapter 225. The King and Kálf Árnason Exchange Words

When both armies were [thus] stationary and men could recognize one another, the king said, “Why are you, Kálf, on that side, seeing that we parted as friends south in Mœr? It ill befits you to fight against us and shoot fatal shots into our ranks, because there are four brothers of yours with me here.”

Kálf replied, “Much goes differently, sire, than would be most fitting. You parted with us in such a fashion that it was necessary for me to make peace with those on the other side. Now each of us has to stay where he is; but if I had my way we still could come to an agreement.”

Then Finn¹ answered, “About Kálf this is to be noted, that when he speaks fair he is about to do ill.”

The king said, “It may be, Kálf, that you wish to come to an agreement, but it seems to me that the farmers do not look like having peaceful intentions.”

Then Thorgeir of Kviststathir said, “You are now going to have such peace [from us] as many a one before has had at your hands, and now you will be repaid for it.”

The king replied, “You do not need to be so eager to meet us, because victory will not be granted you today over me—for did I not raise you from a lowly station to power?”

Chapter 226. King Ólaf Fights in the Front Ranks

By that time Thórir the Hound had arrived with his company and surged forward in front of the standard, calling out, "Forward, forward, farmer folk!" They raised the battle cry and let fly both arrows and spears. Thereupon the king's men raised their battle cry and urged each other on with the rallying cry they had been taught: "Forward, forward, Christ's men, cross men, king's men!" Now when the farmers who were stationed outermost in the wing heard this, they called out the same as they heard others call out. But when the other farmers heard that, they thought they were king's men and attacked them, thus fighting their own men, and many fell before they recognized each other.

1030 The weather was fair and the sun shone from a clear sky. But when the battle started there came a redness in the sky and also over the sun and before the battle ended it was as dark as at night. [July 29th.]

The king had stationed his men on a certain hillock, and they rushed from above onto the army of the farmers, and made such a furious assault that they gave way, so that the front of the king's battle line came to stand where those in command of the farmers' army had been stationed before, and many among them were about to flee. But the landed-men and their house-carls stood their ground and then there developed a violent struggle. As says Sigvat:

337. Widely o'er fields fared on (148.)
foot—of peace was surcease—
byrnied men to baleful
battle—the earth resounded,
in early morning hour when
arrow-senders, helm-clad—
steel-storm raged at Stiklar
Stead—rushed down upon them.

The landed-men urged their troops on and goaded them to advance. Sigvat makes mention of this:

338. Abreast strode, their banner (149.)
bearing, in middle line, stout
Thronders there, with halberds
thrusting. Now they rue it!¹

Then the army of the farmers attacked on all sides. Those who stood foremost slashed with their swords, those standing next behind them thrust with their spears, and while all these in the rear let fly both with javelins or arrows or thrusts

spears, whilst all those in the rear let fly darts with javelins or arrows or threw stones or hand-axes or shafts with pointed stones. Soon the battle grew murderous, with many falling on either side. In the first onset fell Arnljót Gellini, Gauka-Thórir, and Afra-Fasti, together with all their company, but only after each of them had slain one or two men, and some, several. Then the lines before the banner of the king grew thin. So the king bade Thóρθ to advance the standard, and the king himself followed it with the body of men he had selected to be about him in battle. These were the most dexterous in the use of their weapons and the best armed among his troops. This is mentioned by Sigvat:

339. Closest heard I, kept my (150.)
king beside his standard,
hastening headlong with it—
hard the fight—'gainst foemen.

When King Ólaf issued from the shield castle and went into the front ranks and the farmers beheld his countenance, they were filled with dread and their hands failed them. This is mentioned by Sigvat:

340. Dreadful was it, I deem, for (151.)
dragon-hoard-dispenders²
to look in the eyes of Ólaf,
eager for fight and knife-sharp.
Nor dared the doughty Thronders—
dread of the hersars' lord o'er-
awed them—in fray e'er his
asp-keen eyes encounter.

Then the battle grew most violent. The king himself advanced in hand to hand combat. As Sigvat says:

341. Red grew in raging sword-fight, (152.)
wrathfully as fought fierce
warriors our worthy folk-lord,
weapons and hands with wound-dew.
And in the game-of-iron,
Ólaf, battle-eager,
cleft many a man's head in
middle with sharp falchion.

Chapter 227. There Is an Eclipse of the Sun During the Battle

King Ólaf fought then most valiantly. He slashed across the face of Thorgeir of Kviststathir, the landed-man mentioned above, cutting in two the nose guard of his helmet and cleaving his head below the eyes, so that it was almost sundered. When he fell, the king said, “Is it not true what I told you, Thorgeir, that when we met you would not be the victor?”

Right then, Thóρθ rammed down the standard shaft so hard that it stood in the ground. He had received a mortal wound and fell beneath the standard. With him fell also Thorfinn Mouth and Gizur Goldbrow. He had been attacked by two men, but killed one of them and wounded the other before he fell. As says Hofgartha-Ref:

342. One bold spear-Ygg,¹ without
wavering, started Hild’s-play—
his sword sang out—against two
savage trees-of-combat.²
Dealt the dart-thrower bold his
death-blow—he steel reddened—
to one war-worker, another
wounded he grievously. (153.)

Then occurred this, as was stated above, that in a clear sky the sun disappeared and it became dark. This is mentioned by Sigvat:

343. No small wonder, say the
sailship-steerers, was it,
when from cloudless heaven
hardly warmth gave the sun-orb.
An awful omen—from the
English³ I learned the portent—
for the king that fast did
fail daylight in battle! (154.)

Just at that time Dag Hringsson arrived with his force, and he began to put his troops in battle formation and set up his standard. However, because of the great darkness they delayed in delivering their attack, for they did not know for sure who confronted them. Yet they turned against the wing where stood the men from Rogaland and Horthaland. Many of these events occurred at the time or else shortly before or after.

Chapter 228. Thorstein, Thórir, and Kálf Deal King Óláf Fatal Blows

Two kinsmen of Kálf Árnason bore the name of Kálf and Óláf. They stood on one side of him. They were large and bold men. Kálf was the son of Árnfinn Armóthsson, a nephew of Áрни Armóthsson. On the other side of Kálf Árnason stood Thórir the Hound. King Óláf slashed across Thórir the Hound's shoulder. The blow took no effect, and it seemed as if dust flew up out of the reindeer skin. Sigvat makes mention of this:

344. The free-handed king found out (155.)
full clearly himself, how
the mighty magic of Finns from
maim protected Thórir,
when with slaughterous sword he
slashed across the shoulders
of the Hound, but blunted,
bit not gold-dight Hneitir.

Thórir struck at the king, and then they exchanged some blows; and the king's sword took no effect where Thórir's reindeer skin protected him, yet he received a wound on his hand. Sigvat says still further about this:

345. Who would call in question— (156.)
courage lacked not Thórir—
the Hound's hardihood when
having it out with Óláf?
The stalwart storm-of-arrows-
starter basely dared 'gainst
the king himself in cruel
combat to lift his broadsword.

The king said to Bjorn, his marshal, "Strike down the dog on whom steel takes no effect!"

Bjorn turned his battle-axe and hit him with the hammer of it. The blow fell on Thórir's shoulder. It was a mighty one, and Thórir tottered. At the same moment the king turned on Kálf and his kinsmen and dealt Óláf, Kálf's kinsman, his deathblow. Then Thórir the Hound thrust with his spear at Bjorn the Marshal and pierced him in the middle and that was his death.

Then Thórir said, "Thus beat we the bears."¹

Thorstein Shipbuilder hewed at King Óláf with his battle-axe, and the blow struck his left leg above the knee. Finn Árnason instantly killed Thorstein. Receiving that wound the king leaned against a boulder. He threw down his sword and prayed God to help him. Then Thórir the Hound thrust at him with his spear. It pierced him from below his coat of mail and through the belly. Then Kálf slashed at the king, and the blow struck his neck on the left side. Men disagree as to which Kálf [Kálf Árnason or Kálf Árnfinnsson] wounded the king. These three wounds caused King Óláf's death. After his fall most of the company which had advanced with him fell too. Bjarni Gullbráskáld composed this verse about Kálf Árnason:

346. Warlike prince, with weapons you (157.)
warded Norway 'gainst Óláf.
You fought with noblest folklord
fearlessly. I heard said
that, stout of heart, at Stiklar-
stath you went before the
flag and fought until that
fallen lay the liege-lord.

The skald Sigvat composed this verse about Bjorn the Marshal:

347. Also heard I how erstwhile— (158.)
onward he strode—Bjorn taught
marshals, manly-wise, their
masters to help in battle:
fell he with faithful king's men,
fighting for his liege-lord,
by the head of high-souled
hero. Glorious that death is.

Chapter 229. Dag Hringsson Renews the Battle

Thereupon Dag Hringsson kept the battle going, making such a strong first attack that the farmers yielded ground and some turned to flee. Then fell a great number of farmers, and also these landed-men: Erlend of Gerthi and Áslák of Finney. The standard they had followed was cut down then. The battle then raged most violently. It has been called Dag's Onslaught. Against Dag made head Kálf Árnason, Hárek of Thjóttá, Thórir the Hound, together with the troops under their command. Then Dag was overborne by the odds against him, and he turned to flight, as did all that remained of the army. There is a certain valley through which fled the main body of it, and there many were cut down. Then men fled two ways, many severely wounded, and some so spent that they were fit for nothing. The farmers did not pursue them for any length of time because their leaders soon returned to the battlefield, for many were bound to look there for their friends and kinsmen.

Chapter 230. King Óláf's Sanctity Is Revealed to Thórir the Hound

Thórir the Hound went to the spot where lay the corpse of King Óláf, and prepared it for burial, laying it flat on the ground, straightening it, and covering it with a garment. And when he wiped the blood from the king's face, he related afterwards, his countenance was beautiful, in that his cheeks were ruddy as though he were asleep, and much more radiant than before when he was alive. The king's blood came on Thórir's hand and flowed between his fingers where he had been wounded before, and from that moment the wound healed so quickly that it required no dressing. Thórir himself bore witness to this occurrence before all men at the time the sanctity of King Óláf became known. Thórir the Hound came to be the first among the men of influence who had been the king's opponents to witness to his sanctity.

Chapter 231. The Farmers' Army Disbands

Kálf sought for his brothers who had fallen there. He found Thorberg and Finn, and we are told that Finn hurled a sword at him and wanted to kill him. He spoke harsh words to him, calling him a truce breaker and a betrayer of his king. Kálf paid no attention to him and had him borne from the battlefield together with Thorberg. Their wounds were investigated and none of them found mortal. They had fallen because of the shower of missiles and from sheer exhaustion. Then Kálf proceeded to have his brothers brought to his ship and departed with them himself.

Now as soon as he had gone, all the farmers who had their homesteads nearby left too, excepting those who were busy with their friends and kinsmen who were wounded or who attended to the bodies of those who had fallen. The wounded were brought in to the farms, so that every house was full of them; but over some, tents were erected outside. But however remarkably many had gathered to form the army of farmers, it was thought even more remarkable how quickly this gathering of forces broke up, once it began to do so; and the reason for that was chiefly that the greatest number had come together there from the [surrounding] country and that they were very eager to return to their homes.

Chapter 232. Thórir the Hound Gives Pursuit

The farmers who lived in the Vera Valley went to meet the chieftains Hárek and Thórir and complained about their difficulties. They said, “These fugitives who have escaped from battle are likely to make their way through Vera Valley and are likely to deal roughly with our homes, and we dare not return home while they are in the valley here. Be so good to pursue them with your troops and let no living soul get away; because that is what they would have done to us if they had been victorious in the battle, and so they are likely to do still if there is an encounter when they have greater numbers than we. Possibly they will linger in the valley if they consider they have nothing to be afraid of. And in that case they are likely right away to deal roughly with our habitations.” The farmers said a great deal about this and urged the chieftains with great impatience to proceed and kill the men who had fled. And when the chieftains discussed this matter between them they thought the farmers had much justification for what they said; so they agreed to send Thórir the Hound to accompany the Vera Valley farmers with the six hundred [720] men who had stood under his leadership, and they started on their way.

Night began to fall then. Thórir did not stop till at nightfall he arrived at Súl. There he learned that Dag Hringsson and many other of Óláf’s troops had been there and stopped for eating their supper, but had then continued over the mountains. Then Thórir said he would not pursue them over the mountains. So he returned down the valley, and they managed to cut down only a few [of the stragglers]. Thereupon the farmers returned to their homes; and the day after, Thórir and his men boarded their ships. But the king’s men who could do so saved their lives by hiding in the forests. Some were helped by people [living near by].

Chapter 233. Of the Skald Thormóth and Kimbi

Thormóth the Skald of Coalbrows, had fought in the battle beneath the king's standard. And when the king had fallen and the battle raged at its fiercest, the king's bodyguard fell, one after the other, and those who still stood up were mostly wounded. Thormóth had been severely wounded. Then he, like the others, retreated from where they thought was the greatest danger, and some fled running. Then started the battle which men call Dag's Onslaught. All of the king's troops still capable of fighting joined it, but Thormóth did not fight in that battle, for he was unable to on account of exhaustion and his wounds, and he merely stood up near his companions though he could do nothing else. Then he was struck by an arrow in his left side. He broke off the shaft of the arrow, then left the battle, and went up to a farmstead and came to a barn. That was a large building. Thormóth had a bare sword in his hand. And when he went inside, a man met him.

He said, "There is a most miserable noise in here with wailing and lamenting. Great shame that brave men should not be able to bear their wounds. It may be that the king's men acquitted themselves well in the fight, but they bear their wounds mighty poorly."

Thormóth answered, "What is your name?" He gave his name as Kimbi [Scoffer]. Thormóth asked, "Were you in the battle?"

"I stood with the farmers," he said, "which was the better part [to take]."

"Are you wounded at all?" asked Thormóth.

"A little," said Kimbi; "and you, were you in the battle?"

Thormóth replied, "I was, and on the side of those who had the better cause."

Kimbi saw that Thormóth had a gold ring on his arm. He said, "You are likely to be a king's man. Give me your gold ring, and I will hide you. The farmers will kill you if they find you."

Thormóth said, "Take the ring if you can. I have now lost what is most valuable." Kimbi reached out and wanted to grab the ring. Thormóth swung his sword, cutting off his hand; and we are told that Kimbi bore the pain of his wound in no wise better than those he had found fault with. Kimbi went his way, and Thormóth sat down in the barn and stayed there for a while listening to what people said. They talked most about what they had seen in the battle and discussed how the combatants had fought. Some praised most highly King Óláf's valor, but others praised other men no less. Then Thormóth spoke this

verse:

348. Oaken-hearted Óláf
onward strode—gore-covered
steel bit deep at Stiklar-
Stath—and urged his men on.
Shields did shelter all from
shower-of-arrows—tried was
many a warrior's mettle in
medley—but the leader.

(159.)

Chapter 234. Thormóth's Last Hours

Thormóth then went to a small detached building and entered it. Inside it there were already many severely wounded men. A certain woman was busy there bandaging these men. There was a fire on the floor, and she heated water for cleansing their wounds. Thormóth sat down near the door. People went in and out, attending to the wounded men. One of them turned and looked at Thormóth and then said, "Why are you so pale? Are you wounded, and if so why don't you ask to be helped by the healer?" Thormóth then spoke a verse:

349. Not ruddy am I; red cheeks, (160.)
ring-dight slender woman,
has your husband. No one
heeds my grievous wounds, though.
Pale I am with pangs of
pain, scatterer-thou-of-
gold, from deep wounds deadly
Danish arrows gave me.

Thereupon Thormóth got up to stand before the fire, and remained there for a while. Then the healer woman said to him, "You man, go outside and bring me the firewood that lies outside the door." He went outside, brought in an armful of firewood, and threw it down on the floor. Then the healer woman looked at his face and said, "Terribly pale this man is. Why are you so pale?" Then Thormóth spoke this verse:

350. Wonders the woman, why so (161.)
wan the tree-of-combat.¹
Few from wounds grow fair-hued:
Found me the flight of arrows.
The ice-cold iron, linen-
elm,² flew through my middle.
Hard by my heart, think I,
hit me the baleful weapon.

Then the healer woman said, "Let me see your wounds and bandage them." Then he sat down and cast off his clothes. And when she inspected his wounds she looked closely at the wound he had in his side. She noticed that there was an iron in it, but did not know which path it had taken. She had made a concoction in a stone kettle in which she had mashed leeks and other herbs and boiled them together, and that she gave the wounded men to eat. In that manner she tried to

find out if they had wounds in vital parts, because she could smell the leek through a wound which went into the body cavity. She brought some of it to Thormóth and told him to eat it.

He replied, "Take it away! I am not porridge-sick." Then she took a pair of pincers and tried to pull out the iron [head of the arrow], but it was stuck fast and would not budge. Also, it showed but little, the wound having swollen.

Then Thormóth said, "You cut in to reach the iron so that one can take hold of it with the pincers, then let me have them and let me pluck it out." She did as he told her. Then Thormóth took the gold ring off his arm and gave it to the healer woman, telling her to do with it as she pleased. "There is good value in it," he said. "King Ólaf gave me the ring this morning." Thereupon Thormóth took the pincers and pulled out the arrow. It had barbs on it, and there were fibers of his heart in it, some red and some white; and when he saw that he said, "Well has the king fed us. I am fat still about the roots of my heart." Thereupon he leaned back and was dead. And this ends what we have to say about Thormóth.

Chapter 235. The Aftermath of the Battle

1030 King Óláf fell on Wednesday the fourth Calends of August [July 29th].¹ It was close to midday when the armies met, and early in the afternoon when the battle began. The king fell before high noon [three o'clock], and the darkness lasted from midday till high noon. Sigvat tells this about the end of the battle:

351. Loath I am, our liege's (162.)
loss to bear, the time that—
cleft was his shield—o'ercome in
clash he was by foemen.
Of land and life reft Óláf
lawless hordes—were splintered
shields. Unsheltered, the fray he
shunned not; but Dag was laggard.

He recited also this verse:

352. Never before, of farmers (163.)
folk had seen so many
gathered—they did to death the
dear lord—nor of hersar,
seeing that such a king the
sea-steed-steerers laid low—
drenched in dew-of-wounds² lay
doughty men—as was Óláf.

The farmers did not pilfer the dead, for right after the battle a dread fell upon many who had fought against the king. Yet they clung to their ill-will [against him] and decided between them that all those who had fallen on the king's side should have no care given their bodies nor burial as befitted good men, and declared them all robbers and outlaws. But men of power who had kinsmen among the fallen paid no heed to this but brought their bodies to the churches and gave them burial.

Chapter 236. The King's Blood Restores a Blind Man's Vision

Thorgils Hálmuson and his son Grím went to the battlefield after it had grown dark. They took up the body of King Ólaf and bore it to a certain small, empty hovel distant from their farmstead. They had lights and water along, removed the clothes from the corpse, washed it, then swathed it in linen cloths, deposited it there in the hut, and hid it under wood so that it could not be seen even if people came into the hut. Then they went home to their farm.

Both armies had been followed by many mendicants and poor folk who begged for food. Now on the evening following the battle many of them had remained behind there, and when night fell, they sought shelter in all houses, both large and small. One blind man is told of. He was poor, and his boy went with him, leading him. They went about the farm, looking for shelter, and came to this same deserted hut. The door was so low that they almost had to creep in. And when this blind man came inside he groped about on the floor to find a place where he might lie down. He had a hood on his head, and when he bent down it slid down over his face. With his hands he felt that there was a pool on the floor. He lifted his wet hand to raise up the hood, and when his fingers touched his eyes there was at once such an itching in his eyelids that he passed over the eyes themselves with his wet fingers. Then he backed out of the house, saying that everything in there was so wet one could not lie there. And when he came out of the house he could at once distinguish his hands, and then all the things near him that could be seen in the darkness of night. He straightway went back to the farm and into the sitting room, and there told all the people that he had regained his sight and could now see everything. Now many knew that he had been blind for a long time, for he had been there before and had gone about the settlements. His sight returned to him only then when he came out of a certain mean little house, "and all was wet inside there," he said. "I got in it with my hands and with my wet hands rubbed my eyes." He also told them where that house was. But the people who heard and saw this wondered greatly about this occurrence and talked about what might be in the house. But Farmer Thorgils and his son Grím believed they knew what the connection was. They greatly feared that enemies of the king might come and ransack the house. So they stole away, went to the hut, and moved the king's body out into the pasture where they hid it. Then they returned home and slept during the night.

Chapter 237. Thorgils Hálmuson Hides the King's Body from Thórir the Hound

On the fifth day [of the week, Thursday] Thórir the Hound came down the Vera Valley to Stiklarstathir, together with many troops. There was also a large part of the farmers' army. At that time the battlefield was still being cleared. Men were moving the bodies of their friends and kinsmen and gave help to those whom they wanted to restore to health. But a great number had died since the battle had ended. Thórir the Hound went to the place where the king had fallen, looking for his body, but not finding it he inquired whether anyone could tell him what had become of it; but no one could tell him. Then he asked Farmer Thorgils if he knew where the king's body was. Thorgils made this reply: "I was not in the battle, and I know little of what happened there. Many stories are current about it now. People say that King Óláf had been seen last night up at Staf together with a troop of men. But if he fell, your men probably hid his body in the woods or in stone piles." And though Thórir thought he knew that the king had fallen, many were willing [to believe the opposite] and spread the rumor that the king probably escaped from the battle and that it might be but a little while before he gathered troops and fell upon them. So Thórir went to his ships and sailed through the fjord and out to sea. Then all the army of the farmers scattered, taking with them all the wounded men capable of being moved.

Chapter 238. Thorgils Brings the King's Body to Nitharós

Thorgils Hálmuson and his son Grím had the mortal remains of King Ólaf in their keeping, and they were greatly concerned how they should go about it that the enemies of the king should not get to mistreat the corpse; because they had heard the farmers say it would be advisable to burn the body of the king if it were found, or else to take it out to sea and drop it there. Both father and son had seen what seemed like a candle burning at night on the spot where the body of King Ólaf had lain on the battlefield; and also, after they had hidden it, they saw a light always burning at night at the place where the king reposed. They were afraid that the enemies of the king might search for the body where it was hidden if they saw the signs. So they were anxious to remove the body to some place where it would be safe. They made a coffin, taking great pains to have it well made, and in it they deposited the body of the king. And afterwards they made another coffin which they filled with straw and stones to weigh as much as a man's body and closed it carefully. Now when all of the troops of the farmers had left Stiklarstath, Thorgils made ready to depart [with the coffins]. He procured a large rowboat which he manned with seven or eight of his kinsmen or friends. They brought the body of the king on board in all secrecy, placing the coffin beneath the floorboards. The coffin which they had filled with stones they also had along, placing it where everyone could see it. Then they sailed through the fjord. They had a favorable breeze and in the evening as it began to grow dark they arrived in Nitharós and made fast at the royal pier.

Then Thorgils sent men into the town to tell Bishop Sigurth that they had come with the body of King Ólaf. As soon as the bishop heard this he sent his men down to the pier. They fetched a rowboat and laid it alongside that of Thorgils, demanding to have the king's body. Thorgils and his companions lifted up the coffin that lay on top of the floorboards and carried it over to the bishop's boat. Thereupon his men rowed out into the fjord and there dropped the coffin overboard.

By that time it had become dark night. Then Thorgils and his friends rowed up the river to the end of the town and landed at a place called Saurhlith which is outside the town. They carried the coffin with the king's body into a certain empty house standing above the other houses there. There they kept vigil during the night over the body. Thorgils went down to the town then. There he spoke with some men who had been among the king's best friends. He asked them if they would take care of the king's body, but no one dared to do that. Thereupon Thorgils and his companions moved the body [further] up the river and buried it

in a sandbank there, then levelled the ground so that no one should see that anyone had been digging there. They were done with all this before dawn. Then they returned to their boat and at once rowed out of the river [into the fjord], then pursued their course till they were back again at Stiklarstathir.

Chapter 239. King Svein's Harsh Laws Embitter the Norwegians

Svein, the son of King Knút and of Álfífa, the daughter of Earl Álfrim, had been appointed to rule Jómsborg in Wendland; but then there came to him the message of King Knút, his father, that he was to come to Denmark; moreover that then he was to proceed to Norway to rule that land, and that the title of king of Norway was to be conferred upon him. Thereupon Svein proceeded to Denmark with a great force. With him went Earl Harald and many other men of influence. This is mentioned by Thórarin Loftunga in the poem which he composed about Svein, the son of Álfífa, and which is called *Glælognskvitha*:¹

353. No one doubts (164.)
what dapper band
of Danes were
with the Dogling:²
first of all
came Earl Harald;
after him
every man's son
following him
more fit than th'other.

Then Svein proceeded to Norway, accompanied by Álfífa, his mother; and he was accepted as king at every general assembly. He had arrived in Vík, coming from the east [south], at the time the battle of Stiklarstathir occurred and King Óláf fell. Svein did not stop in his journey till in the fall he arrived north in the Trondheim District. He was accepted there as king as he had been in other places.

King Svein instituted new laws in the land concerning many matters. They were patterned after the Danish laws, but some were much harsher. No one was to depart from the country except with the king's leave; but if he left nevertheless, then his property was to revert to the king. And everyone who killed a person was to forfeit land and chattels. If a man was outlawed and an inheritance came to him, then this inheritance fell to the king. At Yuletide every farmer was to bring to the king a measure of malt for every hearth and also the ham of a three year old ox—that was called *vinartoddi* [pasture tax]—also, a pail of butter. And every housewife was to pay of *rykkjartó*—that is, of undressed linen [thread]—so much as could be grasped between thumb and the long finger. Farmers were in duty bound to construct all the houses the king desired to have

on his estates. Seven men, including every [boy] five years old, were to equip one man for war duty and perform their share in the same proportion in the building and equipping of ships levied. Every man who rowed out to sea [for fishing] was to pay the king land-tax, from whatever place he started, to the amount of five fish. Every ship leaving the land was to reserve for the king's [purposes] one space across the ship. Everyone travelling to Iceland was to pay land-dues, both Norwegians and Icelanders. Among these statutes was also this one that Danes were to have such weight in Norway that one Danish witness was to outweigh the witness of ten Norwegians.

Now when these laws were made known to the people there was immediate opposition and there arose grumbling as they met together. Those who had not participated in the campaign against King Ólaf said, "Now you people from the inner reaches of the fjord are shown the friendship and reward of the Knytlings³ for having fought against King Ólaf and deprived him of his country. Peace and better justice were promised you, but now you have oppression and servitude [from them], and in addition you have committed a great misdeed and villainy."

It was not easy to contradict them, because all could see that they had taken ill advice. Yet people did not dare to make resistance against King Svein, chiefly because they had given their sons or other near kinsmen as hostages to King Knút, and also because they had no leader for such resistance. Soon people complained greatly of King Svein, though most blamed Álfífa for what irritated them. But now the truth came to be heard by many concerning King Ólaf.

Chapter 240. King Óláf's Sainthood Is Recognized

That winter there arose much talk among the people of Trondheim that King Óláf was in truth a saint and that many miracles had come to pass testifying to his sainthood. Many began to invoke King Óláf about matters of importance to them. Many were benefited by these prayers, some in their health, some in the furthering of their voyages or of other matters where help seemed needful.

Chapter 241. Einar Thambarskelfir Champions King Ólaf's Sanctity

Einar Thambarskelfir had returned home to his estates from the west in England and was enjoying the revenues which King Knút had bestowed upon him when they had met in Trondheim; and that was almost an earldom. Einar Thambarskelfir had not joined in the rebellion against King Ólaf, and that he boasted of himself. Einar was mindful of the fact that Knút had promised him the earldom over Norway, and also that the king had not kept his promise. Einar was the first among men of influence to maintain the sanctity of King Ólaf.

Chapter 242. Kálf Árnason Restores His Brothers to Health

Finn Árnason dwelled but a short time with Kálf at Egg because he was exceedingly put out by Kálf's having been in the battle against King Ólaf; and for that reason Finn reproached Kálf bitterly. Thorberg Árnason showed much more restraint in this matter than Finn; yet he too was eager to return home to his estate. Kálf provided his two brothers with a good man-of-war equipped with all tackle and other gear as well as with a good crew. So they returned to their estates. Árni Árnason lay for a long time laboring with his wounds, but recovered finally without being in any way a cripple. Later in winter he journeyed south to his estate. All of the brothers made their peace with King Svein and settled down in their homes.

Chapter 243. Bishop Sigurth Flees the Country

1031 The summer after there was much talk about the sanctity of King Ólaf, and [now] all this talk about the king took a different turn. There were many then who confirmed the sanctity of the king who had been his sworn enemies and had not at any time done him justice. Then they began to heap reproaches on those who had most urged them on in their hostility against the king. Much of that was blamed on Bishop Sigurth; and people showed such great hostility to him that he thought it wisest to leave the country and sail west to England and join King Knút. Thereupon the people of Trondheim sent messengers to the Uppland districts inviting Bishop Grímkel to come north to Trondheim. King Ólaf had sent Bishop Grímkel back to Norway when he himself proceeded east to Gartharíki, and since that time Bishop Grímkel had lived in the Uppland District. When this message came to him, he at once made ready to go. A special reason for his going was that he believed there might be truth in what was said about the miracles and the sainthood of King Ólaf.

Chapter 244. King Óláf's Body Is Disinterred

Bishop Grímkel then set out to meet Einar Thambarskelfir. Einar received the bishop joyfully and they discussed many matters, and also the great events which had taken place in the land. They came to agree on all matters. Thereupon the bishop journeyed to the town, and there all the people received him well. He inquired carefully into the miracles told of King Óláf and learned only good reports about them.

Thereupon the bishop sent word to Thorgils and his son, Grím, requesting them to come to the town and meet with him. They did so at once and came to the bishop and told him of all the signs they had noted and also where they had deposited the body of the king. Thereupon the bishop sent word to Einar Thambarskelfir. He came to the town, and both then had speech with the king and Álfífa, requesting them to give permission to disinter the body of King Óláf. The king gave it and told the bishop to proceed with it as he pleased. There was at that time a great multitude of people in the town.

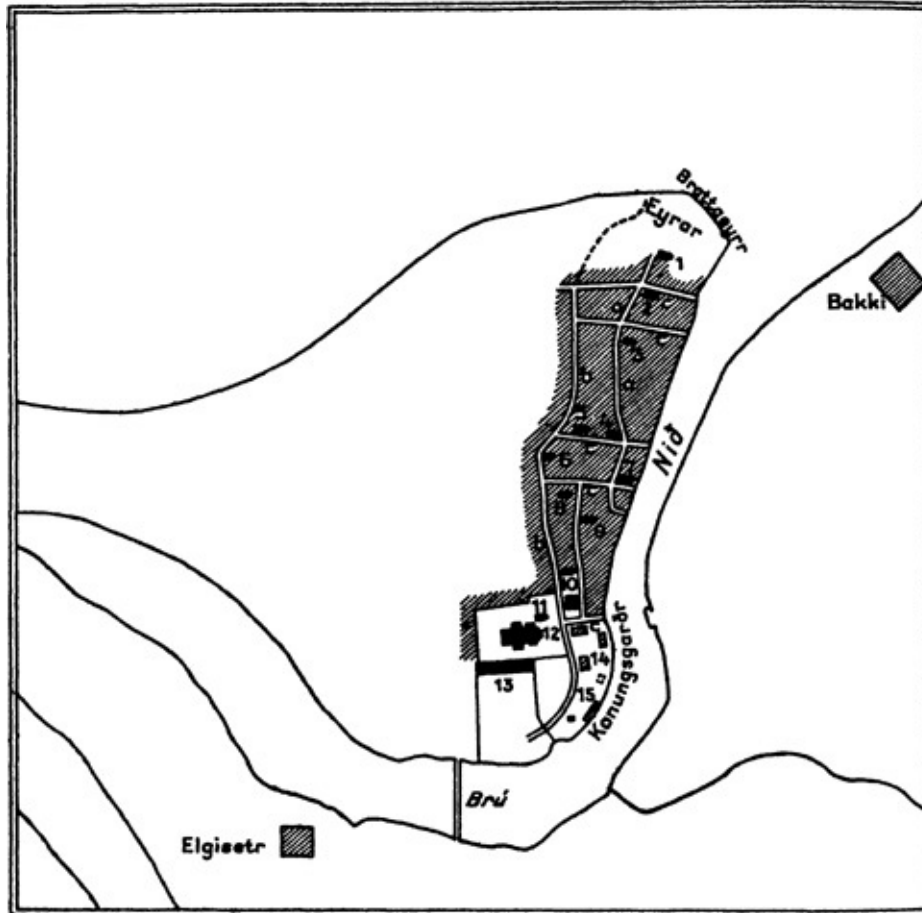
The bishop, Einar, and some men went to the place where the body of the king had been interred and had them spade up the ground for it. The coffin had by then about come to view. Many advised the bishop to have the king buried by the Church of Saint Clemens. Now when twelve months and five days had passed after the death of King Óláf, his holy remains were again disinterred. By that time the coffin had again emerged considerably out of the ground, and looked span-new as though it were but recently planed. Bishop Grímkel was present when the coffin of King Óláf was opened. A delicious odor met them. Then the bishop bared the countenance of the king, and its aspect had changed in nowise, and there was a ruddiness on his cheeks as though he had only recently fallen asleep. Those who had seen King Óláf when he fell now saw a great change in that his hair and nails had grown almost as much as they would have if he had been alive all the time since he fell. Then King Svein approached to view the body of King Óláf, and so did all the chieftains present.

Then Álfífa said, "Mighty little do bodies decompose when buried in sand. It would not be the case if he had lain in earth." Then the bishop took a pair of shears and cut the king's hair and trimmed his whiskers. He had had long whiskers as people in those days used to have.

Then the bishop said to the king and Álfífa, "Now the hair and the beard of the king are as they were when he died, but it had grown as much as you can see here cut off."

Then Alfríða replied, "That hair would seem to me a holy relic only if fire does not burn it. We have often seen wholly preserved and undamaged the hair of persons who have lain in the ground longer than this man has."

Thereupon the bishop had fire put into a censer, blessed it, and put incense on it. Then he laid King Ólaf's hair into the fire, and when all the incense was burned, the bishop took the hair out of the fire, and it was not burned. The bishop had the king and the other chieftains view it. Thereupon Álfífa bade them lay the hair into fire that had not been blessed. Then Einar Thambarskelfir bade her be silent and used hard language against her. So then, by the bishop's pronouncement, the consent of the king, and the judgment of all the people, King Ólaf was declared a true saint. Subsequently the body of the king was carried into Saint Clemens Church and set up in public view before the high altar. The coffin was covered with a costly fabric and canopied with velvet[?]. Right soon there occurred many kinds of miracles by the shrine of Saint Ólaf.



- | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|
| 1 Margrétarkirkja | 9 Andréaskirkja | a Langstræti neðra
(Kaupmannastræti) |
| 2 Clemenskirkja | 10 Predikaraklaustr | b Langstræti efra |
| 3 Jóanskirkja | 11 Máriukirkja
(er Haraldr Sigurdarson lét reisa) | c Almennigar
(þvergötur) |
| 4 Óláfskirkja | 12 Kristskirkja (dómkirkjan) | |
| 5 Grégóriúskirkja | 13 Erkibyskupsgarðr | |
| 6 Máriukirkja | 14 Konungsgarðr | |
| 7 Krosskirkja | 15 Nikoláskirkja | |
| 8 Pétrskirkja | | |

Niðarós. From *Íslenzk Fornrit*, Vol. 28. Courtesy of Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, Reykjavík.

Chapter 245. Saint Óláf's Miracles Are Sung by Thórarin Loftunga

On the sand flat where the body of King Óláf had been interred, a fine spring arose, and people obtained relief from their ailments by drinking its water. It was walled in, and its water has been safeguarded ever since. First a chapel was built there and an altar erected where the burial place of the king had been; but now Christ Church stands on that spot. When Archbishop Eystein built the large minster which stands there now he had its high altar erected on the very spot where the king's grave had been. And on that spot stood also the high altar in the old Christ Church. It is said that Saint Óláf's Church now stands where stood the shed in which the body of King Óláf reposed during the night. The rise up which the holy remains of the king were borne from the boat is now called Óláf's Slope, and that is now in the middle of the town. The bishop tended the sanctuary of King Óláf, clipping his hair and nails, because both grew as they did when he was living in this world. As says the skald Sigvat:

354. Like on living men—I (165.)
lie not—much praise is due the
fearless men who his flag did
follow—Óláf's hair grew.
Lasted the locks of him who
light gave to the eyes of
Valdamar who, view-less
vision gained in Garthar.¹

Thórarin Loftunga composed the poem about Svein Álfífuson which is called *Glælognskviða*; and in it are these verses:

355. Now has the (166.)
high-born one gained
the throne in
Thrándheim's folk-lands.
There fore'er
the atheling hopes
as liege-lord
the land to rule,

356. Where Óláf (167.)
erstwhile governed
ere he fared

to future life
and there was,
as wot we all,
set as saint
in sepulchre.

357. Had him there (168.)
in heavenly Kingdom
Harald's son
with hardy deeds
won a realm
...
358. There where pure, (169.)
unputrified,
our lief liege
lies in his grave,
wondrously
as on one living
hair and nails
behold growing!
359. The choir bells (170.)
his coffin above
ring themselves
readily o'er him:
every day
all the people
hear the bells
above the king.
360. Over him (171.)
on the altar,
to Christ lief,
the candles burn.
Thus Óláf
ere he left us,
free of sins
had saved his soul.

361. Hosts do come (172.)
where the holy king
lies in state,
relief to gain.
Halt and blind,
they hither come
and hence go
hale and hearty.
362. Pray Óláf (173.)
to apportion you—
God's saint he—
goodly Norway;
he will get
from God himself
for us all
all that is needful,
363. if made known (174.)
to the man of God
what your wants,
so he will grant them.

Thórarin Loftunga was in attendance with King Svein at the time, and saw and heard these great miracles, witnessing to the sanctity of King Óláf: that above his sanctuary one could hear sounds as though bells were rung by supernatural powers; and candles lit themselves above the altar, kindled by heavenly fire. And as Thórarin says, a host of halt and blind or otherwise ailing people came to the sanctuary of King Óláf, and departed from there hale and well. And though he says nothing else nor gives a close account there must have been an innumerable host who regained their health right from the beginning of the miracles wrought by Holy King Óláf. But the most important miracles of Saint Óláf which have occurred since have been written down and noted carefully.

Chapter 246. The Length of King Óláf's Reign

Men who have kept close account say that Holy King Óláf was king of Norway for fifteen years after Earl Svein left the country, but that he assumed the royal title the winter before, when he was in the Uppland District. The skald Sigvat says this:

364. Open-handed Óláf (175.)
Uppland districts ruled for
fifteen years before he
fell in his patrimony.
What greater giver-of-rings hath
governed northern folk-lands?
Though shorter his life was shaped than
should have been his fortune.

According to Priest Ari the Learned, Holy King Óláf was thirty-five years old when he fell. He had fought twenty large battles. As says the skald Sigvat:

365. Some good men believed in God, we (176.)
gather; others did not¹—
folk-battles twenty fought the
folk-lord eager for combat.
Kings-men in Christ believing
called he to stand on right wing.
Would that God gave welcome
warm to Magnús' father!

Now we have told a part of the saga of King Óláf, of some happenings which occurred whilst he ruled Norway, and also of his fall and how his sainthood became known. But now we must not neglect to tell what redounds to his greatest honor, and that is, of the miracles wrought by him; but of that will be written also later in this book.

Chapter 247. The Norwegians Resent the Tyranny of the Danes

King Svein, the son of Knút was ruler of Norway for several years. He was a child both in age and sense. During that time Álfífa, his mother, had the government of the country in her hand; and the Norwegians hated her greatly, both then and afterwards. The Danes showed great overbearing in Norway during these years, and the people of the country were much incensed about that. And when they talked about that among themselves, people from other parts of the country than the Trondheim districts blamed the people of Trondheim for having been the chief cause of Saint Óláf's death and [for the fact] that Norwegians were subjected to such tyranny, when oppression and slavery were the lot of both the great and the humble and all the people; and they said that it behooved the Tronders to start a rebellion "to free us from this oppression." Also it was the general opinion that they had at that time the greatest power in Norway because of their leaders and the great numbers of inhabitants. And when it came to the ears of the Tronders that their countrymen reproached them, they acknowledged the truth of [the reproach, and admitted] that they had committed a most ungodly deed in robbing King Óláf of both life and land, and also, that their luckless deed was being repaid with much evil.

The chieftains had meetings and discussed what was to be done; and in these deliberations Einar Thambarskelfir was the leader. The same was the case of Kálf Árnason, when he understood into what trap he had fallen through the instigation of King Knút: the promises he had made to Kálf were all broken. King Knút had promised Kálf an earldom and the rule over all Norway, and Kálf had been the leader in the battle against King Óláf and in depriving him of his land. [But now] Kálf had no higher rank than before, so he considered himself badly deceived, and so he came to an understanding with his brothers Finn, Thorberg, and Árni, and good relations were re-established between them.

Chapter 248. Kálf Árnason Refuses to Join King Svein's Fleet

1033 When Svein had been king for three years the news came to Norway that west across the sea a band was gathering whose leader was a certain Tryggvi. He called himself a son of Óláf Tryggvason and Gytha the English woman.¹ Now when King Svein learned that a foreign army might invade the land he summoned a force from the northern part of the country and most of the landed-men of the Trondheim District joined him. Einar Thambarskelfir remained at home and refused to join King Svein. But when the message came to Kálf at Eggja, to wit that he was to join the king's levy, he took a ship of twenty rowers' benches which he owned, went on board of it with his housecarls in a great hurry and steered through the fjord, nor waited for King Svein. Then Kálf sailed south to Mær and did not stop till he arrived south at Giski where his brother Thor-berg lived. Thereafter all of the brothers, the sons of Áрни, arranged for a meeting and took counsel with one another. Then Kálf returned north. But when he came to Frekeyar Sound there lay before him the fleet of King Svein; and as Kálf came rowing north in the sound they hailed one another. The king's men called upon Kálf to lay to and join the king and help him defend his land. Kálf answered, "I have done enough if not too much, fighting against my countrymen in order to help the Knytlings gain the kingdom." Kálf and his men rowed north on their way, and continued until he came home to Eggja. None of the sons of Áрни joined King Svein's levy. King Svein steered south along the land with his fleet; but when he learned that no fleet had arrived from the west he continued south to Rogaland and all the way to Agthir, because his men believed that Tryggvi might intend to sail first to Vík because there his forbears had lived and he had most support. And [indeed] there he had much backing from kinsmen.

Chapter 249. The Pretender Tryggvi Is Defeated and Slain

Coming from the west, King Tryggvi arrived with his fleet in Horthaland. Then he learned that King Svein had sailed south, whereupon he also sailed south to Rogaland. But when King Svein heard of Tryggvi's whereabouts after arriving from the west, he turned back north with his fleet, and the hostile forces met in the Sóknar Sound on the landward side of the Island of Bókn, not far from where Erling Skjálgsson had fallen, and a great and violent battle took place. It is told that Tryggvi hurled javelins with both hands at the same time. He said, "Thus did my father teach me to say mass." His enemies have said that most likely he was the son of a priest, but he himself boasted that he looked more like King Óláf Tryggvason. Tryggvi was indeed a most resourceful man. In this battle he fell, together with many of his force. Some escaped by flight, others asked for quarter. The poem on him, called *Tryggvaflokkr*,¹ has it thus:

366. For fame eager, forth fared (177.)
from the north King Tryggvi,
whilst Svein from the south forth
sailed to join the battle.
From fray not far was I.
Fast they raised their banners.
Swiftly then—rang sword 'gainst
sword—began the bloodshed.

This battle is mentioned in the poem of praise composed about King Svein:²

367. That Sunday morning, maiden, (178.)
much unlike it was to
days when at wassail women
wait on men with ale-drink:
when Svein the sailors bade his
sloops of war to fasten
by their bows, with carrion
battening hungry ravens.

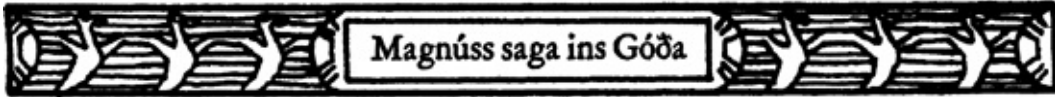
King Svein continued to rule the country after this battle. A time of peace followed. During the ensuing winter King Svein resided in the south of the land.

Chapter 250. Kálf Árnason Refuses Tribute to King Knút

Einar Thambarskelfir and Kálf Árnason conferred that winter and took counsel together, meeting in Kaupang. About that time there arrived a messenger from King Knút to Kálf Árnason, demanding that Kálf should send him three dozens of [battle-]axes of prime quality. Kálf made this answer, “No axes shall I send to King Knút. Tell him I shall let his son Svein have enough axes so he will not think he is short of them.”

Chapter 251. Einar Thambarskelfir and Kálf Árnason Offer Magnús the Crown

1034 Early in the spring Einar Thambarskelfir and Kálf Árnason set out with a large company of men picked from the best in all the Trondheim districts. They proceeded to Jamtaland in spring, across the Keel, from there to Helsingjaland, and arrived in Sweden. There they procured ships and in summer sailed to Gartharíki, arriving in fall at Aldeig-juborg. From there they sent messengers to Hólmgarth and King Jarizleif with the message that they desired Magnús, the son of Saint Ólaf to go with them and accept their company to Norway, and that there they would give him support so that he could win back his patrimony and be made king of the country. Now when this message reached King Jarizleif he took counsel with the queen and his other chieftains. They agreed upon sending word to the Norwegians inviting them to come and meet with King Jarizleif and Magnús. They were given safe-conduct for the journey. And when they arrived in Hólmgarth it was agreed between them that the Norwegians who had come there were to swear loyalty to Magnús and become his followers; and they confirmed this with the oaths of Kálf and all those who had fought against King Ólaf at Stiklarstathir. [On his part] Magnús gave his plighted faith offering full reconciliation, and confirmed with his oath that if he obtained the kingship and the rule of Norway he would be faithful and true to them. He was to become the foster son of Kálf Árnason, and Kálf [on his part] was to be in duty bound to do all that for Magnús which he believed would make his realm greater and more independent than before.



The Saga of Magnús the Good

Chapter 1. Magnús Ólafsson Arrives in Sweden

King Magnús Ólafsson started on his journey to the west after Yule, first from Hólmgarth to Aldeigjuborg. He and his men began to get their ships ready when the ice broke up in spring. Arnór Jarlaskáld mentions this in his *Magnússdrápa*:¹

368. Of the atheling's early (1.)
outfitting shall I speak now—
give ye heed, ye gold-ring
givers—for I was witness.
Eleven years had not lived the
lordling noble, when out of
Russia he made ready
red-shielded war-galleons.

In spring King Magnús sailed west to Sweden. Thus says Arnór:

369. Summoned the sword-reddener, (2.)
sage though young, his forces.
Weaponed, briskly went the
warrior's host to the row-locks.
From the east, o'er ocean,
oaken keels pushed westward.
Blustering winds bore the
breaker-of-rings to Sigtúna.

We learn here that King Magnús, leaving Russia, first sailed west to Sweden and to Sigtúna. At that time Emund Ólafsson was the king of Sweden. And there lived also Queen Ástríth, the widow of Holy King Ólaf. She welcomed her stepson Magnús most heartily, and immediately had a numerous assembly summoned at a place called Hangrar.² At this assembly Queen Ástríth spoke as follows: “With us here is the son of Holy King Ólaf, whose name is Magnús. He now plans to proceed to Norway to recover his patrimony. I have great good reason to support him in this endeavor, for he is my stepson, as all know, both Swedes and Norwegians. I shall not be sparing of anything which he may need for his aid, so that his force may become as great as possible. I shall not be sparing of either the followers I have or of my goods. So all who are willing to join him in his expedition shall be assured of my whole-hearted friendship. I shall also let it be known herewith that I shall join him in this expedition. Thus all can see that I shall not be sparing for his support of any other thing which I

am able to supply him with.” And she continued thus eloquently and at length.

But when she ceased, many made answer and said that the Swedes who had followed King Ólaf, his father, to Norway had reaped little honor therefrom —“nor is there expectation of greater success with this king,” they said. “And for this reason men are not very willing to go on this expedition.”

Ástríth made this answer: “All those who want to be called men of mettle will not be given pause by such considerations. But [on the contrary], if anyone lost a kinsman in following Holy King Ólaf or was wounded himself, then it shows manhood to proceed to Norway now and avenge that.”

And so successful was Ástríth, what with her speech and her active support of Magnús, that a great host was willing to join Ástríth in accompanying him to Norway. This is noted by the skald Sigvat:

370. Owe I to open-handed (3.)
Ólaf’s daughter, her who
wedded was to Norway’s
warlike king, my praises.
A countless host on Hangrar
heath of Swedes assembled,
eastward, to hear Ástríth
Ólaf’s son’s cause pleading.
371. More whole-hearted counsel (4.)
hardly could she have given,
mailed Swedes among, than if
Magnús were her own son.
Harald’s³ whole dominion
her, the Swedish princess—
most beside Christ the mighty—
Magnús had to thank for.
372. Due to Ástríth’s doughty, (5.)
dreadless words it is that
Magnús o’er lands and lieges
lords it in high favor.
Women few with well-turned
words have ever thus—I
praise her pluck and shrewdness—
profited their stepsons.

The skald Thjóthólf^{f4} has this to say in his poem about Magnús:

373. Out you shoved a ship, fast— (6.)
shuddered the boat's sail-yards—
seaward driven by sixty
sweeps strong-manned, King Magnús.
Above you, stormy blasts did
bend the shaken mast-head.
Striped sail loyal liegemen
lowered at Sigtúna.

Chapter 2. Magnús Arrives in Trondheim and Is Received Cordially

Magnús Ólafsson started from Sigtúna and had then a large force which the Swedes had gotten together for him. On foot they traversed Sweden proper and then journeyed to Helsingjaland. Thus says Arnór Jarlaskáld:¹

374. Bucklers red then bor'st thou, Ygg-of-(7.)
battle, into Swedish hamlets,
and the franklins of the folk-land
flocked to thee to aid thy progress.
From the east there thronged the thingmen
thither, with gilded spears and shields white—
reddener-of-ravenous-wolves'-tongues—
rallying, chosen for the sword-thing.²

From there, Magnús Ólafsson journeyed through Jamtaland and across the Keel and down to Trondheim; and immediately all the inhabitants gave him cordial reception. But the followers of King Svein, as soon as they learned that Magnús, the son of King Ólaf, had entered that part of the land, all fled in every direction and sought safety. No resistance was shown there to Magnús. King Svein had his residence in the south. As says Arnór Jarlaskáld:

375. Westward cam'st thou, awing craven(8.)
caitiff foemen with the highest
helm of terror,³ into Trondheim's
traitor shires, thou wound-birds'⁴-feeder;
whilst approaching doom and downfall
dogged the enemy host from Denmark:
for their wretched lives they fearing
fled before the son of Ólaf.

Chapter 3. The Eyra Assembly Accepts Magnús as King

Magnús Ólafsson and his army marched to Kaupang.¹ There he got a friendly reception. Then he had the Eyra Assembly summoned. And when the farmers arrived at the assembly, Magnús was accepted as king over all the land as far as King Ólaf, his father, had had sway. Thereupon King Magnús selected a bodyguard and appointed landed-men. Soon afterwards in the fall King Magnús levied men and ships round about the Trondheim District, and he met a good response. Thereupon he sailed south with his fleet.

Chapter 4. King Svein Decides to Sail to Denmark

King Svein, the son of Álfífa, was in South Horthaland when he learned about this news of war. He had the war-arrows carried at once in all directions, summoning all the farmers to him with the message that there should be a general levy of men and ships to defend the land with him. All those in his immediate neighborhood gathered about him. Thereupon the king had an assembly and addressed the farmers, saying that he would advance against King Magnús and do battle with him if the farmers would follow him. The king spoke rather briefly. To this the farmers made rather lukewarm response. Then the Danish chieftains who were with the king spoke at length and cleverly; but the farmers made bold to speak against them. Many said they would follow King Svein and join him in battle, but some refused to. Some said nothing; some said they would join King Magnús as soon as they could.

Thereupon King Svein said, “It appears to me that few farmers have come here of those whom we summoned. But those farmers who are here tell us themselves that they mean to follow King Magnús. So it seems they will be as helpful to me as those who say nothing. But as to those who say they will follow us, probably every other man, or more, will not be dependable if we come to do battle against King Magnús. My advice is that we do not depend on the loyalty of these farmers, but rather go where all the people are proven and true to us. There we have a sufficient force to win and hold this land.”

As soon as the king had made this decision all his men concurred with him. They turned their ships about and hoisted their sails. Then King Svein sailed east [and south] along the land, nor stopped till he came to Denmark. There he was well received. And when he met his brother Hortha-Knútt, the latter offered to share his kingdom in Denmark with him, and that King Svein accepted.

Chapter 5. King Knút the Powerful Dies in England

In the fall King Magnús journeyed east to the very boundary of the land, and was accepted as king everywhere; and all the people were glad that Magnús had become king. That same fall Knút the Powerful died in England, on the
1035 thirteenth of November. He was buried in Winchester. He had then been king of Denmark for twenty-seven years, and over Norway too, for seven years. Then Harald, the son of Knút, became king of England. That same winter Svein Álfífuson died in Denmark. Thjóthólf spoke this verse about King Magnús: (9.) 376. Swedish forests you fared o'er,
feeder of hungry eagles.
With you wended, ruler,
warrior-hosts to Norway.
Fled Svein; and deserted
sithen by all, that learned I,
Denmark-ward had drifted,
daunted, the son of Álfífa.

Bjarni Gullbráarskáld composed this verse about Kálf Árnason: (10.)
377. Great the help you gave, to
Gain for each his kingdom.
Right I reckon for Svein to
rule in Denmark only.
Kálf, through you the king did
come into his own; and
you it was who, warrior,
won Magnús his title.

King Magnús ruled that winter in Norway, and Hortha-Knút in Denmark.

Chapter 6. Peace Is Concluded between Magnús and Hortha-Knútr

In the spring following both of the kings levied men and ships for war, and it was reported that they would fight it out near the [Gaut Elf] River. But when both forces were preparing to do battle, the landed-men in either army sent messengers to kinsmen and friends to find out if peace could not be concluded between the kings. And because both kings were still young and of childish mind, the influential men who had been chosen therefore in either land were in charge of the government; and it came to this that a peace meeting was arranged for the kings. Thereupon they met personally, and terms of peace were discussed. And the covenant was made that the kings swore brotherhood by mutual oath, and concluded peace between them for so long as either lived; and if one of them died without a male heir, the one who survived was to take over his land and subjects. Twelve men, the noblest in either land, confirmed with their oaths that this peace was to be kept the while any one of them lived. Thereupon the kings parted, and both returned to their kingdoms; and this peace was kept the while both lived.

Chapter 7. Ástríth and Álfhild Have a Falling Out

Queen Ástríth, who had been married to King Ólaf the Saint, came to Norway with King Magnús, her stepson, and resided with him in excellent agreement, as was proper. Then also Álfhild, King Magnús' mother, joined his court. The king immediately received her with the greatest affection and established her in worthy fashion. But as is the case with many when they obtain power, Álfhild's presumption grew apace, so that she was greatly vexed that Queen Ástríth was honored somewhat more than she, both in their seating and the services rendered them. Álfhild wanted to sit near to the king, but Ástríth called her her servant-woman, as had been the case when Ástríth was queen in Norway, at the time when King Ólaf ruled the country, and would under no condition sit with Álfhild. [Indeed] they would not be accommodated in the same lodgings.



Magnús the Good meets Hortha-Knút.

Sigvat the Skald, had made pilgrimage to Rome the time the battle of Stiklarstathir took place. But on his journey north he learned of the fall of King Ólaf, and that was a great sorrow for him. Then he spoke this verse:

378. On the Mont¹ I stood, remembering (11.)
many targes sundered,
broad ones, and long byrnies,
above the keep, at sunrise:
in his prime the prince wielded
power in all of Norway;
near the throne did Thóρθ² stand
then—to mind I called it.

One day Sigvat came through a hamlet and heard a certain farmer wailing loudly because he had lost his wife by death. He beat his breast and rent his clothes, weeping much and saying that he would gladly die. Sigvat spoke this verse:

379. His dear wife dying, he would (12.)
die too, vowed in sadness
a peasant: too high a price to
pay for love departed;
but bloody tears will be weeping—
worse by far our loss is—
unfleeing men when fallen they
find their king in battle.

Chapter 8. Sigvat Sorrows over King Óláf's Death

Sigvat returned to Norway. He had a home and children in the Trondheim District. He sailed north along the land on a merchant ship. And when they were anchored in the Hillar Sound¹ they saw many ravens flying past. Sigvat spoke this verse:

380. Harborward now hie them (13.)
hungry ravens, where ere
floated the fair-shielded²
fleet of noble Óláf.
Screaming hie to Hillar
hither greedy eagles
many a morning, whom oft
Magnús' father had sated.

But when Sigvat had come north to Kaupang he encountered King Svein, and the king invited him to join his court, because Sigvat before had been with Knút the Powerful, King Svein's father. Sigvat said he wished to go to his homestead. One day Sigvat was walking on the Street and saw the king's men disporting themselves at games. Then Sigvat spoke a verse:

381. Pale as ashes, I promptly (14.)
passed from where the ruler's
spearmen in games sprightly
sport—my breast fills sorrow:
came to mind how the keen-eyed
king oft played, aforetime,
the glorious one, games on
ground of his forefathers.

Thereupon he repaired to his homestead. He heard many reproach him, saying that he had fled from King Óláf. Sigvat spoke this verse:

382. May cast me Holy Christ in (15.)
quenchless fires of hell-pain,
the all-seeing, if I from
Óláf fled: I am guiltless.
Witnesses have I like water.
Went I to Rome as palmer,

amends to make for my
many sins—why deny it?

Sigvat did not like it at home. One day he walked outside and spoke this verse:

383. Smiled, methought, the sloping (16.)
sides of hills in Norway—
close to him the king e'er
kept me—when Óláf lived still:
gloomier now the grey fells—
grief besets me—with him
I sailed the seas in my time—
since his face shone on me.

At the beginning of winter Sigvat journeyed east over the Keel to Jamta-land and from there to Helsingjaland, and finally to Sweden. He straightway repaired to Queen Ástríth and remained with her for a long time, enjoying her favor. He also stayed with King Onund, her brother, and received from him ten marks of burnt [silver]. So we are told in his *Knúts drápa*.³ Sigvat often asked merchants who had dealings with Hólmgarth what they could tell him about Magnús Óláfsson. He spoke this verse:

384. Once more would I—nor are (17.)
wasted your words, often
praising high the princeling—
ply you with my questions:
little ask I, though littlest
love-birds—but I doubt not
the king's sop craves now home to
come—oft fare between us.

Chapter 9. Sigvat Joins Queen Ástríth and Magnús on Their Journey to Norway

Now when Magnús Ólafsson arrived in Sweden from Russia, Sigvat was there with Queen Ástríth, and they were all overjoyed. Then Sigvat spoke this verse:

385. Boldly back to your homeland— (18.)
bounden am I to aid you—
faring, may'st thou, King Magnús,
make claim of lands and liegemen.
Gone had I to Garthar
gladly—thy name I gave thee¹—
messages must have reached you,
Magnús, from thy kinsfolk.

Thereupon Sigvat joined Queen Ástríth to accompany Magnús to Norway. Sigvat spoke this verse:

386. Pleased I am—to people (19.)
plainly I say it—Magnús,
—God's good grace it is—that
guided well your life is.
Few would be the folk-lands,
famous king, that could then
boast that equal heir e'er,
Ólaf, a father engendered.

And when Magnús had become king in Norway, Sigvat stayed with him and was in high favor. When Queen Ástríth and Álfhild, the king's mother, had had some words with each other, he spoke this verse:

387. Let thou, Álfhild, Ástríth (20.)
uppermost sit at table,
thousandfold though your standing,
thanks to God, have risen.

Chapter 10. Magnús Enshrines Saint Óláf's Body

King Magnús had a shrine made adorned with gold and silver and inlaid with jewels. And that shrine was like a coffin, both as to size and shape, with a portico underneath, and above, a cover fashioned like a roof, and surmounting it, dragonheads as gable ends. On the back of the cover were hinges, and in front, hasps closed with [lock and] key. Thereupon King Magnús had the sacred remnants of King Óláf repositied in this reliquary. Many miracles happened there at this sanctuary of King Óláf. About these Sigvat the Skald spoke this verse:

(21.) 388. A golden shrine for good and
gallant King Saint Óláf—
high I hold fore'er his
holiness—was made then.
Many a man, quickly
mended, wends from the holy
saint's sepulchre, and many,
seeing who blind came there.

Then it was written into the laws everywhere in Norway that the memorial day of King Óláf was to be kept holy. And then that day was kept as holy as the greatest of festivals. This is mentioned by the skald Sigvat: (22.) 389. It behooves us to hold e'er
holy—God has given
power to sainted prince—with
pure spirit his mass day.
Seemly, to celebrate the
sainted Óláf's death day,
the ruler's who with red gold-
rings adorned my arms both.

Chapter 11. Thórir the Hound Makes a Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

Thórir the Hound left the country shortly after the fall of King Óláf. Thórir journeyed to Jerusalem, and it is the opinion of many that he never returned. Sigurth was the name of the son of Thórir the Hound. He was the father of Rannveig, the wife of Jóan, who was the son of Árni Árnason. Their children were Víthkun of Bjarkey and Sigurth the Hound, Erling and Jarthrúth.

Chapter 12. Ásmund Grankelsson Slays Hárek of Thjóttá

Hárek of Thjóttá resided at home on his estates until the time when Magnús Ólafsson came into the land and had become king. Then Hárek journeyed south to Trondheim to meet King Magnús. At that time Ásmund Grankelsson was with the king. Now when Hárek had arrived in Nitharós and stepped on land from his ship, Ásmund was standing by the side of the king in the gallery [of the house he resided in]; and they saw Hárek and recognized him. Ásmund said to the king, “Now I want to repay Hárek for the slaying of my father.” He had in his hand a small axe with a broad blade that was beaten out thin.

The king looked at him and said, “Take my axe rather.” That one had a wedge-shaped edge and was thick. And he continued, “I am thinking, Ásmund, that the bones of that fellow are likely to be hard.”

Ásmund took the axe and stepped down from the house; and below, on the cross street, Hárek and those with him met him coming up from the river. Ásmund struck him on the head with such force that the axe at once cleft his skull. It was a mortal blow. But Ásmund returned to the house and rejoined the king, and the whole edge of the axe had been knocked off. Then the king said, “Now how would that thin axe have served you? It seems to me this one is ruined now.” Thereupon King Magnús gave Ásmund a fief and a stewardship in Hálogaland, and there exist many and long accounts of the dealings between Ásmund and the sons of Hárek.

Chapter 13. Thorgeir Makes the King Listen to Him

At first it was Kálf Árnason who wielded most power under King Magnús. But then some people reminded the king on what side Kálf had stood at Stiklarstathir. And then it became more difficult for Kálf to have influence with the king. Once, when there were many men gathered about the king to plead their causes, a certain man appeared before him to present to him his necessary business. It was a man who has been mentioned before, Thorgeir from Súl in Vera Dale.¹ The king paid no attention to his words but listened to those who were close to him. Then Thorgeir spoke to the king in such a loud voice that all heard who were near by:

390. ²Speak thou with me, (23.)
Magnús, king!
I followed faithfully
your father Óláf.
A broken brain-pan
bore I thence,
when to death they did
the dear ruler.
But you favor
who foully left him,
the traitors who had
truck with the devil.

Then some shouted him down, and others bade Thorgeir leave the hall. The king told him to approach, and then attended to his business so that Thorgeir was well pleased, and the king promised him his friendship.

Chapter 14. Kálf Árnason Flees the Wrath of King Magnús

A short time later King Magnús was at a reception at Haug in Vera Dale. And when the king sat at table, Kálf Árnason sat on one side of him, and on the other, Einar Thambarskelfir. By that time things had gone so far that the king acted coolly toward Kálf and honored Einar most. The king said to Einar, “We two shall ride to Stiklarstathir today. I want to see the marks of what happened there.”

Einar answered, “It isn’t I who can tell you about that. Let Kálf, your foster father, go with you. He will be able to tell you what happened there.”

Now when the tables had been removed, the king made ready to go. He said to Kálf, “I shall want you to go with me to Stiklarstathir.” Kálf said that he was not bound to do so. Thereupon the king arose and said rather angrily, “Go you shall, Kálf!” Then he left the hall.

Kálf quickly dressed and said to his attendant, “You are to go to Egg and tell my men servants to bring all my belongings onto the ship before sunset.”

The king rode to Stiklarstathir, and Kálf with him. They dismounted and went to the place where the battle had been fought. Then the king said to Kálf, “Where is the place the king fell?”

Kálf answered and pointed to the place with the shaft of his spear. “Here he lay when he fell,” he said.

The king said, “And where were you then, Kálf?”

He answered, “Here where I am standing now.”

The king said, and his countenance was blood red, “In that case your axe might have reached him.”

Kálf said, “My axe did not reach him.”

Thereupon he went up to his horse, leaped on its back, and rode off together with all his men; but the king rode back to Haug. Kálf arrived in Egg by nightfall. His ship lay there ready for sailing, with all his movable goods aboard and manned with a crew of his men servants. They immediately sailed out of the fjord at night. Thereupon Kálf sailed day and night as the wind permitted. He crossed the sea westward and remained there a long time, harrying in Scotland, Ireland, and the Hebrides. Of this Bjarni Gullbráskáld speaks in his *flokk* about Kálf:

—worthy of that were you—
was Harald's nephew,¹ heard I,
wholly to you; until that
enemies steadily stirred up
strife between you, in envy.
Ill will come to Óláf's
heir through this your discord.

Chapter 15. Sigvat Is Chosen by Lot to Warn the King

King Magnús appropriated Vigg, which Hrút had owned, and Kviststathir, which had been Thorgeir's¹ property; also Egg with all the goods Kálf had left behind. And he took possession of many other large estates which had belonged to those who had fallen in the yeomen's army at Stiklarstathir. Also, he dealt out heavy punishment to those who had fought against King Óláf in that battle. Some, he drove out of the country, and from some he took great sums of money, and in the case of still others he had their cattle slaughtered. Then the farmers began to murmur and said to one another, "What can this king be thinking of, breaking thus [against us] the laws which King Hákon the Good has given us? Doesn't he remember that we have never tolerated acts of injustice? He is likely to have the same fate as his father and other chieftains whom we have slain when we grew weary of their overbearing and lawlessness."

This dissatisfaction was widespread throughout the country. The people of the Sogn District collected their forces and let it be known that they would fight King Magnús if he came there. King Magnús was in Horthaland then and had stayed there a very long time with a large army and seemed on the point of proceeding north to the Sogn District. The king's friends became aware of this, and came together for a conference, twelve of them; and they agreed to cast lots to select a man to inform the king of this dissatisfaction; and it was managed in such fashion as to fall on Sigvat the Skald.

Chapter 16. Warned by Sigvat, Magnús Mends his Ways

Sigvat composed a *flokk* which bears the name of *BersQglisvísur* [Outspoken Verses].¹ And in it he began by telling the king that they thought he had hesitated too long about acting on their advice to reconcile himself with the yeomen when they threatened to rise up against him. He spoke [this verse]:

392. Sternly stressed it Sigvat: (25.)
“Strive not with the Sognings,
embattled ’gainst thee and bitter!”
But I shall fight if need be.
Seize we our swords then, and
sadly do as he orders,
if but thereby, king, we
bate the hateful discord.

In the same poem are also these verses:

393. Hákon fell at Fitjar: (26.)
folk named him the Good, and
held most high and loved him,
halt who called on outlaws;
folk e’er and aye remember
Æthelstān’s foster son:² they
keep his laws right loyally,
loath e’er to forget him.
394. Right were rich and poor to (27.)
rally round the Óláfs:
these kings gave their crops and
cattle the peace they needed:
both Harald’s heir and Tryggvi’s
hardy son strove e’er to
heed and uphold the even-
handed laws made by them.
395. Beware lest wrath thou wax at (28.)
warnings, frankly uttered
by men of wisdom, mainly
meant for thine own honor.

But they lie, worse laws thy
lieges have now, say they,
prince, than which were promised,
previously at Úlf Sound.³

396. Whoever eggs thee, atheling, (29.)
eager for battle—oft thy
blade with blood is red—to
break thy promise given?
Constant a king should e'er be,
keeping his pledges. Nowise
folk-warrior, befits thee
false to be and mainsworn.
397. Whoever eggs thee, atheling, (30.)
to axe the farmers' cattle?
Unheard for hero is't to
harry in his country.
To youthful king such cursed
counsel never was given:
weary of sack thy warriors,
ween I, wrathful the farmers.
398. Guard thee 'gainst the groundless (31.)
gossip of folk which borne is
hitherward—one's hand should,
hanger-of-thieves, move slowly.
A faithful friend is he who,
feeder-of-greedy ravens,
gives thee goodly warning:
the gorge of yeomen has risen!
399. Warning take thou, warlord— (32.)
wise is't to stave off danger—
hoary men of whom I
heard are set against thee;
'tis parlous, prince, if franklins
put their heads together,
suddenly grow silent,
sinking noses cloakward.

400. This they ever think on:
thou, king, takest from them
farmlands that their fathers
farmed: they rise against thee!
Robbery recks it the yeoman,
routed from his freehold
by high-handed rulings
of henchmen, at thy bidding.

(33.)

This warning the king took in good part. Many others also pleaded like words before the king. The result was that the king took counsel with the wisest men, and they agreed on the laws [to be followed]. Thereupon King Magnús ordered the law-book written down which is still kept in Trondheim and is called *Grágás* [Grey Goose].⁴ King Magnús then became popular and beloved of all the people. Because of this he was called Magnús the Good.

Chapter 17. Of the Successors of King Knút

Harald, the king of the English, died five years after the death of Knút the Powerful, his father. He was interred at the side of his father in Winchester. After his death, Hortha-Knút, Harald's brother, another son of Knút the Old, succeeded him on the throne of England. He then was king of both England and the Danish realm. This dominion he ruled for two years. He died from sickness in England and is buried in Winchester by the side of his father. After his death, Eadward the Good was made king of England. He was the son of King Æthelred and Queen Emma, the daughter of Richard, the earl of Rouen. King Eadward was the brother of Harald and Hortha-Knút by the same mother. Gunnhild was the name of the daughter of Knút the Old and Emma. She was married to Emperor Henry [Heinrich] in Saxland [Germany]. He was called Henry the Generous. Gunnhild lived for three years in Saxland before she became sick. She died two years after the demise of King Knút, her father.

Chapter 18. Magnús Succeeds Hortha-Knútt

King Magnús Ólafsson learned of the death of Hortha-Knútt. Thereupon he at once sent his envoys south to Denmark with the message to the men who had bound themselves with oaths, the time the covenant and the special terms were drawn up between Hortha-Knútt and him, and reminded them of their words; and he added that he would right away in the following summer come to Denmark himself with his army; and concluded by saying that he would take possession of the entire Danish realm, according to the covenant and special terms agreed upon, or else fall in combat with his army. Thus says Arnór Jarlaskáld:

401. Powerful the prince's (34.)
parlance—and deeds followed—
as the wilding-wolf-brood's
warlike-sater swore that
ready he was, to ravening
ravens a prey, in grimmest
shield-clash fighting fey to
fall, or else rule Denmark.

Chapter 19. King Magnús Sails to Denmark

Thereupon King Magnús collected his forces. He summoned to him stewards and powerful yeomen and got himself warships. And when these forces came together they proved to be picked men, excellently outfitted. He had seventy ships when he sailed from Norway. Thus says Thjóthólf:

402. Forthwith, fearless, didst thou (35.)
fare to eastward, since that
seventy sailships had been
summoned by thy stewards;
south then foamed they swiftly—
salt waves Ví sund cleft—with
hoisted sails and halyards
holding secret converse.

Here it is mentioned that King Magnús then had [the ship called] the great Bison, which Holy King Ólaf had had built. It had more than thirty seats [for rowers]. On the stem was the head of a bison; on the stern, its tail. The head and tail and both “necks”¹ were all gilded. This is mentioned by Arnór Jarlaskáld:

403. ² Hatefully, the spume and spindrift (36.)
spattered ’gainst the poop and rudder,
gusts of wind did shake the galleys’
gold-decked yard-arms, low them bending,
as you steered past Stafang³ southward
steadfastly—the waters parted—
up above there burned like fire
burnished mastheads—toward Denmark.

King Magnús sailed from Agthir across to Jutland. Thus says Arnór:

404. Say I shall how sailed the (37.)
Sognings’ doughty ruler
Ví sund, listing leeward,
loaded with rime, to Denmark.
His stems then turned the stalwart
strife-awakener—met him
joyfully the gentry—

Jutland-ward to harbor.

Chapter 20. Magnús Is Accepted as King of Denmark

Now when King Magnús arrived in Denmark he was well received. He straightway held an assembly and meetings with the countrymen and asked to be received [as king] as had been agreed upon. And because the chieftains who wielded the greatest power in Denmark were bound by oaths to King Magnús and meant to stay by them, they advocated this strongly before the people. A contributing factor was that Knút the Powerful had passed away and all his progeny were dead; and also, that the sanctity of Holy King Óláf and his miracles had become known in all the lands.

Chapter 21. King Magnús Returns to Norway

Then King Magnús had the Vébjorg¹ Assembly summoned. That is where the Danes choose their kings, both formerly and now. And at this assembly the Danes accepted Magnús Ólafsson as king over all the Danish realm. King Magnús stayed in Denmark for a long time in summer, and all the people received him well and showed him obedience. He set then men over all the country in both hundreds and districts, and gave the revenues to men of eminence. But as autumn approached he returned with his army to Norway and lay anchored in the [Gaut Elf] River for some time.

Chapter 22. Svein Úlfsson Declares Himself King Magnús' Vassal

Svein was the name of the son of Earl Úlf, the son of Thorgils Sprakalegg. Svein's mother was Ástríth, the daughter of King Svein Forkbeard. She was the sister of King Knút the Powerful by the same father and of King Ólaf Eiríksson of Sweden by the same mother. Their mother was Queen Sigríth the Haughty, the daughter of Skoglar-Tósti. Svein Úlfsson had been staying for a long time at the court of the Swedish kings, his relatives, from the time his father, Earl Úlf had fallen—as is written in the story of King Knút the Old, he had his kinsman Úlf killed in Hróiskelda.¹ Because of this, Svein Úlfsson did not stay in Denmark afterwards.

Svein Úlfsson was an exceedingly handsome man. He was of large stature and strong build, the greatest athlete, besides being a man of great intelligence. It was said by all who knew him that he had all the qualities that mark the good leader. Svein Úlfsson came to meet King Magnús when he lay anchored in the [Gaut Elf] River, as was written before. The king received him well. Also there were many who spoke for Svein, for he had a most engaging personality. And he himself pleaded his cause before the king eloquently and shrewdly. The outcome was that Svein declared himself King Magnús' vassal. Then the king and Svein discussed many matters in private.

Chapter 23. Magnús Appoints Svein to Rule Denmark in His Absence

One day when King Magnús sat in his high-seat, and a great many men were about him, Svein Úlfsson sat on the foot-board in front of the king. The king began to speak as follows:

“To the chieftains and all the people I wish to make known the decision which I have come to. To me has come here a most excellent man, both as to family and himself, Svein Úlfsson. He has now become my vassal and has given me assurances as to that. But as you know, all Danes have this summer sworn allegiance to me, and now the land will be without a ruler when I leave it. But as you know also it is much exposed to incursions of the Wends, Kurlanders, and other tribes along the Baltic, as well as of Saxons. Again, I have promised [the Danes] to give them a chieftain for the protection of the land and for governing it. I do not know of any man as well suited for that, in every way, as is Svein Úlfsson. He has the birth to be a chieftain. Now then I shall appoint him my earl and give into his hands the Danish realm, to rule while I am in Norway; just as Knút the Powerful set Earl Úlf, his father, as chieftain over Denmark while he himself was in England.”

Einar Thambarskelfir said, “Too great an earl, too great an earl, foster son!”

Then the king said wrathfully, “Little understanding you think I am showing; but to me it seems that you think some too great to be earls and some, not man enough [to be so].”

Thereupon the king stood up and took a sword and fastened it in Svein’s belt. Then he took a shield and fastened it on his shoulder, and last he set a helmet on Svein’s head and bestowed the title of earl on him, giving him such revenues as Ulf, his father, had had before. Thereupon a shrine with holy reliques was brought before them. Upon it Svein laid his hands and swore allegiance to King Magnús. Thereupon the king led the earl to share his high-seat with him. Of this speaks Thjóthólf in this verse:

405. In proper person Úlf’s son (38.)
pledges gave to Magnús.
Solemn oaths did swear there
Svein, with hands on shrine laid.
Saint Ólaf’s heir drew up
oaths while on the River—

would that his word had not been
worthless—for him to swear to.

Thereupon Earl Svein journeyed to Denmark and was well received there by all the people. He surrounded himself with a bodyguard and soon became a great chieftain. During the winter he travelled widely about the land and made fast friends with men of eminence. He was also popular with the people.

Chapter 24. King Magnús Destroys Jómsborg

King Magnús continued with his forces north to Norway and remained there during the winter. But when spring came, King Magnús collected a large army and proceeded south to Denmark. And when he arrived there he learned that the Wends in Jómsborg had thrown off their allegiance to him. There the kings of Denmark had had a large earldom—it was they who had founded Jómsborg; and it had become a mighty stronghold. But when King Magnús heard this news he summoned a large fleet from Denmark, and in summer proceeded to Wendland with all his forces, and it was a mighty army. Of this Arnór Jarlaskáld speaks in this verse:

406. ¹Hear now how the scion of heroes (39.)
harried on the Wendish folklands,
in this burden; fortune-favored
fared his ships from shipyard rollers;
hardly ever had a ruler
high-born launched more ships—'t was rued by
Wends—the foaming main to furrow,
frosty-prowed—against that folkland.

And when King Magnús arrived in the land of the Wends he steered to Jómsborg and quickly conquered that fortified place. He slew a multitude of people there, burned the fort and [laid waste] the land far and wide, ravaging it severely. About this Arnór Jarlaskáld spoke this verse:

407. Skylding king! With fire then fell you (40.)
furiously upon the heathen,
made great carnage, keen-eyed rapine-
queller, bloody, south by Jómsborg;
heathen hosts durst nowise shield their
halls within the ample breastworks:
fire and hurtling flame, high-blazing,
frightened townsmen, king, awe-stricken.

Many people in Wendish lands offered their submission to King Magnús, but many more fled. Then King Magnús returned to Denmark and prepared his winter quarters there, dismissing his army, both the Danish forces and also those that had come with him from Norway.

Chapter 25. Svein Úlfsson Makes Himself Master of Denmark

The same winter that Svein Úlfsson had received power over all the Danish realm and had established friendly relations with a great number of important persons, he had himself given the title of king; and in this he had the consent of many chieftains. But in the spring, when he learned that King Magnús was coming south from Norway with a large army, Svein betook himself to Scania, and from there to Gotland and to Sweden to his kinsman Emund, the king of Sweden, and remained there with him during the summer, but had spies out in Denmark to warn him of the movements of King Magnús and to learn how great an army he had. And when he learned that King Magnús had dismissed a large part of his army, and also that he himself had gone south to Jutland, then he, Svein, rode down from Sweden together with large forces which the Swedish king had procured for him. And when he arrived in Scania the people there received him well and regarded him as their king. Then a great number of men joined him. Thereupon he proceeded to Seeland and was well received there. He made himself master of all the land. Then he went over to the island of Fjón [Funen] and took possession of all the islands. The people all submitted to him. Svein had a large army and many ships.

Chapter 26. A Wendish Army Invades Denmark

King Magnús learned about those events, and also that the Wends had gathered an army: Then King Magnús collected a large force, and quickly gathered troops from all over Jutland. Then Otto, the duke of Saxony from Brunswick joined him. He had as wife Úlfhild, a daughter of King Saint Ólaf and [thus] a sister of King Magnús. The duke had a large military force. The Danish chieftains urged King Magnús to march against the Wendish army and not let that heathen host overrun the country and lay it waste; and the plan was adopted that the king should lead his army south to Heithabý. Now when King Magnús lay encamped by the Skotborgará River in the Hlýrskógs Heath, his spies brought him news that the Wendish army was near and also, that they had so great a host that no one could count them and that King Magnús could not possibly make head against such a multitude and had no other choice but to flee. Nevertheless King Magnús wanted to do battle if there was any chance of gaining the victory. But most men advised against it, and all were of one mind, that the Wends had an invincible army. But Duke Otto rather urged him to fight them. Then the king had the trumpets blown for all his army to gather, and all men put on their armor and lay under the open sky at night beneath their shields; because they were told that the army of the Wends had come near. And the king was very distressed. It seemed to him an ill chance if he were compelled to flee, because he had never had that experience. He slept little during the night and said his prayers.

Chapter 27. King Magnús' Dream

1043 The next day was Michaelmas Eve [September 28th]. Now toward dawn the king fell asleep and dreamed that he saw Holy King Ólaf, his father, and that he spoke to him: “Are you much distressed now and fearful because the Wends advance against you with a big army? You must not fear the heathen though they be many. I shall be with you in this struggle. Go to battle when you hear my horn.” But when the king awoke he told [the men about him] his dream. Then it was bright daylight. Then all the army heard the ringing of a bell aloft, and those of King Magnús' men who had been in Nitharós thought that it sounded like the pealing of Gloth [Glad]. That was the bell King Ólaf had given the Church of Saint Clement in Kaupang.

Chapter 28. Magnús Defeats the Wends on Hlýrskógs Heath

Then King Magnús arose and ordered the trumpets to be blown for the army to arise. By that time the host of the Wends was advancing toward them over the river. Then all the king's army arose and marched against the heathen. King Magnús cast off his shirt of mail. His outermost garment was a kirtle of red silk. He grasped the battle-axe Hel which had been King Óláf's own. He ran ahead of all the others against the enemy and at once, wielding the axe with both hands, hewed down one man after the other. As Arnór Jarlaskáld:

408. Strode then forth to strife the (41.)
stout-hearted sea-king, with
broad-axe brandished, and doffed his
byrnie, for battle eager.
With both his hands the haft of
Hel he grasped; and Heaven's
Warder—unscathed in skirmish,
skulls he cleft—gave victory.

This battle did not last long. The king's men fought most fiercely. And wherever they met, the Wends fell as thick as waves at high tide, and those who stood in the rear turned to flee and were slaughtered like cattle. The king himself pursued them east over the heath, and the whole heath was strewn with their dead. As Thjóthólf says in this verse:

409. In host, Harald's nephew (42.)
hardy—was the ravens',
starved long, strongest hunger
stilled—foremost of all stood.
Widely, Wends lay scattered.
Was, where Magnús battled
the heath hidden by corpses
hewn down, in several miles' breadth.

It is common report that there never has been as great a carnage in the north lands in Christian times as that of the Wends on Hlýrskógs Heath. But of the army of King Magnús only a few fell though many were wounded. After the battle King Magnús had the wounds of his men dressed, but there were not as many physicians in the army as were needed. Then the king went to the men who to him seemed suitable and felt of their hands. And after he had felt their palms, stroking them, he selected twelve men who seemed to him to have the

softest palms and said that they were to bandage the men's wounds. None of them had ever bandaged wounds before, but they all became most excellent physicians. There were two Icelanders among them, Thorkel Geirason of Lyngar and Atli, the father of Bárth the Black in Selar Dale, and from them are descended many physicians in later times.

After this battle the news of the miracle which King Saint Óláf had performed was spread far and wide in all lands; and all men declared it was in vain for anyone to fight against King Magnús Óláfsson, because King Óláf, his father, stood so close to him that no one could offer him resistance because of that.

Chapter 29. King Magnús Is Victorious over Svein

Thereupon King Magnús marched with his army against Svein, whom he called his earl even though the Danes called him king. King Magnús procured ships and equipped his army. Both sides collected large forces. Many chieftains from Scania, Halland, Funen were in Svein's army, whereas King Magnús had mostly Norwegians and Jutlanders. Then he proceeded with his fleet against Svein. They met before Westland by [the island of] Ré.¹ A great battle was fought there, and it ended with King Magnús winning the victory and Svein being put to flight with great losses. He fled back to Scania for he had a hiding-place in Gautland for refuge when needed. But King Magnús returned to Jutland and had his winter quarters there with a great army, setting a watch over his ships. Of this speaks Arnór Jarlaskáld in this verse:

410. Ready was the ruler at (43.)
Ré to go to battle.
Welsh swords before Westland
wide then reddened Magnús.

Chapter 30. King Magnús Defeats Svein at Árós

Svein Úlfsson at once boarded his ships when he learned that King Magnús had disembarked. He collected all the troops he could and during the winter went about Seeland and Funen and the [other Danish] islands; and toward Yule he proceeded south [north] to Jutland, first sailing to the Limfjord. Many submitted to him there, and from some he took tribute. Others went to join King Magnús. And when King Magnús learned what Svein was about, he proceeded to his ships, accompanied by his Norwegian troops which were then in Denmark, and by some Danish ones, and sailed north along the land. Svein was in Árós [Aarhus] at that time and had a large army. When he learned of the approach of the army of King Magnús he pulled his troops out of the town and prepared for battle.

Now when King Magnús had heard where Svein was and he knew that he was close to him, he called his troops together and spoke to them as follows:

“We have learned now that the earl and his army are close by. I am told he has a large army. I shall now make known to you what my intention is. I shall take the offensive against the earl and do battle with him even though our force is somewhat smaller than his. As before, we shall put our confidence in God himself and in Holy King Óláf, my father. He has several times before given us victory when we went to battle and often had a smaller force than our enemies. Now I want my men to be prepared to advance against them; and as soon as they come near we shall row at them and at once do battle. So let all my men be prepared to fight.”

Thereupon they put on their armor, each preparing himself and his space in the ship for battle. King Magnús’ fleet rowed forward until they caught sight of the earl’s fleet and immediately rowed to the attack. Svein’s men armed themselves and tied their ships together, and at once a hard battle began. As the skald Thjóthólf says in this verse:

411. Clashed the shields of king and (44.)
keen-eyed earl but lately—
broke out bitter play-of-
blades ’twixt sea-glow-keepers,¹
so men could not remember
maid-of-Hethin’s² conflict—
din of darts was made by
dauntless warriors—fiercer.

They fought about the forecastle, so that only those who were there could exchange blows, but those who stood in the space right behind them dealt thrusts with their halberds, while all those who stood farther back hurled thong-javelins, darts, or gaffs. Still others threw stones or other missiles, and those who stood about the mast shot with bows and arrows. This is mentioned by Thjóthólf:

412. Splintering spears, heard I, (45.)
sped fast—wolves on corpses
bloody gorged, bucklers were
battered—in that onset.
Men made use, as most they
might—sword-slain lay many
warriors—waxed the din of
war—of rocks and arrows.

413. Unwearièd, bowmen bent their (46.)
bows to wing keen arrows.
Surely, of shots fell Thronders
short in nowise, that day.
Thong-spèd darts were thrown so
thickly that one could not—
was hail of hissing arrows
heard—e'en see between them.

We are told here how violent the exchange of missiles was. At the beginning of the battle King Magnús first stood in a rampart of shields; but when it seemed to him that the attack was being pushed too slowly he ran from behind the shield-castle and along the length of the ship, calling out aloud and urging his men on, and going to the very front where blows were exchanged. And when his men saw that, everyone egged on his neighbor, and there was great shouting throughout the host. As says Thjóthólf:

414. 'Monished each his mate in (47.)
Magnús' ranks, with briskness—
was their prompting put to
proof—to fall on the enemy.

So the battle raged most fiercely. In that onset the forecastle of Svein's ship and the space in front of the mast were cleared of men. Then King Magnús himself, together with his bodyguard, boarded Svein's ship, and thereupon the king's men, one after the other; and they attacked so sharply that Svein's men gave ground. And then King Magnús cleared that ship of men, and afterwards

one ship after the other. Then Svein fled, and also a large part of his fleet. Many of his men fell, and many others were given quarter. As says Thjóthólf in this verse:

415. The warder-of-keel-wagons³ (48.)
went aboard, unquailing—
famous was that—the foc’sl
fair of Earl Svein’s vessel.
We fought so fewer grew the
followers of the earl there.
Big the booty, as we
boarded and cleared their bottoms.

416. Earl Svein’s fleet, defeated, (49.)
fell back—great the slaughter,
ere the keen-eyed king gave
quarter to the warriors.

1043 This battle was fought on the last Sunday before Yule [December 18].
As says Thjóthólf:

417. Fiercely, heard I, that fray was (50.)
fought—the trees-of-combat⁴
strove in storm-of-Óthin⁵
stoutly—on a Sunday.
Floated, fated to perish,
fey men’s—drowned were many,
cruel carnage fleeing—
corpses on every billow.

King Magnús captured seven of Svein’s ships there. As says Thjóthólf:

418. Cleared then Óláf’s kinsman (51.)
keel-wains seven, and victory
won—scarce will the women
weep at home in Norway.

And stíll further:

419. Lost have Earl Svein’s luckless (52.)
liege-men in storm-of-arrows—

hard was the hail-of-darts—their
home-coming—at Áróf.
Winter storms will stir there
steersmen's skulls and leg bones—
wind-whipped waves o'er dead men
wash—on shelving sand banks.

Svein straightway fled to Seeland in the night with such ships as had escaped and wanted to stay with him. But King Magnús anchored his ships by the land and let his force straightway disembark in the night; and early on the following morning they returned after making a great raid in the countryside. This is mentioned by Thjóthólf:

420. Warrior's heads were hit by (53.)
hard stone-casts but lately—
their battle array was breached and
broken—that crushed their helmets.
Booty great we gathered,
gotten above in Denmark—
reconquer cannot Svein his
country—where we anchored.

Chapter 31. King Magnús Pursues Svein

King Magnús immediately sailed north [south] to Seeland with his fleet in pursuit of Svein. But as soon as King Magnús' fleet arrived, Svein at once fled on land with his army. King Magnús pursued them in their flight and killed those whom they overtook. As says Thjóthólf: (54.)

421. With one voice Seeland's women
wished to know in truth who
bore the banner:¹ many
blood-reddened shields had there.
Fearful, many fled through
forests in mad terror—
fast their feet did carry
fugitives—to Ringstath.

422. All were the earl's shoulders
up to his neck muddy:
Much I marvel if the
master of Lund² can hold out.
But yesterday the darts did
drop o'er swamp and heather
as Svein the strong to sea-coast
slunk with dragging banner.

(55.)



Magnús' men put farms to the torch in Seeland.

Then Svein fled over to the island of Funen, but King Magnús harried in Seeland, burning down far and wide the houses of those who in fall had joined Svein's army. As says Thjóthólf: (56.)

423. Up had the earl to yield his
aim, that winter, of kingship.
Right well didst thou, war-lord,
ward thy country, Magnús.
Risk didst thou, ring-giver,
raging strife 'neath war-shield.
Near to death was Canute's stout
nephew in that battle.

424. Wrathfully didst, Raumers'³
ruler, set all dwellings—
hadst all barns of bonders⁴
burned to gleeds—on fire.
Repay and punish wouldst thou,
prince, with like for like, for
scathe done by them—they scattered,
scuttling—the earl's followers.

(57.)

Chapter 32. King Magnús Ravages Funen

As soon as King Magnús learned where Svein was he sailed with his fleet to Funen. When Svein heard this he took ship at once and landed in Scania, from where he proceeded to Gautland and then to Sweden, to join the king. But King Magnús disembarked on Funen and had his men plunder and burn the estates of many [followers of Svein]. All of them on the island scattered and fled. As says Thjóthólf:

425. Storm winds stir up flames from (58.)
stout oak-rafters blazing.
Furious fires, kindled,
flickering glow in southland.
Houses burn still higher by
half o'er folks on Funen.
Roof and rafters suffer
ruin through the Northmen.

426. Magnús' men ought now be (59.)
mindful to make free with
Svein's warriors' women, having
won three battles against him:
fair ones we shall find in
Funen: redden weapons!
Forward now to fight in
foremost ranks in sword-din!

After that, all people in Denmark submitted to King Magnús. Then there was good peace during the latter part of that winter, and King Magnús appointed his own men to administer all of Denmark. But with approaching spring he proceeded to Norway with his army and remained there a long time during the summer.

Chapter 33. Magnús Defeats Svein in the Battle off Helganes

Now when Svein learned that, he straightway rode down to Scania with a large army he had from Sweden. The people of Scania gave him a good welcome. He increased his army there and thereupon proceeded to Seeland and made himself master of it as well as of Funen and all the other islands. But when King Magnús heard of that he mustered an army and a fleet and then proceeded south to Denmark. He learned where Svein and his fleet lay at anchor, and proceeded against him. The fleets met at Helganes, toward evening (1045). When the battle began, King Magnús had a smaller fleet but larger ships and better equipped. As says Arnór:

427. A headland broad, heard I, (60.)
Helganes is called, where
he-who-well-feeds-wolf-brood
wave-steeds many emptied.
As eve wore on, the ruler
asked us to join battle.
All night the rain-of-rocks did
rage, and warriors went Hel-ward.

The battle was fiercely fought, and as the night wore on there was great carnage. King Magnús threw javelins all night long. As says Thjóthólf:

428. At headland there which high is (61.)
Helganes, Svein's army
whelmed was in the hail-of-
halberds—men drowned wounded.
Thong-spied darts were thrown by
Thronders' famous liege-lord.
Ashen rods he reddened
rapidly toward night-fall.

To be brief about this battle, King Magnús was victorious, and Svein was put to flight. His ship was cleared from stem to stern, and all other ships of Svein were cleared, likewise. As says Thjóthólf:

429. Fled the ill-starred earl from (62.)
emptied warship, fearing
flight barred by the embattled
bold offspring of Ólaf.

Shedded blood did sheathe the
sharp-edged blade of Magnús'
brand, whetted to bite strong
byrnies. He fought for his kingdom.

Arnór says furthermore:

430. From Bjorn's¹ brother took then, (63.)
baleful to Scanings,² Magnús—
thither thronged the warships
thickly—all his vessels.

A great host of Svein's men fell there. King Magnús and his men obtained
much booty. As says Thjóthólf:

431. Buckler good and byrnie (64.)
bore I, by lot gotten—
fierce the din of furious
fighting—from that battle.
Arms fair and feat, as before
I told my leman,
got I where gallant Magnús
gave the Danes a drubbing.

Svein then fled up into Scania, together with all those who managed to get
away; but King Magnús and his army pursued them far into the country, and
little resistance was made by Svein's men and the farmers there. As says
Thjóthólf:

432. Bade then Óláf's heir his (65.)
army to invade the country.
Lusting for battle, the liege-lord
left his ships in harbor.
Brave king had us harry—
here is tumult—in Denmark.
Storm our steeds to eastward,
streaking over Scania.

Thereupon King Magnús had his men harry widely about the countryside. As
says Thjóthólf:

433. Now flock the Norse to follow (66.)
flags, high-borne, of Magnús.

At my side but seldom
sword and shield I carry.
Scuttled the scamps o'er all
Scania in great hurry—
few lands have I found more
fair e'er—south to Lund town.

Then they took to burning down the houses all over the countryside, and the people fled far and wide. As says Thjóthólf:

434. With ice-cold iron we drove the (67.)
earl's followers [southward].
A halt was called to haughty
hopes of Scanings' victory.
Red-blazing fires ravage
rich villagers' houses,
kindled by keen warriors
quickenning this havoc.

435. With flaming firebrands kindled, (68.)
fast the son of Óláf
with war-host great lays waste the
wealth of Danish folklands.
O'er moors of Denmark marching,
men wearily shields bear.
Wounded, Earl Svein's warriors—
Victory ours!—flee before us.

436. Yesteryear our liege-lord (69.)
youthful had his war-host—
truth I tell—on Funen
tread the olden folk-paths.
May the men of Svein scarce
Magnús hinder, fleeing—
this morning, martial banners
many flew—from winning.

Svein then fled east in Scania while King Magnús returned to his ships and proceeded east along the coast of Scania after hurried preparations. Then Thjóthólf spoke this verse:

437. Naught have I now, save this (70.)

nasty sea, to drink of.
From salty sea I take a
swallow on board the king's ship.
Lies now Scania low on
leeshore—greatly have we
labored for our leader;
little fear we the Swedish.

Svein fled to Gautland and then sought out the Swedish king. There he stayed all winter and was accorded a good reception.

Chapter 34. King Magnús Ravages Falster and Funen

King Magnús turned back after subduing Scania, and first went on land in the island of Falster, where he harried and killed many who had supported Svein. This is mentioned by Arnór:

438. Well repaid the prince their (71.)
perfidy to the Danish:
many Falster farmers
felled he then wrathfully.
Heaped he—and his henchmen
helped him not a little—
hills of high-piled slain for
hungry wolves on the island.

Thereupon King Magnús proceeded with his army to the island of Funen where he harried, greatly ravaging the land. As says Arnór:

439. Reddened the ring-sarks'-dye—for (72.)
rapine he repaid them—
fought the folk-lord young on
Fuñen—their bright banners.
Men may not call to mind that
many other leaders
gave equal food to eagles,
aged twenty winters.

Chapter 35. King Magnús' Battles Are Rehearsed

King Magnús resided in Denmark that winter; and good peace prevailed then. He had fought many battles in Denmark and had victory in all. Odd Kíkinaskáld¹ says thus: (73.)

440. Michaelmas before was
murderous battle foughten—
Wends did fall. To war-din
waxed men much accustomed.
At Yule before was fought out
fiercely still another:
savage sword-fight was there
south of Áróf started.

Still further Arnór says: (74.)

441. ²Óláf's avenger, grist thou givest,
glorious ruler, for my poem:
Dew-of-wounds³ thou lettest drink the
dun-hued wolves: I sing thy praises.
Battles four, folk-ruler, hast thou
foughten in one winter, hard ones—
stern art called, destroyer-of-shields—and
storms-of-arrows urged in Denmark.

Three battles King Magnús fought with Svein Ulfsson. As says Thjóthólf:
(75.)

442. With omens goodly urged was
Óthin's-weather⁴ by Magnús.
The vikings'-foe's victory
vaunt I in my poem:
reddened his sword the Raumers'
ruler; in three battles
the upper hand had he,
whelming aye his enemies.

Chapter 36. King Magnús Lays Claim to England

Now then King Magnús ruled over both Denmark and Norway. But when he had taken possession of the Danish realm he sent emissaries west to England. They went to the court of King Eadward and showed him the letter and seal of King Magnús. In his letter there stood, together with the greetings of King Magnús:

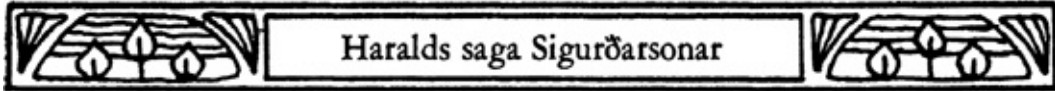
“You will have learned of the agreement made between Hortha-Knútt and me that the one of us who survived the other, if the latter died without a son, should take over the land and subjects of the deceased. Now it has turned out so, as I know you have heard, that I have taken possession of all of the Danish realm as my heritage after Hortha-Knútt. But when he died he had power over England no less than over Denmark. So now I claim England according to our agreement. I desire that you give up your kingdom to me. Otherwise I shall attempt to gain it with the forces both of Norway and Denmark. And then he will govern the land who wins the victory.”

Chapter 37. King Eadward Refuses to Give Up His Kingdom

But when Eadward had read this letter, he made reply as follows:

“All men in this country know that King Æthelred, my father, was entitled by birth to this realm, according to both old and recent covenants. We four were his sons. But when he left us by death, Eadmund, my brother, took over the power and the realm, because he was the oldest of us brothers. Therewith I was well pleased, the while he lived. After him, King Knút, my stepfather, took possession of the kingdom. And while he lived it was not easy to lay claim to the throne. After him, Harald, my brother, ruled during his lifetime. But when he died, my brother, Hortha-Knút governed Denmark; and it was thought the right and proper division between us brothers that he should be king both over England and Denmark. But I had no kingdom to govern. Now he has died; and it was the counsel of all men in this country to have me as king here in England. But during the time I did not have princely rank, I served those above me without any more overbearing than they who had no hereditary claims to kingship. Now I have been consecrated king of this country with as complete authority as had my father before me. And I shall not give up this title while I live. But if King Magnús comes here with his army, I shall gather no army against him, and he may then take possession of England after depriving me of my life. Tell him these my words.”

Thereupon the messengers returned to King Magnús and reported to him what they had heard. The king answered slowly in this wise: “I consider it best and most fitting to let King Eadward have his kingdom in peace, so far as I am concerned, and to hold on to the one which God has permitted me to possess.”



The Saga of Harald Sigurtharson [Hardruler]

Chapter 1. Harald Escapes from the Battle of Stiklarstathir

Harald, the son of Sigurth Sýr, brother of King Saint Óláf by the same mother, was at the battle of Stiklarstathir where Holy King Óláf was slain. Harald was wounded and escaped with others who took to flight; as says Thjóthólf:

443. Heard have I that near to (76.)
Haug did rage the shield storm;
by his brother stood, though,
Bulgary's-destroyer.¹
Parted from his peerless
prince he, all unwilling—
fifteen years the youth then—
beyond the woods to hide him.

Rognvald Brúsason helped Harald to escape from the battle and led him to a certain farmer who lived in the forest far from other people. There Harald was healed, and stayed till he was entirely recovered. Then the son of the farmer accompanied him on the way east of the Keel. They took to paths in the woods, avoiding, as far as possible, the commonly travelled roads. The farmer's son did not know whom he was following. And when they were riding through some wild woods, Harald spoke this verse:

444. Through endless woods I wend my (77.)
way now, honored little.
Who knows but my name will be
noised abroad hereafter?

He journeyed east through Jamtaland and Helsingjaland till he came to Sweden. There he found Earl Rognvald Brúsason and many others of King Óláf's men who had escaped from the battle.

Chapter 2. Harald Repairs to Gartharíki and to Miklagarth

In the following spring they procured for themselves a ship and in summer travelled to Gartharíki to the court of King Jarizleif and stayed there during the winter. As says Bolverk:¹

445. Bold prince! Blood didst wipe from (78.)
brand ere leaving combat:
You filled the ravens with flesh of
fallen—wolves howled in forests.
Passed then—of more peerless
peace-destroyer² not heard I
ever speak—the atheling
east, next year, to Garthar.

King Jarizleif made Harald and his followers welcome. Harald became chieftain of the men charged with the defence of the country, as did Eilíf, the son of Earl Rognvald. As says Thjóthólf: (79.)

446. ³ The same was done
by Rognvald's son:
in phalanx taut
both chieftains fought
East-Wends, pent tight
in sorry plight;
to Poles hard driven
harsh terms were given.

Harald remained several years in Gartharíki and made forays in the eastern Baltic. Later, he proceeded to Greece with a great host of men, all the way to Miklagarth [Byzantium]. As says Bolverk: (80.)

447. Fresh gales drove our gallant
galley scurrying shoreward—
with armored prows and poops our
proud ships rode to harbor.
Of Miklagarth the golden
gables our famous prince saw.
Many a mere-ship fair-dight
moved toward the high-walled city.

Chapter 3. Harald Becomes the Leader of the Varangians

At that time there ruled over the Greek Empire Queen Zóë¹ the Powerful together with Michael Kátalactús. And when Harald arrived in Byzantium and had had a meeting with the queen he took military service with her and right away in fall sailed with some galleys together with the fleet into the Greek Sea. Harald had command over a troop of his own men. The leader over the fleet was called Gyrgir [Georgios]. He was a kinsman of the queen. Harald had joined the expedition but a short time before the Varangians² became greatly attached to him, so they all fought together in battles. And at last Harald became the leader of all Varangians. Gyrgir and his fleet sailed widely about the Greek islands, making war upon the corsairs.

Chapter 4. Harald Outwits Gyrgir

Once, when they had been marching overland and were about to choose night quarters near some forest, the Varangians had arrived first at the spot where they intended to camp for the night and had chosen for their tents the places which had the best and highest location; for the land there is swampy, and when the rains come it is bad to be camped in low places. Then Gyrgir, the general of the army, arrived and when he saw where the Varangians had pitched their tents he commanded them to leave that place and camp somewhere else, saying that he wanted to pitch his tent there. Harald answered him thus:

“Whenever you are the first to arrive at night quarters, then you choose the location for camping, and then we pitch our tents somewhere else to suit ourselves. Do this now, you too, and pitch your tent where you will, in some other place. It was my impression that it was the privilege of the Varangians here in the empire of the Greek kings to be free and independent of everyone in all respects, owing service only to the king and the queen.”

They quarrelled about this with great heat, and it went so far that both parties armed themselves and were ready to fight. Then the wisest men intervened and parted them, saying that it would be better for them to come to an agreement about this and arrive at a clear understanding, so that there would be no occasion in the future for an argument. A meeting was arranged with the best and wisest men to judge between them. At that meeting, following their counsel, all were agreed that Greeks and Varangians should cast lots as to who was to be first in riding or rowing or choosing a berth in harbor or selecting a place for pitching their tents. And each side was to be satisfied with the outcome.

Thereupon the lots were made ready and marked. Then Harald said to Gyrgir, “I want to see how you mark your lot, so that we don’t mark them the same way.” This Gyrgir did. Then Harald marked his lot and threw it into the bag, as did Gyrgir.

The man who was to draw the lots took one between his fingers and held it up, saying, “These shall be first to ride, to row, to choose a berth in harbor, and to select a place for pitching their tents.”

Harald grabbed his hand with the lot, threw it into the sea, and said, “That was our lot.”

Gyrgir said, “Then why didn’t you let others see it?”

“Look at the one left,” said Harald, “and you will recognize your mark.”

Then they looked at that lot, and all saw it bore Gyrgir’s mark. So it was

Then they looked at that lot, and all saw it bore Gyrfil's mark. So it was decided that the Varangians should have the first choice in all matters under dispute. There were several matters on which they could not agree, and the end was that Harald always had his way.

Chapter 5. Harald Gains Great Possessions in Africa

During the summer the whole army harried [in the countryside]. Whenever the whole army was together, Harald had his men keep away from battle or, at least, stay where there was least danger, saying that he wished to avoid losing his men. But when his troop was alone, he gave himself to fighting so furiously that he would either be victorious or else die. Thus it often happened that when Harald led he won the victory whilst Gyrgir did not. The soldiers took note of this and said they would have more success if Harald alone was general of the whole army; and they reproached the commander that neither he nor his men showed any efficiency.

Gyrgir said that the Varangians refused to support him, and requested them to turn elsewhere and let him and the remainder of the army achieve what they could. Thereupon Harald left the army together with the Varangians and the Latin men.¹ Gyrgir then proceeded with his army of Greeks, and it became apparent then who was most effective. Harald always was victorious and won booty, but the Greeks returned to Miklagarth, excepting the young men who wanted to gain riches. They joined Harald and chose him as their general. He proceeded with his army west to Africa, which the Varangians call Serkland [Saracen Land], and there he increased his strength greatly. In Saracen Land he gained possession of eighty cities. Some surrendered, some he took by force. Thereupon he proceeded to Sicily. As says Thjóthólf:

448. Taken were twice forty (81.)
towns—oft risked his life the
youthful glow-red gold-rings'-
giver—in land of Saracens,
ere the hardy hero
Hild's-dire-game, to Saracens
baleful, buckler-shielded
brought to level Sicily.

Thus says Illugi Bryndœlaskáld:²

449. Mighty Michael didst make (82.)
master—his kin, Atli³
to him invited, heard we—
Harald, over Southlands.

Here we are told that Michael was king over the Greek Empire at that time.

Harald remained many years in Africa and acquired great quantities of chattels—gold, and all kinds of valuable things. But all the property thus acquired which he did not need for his living expenses he sent by trusty men north to Hólmgarth for King Jarisleif to keep and safeguard; and an immense amount of treasure accumulated thus, as was to be expected, seeing that he harried in that part of the world which is richest in gold and treasure, and also considering his achievements, having as was stated truthfully before, conquered eighty strongholds.

Chapter 6. Harald Gains a City by a Stratagem

Now when Harald came to Sicily he harried there and with his army laid siege to a great and populous fortified city. He surrounded the place, because it had strong walls, so that it seemed unlikely that he could break them down. The townspeople had sufficient victuals and other things required to resist a siege. Then Harald hit upon this stratagem: he let his fowlers catch little birds which had their nests in the city and tie plane shavings of resinous pine soaked with molten wax and sulphur on their backs, to which he set fire. When liberated, all the birds at once flew into the city to seek their young and the nests they had under the thatches of reed or straw. And then the fire spread from the birds to the house-thatches; and though each single one carried but little fire, it soon grew to a conflagration, since many birds carried it all about the thatches of the city; and soon one house after the other began to burn till the whole city was aflame. Then all the people came out of the city and begged for mercy—the very same who many a day had spoken overbearingly and scornfully about the Greek army and its generals. Harald gave all those quarter who asked for it, and made himself master of that city.

Chapter 7. Harald Digs a Tunnel to Overcome a City

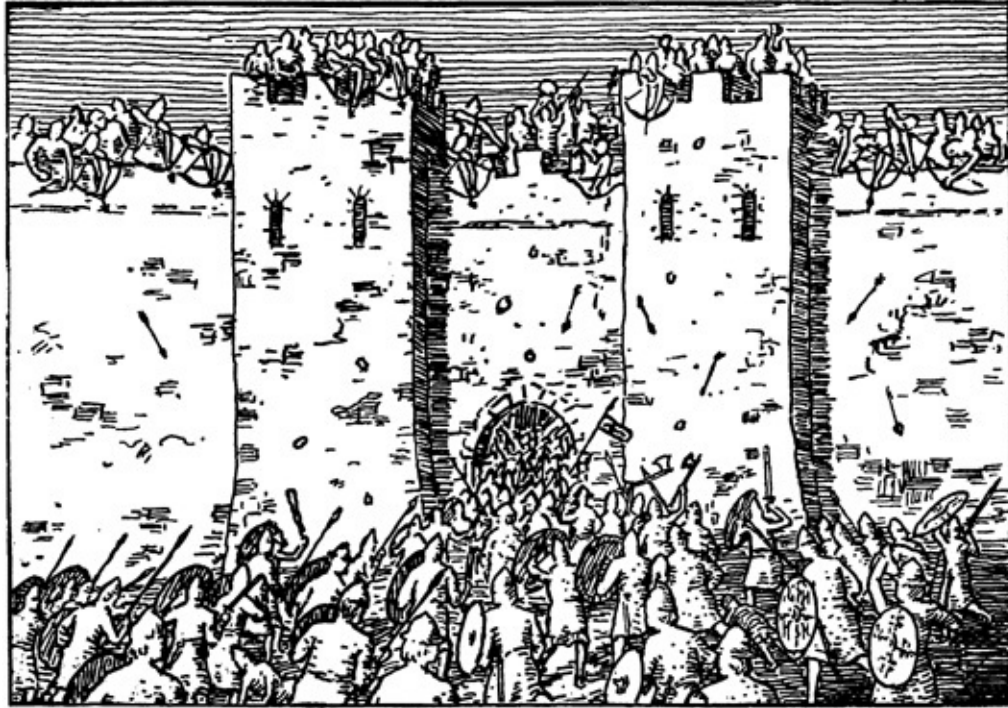
There was another fortified town to which Harald laid siege. It was both populous and strong, so that they could not expect to break it down, [especially] seeing that it was surrounded by a flat, hard plain. Then Harald began to dig an underground passage from a place where a creek flowed in a deep gorge so that one could not see down into it from the stronghold. They dumped the earth [they excavated] into the water, and let the current carry it away. They kept at this work both day and night, in shifts. But the army every day went up to the castle, and the garrison stood behind their ramparts, and they shot at each other. But at night both sides slept. When Harald judged that the underground passage had reached to within the castle wall he ordered his army to be ready for battle. It was toward daybreak when they entered the passage. And when they reached the end of it they began to dig over their heads until they came to stones laid in lime. That was the flooring of a stone hall. Then they broke through the floor and went up into the hall. There they found many townsmen who were eating and drinking there; and it was for them a most unforeseen calamity, because the Varangians attacked them with drawn swords, killing some, while others fled who could. The Varangians pursued them, and some seized the castle gates and undid them, letting in the whole army. When they entered the stronghold the townsfolk fled, but many asked for mercy, and all who surrendered were given quarter. In this fashion Harald took possession of the town and won immense booty.

Chapter 8. A Third Stronghold Defies Harald

They came to a third stronghold, the largest and strongest of them all, and also the richest and most powerfully garrisoned. About this stronghold there were moats so large that they saw they could not win the place with wiles as they did the other ones. They lay before it a very long time without accomplishing anything. But when the people in the stronghold saw that, they became quite bold. They placed their men on the battlements and then opened up the castle gates, shouting at the Varangians, daring them to come into the stronghold, and taunting them and saying that they couldn't fight any more than chickens. Harald asked his men to behave as though they did not know what they said. "We shall not accomplish anything," he said, "even though we assault their stronghold. They can shoot at us from above, and though we might get into the stronghold with some troops, they have the power to lock in those they want to, and lock others out, because they have set guards over all the gates. We shall make no less game of them and let them see that we are not afraid of them. Let our men go forward as far as possible on the level ground before the fortress, yet be careful not to come within range of their arrows. Let all our men go unarmed and play games and let the men in the stronghold see that we are not concerned about their array." And thus it went on for several days.

Chapter 9. Harald Forces the Castle Gate

Mention is made of two Icelanders who were in Harald's army. One was Halldór, a son of Snorri Gothi [the Priest]—he brought this account to Iceland; the other, Úlf, the son of Óspak, the son of Ósvífr the Wise. Both men were of great strength and valor and were dear friends of Harald. Both took part in the games. Now when things had gone on this way for several days, the men of the fortress wanted to show still greater hardihood and went up on the fortress walls unarmed, leaving the gates of the stronghold open. But when the Varangians saw that, one day, they went to the games with their swords under their cloaks and their helmets under their hoods. When they had disported themselves for a while they saw that the men of the fortress were off their guard. Then they quickly brandished their swords and ran toward the gate. But when the men of the fortress saw that, they made a courageous stand, fully armed, and there was a battle in the castle gate. The Varangians had no means for protecting themselves except that they wrapped their mantles around their left arm. Some were wounded, some fell, and all were in great danger. Harald and those who were in the camp with him came up to support his men. But the men of the fortress had by that time gone on the castle wall and shot and threw stones down on them. A hard battle ensued. Those [Varangians] inside the castle gate thought there was more delay in helping them than they could have wished. When Harald arrived at the castle gate his standard bearer fell. Then he said, "Halldór, you take up the banner!"



Harald storms a walled city.

Halldór, taking up the standard, answered rather unwisely, “Who would bear your standard if you do your part so timidly as you have been doing?” These were words of anger rather than the truth, for Harald was the most valiant of men. Then they forced their way into the stronghold. There was the fiercest battle, but in the end Harald won the victory and took the fortress. Halldór was severely wounded with a great wound in his face, and that blemish disfigured him for life.

Chapter 10. Harald Wins a Fourth City by Shamming Death

The fourth stronghold Harald came to with his army was larger than all those spoken of before. It was also so strong that they saw no hope of taking it. So they laid siege to it, to prevent any supplies being brought into it. Now after they had camped there but a little time, Harald fell ill, so that he had to take to his bed. He had his tent pitched at some distance from the other encampment, because he felt it to be more restful not to hear the noise and uproar of the troops. His men often went to and from his tent for advice. The people in the stronghold observed that something had happened among the Varangians. So they sent out spies to find out what it was. And when these spies returned to the stronghold, they were able to report that the chieftain of the Varangians was sick and that this was the reason no attack was made on the city. And when things had gone on this way for a while, Harald's strength failed him. Then his men became very sad and downcast. All this was learned by the citizens. And finally Harald wasted away so greatly that his death was noised abroad through his army. Thereupon the Varangians had a parley with the townsmen and told them of the death of their chieftain and asked the priests to let him be interred in the fortress. But when the townsmen heard this, many who ruled over cloisters or other great churches in the city all wanted to have the body interred in their churches, because they knew that rich donations could be expected. So all the priests clad themselves in their vestments and went out of the city with shrines and holy relics and formed a fine procession. The Varangians also prepared a great funeral. The coffin was borne on high, covered with costly cloths, and with many banners borne over it. But when the coffin was carried in past the castle gate they set down the bier across the open castle gate. Thereupon the Varangians sounded a war blast with all their trumpets and bared their swords. Then all the army of the Varangians rushed out of their camp fully armed and ran toward the stronghold with shouts and whooping. But the monks and other clerics who had issued for this funeral procession and had vied with each other to be the first and foremost to come out and receive the offerings, now were more eager by half to run away from the Varangians, because they slew all of those nearest to them, whether priest or layman. And the Varangians went through the whole city, killing the men, plundering all the churches, and taking immense booty.

Chapter 11. Of Harald's Eighteen Battles

Harald for many years took part in the campaign just described, both in Serkland [Saracen Land] and in Sicily. After that he returned to Miklagarth with that army and remained there for a little while before starting out for Jerusalem Land. Then he left behind him there the payment in gold for his military services for the Greek king, and so did all Varangians who had been in this expedition with him. It is said that in all these campaigns Harald fought eighteen great battles. As says Thjóthólf:

450. All have heard that Harald (83.)
had—oft the folk-leader
urged the storm-of -arrows—
eighteen fierce-fought battles.
Glorious king! With gore the
grey eagles' talons you did
redden, wherever you harried,
home ere that you journeyed.

Chapter 12. Harald Bathes in the Jordan River

Harald proceeded with his army to Jerusalem Land and then overland to Jerusalem itself. And wherever he went all castles and strongholds surrendered to him. Thus says the skald Stúf,¹ who had heard the king himself tell about these events:

451. Wended, weapon-bold, the warrior out from Greek-land—
to follow him that folk was fain—Jerusalem-ward.
Unburned also, because of awe of his power, was the Holy Land handed to him.
*Harald's soul, we pray, shall.*² (84.)

Here we are told that this land came into Harald's power unburned and unharried. Then he journeyed to the Jordan River and bathed in it, as is the custom of other palmers. Harald made great gifts to our Lord's sepulchre as well as to the Holy Cross and other sacred places in Jerusalem Land. He rendered the road safe all the way to the Jordan River and killed robbers and other disturbers of the peace. As says Stúf:

452. Held good Harald's angry hest, the Egthir's³ ruler's,
on both the banks of Jordan—
bad men's wiles it stopped short.
But for taunts and treachery
trounced them thoroughly the stern folk-warder straightway.
Stay with Christ forever. (85.)

Thereupon he returned to Miklagarth.

Chapter 13. Harald Is Imprisoned by the Greek Emperor

Once back in Miklagarth from Jerusalem Land, Harald felt the desire to return to the North and his own ancestral possessions. He had learned that Magnús, the son of Óláf, had become king of Norway and also of Denmark. So he gave up service for the Greek king. But when Queen Zóë learned of this she became enraged and accused him of having misappropriated the property of the Greek king which Harald had acquired on these expeditions when chieftain over his army.

Máría was the name of a beautiful young maiden. She was the daughter of Queen Zóë's brother. Harald had asked for the hand of this maiden, but the queen had forbidden it. According to Varangians who had served as soldiers in Miklagarth and returned to Iceland, it was said by well-informed men there that Queen Zóë herself wished to marry Harald and that this was the chief reason for her accusation of Harald when he desired to leave Miklagarth, though the people were given another reason. At that time Konstantínus Mónomákús¹ was the king of the Greeks. He ruled together with Queen Zóë. For the reasons alleged, the king of Greece had Harald taken prisoner and put into a dungeon.

Chapter 14. Harald Blinds the Greek Emperor

But when Harald approached the prison, Holy King Óláf appeared to him, saying that he would succor him. On the street there a chapel was built later and consecrated to King Óláf, and that chapel has stood there ever since. The prison was made in such fashion that it was a high tower, open above, with a door leading into it from the street. Harald was locked in there, and with him, Halldór and Úlf.

In the following night a certain lady of high degree came to the top of the prison, having climbed the tower with ladders, together with two servants of hers. They let down a rope into the dungeon and pulled them up by it. This woman, Holy King Óláf had healed, and he had appeared to her and told her that she should free his brother from prison. Then Harald at once went to the Varangians, and they all arose and bade him welcome. Thereupon all the army took their weapons and went to the bedchamber of the king. They made him prisoner and put out both his eyes. As says Thórarin Skeggjarson¹ in his *drápa*:

453. Gained e'en more of the glow-red (86.)
gold our valiant chieftain.
With eyes destroyed, stone-blind
stared the Greek lands' liege-lord.

So says also the skald Thjóthólf:

454. On both eyes blinded was then— (87.)
baleful strife was started—
Greekland's great lord by the
greedy-wolf-brood's-sater.
Over in the East, an
ill mark Norway's ruler,
Magnús' kinsman, made on
mainsworn Greek king's countenance.

In these two *drápas* in honor of Harald, and in many other poems about him, it is mentioned that Harald put out the eyes of the very emperor of the Greeks. They might have named a duke or count or some other man of princely rank as having done it if they knew that to be more true. But Harald himself told this story, as did the other men who were with him there.

Chapter 15. Harald Escapes with Princess Mária

That same night Harald and his men went to the house where Mária slept and took her away by force. Then they went to the place where the galleys of the Varangians were anchored. They captured two of them and rowed out into the Golden Horn,¹ and when they came to where iron chains were stretched across the entrance of the harbor Harald ordered the men on both vessels to take to their oars; and those who did not row were to run back to the stern, each with his sleeping bag in hand. So they ran the galleys up on the iron chains. And as soon as they were fast and the momentum was spent, Harald ordered them all to run forward. Then the galley on which Harald was, plunged forward and through this teetering slid down from the iron chain; but the other galley hung fast on the chain and broke in two, and many drowned there while some were rescued. In this fashion Harald escaped from Miklagarth and sailed into the Black Sea. But before leaving the land he put the maiden ashore, giving her a goodly retinue back to Miklagarth. He bade her tell Zóë, her kinswoman, just how much power she had over him and [ask her] whether the queen's power would have been able to prevent him from taking the maiden. Then he sailed north to Ellipaltar,² and from there he travelled all through the eastern realm. On this journey Harald composed humorous verses, sixteen altogether,³ with one refrain for them all. One of them is as follows: (88.) 455. On Sea of Sicily we

sailed in stately fashion—
sharp-cut, moved our shapely
ship, full-manned with warriors.
Scarce would cowards care to
come, I ween, where we did.
*Yet the gold-ring-Gerth⁴ from
Garthar lets me dangle.*

With this he referred to Ellisif, the daughter of King Jarizleif in Hólmgarth.

Chapter 16. Harald Collects Much Treasure

When Harald arrived in Hólmgarth, King Jarizleif welcomed him most heartily. He remained there during the winter, taking into his own keeping all the gold he had before sent there from Miklagarth, together with much other treasure. Altogether it was more than had ever been seen in the North in one man's property. Harald had been in "*pólútasvarf*"¹ three times whilst in Miklagarth. It is a custom there that every time the Greek emperor dies the Varangians are permitted to have "*pólútasvarf*." Then they are free to go through all the *pólútir* of the emperor where are kept his treasures, and every one may then freely help himself to whatever he lays his hands on.

Chapter 17. Harald Marries Ellisif and Sails to Sweden

That winter King Jarizleif married his daughter to Harald. Her name was Elizabeth, whom Northmen call Ellisif. Witness Stúf the Blind:

456. Kinship won the keen-eyed (89.)
king which he had wished,
gold a-plenty as guerdon
gained he, and eke the princess.

In the spring following he journeyed from Hólmgarth to Aldeigjuborg. There he got himself ships and in summer sailed west, turning first to Sweden, and anchored in Sigtúna. As says Valgarth á Velli:¹

457. Laden with fairest load, you (90.)
launched your swift ship, Harald,
carrying gold from Garthar—
glory came to you—westward.
You steered in stormy weather,
stalwart chief—ships wallowed
deep—through spray and spindrift
speeding, till you saw Sigtún.

Chapter 18. Harald Allies Himself with Svein

There, Harald encountered Svein Úlfsson. He had fled from King Magnús that fall, after the battle off Helganes. And when they met they were greatly pleased. Óláf Sænski [the Swedish], King of Sweden, was the grandfather of Ellisif, Harald's wife; and Ástríth, Svein's mother, was the sister of King Saint Óláf. Harald and Svein entered into an alliance with each other and made firm agreements. All Swedes were friends of Svein, because most of his kinsmen dwelled there. And so all Swedes became friends and followers of Harald. Many important personages were bound to him there by ties of marriage. As says Thjóthólf:

458. Your oaken keel from the east the (91.)
angry billows parted.
Since that time, all Swedes did,
scion of Óláf, aid thee.
Gales fell on gold-laden
galley soaked with salt sea,
leeward leaning strongly,
luffing under broad sail.

Chapter 19. Harald and Svein Harry in Denmark

Afterwards they procured ships, Harald and Svein, and soon a large force collected; and when it was equipped they sailed west to Denmark. As says Valgarth:

459. Shoved out for you a ship was, (92.)
shield-surrounded, battle-
eager Yngvi-scion, your
own to win, from Sweden.
High, then, to mast's head you
hoisted the sail as you
scudded past level Scania,
scaring women, near Denmark.

First they landed in Seeland with their fleet and harried and burned there far and wide. Then they made for Funen, went up on shore, and plundered there. As says Valgarth:

460. Harrying, Harald, thou didst (93.)
havoc spread—the wolves on
bloody battle-slain then
battened—in all of Seeland.
With strong force you fell on
Funen and did to helmets—
shredded were there shapely
shields galore—great damage.

461. Bright fire houses burned and (94.)
barns, south of Roskilde.
Toppled farms in flames the
fierce urger-of-combat.
Hel did life withhold from
hapless countrymen, while
hosts of fear-crazed franklins
fled to the woods in silence.

462. Down-cast, away drifted (95.)
Danes who lived still, scattered
in flight, while fair maidens
fell into our power.

With fetters fastened, women
followed you down to your vessels;
cut chafing chains the flesh of
chattel maidens cruelly.

Chapter 20. Harald and Magnús Advance Against One Another

In the fall after the battle of Helganes King Magnús Ólafsson had sailed north to Norway. Then he heard the tidings that Harald Sigurtharson, his kinsman, had arrived in Sweden, and also, that he had allied himself with Svein Úlfsson, and with a large fleet intended to conquer Denmark and afterwards, Norway. King Magnús thereupon levied ships and men from Norway and soon had gathered a large fleet together. Then he heard that Harald and Svein had invaded Denmark, burning and laying waste everything, and that the people were submitting to them. It was said also that Harald was larger and stronger than any other man, and so clever that nothing was impossible for him and that he always was victorious, wherever he fought; also that he was so rich in gold that no one ever had seen the like of it. Thus says Thjóthólf:

463. Little hope have land-folk— (96.)
lies the fleet before anchor—
fearful are they to face their
foes—to live in peace now.
Martial Magnús from northward
musters his roller-horses
whilst from the south his sea-steeds
Sigurth's son makes ready.

Chapter 21. Magnús Agrees to Share the Kingdom with Harald

King Magnús councillors advised him that they considered it most unfortunate if he and his kinsman Harald were to enter into hostilities with one another. Many offered to try to have them come to an agreement and the king was persuaded to let them try. So some were detailed to travel by a swift boat as fast as possible south to Denmark. Those who were selected for this errand were Danes in whom King Magnús had complete confidence, and they were to bring this matter up before Harald. This was done with the utmost secrecy. But when Harald learned that King Magnús, his kinsman, would offer him terms, of partnership according to which Harald was to have one half of Norway and Magnús the other, against sharing each other's treasure [then Harald agreed to that].¹ And this covenant was brought back to King Magnús.

Chapter 22. Harald and Svein Fall Out

A short while thereafter, one evening Harald and Svein talked with one another at table. Svein asked Harald what possessions of his he valued most highly. He answered that it was his banner "Land-Destroyer." Thereupon Svein asked what virtue it had to be accounted so valuable. Harald replied that it was prophesied that victory would be his before whom this banner was borne; and added that this had been the case ever since he had obtained it. Thereupon Svein said, "I shall believe that your flag has this virtue if you fight three battles with King Magnús, your kinsman, and are victorious in all."

Harald answered rather angrily, "I am aware of the kinship between Magnús and myself even though you had not reminded me of it; and I would say that it would be more seemly for us two to meet otherwise than as enemies."

Svein changed color and said, "Some say, Harald, that you have been known to keep only that part of an agreement which suits your purpose best."

Harald answered, "Most likely you know of fewer occasions when I didn't keep my agreements than I know King Magnús is likely to remember that you kept with him."

Then each went his way. In the evening, when Harald went to sleep in the poop of his ship he said to his page, "Now I shall not lie in my bunk tonight, because I have a suspicion that there may be some treachery afoot. This evening I saw that my kinsman grew very angry at my frank speech. I want you to keep watch tonight to see if anything happens here." Then Harald went to sleep in some other place, and placed a log of wood in his bunk. In the night a boat approached the poop. A man climbed up and ripped open the tent-covering over it, stepped up to Harald's bunk, and with a big axe hewed into it so that it stood fast in the wood. Then the man immediately jumped into his boat in the pitch-black night and rowed away; but the axe was left behind as evidence of the deed, standing fast in the wood. Then Harald woke up his men to show them what treachery they had been exposed to. "We can see by that," he said, "that we shall have no support in Svein-here so soon as he contemplates treachery against us. So it might be wisest for us to get away from here while we have the chance. Let us now unfasten our ships and row away stealthily." So they did, and during the night rowed north along the land. They sailed day and night till they encountered King Magnús where he lay anchored with his fleet. Then Harald went to meet his kinsman, King Magnús, and their meeting was most cordial, as says Thjóthólf:

464. With keen oaken keels you
cleft, famed prince, the waters—
the trim ships severed salty
seas—westward to Denmark.
Offered thee, thereafter,
Óláf's son—methinks that
whole-heartedly they met—the
half of lands and liegemen.

(97.)

Thereupon the kinsmen discussed matters between them, and all went in a conciliatory fashion.

Chapter 23. King Magnús Stipulates Superior Rights

King Magnús with his fleet lay anchored near land and had his tents erected up on land. He then invited his kinsman, Harald, to his table, and Harald came to the banquet with sixty men. It was a very noble banquet. And as the day wore on, King Magnús entered the tent where Harald sat. Men accompanied him, bearing weapons and garments. The king went up to the man farthest down at the table and gave him a good sword, to another, a shield, and so on, garments or weapons or gold—and more valuable things to those of greater distinction. Last of all, he approached Harald, his kinsman, and had in his hand two reeds. He said, “Which of these reeds would you have?”

Then Harald answered, “The one nearest to me.”

Then King Magnús said, “With this reed I give you half of the Norwegian realm, with all the imposts, levies, and all properties thereto appertaining; with this stipulation that you shall be king in Norway in all places, having the same rights as I. But when we are both together, then I shall be first, in salutation, services, and seating. And if there are three men of princely rank present, then I shall occupy the middle seat. I shall have the king’s berth in harbor and the king’s pier. You are also to support and strengthen our realm, against my raising you to that position in Norway which I thought no one would have while I was above ground.”

Thereupon Harald arose and thanked him properly for the honor and glory conferred on him. Then both were seated and in excellent spirits all that day. In the evening Harald and his men repaired to their ship.

Chapter 24. Harald Shares His Treasures with Magnús

The morning after, King Magnús had the trumpets blown to call an assembly for all his forces. And when they were come together, King Magnús announced to all his men the gift he had bestowed on his kinsman Harald. Thórir of Steig gave Harald the title of king at this assembly. On the same day King Harald invited King Magnús to his table. In the course of the day, accompanied by sixty of his men, he went to King Harald's tent where the banquet was prepared. Then both kings were seated together, and the banquet was a noble one, with excellent food and drink. Both kings were cheerful and in good spirits. Now as the day wore on, King Harald had a great many bags carried into the tent, and also garments, and weapons, and other valuable things. These things he distributed among the followers of King Magnús who were in the tent. Then he had the bags opened, and said to King Magnús, "Yesterday you gave us a large realm, which you had earlier won from your and my enemies, and granted me to have it in common with you. That was well done, because you labored greatly to gain it. Now I, for my part, I have been in foreign lands, and have indeed also been in some dangerous situations before acquiring the gold which you see here. This, I give for co-partnership with you. Let us two own this property in equal parts just as we have, each of us, half of the kingdom of Norway. I know that our natures differ. You are by far more generous than I. Let us then divide this treasure equally between us, and let then each do with it as he will."

Thereupon Harald had a large ox-hide spread and poured the gold from the bags out on it. Then scales and weights were brought and the valuables weighed in the balance and divided by weight; and it seemed marvellous to all who saw it that so much gold should have been got together in one place in the North. As a fact it was really the property and treasure of the emperor of Greece where, as all say, there is red gold by the houseful.

The two kings were now in excellent spirits. A goblet was produced then as big as a man's head. King Harald took hold of this goblet and said; "Where is the gold, kinsman Magnús, to match this knob-head?"

Then King Magnús answered, "There have been so many hostilities and such great levies [for me] that I have given you nearly all the gold and silver which were in my keeping. Now I have no more in my possession than this ring," and took the ring and gave it to Harald.

He looked at it and said; "That is little gold, kinsman, for a king who has two kingdoms; and yet some might doubt whether you own this ring."

Then King Magnus said gravely, "If this is not my ring by rights, then I don't know what is my own by rights; because Holy King Ólaf, my father, gave me this ring when last we parted."

Then King Harald answered, laughing, "You say truly, King Magnús: your father gave you the ring. That ring he took from my father for little cause. But that is true, too, that petty kings fared badly when your father was most powerful."

King Harald gave Steigar-Thórir a maple-wood bowl at this banquet. It was encircled with silver bands, with a silver handle on top, all gilded, and filled with coins of pure silver. In addition he gave him two gold rings, weighing eight ounces together. He also gave him his cloak which was of dark purple with white fur, and promised him great honor and friendship. Thorgils Snorrason said that he saw the altar cloth which was made of this cloak; and Guthríth the daughter of Guthorm, the son of Steigar-Thórir, affirmed that her father Guthorm owned that bowl. As says Bolverk:

465. To goodly land was given thee, (98.)
gladsome prince,¹ the title
when that met thee Magnús—
matched by thee with treasure.
Close the accord you two
kinsmen reached peacefully;
whereas Svein could sithen
solely look for conflict.

Chapter 25. Magnús Has Custody of the Reliques of Saint Óláf

King Magnús and King Harald both ruled Norway in the winter following their agreement, and both had their own bodyguards. During the winter they went about the district of Uppland on their journeys of state, sometimes together, sometimes separately. They progressed as far as the district of Trondheim and the town of Nitharós. King Magnús had had custody of the reliques of Saint Óláf ever since his return to Norway. He had cut Saint Óláf's hair and clipped his nails every twelve months, and kept the key to the shrine. Many kinds of miracles happened at that time at the shrine of King Óláf.

Soon there came some rifts in the concord of the two kings; and many were so malicious as to sow ill-will between them.

Chapter 26. Svein Takes the Royal Tithes in Denmark

Svein Úlfsson lay asleep when Harald had absconded. Thereafter, Svein inquired carefully about Harald's actions. And when he learned that Harald and Magnús had come to an agreement and had one army in common, he proceeded with his fleet east past the coast of Scania, and remained there till he learned, in winter, that both Magnús and Harald with their forces had proceeded north to Norway. Thereupon Svein sailed with his fleet south [west] to Denmark and during that winter took in all royal tithes there.

Chapter 27. Magnús Asserts His Rights to the King's Berth

When spring approached, King Magnús and King Harald levied men and ships for war. It happened one time that both kings one night lay in the same harbor; but the day after, Harald got ready to sail first and proceeded at once. In the evening he anchored in the place where King Magnús and his ships had intended to anchor that night. Harald anchored his vessel in the king's berth and pitched his tent there. King Magnús got a later start and arrived at the harbor where Harald and his men had already pitched their tents. They saw that Harald had anchored in the king's berth and that he meant to remain there. But when King Magnús' crew had lowered their sail, King Magnús said, "Let men sit down by the gunwales and take to their oars. Let others get out their weapons and arm themselves. And if they will not move we shall fight."

But when King Harald saw that King Magnús meant to do battle with him, he ordered his men, "Cut the cables and move the ships out of their berths. Our kinsman Magnús is furious." And so they did, and rowed their ships out of the king's berth. Then King Magnús moved his ships into the king's berth; and when both parties had made their arrangements, King Harald with a few men went aboard King Magnús' ship. The king welcomed him cordially.

Then King Harald said, "I had thought that we had come to be friends; but a while back I wondered if you would have it that way. But there is truth in the saying that 'hasty is youth.' I shall not consider this as anything but a childish prank."

Then King Magnús replied, "It was a family trait, not a childish deed, when I bore in mind what I gave and what I withheld. If this little matter had been taken from me without my consent, there would soon be another. But we mean to stick to all agreements we have made; and the same we expect from you, just as we have settled matters between us."

Then answered King Harald, "It is also an old custom for the wiser one to yield—" and went back to his ship.

In such conflicts between the kings it was seen that it was difficult for them to observe moderation. King Magnús' followers held that he was in the right; but unreasonable men thought that Harald had been slighted. But as to King Harald's henchmen, it was their opinion that there were no two ways about it—that King Magnús should occupy the king's berth if both arrived at the same time, but that Harald was not obliged to move out of the king's berth if he came there first; and they maintained that Harald had acted wisely and well. But those

who wanted to put a worse interpretation on it said that King Magnus wanted to break their agreement and that he had done King Harald a wrong and insulted him.

From such dissensions there soon arose the talk of unwise men which finally brought about discord between the two kings. Then many things occurred about which the kings each had his own opinion; though little is written about that here.

Chapter 28. King Magnús Dies and Gives Svein Denmark

With that fleet King Magnús and King Harald sailed south to Denmark. And when Svein was informed of that, he fled east to Scania. Both King Magnús and King Harald stayed in Denmark for a long time that summer and brought all the land under their sway. They were in Jutland in the fall.

One night, when King Magnús lay in his bed he dreamed that he was in the presence of his father, Holy King Ólaf, and that he spoke to him, “Which of these two would you choose, my son: to go with me now or to become the most powerful of all kings and live long and do such misdeeds as you could atone for hardly or not at all?”

King Magnús dreamed that he answered, “I would want you to choose for me.”

Then he thought the king replied, “In that case you shall go with me.”

King Magnús told his men this dream. And a short while after he fell sick and took to his bed at a place called Súthathorpe. And when he was near death he sent his brother Thórir to Svein Úlfsson, with the message that he should help Thórir whenever he needed it. And also, that King Magnús gave Svein the Danish realm after his death, saying that it was proper that Harald ruled over Norway and Svein over Denmark. Thereupon King Magnús the Good
1047 died, and was sorrowed for by all the people. As Odd Kíkinaskáld says:

466. Men shed many tears when (99.)
Magnús—heavy that sorrow—
to grave was borne—gold he
gave a plenty to lieges.
Housecarls their tears hardly
held back, grieving sorely;
downcast, o’er their dauntless
dealer-of-gold they sorrowed.

Chapter 29. Harald Is Proclaimed King over all Norway

After these events King Harald called an assembly of his army and told them of his intention to proceed with them to the Vebjorg Assembly and there let himself be proclaimed king of the Danish realm and then subdue the land. He claimed Denmark to be his inheritance after his kinsman King Magnús as well as Norway, and asked his army to support him, saying that then Norwegians would for all times be the masters of the Danes.

Thereupon Einar Thambarskelfir answered and said that it was his duty to give burial to King Magnús, his foster son, and bring him to his father, King Ólaf, rather than to fight in foreign parts and be bent on acquiring another king's land and property, and he concluded by saying that he preferred to follow King Magnús in death rather than any other king in life. Thereupon he had King Magnús' body prepared honorably for burial so that one might see the funeral arrangements on board the royal vessel.

Thereupon all Throanders and Norwegians prepared to proceed homeward with the body of King Magnús, and the army broke up. Then King Harald considered it wisest to return to Norway with all his army. And as soon as he arrived there he met with the people at assemblies and had himself proclaimed king over all the land. And thus he proceeded all the way west from Vík, so that he was acknowledged as king in every district of Norway.

Chapter 30. Of King Magnús' Appearance and Character

Einar Thambarskelfir proceeded with the body of King Magnús, followed by the Throners in the army, and brought it to Nitharós, where he was buried in the Church of Saint Clement. There was kept the shrine of Holy King Ólaf. King Magnús was of middle height, with regular features and light complexion. He had light blond hair, was well-spoken and quick to make up his mind, was of noble character, most generous, a great warrior, and most valorous. He was most popular as a king, both friends and enemies praising him.

Chapter 31. Svein Is Acknowledged as King of Denmark

Svein Úlfsson sojourned in Scania that fall, and was preparing to proceed east to Sweden, intending to give up the royal title he had assumed in Denmark. But when he was about to mount his horse, some men came riding up to him with tidings—first, that King Magnús Ólafsson had died and, also, that all the Norwegian army had left Denmark. Then Svein quickly answered and said, “Swear I by God that never after shall I flee from Denmark whilst I live.” Thereupon he mounted his horse and rode south in Scania. Then a great host joined him straightway. That same winter he took possession of all the Danish realm, and all Danes acknowledged him as their king. Thórir, King Magnús’ brother, came to Svein that fall with the message of King Magnús as written above. Svein received him well, and Thórir dwelled a long time with him in high favor.

Chapter 32. King Harald Raids in Denmark

After the death of King Magnús Óláfsson, King Harald Sigurtharson assumed kingship over all of Norway. But when he had ruled over it one winter, and spring came, he summoned forces for war from the whole country, half a levy of men and ships, and sailed south to Jutland. There he harried and burned far and wide in the summer and anchored in the Gothnarfjord.¹ At that time King Harald composed this verse:

467. At anchor we lie—while lulls the (100.)
linen-goddess² her husband,
the gait-fair-Gerth² with songs—in
Gothnarfjord in our dragons.

Then he challenged Thjóthólf the Skald to compose one to match this. He spoke this verse:

468. Next summer further southward— (101.)
say I truly—shall we
cast our anchor and let
iron-nose³ hold the sea-steed.

And Bolverk in his *drápa* also mentions that Harald sailed to Denmark in the summer following the death of King Magnús:

469. A levy from all the lands you— (102.)
lapped the brine your mere-ships,
furrowed the main your fair-decked
fleet—craved the year after.
Fair-dight rode on darkling
deep the sea-steed, booty-
laden, near the land—ill
luck befell the Danes then.

Then they burned down the farm of Thorkel Geysa. He was a great chieftain. Then his daughters were led down to the ships bound. The winter before they had scoffed much about King Harald's intending to sail to Denmark with his fleet. They had fashioned anchors out of cheese and said that anchors such as that might well be able to hold fast the ships of the king of Norway. Then this verse was spoken:

470. Made the Danish maidens— (103.)

much that angered Harald—
anchor-rings and other
outfit of soft whey-cheese.
This morn, though, see maidens
many—no laughing matter
that!—hard hooks of iron
hold the ruler’s vessels.

It is told that the lookout man who had seen the fleet of King Harald said to the daughters of Thorkel Geysa, “You daughters of Geysa said Harald would not come to Denmark.”

Dóttá answered, “That was yesterday.”

Thorkel ransomed his daughters with an immense amount of money. As says Grani:⁴

471. Left the ruthless ruler (104.)
rarely dry the eyes of
hapless maidens hid in
Horn Forest’s great thickets.
Down King Harald drove the
Danish foe to the seashore.
Dóttá’s father forthwith
for her paid huge ransom.

All that summer King Harald harried in Denmark, taking immense booty, but did not stay there for good, and in the fall returned to Norway, where he resided during the winter.

Chapter 33. King Harald Marries Thóra

King Harald married Thóra, the daughter of Thorberg Árnason, the winter after King Magnús the Good died. They had two sons. The older was called Magnús, the other Óláf. King Harald had two daughters with Queen Ellisif. The one was called Mária, the other, Ingigerth. The spring following the expedition we just told of, King Harald summoned a levy of men and ships and in the summer sailed to Denmark where he harried, one year after another. As says the skald Stúf:

472. We hear that Falster was harried. (105.)
Haunted were people with terror.
Fed were wolves with fallen.
Feared the Danes each summer.

Chapter 34. King Harald Harries in Denmark

King Svein ruled over the entire Danish realm after King Magnús died. He kept the peace during the winter, but in summer he mustered his forces and vowed to sail north to Norway with the Danish fleet and do as much damage there as Harald had done in Denmark. One winter King Svein challenged King Harald to meet him the following summer in the [Gaut Elf] River and there fight it out or else come to an agreement. Both of them had outfitted their ships all that winter and summoned a half levy of men and ships by the following summer.

That summer, Thorleik the Fair came from Iceland and began to compose a poem about King Svein Úlfsson.¹ When he had arrived in northern Norway he learned that King Harald had sailed south to the river to fight King Svein. Then Thorleik spoke this verse:

473. Before long, belike, the (106.)
levy of In-Thronders²
on the main will meet a
martial king in battle.
There, who life or land shall
lose, almighty Godhead—
Svein distrusts oaths sworn and
seldom kept—will settle.

And still further:

474. In wrath he who with red shield³ (107.)
roamed oft foreign lands, now
brings on Buthli's-pathways⁴
broad warships from northland.
But the beauteous ships of
battle-tested Svein, with
gilded prows and painted
planks advance from southward.

King Harald with his fleet came to the place agreed on. Then he learned that King Svein and his fleet were in the south, off the coast of Seeland. So King Harald divided his force and let most of the yeoman army return; and he himself, with his bodyguard, his stewards, picked men, and those of the yeomen who lived [in Norway] nearest to Denmark, sailed on. They sailed south to Jutland,

south of the Skaw, then south past Thjóth,⁵ harrying wherever they came. As says the skald Stúf:

475. Fled those in Thjóth Shire the (108.)
thane's oncoming straightway.
Stout-hearted, he aimed highly.
*Hereafter dwell with Jesus.*⁶

They sailed all the way south to the town of Heithabýr, took it by storm, and burned it. Then men in King Harald's forces composed this verse:

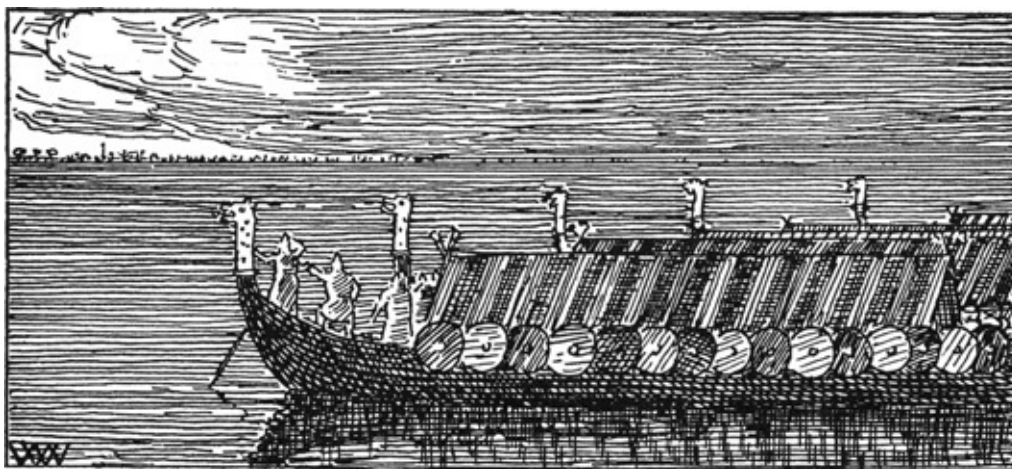
476. Burned down was at both ends— (109.)
bold methinks this deed was—
by Harald's valiant henchmen
Heithabýr altogether.
Dire damage to Svein we'll
do; before dawn was I—
high flames out of houses
whirled—in the town's outskirts.

This is mentioned also by Thorleik in his *flokk*, composed when he learned that no battle had taken place by the river:

477. How that to Heithabýr the (110.)
hate-filled king then travelled,
that, he who heard not, needs to
have his shipmates tell him—
the time when, to no purpose,
toward King Svein's borough
Harald headed west—ah,
had it never been thus!

Chapter 35. King Svein Pursues Harald's Fleet

Then Harald sailed north with sixty ships, of which most were large and loaded down with the booty they had taken that summer. But when they sailed north past Thjóth, King Svein came down to the coast with a great force and challenged King Harald to do battle on land. King Harald had an army smaller by half than Svein. Yet he challenged King Svein to do battle with him on the sea. As says Thorleik the Fair:



When it dawns they see the Danish fleet.

478. Bade he, on earth who born was
best, noble King Svein, his
lordly lieges, in fray on
land their shields to redden.
But fearless Harald fain would
fight on his sail-horses
if the crafty king would
keep him from his own land.

(111.)

Then Harald sailed north past the Skaw. There they got contrary winds and they lay to in the lee of Hlésey Island and remained there during the night. Then there was a heavy mist. But when morning came and the sun rose, it looked on the opposite side as though fires were burning on the sea. That was told King Harald. And when he saw it he said straightway, "Cast the tent coverings off the ships and let men take to the oars. Most likely the Danish fleet is approaching us. The fog probably has lifted over there and the sun is shining on the dragon heads

of theirs which are gilt.” And it was as Harald said: there was Svein, the king of the Danes, with an overwhelming fleet. Then both parties rowed with all their might. The Danes had faster-rowing vessels, whereas the ships of the Norwegians were both water-logged and very deep in the water, so that the distance between them grew less. Then Harald said that would not do.

King Harald’s dragon ship went slowest of them all. Then King Harald gave orders to throw pieces of wood overboard and lay clothes and valuable things on them. The weather was so calm that all these drifted with the current. But when the Danes saw their property floating on the sea, those who were foremost steered toward it, thinking it easier to gather up things floating than to go for them on board the Norwegian ships, and so the pursuit lagged. But when King Svein caught up with them with his ship he urged them on and said it was a big shame that so large a fleet as theirs should not overtake the enemy when they had so few ships, and overpower them.

Thereupon the Danes took to rowing harder again. But when King Harald saw that the Danish ships were gaining on them, he bade his men to lighten the ships by throwing overboard malt and wheat and bacon, and to jettison their drinks, and that helped for a while. Thereupon King Harald ordered bulwarks and the casks and barrels which were empty to be thrown overboard, together with captives. And when all this drifted on the sea, King Svein gave command to rescue the men; and so they did, and with that the distance between them became greater. Thereupon the Danes gave up the pursuit, and the Norwegians went their way. As says Thorleik the Fair:

479. Heard I have, on ship’s-road (112.)
how that Northmen were by
Svein pursued—how nathless
slipped away sly Harald.
Scattered, as they ’scaped, on
squally Jutland waters—
laden ships they lost—was
loot they took in Denmark.

King Svein returned with his fleet and anchored under the lee of Hlésey Island. There they found seven Norwegian ships. They were manned by men levied by Harald—all farmers. But when King Svein bore down upon them they asked quarter, offering goods in return. As says Thorleik the Fair:

480. Eagerly for quarter asked the (113.)
atheling’s confederates:

blenching, the brave warriors¹
battle shunned, outnumbered.
And the unflinching farmers
fighting wished to stave off—
loath they were their life to
lose—by their much parleying.

Chapter 36. Of King Harald and His Skalds

King Harald was a powerful and able ruler of his land, and one extremely resourceful, so that it is common opinion that in the northlands no prince ever was his equal as to sagacity and wise counsel. He was a great warrior and greatly skilled in arms. He was stronger and more dexterous in arms than any other man, as was written above. Yet many more of his famous deeds have not been set down, both because of our lack of information and because we do not wish to put down in writing stories not sufficiently witnessed. Even though we have heard mentioned, or touched upon, a number of things, it seems better that they be added later, rather than that they need to be omitted then. Much about King Harald is incorporated in poems delivered by Icelanders before him or his sons. For that reason he was a great friend of theirs. Also, he befriended greatly all countrymen of ours who came to Norway. And when there was a bad season in Iceland, King Harald gave permission to four ships to export flour to Iceland and determined that the shippound¹ should not cost more than a hundred and twenty ells of homespun. He allowed all poor people to come to Norway [from Iceland] if they could find transportation across the sea; and thus our land was able to recover with better seasons and better conditions. King Harald sent out to Iceland the bell for the church for which Holy King Ólaf had sent the timber and which was built on the site of the Althing.² Memories of King Harald such as these are cherished here as well as that he made noble presents to those who sought him out.

As was mentioned before, Halldór Snorrason and Úlf Óspaksson joined King Harald in Norway. They differed in many respects. Halldór was very tall, strong, and handsome. That testimony King Harald bore him that he was one of those among his followers who was least disturbed when anything terrible and unforeseen occurred. Whether danger threatened or good news was brought, or whatever peril there was, he was neither gladder nor sadder, nor did he sleep more or less, nor eat and drink otherwise than was his custom. Halldór was a man of few words, and gruff, outspoken, stubborn, and obstinate. But that did not sit well with the king, as he had plenty of excellent men about him who were ready to serve him. Halldór remained but a short while with the king. He sailed to Iceland, established himself in Hjartharholt, and lived there till his old age.

Chapter 37. Úlf Óspaksson Marries Jórunn

Úlf Óspaksson was in great favor with King Harald. He was exceedingly wise, eloquent, a great leader, dependable and honest. King Harald made Úlf his marshal and gave him Jórunn, the daughter of Thorberg, in marriage. She was the sister of Thóra with whom King Harald was married. The children of Úlf by Jórunn were Jóan the Strong of Rásvoll and Brígitha, the mother of Sautha-Úlf, the father of Peter Byrtharsvein, the father of Úlf Flý [and his brothers and sisters]. The son of Jóan the Strong was Erlend Hímaldi, the father of Archbishop Eystein and his brothers. King Harald gave Marshal Úlf the income of a king's steward and twelve marks of rent, together with half a shire in the Trondheim District. So says Stein Herdísarson¹ in his poem called *Úlfsflokk*.

Chapter 38. King Harald Builds Churches in Kaupang

King Magnús Ólafsson had the Saint Ólaf's Church built in the town of Kaupang. At that spot the body of the king was set down one night. It was located above the town. Also, he had the royal residence erected there. The church was not finished before the king's death, and King Harald had it completed. In the same enclosure he laid the foundations of a stone hall; and that was not finished before he laid the foundation of Saint Mary's Church on the sand hill near where the holy remains of the king were interred the first winter after his fall. That was a great minster, constructed strongly with mortar so that they could hardly raze it when Archbishop Eystein had it torn down. The holy shrine of King Ólaf was kept in Saint Ólaf's Church while Saint Mary's Church was being erected. King Harald had the royal residence built below Saint Mary's by the river, where it now stands. But the hall he had erected he had consecrated as Saint Gregory's Church.

Chapter 39. Of Ívar the White

There was a man by the name of Ívar the White, an excellent steward of the king. He resided in the Uppland District. He was the son of a daughter of Earl Hákon the Powerful. He was an exceptionally handsome man. His son was called Hákon. Of him it is said that he was superior to all his contemporaries in Norway as to valor, strength, and accomplishments. Even in his youth he joined warlike expeditions and acquired much fame, making a great name for himself.

Chapter 40. Of Einar Thambarskelfir and His Son Eindrithi

Einar Thambarskelfir was the most powerful landed-man in the Trondheim District. There was considerable coolness between him and King Harald. Yet Einar kept the revenues he enjoyed whilst King Magnús lived. Einar was a man of very great wealth. His wife was Bergljót, a daughter of Earl Hákon, as was mentioned above. At this time, Eindrithi, their son, was full grown. He married Sigríth, a daughter of King Harald's sister. Eindrithi had the handsome appearance and comeliness of his mother's kin, Earl Hákon and his sons, and the stature and strength of his father, Einar, as well as the accomplishments in which Einar excelled all others. He was the favorite of everyone.

Chapter 41. The Descendants of Earl Hákon

At that time there resided in the district of Uppland an earl by the name of Orm. His mother was Ragnhild, a daughter of Earl Hákon the Powerful. He was a most excellent man. East [west] in the district of Jathar at Sóli there lived a man by the name of Áslák Erlingsson, who was married to Sigríth, a daughter of Earl Svein, the son of Earl Hákon. Gunnhild, another daughter of Earl Svein became the wife of Svein Úlfsson, the king of Denmark. Those and other distinguished persons were the descendants of Earl Hákon living at that time in Norway; and all that family were handsomer by far than other people, and most of them were greatly accomplished, but all were distinguished.

Chapter 42. Of King Harald's Imperious Nature

King Harald was of an imperious nature, and grew the more so as he consolidated his rule in Norway. And eventually it became worse than useless to oppose him or to promote matters other than those he wished. As says Skald Thjóthólf: (114.) 481. 'Tis right for loyal liege, as likes the combat-loving war-worker intrepid well, to sit and stand eke. The army all obey the eagles'-feeder; neither could the king's own men go counter to his wishes.

Chapter 43. Einar Thambarskelfir Antagonizes King Harald

Einar Thambarskelfir was the chief leader of the farmers in all the districts of Trondheim. At the assemblies he defended those against whom suit was brought by the king's men. Einar was well versed in the laws; and he did not lack the boldness to defend his case at the assemblies, even though the king himself was present. And all the farmers supported him. This infuriated the king, and it went so far that it came to high words between them. Einar maintained that the farmers would not tolerate any injustice from the king nor stand for his breaking the laws of the land. And this occurred several times between them. As a consequence Einar took to having a large company of men about him when he was at home, and even more when he came to town and knew the king to be there.

It happened one day that Einar came sailing to the town with a great host—eight or nine warships—and a crew of some five hundred [600] men; and when he reached the town he went on shore with that company. King Harald was in his royal residence and stood outside in the gallery, watching Einar's troops disembark. And it is said that he then composed these verses:

482. Behold free-handed Einar, (115.)
who the sea can cleave with
keel-horse, come ashore, by
crew of hundreds followed:
means the mighty chieftain—
many earls I've known were
followed by fewer men—to
fill the royal throne-seat.

483. Will the dart-speeder dauntless (116.)
drive me from my kingdom
but the baron kiss the
bill's blue thin-lipped edges.¹

Einar remained several days in the town.

Chapter 44. Einar and His Son Eindrithi Are Slain by King Harald

One day a meeting was held, and the king himself attended it. A thief had been taken in town and was led to the meeting. The man had been with Einar, before, and Einar had rather liked him. When Einar was told, he thought the king would not let the man go any the sooner because Einar would take his side. So Einar had his troops take their arms and go to the meeting, where he took the man from the meeting by force. Thereupon friends of both the king and Einar went between them and sought to reconcile them. As a result an appointment was agreed upon where they were to meet. The meeting hall was in the king's residence down by the river. The king entered the room with only a few men; the remainder of his force stayed outside. The king had the cover lid drawn over the louver, so as to leave but a small opening. Then Einar arrived in the yard with his men. He said to Eindrithi, his son, "Stay outside here with the men; then there will be no risk for me." Eindrithi stood outside at the entrance door. When Einar came into the room he said, "It is dark in the king's council hall." Immediately, men fell upon him, some thrusting, others striking. But when Eindrithi heard that, he drew his sword and burst into the room. He was promptly cut down, along with his father. Thereupon the king's men [outside] ran to the hall and stood before the door. But the farmers did not know which way to turn as they now were left leaderless. One urged on the other, saying it was a shame if they did not avenge their chieftain. Yet nothing came of an attack. The king came out to his troops and ordered them in battle array, setting up his standard; but no attack was made by the farmers.

Thereupon the king boarded his ship with all his force. They rowed down the river and out into the fjord.

Bergljót, Einar's wife, learned of his fall. At the time she was in the quarters which Einar and she had occupied when in the town. She went at once up to the royal residence where the farmers' force stood, and heatedly urged them to do battle. That was just when King Harald rowed down the river. Then said Bergljót, "Now we feel the want of my kinsman, Hákon Ívarsson. The slayers of Eindrithi would not be rowing down the river if Hákon stood here on the banks." Then Bergljót had the remains of Einar and Eindrithi attended to. They were interred near the Church of Saint Ólaf, close by the tomb of King Magnús Ólafsson.

After the fall of Einar, King Harald was so strongly detested on account of his deed that the only reason the king's stewards and the farmers did not attack and do battle with him was the lack of a leader to raise the standard for the farmers'

army.

Chapter 45. King Harald Has Finn Árnason Intercede for Him

At that time Finn Árnason lived at Austrátt in the district of Yrjar. He was a steward of King Harald's. Finn had in marriage Bergljót, the daughter of Hálfðan, the son of Sigurth Sýr. Hálfðan [thus] was a brother of Holy King Ólaf and King Harald. Thóra, wife of King Harald, was the niece of Finn Árnason. The king was very fond of Finn, as of his brothers. For some summers, Finn Árnason had been on viking expeditions in the west. He, Guthorm Gunnhildarson, and Hákon Ívarsson had been together on these expeditions.

King Harald had sailed out on the Trondheimfjord till he came to Austrátt. There he was made very welcome. Later, Finn and the king talked together about the events which had just happened—the slaying of Einar and his son—and also about the grumbling and uproar of the Thronders against the king. Finn answered quickly, “You blunder in whatever you do. First you commit all kinds of wrongs, and afterwards you are so afraid that you don't know what to do with yourself.”

The king answered laughing, “Kinsman, I am now going to send you to the town. I want you to reconcile me with the farmers. And if you don't succeed in that, I want you to go to Uppland and bring it about that Hákon Ívarsson doesn't become my enemy.”

Finn answered, “What will you promise to do for me if I go on this dangerous errand, because both Thronders and the men of Uppland are so enraged against you that no messenger of yours can go there without danger to life and limb, unless he has your assistance.”

The king answered, “You go on this errand, kinsman, because I know that if anybody can execute it successfully, you can. Reconcile us and you can choose whatever you want from me.”

Finn replied, “Then keep your promise and I shall choose this: I choose pardon and permission to stay in the country, for my brother Kálf, and that he may regain all his property; and also, that he have the rank and all the power he had before he left the country.”

The king assented to all conditions Finn made, and the agreement was witnessed by others, and they clasped hands upon it. Then Finn asked, “What shall I offer to Hákon to make him agree to a reconciliation with you? He is the person of greatest influence now among the people of Trondheim.”

The king answered, “First hear what Hákon himself would demand for a reconciliation. Then advance my interests as best you can: but as a last resort

offer him anything short of being king.” Thereupon King Harald sailed south to Mœr and gathered a considerable force.

Chapter 46. Finn Offers Compensation for the Slaying of Einar

Finn Árnason sailed to the town together with his henchmen, almost eighty in number. And when he entered the town he arranged a meeting with the townsmen. At this meeting Finn made a long and eloquent speech in which he asked both townsmen and farmers by all means to avoid hostilities against their king so as to drive him away. He reminded them how much evil they had suffered doing that before to Holy King Óláf; and he said that the king was willing to pay compensation for the slayings committed, according to the judgment of the best and wisest men. At the conclusion of his speech the farmers agreed to do nothing about the matter until the messengers returned whom Bergljót had sent to Hákon Ívarsson in Uppland.

Thereupon Finn, together with the men who had followed him to the town, travelled up the Orka Valley; then to the Dofra Fell, and then east [south] across it. First, Finn went to see Earl Orm, his son-in-law—he had married Sigríth, Finn's daughter—and told him about his business.

Chapter 47. Hákon Ívarsson Demands Ragnhild in Marriage

Thereupon they arranged a meeting with Hákon Ívarsson; and when they met, Finn told Hákon the message which King Harald had entrusted to him. It soon appeared that Hákon thought it was his stern duty to avenge his kinsman Eindrithi; and he said he had had word from Trondheim that he would find sufficient support there to start a rebellion against the king. Thereupon Finn demonstrated to Hákon that it was a better alternative for him to exact from the king as much honor as he himself would ask for, rather than to risk rising in opposition to the king to whom he was bound in allegiance; that he might be defeated—“and then you have forfeited both property and life. But if you overcome King Harald you will be called a traitor to your king.”

Earl Orm also gave support to Finn’s arguments. And when Hákon had weighed them he revealed what he had in mind. He said, “I shall be reconciled to King Harald if he will give in marriage to me his relative Ragnhild, the daughter of King Magnús Ólafsson, together with such a dowry as is seeming to her and as she would like.” Finn said he would assent to that by authority of the king; and they came to an agreement about that. Thereupon Finn returned north to Trondheim. Then the unrest and turbulence there subsided, so that the king continued to rule undisturbed in the land; because now there was an end to the alliance among Eindrithi’s kinsmen to resist King Harald.

Chapter 48. King Harald Refuses Hákon Ívarsson the Title of Earl

When the time came for Hákon to demand the fulfilment of the agreement, he went to see King Harald. And when they began to discuss the matter, the king declared that he would on his part adhere to the agreement reached between Finn and Hákon. “It is your business, Hákon, to talk about this matter with Ragnhild and find out whether she agrees to this marriage. But neither you nor any else will find it advisable to obtain Ragnhild in marriage unless it be with her own consent.”

Thereupon Hákon went to Ragnhild and made his proposal of marriage to her. She answered in this wise, “Frequently I am made to feel that King Magnús, my father, is dead and his memory gone, if I am to marry a farmer, even though you are handsome and accomplished in many ways. If King Magnús were alive he would not give me in marriage to anyone less than a king. So there is no prospect that I be willing to marry a man not of princely rank.”

Thereupon Hákon went to King Harald and reported to him the parley between Ragnhild and him, and also reminded him of the agreement made between Finn and himself. Both Finn and several others were present who had been witnesses of this agreement. Hákon called upon all of them to witness that it had been agreed upon that the king was to provide Ragnhild with such a dowry as would be acceptable to her. “Now she declares she will not marry a man not of princely rank; so you can give me the title of earl. I am of sufficiently high birth to be called an earl, and also have some other qualities required for that, according to what people say.”

The king answered, “Both King Ólaf, my brother, and King Magnús, his son, during their reign allowed only one earl at one time in the country. And I followed this, ever since I became king. I am not willing to take the title away from Earl Orm which I have before bestowed on him.”

Then Hákon understood that his plan would not succeed, and he was very greatly displeased. Finn, too, was furious. They said that the king would not abide by his word; and with that they parted. Hákon immediately left the land with a well-equipped warship. He sailed south to Denmark and immediately sought out King Svein, his kinsman. The king made him very welcome and gave him large revenues. He was entrusted with the defence of the country against the vikings who made many incursions in the Danish realm—Wends, Kurlanders, and many others from the eastern Baltic. He was out at sea with his fleet both in summer and winter.

Chapter 49. Hákon Ívarsson Defeats and Slays Ásmund

There was a man called Ásmund who, it is said, was the son of King Svein's sister and was fostered by him. Ásmund was most accomplished, and the king was very fond of him. But as Ásmund grew up, he became most overbearing and a killer. The king was displeased at that and dismissed him from his presence; but he procured him a good fief on which he could well support himself together with a company of men. But as soon as Ásmund had received these possessions from the king he drew a great host of men together. And since the moneys the king had given him did not meet his expenses, he appropriated other and far greater properties belonging to the king. When the king learned of that he summoned Ásmund, and when he came, ordered him to join his bodyguard and not to have any followers; and the king had his way. But after Ásmund had been a little while with the king's court he did not like it there, and he escaped at night and rejoined his company and did more mischief than before. So when the king rode over land near where Ásmund kept himself, he sent a body of men to capture him by force. Then the king had him placed in chains for a while, thinking that he might calm down. But as soon as Ásmund was freed he straightway escaped and got himself a company and warships, and then he began to harry both abroad and at home, doing great damage, and killing and robbing far and wide. Those who suffered from these hostilities went to the king and complained about the damage done to them. He answered them, "Why do you tell me this? Why don't you go to Hákon Ívarsson? He is entrusted by me with the defence of the country and appointed for the purpose of keeping the peace for you farmers and punishing vikings. I was told that Hákon was a bold and brave man, but now it seems to me he doesn't want to engage in anything he thinks might involve danger."

These words were reported to Hákon, together with many that were not said. Then Hákon with his force went to search for Ásmund. They met with their fleets. Hákon at once gave battle, and it was a great one, and hard fought. Hákon boarded Ásmund's ship and cleared its decks. Finally, he and Ásmund encountered each other and fought. Ásmund fell and Hákon cut off his head. Then he hurriedly sought out the king and found him sitting at table. Hákon advanced to the table and laid Ásmund's head on it before the king and asked him if he knew it. The king made no answer, but his face grew red as blood. Then Hákon left. A short time afterwards the king sent men to Hákon asking him to leave his service, "Tell him that I do not wish to do him harm; but I cannot take care of all our kinsmen."

Chapter 50. King Harald Bestows the Earldom on Hákon

Thereupon Hákon left Denmark and returned north to his possessions in Norway. His kinsman Orm had died meanwhile. Both kinsmen and friends received Hákon with open arms; and many excellent men took it upon themselves to reconcile King Harald and Hákon. In the end they agreed upon these terms that Hákon was to have Princess Ragnhild in marriage, and King Harald conferred on Hákon the earldom and power Earl Orm had had. Hákon swore allegiance to King Harald, binding himself to perform all the services he owed the king.

Chapter 51. Kálf Árnason Is Permitted to Return to Norway

Kálf Árnason had been engaged in freebooting expeditions in the western seas ever since he left Norway; but during the winters he stayed in the Orkneys with his kinsman, Earl Thorfinn. Kálf's brother, Finn Árnason, sent word to Kálf to tell him of the special agreement between King Harald and himself, that Kálf be permitted to return to Norway to his possessions and have the same revenues he had had under King Magnús. When this message was brought to Kálf he made ready at once for the journey. He sailed east to Norway, and first of all he went to meet his brother Finn. Thereupon Finn procured security for Kálf; and they both met together, the king and Kálf, and came to an agreement according to the terms which the king and Finn had before settled on. Kálf then pledged himself to the king that, according to stipulations formerly arrived at with King Magnús, he was in duty bound to do all King Harald wanted him to and which the king held would strengthen his rule. Thereupon Kálf repossessed himself of all the properties and revenues he had had before.

Chapter 52. Kálf Árnason Is Slain on Funen

The summer following, King Harald summoned a levy and sailed south to Denmark, where he harried all summer. When he arrived at the island of Funen in the south, he found a great army arrayed against him. The king had his men disembark and make ready to go up on land. He divided his forces in such fashion that Kálf Árnason was to head a troop which was to disembark first. He told them in which direction they were to proceed and said he would go up on land after them and support them. Accordingly, Kálf and his troop went up on land and were promptly met by the enemy. Kálf engaged him at once; nor did the battle last long, for Kálf was soon overborne by superior force. He and his troop took to flight, pursued by the Danes. Many of the Norwegians fell there, also Kálf Árnason. King Harald went up on land with his force, and they soon came on the field of battle and found Kálf's body. It was borne down to the ships. The king himself went ashore to harry, and killed a great many there. As Arnór says:

484. Reddened then wrathfully— (117.)
Ran fire o'er their dwellings—
his flashing blade on Funen
folk; their numbers lessened.

Chapter 53. Finn Árnason Joins King Svein

After this occurrence Finn thought he had good reason for harboring enmity to the king who, he considered, had been the cause of his brother Kálf's death. He accused the king of having contrived Kálf's death, and [argued] that it was merely a ruse against him when he enticed his brother Kálf from the west across the sea into his power and on his good faith.

But when people learned of these allegations many said that it was naive for Finn to have believed that Kálf could trust the good faith of King Harald, considering that the king had shown his vindictiveness in the case of smaller offences than those which Kálf had committed against him. The king let everyone talk about this as he pleased, he neither confirmed it nor denied it. Only this was plain that the king was pleased with what had happened. King Harald spoke this verse:

485. Done to death now have I— (118.)
driven was I to it—
and laid low of my lieges
eleven and two, I remember.
Men must guard them 'gainst the
guileful toils of traitors:
great oaks, say they, out of
acorns little grow up.¹

Finn was so infuriated by this deed [of Harald's] that he left the country and sailed south to Denmark where he joined King Svein and was welcomed by him. They had long conferences in private, and their upshot was that Finn swore allegiance to King Svein. He was given the title of earl by King Svein and the rule of the province of Halland, where he was entrusted with the defence against the incursions of the Norwegians.

Chapter 54. Guthorm Allies Himself with King Margath

There was a man called Guthorm who lived on Hringuness. He was the son of Ketil Kálf and Gunnhild, and thus the nephew of King Óláf and Harald. Guthorm was an accomplished man, early full grown. He often was in the company of King Harald and was a great favorite of his. He counselled the king, because he was a shrewd man, besides being much liked by people. Frequently he was on warlike expeditions and harried much in the lands beyond the North Sea. He had a great force under him. He had a place of retreat and winter quarters in Dublin in Ireland, where he was on terms of close friendship with King Margath [Eachmargach].¹

Chapter 55. By Saint Óláf's Help Guthorm Defeats Margath

The summer following, King Margath and Guthorm went on a viking expedition and harried in Wales. There they took immense booty. Then they sailed to Anglesey Sound [Menai Strait], where they were to divide their spoils. But when the large amount of silver was brought forth and the king saw it, he wanted to have all the treasure himself and counted for little his friendship with Guthorm. The latter was greatly affronted that he and his men should be robbed of their just share. The king said he could choose one of two things, "Either to be content with the way I want it, or else to fight with us and let him have the silver who is victorious—and also this: I want you to surrender your ships, because I want to have them." To Guthorm both alternatives seemed bad, and he thought he could not in decency give up his ships and the silver, not having given any provocation on his part. On the other hand it was very risky to do battle with the king and the large fleet he had. There was a great difference between their forces, in that the king had sixteen warships against Guthorm's five. Guthorm asked the king to let him have three nights' time to confer with his men about this matter. He thought that the king might relent somewhat in that time and that he might obtain better terms with the king through the representatives of his men. But the king refused to consent to this request.

The time was the eve of Saint Óláf's Day. Then Guthorm chose to die like a man, or else win the victory, rather than suffer the shame and dishonor, and the reproach of cowardice, for having lost so much. Thereupon he called on God and Holy King Óláf, his kinsman, for help and support, and he made the vow to give tithes to the church of that saint of all the spoils they would make if they were victorious. Thereupon he arranged his forces in battle array against the large fleet, advanced and engaged them. But with the help of God and Saint Óláf, Guthorm won the victory. King Margath fell there, and with him, every man who followed him, young and old. And after this glorious victory Guthorm [and his men] returned home happy with all the treasure they had won in the battle. Then was taken every tenth coin of silver they had won and had vowed to give Holy King Óláf; that was a huge amount of silver. Of it, Guthorm had a crucifix made as tall as he himself or his forecastleman. That image¹ is seven ells high, and Guthorm gave the crucifix so fashioned to the Church of Saint Óláf. It has remained there ever since as a memorial to Guthorm's victory and to this miracle of Holy King Óláf.

Chapter 56. The Evil Count Is Blinded by Saint Óláf

In Denmark there lived a count of evil and envious disposition. He had a Norwegian servant woman from the district of Trondheim. She worshipped Holy King Óláf and firmly believed in his sanctity. But the count I mentioned disbelieved all that was told him of the miracles of this holy man. He said it was nothing but rumor and loose talk, and made mock and sport of the praise and honor which the people of the country gave the good king. Now the holy day approached on which the gentle king had lost his life and which all Norwegians kept. This, that unwise count did not want to keep and ordered his maid to heat the oven and bake bread on that day. She knew the fury of the count and that he would punish her severely if she did not do all he told her. She went to work much against her will and heated the oven for baking, weeping much as she worked, and calling on Holy Óláf and saying that she would never believe in him unless he avenged this enormity by some sign. Now you may here learn of fitting punishment and a true miracle: right quickly, and at the same time, the count became blind in both eyes, and the bread which she had shoved into the oven turned into stone. Some bits of this stone were brought into Saint Óláf's Church and into many others. From that time on Saint Óláf's Day has always been kept in Denmark.



Saint Ólaf and the cripple walk over London Bridge.

Chapter 57. Saint Óláf Miraculously Heals a Cripple

West in France there lived a man who was in such ill health and so crippled that he had to walk on his knees and knuckles. One day he fell asleep on the road. He dreamed that a courtly man approached him and asked him whither he was going, and he named some town. The courtly man said to him, "Go to the Church of Saint Óláf in London, you will recover your health there."

Thereupon he awoke and straightway proceeded to find Saint Óláf's Church. Finally he came to London Bridge and there asked townsmen if they could tell him where Saint Óláf's Church was. And they answered, saying that there were so many churches there that they didn't know to whom each one was dedicated. But a little while afterwards a man approached him and asked whither he was going. He told him. Then the man said, "Let us both go to Saint Óláf's Church, I know the way there." Then they walked over the Bridge and went up the street leading to Saint Óláf's Church. And when they came to the gate of the churchyard, this man stepped over the threshold of the gate, but the cripple rolled himself over it, and straightway arose a well man. But when he looked about him, his companion had vanished.

Chapter 58. King Harald Escapes from the Limfjord

King Harald had a market town built in Ósló in the east, and often resided there, because provisions were easy to obtain there and it is an important center. And the location was good also, both to protect the land against an attack of the Danes and to make incursions in Denmark. He often did so, even though he did not have much of a force.

One summer King Harald sailed forth with some light, swift ships and a small crew. He sailed south in Vík, and when there was a favorable wind he crossed over to Jutland and took to harrying there. But the countrymen gathered together to defend their land. Then King Harald sailed to the Limfjord and into it. The nature of the Limfjord is such that at its entrance it is narrow like some river channel, but after one is inside it opens up like a broad sea. Harald harried on both shores, but the Danes had armed forces everywhere. Then King Harald anchored his ships close to an island. It was small and uninhabited, and when they looked for water they found none, and told the king so. He had them look for some snake, and when they found one they brought it to the king. He had it carried to fire, to heat and exhaust it, so that it should become as thirsty as possible. Then they tied a string to its tail and let it go. It escaped quickly, with the string unwinding from the ball. They followed the snake till it burrowed down into the ground. The king bade them dig for water in that place. They did so, and they found an abundance of it there.

King Harald learned from his spies that King Svein had arrived at the mouth of the fjord with a big fleet. He was delayed in entering it as only one ship at a time could navigate the channel. King Harald with his ships continued farther into the fjord. Its broadest expanse is called Lúsbreith, and between one of the innermost arms and the sea there is only a slender neck of land. King Harald and his fleet rowed to that place in the evening; and in the night, when it had become dark, they unloaded their ships and dragged them across the neck of land. Before day broke they had finished doing that, and made their ships ready again and sailed north past Jutland. Then they spoke this ditty:

486. Through the hands of the Danes (119.)
Harald did slip.

Then the king said that another time he would come to Denmark with a greater fleet and larger ships. Thereupon he sailed north to Trondheim.

Chapter 59. King Harald Challenges King Svein

During the winter King Harald resided in Nitharós and had a ship constructed outside on the point of Eyrar. That was [of the type] called *búz*,¹ and in point of size like the Long Serpent, and great pains were bestowed on it. It had a dragon head on the stem and a tail on the stern, and the neck of the dragon head was gilt. It had thirty-five compartments and was long in proportion and altogether handsome. The king had all of its equipment made of choice materials, both the sail, the hawsers, the anchor, and the anchor ropes. In winter King Harald sent a message south to King Svein of Denmark that he should in spring come north to the Gaut Elf River, there to fight it out and dispose of their lands, so that one of them should have both kingdoms.

Chapter 60. King Harald Is Delayed by a Storm

That winter King Harald summoned a total levy in Norway. And when spring came, a large army collected. Then King Harald ordered the large ship to be launched in the Nith River and had the dragon head erected on it. Then Thjóthólf the Skald spoke this verse:

487. Lo! I saw launched, fair one, (120.)
lordly ship in the river:
pridefully its panelled
prow rides on the water;
golden shines the shapely
ship since from its moorings
floated, flaming-maned, with
flanks all gilt, the dragon.

Then King Harald got that vessel shipshape and made ready for his expedition. And when all ready he steered the ship out of the river [into the fjord]. Much care was bestowed on the management of the oars. As says Thjóthólf:

488. Betimes tosses off the (121.)
tent-flaps, on a Saturday,
the leader-in-war, as ladies
look from the town on his sailing:
steers his stag-of-billows
straightway seaward, while the
long oars of his lads do
lash the briny waters.

489. Well in time his warriors (122.)
wield the slender sweeps as
eyes the maid the oar-blades'
even course with wonder:
ply they will in peace their
pitchblack oars ere that in
shower-of-darts are shivered,
shapely maid, their row-tools.

490. Much ill will suffer oaken (123.)
oar-locks, ere by rowers

seventy sweeps from stormy
sea be lifted sithen:
onward, Northmen urge the
iron-mailed great dragon,
like as, with outspread wings, an
eagle, on hailstruck sea-stream.

King Harald sailed his fleet south along the land, summoning a levy both of men and ships. But when they advanced east in Vík they encountered strong head-winds, so that the fleet was forced to anchor in many places, both by out-islands and in the bays. As says Thjóthólf:

491. Sheltering shores beneath lie (124.)
shield-rimmed galleys, storm-tossed.
Girds the levy's lord the
land with plank-built warships.
Landlocked lies the fleet in
lea of wooded hillocks,
'gainst scathe by every skerry
screened and safely harbored.

But in the great gale that beset them the large ship needed good anchor cables. As says Thjóthólf:

492. Cleaves the king's ship's iron (125.)
keel the pounding billows.
Stand in good stead cables
stout to hold the sea-steed.
Unkind is the oak's-scourge¹ to
anchor-flukes, the curved ones:
both nasty gale and nibbed rock
gnaw at the crooked iron.

But when a favorable breeze sprang up, King Harald with his fleet sailed east [south] to the Gaut Elf River and arrived there in the evening. As says Thjóthólf:

493. Swept Harald his sail-craft (126.)
swiftly toward the River.
Passed Norway's king the night quite
near to Denmark's border.
There he has a thing² at
Thumli³ with Svein Úlfsson,

owing to ravens, unless
off the Danes do hie them.

Chapter 61. King Harald Places His Fleet in Battle Array

But when the Danes learned that the Norwegian fleet had come, then all fled who could. The Norwegians were told that the Danish king also had called out his forces and lay in the south by Funen and the Smaller Islands.¹ But when King Harald learned that King Svein did not intend to meet him in battle as agreed upon, he followed the same plan as before, letting the levy of farmers return home, and fully manning a hundred and fifty [180] ships. Thereupon he proceeded south along Halland, ravaging the countryside. He anchored in the Lófufjord² and harried from there.

Shortly after, King Svein with his fleet approached. He had three hundred [360] ships. And when the Norwegians sighted this fleet, King Harald had the fleet called together. Many said that it was best to flee, that it was impossible to fight that force. The king answered, “Rather shall we all of us fall, one upon the other, than flee.” As says Stein Herdísarson:³

494. This spoke who, methought, would (127.)
thefully prove him a leader:
“Put away all pleas for
peace,” he said, “as hopeless.”
“Rather,” said the ruler—
readied men their weapons—
“than flee shall each, unfaltering
fall upon the other.”

Thereupon King Harald drew up his fleet in order for the attack. His own great dragon ship he put in the middle of his line. As says Thjóthólf:

495. At the head, free-handed (128.)
Harald, to wolves friendly—
fore-front was that of our
fleet—placed his dragon.

That vessel was excellently equipped and had a numerous crew. As says Thjóthólf:

496. Fast and fearless bade the (129.)
folk-ruler his men stand.
Round him arrayed, warriors
raised their shields to ward him.

Sheathed with blood-red shields his
ship the dauntless leader
tightly, so that touched one
t' other—by the Níza River.

Úlf, the king's marshal, placed his ship by one side of the royal ship, ordering his men to have it well forward. Stein Herdísarson was aboard Úlf's ship. He spoke this verse:

497. Egged us on to battle (130.)
Úlf, the sea-king's marshal,
spears when sped about us,
spurring us to row fast.
Bade the king's friend brave to
bring his ship well forward,
alongside with his lord's to
lie; which the crew did willing.

Earl Hákon Ívarsson was placed outermost in one wing. He had a great many ships under him with well-equipped crews. And outermost in the other wing were the chieftains from the Trondheim District. They also had a great and fine fleet.

Chapter 62. King Svein with a Great Fleet Opposes Harald

King Svein likewise arrayed his forces for battle. He laid his ship in the middle of the front against that of King Harald, and right next to his was Earl Finn Árnason's ship; and close to them was arrayed that part of the Danish force which was bravest and best equipped. Then both parties fastened together with hawsers the central portions of their fleet. But because the fleet was so large, there was such a multitude of ships that a great many of them had to navigate independently, each moving to the attack as its skipper chose; and there was a great difference in that respect. Still, though the odds were great, both sides had a tremendous host. There were six earls in King Svein's fleet. As said Stein Herdísarson:

498. Ran great risks the valiant (131.)
ruler of Thronders, when that,
with vessels half two-hundred
he awaited Svein's fleet.
Eftsoons, Leire's liege-lord
likewise thither, wroth in
mind, with kelpland's-coursers¹
came fully three hundred.

Chapter 63. The Danish Fleet Is Defeated

King Harald had the trumpets sounded as soon as his ships were ready for battle and had his men row to the attack. As says Stein Herdísarson:

499. Hindered Harald, at Níz' mouth, (132.)
high-souled Úlf's son's progress.
Unstinting stand made there
strife-loving Norway's ruler.
Sword-girt, the sea-king's henchmen
smartly rowed by Halland,
while welled wound-dew steaming
warm upon the waters.

Then the battle began with great fury. Both kings urged their men on. As says Stein Herdísarson:

500. Did both the brave Skyldings¹ (133.)
bid men, both unshielded—
hand to hand then fought the
hosts—to give no quarter.
Reeking red blood dripped from
ring-sarks—death it boded
to the fey—as flew in
fray both stones and arrows.

1062 It was late in the day when they closed and the battle lasted all night.
King Harald for a long time shot with his bow. As says Thjóthólf:

501. All night long the liege-lord (134.)
let the arrows fly from
yew-bow on shining shields—the
shafts pierced warriors' mail-coats.
Bloody axes bit through
byrnies, while stinging arrows
stabbed through stained shields—grew
storm-of-darts from the Dragon.²

Earl Hákon and his force had not fastened their ships together and rowed at those Danish ships which fought singly; and every ship he fastened himself to he cleared of its crew. But when the Danes observed that, then everyone drew away from the earl. He pursued the Danes as they retreated, and they were about to

flee. At that juncture a skiff approached the earl's ship; they called to him from it and told him that the other wing [of Harald's fleet] was yielding ground and that many had fallen there. Thereupon the earl rowed in that direction and made a sharp attack, so that the Danes again retreated with their ships. The earl pursued the same course all night long, attacking where there was most need; and wherever he came, there was no resisting him. Hákon rowed on the outside of the battle. Toward the latter part of the night the general flight of the Danes began, because by then King Harald with his force had boarded King Svein's ship, and it was cleared so thoroughly of its crew that all men fell except those who jumped overboard. As says Arnór the Earls' Skald:

502. His swift-sailing ship left (135.)
Svein not without struggle:
hard iron against helmets,
heard I, rang in combat.
Crewless floated the fearless
friend-of-Jutes'³ swift warship,
ere that the atheling fled, with
all its warriors fallen.

But as soon as the banner of Svein had fallen and his ship was cleared of its crew, then all his host fled, and some fell. And on the ships which were fastened together, men jumped overboard while some took refuge on other ships which had not been fastened together. But all of Svein's men who could, rowed away. Then there was great carnage. But at the point where the battle between the kings themselves had taken place and where most ships were fastened together, more than seventy vessels of King Svein's fleet lay cleared of their crews. As says Thjóthólf:

503. 'Tis told how taken, in the (136.)
twinkling of an eye, were
swift ships seventy, at least, of
Svein's by valiant leader.

King Harald rowed in pursuit of the Danes, but that was not easy, because the ships were crowded together so thickly that it was difficult to proceed. Earl Finn refused to flee, and was captured. Also, his sight was poor. As says Thjóthólf:

504. Nowise owes Svein success to (137.)
six earls, though in forefront
bravely battling in the bitter storm-of-arrows.

Dying Danes among, but
dauntless, in midcolumn
fighting, loath to flee, was
Finn Árnason captured.

Chapter 64. Earl Hákon Ívarsson Helps King Svein to Escape

Earl Hákon lagged behind with his ship when the king with the remainder of the fleet pursued the enemy, because the earl's ship could not push forward with all the ships barring his way. At that time a man in a boat rowed toward the earl's ship and made fast along the poop. He was a large man, and had a wide hood over his face. He called up to the ship, "Where is the earl?" The earl was in the stern, stopping a man's bleeding. He looked at the man with the hood and asked his name. He replied, "Vandráth¹ is here. Speak with me, earl!" The earl leaned down to him over the ship's side. The man in the boat said: "I would ask my life of you, if you will grant it."

The earl straightened up and designated two men, both close friends of his, and said, "Get into the boat and bring Vandráth to land. Accompany him to Farmer Karl, my friend, and tell him by way of token to let Vandráth have the horse I gave Karl day before yesterday, together with the saddle, and tell him to let his son accompany Vandráth."

They got into the boat and took to the oars, with Vandráth steering. This occurred at dawn of day. There was at that time a great moving to and fro of ships, some rowing to land, some out to sea, both big and little ships. Vandráth steered where there seemed most passageway between the ships. But whenever Norwegian ships rowed near them the earl's men said who they were, so all let them pass wherever they wanted. Vandráth steered along the land, but did not make for shore until they had passed the great mass of ships. Then they went up on land to Karl's farm as it began to be daylight. They went into the room. There they found Karl, who had just dressed himself. The earl's men told him their message. Karl told them to eat first. He had the table set for them and gave them water to wash their hands.

Then the lady of the house entered the room and said right away, "Good heavens, we can't get sleep or rest tonight what with all the shouting and noise."

Karl replied, "Don't you know that the kings battled tonight?"

She asked, "Who had the upper hand?"

Karl answered, "The Norwegians were victorious."

"Then I suppose our king fled once more," she said.

Karl answered, "It is not known whether he fell or fled."

She said, "A wretched king we have. He is both halt² and a coward."

Then Vandráth said "It isn't that the king is a coward though he is not

Then Vandr ath said, "I wish that the king is a coward though he is not victorious."

Vandr ath was the last to wash his hands, but when he took the towel he dried them on the middle of it. The lady of the house took hold of it and snatched it from him. She said: "You have no manners. It is boorish to wet all the towel."

[Vandr ath answered, "I shall yet come to a place where I can dry my hands on the middle of a towel."] ³ Then Karl set the table before them, and Vandr ath seated himself in the middle.

They ate for a while, and afterwards went outside. There they found a horse all ready and the son of the farmer prepared to accompany him, seated on another horse. They rode away to the forest; but the earl's men got into their boat and rowed out to the earl's ship.

Chapter 65. King Harald Learns of King Svein's Escape

King Harald and his fleet pursued the enemy for a while, then rowed back to the ships that had been cleared. They searched these and found a great many corpses but not the body of the king. Yet they thought he had fallen. Then King Harald had his own dead attended to and the wounds of those dressed who needed it. Thereupon he had the bodies of King Svein's men brought to land, and sent word to the farmers that they were to bury them. Then he had the booty divided. He stayed there for some time. Then he learned that King Svein had escaped to Seeland and that all those who had fled from the battle had joined him, together with many others and that he had gotten together an innumerable army.

Chapter 66. King Harald Gives Quarter to Finn Árnason

Earl Finn was captured in the battle, as was written before. He was brought before the king. King Harald was very merry then and said, “Here we meet now, Finn, as we did lately, in Norway. The Danish men have not stood firm about you, and [now] the Norwegians are put to the trouble to drag you around with them, blind as you are, in order to keep you alive.”

Then the earl answered, “Much ill the Norwegians are made to do, and worst, all that you order them to do.”

Then said King Harald, “Will you accept quarter, though you don’t deserve it?”

Then the earl said, “Not from you, dog!”

The king said, “Will you then accept quarter from your kinsman, Magnús?” Magnús, the king’s son, was there and had command of a ship.

Then the earl answered, “How can that whelp give quarter?”

Then the king laughed and thought it fun to tease him, and said, “Will you accept quarter from your kinswoman, Thóra?”

Then the earl said, “Is she here?”

“Here she is,” said the king.

Then the earl spoke the abusive [and uncourtly] words which have been remembered ever since and show how furious he was so that he could not put restraint on his language, “No wonder you bit savagely, seeing that mare was with you.”

Finn’s life was spared, and King Harald had him along for a while. Finn showed himself rather dejected and was gruff in his language. Then King Harald said to him, “I can see, Finn, that you do not want to be friends with me and your kinsfolk. I shall now give you permission to join Svein, your king.”

The earl answered, “That I accept, and the more thankfully the sooner I get away from here.” Thereupon the king had the earl and his company put to land. The people of Halland received him well. Then King Harald steered his fleet north to Norway, first to Ósló, and gave leave to all to go home if they wanted to.

Chapter 67. King Svein Rewards Farmer Karl

We are told that King Svein resided in Denmark the following winter and maintained his rule there as before. In winter he sent men north [east] to Halland to fetch Karl and his wife. And when they arrived at the king's court he called Karl to him and asked him whether he recognized him or thought he had seen him before.

Karl answered, "I know you now, sire, and I knew you before, as soon as I saw you, and I thank God that the little help I gave you was of use to you."

The king answered, "I owe you my life from that day on. I shall reward you, first, by giving you the estate in Seeland which you may choose to have; and also, I shall raise you to great honor if you prove worthy of it."

Karl thanked the king greatly for his words and said that—"there is still one wish I would have granted me." The king asked what that might be. Karl said, "I shall ask you, sire, to let me have my wife with me."

The king gave this answer, "That I shall not grant you, because I shall procure you a much better wife and a wiser one. But your wife might get along with the small farm you had before. That will provide her with sustenance."

The king gave him a large and excellent estate and procured him a good match, and he grew to be a man of importance. This incident became favorably known and was spread far and wide. It became known in Norway.

Chapter 68. King Harald's Jealousy of Earl Hákon Is Aroused

The winter following the battle of Níz River King Harald resided in Ósló. In fall, when the fleet had returned from the south, there was much talk about the battle which had taken place outside the Níz River, and many stories were told. Everyone who had been in it thought he could tell something about it. It happened one time that some men sat in an under-room drinking and became very talkative. They talked about the battle of Níz River and also, of who had most distinguished himself there. They were all of one opinion, that no one had fought there like Earl Hákon—“he was the keenest fighter and the most skilful and the luckiest, and all he did was of the greatest help, and he won the victory.”

King Harald happened to be outside in the yard, talking with some men. Then he walked to the door of the room and said, “Everyone here would now like to be called Hákon,” and went his way.

Chapter 69. Earl Hákon Is Forewarned of the King's Intention to Kill Him

Earl Hákon journeyed to Uppland in the fall and during the winter resided in his domain. He was exceedingly popular with the Upplendings. One time when spring was approaching and men sat drinking, it happened that the talk again turned to the battle of the Níz River. There was much praise for Earl Hákon, but some commended others no less. After they had talked about that for a while, a man spoke up and said, "It may be that others beside Earl Hákon fought bravely outside the Níz River; yet no one is likely to have had as much luck as he." The men said that the greatest piece of good fortune was that he had put to flight many of the Danes. The same man replied, "A greater piece of good fortune it was that he saved King Svein's life."

One of the men answered, "You probably don't know that for sure."

He replied, "I know it for sure, because I was told by one of the men who conveyed the king to land."

And then the saying proved true that "many are the king's ears": this was told the king, and straightway he had many horses saddled, and at once set out at night with two hundred [240] men.

They met some men who were going to the town with flour and malt. A certain man with the name of Gamal was in the king's company. He rode up to one of the farmers who was an acquaintance of his. They had some conversation by themselves. Gamal said, "I will give you money if you will ride to Earl Hákon the fastest you can by secret paths and the shortest way you know, and tell him that the king means to kill him. Because the king knows now that the earl helped King Svein to the land near the River Níz."

And they agreed on this. The farmer rode and came to the earl who was sitting up drinking, and had not yet gone to sleep. And when the farmer had delivered his message the earl rose at once, and all his men. The earl had all his movable property removed from his estate to the woods. Also all his men left the place during the night before the king arrived. The king stayed there during the night; but Earl Hákon rode on his way till he came to King Steinkel east in Sweden; and there he remained during the summer. King Harald afterwards returned to the town. He journeyed to Trondheim in summer, and dwelt there during the summer with his followers, but in fall returned east to Vík.

Chapter 70. The King Is Denied His Revenues from the Upplands

Earl Hákon straightway returned to Uppland in summer as soon as he learned that the king had journeyed north, and stayed there till the king returned to the south. Thereupon the earl journeyed east to Vermaland and dwelt there a long time during the winter. King Steinkel gave the earl the revenues from that district. As winter wore on he journeyed west, to Raumaríki, accompanied by a great host which the people from Gautland and Vermaland had gotten together for him. Then he levied the rents and revenues from Uppland which belonged to him. Thereupon he returned east to Gautland and remained there in the spring following.

King Harald resided in Ósló during the winter and sent his men to the Uppland districts to fetch the revenues, rents, and fines due him. But the Uppland people said that they would pay all their just dues, and deliver them into Earl Hákon's hands, as long as he lived and had not forfeited either his life or his possessions; and that winter the king received no revenues from that district.

Chapter 71. King Harald and King Svein Conclude Peace

That same winter, messages and emissaries fared between Norway and Denmark, with the intent that both Norwegians and Danes wished to arrange for peace and agreements between them and prayed the kings to be agreeable to that. These exchanges of messages seemed likely to bring about an agreement, and the result was that a meeting to come to terms about peace was set at the [Gaut Elf] River between King Harald and King Svein. And when spring came, both kings collected many troops and ships for the journey; and in one *flokk* the skald¹ tells about both kings and their expeditions:

505. Steers from Seeland's strands with (138.)
steeds-of-blueland² he who
feeds the wolves; his fleet does
fence the Danish islands.
Gash the gold-emblazoned
galleons the waters
west of Halland while that
heavy seas assail them.

506. Oft, to oaths true, Harald (139.)
orders out his navy.
Svein, too, the Sound furrows,
seeking the other ruler.
Large the force the liege of
loyal Danes all summoned,
the wolves' feeder, with fleet who
fences all bays to southward.

Here we are told that these two kings came to the appointed meeting agreed on between them, and that both met at the boundary, as is told in this verse:

507. South you sailed then, noble (140.)
sire, as all Danes wanted:
no less the cause for coming,
king, than for a battle!
Northward sailing, Svein did
seek his kingdom's border—
windy weather swept the

wide lands—to meet Harald.

And when the kings met, men began to talk about peace between them; and no sooner was this matter broached than many complained about the great havoc they had suffered from pillage, harrying, and loss of life. And they held forth long about this as is told in these verses:

508. As they met, they uttered (141.)
angry words between them,
withering words outspoken,
wounding doughty yeomen.
Men who quit not quarrelling
constantly will hardly—
rises the rulers' vainglory—
reach a fair agreement.

509. Parlous to peace grows the (142.)
princes' rankling dudgeon.
Wise men wanting truce will
weigh all matters justly.
'Tis needful now to make this
known to the folk-rulers:
stubbornness will stir up
strife between the sea-kings.

Finally the most eminent men and the wisest intervened. Then a reconciliation of the two kings was brought about to this effect that Harald was to have Norway, and Svein, Denmark, to the boundaries which had been heretofore between Norway and Denmark. Neither was to make amends to the other. Incursions were to stop, and he who had made gains was to hold onto them. And this peace was to be in force as long as they lived. This agreement was confirmed by oaths. The kings gave each other hostages, as is told in this verse:

510. Heard I have, how, gladly (143.)
Harald and Svein each did
give the other—God had
granted it—hostages.
May all their oaths kept be
altogether, nor broken
e'er the pact of peace by
people sworn as witness.

King Harald fared north to Norway with his force and King Svein sailed

King Harald ruled north to Norway with his force, and King Svein ruled south to Denmark.

Chapter 72. Harald Defeats Earl Hákon—Thormóth Eindrithason Slays Hall

King Harald stayed in the district of Vík in summer, and sent his men to Uppland to gather the dues and taxes owing to him there. Then the farmers there did not pay the dues they owed the king and declared they would wait with everything till Earl Hákon returned, if indeed he did.

Earl Hákon at that time was inland in Gautland with a great host. When summer was nearly gone, King Harald sailed south to Konungahella. There he gathered all the light, fleet ships he could obtain and rowed up the river. He portaged around the Falls¹ and moved his ships into Lake Vænir, then rowed east across the lake to where he had heard Earl Hákon was.

But when the earl learned about the approach of the king he came down toward the lake, unwilling that the king should harry there. Earl Hákon had a considerable force which the people of Gautland had procured for him. King Harald anchored his ships in some large river and made ready to go on land, leaving behind some of his force to guard the ships. The king himself and some of his troops rode, but by far the most walked. They had to pass through some woods, and then they encountered some swamps with bushes growing in them, and then some stony ridges. And when they had gotten up on a ridge they saw the army of the earl. A swamp lay between them. Then both drew up their battle array. Then the king ordered his men to remain sitting on the hill—“let us first see if they mean to attack us. Hákon is impatient,” he said. It was frosty weather, with some driving snow. Harald and his men sat behind their shields, but the men from Gautland were scantily clad and became chilled. The earl bade them wait till the king attacked them, so that they were on a level with them. Earl Hákon used those battle flags which King Magnús Ólafsson had possessed.

The lawman of the Gauts was called Thorvith. He sat on a horse, and the reins were tethered to a stump that stood in the swamp. He spoke and said, “God knows we have here a great force and exceedingly brave men. Let King Steinkel learn that we give good support to this excellent earl. I am sure that if the Norwegians attack us we shall make stanch resistance. But if your young men grumble and will not wait, then let us run no farther than to this brook here. And if the young men keep on grumbling, as I am sure will not be the case, then let us not run farther than to that hill.”

Just then the Norwegian force stood up and raised their war whoop, beating their shields. Thereupon the Gauts raised their war whoop. But the lawman’s

norse took fright at the war whoop and jerked the reins so hard that the stump was pulled out and hit the lawman on the head. He shouted, "Shoot, you wretch of a Norwegian," and galloped away.

King Harald had before told his troops, "Though we shout and halloo, let us not go down the hill before they come on against us."

Now as soon as his men raised their war whoop, the earl had his standard borne before him. But when they arrived at the foot of the hill the king's men rushed down on them. Then part of the earl's force fell and part fled. The Norwegians did not push the pursuit long because it was late in the day. They captured there Earl Hákon's standard and such booty of weapons and garments as they could. The king had both standards borne before him when he returned [to the lake]. They discussed whether the earl might have fallen. But when they rode down through the forest only one could ride [along the path] at one time. A man leapt across the path and ran his halberd through the man who carried the earl's standard. He seized the standard-pole and disappeared into the forest with the standard. But when the king was told this, he said, "The earl is alive! Bring me my coat of mail!"

Then the king rode to his ships in the night. Many said that the earl had taken his revenge. Then Thjóthólf spoke this verse:

511. Fallen the flock of Steinkel's (144.)
followers, given to Hel, who—
brought the king² it about thus—
bid were to help Hákon.
But since help from him³ did
hapless prove, says he who
thought that best, the baron
beat a retreat quickly.

King Harald passed the remainder of the night on his ships; but in the morning, when dawn came, it was seen that ice had formed about the ships, and of such thickness that one could walk around them. Then the king commanded his men to chop the ice from the ships [to make a way] out into open water. So men took to chopping the ice. Magnús, King Harald's son, steered the ship which lay farthest down the river and nearest to open water. Now when the men had cleared nearly all the ice away, a man ran along over the ice to where it was to be cut away and began to chop like one possessed. Then somebody said, "Now you can see as always that no one is as good to lend a hand in whatever is called for as is Hall, the Slayer of Kothrán. Just look how he chops the ice."

Now there was a man on Magnús' ship called Thormóth Eindrithason, and when he heard the name of Hall, the Slayer of Kothrán, he ran up to Hall and struck him a mortal blow. Kothrán was the son of Guthmund, the son of Eyólf; and Valgerth, the sister of Guthmund, was the mother of Jórunn, the mother of Thormóth. Thormóth was one year old when Kothrán was slain, and he had never seen Hall Ótryggson before.



Thormóth Eindrithason slays Hall on the ice.

By that time the ice was chopped out to open water and Magnús moved his ship into it. He hoisted sail at once and sailed west across the lake. But the king's ship lay inmost [in the clearing made in the ice] and issued last. Hall had been a follower of the king and a great favorite of his, so the king was most furious. It was late in the day when he made harbor, and by that time Magnús had helped the slayer to escape into the woods, and now offered amends for him. But the king almost came to blows with Magnús and his men before mutual friends brought about a reconciliation.

Chapter 73. The King Avenges Himself on the Uppland Farmers

That winter, King Harald journeyed to Raumaríki with a great host. He accused the farmers of having withheld from him the dues and taxes and of having aided his enemy in hostile actions against him. He had the farmers seized. Some he had maimed, others killed, and of many he confiscated all their property. All those who could, fled. He had the district burned and laid waste far and wide. As says Thjóthólf:

512. Direly the Danes' humbler (145.)
dealt with Raumaríki:
harshly Harald's men did
harry 'mong the franklins.
Farms were fired in vengeance
fierce by the king, while tow'ring
flames took down the farmers'
froward bearing toward him.

Thereupon King Harald marched up to Heithmork, burning and ravaging there no less than in Raumaríki. From there he proceeded to Hathaland, and thence to Hringaríki, burning and harrying. As says Thjóthólf:

513. Burned the goods of grudging (146.)
grangers, fire seized shingles.
The unbeaten battle-lord dealt
blows to men of Heithmork.
Begged for their lives luckless
landholders of Hringshire;
nor was lifted Logi's-
loathly-doom¹ ere they rued it.

After that, the farmers submitted unconditionally to the king.

Chapter 74. The King's Feud with the People of Uppland Continues

After the death of King Magnús, fifteen years elapsed before the battle off Níz River, and two more before Harald and Svein came to an agreement. As says Thjóthólf: (147.) 514. Put the prince an end now—
peace began the third year—
were bucklers battered on Danish
beaches—to horrid warfare.

After this peace with Denmark, the feud of the king with the people of the Uppland districts lasted for a year and a half. As says Thjóthólf: (148.) 515. Hard is 't to tell, how that,
high-handed, the atheling
taught the oafs of Uppland
idle to keep their ploughshares.¹
Regard so great has the
gallant chieftain won him,
these three half-years, that, hear I,
hardly will't be forgotten.

Chapter 75. Of the Sons of King Eadward of England

Eadward, the son of Æthelred, ruled over England after the death of his brother Hortha-Knúť. He was named Eadward the Good. And he was that. The mother of King Eadward was Queen Emma, daughter of Richard, earl of Rouen. Her brother was Earl Robert, the father of William the Bastard, who then was duke of Rouen in Normandy. King Eadward was married to Queen Eadgyth, the daughter of Earl Godwine, the son of Wulfnoth. The brothers of Eadgyth were Earl Tostig—he was the oldest—the second, Earl Morkere, the third, Earl Wæltheow, the fourth, Earl Svein, the fifth, Harold. He was the youngest. He was brought up at the court of King Eadward as his foster son. The king loved him exceedingly and adopted him as his son, being childless himself.

Chapter 76. Harold, the Son of Earl Godwine, Is Engaged to Earl William's Daughter

One summer Harold, the son of Godwine, was to journey to Bretland [Wales] by ship. But when they left harbor they had headwinds and were driven out to sea. They reached land to the west [south] in Normandy after having weathered a dangerous storm. They anchored by the town of Rouen and found there Earl William. He received Harold and his followers graciously. Harold remained there a long time during the fall, enjoying the earl's hospitality, because the storms continued and it was not feasible to go out to sea.

But when winter approached, the earl and Harold discussed the latter's remaining there during the winter. Harold sat in the high-seat, with the earl on one side and the earl's wife on the other. She was more beautiful than any other woman men had known. At table they all always talked together for entertainment. The earl most often went to bed early, but Harold sat up long evenings, talking with the earl's wife. Thus it continued for a long time during the winter. One time when they were conversing together she said, "Now the earl has spoken to me about it and asked what we talked about so constantly, and now he is furious."

Harold replied, "Then we shall let him know by the soonest what we have been talking about." The next day Harold asked the earl to speak with him, and they went into the conference room. The earl's wife and their councillors were present also. Then Harold spoke as follows: "I shall have to tell you, earl, that more was in my mind in coming here than I have given you to understand. It is my intention to ask for the hand of your daughter in marriage. This I have frequently discussed with her mother, and she has promised to support my suit with you."

Now as soon as Harold had proposed this, all those who heard it were favorably inclined and lent their support to it before the earl. And the outcome of it was that the maiden was betrothed to Harold. But because she was young, it was agreed that they were to wait several years for the marriage.

Chapter 77. By a Ruse Harold Is Made King of England

Now when spring came, Harold got his ship ready for his departure. The earl and he parted as great friends. Harold sailed to England and joined King Eadward's court, and never afterwards returned to France to fetch his bride. Eadward was king of England for twenty-three years and died of a malady in London on the fifth of January (1066). He was buried in Saint Paul's Church, and Englishmen considered him a saint.

At that time the sons of Earl Godwine were the most powerful men in England. Tostig had been put in command of the army of the king of England; and he was charged with the defence of the country when the king began to grow aged. He was chief over all the other earls. Harold his brother always was nearest [to the king] in all services, and guarded all the treasures of the king.

It is told that when the king was near death, Harold was present with few others. Then Harold bent down over the king and said, "I call you all to witness that the king just now gave me the kingdom and all power in England." A short while afterwards the king's [lifeless] body was lifted out of the bed. The same day there was a meeting of the chieftains, and the succession to the kingship was discussed. Then Harold produced his witnesses that King Eadward in his dying hour had bestowed the kingdom on him. And the meeting ended with Harold being chosen king and consecrated as such on the thirteenth day afterwards in Saint Paul's Church. Then all chieftains swore allegiance to him, and all the people.

But when Earl Tostig, his brother, learned of that he took it in ill part, thinking he was no less entitled to the crown. "It is my wish," he said, "that the chieftains of the land choose him as king whom they deem most fitting." And these words passed between the brothers. King Harold declared that he would not surrender the crown, seeing that he now had ascended the throne in the place designated for that, and had since been anointed and consecrated as king. Also, he had on his side the great majority of the people. Besides, he had all the king's treasures in his keeping.

Chapter 78. Earl Tostig Seeks King Svein's Help

When Harold became aware that Tostig, his brother, intended to deprive him of the crown, he grew mistrustful of him, because Tostig was an astute man as well as a great warrior and a good friend of important chieftains. Then King Harold deprived Earl Tostig of his command of the army and of all the power greater than other earls in the land which he had before. Earl Tostig would under no circumstances submit to be the underling of his brother born of the same parents. So he left the country with his force and sailed south over the sea to Flanders, remained there for a while, then sailed to Frisia, and from there to Denmark to meet King Svein, his kinsman. Earl Úlf, King Svein's father, was the brother of Eadgytha, the mother of Earl Tostig. Earl Tostig asked King Svein for assistance and armed support. King Svein offered him his hospitality and an earldom in Denmark sufficient to make him an honored chieftain there.

The earl made this reply: "I long to return to England and to my possessions there. And if I obtain no support for that from you, sir king, then I would rather make this offer to you to assist you with all the force on which I can count in England, if you will with your Danish fleet sail to England to win that land, as did Knút, your mother's brother."

The king answered, "So much am I a lesser man than my kinsman, King Knút, that I am scarcely able to hold my power in Denmark against the Norwegians. Knút the Old obtained Denmark by inheritance, and gained England by warfare and battle; and yet for a time it looked as though he might lose his life there; and Norway he gained without a blow. Now I know my limitations, [and wish] to live in accordance with my circumscribed power, rather than vie with the prowess of my kinsman, King Knút."

Then the earl said, "The outcome of my business here is less than I had thought you would make it, so powerful a man as you are, and considering the need I, your kinsman, have [of your aid]. Now I may possibly seek friendly support in a quarter which is more unlikely. Yet it may well be that I shall find the chieftain who is less faint-hearted than you to engage in a great enterprise, sir king."

After that the king and the earl parted in none too cordial a fashion.

Chapter 79. Earl Tostig Wins over King Harald to Help Him

Then Earl Tostig turned to another direction and ended up in Norway, where he sought out King Harald. He was in the district of Vík. And when they met, the earl brought up his business before the king, telling him all about his journey after leaving England, and asked the king to support him in regaining his kingdom in England. The king replied, saying that Norwegians would hardly be eager to sail to England and harry there, only to have an English overlord. "It is people's opinion," he said, "that the English are not altogether reliable."

The earl replied, "I wonder if it is true, as I have heard people say in England, that King Magnús, your kinsman, sent messengers to King Eadward, and that their message was that King Magnús was entitled to England as well as to Denmark which he inherited after Hortha-Knútt, according to agreements between them?"

The king replied, "Why, then, did he not have possession of it if he had a right to it?"

The earl said, "Why do you not possess Denmark as King Magnús did before you?"

The king said, "The Danes do not need to brag to us Norwegians. Many a mark have we left on those kinsmen of yours."

Then the earl said, "If you will not tell me, then I shall tell you: King Magnús took possession of Denmark, because the chiefs of that land aided him; and you did not, because all the people stood against you. King Magnús did not fight to gain England, because all the people wanted Eadward for king. If you wish to gain possession of England, then I may bring it about that most of the chieftains in England will be on your side and support you. As against my brother Harold, I lack only the royal title. All men know that no greater warrior has arisen in the North than you; and it seems strange to me that you fought fifteen years to gain possession of Denmark and don't want to have England which is yours for the having."

King Harald weighed closely what the earl said, and he concluded that much the earl had said was true; and also, he was eager to gain possession of that kingdom. Thereafter the king and the earl talked together long and often, and they agreed on this plan that in the summer following they would sail to England and win possession of it.

King Harald sent word all about Norway, ordering out a half levy of men and ships. This became widely known, and many surmises were made as to how this

expedition would turn out. There were some who counted up all the great deeds of King Harald, and said nothing would be impossible for him; but some said that England would be difficult to conquer, having a great population and there being the army called in England “the king’s housecarls.” This consisted of men so valiant that one of them was better than two of Harald’s best men. Then Úlf, the king’s marshal, made answer with this verse:

516. Need no more king’s marshals (149.)
move about—I surely
boggle not at booty—on
board King Harald’s sea-steed,
if, linen-dight lady—
learned I otherwise in
youth—two yeomen were to
yield to one king’s housecarl.

Marshal Úlf died that spring. King Harald stood over his grave and said as he turned away, “There lies the man who was the most faithful and loyal of all to me.”

In spring Earl Tostig sailed west to Flanders to join the body of men who had followed him when he left England and that flock which gathered about him, both from England and there in Flanders.

Chapter 80. Gyrth's Foreboding Dream

The army of King Harald gathered in the Sólund Islands. But when the king was ready to sail from Nitharós he first went to the shrine of King Ólaf. He opened it, clipped the king's hair and nails, and then locked it again and threw the key out into the Nith River; nor has the shrine of Holy King Ólaf been opened since that time. Thirty-five years had elapsed since his fall. His life in this world also had lasted thirty-five years.

King Harald sailed south with his fleet to join the force assembled there. A huge fleet was gathered there. It is said that King Harald had nearly two hundred [240] ships, not counting merchant ships carrying provisions and lesser vessels.

When they lay in the Sólund Islands a certain man called Gyrth, who was stationed on the king's ship, had a dream. It seemed to him that he was on the king's ship and looked up on an island and there stood a big troll woman who had a sword in one hand and a trough in the other. And it seemed to him he looked over all their ships and that a bird sat on every prow. These were all eagles and ravens. The troll woman spoke this verse: (150.)

517. That wot I well: enticed is
westward the king, to
fore-gather—my gain it is—with
glorious knuckles many.¹
Keen-eyed carrion birds will
carve them plenteous tid-bits,
and famished ravens feast on
fallen—we're leagued ever.²

Chapter 81. Thóρθ's Warning Dream

A certain man by the name of Thóρθ was on a ship not far from that of the king. One night he dreamed that he saw King Harald's fleet come to land, and it seemed to him that land was England. On the land he saw an army in battle array, and it looked as though both parties prepared to do battle and had many banners aloft, and in front of the army of the inhabitants of that land a big troll woman rode on a wolf, and the wolf had the corpse of a man in his mouth, and blood dripping from his chops, and when he had eaten that man she tossed another one into his jaws, and so with one after another, and he swallowed them all. She spoke this verse:

518. Red shield the troll shows as (151.)
shine forth swords for battle.
Seen is the dear lord's downfall
dire by etin¹ woman.
In wolf's wide jaws she tosses
warriors' bloody corpses;
ravening reddens his chops with
reeking gore of men slain,
the reeking gore of men slain.²

Chapter 82. King Harald Has a Warning Dream of Saint Óláf

Still further, King Harald dreamed one night that he was in Nitharós and met King Óláf, his brother, and that he spoke a verse for him: (152.) 519. Honor earned him portly

atheling¹ by his victories.

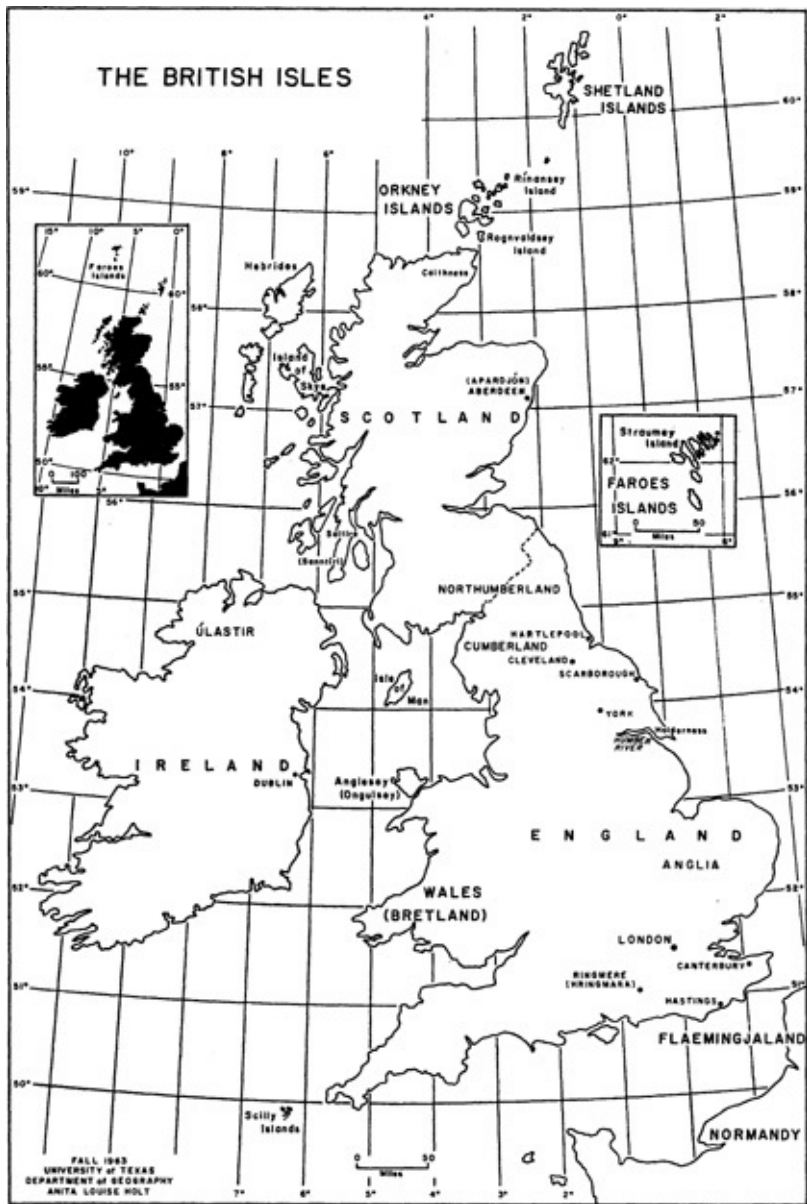
A holy death I had, on
homeland falling, glorious.

Fear I that, folk-ruler,
fey thou wilt be yonder,
gorging the greedy mount-of-
ghouls.² 'Tis not God's doing.

Many other dreams were told there, as well as other forebodings, most of them gloomy. Before sailing from Trondheim King Harald had his son Magnús proclaimed king, and set him on the throne before leaving the country. Thóra, the daughter of Thorberg, also remained behind, but Queen Ellisif went with him together with her two daughters, Mária and Ingigerth. Óláf, [another] son of King Harald, also left the country with him.

Chapter 83. King Harald Ravages the Coast of England

Now when King Harald had fully equipped his fleet and a favorable breeze sprang up he set out to sea, and made land in the Shetland Islands; but part of his fleet landed in the Orkneys. King Harald stopped in the Shetland Islands for a while, then sailed on to the Orkneys. And when departing from there he had a mighty host of men with him, including the Earls Pál and Erlend, the sons of Earl Thorfinn, but he left behind there Queen Ellisif and the daughters he had by her, Mária and Ingigerth. From there he sailed south along the coast of Scotland and England, and landed in the district of Cleveland. There he disembarked and at once began to ravage the country and bring it under subjection, without meeting any resistance. Thereupon King Harald besieged Scarborough and fought with its garrison. He went up on the cliff which is there and had a great fire made. And when it blazed high they took long gaff-poles and hurled brands upon the town. Then one house after the other began to blaze, and the whole town went up in flames. The Norwegians slew many there and took everything they laid hands on. The English then had no choice, if they wanted to save their lives, but to swear allegiance to King Harald. Then he made subject to him all the land where his course lay. Thereupon King Harald with all his army sailed south along the land and landed at Holderness. There, they met a force that had gathered to oppose him, they gave battle, and King Harald was victorious.



Chapter 84. The Earls Morkere and Wæltheow Oppose King Harald

Thereupon King Harald sailed to the Humber and up the river, and anchored there. At that time there were two earls in York, Morkere and his brother Wæltheow, with a huge army. King Harald lay in the Ouse when the army of the earls came down from the land to oppose him. Then the king went on land and began to array his army for battle. One wing stood on the bank of the river, the other was arrayed further up on land, and extended to a ditch. There was a swamp, deep and broad and full of water. The earls deployed their army down along the river with the whole body of their men. The royal banner was close by the river. There the king's men stood thickest, and the lines were thinnest by the ditch, with the troops he could least rely on. Then the earls proceeded down along the ditch. There the wing of the Norwegian army extending to the ditch gave way, and the English followed them up, thinking that the Norwegians were about to flee. That part of the English army was led by Morkere.

Chapter 85. King Harald Defeats the Earls

But when King Harald saw that the battle array of the English had come down along the ditch right opposite them, he had the trumpets blown and sharply urged on his men to the attack, raising his banner called Landwaster. And there so strong an attack was made by him that nothing held against it. Then there was a great slaughter among the earls' men. Soon their army took to flight. Some fled up or down along the river, but most leapt into the ditch. There the bodies of the fallen lay so thick that the Norwegians could walk dryshod over the swamp. There Earl Morkere lost his life. As says Stein Herdísarson:

520. Their lives lost there many, (153.)
left this world by drowning.
Mired in the marsh, lay by
Morkere young a legion.
Pursued the sea-king this
smitten host. They madly
fled before the brave king.
*Foremost under heaven—*¹

This *drápa* Stein Herdísarson composed about Óláf, the son of King Harald; and we are told here that Óláf took part in the battle with King Harald, his father. This is mentioned also in the poem called *Haraldsstikki*:²

521. Lay the fallen (154.)
in fen thickly,
Wæltheow's men, by
weapons slaughtered;
so that walk could
warlike Northmen
on dead bodies
dryshod across.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Earl Wæltheow and those who managed to escape fled to the fortified town of York. It had been a murderous battle. It took place on Wednesday, the day before Saint Matthew's Day [September 21st].

Chapter 86. The Town of York Surrenders to King Harald

Earl Tostig had come north from Flanders to join King Harald as soon as he invaded England, and the earl had been in all these battles. Then it came about, as he had told Harald when they had been together before, that a great many English flocked to them, kinsmen and friends of Earl Tostig, and gave the king much reinforcement.

After the battle just told of, all the people in the districts round about submitted to King Harald, but some fled. Then King Harald started to lay siege to the town [of York] and encamped with his army at Stamford Bridge. But because the king had won so great a victory against great chieftains and an overwhelming army, all the people were afraid and despaired of resistance. Then the townsmen decided to send messengers to King Harald in order to deliver themselves and their city into his power. It was arranged in such fashion that on Sunday King Harald and all his army advanced to the town, where the king and his men held an assembly to which came the men of the town. There all people submitted to King Harald, giving him as hostages the sons of eminent men, because Earl Tostig knew all the people in this town. Then the king after this easy victory went down to his ships and was of excellent cheer. An assembly was set for Monday early, in the city. Then King Harald was to appoint governors for the city and bestow fiefs and assign places of honor.

That same evening, after sunset, King Harold, the son of Godwine, approached the town from the south with an immense army and entered the town at the wish and with the consent of all its citizens. All gates were manned and all roads guarded, so that no information should reach the Norwegians. This army remained inside the fortification during the night.

Chapter 87. The Army of King Harold of England Approaches

On Monday [September 26th], when Harald Sigurtharson had eaten his fill at breakfast, he ordered the trumpets to be blown for going ashore. He got his army ready, deciding which troops were to go with him and which were to stay behind. Out of every detachment two men were ordered to go on land, for one to stay behind. Earl Tostig and his company made ready to go on land with King Harald; but left behind, to guard the ships, were Óláf, the king's son, together with the Orkney earls Pál and Erlend, and also Eystein Orri, the son of Thorberg Árnason, who at that time was the most eminent of all landed-men as well the most in favor with the king, who had promised him his daughter Mária in marriage.

The weather on that day was excellent, with hot sunshine. The men left their mail coats behind and went on land with their shields and helmets and halberds, and girt with their swords. Many also had bows and arrows. They were in excellent good spirits. But when they approached the town, a great army was seen riding against them. They saw the cloud of dust raised by horses, and under it, fine shields and shining coats of mail. Then the king stopped his army. He had Earl Tostig called to him and asked him what host that might be. The earl answered and said that it seemed to him that there rather was a likelihood of trouble, but it might be also that these were some of his kinsmen who were coming to ask for quarter and offer their friendship against the king's granting them protection and his trust. The king said that first they were to come to a halt and learn more about that army. They did so; and the army grew the larger the nearer it came, and it looked like gleaming ice as the weapons shone.

Chapter 88. King Harald Decides to Make a Stand

Then King Harald Sigurtharson said, “Let us now decide on some good and wise plan, because we can’t shut our eyes to the fact that this means trouble, for this is probably the king himself.”

Then the earl answered, “The first thing to do is to turn back the fastest we can to our ships for our men and our weapons, and then make a stand as best we can, or else let our ships defend us, for then horsemen have no power over us.”

King Harald replied, “I mean to follow another plan: Let us put three of our best men on the fastest horses and let them ride with all speed to inform our men, and then they will quickly come to our help—because the English shall have to expect the hardest fight rather than we suffer defeat.” Then the earl said that the king should have his way in this as in other matters, and that he too was unwilling to flee. Then King Harald had his banner Landwaster raised. Frírek was the name of the man who bore the banner.

Chapter 89. King Harald Puts His Army in Battle Array

Thereupon King Harald put his army in battle array, with the lines long and not deep. He bent the wings back so that they touched, so as to form a wide and thick ring everywhere even on the outside, shield by shield, and one above the other. The king with his retinue was inside the ring, with the banner—a picked force. At another place stood Earl Tostig with his troops. He had a different banner. The reason for this arrangement was that the king knew that the horsemen were wont to attack in small detachments and retreat at once. Now the king ordered that his retinue and that of the earl were to attack at the point where it was most needed—“but our archers also shall be there with us; and those men who stand in front are to set the ends of their spear shafts on the ground and turn the points toward the breast of the horsemen, if they ride against us; and those standing next behind them are to turn the points of their spears against the breast of their horses.”

Chapter 90. King Harald Is Thrown by His Horse

King Harold, the son of Godwine, had come there with an overwhelming army of both horsemen and foot soldiers. King Harald Sigurtharson then rode around his troops to examine how they were arrayed. He rode a black horse with a white mark on its forehead. The horse fell under him, and the king was thrown forward. He rose quickly and said, "A fall betokens luck on the journey!"

Then Harold, the king of the English, said to the Norwegians who were with him, "Did you recognize the big man who fell off his horse there, the one with the blue doublet and the shining helmet?"

"That is the king himself," they said.

The king of the English said, "A big man and stately; but more likely his good luck has deserted him."

Chapter 91. King Harold Offers Tostig a Third of His Kingdom

Twenty horsemen rode out in front of the army of the king's housecarls and toward the array of the Norwegians. They were in armor from head to foot, as were their horses. Then one of the riders spoke up: "Is Earl Tostig in this army?"

Tostig answered, "I shall not deny it, here you may see him."

Then one of the riders said, "Harold, your brother, sent you greetings and this message, that you shall have peace and all Northumberland; and rather than that you fight him he would give you a third of all the kingdom to share with him."

Thereupon the earl answered, "That is an offer different from the one of last winter, when I was shown contempt and hostility. If it had been made then, many a man would be alive who is dead now, and the king's power in England would stand on firmer ground. Now if I should accept this, what will he offer King Harald Sigurtharson for his pains?"

Then the horseman said, "He did say something about what he would grant him of England: seven feet of English soil or so much more as he is taller than other men."

Then the earl replied, "Go now, and tell King Harold to prepare for battle. This, the Norwegians shall not have to say about Earl Tostig, that he forsook King Harald Sigurtharson to join his enemies, the time he came to do battle west in England. Rather shall we all resolve to die with honor or else win England and victory." Then the horsemen rode back.

Thereupon King Harald Sigurtharson asked the earl, "Who was that man who spoke so well?"

The earl replied, "That was King Harold, the son of Godwine."

Then King Harald Sigurtharson said, "Too late were we told of that. They had approached our army so close that this Harold would not have lived to tell of our men's death."

Then the earl said, "That is true, sire; it was incautious for such a chieftain, and it might have been as you say. I saw that he wished to offer me peace and much power and that I would be the cause of his death if I told who he was. But I would rather that he slay me than I him."

Then King Harald Sigurtharson said to his men: "A little man that was, and proudly he stood in his stirrups."

It is told that King Harald Sigurtharson spoke this verse:

522. We stride forward, (115.)
fighting bravely,
though byrnieless,
'gainst blue-steel swords.
Helmets do shine—
I have not mine:¹
below in the ships
lies our armor.

His coat of mail was called Emma. It was so long that it reached down to below his knees, and so strong that no weapon was known to have pierced it. Then King Harald Sigurtharson said, “This verse is poorly composed, and I shall have to make another and better one.” Then he spoke this verse:

523. Hide within the hollow— (156.)
high-born maid thus bade me—
of our shields we surely
shall not, in battle-tumult:
high she bade me hold my
head, the Hild-of-combat,²
when in bloody battle
blades and skulls were clashing.

Then Thjóthólf also spoke a verse:

524. Ne'er shall my fealty fail, though (157.)
fall the prince himself—but
God does govern all—to
gallant sons of the sovrán.
Shines not the sun on sightlier
scions—avengers they of
hard-fighting, high-hearted
Harald—than both these eaglets.

Chapter 92. King Harald Sigurtharson Falls

Now the battle began, and the English horsemen rode down upon the Norwegians. They met hard resistance, for it was not easy for the English to ride down upon the Norwegians because of [the volley of] shots, so they rode in a circle around them. At first it was not a fight at close quarters while the Norwegians held their order of battle. The English rode upon them fiercely, but retired when they could do nothing against them. But when the Norwegians saw what they conceived to be feeble attacks, they attacked in their turn and wished to pursue them; but when in so doing they broke up their shield castle, then the English rode down upon them from all sides with spear thrusts and arrow shots.

But when King Harald Sigurtharson saw that, he advanced in the battle where the fighting was hardest. It was a fierce fray, and many fell on both sides. Then King Harald Sigurtharson became so [ungovernably] fighting mad that he ran out in front of the battle line, slashing with both hands. Neither helmet nor corselet held out against him, and all those close by turned tail, and a little more and the English would have taken to flight. As says Arnór the Earls' Skald:

525. Little sheltered him, nor shook in (158.)
shattering-of-shields the
heart—no whit then gave he
heed—of fearless sea-king,
when the host all saw it,
how the embattled war-lord's
bloody sword in swaths did
slash the ranks of foemen.

King Harald Sigurtharson was struck in the throat by an arrow. That was his death wound. He fell, and with him all the men who had advanced to the front with him, except those who retreated; and they held onto the banner. Then again ensued the fiercest struggle. Earl Tostig had the king's banner raised over him, and both sides reformed their lines, and there ensued a long pause in the fighting. Then spoke Thjóthólf this verse:

526. Upon evil days has (159.)
all the host now fallen:
needless and for naught from
Norway brought us Harald;
ill bestead now are we—
ended is the life of

him who boldly bade us
battle—here in England.

But before this last battle began, Harold, the son of Godwine, offered quarter to his brother, Earl Tostig, and to all the Norwegians still alive. But the Norwegians all shouted together and said they would rather fall one upon the other than accept quarter from the English, and raised their war-whoop. Thereupon the battle started again. As says Arnór the Earls' Skald:

527. Ill-fated the fierce king's (160.)
fall in storm-of-arrows:
gold-wound spears did spare the
spender-of-rings but little.
Death would rather dree the
doughty chieftain's henchmen,
thronging thickly about him,
than be given quarter.

Chapter 93. Eystein Orri Renews the Battle

Just then Eystein Orri and his men arrived from the ships. They were in full armor. Eystein then seized hold of Landwaster, the banner of King Harald. And now battle was joined for the third time, and most grimly. Many of the English fell, and they came close to fleeing. This engagement is called Orri's Charge. Eystein and his men had marched in such haste from the ships that they were so tired to start with that they were nearly undone, but later on they were so frenzied that they did not shield themselves so long as they could stand upright. Finally they shed their coats of ring-mail. Then it was easy for the English to find their unprotected parts; but some died unwounded from sheer exhaustion. Nearly all men of rank among the Norwegians succumbed. This happened in the latter part of the day. As was to be expected, not all were equally brave, many fled, and many were fortunate enough to escape. Also, it grew dark in the evening before the slaughter came to an end.

Chapter 94. Marshal Styrkár Deprives an Englishman of His Jacket

Styrkár, the marshal of King Harald Sigurtharson, and an excellent man, managed to escape. He procured a horse and rode away on it. In the evening a rather chilly breeze arose, and Styrkár had nothing on but a shirt. He was helmeted and held a naked sword in his hand. And when the weariness had worn off he began to feel chilly. Then he met a man with a cart who wore a lined skin jacket. Then Styrkár said, “Will you sell me your jacket, my good man?”



Styrkár kills the English farmer.

“Not to you,” he replied. “You are probably a Norwegian, I know you by your speech.”

Then Styrkár said, “If I am a Norwegian, what would you do?”

The farmer replied, “I would kill you, but unfortunately I don’t have a weapon by me to do it with.”

Then Styrkár said, “If you can’t kill me, farmer, then I shall see if I can kill you”—and raising his sword he cut off his head so that it tumbled on the ground. Then he took the skin jacket, leapt on his horse, and rode down to the shore.

Chapter 95. Earl William the Bastard Invades England

William the Bastard, earl of Rouen, had learned of the death of his kinsman, King Eadward, and also, that thereupon Harold, the son of Godwine, had been chosen king of England and had been anointed as such. But William considered himself better entitled to the English realm than Harold because of the kinship between him and Eadward. Another reason was that he wished to avenge the affront put on him by Harold in breaking the engagement with his daughter. For all these reasons William gathered an army in Normandy. It was exceedingly numerous, and he also had a sufficiently large fleet [to transport it].

On the day when he rode out of his castle down to his ships and he had already mounted his horse, his spouse went up to him and wanted to speak with him. But when he saw her, he struck at her with his heel, piercing her breast deeply with his spur so that she fell down dead. But the earl rode down to his ships and sailed to England with his army. With him was Bishop Ótta, his brother. And when the earl arrived in England, he harried and took possession of the land wherever he went. William was taller and stronger than other men, an excellent horseman, a great warrior, of cruel disposition, a very shrewd man. He was called double-tongued.

Chapter 96. King Harold of England Falls in the Battle of Hastings

King Harold, the son of Godwine, gave permission to Ólaf, the son of Harald Sigurtharson, to leave the country with the men who had not fallen in the battle. But he himself and his army marched to southern England, because the news had come to him just then that William the Bastard had invaded England in the south, taking possession of the land. At that time there were in King Harold's company three of his brothers, Svein, Gyrth, and Wæltheow. The locality where the clash between King Harold and Earl William occurred was in southern England, near Helsingjaport [Hastings]. A great battle took place there. King Harold fell there, also Gyrth, his brother, and a large part of their army. That was nineteen days after the fall of King Harald Sigurtharson [October 14th].
1066 Earl Wæltheow escaped by flight, and late in the evening the earl encountered a small band of William's followers. When they saw the troops of the earl they fled into a certain oak forest. They were one hundred [120] men. Earl Wæltheow laid fire to the forest and burned them all. As says Thorkel Skallason¹ in the poem called *Valthjófsflokk*.²

528. King's henchmen one hundred (161.)
had the Ygg-of-combat³—
a baleful blaze was that—
burned in raging fire.
Heard I have that Franks 'neath
horse-of-troll-woman's⁴
claws did come to lie, and
corpses fed the wolf-brood.

Chapter 97. William Has Himself Proclaimed King of England

William had himself proclaimed king of England. He sent word to Earl Wæltheow about coming to terms with him, and gave him assurance of safe-conduct for coming to a meeting with him. The earl journeyed with but a few men, and when he came to the heath north of Castlebridge, he encountered two stewards of the king with a troop of followers. They took him prisoner and set him in chains, and later he was put to death. The English consider him a saint. As says Thorkel:

529. Well I know that William— (162.)
war-targes he bloodied—
from the south who sailed the
sea, cozened brave Wæltheow.
Not soon will cease, ween I—
certes never died a
bolder baron than he was—
bloodshed dire in England.

After that, William ruled England as king for twenty-one years, and his descendants, ever since.

Chapter 98. Ólaf, the Son of Harald, Is Chosen as King of Norway

Ólaf, the son of King Harald, brought his force away from England, sailing out of Hrafnseyr [Ravenspur] and toward fall arrived in the Orkneys. And there he learned that Máriá, the daughter of King Harald Sigurtharson, had died suddenly the same day and at the same hour as did her father, King Harald. Ólaf remained there during the winter, and in the following summer sailed east to Norway. There he was chosen king, together with his brother Magnús. Queen Ellisif and her daughter Ingigerth accompanied her stepson Ólaf when he sailed east. With them from the west came also Skúli, who later was called the king's foster father, and Ketil Krók, the latter's brother. They both were excellent men and of noble English extraction, and both exceedingly wise. Both were much beloved by King Ólaf. Ketil Krók journeyed to Hálogaland, where King Ólaf procured him a good match; and many persons of note are descended from him. Skúli, the king's foster father, was a wise man and a man of great account, as well as of very handsome appearance. He became the leader of King Ólaf's retinue. He spoke at the assemblies and gave the king advice in all matters of government. King Ólaf offered to give Skúli a county in Norway, the one which suited him best, with all the income and revenues due to the king. Skúli thanked him for his offer but said he would rather ask for other things; because—"if there is a change in the succession, it may be that this gift may be taken away from me. I would like," he said, "to be granted some possessions lying near to the market towns where you, sire, are accustomed to reside and have your Yule entertainment."

The king granted him this and assigned to him landed possessions east near Konungahella, near Ósló, near Túnsberg, near Borg, near Bjorgvin [Bergen], and in the north near Nitharós. These were about the most valuable estates in every place, and they have since been in the hands of the kinsmen who are descended from Skúli. King Ólaf gave him in marriage his relative, Guthrún, the daughter of Nefstein. Her mother was Ingiríth, the daughter of King Sigurth Sýr and Queen Ásta. She was thus a sister of Holy King Ólaf and of Harald. The son of Skúli and Guthrún was Ásólf at Rein. He was married to Thóra, the daughter of Skopti, the son of Ogmund. Their son was Guthorm at Rein, the father of Bárth, the father of King Ingi and of Duke Skúli.

Chapter 99. Of King Harald's Appearance and Character

One year after the fall of King Harald, his body was brought east from England to Nitharós in the north, and interred in the Church of Saint Mary, the one he caused to be built. It was the opinion of everybody that King Harald had excelled other men in shrewdness and resourcefulness, whether he had to act on the spur of the moment or to make plans at long range for himself or others. He was exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings, as was set down above. As says Thjóthólf:

530. His derring-do brought dread to (163.)
dwellers oft in Seeland.
Hardihood wins out—is
Harald witness—in warfare.

King Harald was a handsome man of stately appearance. He was light blond, with a blond beard and long mustaches, with one eyebrow higher than the other. His hands and feet were large, and both well proportioned. His height was five ells.¹ He was ruthless with his enemies, and given to harsh punishment of all who opposed him. As says Thjóthólf:

531. Sternly strikes down Harald (164.)
strutting henchmen's o'erbearing.
I ween, the king's warriors
wanton deeds will atone for.
Will the sword-wielders pay for
willful deeds—'t is but right so—
Harald heals their quarrels—
which they had a hand in.

King Harald was inordinately covetous of power and of valuable possessions of all kinds. He bestowed great gifts on his friends and those of whom he thought much. As says Thjóthólf:

532. One mark² for my merits (165.)
meted out the sea-battles'-
urger. He honors highly
all those who are worthy.

King Harald was fifty years old when he fell. We have no stories worthy the telling of his youth before he was fifteen, when he took part in the battle of Stiklarstathir at the side of King Ólaf, his [half] brother. He lived thirty-five

years after that. And in all that time he lived in constant turbulence and war. King Harald never fled out of battle, but often he sought some way out when fighting against great odds. All who accompanied him in battle and warfare are agreed in saying that when he was in great danger and everything depended on making a quick decision he most usually hit on a plan which in the event was seen by all to be the one most likely to succeed.

Chapter 100. A Comparison of the Ways of Saint Óláf and Harald

Halldór, the son of Brynjólf Úlfaldi the Old, was a man of discernment and a great chieftain. He spoke as follows when he overheard men speaking about how unlike were the dispositions of the two brothers, Holy King Óláf and Harald. He said:

“I was in great favor with both brothers, and I knew the disposition of both. I never saw two persons whose disposition was more alike. Both men were exceedingly sagacious and skilled in arms, avid for wealth and power, imperious in manner, not very affable, jealous of their authority, and given to meting out stern chastisement. King Óláf forcibly converted the people to Christianity and the true faith, and cruelly punished those who turned a deaf ear to it. The leaders of the country would not accept his jurisdiction and equitable judgments, and gathered an army against him, laying him low in his own land. It was therefore he became a saint. But Harald made war to gain fame and power, subduing all those he could, and fell in the realm of other kings. Both brothers were as a rule well mannered and high-minded. They were also widely travelled and men of great energy, and as such became famous and gained a great name.”

Chapter 101. King Svein and the Kings Ólaf and Magnús

King Magnús, the son of Harald, held dominion in Norway the first year after the fall of King Harald, but afterwards he ruled the land for two years with his brother Ólaf. These two shared the kingdom. King Magnús held sway in the northern part of the country; and Ólaf, in the eastern part. King Magnús had a son called Hákon who was fostered by Steigar-Thórir. He was a youth who gave rise to the greatest expectations.

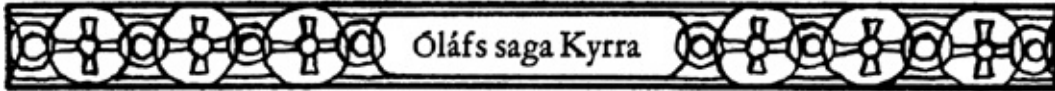
After the fall of King Harald Sigurtharson, Svein, the king of the Danes, alleged that the peaceful agreement between the Norwegians and the Danes had come to an end, asserting that this agreement was to last only as long as both Harald and Svein lived. Then forces were levied in both kingdoms. The sons of Harald had out a full levy of ships and men from Norway, and Svein sailed from the south with an army of Danes. Thereupon envoys went between the two parties with proposals for coming to terms. The Norwegians said they would either adhere to the same conditions of peace that were made before or else give battle. That was the occasion for this verse:

533. Thwarted with threats of battle (166.)
thewful Ólaf,¹ eke with
pledges of peace, any
prince's lust for Norway.

As Stein Herdísarson says in his *Óláfsdrápa*:

534. Will the combat-keen, in (167.)
Kaupang he who rules, where
Holy Ólaf aye his
altar hath, ward Svein off.
Would Ólaf grant to all his
heirs the whole of Norway:
cannot Ulf's son, the king, lay
claim to any of it.

At this meeting of the naval forces [of both countries] the kings came to an agreement by which peace was established between them. King Magnús became ill with ergotism and lay sick for some time. He died in Nitharós and was interred there. As a king he had been beloved of all the people.



The Saga of Ólaf the Gentle

Chapter 1. King Óláf the Gentle's Appearance and Disposition

Óláf was sole king over Norway after the death of his brother Magnús. Óláf was a large man in every way, and well proportioned. All are agreed that no one ever saw a handsomer man nor one of more stately appearance. He had flaxen, silky hair of great beauty, and a fair skin. His eyes were unusually fine, and his limbs well-shaped. As a rule he was a man of few words and spoke little at assemblies. But he was merry at ale and a great drinker, talkative and soft-spoken, peaceably inclined during his rule. As Stein Herdísarson has it:

535. His lands the lord of Thronders (168.)
—like that well his henchemen—
well-skilled he in warfare—
willingly keeps untroubled.
Store they set by his stemming
strife within his homeland
while he awes the English.
—*Óláf under heaven.*¹

Chapter 2. King Óláf the Gentle's Building Activities

It was an old custom in Norway that the high-seat of the king was in the middle of the long bench in the hall. And the ale was carried around the fire. King Óláf was the first to have his high-seat placed on the elevated dais which ran across the hall [on one side]. He was also the first to have rooms furnished with stoves, and have the floor covered with straw in winter¹ as well as in summer. In the days of King Óláf the market towns grew fast, and some new ones were established. King Óláf founded a market town in Bergen. And soon many rich men began to reside there, and merchants from other lands came sailing to the place. He laid the foundations of Christ Church, the great stone church; however, little was done toward its completion; but he had the wooden church there completed. King Óláf established the Great Guild² in Nitharós, and many others in the market towns. Before, there had been only banquets at various places. Bøjarbót³ was the name of the great guild bell in Nitharós. The guild brothers there built the Church of Saint Margaret, a stone church.

In the days of King Óláf there arose clubs and drinking bouts in the market towns. At that time new fashions in dress made their appearance. Men wore “court-breeches” laced tight around the legs, and some clasped gold rings around their ankles. They wore trailing gowns, laced with ribbons [?] at the side, and sleeves five ells in length and so tight that they had to be laced with straps all the way up to the shoulders, and high shoes, embroidered all over with white silk, and some with gold laces. And there were many other striking new fashions at that time.

Chapter 3. King Óláf Introduces New Customs

King Óláf introduced these customs in his court that he had cup-bearers stand by his table to pour out the drink from pitchers, both for himself and for all men of high rank who sat at his table. He had also candle-bearers who held tapers for him at table, as many as there were men of high rank sitting there. There was also the seat for the king's marshal, farther out from the sideboard, and there sat the marshals and other persons of rank; and they sat facing inward toward the high-seat. King Harald and other kings before his time used to drink out of horns and to have the ale borne from the high-seat around the fireplace, and to toast those whom they wished. As says Stúf the Skald:

536. Warmly the war-play-urger— (169.)
well it was to know him—
thought of me, the thewful
thane victorious ever,
when, with gilded horn in
hand, the ring-dispenser,
the dun heath-dwellers'¹ feeder,
drank to me at Haug farm.

Chapter 4. Of King Óláf's Court

King Óláf had a hundred [120] men in his bodyguard and sixty “guests,”¹ as well as sixty housecarls whose business it was to transport to the [king's] place of residence whatever was needed there or to perform such other services which the king desired. But when the farmers asked the king why he had with him a more numerous company at the entertainments the farmers gave him than the laws permitted or former kings had maintained, the king answered as follows: “I do not govern the country better, nor am I held in greater awe than my father, even though I have a company larger by half than he had; but it is not my intention to oppress you or put you to greater expense.”

Chapter 5. The Line of the Danish and Norwegian Kings

1076 King Svein Úlfsson died of a malady ten years after the fall of the [two] Haralds. He was succeeded on the throne of Denmark by Harald

Hein, his son, who ruled for four years; then by Knút, his second son, who ruled for seven years and is pronounced to be a true saint; then by Ólaf, his third son, who ruled for eight years; then by Eirík the Good, his fourth son, who also ruled for eight years. Ólaf [the Gentle], the king of Norway, married Ingiríth, the daughter of Svein, king of Denmark; and Ólaf Sveinsson of Denmark married Ingigerth, the daughter of Harald and thus sister of Ólaf [the Gentle]. King Ólaf Haraldsson, whom some called Ólaf the Gentle, and many, Ólaf the Farmer, had a son by Thóra, the daughter of Jóan. He was called Magnús. That lad was very handsome and gave much promise. He grew up at the king's court.

Chapter 6. The Miracles of Holy King Óláf

King Óláf had a stone church erected in Nitharós on the spot where Holy King Óláf had first been interred; and the altar was placed above the spot where the king had lain. It was consecrated as Christ Church. The shrine of King Óláf was moved there and the altar placed above it. Then many miracles took place there.

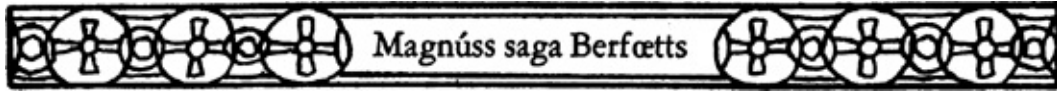
In the summer following, on the same day the church had been consecrated, a great multitude was present. It was on the eve of Saint Óláf's Mass that a blind man recovered his sight. On the mass day itself, when the shrine was set down in the churchyard, as was the custom—a man recovered his speech who had been dumb before for a long time, and with a gentle voice sang praises to God and Holy King Óláf. The third was a woman who had come west from Sweden and had endured much hardship on her journey on account of her blindness and yet had trusted to the mercy of God and had come journeying there on this holy day. Sightless she was led that day into the church for mass; but before the service was at an end she saw clearly with both eyes and had keen vision, when before that she had been blind for fourteen years. She departed thence with solemn joy.

Chapter 7. Saint Óláf Discovers a Murdered Child

It happened in Nitharós, when the shrine of King Óláf was borne about the Street,¹ that the shrine became so heavy that it could not be borne away from the spot. Then it was set down and they dug into the Street to find what was below it, and they found there the body of a child which had been murdered and hidden there. It was borne away and the Street put back in the shape it was before; and then the shrine was borne on as usual.

Chapter 8. King Óláf the Gentle Dies of a Sickness

King Óláf often resided in the country on the large estates he owned there. But when he was east in the District of Ranríki, on his farm of Hauk-boer, he was struck down by a sickness which caused his death. He had then been ¹⁰⁹³king of Norway for twenty-six years, after having been chosen king one year after the fall of King Harald. King Óláf's body was brought north to Nitharós and buried in Christ Church, which had been erected by him. He was much beloved as king, and during his rule Norway had grown greatly in wealth and honor.



The Saga of Magnús Barelegs

Chapter 1. Norway Is Divided between Magnús Ólafsson and Hákon Magnússon

After the death of King Ólaf, at an assembly in Vík, Magnús, the son of King Ólaf, was immediately chosen king of all Norway. But when the people in the districts of Uppland learned of the death of King Ólaf, they chose as king, Hákon, the foster son of Thórir, who was the cousin of Magnús. Thereupon Hákon and Thórir journeyed north to Trondheim, and when they arrived in Nitharós they called together the Eyra Assembly. And at this assembly Hákon demanded the title of king for himself; and the farmers gave him dominion over half the land, the same as King Magnús, his father, had had. Hákon relieved the people of Trondheim of the land-tax and granted them many other amendments of the laws. He also exempted them from having to give Yule presents [to him]. So all the people of Trondheim became friendly inclined to King Hákon. Then King Hákon selected a bodyguard and returned to Uppland. There he granted the people the same improvements in the laws as he had granted the people of Trondheim. And they, too, became his fast friends. Then somebody in Trondheim composed this verse:

537. Hákon the young hither—
he is of all men noblest
born, famous in folk-lands—
fared with Steigar-Thórir.
Would he sithen cede the
sway of half of Norway
to Ólaf's son: he asked though
all of the land to govern.

(170.)

Chapter 2. King Hákon Dies Traversing the Mountains

In the fall King Magnús journeyed north to Kaupang, and when he had arrived there he went to the royal estate and dwelled there during the beginning of the winter. He kept seven warships in an open space in the ice of the Nith River in front of the royal residence. But when King Hákon learned that King Magnús had arrived in the Trondheim District he came west [north] over the Dofra Mountains to Trondheim and to Kaupang, and took lodgings in the Skúli residence below Saint Clemens Church. That had been the old royal residence. King Magnús thought ill of the great concessions which King Hákon had made to the farmers to win their favor. Magnús considered that it was no less his own property which had been given away, and he was greatly incensed about that and considered himself wronged by his kinsman in thus having so much less revenue than his father and forefathers had had, and blamed Thórir for that. King Hákon and Thórir became aware of this and were apprehensive of what measures Magnús would take. They thought it ominous that Magnús had afloat warships tented and equipped.

In spring, near Candlemas Magnús set out at dead of night and stood out with his ships tented and with lights under the tents, and sailed to Hefring Head.¹ There they stayed during the night, making great fires up on land.

Then King Hákon and the troops in the town thought that this was done to trick them. He had the trumpets blown to call out his forces, and all the people in the town came and collected in one place. But in the morning at dawn, when King Magnús saw the assembled multitude on Eyrar Point, he sailed out of the fjord and south to the Gula Assembly District. Then King Hákon prepared for proceeding east [south] to Vík. But before that he held a meeting in the town and there made a speech bespeaking the friendship of the people and promising to be friends with all. He said he felt much misgivings as to what King Magnús, his kinsman, intended to do. King Hákon sat on horseback, all ready to start out. Everyone vowed friendship and good will, promising him their aid, if that was required. And all the multitude followed him out to Steinbjorg Hill.²

King Hákon journeyed up to the Dofra Mountains; and one day, as he rode over the mountains, he followed after a ptarmigan which flew away from him.

1094 Then he took deadly sick and expired there on the mountain. His body was brought north and arrived in Kaupang half a month after he had left it. Then all the people of the town, most of them weeping, came to meet the body of the king, because everybody had loved him with heartfelt affection.

The body of King Hákon was interred in Christ Church. King Hákon had reached the age of about twenty-five years. He was one of the chieftains who was most beloved by all the people in Norway. He had travelled north to Permia, had fought there, and won a victory.

Chapter 3. King Magnús Harries in Halland

During the winter King Magnús continued east to Vík. And when spring came he sailed south to Halland and harried there far and wide. He destroyed Viskar Dale and a number of other districts by fire. He made large booty there and then returned to his own kingdom. As Bjorn the Cripple-handed¹ says in his *Magnúsdrápa*:

(171.) 538. Far and wide the war-lord
wasted Halland's homesteads—
swift he followed the fleeing
foe—with sword and fire.
Burned the thane of Thronders²
thatched farms many in Visk Dale—
soundly slept not women

It is said here that King Magnús harried fiercely ~~in Halland~~ ^{south there}—and other shires.

Chapter 4. Steigar-Thórir Collects Forces against King Magnús

There was a man called Svein, the son of Harald Flettir, of Danish origin. He was a great viking and warrior, of exceeding bravery, and of noble lineage in his country. He had been one of the followers of King Hákon. Now after the death of Hákon, Steigar-Thórir had small hopes that he could achieve a reconciliation with King Magnús and win his friendship, once his power extended over all the land, because of what he had done and his opposition to King Magnús. Then Thórir and Svein adopted a plan which later proved a success: they raised a band with the aid of Thórir and his many henchmen. But because Thórir was an old man now and sluggish in his movements, Svein took over the leadership of the band and became its chieftain. In this plot a number of chieftains were involved. The most prominent of them was Egil, the son of Áslák of Forland. Egil was a landed-man. He was married to Ingibjorg, the daughter of Ogmund Thorbergsson and the sister of Skopti of Gizki. Skjálǵ was the name of another powerful and wealthy man who joined the band. Of this, Thorkel Hamarskáld¹ makes mention in his *Magnússdrápa*:

539. From far and wide his war-band (172.)
wealthy Thórir gathered—
sorely men did suffer
soon from this—with Egil.
Heard I that overwhelming
hardships befell Skjálǵ's friends, when
the king's stewards stirred up
strife 'gainst the feeder-of-ravens.

Thórir and his men collected their forces in the Uppland districts and descended into Raums Dale and South Mær. There they procured ships and then sailed north to Trondheim.

Chapter 5. Thórir Flees to Hálogaland, Pursued by King Magnús

Sigurth Woolstring was the name of a king's steward. He was the son of Lothin Viggjarskalli. When hearing of the approach of Thórir and his band he gathered a force by means of sending around the war-arrows, and proceeded to Vigg with all the men he managed to get. But Svein and Thórir headed the same way with their force and gave battle to Sigurth. They were victorious, causing great slaughter, and Sigurth fled and sought out the king. But Thórir and his men proceeded to Kaupang, remaining in the fjord for a while, and many men joined them.

King Magnús learned of these happenings and at once summoned his troops and then proceeded to Trondheim. When he arrived at the Trond-heimfjord, and Thórir and his men learned that—they were anchored by Hefring Head, ready to sail out of the fjord—they rowed over to Vagnvíkastrands and there disembarked and went north to Thex Dale in the Selja District. Thórir was carried over the mountains on a stretcher. There they procured ships and sailed north to Hálogaland. But King Magnús pursued them, as soon as he had made his preparations in Trondheim. Thórir and his men sailed all the way north to Bjarkey. There, Jóan fled, together with his son Víthkun. Thórir's band plundered there, taking all movable property and burning the farm and also a fine warship which belonged to Víthkun. When the ship burned and began to heel, Thórir said, "More to starboard, Víthkun!" Then someone composed this verse:

540. Burns in middle Birch-Isle
the best of manors—little
good one ever gets from
grim Thórir—high blazing.
Needless to ask, at night, if
Jóan enough had of plunder—
high to heaven from buildings
whirls the smoke—or fire.

(173.)

Chapter 6. Thórir and Egil Are Hanged

Jóan and Víthkun travelled day and night to join King Magnús. Svein and Thórir also came down from the north with their forces, plundering far and wide in Hálogaland. But when they were anchored in the fjord which is called Harm they saw the fleet of King Magnús approaching; and they did not consider they had a force to stand up against the king, and so took to flight by rowing. Thórir and Egil rowed to Hesjutún while Svein rowed out to sea; and a part of their fleet rowed into the fjord. King Magnús pursued Thórir, and when the ships began to engage each other in fight at the landing-place, Thórir stood forward in his ship. Then Sigurth Wool-string called out to him, “Are you hale, Thórir?”

Thórir replied,

541. “Hale in my hands, (173a.)
but halt in my feet.”

Then all of Thórir’s men fled up on land, and Thórir was captured. Egil, too, was made captive, because he did not want to abandon his wife. King Magnús had both led to Vambarhólm Island. But as Thórir was brought upon the island he tottered on his legs. Then Víthkun said, “More to larboard, Thórir!” Thereupon Thórir was led up to the gallows. Then he spoke this verse: (174.)

542. “Formerly were there four¹ of us
fellows; one did the steering.”

And when he went up to the gallows he said, “Ill are evil counsels.” Thereupon he was hanged; and when the gallows-tree was raised, Thórir proved so heavy that his neck was torn from his body, which fell to the ground. Thórir was an enormously big man, and both tall and stout.

Egil was also led to the gallows; but when the king’s slaves were about to hang him, Egil said, “Not that every one of you didn’t better deserve to hang!” according to the verse:



Egil is hanged.

543. In spite Egil spoke, on the
spur of the moment, sun-of-
gleaming-gold,² about the
grovelling thralls of Magnús:
that higher than he should each be
hanging by rights, said he:
the fire-of-fray's³-waster
far too much did suffer.

(175.)

King Magnús sat near where they were hanged and was so furious that no one of his men dared to plead for their lives. When Egil kicked the gallows the king said, "Of little avail are your good kinsmen to you." From these words it was inferred that the king wished that someone had pleaded for Egil's life. Thus says Bjorn the Cripplehanded: (176.)

544. Soon the Sogn men's lord his
sword reddened on spoilers—
far and wide the wolf-brood
warm flesh got in Harmfjord.
Heard you have, how Magnús—
hanged was by him Thórir—
fast he fared against his
foes—punished the traitors.

Chapter 7. King Magnús Is Sole Ruler in Norway

Thereupon King Magnús returned to the Trondheim District, and sailing into the Trondheimfjord, visited strong retribution on the men who had been guilty of treason against him. Some he executed, and burned down the houses of others. As says Bjorn the Cripplehanded: (177.)

545. Fear put the feeder-of-ravens
fierce into the hearts of
Thronders, when their thatch he
threatened to set fire to.
Did the liege of life rob
leaders twain at one time—
hawks pounced on the hanged, and
had their fill witch-horses.¹

Svein Haraldsson first fled out to sea, and then to Denmark, and lived there until he effected a conciliation with King Eystein, the son of Magnús. He pardoned Svein and made him his cup-bearer, befriending him and holding him in great honor.

Then King Magnús was sole ruler in Norway. He preserved peace in it, destroying all vikings and pirates. He was a vigorous man, warlike and active, and in every respect more like his grandfather Harald in disposition than his father.

Chapter 8. King Magnús' Expedition to the Western Isles

King Magnús prepared for an expedition abroad, taking with him a force both large and well-equipped and a fine fleet. With this force he sailed west across the sea, first to the Orkneys. He made the earls Pál and Erlend captive and sent them both east to Norway, setting his son Sigurth as chieftain over the islands, and giving him a body of counsellors. Then King Magnús sailed to the Hebrides, and at once upon arrival there began to harry and burn the countryside, killing the men and despoiling them wherever the troops came. The inhabitants of the land fled and scattered in all directions. Some fled into the Scottish firths, some south to Saltire [Kintyre] or west to Ireland. Some were given quarter and swore him allegiance. Thus says Bjorn the Cripplehanded:

546. Leapt the flames aloft on (178.)
Lewis nigh to heaven.
Far and wide all folk did
flee—burst fire from houses.
Over Uist Island
endlong went the Skjoldung—
life and wealth the lieges
lost—with reddened sword-blade.
547. Harried on Skye he who (179.)
hungry ravens battens.
Their teeth on Tíree reddened
tawny wolves on corpses.
Grieved there Grenland's¹ ruler
girls in Shetland islands—
high up in Scotland harried
he who Mull's people frightened.

Chapter 9. King Magnús Captures Lawman

King Magnús with his force came to Holy Isle [Iona] and there assured men of peace and protection and likewise everyone's possessions. It is told that he wanted to open up Kolumba's little cell,¹ but did not enter into it, and immediately closed the door again, saying that no one should dare to enter that church; nor was that done in after time.

Then King Magnús sailed with his fleet south to Islay and harried and burned there. And after conquering that land he proceeded south past Saltire, harrying on both sides in Ireland and Scotland. He laid the land waste all the way south to Man, harrying there as elsewhere. As says Bjorn the Cripplehanded:

548. Warlike Magnús widely (180.)
waste laid Sanday's grasslands.
Smoke rose up on Islay
Isle as homesteads burned there.
South on Saltire bloody
swords felled many Scotsmen.
Manxmen many then by
Magnús' host were laid low.

Lawman was the name of the son of Guthröth, king over the Hebrides. Lawman had been charged with the defence of the Northern Isles. But when King Magnús neared the Hebrides with his fleet, Lawman fled and hid among the islands; but finally King Magnús' men captured him together with his crew as he was about to flee to Ireland. The king had him put in irons, with a guard set over him. As says Bjorn the Cripplehanded:

549. Safe for sea-king Guthröth's (181.)
scion was no refuge.
Won there lands the lord, to
Lawman barred forever.
Out at sea, where swords did
sing, the Egthirs' ruler
bound the breaker-of-rings with
bonds and chains of iron.

Chapter 10. King Magnús Defeats Two Welsh Earls

Then King Magnús steered his fleet to Bretland [Wales]. And when he arrived at the Sound of Anglesey [Menai Strait] a fleet approached from Bretland, headed by two earls, Hugh the Proud and Hugh the Stout, and at once gave battle. It was a hard fight. King Magnús shot with his bow, but Hugh the Proud was clad in mail from head to foot, so that no spot was bare except the eyes. Both King Magnús and a man from Hálogaland who stood near the king aimed their arrows at him, and both shot at the same time. One arrow struck the visor of Hugh's helmet, and was deflected to the side, but the other hit the earl's eye and penetrated his head; and that shot was attributed to the king. Earl Hugh fell dead, and then the Welsh fled after losing many men.

As says Bjorn the Cripplehanded:

550. Lifeless was left by the (182.)
liege where raged the battle—
whined and whizzed the arrows—
Hugh in Sound of Anglesey.

This verse also was spoken:

551. Darts then drummed on byrnies, (183.)
doughtily hurled by war-lord.
Blood rose on helms. Bent his
bow of elm the atheling.
A hail of arrows hit the
hauberks—many fell there—
when the Horthar's¹ king in
hard fight slew Hugh Earl.

King Magnús was victorious in this battle. He took possession of Anglesey, as had done the kings of Norway who had dominion farthest south. Anglesey is one third the size of Bretland.

After this battle King Magnús turned back with his fleet and steered first to Scotland. Then men negotiated a peace between him and Malcolm, king of Scotland. According to their agreement King Magnús was to have possession of all the islands west of Scotland separated from the mainland by water so that a ship with fixed rudder could pass between them. Now when King Magnús approached Saltire from the south he had a small craft dragged over the neck of land between Saltire and the mainland, with tiller fixed. The king himself sat on the raised afterdeck, holding the steering post, and thus took possession of the

we raised afterdeck, holding the steering post, and thus took possession of the land to larboard. Saltire is a large land, and better than the best island in the Hebrides excepting Man. There is a slender neck of land between it and the mainland of Scotland. Warships are often dragged across it.

Chapter 11. Sigurth, the Son of Magnús, Marries Bjathmynja

King Magnús remained in the Hebrides during the winter. At that time his men went west about all the firths of Scotland behind the islands, both inhabited and uninhabited, and took possession of all of them for the king. King Magnús married his son Sigurth to Bjathmynja, the daughter of King Mýrjartak Thjálbason,¹ king over the Irish. He ruled over Connaught. In the summer after, King Magnús with his fleet returned east to Norway.

Earl Erlend died of a sickness in Nitharós and is buried there; but Pál, in Bergen.

Skopti, the son of Ogmund Thorbergsson, was a steward of the king, an excellent man. He resided in Gizki in South Mær. He was married to Guthrún, the daughter of Thóρθ Fólason. Their children were Ogmund, Finn, Thóρθ; and his daughter Thóra became the wife of Ásólf Skúlason. When young the sons of Skopti gave rise to much promise.

Chapter 12. Magnús Constructs a Fort in Lake Vøneren

Steinkel, the king of Sweden, died about the time of the death of the [two] Haralds. Hákon was the name of the king who succeeded Steinkel in Sweden. After him Ingi, the son of Steinkel, was king—a good and powerful king, a man of great size and strength. He ruled in Sweden at the same time as Magnús in Norway.

King Magnús maintained that in the olden times the Gaut Elf River had been the boundary between the realms of the Swedish and the Norwegian kings, and from there, Lake Vænir up to Vermaland. King Magnús laid claim to all the districts west of Vænir. These comprise Sunn Dale and North Dale, Véar and Varthynjar, and all the forested parts neighboring to them. All these had for a long time been subject to the Swedish kings, and paid tribute as parts of West Gautland. And the people of the Forest Settlements wanted to be under the Swedish king as before.

King Magnús proceeded from Vík and into Gautland with a large and well-equipped army. And when he came to the Forest Settlements he harried and burned, and dealt so with all districts. The people swore him allegiance and fealty. But when he came to Lake Vænir, fall was approaching. Then the king's men rowed out to the island of Kvalthinsey and there constructed a fort of turf and timbers and dug a ditch around it. And when this fortification was completed they brought into it victuals and other necessaries. The king placed a garrison of three hundred [360] men there. They were under the command of Finn Skoptason and Sigurth Woolstring. It was a picked band. Then the king returned to Vík.

Chapter 13. King Ingi Treats the Garrison of the Fort with Ignominy

But when the Swedish king learned about these events he summoned troops; and it was reported that he would move down to those parts. However, there was a delay. Then the Norwegians spoke this ditty:

552. Long does loin-broad Ingi
linger before coming. (184.)

But when the ice formed on Lake Vænir, King Ingi rode down with nearly thirty hundred [3600] men. He sent a message to the Norwegians in the fortification, asking them to depart with the booty they had made, and to return to Norway. But when the messengers had delivered the king's message, Sigurth Woolstring replied that Ingi should think of some other plan than to turn them out like a herd into the pasture—that he would have to come nearer first. The messengers returned to the king with that answer.

Thereupon King Ingi proceeded to the island with all his army. Then he sent his men to the Norwegians a second time and asked them to depart with their weapons, clothes, and horses, but to leave behind their booty. They refused to do so. Thereupon an attack was made and they shot upon one another. Following that the king had stones and wood brought up to fill the moat. Then he had anchors fastened to long timbers and had those thrown up on the wooden wall. Many men took hold and pulled the wall apart. Still further great fires [with glowing embers] were kindled and flaming brands tossed at them. Thereupon the Norwegians asked for quarter, but the king then commanded them to leave weaponless and without their outer garments; and when they issued, every one of them was lashed with a switch. They left in this wise and went back home to Norway. But the men of the Forest Districts returned to their allegiance to King Ingi. Sigurth and his companions rejoined King Magnús and told him about their misadventure.

Chapter 14. King Magnús Is Defeated and Pursued

As soon as the ice broke up in the spring, King Magnús proceeded east to the [Gaut Elf] River with a large army. He rowed up the eastern [southern] branch and harried everywhere in the Swedish realm. And when he [and his forces] arrived at Foxerni they went on land from their ships. As they passed over a certain river an army of Gauts met them. There was a battle, and the Norwegians were overpowered and took to flight. Many of them were slain near a certain waterfall. King Magnús fled, with the Gauts pursuing and killing all they could.

King Magnús was easily recognizable, being of unusual height. He wore a red doublet over his coat of mail, and his long hair, as pale as silk, fell down over his shoulders. Ogmund, the son of Skopti, rode by the side of the king. He too was exceedingly tall and handsome. He said, "Give me your doublet, king!"

The king answered, "Of what use to you would be my doublet?"

"I wish to have it," he said. "You have given me greater gifts." The nature of the place was such that there were broad plains round about, so that Gauts and Norwegians were always in sight of one another. But there were also steeps and coppices, and there they were out of each others' sight. Then the king gave Ogmund his doublet, and he put it on. Afterwards they rode on over the plain. Then Ogmund and his men turned abruptly to one side, and when the Gauts saw that they thought it was the king and pursued him in a body. But the king kept on till he boarded his ship, while Ogmund barely escaped, yet made it to the ships. Thereupon King Magnús rowed down the river and then north to Vík.

Chapter 15. Kings Magnús, Ingi, and Eirík Agree on Peace Terms

The summer after [these events], a meeting of kings was arranged, to take place at Konungahella in the [Gaut Elf] River. To this meeting came Magnús, king of Norway, Ingi, king of Sweden, and Eirík Sveinsson, king of Denmark. And this conference was safeguarded by mutual assurances. When it took place, the three kings came forward on the plain, away from their followers, and conferred together for a little while, then returned to their company. Then the agreement was made that each of them was to have possession of the realm his forefathers had had; and each of the kings was to make recompense to the other for the booty made by him, and for the destruction of life. And each of them was to make amends for the damages done by him. King Magnús was to obtain in marriage Margrét, the daughter of King Ingi—she was thereafter called Frithkolia [Peace Woman].

People said that never had there been seen more princely men than these three kings. King Ingi was the tallest in stature and the stoutest of them, and to all he seemed the most majestic in appearance. But King Magnús seemed the most striking and active, whereas Eirík was the handsomest. But all three of them were large men, handsome, distinguished-looking, and eloquent. They parted when these agreements had been made.

Chapter 16. Of the Costumes Worn by King Magnús and His Son

King Magnús obtained Queen Margaret in marriage. She was sent west from Sweden to Norway with a magnificent following. Now King Magnús had some children from before whose names are as follows. One son's name was Eystein. His mother was of low birth. A second was called Sigurth, younger by one year, whose mother was Thóra. The third was Óláf, who was by a great deal the youngest. His mother was Sigríth, daughter of Saxi of Vík, a chieftain in the district of Trondheim. She was Magnús' mistress.

It is told that when King Magnús returned from his expedition to the west he and many of his men for the most part had the manners and wore the clothes which were customary in the British Islands. They went barelegged in the Street [of Kaupaug] and had short kirtles and outer garments. Then people called him Magnús Barefoot or Barelegs; but some, Magnús the Tall, and still others Styrjaldar Magnús [Magnús of the turbulence, warfare]. He was exceedingly tall. A mark was made of his height in Saint Mary's Church in the town, the one which King Harald had had built. There on the north door three crosses were chiseled, one showing Harald's height, another, Óláf's, and a third, that of Magnús. They were put where it was easiest for them to kiss. And highest was Harald's cross; the lowest that of Magnús, and that of Óláf in the middle between them.

Chapter 17. Skopti Ogmundarson Falls Out with Magnús

Skopti, the son of Ogmund, had a falling out with King Magnús. They quarrelled about the inheritance of one deceased which Skopti had possession of, but which the king claimed for himself with such vehemence that there was danger of serious trouble between them. They [Skopti and his kinsmen] had many discussions [about this], and Skopti cautioned against himself and his sons ever putting themselves into the king's power at one and the same time, and that this would best serve their purposes. Now when Skopti himself came before the king he pointed out that there was a close relationship between the king and himself, and also, that he, Skopti, always had been a close friend of the king and that their friendship never had been broken. He also said that men might know that he had sense enough—"not to quarrel about this matter with you, sir king, if I were in the wrong. But I take after my forefathers in this that I insist on my rights against everyone, and in this I make no distinction against whom." The king did not change his mind, nor was it softened by such an appeal. Skopti returned home.

Chapter 18. Finn Skoptason Pleads with the King

Then Finn [Skoptason] went to see the king, and spoke to him, asking him to let his father and his kin have what they were by rights entitled to. The king answered curtly and gruffly. Thereupon Finn said, “A different treatment, sir king, I expected to get from you than to be cheated out of my lawful rights by you, considering the time I stationed myself on the island of Kvalthinsey, which few of your other friends would consent to do, because they said—and that proved to be the truth—that those who were stationed there were delivered up and would have been condemned to death if King Ingi had not shown greater chieftainly qualities than you have shown us; and yet it would appear to many that even so we suffered great humiliation there—if that has any weight [with you].” The king was not moved by such arguments, and Finn returned home.

Chapter 19. Ogmund Skoptason Urges his Cause before the King

Thereupon Ogmund Skoptason went to speak with the king, and when he appeared before him he pleaded his case, praying the king to proceed with justice toward his father and brothers. The king said that the right was on his side and that they were most impudent. Then Ogmund said, “You are likely, sir king, to succeed in wronging us, because of your power. Thus is proved true that, as the saying goes, most people show little or no gratitude, even if you save their lives. But I shall want it understood that never again shall I join your service, nor any of our kin, if I have my way.” Thereupon Ogmund returned home, nor did King Magnús or they ever meet again.

Chapter 20. Skopti and his Sons Die Abroad

In the spring following, Skopti Ogmundarson outfitted to leave the land. He had five warships, all well equipped. His sons, Ogmund, Finn, and Thórth all joined company with him. They got off to a rather late start, and in the fall sailed to Flamlund [Flanders] and stayed there during the winter. Early the following spring they sailed west to Valland [France], and in the summer they sailed through Norva Sound [the Straits of Gibraltar], and in fall, to Rome. There Skopti died, and all his sons died on that expedition. Thórth lived longest of them. He died in Sikiley [Sicily]. It is said that Skopti was the first Norwegian to sail through Norva Sound, and this journey was famed widely.

Chapter 21. Saint Óláf Saves his Church from Burning

It happened in Kaupang, where King Saint Óláf is interred, that fire broke out in a house in the town and spread widely. Then the shrine of King Óláf was borne out of the church and set against the conflagration. Then a certain rash and witless man ran up to it, beat upon the shrine, and uttered threats against the saint, saying that all, both the churches and other buildings, would go up in flames unless he prevented it by his prayers. Now Almighty God kept the church from burning, but to this witless man he sent a pain in the eye that very night, and he lay there until Holy King Óláf interceded for him with God Almighty and he was healed in that same church.

Chapter 22. Saint Óláf Heals a Crippled Woman

Still further it happened in Kaupang that a woman was brought to the place in the town where King Óláf is interred. She was so misshapen that she was all shrunk together and both feet were bent up against her thighs. And when she lay there, constantly praying and weeping, and had called on him, he healed her of her great infirmity, so that her feet and legs and other limbs were straightened from their bent position and each limb and joint afterwards served its proper purpose. Before, she could not even creep to that spot, but now she walked from there hale and rejoicing to her home.

Chapter 23. King Magnús Sails to Ireland

King Magnús prepared an expedition abroad with a large army. At that time he had been king over Norway for nine years. Then he sailed west across the sea with the best equipped army that ever left Norway. In his company were all the chieftains in the country: Sigurth Hranason, Víthkun Jóansson, Dag Eilífsson, Serk of Sogn, Eyvind Elbow, the marshal of the king, Úlf Hranason, the brother of Sigurth, and many other chieftains. With all this force the king sailed west to the Orkneys and from there took with him Magnús and Erling, the sons of Earl Erlend. Then he sailed to the Hebrides; and when he was anchored beside the Scottish coast, Magnús Erlendsson at night jumped overboard from the king's ship and swam to land. Then he hid in the forest and finally came to the court of the king of Scotland. Afterwards King Magnús sailed to Ireland and harried there. Then King Mýrjartak joined him, and together they won much of the land, Dublin and the Shire of Dublin; and in the winter following, King Magnús dwelt in Connaught with King Mýrjartak, putting his men to the defence of the land he had won. But when spring came the kings with their army marched west to Ulster and there had many battles and subdued the land, winning the greater part of Ulster. Thereupon Mýrjartak returned to Connaught.



At sunrise Magnús and his men go on land.

Chapter 24. King Magnús Goes Inland in Ulster

Then King Magnús outfitted his ships, intending to return to Norway. He stationed his men in Dublin to guard it. He lay with all of his ships by the Ulster coast, ready for sailing. They thought they needed provisioning, and King Magnús sent his men to King Mýrjartak, asking him to send provisions and mentioning the day they were to be brought—the day before
1103 Bartholomew Mass [August 24th], if his messengers got through with a whole skin. But on the evening before the day they had not arrived. On the day of the Mass, when the sun rose, King Magnús debarked with the greater part of his force and went up on land, meaning to look for his men and provisions. The weather was calm and the sun shone. The way lay over swamps and fens. A corduroy road was made over them, and there were thickets on both sides. As they proceeded they came to a very high hill. From there they had a wide view. Inland they saw a great cloud of dust arising from a body of horsemen. They wondered whether that might be the army of the Irish, but some said that these probably were the men with the provisions. They took a position there. Then Eyvind Elbow spoke. “Sir king,” he said, “what do you think this body of men is? Your men think you are proceeding without due caution. You know that the Irish are treacherous. Lay down some plan for your troops to follow.”

Then the king said, “Let us draw up our force in battle array, to be prepared in case this is treachery.” This they did. The king and Eyvind went in front of their lines. King Magnús had a helmet on his head and a red shield before him on which a lion was embossed in gold. He was girt with the sword which was called Legbiter, whose hilt was carved of walrus-tooth and whose haft was wound with gold—an excellent weapon. In his hand he carried a halberd. Over his kirtle he wore a red silken jacket with a lion sewed on front and back with yellow silk. It was said that a man of more imposing stature and more gallant bearing had never been seen. Eyvind, too, had a red silk jacket, just like that of the king. And he also was a tall man, handsome, and of martial bearing.

Chapter 25. King Magnús and His Army Are Overcome by the Irish

But when the cloud of dust approached they recognized their own men, who came with a great amount of provisions which the king of the Irish had sent them. He kept all the promises he had made to King Magnús. Then they started on their way back to the ships, and that was about noontime. But when they came out on the fens they were slow in passing over them. Then the army of the Irish rushed out upon them from every corner of the woods and at once began to give battle; but the Norwegians were travelling in open formation, and many of them fell quickly.

Then Eyvind spoke. “Sir king,” he said, “our troops are faring badly. Let us quickly hit on a good plan.”

The king said, “Let a blast of trumpets call all the troops under their banners; but let all those who are here form a rampart of shields, and then let us beat a retreat over the moors. Once we are on even ground there will be no more danger.” The Irish shot [their arrows] boldly, yet they fell thickly. However, where one had fallen, another filled his place. And when the king had got to the next ditch—it was difficult going there, with only few places where one could get over—a great many Norwegians fell.

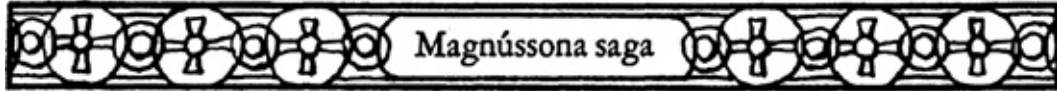
Then the king called Thorgrím Furcap, one of his stewards—he was from the Upplands—and ordered him to pass over the ditch with his troop, “but meanwhile we shall keep them away,” he said, “so that they won’t harm you. Then get on the knoll over there and shoot at them while we pass over the ditch—you are good shots.” But as soon as Thorgrím and his men had got over the ditch they threw their shields on their backs and ran down to the ships. When the king saw that he called out: “Shamefully you part with your king. A fool I was to make you my steward but outlawed Sigurth the Hound¹—he would never have behaved so!”

King Magnús was wounded by a spear passing through both his thighs above the knee. He grasped the shaft between his legs and broke it, and said: “Thus break we every leg-spar, men!” King Magnús received a blow with a battle-axe on his neck, and that was his death-wound. Then those fled who were
1103 still left. Vithkun Jóansson carried the sword Legbiter and the standard of the king to the ships. These were the last to take to flight: he, and Sigurth Hranason, and Dag Eilífsson. Together with King Magnús there fell Eyvind Elbow, Úlf Hranason, and many other chieftains. Many Norwegians fell, yet many more Irishmen.

The Norwegians who escaped, at once left [Ireland] in the fall. Erling, the son of Earl Erlend, fell in Ireland with King Magnús. But when the force that had fled from Ireland arrived in the Orkneys and Sigurth learned of the death of his father Magnús he joined them at once, and that [same] fall returned to Norway.

Chapter 26. Of King Magnús Barelegs' Character

King Magnús had ruled Norway for ten years, and in his days there was good peace within the land; but people had much labor and expense from his expeditions abroad. By his followers King Magnús was greatly beloved, but the farmers considered him stern. It is recalled that when his friends told him that he often proceeded incautiously on his expeditions abroad he replied, "for glorious deeds one should have a king, not for a long life." King Magnús was approaching thirty years of age when he fell. Víthkun slew that man in the battle who had given King Magnús his death-blow, whereupon he fled, having received three wounds. For this reason he was in great favor with the sons of King Magnús.



The Saga of the Sons of Magnús

Chapter 1. King Sigurth Heads an Expedition to Miklagarth

After the fall of King Magnús Barelegs his sons, Eystein, Sigurth, and Óláf succeeded to the kingdom of Norway. Eystein ruled in the northern part of the country, Sigurth, in the southern part. King Óláf was four or five years old, and the third of the land which fell to his share was in the keeping of his two older brothers. Sigurth was chosen king when he was thirteen or fourteen years old, but Eystein was a year older. King Sigurth left the daughter of the Irish king behind in the west.

When the sons of Magnús succeeded to the throne, the men who had gone abroad with Skopti Ogmundarson returned from Palestine, and some, from Miklagarth [Byzantium]. They had acquired great fame and could tell of many events; and this news whetted the desire of a great many in Norway to undertake a like journey. It was said that in Miklagarth Norwegians who wanted to take service as mercenaries could acquire great wealth. The request was made of the kings that one of them, whether Eystein or Sigurth, should head a fleet which was being outfitted for such an expedition abroad. The kings assented and equipped this expedition at the expense of both. Many chieftains joined it, both such as held lands from the king and rich farmers. And when they were ready it was decided that Sigurth was to head this enterprise, and that Eystein was to govern the country for both kings.

Chapter 2. Hákon Is Made Earl of the Orkneys

One year or two after the fall of Magnús Barelegs, Hákon, the son of Earl Pál, came east from the Orkneys; and the kings bestowed on him the earlship and authority over the Orkneys, the same as Earls Pál, his father, or Erlend, his paternal uncle, had had before him; whereupon Hákon sailed west back to the Orkneys.

Chapter 3. King Sigurth Sails to England

1107 Four years after the death of King Magnús, King Sigurth and his expedition left Norway. He had with him sixty ships. As says Thórarin Stuttfeld:¹

553. So great a fleet (185.)
together came
for prudent prince,
picked and faithful,
that sixty ships
sailed, gaily planked,
hence by holy
heavens' decree.

In the fall King Sigurth sailed to England. At that time Henry, the son of William the Bastard was king. King Sigurth remained there during the winter. As says Einar Skúlason:²

554. Strongest fleet was steered by (186.)
stout-hearted king westward.
Leapt toward English lands the
liege-of-Norway's sea-steed.
Gave the ruler rest to
roller-horses weary
winter-long—alighted
lord ne'er better from gangplank.

Chapter 4. King Sigurth Proceeds Along the Coast of Spain

1108 In the spring following, King Sigurth proceeded west to France with his fleet, and in fall reached Galicia, where he remained another winter. As says Einar Skúlason:

555. He who holiest realm¹ did (187.)
have 'neath the sun's-mansion,²
one more winter tarried
west in land of Saint Jacob.³
There the prince repaid the
perjured earl—he gladdened
ravens ever—
richly for broken promise.

What happened was that the earl who ruled that land had made an agreement with King Sigurth that he would have a market set up where Sigurth could purchase food the whole winter through; but this he did no longer than Yule, so food became scarce for them, because that land is rugged and does not produce much food. Then King Sigurth proceeded with a large army to the castle the earl had; whereupon the earl fled as he had but a small force. King Sigurth captured
1109 much food there and made much other booty, which he transported to his ships. Then he made ready to depart and sailed west [south?] along the Spanish coast.

When King Sigurth was sailing along the coast of Spain it happened that some vikings out for plunder came toward him with a fleet of galleys. But King Sigurth joined battle with them, and this was his first engagement with heathen men. He won eight galleys from them. As says Halldór Skvaldri:⁴

556. And the paltry pirates (188.)
pounced—but many warriors
fierce before his onset
fell—on the mighty ruler.
Fast the fleet of men cleared—
few were there our losses—
eight of the enemy's galleys:
heir was he to their riches.

Thereupon King Sigurth proceeded to the castle which is called Sintre [Cintra], and there had another battle. That stronghold is in Spain. There the

heathens had established themselves and harried on the Christians. He conquered the stronghold and killed all people in it, because they refused to be baptized, and made much booty there. As says Halldór Skvaldri:

557. Tell I shall the tidings (189.)
to you, how that the lavish
dispender-of-spoils took, in
Spain, the castle of Cintra.
Hard found it the hapless
heathens—but they would not
take to God's his tested
truth—to deal with Sigurth.

Chapter 5. King Sigurth Conquers the City of Alcasse

Thereupon King Sigurth and his fleet proceeded to Lissabon. That is a great city in Spain, half Christian and half heathen. There is the boundary between Christian and heathen¹ Spain. All the districts west [south] of that are heathen. There King Sigurth had a third battle with heathen warriors in which he was victorious, and carried off much booty. As says Halldór Skvaldri:

558. South you sailed and landed, (190.)
Sigurth, by the castle
Lisbon, learned I, called, and,
lord, won a third victory.

Then King Sigurth with his fleet proceeded west [south] along the heathen part of Spain and made land by a city which is called Alcasse,² and there had a fourth battle with the heathens and conquered that city. He slew many people there so as to depopulate the city. There they made an immense amount of booty. As says Halldór Skvaldri:

559. Fourth victory fain wouldst, (191.)
folk-ruler, win in combat,
heard I, 'gainst a heathen
host, at Alcasse castle.

And still further:

560. In sapped castle, sorrow (192.)
seized on heathen women,
heard I, when their men had
hied them off in wild flight.

Chapter 6. King Sigurth Subdues a Cave Fort on Forminterra

Then King Sigurth continued on his journey and came to Norva Sound, and in the sound he encountered a large fleet of corsairs. The king engaged them in combat. This was his fifth battle, and he was victorious. As says Halldór Skvaldri:

561. Fearless ye fought—God did (193.)
favor you—the raven to
new wounds flew—in Norva
Narrows 'gainst the heathens.

After that King Sigurth sailed south [east—of Spain] along Serkland¹ and arrived at the islands which are called Forminterra.² There a large force of heathen black men had established themselves in some cave and had placed a stone wall in front of its mouth. They harried far and wide on the land and had brought all their booty into the cave. King Sigurth went on land in this island and advanced to the cave—it was in a cliff, and one had to go high up to the stone wall, and the cliff jutted out above it. The heathens defended the stone wall and were not afraid of the weapons of the Norwegians, because they could throw stones and shoot down on the Norwegians below them. Nor did the Norwegians want to attack under such conditions. Then the heathens brought costly stuffs and other precious things out on the wall, shook them at the Norwegians, shouted at them, egged them to come on, and taunted them.

Then King Sigurth bethought himself of a stratagem. He had two ship-boats which are called barks [launches] dragged up to the top of the cliff above the opening of the cave and had them secured with strong ropes under the ribs and about the stern. Then as many men got into them as could find room in them, and then they let the boats down above the cave with ropes. Then those in the boats shot and hurled stones so that the heathens drew back from the stone wall. Then King Sigurth and his troops climbed up the cliff under the wall, broke it down and thus got into the cave. The heathens fled behind the stone wall which was set across the cave. Then the king had large pieces of wood brought up and great bonfires lit before the door-opening. And when the fire and the smoke told on them, some of the heathens lost their lives, others hurled themselves against the weapons of the Norwegians; but all were either killed or burned. The Norwegians took the greatest amount of booty they had gotten on this expedition. As says Halldór Skvaldri:

(194.)

562. ³ His sea-steed then
steered the dauntless,
fight-loving prince to
Forminterra.
There, fire and sword
suffered the Moors
in dogged fray, ere
death overtook them.

And still further:

563. From above, the boats thou, (195.)
battle-urger—done were
mighty works among the
Moors—didst lower gently.
But from below, liege, didst,
loving battle, climb to
cliffy and man-crowded
cave at head of warriors.

Still further, Thórarin Sutfeld says:

564. Bade the weapon-skilled (196.)
warlord drag two
blue-black breeze-wolves⁴
above the cliff,
whence by ropes were
the roller-horses⁵
lowered to cave-mouth,
laden with men.

Chapter 7. King Sigurth Has Battles at Íviza and Minorca

Then King Sigurth continued on his journey and came to the island called Íviza.¹ There he had a battle and was victorious—that was the seventh. As says Halldór Skvaldri: (197.) 565. Steered then the strife-loving, stout-souled king his sea-steeds—
eager aye was he for
honor—straight to Íviza.

Then King Sigurth arrived at the island which is called Manork [Minorca] and there had an eighth battle with heathens and was victorious. As says Halldór Skvaldri: (198.)

566. An eighth storm-of-arrows
added the prince sithen—
crimsoned king's men spears in
combat—on green Minorca.

Chapter 8. King Sigurth Is the Guest of Duke Roger

In the spring King Sigurth arrived in Sicily, and there he remained for a long time. Rothgeir [Roger] was duke there at that time. He received the king well and invited him to a banquet. King Sigurth came to it with a great following. A splendid hospitality was shown him there, and every day the feast lasted, Duke Rothgeir stood by the table of King Sigurth, serving him. And on the seventh day of the banquet, when men had washed their hands, King Sigurth took the duke by the hand, led him up to the high-seat, and conferred the title of king on him and the right to be king over the realm of Sicily; but before that time earls had ruled that land.

Chapter 9. Of Duke Roger and His Kin

Rothgeir [Roger], the king of Sicily, was a most powerful ruler. He conquered all of Apulia and also many large islands in the Greek Sea. He was called Rothgeir the Powerful. His son was William, king over Sicily, who for a long time was at war with the emperors of Miklagarth. King William had three daughters but no son. One of his daughters was married to Emperor Henry, the son of Emperor Frederick; and their son was the Frederick who at that time was Roman emperor. Another daughter of King William was married to the duke of Capr [Cyprus?]. The third was the wife of the admiral of the fleet, Margrít [Margarito]. Emperor Henry slew both of them. The daughter of Rothgeir, king of Sicily, was married to Mánúli [Emanuel Komnenos], emperor of Miklagarth. Their son was Emperor Kir-jalax [Kyr-Alexios].

Chapter 10. King Sigurth Is Received by King Balduin

1109 During the summer King Sigurth crossed the Greek Sea on his way to Palestine, then marched up to Jerusalem and there met Balduin, the king of Jerusalem. King Balduin received King Sigurth most graciously and with him rode to the River Jordan and back to Jerusalem. Thus says Einar



Skúlason:

The kings ride to Jordan.

567. Sped the king through spume and
spindrif his man-of-war—not
few the folk-lord's deeds of
fame—in Grecian waters,
ere at Acre the liege his
anchor lowered, and all his
followers fain were on that
festive morning, with him. (199.)

568. Peaceful pilgrimage made the
prince—under wide heaven
nobler lord was never
known—through Land the Holy;
and the gladsome gold-ring-
giver—praiseworthy was that—
bathed in blessed Jordan's (200.)

burn, of sin to cleanse him.

King Sigurth remained a long time in Palestine during the fall and the first part of winter.

Chapter 11. King Sigurth Is Given a Splinter of the Holy Cross

King Balduin prepared a splendid feast for King Sigurth and a great following of his. At that time King Balduin gave King Sigurth many sacred relics. With the consent of King Balduin and the Patriarch a splinter was taken from the Holy Cross. They both swore by the sacred relics that this wood was from the holy cross on which God himself was martyred. Then this sacred relic was given to King Sigurth on condition that he, and twelve other men with him, made oath that he was to promote Christianity with all his power and establish an archbishopric [in his land] if he could, and that [this piece of] the cross should be deposited where Holy King Óláf was interred, and that he [the king] should promote the paying of tithes [to the church] and that he should do so himself.

Thereafter the king returned to his ships at Acre. Then also King Balduin made ready his army to proceed to Syria and the city called Sæt [Sidon]. That city was heathen. King Sigurth joined him on this expedition. And when
1110 the two kings had beleaguered the city for a short time the heathen men surrendered, and the kings took possession of the city, and their troops of all other booty. King Sigurth yielded to King Balduin entire possession of the city. As says Halldór Skvaldri: (201.)

569. Heathen fastness, feeder-of-
famished-wolves, thou tookst and,
great-hearted, gavest back then,
gallant ruler, to Balduin.

Einar Skúlason also speaks about this: (202.)

570. A pact of peace, I heard, the
prince-of-Dalesmen¹ made there.
Crashed the catapults in
combat against Sidon.
Broke down the strong, beetling
breastworks the ravens'-feeder.
Bitter brands were reddened,
boasted the king of victory.

After that, King Sigurth returned to his ships and made ready to leave Palestine. They sailed north to the island called Kípr [Cyprus], and there King Sigurth remained for some time. Then he sailed to Greece and moored the whole fleet by Angel's Ness [Cape Saint Angelo] and lay there for half a month. A fresh south wind blew there every day [to sail with] but he wanted to wait for a

side-wind so that the sails could be set lengthwise on the ships; because all his sails were covered with costly stuffs—both in front and back, because neither those stationed in the bow of the ships nor those in the stern cared to see the less attractive side of the sails.



King Sigurth and his men ride into Miklagarth.

Chapter 12. King Sigurth and His Train Make Their Entry into Byzantium

When King Sigurth sailed in to Miklagarth he kept close to the shore. There, towns and castles and villages follow the shore without a break. The people on land could see all the billowing sails, nor was there any opening between them, so that it looked like an unbroken wall. All the people stood outside to behold the sailing of King Sigurth. Also Emperor Kirjalax had heard of the approach of King Sigurth, and he had the castle gate of Miklagarth opened which is called Gullvarta [Golden Gate] That gate the emperor is to ride through when he has been away for a long time from Miklagarth and returns victorious. Then the emperor had precious stuffs laid on all streets of the city leading from Gullvarta to Laktjarnir.¹ There is the most splendid imperial palace.

King Sigurth told his men to ride into the city with a proud bearing and not to show any astonishment at all the new things they might see; and so they did. With such pomp King Sigurth and all his men rode into Miklagarth and then into the most splendid of royal halls; and all was ready there for their reception. King Sigurth remained there for some time. Then King [sic] Kirjalax sent messengers to him to ask whether he would rather accept six hundred-weights of gold from the emperor or have him make preparations for the games which the emperor was accustomed to have played in the Hippodrome. King Sigurth chose the games; and the messengers said that it would cost the emperor as much as the gold. Thereupon the emperor made preparations for the games, and then they were played in the usual fashion; and all the games that time went better for the emperor. The empress has half the game, and their men vie with each other. The Greeks say that if the emperor wins more games in the Hippodrome than the empress, then the emperor would be victorious in his expeditions.

Chapter 13. King Sigurth Returns to Norway

Thereupon King Sigurth made ready for the home journey. He gave the emperor all his ships. There were gilded [dragon] heads on the ship the king had steered—they were set on Saint Peter's Church. Emperor Kirjalax gave King Sigurth many horses and furnished him guides through all his lands. Then King Sigurth left Miklagarth; but a great many of his men remained behind and went into military service [with the emperor].

First, King Sigurth marched into Bulgaria, then through Hungary, Pannonia, Swabia, and Bavaria. There he met Lothar, the emperor of Rome, who gave him an excellent welcome, furnished [his force] guides through the whole of his realm, and had markets established for them, whenever they needed all kinds of purchases. And when King Sigurth came to Slesvík in Denmark, Earl Eilíf entertained him splendidly. That was in midsummer time. In Heithaby¹ he met Níkolás, the king of Denmark, who made him greatly welcome, and himself accompanied him north in Jutland and gave him a ship with complete equipment on which he sailed to Norway. Thus King Sigurth returned to his own kingdom, and was well received. It was thought that no more honorable expedition had ever sailed from Norway than this one. He was then twenty years of age, and had been three years on this expedition. Óláf, his [youngest] brother, was then twelve years old.

Chapter 14. King Eystein's Improvements in Norway

King Eystein had done much in the land to serve it well, while King Sigurth was on his expedition. He had established the monastery in Bergen on the Northness and endowed it with much wealth. He had built the Church of Saint Michael, a splendid stone minster. And on the site of the royal palace in Bergen he had built the Apostle Church, a wooden edifice. There also he had erected the great hall, the most magnificent wooden structure that has been built in Norway. Also, he had built a church at Agthanes, and had made a fortification and a harbor where before had been a harbor-less coast. Still further, he had built the Saint Nicholas Church in the royal palace in Nitharós, which edifice is very richly adorned with woodwork and all kinds of artistry. Another church he had built in Vágar in Hálogaland and gave it a prebend [for its maintenance].

Chapter 15. King Eystein Wins over Jamtaland

King Eystein sent word to the wisest and most powerful men of Jamtaland, inviting them to come to him; and very kindly welcomed all who came, and saw them off with gifts of friendship, and thus won them over. And as many became accustomed to see him and receive his gifts, and others who did not come to him were sent presents, he gained the complete adherence of all those who were leaders in that land. Then he spoke to them and said that the people of Jamtaland had followed ill counsel to turn their allegiance and their tribute away from the kings of Norway. He brought up the fact that the people of Jamtaland had joined the realm of King Hákon, the foster son of Æthelstān, and had long been subject to the kings of Norway. He also mentioned how many necessities they might obtain from Norway and how much trouble it was for them to seek in the realm of the king of Sweden the things they needed. And with his speeches he brought it about that the people of Jamtaland offered to yield their allegiance to King Eystein, calling that their need and necessity. The outcome of their friendly intercourse was that the people of Jamtaland brought all their land under the sway of King Eystein. First, their chieftains obtained assurance of complete agreement from all the people, and then they came to King Eystein and by oaths confirmed to him possession of their land; and this they have abided by ever since. Thus King Eystein won the land of the Jamts by wisdom and not by force as had some of his forbears.

Chapter 16. King Eystein's Appearance and Character

King Eystein was strikingly handsome in appearance. His eyes were blue and rather large, his hair pale blond and curly. He was a man of middle height, wise and well-informed in all respects—both in the laws, instances, and history—and resourceful, eloquent, and well-spoken. He was of a most cheerful disposition, affable, pleasing in his ways, and beloved by all the people. He was married to Ingibjorg, the daughter of Guthorm, the son of Steigar-Thórir. Their daughter was called Mária and later became the wife of Guthbrand Skafhoggsson.

Chapter 17. King Sigurth's Appearance and Character

King Sigurth was a man of tall stature, and he had reddish brown hair. He was of an imposing appearance, not handsome but well-proportioned, brisk, of few words, and most often gruff, but a good friend, firm of mind, not inclined to talk much, well-mannered and high-minded. King Sigurth was a man who asserted *his* authority and was inclined to mete out punishment. He observed the laws well, was generous, loved magnificence, and was renowned.

King Ólaf was of tall and slender build, handsome, of cheerful disposition, affable, and popular. When the brothers were kings in Norway they abolished many taxes which the Danes had imposed on the people when Svein Álfifuson ruled there; and because of this they were greatly beloved by both the common people and the chieftains.

Chapter 18. King Óláf Dies of a Malady

King Óláf was attacked by a disease which caused his death. He is buried by Christ Church in Nitharós and was much lamented. Thereafter, the two kings, Eystein and Sigurth, ruled the land between them. Before that time the three brothers had been kings for twelve years—five years after Sigurth returned to the land, and seven before that. Óláf was seventeen when he died, which
1116 was on the twenty-second of December. King Sigurth had his residence in the northern part of the country, Eystein in the eastern part; and when the latter had been king of the eastern part for one year he resided for a long time in Sarpsborg during the winter.

Chapter 19. King Sigurth Deposits the Splinter of the Holy Cross in Konungahella

There was a wealthy and powerful farmer who lived in Aumorth in Mickle Dale and was called Óláf in the Dale. He had two children—a son, called Hákon Fauk, and a daughter, called Borghild. She was exceedingly handsome and a wise and well-informed woman. Both Óláf and his children lived for a long time in Borg during the winter; and Borghild was constantly in the company of the king, and there were conflicting opinions about their intimacy. In the summer following, King Eystein journeyed to the north of the country, whereas Sigurth journeyed east; and during the following winter Sigurth stayed in the east. He resided for a long time in Konungahella and did much to improve that market town. He built a large stronghold there and surrounded it with a great moat. That stronghold was constructed of sods and stone, and within it he had houses erected and also a church. He placed the Holy Cross in Konungahella, and insofar did not fulfil the promise he had made in the Holy Land. But he established tithes and did most other things he had there vowed to do. But the reason he had the cross placed there east at the very boundary was that he thought it would be a protection for all the land. But it turned out to be most ill-advised to place that holy relic almost within the power of heathens as was evident later on.

Borghild, the daughter of Óláf learned of the rumor that people were speaking ill about King Eystein and her because of their conversations and friendship. Then she journeyed to Borg and there fasted in preparation for the ordeal of carrying hot iron. She bore it to clear herself of that accusation and proved her innocence. But when King Sigurth heard of that he rode in one day what is a long two-day's journey, and arrived in Dale where Óláf lived, and stayed there during the night. He made Borghild his concubine and took her away with him. Their son was called Magnús. Very early in his youth he was sent away to be fostered by Víthkun Jóansson in the north at Bjarkey in Hálogaland, and he was brought up there. Magnús was exceedingly handsome, and matured early in stature and strength.

Chapter 20. Of Queen Málmfríth and Her Kin

King Sigurth was married to Málmfríth, daughter of King Harald Valdamarsson from the east in Hólmgarth. The mother of King Harald was Queen Gytha the Old, daughter of Harold, the son of Godwine, king of England. Malmfríth's mother was Kristín, daughter of Ingi Steinkelsson, king of Sweden. Málmfríth's sister was Ingilborg, who was married to Knút Lávarth, the son of Eirík the Good of Denmark, the son of Svein Úlfsson. The children of Knút and Ingilborg were Valdamar, who succeeded Svein Eiríksson, and Margrét, Kristín, and Katrín. Margrét was married to Stíg Whiteskin. Their daughter was Kristín, who was married to Karl Sörkvisson, king of Sweden. Their son was King Sörkvir.

Chapter 21. The Kings Match Their Accomplishments

One winter both King Eystein and King Sigurth were on their visitation in the Uppland District, on separate estates. And since it was but a short distance between the places where the kings were to be entertained, it was decided that they were to be entertained together alternately on their estates. The first time, both were together on the estate King Eystein owned.

Now in the evening, when the men began to drink, the ale was not good, and not much was said. Then King Eystein said, "Everyone surely is silent here. When drinking it is preferable to have some merriment. Let us have some cheer over our cups. That will be a better entertainment for us. Brother Sigurth, it would seem best that we two have some entertaining chat between us."

King Sigurth answered rather curtly, "You may talk as much as you please, but let me keep my peace."

King Eystein said, "It has often been the custom for men when drinking to choose someone to compare themselves with. Let us do so now." To that, King Sigurth said nothing. "I see," said King Eystein, "that it behooves me to start this entertainment. I shall choose you, brother, for my match. And I shall start by saying that we two have the same title and equal possessions. There is no difference between our birth and upbringing."

Then King Sigurth replied, "Do you not remember that I had the better of you in wrestling whenever I wanted to, though you were a year older?"

Then King Eystein answered, "I recall as well that you were no match for me in agility."

King Sigurth replied, "Do you remember how it was with our swimming, and that I could duck you whenever I wanted to?"

King Eystein said, "I could swim as far as you could, nor was I worse at diving. Also, I was so good at skating that I did not know anyone who could vie with me; but you were not better at that than a cow."

King Sigurth said, "A more chieftainly sport, and a more useful one, it seems to me, is to shoot well with bow and arrow. And I believe you would not be able to stretch my bow even though you used both feet [to stretch it]."

King Eystein answered, "I am not as strong at the bow as you are; but there is less difference between our marksmanship. And I am better at the use of skis than you, and that has also been considered a worthwhile accomplishment."

King Sigurth said, "It is considered more chieftainly that he who is to

command others should stand tall in a group and be stronger and more practiced in arms than others and be easily seen and recognized when men are gathered.”

King Eystein said, “It is no less distinctive that a man be handsome. And then he is no less easily recognized in a multitude. That too seems to me chieftainly, because fine clothes go best with a handsome exterior. Also, I have better knowledge of the laws than you; and whatever the subject, I am by far the better speaker.”

King Sigurth answered, “It may be that you have learned more dodges of the law than I, because I have had other things to do. No one doubts that you are glib, but many say that you are not very true to your word, that you attach no importance to your promises, and that you truckle to those who happen to be present; and that does not befit a king.”

King Eystein answered, “The reason for that is that when people bring their cases before me I endeavor to settle them so as to please both parties. Then frequently someone else appears who contends with a man, and then often there has to be a compromise, so that both shall be pleased. Likewise it often occurs that I promise to do what I am asked to, because I would rather that everyone shall leave me pleased. I might also choose to do as you do, if I cared to—that is, to promise everyone ill; and I have not heard anyone taunting you for not sticking to that.”

King Sigurth said, “It is people’s opinion that the expedition abroad which I undertook has been a rather chieftainly one. Meanwhile you stayed at home as though you were the daughter of your father.”

King Eystein replied, “Now you come to the point. I would not have started this controversy if I did not have an answer to that. It seemed to me rather that I dowered you as though you were my sister before you were ready to go on that expedition.”

King Sigurth said, “You probably have heard that I had a great many battles in Saracen Lands, as you probably have learned, and that I was victorious in all and acquired many kinds of valuable things, such as have never been seen in our land. I was held in the highest esteem wherever I met the most highly placed men; whereas I think you have never got over being a stay-at-home.”

King Eystein answered, “I have heard that you had some fights abroad; but more useful for our country has been what I did meanwhile: I built five churches from their foundation up and I constructed a harbor at Agthanness where before the coast was harborless and where everyone must pass who sails south or north

along the land. Also, I erected the beacon in Sinholm Sound¹ and the [royal] hall in Bergen, while you put Moors to the sword in Saracen Land and sent them to the devil. I consider that of little gain to our country.”

King Sigurth said, “On this expedition, at its farthest point, I journeyed to the River Jordan and swam across it. And beyond, on the river bank, there is a thicket, and there I tied a knot and spoke words over it to the effect that you were to undo it, brother, or else have such challenge as was laid on it.”

King Eystein said, “The knot you tied for me I shall not undo; but I could have tied that knot for you which you could have undone even less; to wit, when you with one ship sailed into my fleet, the time you returned to the land.”

Thereafter they both ceased talking, and both were furious. Several things occurred in their dealings between them when one could see that each put himself and his claims forward, and that each wanted to be foremost; yet peace was maintained between the two the while they lived.

Chapter 22. King Sigurth Shows Signs of Insanity

[One time] King Sigurth was in the Uppland District at an entertainment given him, and baths were prepared [for the guests]. But when the king was in his bath, which was tented over, it seemed to him that a fish swam by him in the bath. And then he had such a fit of laughter that his mind was unhinged. And that occurred very often later.

The brothers gave Ragnhild, a daughter of King Magnús Barelegs, in marriage to Harald Kesja. He was the son of Eirík the Good, the king of Denmark. Their sons were Magnús, Óláf, Knút, and Harald.

Chapter 23. Of King Eystein's Improvements and Death

King Eystein had a large ship constructed in Nitharós. It was built on the same scale and in the same manner as was the Long Serpent, which Óláf Tryggvason had had built. A dragon head was on its stem, and a crook on its stern, and both were gilded. The ship had high sides, but the stem and the stern seemed somewhat smaller than was fitting. Also, he had boathouses built in Nitharós, both so large that it was considered a great achievement, and built with the best of materials and excellently constructed.

King Eystein was at an entertainment [given him] at Stim near Hústathir. There he took suddenly ill, and that was his death. He died on the fourth of the Kalends of September [29th of August], and his body was brought north ¹¹²²to Kaupang, and there he is interred in Christ Church. It is said that over no man's body in Norway had ever stood so many men in sorrow, since the death of King Magnús, the son of Holy King Óláf, as over him. Eystein was king in Norway for twenty years. After the death of King Eystein, Sigurth was sole king in Norway as long as he lived.

Chapter 24. Kings Sigurth and Níkolás Agree on a Crusade to Smáland

Níkolás Sveinsson, king of Denmark, afterwards married Margrét, the daughter of Ingi, who had before been the wife of King Magnús Barelegs. Their son was called Magnús the Strong. King Níkolás sent messengers to King Sigurth Jerusalemfarer, asking him to support him with troops and all the force of his kingdom, and proceed with King Níkolás east along the coast of Sweden to Smáland, in order to convert the people there; for the inhabitants of that province had not maintained their faith even though some had accepted Christianity. At that time far and wide in Sweden many still were heathen and many, Christian only superficially, because there had been some kings of theirs who had renounced Christianity and kept up sacrifices, as did Sacrifice-Svein and later, Eirík Ársæl. King Sigurth promised to come, and the kings agreed to meet in the Eyrar Sound.

Thereupon King Sigurth summoned a full levy in all Norway, of both troops and ships. And when this force was assembled he had fully three hundred [360] ships. King Níkolás came to the meeting place much earlier, and waited there a long time. Then the Danes began to grumble and complain, saying that the Norwegians were not likely to come, and then disbanded. Both the king and the whole fleet departed. Later, King Sigurth did arrive and was ill-pleased. They sailed east to Svimrarós and held a meeting there. King Sigurth spoke about King Níkolás not living up to his word; and they agreed on doing some plundering in his country on account of that.

They seized on the village of Tumathorp, which lies not far from Lund,¹ and then steered east to the market town which is called Kalmar. They harried there and also in the District of Smáland, levying contributions of food, to the extent of fifteen hundred [1800] head of cattle; and the people of Smáland accepted Christianity.

Thereupon King Sigurth returned with his army and arrived in his kingdom with many and valuable pieces of goods and property which he had won on this expedition. And this expedition was called the Kalmar Expedition. That was in the summer before the great eclipse [August 11th]. It was the only
1124 warlike expedition undertaken by Sigurth while he was king.

Chapter 25. King Sigurth's Dream

One time King Sigurth was at one of his estates, and in the morning, when he had dressed, he was glum and silent, and his friends feared that he had one of his seizures. But his steward [at the place] was a wise and courageous man, and accosting the king he asked if perchance any tidings had come to his ears which were so weighty that they depressed him, or if it could be that he was not satisfied with his entertainment, or if anything else were amiss that he could set right. King Sigurth replied that none of the things he had mentioned were at fault; "but the reason is," he said, "that I am thinking of the dream I had last night."

"Sire," he said, "I hope it was a good dream, and we would be glad to hear it."

The king said, "I thought I was out in the open, here at Jathar, and that I was looking out to sea and that I saw a great darkness, and it was approaching hither. Then it seemed to me that it was a big tree, with its branches looming above the water and its roots down in the sea. And when that tree drifted on land it broke into pieces and they were scattered far and wide over the land, both on the mainland and the outlying islands, skerries, and strands; and then the vision was given me that I could see all of Norway's coastlands, and I could look into every cove and see that pieces of that tree had drifted into them. Most of them were small, but some, larger."

Then the steward answered, "It would seem best to me that you interpret this dream yourself, and I would gladly hear you do that."

The king said, "It appears to me most likely that it foretells of the arrival in this land of some man, and that he will take up his abode here and that his offspring will be scattered about this land and be of widely differing importance."

Chapter 26. Harald Gilli Undergoes the Ordeal

Hallkel Húk, the son of Jóan Smjórþalti, was the steward [of the king] in the District of Mœr. He sailed west across the sea, all the way to the Hebrides. There, a man from Ireland came to see him who was called Gillikrist [Servant of Christ] and who declared that he was the son of King Magnús Barelegs. His mother accompanied him and said that he also was called Harald. Hallkel espoused his cause and took them to Norway, and straightway went to see King Sigurth with Harald and his mother. They presented their case to the king. King Sigurth laid it before the chieftains, so that each one should give his advice according to his disposition; but all asked him to decide for himself.

Thereupon King Sigurth had Harald called before him and told him that he would not deny him the right to prove his paternity by undergoing the ordeal; provided that a pledge was given that, even in the event his paternity was proved, he should make no claim to the kingdom while King Sigurth or Magnús, his son, was alive. And these pledges were given and confirmed by oaths.

King Sigurth ordered that Harald was to walk on red-hot ploughshares to prove his paternity. But that ordeal was considered rather harsh, because it was to be undergone only to prove his paternity and not his claim to the throne. For that he had before given pledges. However, Harald agreed to it. He fasted in preparation for the ordeal, and then this test was undergone—the sternest ever made in Norway: nine red-hot ploughshares were laid on the ground, and Harald walked over them with bare feet, led by two bishops. And three days later the outcome of the test was looked into, and his feet were found to be unburned.

Thereafter King Sigurth accepted the kinship of Harald with good grace; but Magnús, his son, took a dislike to Harald, and many chieftains followed him in that. King Sigurth was so assured of his popularity with all the people that he demanded that all should swear that Magnús, his son, was to be king after him; and he received assurances from all the people.

Chapter 27. Harald Gilli Shows His Prowess as a Runner

Harald Gilli was a man of tall and slender stature. He had a long neck and rather long face, black eyes, and dark hair. He was alert and swift [in his motions] and most often wore the Irish costume with short and light clothes. The Norwegian speech was hard for him to master, he often hesitated for words, and many ridiculed him for that.

Once upon a time Harald sat drinking and was talking with another man and told him about matters west in Ireland. Among other things he told him that there were men in Ireland who were so fast on their feet that no horse could overtake them. Magnús, the son of the king overheard that and said, “Now he is lying as usual.”

Harald answered. “It is the truth,” he said, “that there are men in Ireland whom no horse in Norway could pass in running.”

They talked about this still further, and both were drunk. Then Magnús said, “That you shall wager, with your head as pledge, unless you run as fast as I ride my horse; and I shall put up my gold ring against that.”

Harald answered, “I do not say that I can run so fast. I could find those men in Ireland who can run so fast, and I can lay a wager about that.”

Magnús, the king’s son, replied, “I do not care to journey to Ireland. Here we shall wager, and not there.”

Then Harald left the company to go to sleep and would have no more to do with him. That was in Ósló. But the following morning, after early mass, Magnús rode up the Street.¹ He sent word to Harald to come there. And when he came he was arrayed like this: he was in a shirt and trousers with straps under the feet; he wore a short mantle and had an Irish hat on his head and a spearshaft in his hand. Magnús marked off the extent of the course to be run. Harald said, “You are making it too long.” Magnús straightway made it much longer and said that it was too short nevertheless.

Many people were present. Then they started the race, and Harald kept up alongside the horse’s shoulder. But when they arrived at the end of the course, Magnús said, “You are holding onto the saddle-strap, and the horse pulled you.” Magnús had a very fast horse from Gautland.

Then they took another heat back, and this time Harald ran ahead of the horse all the way. When they came to the end of the course Harald asked, “Did I hold onto the saddle-strap this time?”

Magnús said, “This time you had a head start.”

Then Magnús let his horse breathe a while, and when he was ready he dug his spurs into the horse and got a fast start. Meanwhile Harald stood still. Then Magnús looked back and called out, “Run now.” Then Harald leapt and ran quickly past the horse, and far ahead, and so to the end of the course. He got there long before Magnús, so that he lay down, and jumped up and greeted Magnús when he arrived.

Then they returned to the town. King Sigurth had been at mass meanwhile, and knew nothing about this till after the meal that day.

Then he spoke to Magnús in angry fashion, “You call Harald foolish, but it seems to me *you* are a fool. You are not acquainted with the ways of other peoples. Did you not know before that people in other parts train themselves in other sports than filling their bellies with drink and rendering themselves senseless and unfit, so they don’t know what they do? Give Harald his ring and make no more sport of him while I am alive.”

Chapter 28. Sigurth Sigurtharson Saves a Man from Drowning

One time when King Sigurth was at sea with his ships and they lay to in a harbor they found a merchant vessel from Iceland anchored beside them. Harald had his station in the fore room of the king's ship, and foreward next to him lay Svein Hrímhildarson, whose mother was Hrímhild and whose father was Knút Sveinsson of Jathar. Sigurth Sigurtharson was a steward [of the king], an excellent man. He steered one of the ships.

One fine day with hot sunshine, many men went swimming, both those of the warships and of the merchantman. A certain Icelfander who was among those swimming took pleasure in ducking those who couldn't swim as well as he. The men laughed about that. King Sigurth saw and heard that. Then he cast off his clothes, jumped overboard, and swam toward the Icelfander. He grabbed him and ducked him and held him under; and as soon as the Icelfander came up, the king ducked him, and so time and again.

Then Sigurth Sigurtharson said, "Are we going to let the king kill that man?" Someone said that no one was particularly eager to go [and prevent that]. Sigurth said, "Someone would if Dag Eilífsson were here."

Thereupon Sigurth leapt overboard and swam to the king. He seized him and said, "Don't kill the man. Everyone now sees that you are much the better swimmer."

The king said, "Let go of me, Sigurth. I shall kill him. He wants to duck our men."

Sigurth answered, "Let us two now play first; but you, Icelfander, swim to the land." He did so, but the king let go of Sigurth and swam to his ship. So did Sigurth. But the king was heard to say that Sigurth had better not dare to show himself to him again. Sigurth was told that, and [leaving his ship] he went on land.

Chapter 29. Sigurth Sigurtharson Saves Harald Gilli from Being Hanged

In the evening, about the time the men were going to bed, some were playing games on land. Harald was among them and bade his page go on board the ship and make his couch ready and wait there for him. The page did so. The king had gone to sleep. But when the page thought it took a long time [for Harald to return] he lay down in Harald's bed. Svein Hrímhildarson said, "A great shame it is for men of good birth to leave their homes in order to have a valet lie next to them." The page replied that Harald had told him to wait there for him. Svein Hrímhildarson said, "To me it seems no particular advantage that Harald has his couch here, even if he doesn't bring here any thralls or beggars"—and he seized a truncheon and hit the page on the head so that the blood ran down his face. The page straightway went on land and told Harald what had happened. Harald at once went on board the ship and back into the forward compartment. He dealt Svein a blow with his hand-axe, inflicting a great wound on his arm. Then he went back to the land at once. Svein ran on land after him. Then Svein's kinsmen came up, seized Harald, and intended to hang him. But when they were preparing to do that, Sigurth Sigurtharson boarded King Sigurth's ship and waked him. But when the king opened his eyes and recognized Sigurth he said, "For this you shall die, since you have come before me, because I forbade you to do that"—and sprang up.

Sigurth said, "That you can do, sir king, whenever you want to, but other matters are more important now: go on land the fastest you can and help your brother Harald. The people of Rogaland are about to hang him."

Then the king said, "May God help us now! Sigurth, call the trumpeter and have him sound his trumpet for all to follow me." The king hurried to the land, and all who recognized him followed him to where the gallows was raised. He took Harald at once under his protection. But all the men, fully armed, at once rushed to the king as soon as they heard the trumpet. Then the king declared that Svein and all his companions were to be outlawed; but on the pleading by all, the king moderated his decree, so that they were permitted to stay in the land and to retain their possessions, but that the wound was not to be atoned for.

Then Sigurth Sigurtharson asked the king whether he was to leave him now. "That I do not wish," the king said. "Never shall I be able to get along without you."

Chapter 30. King Saint Óláf Restores a Man's Speech

There was a poor young man, Kolbein by name, whose tongue Thóra, the mother of King Sigurth the Jerusalemfarer, had cut out for the sole reason that this young man had eaten half a piece of a dish intended for the king's mother, saying that the cook had given it him. But the cook did not dare confess the truth to her. Thereafter this man was deprived of his speech for a long time. Einar Skúlason makes mention of this in his *Óláfsdrápa*:¹

(203.) 571. For little cause the lady
let the tongue be cut out
of the youthful yeoman
yearning aye for riches.
Him I saw then, when at
Hlíth I was, the breaker-
of-rings, bereft of speech and
wretched, few weeks after.

Later, he betook himself Trondheim and Nitharós and kept vigil in Christ Church. And at the time of the matins, on the latter day of Saint Óláf's Mass [August 3rd], he fell asleep; and it seemed to him that Holy King Óláf approached him and with his hand took hold of the stump of his tongue and pulled it toward him. And he awaked healed, and with a glad heart thanked our Lord and Holy King Óláf, through whom he had regained his health and obtained grace—having journeyed thither speechless and sought his holy shrine; and now he returned from there whole and of clear speech.

Chapter 31. Saint Óláf Helps a Man Escape Slavery

A certain young man, Danish of birth, had been seized by heathen men and brought to Wendish lands and kept there with other captives. There he stayed alone in irons in daytime, but nights the farmer's son was chained to him so that he could not escape. But this miserable man could never sleep nor be in peace, because of his grief and sorrow, reflecting this way and that what could be of aid to him. He was much afraid of being kept a slave, and feared both hunger and tortures; nor did he expect any release through his kinsmen, because they had twice before ransomed him from heathen lands; for which reason he believed it would seem to them too troublesome and too expensive to do that a third time. Happy the man who does not experience so much evil in this world as he had undergone. Now no other way seemed open to him than to run away and escape, if luck favored him. So at night time he went and killed the farmer's son, cut off his foot, and headed for the woods with the chains on him. But the morning after, at dawn, they discovered it and went after him with two hounds accustomed to find the tracks of those who escaped, and they discovered him in the woods where he lay trying to hide from them. Then they seized hold of him and beat and pummeled him, mistreating him in all manner of ways.

Then they dragged him back, maltreating him within an inch of his life and showing him no mercy. They dragged him to be tortured, and straightway penned him in a dungeon in which there were already sixteen men, all Christians, and there fastened him with iron chains and other fetters as tight as they could.

And then the misery and tortures he had suffered before seemed to him but a shadow against what he underwent now. There was no man in this prison who besought mercy for him. No one took pity on the miserable wretch except the Christians who lay there by him in chains. They bewailed his sufferings and their own misfortunes and ill hap. And one day they counselled him, asking that he dedicate himself to Holy King Óláf, to become his servant in his house of glory if by God's grace and with his prayers he made his escape out of this prison. To this he assented with a glad heart and at once vowed he would serve in that [holy] place, as they had asked him. The night after, in his sleep, he thought he saw a man of medium height stand close to him and speak to him in this fashion. "Hear, you poor man," he said. "Why don't you arise?"

He replied, "My lord, who are you?"

"I am King Óláf, on whom you called."

"As I have said, I have called on you, and you have answered me."

“Alas, my good lord,” he said, “I would gladly arise if I could, but I lie bound in chains and also fettered among the men who here sit in irons.”

Thereupon King Óláf called him and spoke thus to him: “Get up quickly and do not be afraid—for certainly you are unfettered now.”

Thereupon he awoke and told his fellow prisoners what he had dreamed. Then they told him to try and stand up to see whether it was true. And up he stood and felt that he was free. Now other fellow prisoners spoke and said that this was of no use for him, because the door was locked from without and within. Then an old man who sat there, in pitiful plight, spoke up and prayed him not to misdoubt the mercy of the man from whom he had received his freedom—“and for this reason will he have done this miracle for you that you were to benefit from his mercy and escape from here, but not that you would have to endure more misery and torture. Now be quick,” he said, “and go to the door, and if you can get out, then you are saved.”

So he did; he at once found the door open, and quickly made his way out and escaped forthwith into the woods. People became aware of that and let loose their dogs and set out after him the fastest they could; but he lay hidden, that wretched man, and saw them search for him. Now the hounds right away lost track of him when they approached him, and all the men became confused, so that no one could find him though he lay right before their feet. Then they returned, sorely vexed and bewailing that they could not catch him.

King Óláf let nothing harm him, once he had got into the woods. He gave him back his hearing and restored his health though they before had beaten him and bruised his head so that he became deaf.

Soon after, he managed to reach a ship, together with two other Christians who had been tortured there for a long time, and they all together made use of that ship to betake themselves away.

Later, he made his way to the saint’s edifice. He had by then become hale and able bodied. Then he repented of his vow and broke his promise to the gracious king, and one day ran away and in the evening came to a farmer who gave him shelter for God’s sake. Afterwards, in the night, when he was asleep, he saw three handsome and fair-dight maidens approach him. They spoke to him forthwith and reproached him sternly for being so bold as to run away from the good king who had shown him such great mercy—first freeing him from his chains and then from all captivity—that he ran away from the kindly lord whom he had served.

Then he awoke in terror, arose straightway early in the morning and told the

husbandman [his dream]; and that good farmer did not let him do anything but return to that holy place.

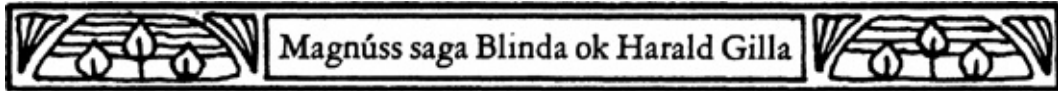
He who first wrote down these miracles, himself saw the man and the marks of the chain on him.

Chapter 32. King Sigurth Builds the Holy Cross Church in Konungahella

King Sigurth had so many buildings erected in Konungahella that there was no more richly provided market town in Norway, and he resided there a long time in order to defend the land. He had a royal residence built within the fortification. He imposed this duty on all the district in the neighborhood of the market town, as well as on the people in the town, that every twelve months everyone nine years old or older was to carry to the fortification five stones to be used as missiles or else five stakes five ells in length which were to be sharpened on one end. Inside the fortification King Sigurth had a Holy Cross Church built. That was a wooden church, very carefully built both as to material and workmanship. This Holy Cross Church was consecrated when Sigurth had been king for twenty-four years. The king deposited in it the splinter of the Holy Cross and many other relics. It was called the Castle Church. In front of the altar he placed the altar-piece he had had made in Greece. It was of bronze and silver, beautifully gilded, and set with enamel and jewels. There was [also] a shrine which Eirík Eimuni, the king of Denmark, had sent him, and a plenary missal,¹ written in golden letters, which the Patriarch had given King Sigurth.

Chapter 33. King Sigurth Falls Sick and Dies

1130 Three years after the Holy Cross Church was consecrated King Sigurth fell sick while in Ósló. He expired one night after Annunciation [March 25th]. He was buried in Saint Halvarth's Church and interred inside the stone wall behind the choir on the south side. Magnús, the son of King Sigurth, was in the town at that time. He at once took over all the king's treasure when Sigurth had died. Sigurth had been king in Norway for twenty-seven years. He was forty years old then. And his reign was blessed for the people of the land with both peace and good harvests.



The Saga of Magnús the Blind and Harald Gilli

Chapter 1. Magnús and Harald Gilli Share the Kingdom

Magnús, the son of King Sigurth, was at Ósló chosen king over all the land, just as all the people had sworn to King Sigurth. Then many men forth with avowed their adherence to him and became his stewards. Magnús was handsomer than any man then living in Norway. He was a man of a haughty disposition, cruel, a great athlete; but it was his father's popularity that brought him the friendship of the people. He was much given to drinking, greedy for money, unfriendly, and hard to get along with.

Harald Gilli was an affable man, merry and gay, not haughty; and he was generous, so that he begrudged his friends nothing. He was open to advice, letting others give him counsel in whatever they would. All this made him popular and earned him praise. As a consequence, men of power attached themselves to him not less than to Magnús.

Harald was in Túnsberg when he learned of the death of King Sigurth, his brother. Then he at once arranged for a meeting with his friends; and they advised him to summon the Haugathing Assembly in that town. At that assembly Harald was chosen as king over half the country. The fact that before he had renounced his paternal inheritance was there declared to have been an oath taken under compulsion. Harald surrounded himself with a bodyguard and appointed stewards. Soon a force joined him no whit smaller than that of King Magnús. Men negotiated between them, and matters continued thus for seven days. But because Magnús could get only considerably smaller forces he had no other choice than to share the kingdom with Harald. The division was made in this fashion that either would have half of the realm King Sigurth had had; but that the ships, the table-service, the jewels, and all movable goods King Sigurth had possessed should go to Magnús. Yet he was ill satisfied with that. Nevertheless they ruled the land in peace for some time, even though they were ill agreed about many things.

King Harald had a son, called Sigurth, by Thóra, a daughter of Guthorm Graybeard. King Harald was married to Ingiríth, a daughter of Rognvald, who was a son of King Ingi Steinkelsson. King Magnús married Kristín, a daughter of Knút Lávarth and [thus] a sister of Valdamar, king of Denmark. Magnús did not take to her and sent her back to Denmark, and thereafter all his affairs took an unfavorable turn. Her kinsfolk were greatly incensed against him.



Horsemen guard the farm.

Chapter 2. The Two Kings Arm against One Another

1134 When the two, Magnús and Harald, had been kings for three years, both took their residence north in Kaupang during the fourth winter.

They invited each other for entertainment. Yet the men of both were ever at the point of fighting. But in the spring following, Magnús with his fleet proceeded south along the coast, collecting all the forces he could get and then approached his friends whether they would furnish him sufficient troops to remove Harald from the kingship and to assign him only so much power as he [Magnús] saw fit, alleging that Harald had [before] renounced the kingship. King Magnús got the consent of many chieftains to this plan.

Harald proceeded to the Uppland districts and overland to Vík, and also collected troops when he heard that King Magnús had done so. And wherever either went he destroyed the property of the other and killed his men. King Magnús had by far the greater force since he had the main part of the country to draw on for troops. Harald was in Vík, east of the fjord, and collected troops, and each deprived the other of men and goods. In Harald's company there was at that time Kríströth, his brother by the same mother, and there were also many landed-men on his side; yet many more on King Magnús'.

King Harald with his troops was at a place called Fors, in the Ranríki District, and from there proceeded toward the sea. On the eve of Saint Lawrence Mass [August 10th] they ate supper at a place called Fyrileif. Mounted guards 1134 were set on all sides of the farm buildings, and these guards became aware of the approach of King Magnús' troops. King Magnús had nearly six thousand men [7200], and Harald, fifteen hundred [1800]. The watchmen told King Harald that the troops of King Magnús were approaching the farm. Harald said, "I wonder what our kinsman, King Magnús, has in mind. He surely does not want to fight us."

Thjóstólf Álason said, "Sire, you will have to take such counsel for yourself and your force [as will be necessary], seeing that King Magnús probably has collected a force all summer long just for this purpose that he intends to fight you as soon as he encounters you."

Then King Harald arose and bade his men arm themselves. "If Magnús intends to fight, then we too shall fight." Thereupon the trumpets were blown, and all the troops of King Harald advanced from the buildings to an enclosure of tilled fields and there set up their standards. King Harald had on two coats of mail, whereas his brother Kríströth, who was accounted a man of great bravery, had none. When King Magnús and his men saw the troops of King Harald they

had none. When King Magnús and his men saw the troops of King Harald they put themselves in battle array, extending themselves in such fashion as to surround the troops of King Harald. As says Halldór Skvaldri:

572. Magnús by much got him
more support to lengthen—
corpses the ground covered
quite—his line of battle.

(204.)

Chapter 3. King Magnús Defeats King Harald Gilli

King Magnús had the Holy Cross borne before him in battle. There ensued a great and fierce fight. Kriströth, the brother of the king, had advanced into the lines of King Magnús, hewing with both hands, and men fell back before him on both sides. But a certain influential farmer who had been in King Harald's army was stationed behind Kriströth. He lifted up his halberd with both hands and thrust it through Kriströth's shoulders so that it pierced his breast and he fell. Then many who stood by asked why he had done that ill deed. He answered, "Now he was given in return for their slaughtering my cattle, this summer, and ransacking my home, and leading me away against my will to be in their army. This I had in mind to do to him before this, as soon as I got the chance."

¹¹³⁴ Then the army of King Harald broke in flight—he and all his troops fled, and many of them had fallen. Ingimar Sveinsson of Ask, a steward of King Harald's, received a mortal wound there; and nearly sixty of King Harald's bodyguard fell. King Harald then fled east in the Vík District to his ships, and thereupon proceeded to Denmark to meet King Eirík Eimuni in order to secure his support. They met in the south, in Seeland. King Eirík received him kindly, chiefly because they had sworn brotherhood to one another.¹ He assigned the province of Halland to Harald for revenue and visitation and gave him eight warships without equipment. Then King Harald went north about Halland, and many joined him there.

After this battle King Magnús subjected all the land to his rule. He gave quarter to all those who were wounded and had them attended to like his own men. Then he laid claim to all of the realm. He then had the best and most influential men in the land at his disposal. And when they held council together, Sigurth Sigurtharson and Thórir Ingirítharson and all the wisest men were of the opinion that they should keep their troops in the Vík District and be on the watch there, in case Harald should come from the south. But self-willed as he was, King Magnús decided to go north [west] to Bergen; and there he took his residence for the winter and let his troops depart and his landed-men go to their estates.

Chapter 4. Harald Gilli Returns and Exacts Revenge

King Harald arrived at Konungahella with the troops he had with him from Denmark. There they were opposed by the landed-men and townsmen, who assembled in battle array landward from the town. But King Harald disembarked and sent messengers to the army of the farmers, praying them not to keep him from his own country by force, and declaring that he was not claiming more than was his by rights. There were negotiations, and in the end the farmers disbanded and swore allegiance to King Harald. Then Harald, in order to win adherents, gave lands in fief and for revenue to the landed-men, and granted amendments of the laws to those yeomen who would join his forces. Thereupon a great host collected for King Harald. He proceeded west [north] about the Vík District, and made a good peace with all except the adherents of King Magnús. Then he had ransacked or killed whenever he caught them. And when he came west [north] to Sarpsborg, he made prisoners of two landed-men of King Magnús, Ásbjorn and Nereith, his brother, and gave them the choice that one was to hang and the other, to be plunged into the Sarp waterfall, and bade them choose for themselves. Ásbjorn chose to be plunged into the Sarp waterfall because he was the older, and because that mode of death seemed to him the worser, and so it was done. Halldór Skvaldri makes mention of this:

573. Ásbjorn, he who ill his (205.)
oath did keep to ruler
feeding famished wolf-brood,
forced was Sarp to enter.
Nereith, the Njorth-of-gold,¹ in
noose-of-Sigar's-enemy²
hanged, and thus his hateful
hústhing³ speech repaid him.

After that King Harald advanced north [west] to Túnsberg, where he was well received. There also a great force joined him.

Chapter 5. Magnús Rejects Sigurth Sigurtharson's Advice

King Magnús while residing in Bergen learned of these happenings. Then he had called in for counsel the chieftains who were in the town and asked their advice as to what should be done. Then Sigurth Sigurtharson answered, “For that I can give good advice: have a small craft manned with a good crew, and let me or some other landed-man steer it and sail to meet King Harald, your kinsman, and offer him a reconciliation in accordance with what righteous men in the land agree upon between you; to wit, that he is to share the realm with you. And it seems likely to me that, with the pleading of men of good will, King Harald will consent to that offer and that then there will be peace between you.”

Then King Magnús answered, “That course I will not take; for else, what good was it that we won the whole kingdom, last fall, if now we are to share it between us? Let me have other advice!”



Sigurth leaves the king.

Then answered Sigurth Sigurtharson, “It appears to me that those landedmen who last fall asked for leave to go home, now sit at home and refuse to join you. At that time you acted straight contrary to my advice in allowing the great force we had then to scatter; because I suspected that Harald and his retainers would return to Vík as soon as they learned that there was no one in command there. Now here is still another alternative—a bad one, yet one that might be

successful; and that is, to send your guests,¹ reinforced by other troops to your landedmen, and kill those who refuse to answer your call when you need them; and to give their possessions to those few who are steadfast in your support, even though they were reckoned of not great account before. Let them herd together your forces, taking with them the evil characters as well as the good, and then proceed east against Harald, with the force you thus obtain, and do battle against him.”

The king replied, “It would create much ill will against me to do to death many men of influence and to elevate men of little account to high position. They have often proved to be as unreliable and managed the land more poorly. I want to hear still other counsel from you.”

Sigurth answered, “It is difficult for me to give you further advice since you will neither seek an agreement nor fight. So let us proceed north to Trondheim, where the greater part of the countryside is for us, and on the way there gather all the men we can get. Maybe the men from the [Gaut Elf] River will weary of being after us.”

The king replied, “I don’t want to be fleeing from the men whom we chased last summer—give me better counsel.”

Then Sigurth arose and made ready to go and said, “Then I shall counsel you to do what I see you want to do anyway and which will happen: remain here in Bergen till Harald comes with a big army; and then either death or disgrace will be in store for you.” Nor did Sigurth say any more.

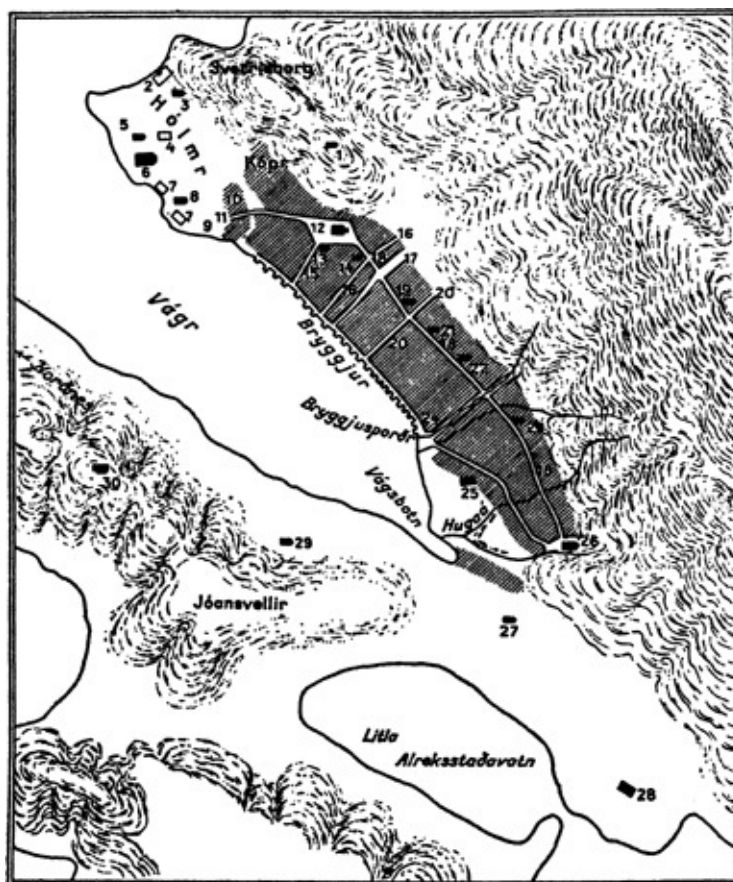
Chapter 6. King Magnús Prepares for the Defence of Bergen

King Harald proceeded west along the land and had a very large force. That winter was called *múga* winter.¹ Harald arrived at Bergen on the day before Christmas and anchored his ships in Flóravág Bay and did not want to
1135 do battle at Christmas because of the Holy Season. King Magnús on his part prepared for the defence of the town. He had a catapult erected out on the Hólm and had iron chains and some timber booms stretched across the bay from the royal hall. He had caltrops forged and strewn over the Jóans Meadows; and no more than three days during Yule did the smiths stop work.

But on the Twelfth-night King Harald had the trumpets sounded for his fleet to leave the harbor. Nine hundred [1080] men [additionally ?] had gathered about King Harald during the Yule season.

Chapter 7. King Magnús Is Taken Prisoner

King Harald made a vow to Saint Óláf that he would at his own expense build a church in his honor in the town there if he granted him victory. King Magnús arrayed his troops in the yard of Christ Church, whereas Harald rowed his ships first to Northness, but when King Magnús and his troops saw that they turned to the town and to the inner end of the bay. But as they passed through the Street,¹ many townsfolk ran into their courtyards and homes whilst those who crossed the Meadows ran onto the caltrops. Then King Magnús and his men saw that Harald and all his fleet had rowed over to Hegravík and there landed on the hill above the town. Then King Magnús turned back along the Street, whilst his men fled from him—some up to the mountain, some up past the Nunnery, some into the churches or hid away in other places. King Magnús went on board his ship, but there was no chance to escape because the iron chains barred his egress.



- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Óláfskirkja á þökkum | 11 Sandbrú | 21 Steinkirkja |
| 2 Naust konungs | 12 Máriukirkja | 22 Marteinskirkja |
| 3 Predikaraklaustr | 13 Láfranzkirkja | 23 Hallvarðskirkja |
| 4 Byskupsgarðr | 14 Péturskirkja | 24 Auta-almenni |
| 5 Litla Kristskirkja | 15 Máriukirkju-almenni | 25 Krosskirkja |
| 6 Stóra Kristskirkja | 16 Búa-almenni | 26 Óláfskirkja í Vágsbotni |
| 7 Konungshallir | 17 Breiði-almenni | 27 Allra heilagra kirkja |
| 8 Postolakirkja | 18 Langstræti efra | 28 Nunnusetr |
| 9 Grasgarðr konungs | 19 Nikóláskirkja | 29 Jóanskirkja (klaustr) |
| 10 Veisan | 20 Nikóláskirkju-almenni | 30 Munklifi |

BJÖRGVIN um 1200

Bergen. From *Íslensk Fornrit*, Vol. 28. Courtesy of Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, Reykjavík.

Also, few men followed the king and so were not capable of making any resistance. As says Einar Skúlason in his *Haraldsdrápa*:

574. Bergen's Bay was
barred a week long:
chains no choice of
channel to ships left. (206.)

Shortly afterwards King Harald's men boarded the ships. Then King Magnús was taken prisoner—he sat aft in the middle of his ship on the chest near the

high-seat—and with him Hákon Fauk, his mother's brother, a very handsome
man but not in full possession of his wits: also, Ívar Ozurason and
1135 many other friends of his were taken prisoner, and some, killed at once.

Chapter 8. King Magnús Is Blinded and Mutilated

Thereupon, King Harald had a meeting with his counsellors, asking them for their advice; and they finally arrived at the decision to depose Magnús and uncrown him. Then he was committed to the charge of the king's thralls, and they mutilated him, putting out his eyes and cutting off one of his feet; and finally they gelded him. Ívar Ozurason was blinded and Hákon Fauk killed.

After that the whole land was subjected to the rule of King Harald. Then much inquiry was made who had most befriended King Magnús and who might know best about his treasures and valuables. Magnús had had the Holy Cross with him ever since the battle of Fyrileif, and he refused to tell what had become of it.

Bishop Reinald in Stavanger was of English origin and said to be very avaricious. He was a close friend of King Magnús, and it was thought that great treasures and many valuables had been given to him for safekeeping. Messengers were sent to him, and he came to Bergen. These charges were then preferred against him, but he denied them, offering to undergo the ordeal. Harald refused that and commanded the bishop to pay him fifteen marks of gold. The bishop said that he would not impoverish his church to that extent and that he would rather risk his life. Thereupon they hanged Bishop Reinald on the Hólm by the catapult. When he walked to the gallows he kicked the boot off his foot and said on his oath, "I have no knowledge of King Magnús' treasure other than is in this boot." A gold ring was found in it. Bishop Reinald was interred on Northness by the Church of Saint Michael. This action earned [Harald] much reproach.

Thereafter, King Harald was sole king in Norway while he lived.

Chapter 9. Portents in Konungahella Alarm the Townspeople

1135. Five years after the death of King Sigurth important events took place in Konungahella. At that time the king's stewards, Guthorm, the son of Harald Flettir, and Sæmund [nicknamed] "Mistress of the House," were there. Guthorm was married to Ingibjorg, a daughter of the priest Andréás Brúnsson. Their sons were called Pál Flíp and Gunni Físs. Ásmund was the name of an illegitimate son of Sæmund. Andréás Brúnsson was a man of mark. He officiated in the Church of the Holy Cross. Solveig was his wife. It was in their home that Jóan Loptsson¹ was fostered and brought up. He was eleven years old then. The priest Lopt Sæmundarson, Jóan's father, was also there at that time. The daughter of Andréás the Priest and Solveig was called Helga and was married to Einar.

It happened in Konungahella, on the Saturday night following Easter Week, that a great din was heard outside in the streets all about town, as great as when the king came through with all his men; and the dogs became so vicious that they got out of hand and could not be confined. And all of them that got out grew rabid and bit all they came across, both people and cattle, and all that were bitten so that blood showed, became mad; and all of the dogs that were with young lost their litters and became mad. These portents occurred nearly every night from Easter till Ascension Day. People were greatly alarmed by these marvels. Many got ready to depart from the town, and sold their property, moving to the country or to other towns. And the wisest even were greatly perturbed, fearing that this might herald great events which had not yet manifested themselves. And Andréás the Priest delivered a long and eloquent sermon at Whitsuntide, and concluded by speaking about the difficulties besetting the townsmen and praying people to take courage and not desert that noble place, but rather to keep watch over themselves, to take counsel, and guard against all that might occur, against fire or hostilities, and pray to God for mercy.



The people flee from Konungahella.

Chapter 10. A Wendish Fleet Attacks Konungahella

Thirteen merchant ships made ready to sail from the town to Bergen; and eleven of them sank with crew and lading and everything on board. The twelfth was shipwrecked. Its crew was saved, but the lading was lost. But Lopt, the priest, sailed to Bergen and got there unscathed. It was on the day before Saint Lawrence Mass [August 10th] that the merchantmen sank. Eirík, the king of Denmark, and Archbishop Ozur both sent messengers to Konungahella, asking the citizens to be on the alert because the Wends had mustered a large army and harried Christian lands far and wide and always were victorious.

The townsfolk paid too little attention to the matter, and they neglected and forgot about it the more, the longer time passed since this terror that had befallen them.

On the day before Saint Lawrence Mass, when high mass was being read, Réttibur,¹ the king of the Wends, arrived at Konungahella with five hundred and fifty [660] Wendish swift sailing vessels, and on every boat there were forty-four men and two horses. Dúnímiz was the name of the king's sister's son, and Únibur, that of a chieftain who headed a great part of the force. These two chieftains and some of their fleet rowed up the eastern fork [of the river] past the island of Hísing, and thus came upon the town from above, and part of the force proceeded up the western branch to the town. They made land by the piles and put their horsemen ashore. These rode over Bratsás Ridge and then up around the town. Einar, the son-in-law of Andréás, brought news of this up to the Castle Church, because the townsfolk had gone there to listen to high mass, and Einar arrived just as Andréás was preaching. Einar told them that an army was moving toward the town with a multitude of ships and that part of the troops rode over Bratsás Ridge. Then many said that very likely this was Eirík, king of the Danes, and that they expected [only] peace from him.

Thereupon all the people ran down into the town to their properties, armed themselves, and went down to the landing stages. Then they perceived at once that it meant war, and with a huge force of enemies. Nine ships belonging to merchants trading with the east floated in the river alongside the landing stages. The Wends attacked them first and fought with the merchants. The merchants armed themselves and made a long and manful defence. It was a hard battle before they were overcome. In the fight the Wends lost one hundred fifty [180] ships with all men. At the height of the battle the townsmen stood on the landing stages and shot at the heathens; but when the fight subsided the townsmen fled up into the town. And then all the people ran into the fort with their valuables

and all the goods they could carry.

Solveig, her daughters, and two other women went inland. When the Wends had overcome the merchant ships, they debarked and mustered their troops, when their losses were seen. Some of them ran into the town, others climbed on the merchant ships and took all they wanted. Then they laid fire to the town, burning it as well as all the ships. Then their whole force proceeded to the fort and prepared to attack it.

Chapter 11. The Wends Beleaguer and Sack the Town

King Réttibur offered to all in the fort the chance to come out, with safety of life and limbs, keeping their weapons, clothes, and gold. But all shouted it down and went out on the fortifications. Some shot arrows, some hurled stones, some cast stakes,¹ and there was a fierce fight. Men fell on both sides, but far more of the Wends.

Solveig came to the Solbjargir estates and told of what had happened. Then war-arrows were sent to Skúrbágar. At that place there happened to be a drinking bout and many men were there. Among them was a certain farmer who was called Olvir Bigmouth. He leaped up straightaway, took his shield and helmet, shouldered a large axe and called out, "Let us arise, good men, and take your weapons in hand, and let us go to help the townsmen; because it will seem shameful to everyone who learns that we sit here and swill ale while good men in the town risk their lives for our sakes!" Many answered and spoke against that, saying that they would lose their lives and yet be of no help to the townsmen. Then Olvir leaped up and said, "Though all of you stay behind, I shall go alone, and one or two heathens shall fall by my hand before I die," and ran down to the town.

The men ran after him to see how he fared and whether they might perhaps help him. But when he approached near enough to the fort that the heathens could see him, eight fully armed men ran against him. And when they met, the heathen men surrounded him. Olvir lifted up his axe and with its forward point hit one of them standing back of him in the throat so that it cut asunder his jawbone and windpipe, and he fell on his back. Then he swung his axe forward and struck another man on the head, cleaving it down to the shoulders. Then the others attacked him, and he slew two more, he himself receiving great wounds. But the four who were left fled then. Olvir ran after them. There was a ditch before them, and two of the heathen men jumped into it, and Olvir killed both of them. By that time he was also stuck fast in the ditch. But two of the eight heathens escaped.

The men who had followed Olvir pulled him out and took him with them to Skúrbágar and he was healed entirely. And it was general opinion that no one had ever behaved more bravely.

Two landed-men, Sigurth Gyrrhason, the brother of Philippús, and Sigarth, arrived at Skúrbágar with six hundred [720] men. Sigurth turned back with four hundred [480] men, and ever after was accounted a man of little worth. He died

soon afterwards. Sigarth with two hundred [240] men proceeded to the town and there fought the heathen, and fell there with all his men.

The Wends attacked the fort, but their king and leaders did not participate. In one spot where the Wends were stationed, there stood a man who shot with his bow and killed a man with every arrow. Two men stood in front of that man, protecting him with their shields. Then Sæmund told his son Ásmund to shoot at the Bowman at the same time he did—“but I shall shoot at the [one of them] carrying a shield.” He did so, and the man shoved his shield in front of himself. Then Ásmund shot between the shields, and his arrow struck the Bowman on his forehead and came out in the nape of his neck, and he fell over dead. When the Wends saw that they all howled like dogs or wolves.

Then King Réttibur called upon them, offering them safety of life and limbs, but they would not hear of it. Thereupon the heathens attacked them fiercely. One of the heathens approached so near as to come to the very castle gate, and lunged at a man who stood within the gate. But they [made at him] with arrow shots and rocks. He had no shield but was so skilled in magic that no weapon could pierce him. Then Andréás the Priest took consecrated fire and blessed it. He cut some tinder, ignited it and placed it on an arrow head which he handed to Ásmund. And with that arrow he shot at the man protected by magic, and that shot took full effect, so that he fell down dead. Then the heathens set up a howl like before, howling and snarling. Then they all went up to the king, and the Christians thought they were taking counsel and meant to retreat.

Then an interpreter who understood Wendish, gathered what the chieftain called Ünibur said. He spoke as follows: “These are fierce people and hard to deal with; and even if we got hold of all the goods in this place we might well give as much again if we hadn’t come here at all, seeing how many men and how many chieftains we have lost. To begin with, when we started to attack the fort today, they defended themselves with arrow shots and spears, then they fought us with stones, and now they fight us with sticks like dogs. This makes me think that their means of defence are getting scarce; so let us once more have at them with all our might and put them to the test.”

The people in the fort had done as he said and had in the first fight hurled missiles and stones recklessly. But when the Christians saw that their supply of stakes was diminishing, they cut each pole in two. The heathen attacked them with strong rushes, resting between them. Both parties grew tired and suffered many wounds. And one time when they rested, the king again offered them safety of life and limbs and that they would be permitted to have along both their

weapons and their clothing and what they themselves could carry out of the fort.

By that time Sæmund Housewife had fallen, and the men who were left gave the advice to surrender the fort and themselves into the power of the heathen; which was most unwise, because the heathen did not abide by their word but made prisoners of all, both men, women, and children, killing many and all those who were wounded and young and were considered hard to remove. They took all the goods they found in the fort, and going into Holy Cross Church they robbed it of all its furnishings.

Andréás the Priest gave Réttibur a crozier with silver ornaments, and to Dúnímiz, his sister's son, he gave a gold finger ring. For this reason they thought he was a man of influence in the town, and so honored him more than others. They took the Holy Cross and had it away with them. Then they took the altar piece which stood before the altar—the one which King Sigurth had had made in Greece and had brought home with him. They laid it down on the step before the altar. Then they left the church. Then the king said, “This building has been appointed with great love for the god who owns it, and it would seem to me that both the town and this building have not been guarded with much care; because I see that the god is angered at those who were to guard them.”

King Réttibur gave Andréás the Priest the church and the shrine, the Holy Cross, the book Plenarius, and four clerks. But the heathens burned down the church² and all the houses within the fort. However, the fire they had set in the church went out twice. Then they hewed down the church, when it took fire all over inside and burned like the other houses.

Thereupon the heathens boarded their ships with the booty and mustered their troops. But when they saw how many men they had lost, they led captive all the people [of the town], dividing them between their ships.

Then Andréás the Priest and his clerks entered the king's ship bearing the Holy Cross. Thereupon a fear befell the heathens, following the portent that so great a heat came over the king's ship that all thought they would almost burn. The king bade the interpreter ask the priest what caused it. He said that the almighty God the Christians believed in sent it as a mark of his wrath for those daring to lay hands on the symbol of his martyrdom who did not believe in their maker. “And so much might goes with the Cross that often before have such signs come over the heathen men who had laid hands on it, some even more striking.”

The king had the priests put out in the ship's boat, and Andréás carried the Cross in his bosom. The heathens guided the boat along the ship, around the

prow, and back along the other side to the poop, then with forks shoved it to the landing stages.



The priests are set adrift.

Then Andrés the Priest in the night went to Sólbjargir with the Cross in wind and downpour. Andrés put the Cross in safekeeping.

Chapter 12. King Magnús Enters the Cloister

King Réttibur and what was left of his troops returned to Wendland, and many of the people who had been led captive from Konungahella remained there in thralldom for a long time. But those who were ransomed and returned to Norway to their estates, all prospered less than before; and the merchant town of Konungahella never afterwards rose again to the affluence it had before.

Magnús, when deprived of his eyesight, travelled to Nitharós and there entered the cloister,¹ taking a monk's habit. Then the income of Herness the Large on the Frosta Peninsula was given the cloister for his maintenance. But Harald was sole ruler in the following winter. He gave amnesty to all who desired it, and accepted many men into his retinue, who had before been with Magnús. Einar Skúlason tells us that King Harald fought two battles in Denmark, one by the island of Hvethn, the other, by the island of Hlésey:

575. Powerful prince, thou didst (207.)
 repay the men neath lofty
 Hvethn, with bloody broadswords
 battling, for their treachery.

And still further:

576. Bitter war didst wage, thou (208.)
 weeds-of-Óthin-reddener,²
 where blasts o'er men billowed
 banners on flat Hlés Isle.

Chapter 13. The Rise of Sigurth Slembidjárn

Sigurth was the name of a man who was brought up in Norway. He was supposed to be the son of the priest, Athalbrikt. The mother of Sigurth was Thóra, the daughter of Saxi in Vík and the sister of Sigríth, the mother of King Ólaf Magnússon and of; Kári, his brother. The latter was married to Borghild, the daughter of Dag Eilífsson. Their sons were Sigurth of Austrátt and Dag. Sigurth's sons were Jóan of Austrátt and Thorstein; also, Andréás the Deaf. Jóan was married to Sigríth, the sister of King Ingi and of Duke Skúli.

In his childhood Sigurth [the son of Athalbrikt] was put to learning. He became a cleric and was consecrated as a deacon. But when he reached maturity in age and strength he was an exceedingly powerful and doughty man, tall in stature, and exceeding all of his own age in accomplishments, as he did nearly everybody else in Norway. Sigurth soon became a most overbearing and unruly man. He was called Slembidjárn [Gadabout-Deacon]. He was a very handsome man. His hair was rather thin, yet of good appearance.

Then it came to Sigurth's ears that his mother said King Magnús Barelegs was his father. And as soon as he was his own master, he quit the clerical mode of life and left the country. He was a long time on these journeys. He journeyed to Jerusalem, went to the Jordan River, and sought out the holy places as pilgrims are wont to. And when he returned he engaged in merchant journeys. One winter he dwelled for some time in the Orkneys. He was with Earl Harald when Thorkel Fóstri, the son of Sumarlithi, fell. Sigurth also was in Scotland with David, king of the Scots, where he was held in great honor. Then Sigurth sailed to Denmark, and, according to him and his men, he there went through the ordeal to prove his paternity—and bore it, to the effect that he was the son of King Magnús. Five bishops [they said] had been present on that occasion. As says Ívar Ingimundarson¹ in his poem on Sigurth:

577. Ordeals ordered (209.)
about the atheling's kin
five Danish bishops
who were foremost thought;
and so was proved,
that of the powerful king,
in might matchless,
Magnús was sire.

Harald's friends alleged that this was just a fraud and lie of the Danes.

Chapter 14. Sigurth Makes Good His Escape

1136 When Harald had been king in Norway for six years Sigurth came to Norway in order to see King Harald, his brother. He found him in Bergen, and at once went up to him and revealed his paternity to him, asking him to acknowledge his kinship. The king made no quick decision about this matter and brought it before his friends in meetings and discussions. The result of these conferences was that the king accused Sigurth of having been an accomplice in the killing of Thorkel Fóstri west in the Orkneys—Thorkel had accompanied King Harald when first he came to Norway and had been his staunch friend. And this accusation was urged with such energy that it was accounted a deed deserving Sigurth's death; and on the advice of the landed-men it was arranged that late one evening some men of the king's 'guests' approached Sigurth and called on him to go with them. They took a skiff and rowed away from the town with Sigurth and south to Northness. Sigurth sat aft on the box, thinking about what was going to happen to him and suspecting treachery. He was clad in blue trousers and a shirt, and had a cloak with cords as outer garments. He looked down before him, with his hands on the cords of his cloak, now placing them on his head, now taking them off. But when they were rounding a point of land—the men were merry and drunk and rowed furiously, entirely off their guard—then Sigurth stood up and went to the side of the skiff. The two men assigned to guard him also stood up, seizing his cloak and holding it away from him, as is the wont with men of rank. But as he suspected that they were holding onto more of his clothing, he grabbed both of them with either hand and plunged overboard with them. But the skiff sped on a long way before they managed to turn, and it took them a long time before they picked up their men. But Sigurth dived and swam under water so far that he reached the shore before they had turned the skiff to get him. He was exceedingly fast on foot. He headed inland, and the king's men went and looked for him all night without finding him. He hid in the cleft of a rock and was chilled through and through. He took off his breeches, cut a hole in the seat-gores, stuck his head through and his arms into the legs and thus for the time being saved his life. The king's men returned, nor could they conceal their misadventure.

Chapter 15. Sigurth Conspires to Kill King Harald

Sigurth considered that it would not be of any avail for him to meet King Harald, and kept in hiding all that fall and during the first part of the winter. He was in the town of Bergen with a certain priest and schemed how he could bring about the death of King Harald, and very many conspired with him in this, even some who at that time were the followers and body servants of King Harald as they had before been the followers of King Magnús. They were great favorites of King Harald, so much so that one or the other of them always sat at table with the king.

1136 In the evening of Lucius Mass [December 13th] two men sitting there were talking together, and one of them said to the king, “Sire, now we have decided to leave to you the decision in our dispute. Each of us has put up as stake a measure of honey. I say that you will sleep with Queen Ingiríth your wife, tonight, but he says you will sleep with Thóra, the daughter of Guthorm.”

Laughing, the king replied, quite unsuspecting that so much treachery lay in the question, “It isn’t you who will win that wager.”

From his answer they gathered where he was expected to be that night. But the bodyguard had been set before the lodgings where most men thought the king would be, which were the queen’s.

Chapter 16. Sigurth Kills King Harald but is Rebuffed by the King's Men

Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon and some men with him went to the lodgings where the king slept, broke down the door and went in with their swords drawn. Ívar Kolbeinsson was the first to inflict a wound on King Harald. The king had lain down drunk and slept hard. He awoke when they attacked him and said in his delirium, “Now you are treating me cruelly, Thóra!”

She started up quickly and said, “You are treated cruelly by men worse disposed to you than I.”

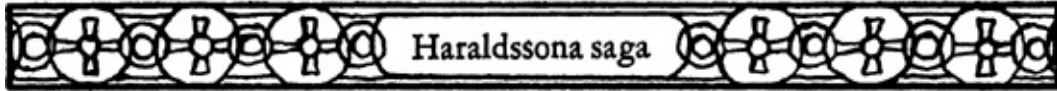
1136 King Harald lost his life there. Sigurth and his men left the place and had those called to him who had promised to follow him if he managed to kill King Harald. Then Sigurth and his men boarded a skiff and, seizing the oars, rowed out in the bay to the royal residence. Day was breaking by that time. Then Sigurth stood up [in the boat] and spoke to the men standing on the king's landing stage. He declared himself to be the slayer of King Harald and asked them to accept him and to acknowledge him as the king, as his birth entitled him to.

Then a great many men from the royal residence drifted to the landing stages and all spoke with one accord, saying that it never should come to pass that they obeyed and served that man who had murdered his own brother—“and if he was not your brother, then you have not the birth to be king.” They struck their weapons together and declared all of them [in the boat] outlawed and proscribed. Then the king's trumpet was sounded and all landed-men and king's men were summoned together. But Sigurth and his men thought it wisest to leave the scene. He betook himself to North Horthaland and there met the assembled farmers. They accepted him and gave him the title of king. Then he proceeded to Sogn and there met the assembled farmers and was accepted as king by them also. Then he sailed north to the Fjord District and was received well there. As says Ívar Ingimundarson:

578. Both Horthar and Sogn-men, (210.)
once Harald had fallen,
received as liege
the son of Magnús.
At the *thing*, many
thanes on him did,
in his brother's stead,

bestow king's name.

King Harald was buried in the Old Christ Church.



The Saga of the Sons of Harald

Chapter 1. Sigurth and Ingi Succeed Harald

Queen Ingiríth, in agreement with the landed-men and the men who constituted the court of King Harald, determined to send a fast boat north to Trondheim to inform the people of the death of King Harald and to urge them to accept as king, Sigurth, the son of Harald, who at that time was north there in the fosterage of Sátha-Gyrth Bártharson, while Queen Ingiríth herself immediately set out for Vík in the east. Ingi, her son by King Harald, was fostered there in Vík with Ámundi, the son of Gyrth, the son of Law-Bersi. And when they arrived in Vík, the Borgar Thing¹ was called together. There Ingi was chosen king. He was two years of age then. In these deliberations were active Ámundi, Thjóstólf Álason, and many other great chieftains.

Now when the news of the murder of King Harald arrived north in Trondheim, Sigurth, the son of King Harald was chosen king, by the advice of Óttar Birting, Pétr Sautha-Úlfsson, the brothers Guthorm Ásólfsson of Reine and Óttar Balli, and many other chieftains. And nearly all the people turned their allegiance to the brothers, the sons of Harald, and chiefly, because their father was called holy. And the country was sworn to them to the effect that it would not swear allegiance to anyone else while any of the sons of King Harald were alive.

Chapter 2. Magnús Escapes from the Cloister But Is Defeated

Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon proceeded north of Cape Stath, and when he arrived in North Mœr the letters and tokens of the leaders who had sworn allegiance to the sons of Harald had reached there before him and he got neither welcome nor support there. And because he himself had few followers, he decided to head into the Trondheim District, because he had before sent word there to his friends and those of King Magnús who had been blinded. Now when he arrived at the town [of Nitharós], he rowed up the Nith River and fastened his landing-cables by the royal residence, but had to depart from there, because all the people resisted him. Afterwards they rowed to the island of Hólm and there took Magnús Sigurtharson out of the cloister against the wish of the monks. Before that time he had taken monk's vows. It is the opinion of most that Magnús went of his own accord; whereas the opposite opinion was spread to improve his [Magnús'?] cause and gain support for himself [Sigurth?], and so it did.

1137 This happened right after Yule. Sigurth and his band sailed out of the fjord. They were followed by Bjorn Egilsson, Gunnar of Gimsar, Halldór Sigurtharson, Áslák Hákonarson, and the brothers, Benedikt and Eirík, together with those who previously had been in the court of King Magnús, and a great many others. All these with their men sailed along the district of Mœr and as far as the opening of the valley of Raums Dale. There they divided, Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon sailing west across the sea that very winter. Whereas Magnús proceeded to the districts of Uppland, because he expected to obtain a great following there, which indeed he did. There he remained during the winter and also during the entire summer and had a great force.

King Ingi on his part approached with his army, and they met at the place which is called Mynni [at the mouth, that is, of Lake Mjors]. A great battle followed, with King Magnús having superiority in numbers. It is told that Thjóstólf Álason had King Ingi along on his lap during the battle and kept near the banner, and that Thjóstólf was in great danger and difficulty in the heat of the battle; and they say that it was then that Ingi acquired the disability which he suffered from all his life—his back was crooked, and one leg shorter than the other and so weak that he limped all his life.

More men fell then on the side of King Magnús [than on Ingi's]—among them these in the front ranks: Halldór Sigurtharson and Bjorn Egilsson, also Gunnar of Gimsar, besides a great many of Magnús' men, before he would flee

or ride away. As says Kolli:¹

578. Met ye east at Mynni, (211.)
mail-clad all, nor was it,
warrior, long ere with your
weapons ye ravens sated.

And also:

580. Fallen lay on field, ere (212.)
flee would the brave ruler,
most of Magnús' henchmen.
*Mighty king in heaven—*²

From there Magnús fled to Gautland and from there, to Denmark.

At that time Earl Karl Sónason ruled in Gautland. He was powerful and ambitious. Wherever Magnús the Blind and his men came before chieftains, they declared that Norway was an easy prey for any powerful chieftain who would seize it, seeing that there was no king over the land and landed-men administered it, and seeing that the landed-men who were first appointed to do so now were at odds with one another because of mutual jealousy. And because Earl Karl was ambitious to rule and lent a willing ear to persuasion he collected a force and rode west to Vík, where many submitted to him because they feared him.

When Thjóstoff Álason and Ámundi got news of this they moved against him with such troops as they could muster, and had King Ingi with them. They encountered Earl Karl and his army of Gauts in the east in the Króka Forest³ and there had a second battle in which King Ingi was victorious. Munán Ogmundarson, Earl Karl's maternal uncle, fell there. Ogmund, Munán's father, was the son of Earl Orm Eilífsson and Sigríth, the daughter of Finn Árnason.

¹¹³⁷Ástríth, the daughter of Ogmund was Earl Karl's mother. Many men fell in Króka Forest. The earl himself fled east out of the forest. King Ingi drove them altogether east out of his land, so their expedition turned out ignominiously. As says Kolli:

581. Known I'll make the news—his (213.)
neb the raven dipped in
wounds of warriors—how that
wolves were sated by Ingi.
With bloody blade repaid he
battle-tumult-raisers

their treachery—was tested
troth—in Króka Forest.

Chapter 3. Magnús Persuades King Eirík to Attack Norway

Magnús the Blind betook himself to Eirík Eimuni's court and was well received there. He offered Eirík to accompany him to Norway if Eirík would want to conquer the land and sail to Norway with the Danish fleet. He said that if he came there with a strong force, no one would dare hurl a spear against him.

1137 The king listened to his persuasions and called out men and ships for war. He sailed north to Norway with six hundred [720] ships, and Magnús the Blind and his men accompanied him on this expedition.

When they came to Vík they proceeded rather peacefully and with moderation, on the east side of the fjord, but when they arrived with their fleet at Túnsberg they encountered there a great gathering of the landed-men of King Ingi. Vatn-Orm Dagsson, the brother of Grégóriús, had most authority among them. There the Danes could not land and obtain water, and they lost many men. Then they sailed along the fjord to Ósló. There, Thjóstólf Álason was in command.

It is told that the townsfolk wanted to have the shrine of Saint Hallvarth¹ borne out of the town in the evening, and that as many as could take hold of it did so, and that they were not able to carry it farther than out on the church floor. But next morning, when they saw the fleet approaching Main Island,² four men carried the shrine out of the town, and Thjóstólf and all the people of the town bore it company.

Chapter 4. The Danish Fleet Is Repulsed

King Eirík and his troops pushed up into the town, and some pursued Thjóóstólf and his followers. Thjóóstólf hurled a javelin at a man whose name was Áskell—he was a forecastleman of King Eirík—and struck him under his throat so that it came out in the nape of his neck; and Thjóóstólf was thought never to have made a better shot; because no place was bare on that man's body but that one. The shrine of Saint Hallvarth was moved to Raumaríki, where it remained for three months. Thjóóstólf journeyed about Raumaríki during the night, collecting a force, and in the morning came down to the town [of Ósló]. King Eirík had fires kindled in Saint Hallvarth's Church and many places in the town, so that it burned down altogether. Soon after, Thjóóstólf descended on it with a large force. King Eirík moved away with his fleet, and they were not able to get on land anywhere in the northern part of the fjord because of the forces of the landed-men; and wherever they tried to land, five, six, or more men of their force fell.

King Ingi lay in the Hornboru Sound with a great fleet. But when King Eirík learned that, he turned back south to Denmark [with his fleet]. King Ingi pursued them, inflicting on them all the damage he could. And it was said that there never was made a more ill-starred expedition with a great force into another king's land. King Eirík was ill-pleased with Magnús and his followers and believed they had made game of him in having him undertake this expedition and declared he would not again be so staunch a friend of theirs as before.

Chapter 5. Sigurth Slembidjárn Makes Depredations in Norway

Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon that summer came east across the sea to Norway. But when he learned of the ill-luck of his kinsman Magnús, he considered that he would get little support in Norway. So he sailed south along the coast by the outer course all the way to Denmark, and steered into the Eyrar Sound. South of Erre¹ he encountered some swift-sailing Wendish ships, attacked them, and was victorious, clearing them of their men, killing many, and hanging others. Another successful battle he fought against the Wends by Mon Island. Then he sailed north and anchored in the eastern branch of the (Gaut Elf) River, overcoming three ships of the fleet of Thórir Hvínantorthi and of Óláf the son of Harald Kesja, his sister's son. Óláf's mother was Ragnhild, a daughter of King Magnús Barelegs. Sigurth drove Óláf up on land. Thórir was in the town of Konungahella where he had collected a force. Sigurth advanced that way, and both parties shot at each other, killing some on each side and wounding many others, but Sigurth and his men were not able to land there. At that place fell Úlfhethin Sox-ólfsson, a man from the north of Norway, who had been forecandleman in Sigurth's force.

Then Sigurth departed and sailed north to Vík, where he plundered far and wide. He anchored his ships in Portyrja on the coast of Lungarth, and waylaid ships sailing in or out of Vík, and plundered in many places. The people of Túnsberg raised a force against him [and his men] and came upon them unawares when Sigurth and his men were ashore dividing their booty. Some of this force fell upon him from the land while they placed ships across the harbor on the outside. Sigurth dashed on board his ship and rowed towards them. Vatn-Orm's ship lay nearest, and he let his ship fall back. Sigurth rowed past them and escaped in one ship, but many of his men fell. Thereupon this ditty was composed: (214.) 582. Poorly defended him at Portyrja old Vatn-Orm.

Chapter 6. Sigurth and Magnús Escape to Northern Norway

Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon then sailed south to Denmark. One man was lost from his ship, his name was Kolbein Thorljótsson of Batald.¹ He was in the cockboat towed behind the ship, and they sailed with all their might.

1138 Sigurth wrecked his ship when they arrived in Denmark, and he stayed that winter in Álaborg. But in the summer following, he and Magnús sailed north with seven ships and arrived unobserved at Listi in the night and anchored their ships near the land. Bentein Kolbeinsson, a member of King Ingi's bodyguard and a very brave man, was in command there. Sigurth and his men went on land at daybreak and came upon the inhabitants without warning. They stormed their houses and wanted to put the town to the torch, but Bentein escaped to a storehouse in his armor and with his weapons and stood within the doorway with drawn sword—he held his shield before him and was helm-clad, all prepared to defend himself. The door opening was rather low. Sigurth asked why they didn't go in. They answered that no one was inclined to go in alone. But while they were talking about that heatedly, Sigurth ran into the house past him. Bentein struck at him, but missed him. Thereupon Sigurth turned on him, and they exchanged but a few blows before Sigurth killed him and carried his head out in his hand. They took all the property they found in the town, then returned to their ships.

But when King Ingi and his friends, and the sons of Kolbein, Sigurth and Gyrrh, Bentein's brothers, learned about the slaying of Bentein, the king collected a force against Sigurth. The king himself went along and took a ship from Hákon Pungelta Pálsson, who was the son of the daughter of Áslák Erlingsson of Sóli and cousin of Hákon Maw. Ingi drove Hákon up on land and laid his hands on all their possessions. Sigurth Stork, the son of Eindrithi of Gaut Dale; Eirík Heel, his brother; and Andréás Kelduskítr, son of Grím of Víst fled into the Fjord District, whilst Sigurth himself and Magnús, together with Thorleif Skjappa with three ships sailed north outside the skerries to Hálogaland.

During the winter Magnús stayed with Víthkun Jóansson; while Sigurth hewed off the [projecting] stem and stern of his ship,² gashed holes in it, and sank it in the innermost reach of the Ægisfjord. He passed the winter in the Tjalda Sound on the island of Hinn³ at Gljúfrafjord. Innermost in this fjord there is a cave. There Sigurth and more than twenty of his men passed the winter. They fashioned a door in front of the cave so that it could not be detected from the beach. They were provisioned during the winter by Thorleif Skjappa and by

Einar, the son of Ogmund of Sand and of Guthrún, the daughter of Einar, who was the son of Ari of Reykjaholar. It is told that Sigurth had the Finns make him two skiffs in the fjord. They were held together by sinews, without any nails, and had withies for knee-timbers. They were rowed by twelve men on each side. Sigurth lived with the Finns while they made the skiffs, and they had small-beer for him when they entertained him. Afterwards Sigurth composed this verse:⁴

583. Good was't in Lapps' hut, (215.)
gladly we drank,
and the prince pleasantly
passed 'twixt the benches.
Not lacked good cheer
at the Lapps' banquet:
cheered is man by man,
remote though the land.

These skiffs were so swift that no ship could overtake them in the open sea; as this verse has it:

584. Few ships fleeter (216.)
than fast Háleyg⁵ boat.
Swiftly saileth
sinew-bound skiff.

1139 In the spring following, Sigurth and Magnús proceeded south in the two skiffs the Finns had built. And when they came to Vágar they killed Svein the Priest and his two sons.

Chapter 7. Sigurth and Magnús Commit Atrocities Along the Shore

Sigurth then sailed south to Víkar and there caught Viljalm the Tanner—he was a landed-man of King Sigurth—and Thóraldi Chaps, and killed both. Then Sigurth proceeded south along the land and there found Styrkár Glæsirófa south at Byrtha sailing north from Kaupang, and killed him. When he arrived at Valsness he found Swíne-Grím, and had his right hand cut off. Then he sailed south to Mær, outside the entrance of the Trondheimfjord, and there captured Hethin Hardbelly and Kálf Ringeye. He let Hethin escape but killed Kálf.

King Sigurth and Sátha-Gyrth, his foster father, learned about Sigurth's excursions and what he was doing, and sent out men to hunt him down. For leaders they chose Jón Katha, the son of Kálf the Crooked, a brother of Bishop Ívar, and as a second in command, Priest Jón Smyril. They manned the ship called the Reindeer which had twenty-two benches and was an exceedingly swift ship. They went out to track down Sigurth, but could not find him and returned ingloriously, because it was said that they had seen them and had not dared to attack them. Sigurth sailed south to Horthaland and arrived at Herthla. There resided Einar, the son of Salmon Pál. He had gone to the Hamarsfjord for the assembly held before Ascension Day.¹ Sigurth and his men took possession of all they could lay hands on and also of a warship of twenty-five benches which Einar owned. They also laid hold of his four-year-old son who was staying with one of Einar's workmen. Some of the men wanted to kill the boy, others, to take him along with them. The workman told them, "It won't be of any advantage to you to kill this boy, nor will you profit from taking him with you. He is my son, and not Einar's." And believing him, they let the boy remain there and went their way. But when Einar returned home he gave the workman goods worth at least two ounces of gold. He thanked him for his resourceful action and said he would be his friend ever after. This is what Eirík Oddsson relates, who was the first to write down this account; and he heard Einar Pálsson tell about this occurrence when he was in Bergen.

After this, Sigurth sailed south along the land until he arrived east in Vík. There, at Kvildir, he encountered Finn Sautha-Úlfsson, engaged in collecting the rents for King Ingi, and hanged him. Thereupon he sailed south to Denmark.

Chapter 8. King Ingi Sends a Letter to King Sigurth

The people of the District of Vík as well as the townsfolk of Bergen said it was a disgrace that King Sigurth, the son of Harald Gilli, and his friends remained quietly north in Kaupang while the killers of his father were sailing along the sea lane outside the Trondheimfjord and while King Ingi and his men were exposed to danger in Vík in the east, defending the land and fighting many battles.

Then King Ingi sent a letter north to Kaupang. In it were these words:

“King Ingi, son of King Harald, sends greetings, both God’s and his own, to King Sigurth, his brother, and to Sátha-Gyrth, Ogmund Sviptir, Óttar Birting, and all landed-men, bodyguardsmen, housecarls, and to all the people, both the rich and the poor, the young and the old. All people know of the difficulties we have, and also of our youth, you being five years old and I, three years. We cannot undertake to do anything except with the aid of our friends and of men of honest intentions. Now we consider that I and my friends are closer to the difficulties and dangers with which both of us are bestead than you and your friends. Now then be so good to join me as soon, and with as large a force, as you can; and let us stay together whatever may befall us. Now he is the best friend of both of us who gives as his opinion that we two should ever be well agreed and hold together in every matter. But if you delay to do this and still refuse to come notwithstanding my urgent message, as you have done so far, then be prepared that I shall proceed against you with an army, when God will decide between us; because we shall no longer abide with being saddled with such great expense to entertain an army, which is required here because of hostile incursions, while you receive half of all the taxes and other income of Norway. The peace of God be with you!”

Thereupon Óttar Birting arose and answered as follows in the Assembly.

Chapter 9. King Sigurth Replies to King Ingi and Joins Him

“This is the answer King Sigurth will make to King Ingi, his brother: that God may reward him for his good greetings and also for the labor and difficulties which [he] and [his] friends are undergoing in this our realm in behalf of both of us. And although some of the words of King Ingi to King Sigurth may seem rather harsh, yet in many ways he has good cause for them. Now I shall make known my opinion and learn whether King Sigurth and other men of note agree with me in holding that you, King Sigurth and all who will follow you, make ready to defend your land, and that you proceed with as many men as possible to meet King Ingi, your brother, and as soon as possible, so that one may support the other in all matters advantageous to both of you; and may God protect both of you. Now I would hear what you say, sir king.”

Péter, the son of Sautha-Úlf carried King Sigurth to the assembly—the one who later was called Pétr Byrtharsvein [Burden-Carrier].

Then the king said, “Know all men that if I prevail then I shall proceed to join King Ingi, my brother, at the earliest possibility.”

Then one man after another spoke up, each in his own way but all coming to the same conclusion as had Óttar Birting, and it was agreed to summon an army and march east. Later, King Sigurth journeyed east to Vík and there joined his brother, King Ingi.

Chapter 10. Sigurth Slembidjárn Is Defeated and Magnús Slain

That same fall Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon and Magnús the Blind came north from Denmark with thirty ships, manned by both Norwegians and Danes. That was at the beginning of winter. As soon as the kings and their army heard of this, they sailed east [south] toward them. They met by the Hvalir Islands¹ at Grey Holm. That was the day after Martin Mass [November 11th], on a Sunday.

King Ingi and King Sigurth had twenty ships, all large. There ensued a hard battle. But after the first onset the Danes with eighteen ships fled home south. Thereupon the ships of Sigurth and Magnús were cleared of men. Now when Magnús' ship was nearly cleared to where he rested on a couch, Hreithar Grjótgarthsson, a man who had long been with him as one of his bodyguard, took up King Magnús in his arms in order to leap with him into another ship. At that moment Hreithar was struck with a spear between his shoulders, so that it pierced him; and it is told that King Magnús was killed with the same spear. Hreithar fell backward onto the deck and Magnús on top of him. But it was all men's opinion that Hreithar had stood by his liege lord bravely and manfully. Fortunate he who achieves such renown.

In that battle there fell Lothin Saupruth of Línustathir on board King Magnús' ship, as also Brúsi Thormótharson, the forecandleman of Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon, Ívar Kolbeinsson, and Hallvarth Fægir, the man stationed before the poop of the ship of Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon. It was Ívar who had been the first to attack and wound King Harald. Then there fell a great number of the troops of Magnús and Sigurth, because the men of Ingi let no one escape whom they could reach, even though I mention only a few here. On one islet alone they slew more than sixty men. Two Icelanders were slain there, Sigurth the Priest, the son of Bergthor Másson, and Klémet, the son of Ari Einarsson. Ívar Skrauthanki, the son of Kálf the Crooked, who later became bishop north in Trondheim and was the father of Archbishop Eirík—this Ívar had steadily followed Magnús. He managed to get on board the ship of Jón Katha, his brother. Jón was married to Cécilía, the daughter of Gyrth Bártharson, and was one of Ingi's force. These three, then, managed to get on board Jón's ship, [Ívar], Arnbjorn Ambi, who later married the daughter of Thorstein of Authsholt, and Ívar Dynta Starason—he was a brother of Helgi Starason, of Trondheim ancestry on his mother's side, an exceptionally handsome man. But as soon as the men of Ingi's force became aware of their presence, they seized their arms and attacked Jón and his followers; but they prepared to resist them, and they were on the point of

fighting one another. But they came to an agreement to the effect that Jón got his brother Ívar ransomed, as well as Arnbjorn, by pledging money for them; but that payment was remitted to him later. Ívar Dynta, however, was taken on shore and slain, because Sigurth and Gyrth, the sons of Kolbein, would not take money for his life: they accused him of having been an accomplice in the slaying of Bentein, their brother.



Hreithar Grotgarthsson seeks to rescue King Magnús.

Bishop Ívar related [later] that nothing had ever affected him so much as when he saw Ívar Dynta led up on land and beheaded, having before that kissed them and hoped that they would meet again.² This was told Eirík Oddsson by Guthríth, the daughter of Birgir and sister of Bishop Jón. She said she had heard Bishop Ívar tell that.

Chapter 11. Sigurth Slembidjákn Is Captured

Thránd Gjaldkeri [Treasurer] was the name of the man who was steersman of one of the ships in Ingi's fleet. By that time Ingi's men rowed in small boats after the men who were swimming about, and killed everyone they found. Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon had dived into the sea from his ship when it was cleared of men. He divested himself of his mail coat while under water, and then swam, holding his shield over his head. Now some men of Thránd's ship caught a man swimming and were about to kill him, but he begged for his life and said he would tell them where Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon was, and they let him do that. Shields and spears and dead men and garments were floating far and wide about the ships. "You can see," he said, "that red shield floating there. He is under that." Then they rowed there, captured him, and took him to Thránd's ship; and Thránd sent word to Thjóóstólf and Óttar and Ámundi.

Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon had on him a tinder-box, with the tinder inside a walnut shell which was sealed with wax. Mention is made of this, because it seemed ingenious to fix it so that it would never become wet. His shield he had held over his head when swimming, because then no one would know whether it was his or someone else's, because many were swimming in the sea. Men said that they never would have found him if they hadn't been told.

When Thránd came ashore with him the troops were told that he had been captured. Thereupon shouts of joy broke out in the army. But when Sigurth heard that he said: "Many a rascal will be glad to see me beheaded here today."

Then Thjóóstólf Álason went up to where he sat and swept a silk cap with laces off his head. Then Thjóóstólf said, "Why were you so bold, you son of a thrall, as to call yourself the son of King Magnús?"

He answered, "You don't need to liken my father to a thrall, because your father was of little worth compared to my father."

Hall, the son of Thorgeir Steinsson, the physician, was one of King Ingi's bodyguard and was present at these happenings. He related them to Eirík Oddsson¹ who wrote down this account. Eirík wrote the book which is called *Hryggjarstykki*. In that book we are told about Harald Gilli and his two sons; also of Magnús the Blind and of Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon, down to their death. Eirík was a man of good understanding and had at that time been long in Norway. Some of his account he wrote according to what he was told by Hákon Maw, a landed-man under the two sons of Harald. Hákon and his sons took part in all these fights and counsels. Eirík mentions still other men who told him

about these events, men who were both of good understanding and reliable. They were close by, so that they heard or saw what was happening. But some things he wrote according to what he himself heard or saw.

Chapter 12. Sigurth Slembidjárn Is Tortured to Death

Hall relates that the chieftains wanted to have Sigurth Gadabout-Deacon put to death immediately. But those men who were most cruel-minded and considered they had to revenge themselves for wrongs done to them, were responsible for the tortures inflicted on him. In that connection are mentioned the brothers of Bentein, Sigurth and Gyrth Kolbeinsson; and Peter Byrtharsvein wanted to avenge his brother Finn. But the chieftains and most others left the place.

They broke his leg bones and arm bones with the hammers of their axes. Then they stripped him of his clothes and wanted to flay him alive, and did scalp him. But they could not carry out their intention on account of the flow of blood. Then they took whips of walrus-hide and flogged him until his skin was completely off as if he had been flayed. Then they took a pole and broke his backbone. Then they dragged him to a tree and hanged him. They cut off his head and then they dragged his carcass away and buried it in a heap of stones.

It is the opinion of all, both friends and enemies, that within the memory of man, no one in all Norway had been more capable, in every way, than Sigurth. But in some respects he was pursued by ill luck. Hall relates that he spoke and answered little, even though they cast insults at him; and according to Hall he did not budge anymore than if they struck stone or wood. But he added that it took a man of rare strength of mind to stand being tortured in such fashion as not to say a word or to budge; nor did he raise his voice anymore than if he sat drinking. He did not speak with a higher or lower voice, nor more tremulously, than was his custom. He spoke until the very last, and sang a third part of the psalter. Hall thought that betokened endurance and strength beyond that of other men.

Now the priest who served a church nearby had Sigurth's corpse brought to the church. This priest was a partisan of the sons of Harald. Nevertheless, when this was learned they turned upon him in wrath and had the corpse returned to where it had been before, and mulcted the priest for what he had done. But later on the adherents of Sigurth came north from Denmark in a ship after the body and brought it to Álaborg and buried it by Saint Mary's Church in that town. So Eirík was told by the provost Ketil who had charge of Saint Mary's Church in that town, affirming that Sigurth was buried there. Thjóstoff Álason had the body of King Magnús brought to Ósló where it was interred in Saint Hallvarth's Church by the side of King Sigurth, his father. The body of Lothin Saupruth they took to Túnsberg, but all the others who had fallen were buried on the spot.

Chapter 13. Eystein Haraldsson Is Given a Third of the Realm

1142 Sigurth and Ingi had ruled over Norway for six years when Eystein, in spring, came over east from Scotland. He was a son of Harald Gilli. Árni Sturla, Thorleif Brynjólfsson, and Kolbein Hróga had sailed across the sea to fetch Eystein and had accompanied him to the land, steering straightway to Trondheim. And the men of the district received him well, and he was chosen king at the Eyra Assembly in the Rogation Days [May 25th-27th], with the intent that he was to have a third part of Norway together with his brothers. At that time Sigurth and Ingi were in the eastern part of the country. Men went to mediate between the kings and came to the agreement that Eystein was to have a third of the kingdom. [No tests of paternity were made],¹ but it was believed what King Harald had said about the matter. King Eystein's mother was Bjathok, and she accompanied him to Norway.

Chapter 14. Óttar Birting Is Assassinated

Magnús was the name of a fourth son of King Harald. He was fostered by Kyrpinga-Orm. He also was chosen king and had his share of the land. Magnús was diseased in his legs. He lived but a short time and died a natural death. Einar Skúlason makes mention of him in this stanza:

585. Wins wealth for all Eystein, (217.)
wages Sigurth battles,
swords sing out for Ingi,
seemly peace gives Magnús.
Nobler brothers never—
ness-of-swords¹ aye reddened
beloved liege's offspring—
lived beneath the sun's rays.

After the death of King Harald Gilli his queen, Ingiríth, was married to Óttar Birting. He was a landed-man and a great chieftain from the Trondheim District. He was a stanch supporter of King Ingi when Ingi was still a child. King Sigurth was no great friend of his, for the reason that he considered Óttar to be altogether too much inclined to favor his kinsman, King Ingi. Óttar Birting was killed north in Kaupang in an affray one evening as he was going to vespers. When he heard the whistle of the blow he lifted his arm and cloak to ward it off, thinking it was a snowball thrown at him, as is often done by young boys. He fell with the blow. But, at that moment, Álf Hrothi, his son, entered the churchyard. He saw his father fall and also [saw] that the man who had done the deed ran east around the church. Álf ran after him and killed him at the corner of the choir. People said that he avenged himself well, and he was considered a man of greater stature than before for having done that.

Chapter 15. Óttar's Death Is Attributed to King Sigurth

King Eystein Haraldsson was in the Trondheim District when he learned of the fall of Óttar, and summoned a force of farmers. He marched to the town with a considerable host. The kinsmen of Óttar and other friends of his attributed the deed to King Sigurth who at that time was in Kaupang, and the farmers were exceedingly enraged at him. But he offered to undergo the ordeal of [red-hot] iron, in order to put his word to the proof, and that was agreed upon. After that King Sigurth travelled south, so that this ordeal never took place.

Chapter 16. Queen Ingiríth's Marriages

Queen Ingiríth had a son by Ívar Sneis. He was called Orm, and later, King's Brother. He was exceedingly handsome and became a great chieftain, as will be told later. Queen Ingiríth was married to Árni of Stothreim who later was called King's Stepfather. Their children were Ingi, Níkolás, Philippús of Herthla, and Margrét. She was married, first to Bjorn Bukk, and later to Símon Kárason.

Chapter 17. Erling and Eindrithi Sail to the Holy Land

Erling was the name of the son of Kyrpinga-Orm and Ragnhild, the daughter of Sveinki Steinarsson. Kyrpinga-Orm was the son of Svein Sveinsson, who was the son of Erlend of Gerthi. Orm's mother was Ragna, a daughter of Earl Orm Eilífsson and Ingibjorg, daughter of Earl Finn Árnason. The mother of Earl Orm was Ragnhild, a daughter of Earl Hákon the Powerful. Erling was a man of excellent understanding and a great friend of King Ingi, and through his influence Erling married Kristín, the daughter of King Sigurth and Queen Málmfríth. Erling resided at Stuthla in South Horthaland. Erling went abroad, and with him Eindrithi the Young and several other landed-men, with a picked troop. They had made preparations to go to the Holy Land and sailed west across the sea to the Orkneys. There they were joined by Earl Rognvald,
1151 surnamed Kali, and Bishop Viljalm. They had altogether fifteen long-ships when they sailed from the Orkneys, and proceeded to the Hebrides, and from there west [south] to France, and along the same route Sigurth the Jerusalem-farer had followed, all the way to Norva Sound, harrying far and wide about heathen Spain. Shortly after they had sailed through the Sound, Eindrithi the Young and those with him parted company with six ships, and afterwards both fleets proceeded separately.

Earl Rognvald and Erling Skakki encountered a large warship. They attacked it with their nine ships and fought with it. In the end they fastened their ships to the warship. Then the Saracens hurled down upon them both missiles and rocks and pots full of boiling pitch and oil. Erling with his ship lay closest to them, so that the missiles of the Saracens flew beyond it. Thereupon Erling and his men hacked holes in the warship, some below the water-line, some in the sides so that they could enter there. As says Thorbjorn Skakkaskáld¹ in his *Erlingsdrápa*:

586. Hacked with whetted axes (218.)
holes the daring Northmen,
little fearing, below the
line in the ship's broadside.
Saw your wiles the wilding
wolfbrood's-hunger-saters,²
how you broke a breach a-
bove the line of water.

Authun the Red, the forecandleman on Erling's ship was the first to board the warship. They conquered it and killed an enormous number of men in it. They took immense booty and had a very fine victory.

took immense booty and had won a fine victory.

Earl Rognvald and Erling Skakki on this expedition reached Palestine and went as far as the River Jordan, whereupon they returned by way of Miklagarth. There they left their ships and returned by the landway from abroad, continuing
1153 until they reached Norway, hale and well, and their expedition won great praise. Erling was now considered a more important man than before, both by reason of this expedition and the match he had made. Also, he was a man of keen understanding, wealthy and high-born, of great eloquence. As between the brothers, he was most inclined to side with Ingi.

Chapter 18. King Sigurth Engenders a Son with a Servant Woman

King Sigurth with his following rode east in Vík on his king's progress, and past the estate of a wealthy man by the name of Símon. And as the king rode through the yard he heard someone sing so beautifully in one of the houses that he was much pleased. He rode to that house and looked in and saw a woman standing by a handmill and singing wondrously fine while she ground. The king descended from his horse and went in and lay with the woman. But when he departed, farmer Símon got to know what the king had been about there. The woman's name was Thóra, and she was a working woman of farmer Símon. Afterwards he had her work done by others. Later on she bore a son, and this boy was named Hákon and termed the son of King Sigurth. Hákon was brought up there by Símon Thorbergsson and his wife Gunnhild. The sons of Símon, Onund and Andréás, were raised with Hákon, and they were so fond of one another that only death could part them.

Chapter 19. King Eystein Overcomes the Farmers of Ranríki and Hísing

King Eystein Haraldsson was stationed east in Vík at the extreme confines of the kingdom. He had some disagreements with the farmers of Ranríki and Hísing. They gathered a force against him, but he fought them and gained the victory. The place where the battle took place is called Leikberg. He devastated Hísing far and wide with fire. Thereupon the farmers submitted to him and paid him large tribute, also giving him hostages. As says Einar Skúlason:¹

587. Stern, unafraid, (219.)
the king repaid—
all men him laud—
the Vík-folk's fraud.
They were in fear:
peace cost them dear.
He hostages took
as luck them forsook.

588. Hard fight he chose (220.)
'gainst bitter foes—
my tale is clear—
to Leikberg near.
All Ran-folk fled,
or did as he said:
gave him their gold
as bade the king bold.

Chapter 20. King Eystein Leads an Expedition to Scotland and England

A short time thereafter King Eystein started on an expedition west across the sea, sailing to Caithness. He learned that Earl Harald Maddatharson was at Thórsá Island [Thurso]. He approached the island with three small skiffs and took them by surprise. The earl had had a ship with thirty rowers' benches and a crew of eighty. However, as they were unprepared [for the attack], King Eystein and his men boarded the ship straightway, took the earl captive, and brought him along. He ransomed himself with three marks of gold, and then they parted. As says Einar Skúlason:

589. Manned with eighty men was (221.)
Maddath's scion's sea-steed.
Won the wolfbrood's-sater
welcome victory o'er them:
with skiffs three, unscathed—nor
'scaped the earl—he conquered.
The ravening ravens'-feeder
ransomed his head with gold rings.

From there King Eystein sailed south along the east coast of Scotland and landed by the Scottish town which is called Apardjón [Aberdeen]. There he slew many men and ransacked the town. As says Einar Skúlason:

590. Heard I have tell (222.)
that folk many fell
when the king made war
near Aberdeen's shore.

Another battle he fought in the south at Hjartapoll [Hartlepool] against a band of horsemen and put them to flight. They cleared some ships of their crews in that place. As says Einar:

591. Bit the king's sword. (223.)
Followed men their lord
with all their soul
at Hartlepool.
Did ravens gloat.
Many an English boat
was cleared. Grew red

swords with blood shed.

He proceeded still further south along the English coast and had a third battle at Hvítaby [Whitby]. He was victorious and burned the town. As says Einar:

592. The king fray stirred, (224.)
was swords' whine heard.
At Whitby Town
he won renown.
Fire leapt high
into the sky,
were wolves' teeth red
with blood that was shed.

After that he harried far and wide in England. At that time King Stephen ruled in England.¹ Afterwards King Eystein had a battle at Skarpasker² with some horsemen. As says Einar:

593. Drave arrows'-rain (225.)
with might and main
by Skarpasker coast
'gainst shield-clad host.

Then he fought a battle at Pílavík³ and was victorious. As says Einar:

594. Bloodied his sword (226.)
the Northmen's lord
in Scotsmen's⁴ blood.
Ran the wound-flood
on Pílavík's strand.
Rang 'gainst skulls his brand,
to the ground as down
he burned Langatown.

There they burned Langatún⁵ to the ground. That was a large town, and it is said that it never rose again to what it was before. Thereupon King Eystein left England, and in the fall sailed back to Norway. Men differed greatly about [the value of] this expedition.

Chapter 21. Of King Sigurth's Appearance and Character

Good peace prevailed in the beginning of the reign of the sons of Harald, and they were tolerably agreed the while the body of their old counsellors was alive and Ingi and Sigurth were children. Then both had their courts together, but Eystein, his own separately. He was a full-grown man [at the time]. But when the foster parents of Ingi and Sigurth had passed away—to wit, Sátha-Gyrth Bártharson, Ámundi Gyrtharson, Thjóstólf Álason, Óttar Birting, Ogmund Sviptir, and Ogmund Dengir, the brother of Erling Skakki—Erling was thought of little account while Ogmund was still living. After that Ingi and Sigurth had separate courts, and King Ingi had the support of Grégóriús, the son of Dag Eilífsson and Ragnhild, the daughter of Skopti Ogmundarson. Grégóriús had large possessions and himself was a man of outstanding qualities. He was at the head of the government of the country with King Ingi; and the king permitted him to appropriate for himself all such possessions of the king as he desired.

King Sigurth as he matured grew to be a most overbearing man, unruly in all respects, as was Eystein who yet was somewhat more moderate, though he was a most avaricious and covetous man. King Sigurth grew to be a tall and strong man of stately appearance. He had brown hair and an ugly mouth, but good features otherwise. He was exceedingly ready and skilful of speech. This is mentioned by Einar Skúlason:

595. Excels in speech Sigurth, (227.)
swords in blood who reddens—
God himself has given him
glory—all in Norway.
Whene'er the Raumers'¹ ruler
raised his voice, 't was as if—
unfading fame he won o'er
foes—hushed were all others.

Chapter 22. Of the Appearance and Character of Kings Eystein and Ingi

King Eystein was a man with black hair and a dark complexion. In stature he was somewhat over medium height. He had a good mind and keen understanding. What most contributed to his unpopularity was his avarice and stinginess. He had for a wife Ragna, daughter of Níkolás Mása.

King Ingi had an exceedingly handsome countenance. His hair was yellow, rather thin, and very curly. He was of low stature and could hardly walk alone because one of his legs was withered, and he had a hump both on his shoulders and his chest. He was kindly of speech and good to his friends, generous with his possessions. He let the chieftains share in the government of the country and was popular among the people. All this contributed to draw most of the people to his side.

Brígitha was the name of a daughter of King Harald Gilli. She was first married to King Ingi Hallsteinsson of Sweden, then to Earl Karl Sónason, and then to Magnús, king of Sweden. King Ingi Haraldsson and she had the same mother. Finally, Earl Birgir Brosa married her. They had four sons—Earl Philippús, Earl Knút, Fólki, and Magnús. Their daughters were Ingigerth, who married King Sørkvir of Sweden—their son was King Jón—Kristín, and Margrét. Another daughter of Harald Gilli was named Mária. She was married to Símon Skálp, the son of Hallkel Húk. Their son was Níkolás. Margrét, the third daughter of Harald Gilli was married to Jón Hallkelsson, brother of Símon. A great many things happened which led to disagreement between the Brothers, but I shall mention only this one thing which, it seems to me, led to the most important consequences.

Chapter 23. Cardinal Níkolás Visits Norway

1152 Cardinal Níkolás of Rome came to Norway in the days of the sons of Harald. He was sent to Norway by the Pope. The cardinal was incensed against Sigurth and Eystein, and they were compelled to come to an agreement with him. But he was exceedingly pleased with Ingi and called him his son. But when they all were reconciled with him he granted them permission to have Jón Birgisson consecrated archbishop of the Trondheim diocese and presented him with the vestment which is called pallium. He made the pronouncement that the archiepiscopal see should be in Nitharós, in Christ Church, where Holy King Ólaf rests. Before that there had only been suffragan bishops in Norway. The cardinal brought it about that no one was to carry arms in the market towns with impunity, except the twelve men who were to attend the king. He improved in many respects the ways of the Norwegians whilst he dwelled there. No foreigner has ever come to Norway whom men rated as highly and who had such influence on the community as he. Later, he travelled south, after receiving many friendly gifts and declaring that he would always be most friendly disposed toward Norwegians. Soon after his arrival in Rome the Pope died who had ruled the see until then. All the people of Rome wanted to have 1154-1159 Níkolás for Pope and so he was consecrated as Pope, with the name of Adrian. Those who came to Rome in those days tell that never had he so important business with other men than he did not first speak with Norwegians, whenever they desired to consult him. He was not Pope for long, and he is pronounced to be a saint.

Chapter 24. Saint Óláf Restores a Man's Speech

In the days of the sons of Harald Gilli it happened that a certain man called Halldór was made a captive by the Wends. They tortured him, slitting his throat, and pulling his tongue through it, and cutting it off at the roots. Thereupon he sought out the resting place of Saint Óláf and turned his thoughts firmly to that holy man and begged King Óláf with many tears to give him back his speech and his health. Soon thereafter he did receive back his speech [by] the mercy of this good king, and straightway became his servant for all his life, becoming an excellent man, steadfast in the Christian faith. This miracle happened half a month before the latter Saint Óláf's Mass [July 20th], on the same day Cardinal Níkolás set foot on land in Norway.

Chapter 25. Saint Óláf Heals the Priest Richard

In the Uppland District there lived two brothers, named Einar and Andréás. Wealthy and of noble extraction, they were the sons of Guthorm Graybeard and maternal uncles of King Sigurth Haraldsson. All their possessions and their family homestead were in that district. Their sister was a woman of rather handsome appearance but not too careful about the promises of evil men, as proved to be the case later. She showed great kindness to an English priest, Richard by name, who lived with her brothers, and out of the goodness of her heart did much to please him. As a result, ugly rumors became current about her. Then, when it had become common talk, everyone laid the blame on the priest, as did her brothers. And as soon as they became aware of this they charged him publicly with seducing her, seeing the great tenderness which had prevailed between the two.

This later turned out to the great misfortune of Richard and their sister, as was to be expected, since the brothers kept their silence about their secret plot and did not betray their intentions by word or look. But on a certain day they called the priest to them—he expected nothing but good of them—luring him from home with them. They told him that they were bound for another district on some business and asked him to accompany them. They had with them their man servant who had been informed of their plan. In a boat they rowed along the lake called Rond and landed on the tongue of land called Skiptisand. There they landed and disported themselves for a while. Then they went to a spot that was hidden from sight and told the servant to deal the priest a blow with the back of his axe, and he did so, knocking him unconscious.

When he came to, he said, “Why do you ill-treat me so?”

They answered, “Even if no one has told you, you are going to find out now what you have done,” and then they brought up the charges against him. He denied them and prayed to let God and Holy King Óláf judge between them. Then they broke the bone in one of his legs. Thereupon they dragged him into the forest and tied his hands behind his back. Then they put a rope around his head and a board under his shoulders and his head and inserted a pin to tighten the rope with. Then Einar took a peg and set it on the eye of the priest. The servant stood over him and struck down with his axe, knocking out the eye so that it dropped into his beard. Then they set the peg on the other eye and said to the servant, “Don’t strike quite so hard.” He did so. Then the peg glanced off the eyeball and tore loose the eyelid. Then Einar took hold of the eyelid with his hand and held it up and saw that the eyeball still was in place. Then he set the

peg outside on the cheek bone, the servant struck, and the eyeball fell down on the cheek bone where it was most prominent. Next they opened his mouth, pulled his tongue out, and cut it off. Then they undid his hands and his head. As soon as he regained his senses it occurred to him to lay the eyeballs under the brows in their proper places and to hold them there with both hands the best he could.

They carried him to the boat and brought him to the farm which is called Sæheimrud, where they landed. They sent a man to the farm to tell the people that a priest lay there on the strand by the boat. While the man they had sent was gone they asked the priest if he could speak, and he wagged his tongue to and fro, trying to speak. Then Einar said to his brother, "If he recovers and the stump of his tongue heals, it occurs to me that he might speak again." Then they took hold of the stub of the tongue with tongs, pulled it out, cut it two ways, and down into the roots of it the third time, and left him there half dead.

The mistress of the farm was poor, yet she and her daughter went straightway and carried him home in their cloaks. Then they went to fetch a priest, and when he came he bandaged all his wounds, and they tried to relieve him the best they could. He lay there then, that priest, sorely mutilated and in a pitiful condition. But he lived aye in hopes of God's grace, never misdoubting it; and though bereft of speech he prayed to God in his thoughts and with a sorrowful heart, and all the more confidently the worse off he was. He turned his thoughts to that gracious king, Saint Ólaf, God's holy man, having before heard told much of his glorious works and believing therefore all the more firmly, and with all his heart, that he would help him in his need. And as he lay there, maimed and bereft of all strength, he wept sorely, sighing, and with a sad heart prayed to glorious King Ólaf to help him.

Now after midnight the sorely ill-treated priest fell asleep, when he thought he saw a noble-looking man come up to him and say to him, "Cruelly have you been maltreated, friend Richard, and I see that your strength is all gone." He believed he agreed. Then the man said to him, "You are indeed in need of mercy."

The priest replied, "I would indeed need the mercy of Almighty God and of Holy King Ólaf."

The other said, "And that you shall have indeed." Thereupon he took hold of the stump of his tongue and pulled it so hard that the priest felt terrible pain. Thereupon with his hand he stroked him about the eyes and legs and other parts that were sore. Then the priest asked who he was. The man looked at him and said "I am Ólaf from north in Trondheim" and disappeared

said, "I am Ólaf from North in Fjotlandem," and disappeared.

But the priest awoke, entirely recovered, and straightway said, "Blessed am I; thanks to God and to Holy King Ólaf. He has healed me." And however cruelly he had before been maltreated, now he quickly received comfort for all his mistreatment, and it seemed to him that he had neither been wounded nor ailing—his tongue was whole, his eyes were both in place, his leg as well as all the other parts were healed and smarted no longer, and he was in the best of health. But as a mark that his eyes had been gouged out, a white scar appeared on both his eyelids, so that the might of this glorious king should be shown in the man who had been so pitiably maltreated.

Chapter 26. The Kings Eystein and Sigurth Conspire against King Ingi

Eystein and Sigurth had fallen out for the reason that King Sigurth had slain a courtier of King Eystein, a man called Harald of Vík, who owned a house in Bergen, and another man, Priest Jón Taparth, the son of Bjarni Sigurtharson. On account of this the kings arranged for a meeting in winter in the Uppland District to come to an agreement. The two had a long session discussing the matter, and the upshot of their talks was that all three brothers were to meet the following summer in Bergen. And the two were also agreed that King Ingi should have only two or three estates and enough property otherwise so as to be able to have thirty men about him; and they were of the opinion that he was not hale enough to be king. Ingi and Grégóriús learned of this and proceeded to Bergen with a large force of men. Sigurth arrived a little later, with a force considerably smaller. By that time Ingi and Sigurth had been kings over Norway for nineteen years. Eystein arrived later, from Vík in the east, whereas the other two had come from the north. Then King Ingi had the trumpets blown for the assembly on the Hólm, and both Sigurth and Ingi came there, together with a great host of men. Grégóriús had two warships and ninety or more men whom he provided for at his own expense. He kept his housecarls better than other landed-men, never drinking at entertainments unless all his housecarls were served too. He went to the assembly with a gilded helmet, and all his following was helmeted. King Ingi arose and told people what he had heard—how his brothers wanted to deal with him, and asked for their support. His speech was well received by the multitude, and they declared they would follow him.

Chapter 27. Queen Ingiríth Asks King Ingi to Avenge Himself

Then King Sigurth arose and spoke. He said that there was no truth in what King Ingi accused him of; that it was Grégóriús who had concocted this, and that it would not be long, if things went as he wished, before they could meet in such wise that he would knock off that gilded helmet of his; and he ended by saying that one of them would have to go. Grégóriús in his answer said he thought he hardly needed to be prompted to meet him and that he was ready to do so.

A few days afterwards one of Grégóriús' housecarls was slain on the Street, and it was one of King Sigurth's housecarls who had done it. Then Grégóriús wanted to attack King Sigurth and his men, but King Ingi was against that, and so were many others.

But when Ingiríth, the mother of King Ingi, came from vespers she found Sigurth Skríthhyrna slain. He was a courtier of King Ingi and an old man who had been in the service of many kings. Two men of King Sigurth's, Hallvarth Gunnarsson and Sigurth, the son of Eystein Trafali had slain him; and the blame for this was laid on King Sigurth. Then she went straightway to King Ingi and said to him that he would long be [considered] a little king if he did not bestir himself even if his courtiers were killed, one after the other, like swine. The king grew furious under her reproaches; and whilst they were bandying words Grégóriús walked in, helmeted and in his coat of mail. He asked the king not to be angry,—that she was saying the truth. "I have come here to support you if you will set upon King Sigurth. And here are more than a hundred men close by, my housecarls, helmeted and in their coats of mail, and we shall attack them from the side which seems to others most dangerous."

But most were against that, saying that Sigurth would be willing to make redress for what had been done. But when Grégóriús saw that King Ingi was about to be persuaded not to do anything, he said to him, "In this way they will kill off one by one—they killed one of my housecarls a little while ago, and now your courtier, and they will want to do away with me or some other landed-man whom they consider we can least afford to lose, once they see that you do not take action, and then remove you from your kingdom after your friends are killed. Now whatever is the inclination of your other landed-men, I for my part will not wait for the final blow. We two, Sigurth and I shall this night have it out. Not only are you poorly off on account of your disabilities, but I think you have little desire to protect your friends. But now I am altogether ready to attack Sigurth [from here] because my banner is right outside here."

King Ingi stood up and called for his armor. He asked all those who would

King High stood up and called for his armor. He asked all those who would follow him to get ready, saying it would be no use to try to dissuade him and that he had given in many times, that now it would have to come to a decision between them.

Chapter 28. King Sigurth Is Slain

King Sigurth was drinking in the house of Sigríth Sæta and was all prepared [to fight], but thought nothing would come of the attack. Then they approached the house—King Ingi from above, from the huts of the artisans; Árni, the king’s father-in-law from Sandbridge in the west; Áslák Erlendsson from the side of his house; and Grégóriús from the Street, which was considered the most difficult side [to attack from]. Sigurth and his men shot many arrows from the loop holes in the loft, and they tore down the ovens and hurled the rocks at them. Grégóriús and his men broke down the house gate; and there in the gate fell Einar, the son of Laxa-Pál, and Hallvarth Gunnarsson, who belonged to King Sigurth’s bodyguard. The latter was shoved into the loft nor did any one feel sorry about his death. Then they tore down the houses; and then Sigurth’s men deserted him and asked for quarter. Then Sigurth went up into a loft and wanted to talk to the attackers; but he carried a gilt shield, and so was recognized, and they did not want to listen to him. They shot at him, and their arrows came as thick as falling snow, so he could not stay there. And when his men had deserted him and the houses were being broken down he came out with Thóρθ Húsfreya, one of his henchmen, a man from Vík. They went in the direction where King Ingi stood, and Sigurth appealed to Ingi to give him quarter. But both were cut down. Thóρθ Húsfreya fell after a brave fight. Many of Sigurth’s company fell there, though I name but a few, but also some of Ingi’s men. Four of Grégóriús’ men were slain, and some who were not on either side but were shot down below on the piers or outside on ships.

¹¹⁵⁵ This fight took place fourteen days before Saint John the Baptist’s Day [June 10th], on a Friday. King Sigurth was interred by the Old Christ Church on the Hólm. King Ingi gave Grégóriús the ship King Sigurth had owned.

Two or three days afterwards King Eystein came sailing from the east with thirty ships. He had with him Hákon, his brother’s son, but did not make for Bergen but laid up in Flóruvág Bay. Men went between them to effect a reconciliation. But Grégóriús wanted to attack them, saying that matters would not improve and that he himself would be the leader. “But you, sire, shall not go. We have a sufficient force.” However, many were against it, and so nothing came of it. King Eystein returned east to Vík, and King Ingi sailed to Trondheim; and there was peace of a sort between them though they did not meet personally.

Chapter 29. Grégóriús Is Forewarned and Flees from King Eystein

Grégóriús Dagsson sailed east shortly after King Eystein did, and dwelt on his estate of Bratsberg in the shire of Hofund.¹ King Eystein resided in Ósló and had his ships dragged more than two sea-miles over the ice, because the bay was frozen over far and wide. He proceeded to Hofund, intending to capture Grégóriús; but he had been warned and got away to Telemark with ninety men and from there journeyed north [west] over the mountains to the Harthanger District, thent o Stuthla in Ethni.² There, Erling Skakki had his estate. He himself had sailed north to Bergen, but his wife, Kristín, the daughter of King Sigurth [Jerusalemfarer], was at home and offered Grégóriús all the help he wanted to proceed further. Grégóriús had a good welcome there. He was given a warship which belonged to Erling, and all else that he needed. Grégóriús thanked her cordially, saying that she had comported herself as befitted a great lady, and as was to be expected. Then they sailed to Bergen, where they found Erling, and he considered she had done the right thing.

Chapter 30. The Kings Do Not Abide by Their Agreement

Then Grégóriús Dagsson sailed north to Kaupang and arrived there before Yule. King Ingi received him with great joy, and asked him to take anything of his possessions that he desired. King Eystein had burned down Grégóriús' estate and slaughtered his livestock. But the boathouses which King Eystein the Elder had had built north in Kaupang, and which were most valuable possessions, were burned down that winter, together with some good ships belonging to King Ingi—a deed which caused much indignation and was attributed to King Eystein and Philippús Gyrtharson, the foster brother of King Sigurth.

The summer after, King Ingi sailed south with a great fleet, and King ¹¹⁵⁶Eystein from the east, also collecting together a force. They met by the Sel Islands north [west] of Cape Lithandisness, King Ingi having much the larger force. They were on the point of doing battle but came to an agreement by which Eystein was to pay forty-five marks in gold. Of these, King Ingi was to have thirty marks because Eystein had instigated the burning of the ships and of the boathouses. Then, Philippús was to be outlawed, as well as all those who had been connected with the burning of the ships. [On the other hand] the men guilty of striking down King Sigurth were also to be outlawed, because King Eystein accused King Ingi of sheltering them, while Grégóriús was to have fifteen marks for the damage King Eystein had done him in burning down his estate.

King Eystein was ill-pleased with this settlement, considering it forced on him. After the meeting King Ingi repaired to the Vík District, and King Eystein to the north. And then King Ingi continued to reside in Vík, and Eystein, in the north, in the Trondheim area. They did not meet personally, and there passed between them only such messages as were not conducive to peace. Also, they had one another's friends killed; and nothing came of the payment Eystein was to make. Each accused the other of not abiding by the agreement they had made between them. King Ingi and Grégóriús enticed many men away from King Eystein—thus, Bárth Standali Brynjólfsson and Símun Skálp, son of Hallkel Húk, and many other landed-men, such as Halldór Brynjólfsson and Jón Hallkelsson.

Chapter 31. The Hostile Fleets Face Each Other

1157 When two years had passed since the death of King Sigurth, the two kings collected forces; Ingi, eighty ships in the eastern part of the country, and Eystein, forty-five in the north. One of these was the large dragon ship which King Eystein Magnússon had had built. Both kings had large and well-equipped crews. King Ingi stationed his ships by the island of Mostr in the south, and Eystein, a little to the north of that, in Grœninga Sound. Eystein sent Áslák the Young, the son of Jón, and Árni Sturla, the son of Sæbjørn with one ship south to Ingi to negotiate with him. But when Ingi's men caught sight of them they attacked them, killing many of the crew. They took possession of the ship and of all on it, together with all their belongings.

But Áslák and Árni and some other men escaped to the land, rejoined King Eystein, and told him how Ingi had received them. Then King Eystein held a council and told his men how Ingi had broken the peace, and called upon them to follow him—"and we have a force so large and good that I shall never flee if you will lend me your support." But there was no applause after his speech. Hallkel Húk was there, but both his sons, Símun and Jón, had joined Ingi. Hallkel made reply so that a great many heard it: "Let your chests of gold support you now and defend your land!"

Chapter 32. King Eystein Flees and Is Slain

During the night many secretly absconded with their ships, some joining King Ingi, some sailing to Bergen, some rowing into the fjords. But in the morning, when it was light the king was left with only ten ships. Then he left the large dragon ship behind because it was heavy to row, as well as several other ships. They damaged the dragon ship [enough to put it out of action]. Also, they let their beer run out, and ruined all they could not take along with them. King Eystein went on board the ship of Eindrithi Jónsson Mornef. They sailed north into the Sognfjord, and thence made their way overland east to Vík.

King Ingi took possession of the ships and sailed, outside the skerries, east to Vík. But east of Fold [the Óslófjord] Eystein was lying in wait for him with nearly twelve hundred [1440] men. However, when they saw King Ingi's fleet they did not consider they were numerous enough and ran away into the forest, fleeing every which way, so that the king was left with only one man.

King Ingi and his men learned which way Eystein had taken, and also that he had only few in his company, and they searched for him. Símun Skálp found him issuing from a thicket by himself to meet them. Símun greeted him, saying, "Hail, my lord."

The king replied, "I don't know but you consider yourself my lord now."

"That is what it turns out to be," said Símun.



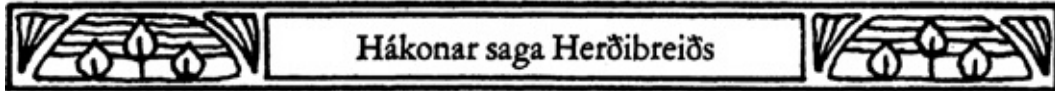
Símun Skálp discovers King Eystein.

The king asked him to help him escape, saying that would be seemly in him —“because for a long time we were on good terms, even though that isn’t the case now.” Símun said that couldn’t be done now. The king asked to hear mass [before being slain], and that was granted him. Then he laid himself with his face down, spreading out his arms, and asked them to slash him crosswise between his shoulders—then they would find out whether he could stand cold steel as King Ingi’s followers said he could not.

Símun spoke to the man who was to hew him, asking him to go to work, and saying that the king had crept all too long through the heather. Then he was beheaded and was considered to have behaved manfully. His body was brought to Fors¹ and placed for the night under the hill south of the church. He was interred in Fors Church, with his resting place in the middle of the church floor, and a rug spread over it. Men call him holy. At the spot where he was beheaded and his blood touched the ground, a spring came up, and another one, under the hill where his body had been placed for the night. Many consider that they have regained their health from the water of either spring. People from Vík have said that many miracles happened at the tomb of King Eystein before his enemies poured broth made from a dog on it.

Símun Skálp was much reproached for his action, and it became the talk of the people. But some say that when King Eystein was captured, Símun sent a messenger to King Ingi, but that the king said he never wanted to see Eystein again. That is what King Sverri ordered written.² But Einar Skúlason says thus:

596. Hardly, though, will he who (228.)
hand raised ’gainst his liege-lord,
Símun Skálp, for his soul e’er
salvation find in heaven.



The Saga of Hákon the Broadshouldered

Chapter 1. Hákon Sigurtharson Is Chosen Leader of Eystein's Troops

Hákon, son of King Sigurth, was chosen chieftain of the troops which had followed King Eystein, and they conferred the title of king on him. He was ten years of age at that time. With him were Sigurth, the son of Hallvarth of Rey, a large landowner; also, Andréás and Onund, the foster brothers of Hákon and sons of Símun; and many of the chieftains and friends of King Eystein and King Sigurth. They first repaired to Gautland. King Ingi had taken possession of all their property in Norway and had made them outlaws. King Ingi journeyed north in Vík and resided, sometimes there, and sometimes in the northern part of the land. Grégóriús stayed in Konungahella close to where hostilities might be expected, to defend the land.

Chapter 2. Grégóriús Prepares to Battle Hákon

1158 The summer after, Hákon and his followers came out of Gautland and proceeded to Konungahella with a very large and well-equipped army.

Grégóriús was there in the town and summoned a numerous assembly of farmers and townsmen, asking for their support. It seemed to him they were half-hearted about it, and he declared that he did not trust them. He left with two ships and sailed to Vík in a depressed state of mind, intending to meet King Ingi. He had learned that King Ingi was coming south to Vík with a large army. And when Grégóriús had come but a short way north he met Símun Skálp, Halldór Brynjólfsson, and Gyrth Ámundason, the foster brother of King Ingi, and he was mighty glad to meet them. Accompanied by them he turned back. They had eleven ships. But when they rowed up to Konungahella, Hákon and his men were holding an assembly outside the town and saw Grégóriús approaching. Then Sigurth of Reyri said, “Now Grégóriús is fey, seeing that he delivers himself into our power with but a small force.”

Grégóriús moored his ships opposite the town with the intention of waiting for King Ingi. He was expected there but did not come. King Hákon prepared for battle in the town and appointed Thorljót Skaufuskalli chieftain over the troops on the merchantmen in front of the town. He was a viking and pirate. But Hákon and Sigurth and all their troops were inside the town and placed themselves in battle array on the piers. All the people in town had joined Hákon’s forces.

Chapter 3. Grégóriús Routs Hákon's Forces

Grégóriús and his men rowed up the river and let their ships drift down at Thorljót. They exchanged shots for a while, until Thorljót and his companions leapt overboard. Some of them were killed, others made their way to land. Then Grégóriús and his men rowed toward the piers and at once shoved out the landing stages from his ship right in front of Hákon's men. Then the man who bore his standard fell, just as he was about to go up on land. Thereupon Grégóriús called on Hall, son of Authun Hallsson, to carry the standard. He did so and carried it up on the pier, and Grégóriús stepped up right after him, holding his shield over Hall's head. But as soon as Grégóriús came up on the pier and Hákon's men recognized him, they drew back, making room on both sides. And when more men had come ashore from the ships, they and Grégóriús advanced, and Hákon's men first backed out and then ran up into the town, with Grégóriús following them and twice driving them out of the town and killing many.

It is said that there never was a braver exploit than this one of Grégóriús, because Hákon had more than four thousand [4800] men, whereas Grégóriús had not quite four hundred [480]. After the battle Grégóriús said to Hall Authunarson, "Many, it would seem to me, are more agile in an attack than you Icelanders, because you are less practiced in fighting than we Norwegians, but few seem to me more gallant than you."

A little later, Ingi arrived and had many put to death who had taken sides with Hákon. Some he compelled to pay fines, in the case of others he burned down their farms, still others he drove out of the land and inflicted much damage on them.

1159 During the winter, Hákon took his way north over the mountains to Trondheim, arriving there before Whitsuntide [April 12th]. And the people of that district accepted him as king allowing him to have as his paternal inheritance one third of Norway together with King Ingi. The latter was in Vík at the time, together with Grégóriús, and Grégóriús wanted to proceed north against Hákon, but many held back so that nothing was done about it that winter.

Chapter 4. Hákon Avoids Grégóriús in Bergen

In spring Hákon proceeded south with thirty ships. The men from Vík in his army went before him and pillaged in both districts of Mœr. Within the memory of man no one had ever harried between the two towns of Bergen and Trondheim. Jón, the son of Hallkel Húk, collecting a force of farmers, attacked the pillagers, captured Kolbein Óthi, and slew every one of his crew. After that he sought out others and encountered seven ships and attacked them. But Hallkel, Jón's father, did not come to reinforce him as had been agreed upon. Many a good farmer fell there, and Jón himself was wounded.

Hákon sailed south to Bergen with his fleet, and when they arrived at Stjórnvelta¹ they learned that King Ingi and Grégóriús had come from the east to Bergen a few days previously, so they did not dare to proceed to Bergen. They sailed south outside the skerries, and on their way met three ships with followers of King Ingi, who had been delayed on their way from the east. They were commanded by Gyrth Ámundason, the foster brother of King Ingi—he was married to Gyrith, the sister of Grégóriús—by Gyrth Lawman, the son of Gunnhild, and by Hávarth Klíning. Hákon then had Gyrth Ámundason and Hávarth Klíning killed, but Gyrth Lawman he took with him as he proceeded to Vík.

Chapter 5. Grégóriús Is for Attacking Hákon

When King Ingi learned of these happenings, he sailed east after them. They met east in the [Gaut Elf] River. King Ingi anchored in the northern [western] branch of the river and reconnoitered to find where Hákon's fleet lay. He made fast outside the island of Hísing, waiting there for his scouts. And when they returned, they reported to the king that they had seen the fleet of King Hákon and what preparations they had made. They told him that they were moored by the piles and had tied the sterns of their vessels to them. "They have two merchantmen, such as frequent the Baltic, and have placed them outside of the other ships." On these merchantmen were fortified crow's-nests on the mastheads, and likewise on the prows of both.

When the king had learned what arrangements the enemies had made, he had the trumpets blown to summon all his army to a council meeting. And as soon as it had assembled, the king sought the advice of his troops, calling on Grégóriús Dagsson and Erling Skakki, his brother-in-law, as well as on other landed-men and skippers, and telling them of the [defensive] arrangements made by Hákon and his followers.

Grégóriús was the first to answer and reveal his opinion. He spoke as follows: "We have had several encounters with Hákon, when most often they had more numerous troops [than we], yet came off second best. But now we have the larger force by far; and it will seem likely to those men who have but recently lost good kinsmen through them, that here they will have a good chance for revenge, because Hákon's men have now for a long time eluded us, this summer. We have often said that if ever they waited for us, as we are told is the case now, we would risk an encounter with them. Now I shall declare that so far as I am concerned, I want to engage them in battle, if that is not against the king's wishes; because I consider it likely that, as before, they will yield ground if we attack them briskly. And I shall attack them where others think it most dangerous."

There was much applause to Grégóriús' speech, and all declared they were ready to do battle with Hákon. Then all the ships were rowed up the river till the two fleets came in sight of each other. Thereupon King Ingi's fleet left the current and steered into the lee of the island [of Hísing]. Then King Ingi spoke to all the skippers, bidding them make ready to attack. Then he addressed Erling Skakki, saying, as was true, that no one in that army was a wiser man nor more experienced in battle, though some were more impetuous. Then he spoke to a number of landed-men, calling several by name, and concluded by asking each

and every one to give such advice as might be most helpful, when all should be agreed on one plan.

Chapter 6. Erling Counsels Against an Attack

Erling Skakki replied to the king's speech as follows: "I owe it to you, sir king, to make answer to your speech. And if you are anxious to know what my advice would be, I shall let you hear it. The plan which has been proposed is straight counter to my mind; for I consider it unwise to fight them as conditions are now, though we have a large and fine army. If we were to attack them, rowing against this current, with three men in each compartment, then one will have to row and one other, to shield him. Then what would that mean except that but one third of our force would be left to fight with? It would seem to me that those who do the rowing and turn their backs to the enemy will not be of much use in battle. Give me time to devise a plan, and I promise you that before three days have elapsed I shall devise a stratagem to attack them more easily." And it was clear from Erling's speech that he was against making an attack. Nevertheless many others urged it, saying that Hákon and his men would escape to land as before—"and then they will get away from us," they said, "whereas now they have but few troops, and we have them altogether in our power." Grégóriús made but a few remarks, cuttingly observing that the main reason for Erling's being against an attack was that he wanted to scout the counsels which he, Grégóriús had given, rather than that he had a better understanding of these matters than others.

Chapter 7. King Ingi Adopts Erling's Plan

King Ingi then said to Erling, "Brother-in-law Erling," said he, "now we mean to follow your advice, how to manage the attack; but because the leaders are bent on that, we shall attack the enemy today."

Then Erling said: "Let all skiffs and light ships row around the island and up the eastern fork of the river, and then come down on them and try to detach them from the piles. Then we shall row at them with the big ships from below; but the outcome will show whether they who now oppose me will fight harder than I in the same measure as they are more insistent on it."

This counsel was approved by all. A point of land jutted out between Ingi's fleet and that of Hákon, so that neither could see the ships of the other side. And when the flotilla of skiffs came rowing down the river, Hákon's men caught sight of them. Before that they had held a council and discussed their plans. There were some who supposed that King Ingi would attack them, but many considered that he wouldn't trust himself to do so since the attack seemed to be delayed and because they had confidence in their own preparations and their forces.

There were many men of high rank in their fleet. There was Sigurth of Reyr and the two sons of Símun. Also Níkolás Skjaldvararson and Eindrithi, the son of Jón Mornef, who at that time was the most prominent as well as the most popular man in the province of Trondheim. Many others there were landed-men and district chieftains.

Now when they saw that Ingi's men with many ships rowed downstream, the followers of Hákon thought that Ingi and his force wanted to flee, so they cut their cables, took to the oars, and rowed after them, intending to pursue them. The ships were carried along by the fast current which bore them past the point of land which previously had concealed one from the other; and then they saw that the main portion of Ingi's fleet lay along the island of Hísing. The followers of Ingi now [on their part] caught sight of Hákon's ships and thought they were about to attack.

Then there arose a great tumult, with clashing of arms and shouts of encouragement, and they raised the war cry. But Hákon's men steered their ships to the northern bank of the river where there is a small indentation, and where they got out of the current. There they prepared for defense, making fast to the land with stern cables and turning their prows out [toward the river]. They fastened their ships together and placed the Baltic merchantmen outside the

other vessels, one upstream and one downstream, tying them fast to the warships. The ship of King Hákon lay in the center of the fleet, with Sigurth's ship beside it and that of Níkolás on the other side, and next to his, that of Eindriði Jónsson. All the smaller ships were on the flanks. Nearly all the ships they had filled with stones and weapons.

Chapter 8. Sigurth of Reyr Exhorts Hákon's Troops

Sigurth of Reyr spoke to the following effect: "It is likely that now will happen what for a long time has been predicted for us, namely that we shall encounter Ingi in battle. And we have also for a long time prepared against it, and many of our companies have boasted that they would not flee or flinch fighting against King Ingi or Grégóriús, and it is a good thing to recall their words now. But we who on earlier occasions have had somewhat of a drubbing [from them] may talk about that with less confidence; and the fact is, as everyone has heard, that we have very often come off second best in encounters with them. But all the same it behooves us to face them in the most manful fashion and stand fast; for this is the [only] way for us to be victorious. And though we have a somewhat smaller force, yet fate will decide which side shall win.

"The best hope we have for our cause is that God knows that we have the right on our side. Ingi has already cut down his two brothers, and no one is so blind as not to know what atonement for the death of his father is in store for King Hákon, and that is, to be cut down like his other kinsmen, and that will become apparent this very day.

"From the beginning, Hákon demanded no more of Norway for himself than a third, such as his father had had, and that was denied him. But in my opinion Hákon is more entitled to the inheritance of Eystein, his uncle, than Ingi or Símun Skálp or the other men who made away with King Eystein. To many who are anxious for the salvation of their soul and who have committed such monstrous misdeeds as has Ingi, it would seem overweening before God to call themselves kings; and I marvel that God abides his audacity, and it may be that God will cast him down through us.

"Let us fight bravely, for God will give us victory. But if we fall, God will make retribution for that with manifold joys if he does give evil men the power to overcome us. Let us advance calmly and not be overcome with fright if there is battle. Let each and every one take care of himself and his comrades, and God of us all."

Sigurth's speech was much applauded, and everybody vowed they would give a good account of themselves. King Hákon went aboard one of the Baltic merchantmen, and was surrounded by a wall of shields, but his standard was erected on the warship on which he had been before.

Chapter 9. Grégóriús and Erling Counsel the King Not to Enter the Fight

Now to tell about Ingi's men: when they saw that Hákon's troops prepared for battle—only the river was between them—they sent a swift boat after that portion of their fleet which had rowed away, with the message that they turn about. But the king and the rest of the fleet waited for them and made ready for the attack. Then the chieftains spoke [to their crews] advising them of their intentions, especially which ships should lie [closest to the enemy].

Grégóriús said, "We have a large and well-equipped force. Now it is my advice that you, sir king, be not in the attack; for if you live, all is well, and no one knows where a stray arrow may hit. They have taken such measures that from the fortified crow's-nest on the merchant ships they can launch both stones and shot. Then it is somewhat less risky for those who remain at a distance. The enemy has a force not too big for us landed-men to take on. I shall lay my ship alongside their largest one. This time, too, I don't believe we will have to wait long before we reach a decision, for so it has been most often in our former contests with them, even though the difference in numbers was in their favor then." All approved what Grégóriús said about the king's not taking part in the battle.

Then spoke Erling Skakki, "With this advice I concur, sir king, that you do not take part in the battle. Their preparations seem to me to be such that we shall have to be on our guard lest we suffer great loss of life from them. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. A great many were against the counsel I gave earlier in the day, saying I did not want to fight. Now it would seem to me greatly to our advantage that the enemy is no longer fastened to the piles. And now things have turned out so that I shall not dissuade from making an attack, for I see, as all will understand, how important it is to disperse this band of robbers who have gone about all the country, pilfering and plundering, so that afterwards people may cultivate their land in peace and serve one king, one who is as good and just as is King Ingi, who yet has had trouble and difficulty from the overbearing and iniquity of his kinsmen and has been a shield for all the people, incurring much danger to bring peace to the country."

Erling spoke long and eloquently, and so did several chieftains, and all to the same effect, all urging to do battle. They waited till all their forces were gathered. At that time King Ingi had the ship called *Bøkisúthin*;¹ and he heeded the prayer of his friends not to participate in the battle but remained behind by

the island.

Chapter 10. Ivar Fights Grégóriús and Is Helped by Him to Escape

Now when the fleet was ready for action, it rowed to the attack, and both armies raised the battle cry. Ingi's followers did not fasten their ships together and did not proceed as a unit, because they rowed across all of the current and the larger ships drifted considerably. Erling Skakki laid his ship alongside of King Hákon's, wedging its prow between that ship and Sigurth's. Then the battle began. But Grégóriús' ship ran aground and tilted much to one side. As a consequence they did not in the beginning take part in the fight. And when Hákon's men saw his plight they laid their ships alongside his and attacked while Grégóriús' ship lay fast. Then Ívar, the son of Hákon Maw, moved up his ship to that of Grégóriús so that their prows drifted together. Ívar cast a boat-hook about Grégóriús' middle and pulled Grégóriús toward the railing, but the scythe slipped up his side. Still Ívar almost managed to drag him overboard. Grégóriús suffered but a slight wound [from it], because he wore plate armor. Ívar shouted over to him, saying he [Grégóriús] had stout armor. Grégóriús replied, saying that the way he [Ívar] went to work, he [Grégóriús] had need for it, nor was it any too thick.

At that time Grégóriús and his crew were almost on the point of having to leap overboard, when Áslák the Young cast an anchor on board his ship and pulled them off the shoal. Then Grégóriús [in his turn] attacked Ívar's ship, and they fought for a long time. Grégóriús' ship was larger and had a more numerous crew. A great many fell on Ívar's ship, and some leapt overboard. Ívar was seriously wounded so that he was unable to fight, and when his ship was cleared of men, Grégóriús had him brought to land and helped him to escape, and they were friends thereafter.

Chapter 11. King Ingi's Forces Are Victorious

Now when King Ingi and his men saw that Grégóriús had run aground, the king called on his men to row up to him. He said, "That was a most unwise counsel for us to stay behind when our friends went to battle. We have the largest ship with the best crew in the whole fleet, and now I see that Grégóriús, the man to whom I owe most gratitude, needs help; so let us join battle and fight as hard as we can. Also, it is most proper that I be in the battle, for if we win victory, then it will be mine. And even though I knew beforehand that we would lose the fight, yet the only proper thing for us to do is to join in the fight with our men; because I shall not be able to undertake anything if I lose the men who have protected me and are the most gallant and who for a long time have governed for me and my kingdom."

And so he bade them raise his standard, which was done, and they rowed across the river. At that time the battle raged most furiously, and the king had no chance to share in the attack, so crowded lay the ships there. Then they rowed close to the Baltic merchantmen, and there they were greeted by a hail of spears and heavy missiles and stones so big that nothing could stand against it, and they had to leave that place. But when the men of the fleet saw that the king had come they made room for him, and then he rowed alongside the ship of Eindrithi Jónsson. Then Hákon's men abandoned their small ships and boarded the merchantmen, and some went on land.

Erling Skakki and his men were engaged in a hard fight. He was stationed by the mast. He called on his forecastlemen to board the royal ship [of Hákon]. They replied that this was no easy matter, that the railing was protected by iron [spikes]. So Erling went forward to the forecastle and stayed there but a little while before they made ready to board the royal ship and [then] cleared it of men. Thereupon the whole army [of the enemy] took to flight. Many leapt overboard, many fell, but the great majority managed to reach land; as says Einar Skúlason:

597. Many a man off bloody (229.)
mere-ship's forecastle tumbled.
Got the giantess' jade¹ his
jaws filled. Drifted corpses.
Reddened was the river's
rapid flow with wound-gore.
Was the warmish wolf's-drink

washed there into Karmt's-ring.²

598. Cleared of men were many (230.)
mast-hogs³ floating down the
river—rang 'gainst helmets
red steel—men drew bowstrings—
from the fray ere landward
fled warriors from sea-steeds.
Fewer grew Hákon's force in
fiercest storm-of-arrows.

About Grégóriús Dagsson, Einar composed the *flokk*⁴ which is called *Elfarvísur* [River Ditties]. King Ingi gave quarter to Níkolás Skjaldvararson after his ship had been cleared of men, whereupon he went over to King Ingi and stayed with him as long as he lived. Eindrithi Jónsson leapt onto the ship of King Ingi when his own ship had been cleared of men, and asked for quarter. This, the king wished to grant him, but the son of Hávarth Klíning ran up and gave him the death blow. He was much blamed for his deed, but he said that Eindrithi had been the cause of his father Hávarth's death. Eindrithi was much mourned, most in the Trondheim District.

Many of Hákon's men had fallen, but not any other chieftains. Of Ingi's troops few were slain but many wounded. Hákon fled up on land, but King Ingi proceeded north to Vík with his fleet. Both he and Grégóriús dwelled there during the winter. But when some of King Ingi's men returned to Bergen from the battle, [including] Bergljót and his brothers, the sons of Ívar of Elda, they killed Níkolás Beard, who had been King Hákon's steward, and then returned to their home north in Trondheim. King Hákon arrived in the north before Yule, and Sigurth sometimes stayed in his home at Reyri. Grégóriús had been permitted by Ingi to give him quarter and that he should have possession of all his properties, because Grégóriús and Sigurth were closely related.

King Hákon was in Kaupang during Yule, and one evening during Yule some
1160 of his men fought in the guardsmen's hall, with the result that seven
were killed and many wounded. And after the eighth day of Yule his
followers went to Elda, [headed by] Álf Hrothi, the son of Óttar Birting,
with nearly eighty men. They arrived there early in the evening, when the people
inside were drunk, and set fire to the hall. They came out to defend themselves.
There fell Bergljót, the son of Ívar, and Ogmund, his brother, together with
many others. Nearly thirty men had been inside.

During the winter, Andréás, the son of Símun, died north in Kaupang. He was

the foster brother of King Hákon, and his death was greatly mourned. Erling Skakki and the followers of King Ingi who were in Bergen talked about sailing north, that winter, and capturing Hákon, but nothing came of it. Grégóriús sent the message from Konungahella in the east, that if he were as near to Hákon as was Erling, he would not sit quiet in Bergen when Hákon had friends of King Ingi and their companions killed in Trondheim.

Chapter 12. Grégóriús and Erling Fight Each Other in Bergen

King Ingi and Grégóriús sailed to Bergen in spring. But as soon as Hákon and Sigurth learned that Ingi had left Vík, they journeyed the landway east to Vík. Now when King Ingi and his fleet arrived in Bergen, a feud arose between Halldór Brynjólfsson and Bjorn Níkolásson. [One time] when one of Bjorn's housecarls met one [of Halldór's] down by the piers he asked him why he looked so pale. He answered that he had had himself bled. "I would not become so deadly pale when bled as you are."

"And I believe," said the other, "that you would stand it worse and in less manly fashion."

It took no more than that to start an altercation. Then one word brought on the other until they bandied words and then fought with one another. Then the word came to Halldór Brynjólfsson that one of his housecarls was wounded on the piers. That was when Halldór was drinking in a house near by. Then he went to that place; but before that, some of Bjorn's housecarls had [joined the fray], and it seemed to Halldór his men were being overborne and so [he and his men] shoved Bjorn's housecarls and struck them. Then Bjorn Bukk was told that the men from Vík were beating his housecarls down by the piers. Then Bjorn and his men armed themselves and ran down to avenge their men, and much blood was shed. Then Grégóriús was told that Halldór, his kinsman needed help, that his housecarls were being cut down outside on the Street. Thereupon Grégóriús and his men quickly put on their coats of mail and hastened down to them. Then Erling Skakki learned that Bjorn, his sister's son, was fighting with Halldór and Grégóriús down by the piers and that he needed help. Then he hurried there with a great force and asked people to aid him, saying that it would be a disgrace for them "if one man from Vík is to get the better of us here in our native town—that would be an everlasting reproach to us."



King Ingi reconciles Erling and Grégóriús.

Fourteen men fell in that encounter, of which nine were killed outright and five died of the wounds they received, and many were wounded. Then word reached King Ingi that Grégóriús and Erling were fighting each other down by the piers, and he hastened there, intending to separate them, but could not prevail upon them, because both were so much beside themselves with fury. Then Grégóriús called out to King Ingi, begging him to go away as he could do nothing about it as matters stood and declaring it would be the greatest mischance if anything happened to him, “because one never knows who might want to do some mischief if he thought he had the chance.” Then the king betook himself away. But when the worst fight was over, Grégóriús and his men went up to Saint Nicholas Church, followed by Erling and his men and called out to one another. Then King Ingi approached them again and reconciled them, and then both desired that he should be sole arbiter between them. At that time information reached them that Hákon was in Vík, so King Ingi and Grégóriús sailed east with a great fleet of ships. But when they arrived in the east, Hákon and his men fled, and it came to no battle. Then King Ingi proceeded up the fjord to Ósló, but Grégóriús remained in Konungahella.

Chapter 13. Hákon and Sigurth Escape from Grégóriús

Shortly afterwards, Grégóriús got news that Hákon and his men were at a place called Saurbýir. That is up toward the forests. He went there, arriving at night, and thought that Hákon and Sigurth were in the larger of the houses there, and put it to the torch. However, Hákon and Sigurth were in the smaller house, and when they saw the fire, they hastened to help the others. There fell Munán, the son of Áli the Shieldless, who was a brother of King Sigurth, King Hákon's father. Grégóriús and his men slew him as he was about to help those who were burned in the house. They made their way out, but many were killed there.

Ásbjorn Jalda managed to get out of the building, sorely wounded. He was a great viking. A farmer encountered him, and Ásbjorn asked the man to let him escape, saying he would give him money in return. The farmer replied he would rather do what he had a mind to do. And saying he had often stood in dread of him he gave him a mortal blow.

Hákon and Sigurth managed to escape, but many of their men were slain. Then Grégóriús returned east [south] to Konungahella. A short time afterwards, Hákon and Sigurth came to the estate of Halldór Brynjólfsson at Vettaland, set fire to the buildings and burned them down. Halldór issued [from the burning building] and was at once cut down, as were his housecarls. Altogether, nearly twenty men were slain. Sigríth, his wife, Grégóriús' sister, they let escape to the forest, clad only in her nightgown. They captured Ámundi, son of Gyrth Ámundason and Gyríth, daughter of Dag, and sister's son of Grégóriús, and took him away with them. He was five years of age then.

Chapter 14. Grégóriús Falls Crossing a River to Attack Hákon

Grégóriús was informed of these happenings and was greatly affected by them. He made careful inquiries where Hákon and his men were. Then he left Konungahella toward the end of Yule with a large force. They arrived at Fors on the thirteenth day of Yule [January 7th] and lodged there overnight. He had the matins read for him on the last day of Yule and afterwards, the gospel. That was on a Saturday. And when Grégóriús and his men caught sight of Hákon's force, it seemed to them much smaller than theirs. A river ran between them where the encounter took place. It is called Befja.¹ The ice on it was unreliable, because the flood-tide from the sea flowed under the ice. Hákon and his men had chopped holes in the ice and covered them [with snow], so that one could not see them. When Grégóriús arrived at the river he remarked that the ice seemed unreliable to him and said it was advisable to proceed to the bridge which spanned the river a little ways above. The farmers [in his army] made the remark that they did not know what was the reason he did not dare to attack the enemy by crossing the ice, seeing how small their force was. They thought the ice safe enough, that maybe he was fey.² Grégóriús replied, saying it had rarely been necessary to urge him to attack, and that they did not need to do that now, either. And he bade them keep up with him and not remain standing on the shore if he ventured on to the ice, that it was their counsel to walk on unsafe ice, which he was unwilling to do—"and yet I will not refuse your challenge," he said, and ordered his banner to be borne forward, and advanced upon the ice. But as soon as the farmers saw that the ice was unsafe, they turned back.

Grégóriús broke through the ice, but not too deeply. He cautioned his men to proceed warily, but not more than some twenty men followed him, the remainder had all turned back. A man in Hákon's troop shot at him, hitting him in the throat. Grégóriús fell there and the twenty men with him, and that was the end of his life. It was everybody's opinion that he had been the greatest chieftain among the landed-men of Norway in the memory of men then living, and that he was the man best disposed to us Icelanders ever since the passing of King Eystein the Elder. His body was brought up to Hofund and buried in Gimsey³ at the nunnery there. At that time, Baugeith, Grégóriús' sister, was abbess there.

Chapter 15. King Ingi Vows to Avenge Grégóriús

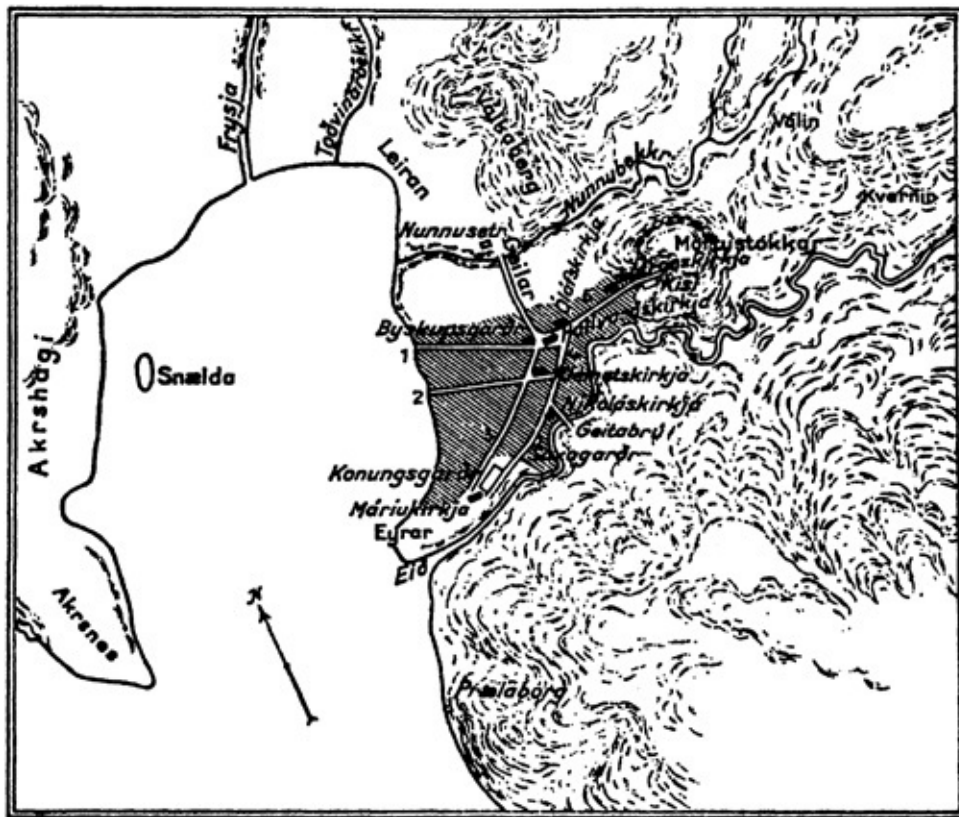
Two king's stewards were sent to Ósló with the news of what had happened. And when they arrived there, they requested to speak with the king. He asked what news they had to tell him. "The death of Grégóriús Dagsson," they said.

"How did such a calamity come about?" asked the king. They told him. The king answered, "Then those prevailed who had little experience." It is told that he was so affected that he cried like a child. And when he had regained his composure, he said this, "I had wanted to join Grégóriús as soon as I had heard of the slaying of Halldór, because I thought for certain that he would not remain inactive long before proceeding to avenge Halldór. But these people here considered that nothing was as important as this Yule banquet and that nothing ought to interrupt it. Because I know for sure that if I had been there, they would have proceeded with greater circumspection, or else Grégóriús and I would have gone to one and the same banquet.¹ There now has passed away the man who has done most for me and has kept the land together for me. Until now I had thought that death would not separate us for long. Now I shall do my utmost to proceed against Hákon and his band, and then one of two things will happen: either I shall fall or else triumph over Hákon and his men. Nor is a man like Grégóriús avenged sufficiently, even though all of them perish." Somebody made answer and said it would not be hard to find them, that they meant to encounter him here.

Kristín, the daughter of King Sigurth and first cousin of Ingi resided in Ósló at that time. The king learned that she intended to leave the town. He sent a messenger to inquire why she wanted to do so. She said she thought there was too much commotion there and that it was not a place for women to remain in. The king requested her not to depart. "If we are successful, as I believe, you will be safe here; but if I fall, my friends will not be able to attend to my body. And then you shall ask to be permitted to do so. And in so doing you will repay me for having treated you kindly."

Chapter 16. Hákon's Army Approaches Ósló

1161 On the evening of Saint Blasius' Mass [February 3rd] the information was brought to King Ingi that Hákon could be expected to arrive before the town. Then King Ingi by trumpet signal called together his troops out of the town, and when counted by tallies there were nearly forty hundred [4800] men. The king ordered the battle array to be long and not more than five men deep. Then some spoke to the king, advising him not to take part in the fighting, that there was much at stake if he did—"but let your brother Orm head the army."



- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Byskupsalmenningr | 4 Eystra stræti |
| 2 Klémetskirkjua | 5 Gøtur |
| 3 Vestra stræti | |

OSLO um 1200

Ósló. From *Íslensk Fornrit*, Vol. 28. Courtesy of Hið Íslensk Fornritafélag, Reykjavík.

The king replied: "If Grégóriús were alive and here, and I had fallen and he had to avenge me, I don't think he would go into hiding, but would take part in

the battle. And though I be less fit [for fighting] than he was, because of my disabilities, I shall be no less willing to fight than he; and don't think for a moment that I shall not be in the battle."

It is told that Gunnhild, who had been the wife of Símun and Hákon's foster mother, had a sorceress sit by a crossroads and conjure spirits to have Hákon win the victory, and it was foretold that they must fight against Ingi at night, but never in daytime, and that they might have success then. Thórdís Skeggja was the name of the woman who is said to have practiced sorcery to procure victory for Hákon, but I cannot vouch for that.

Símun Skálp had gone into town and lain down to sleep when the battle cry waked him. But as night wore on the information came to King Ingi that Hákon and his army were approaching on the ice, for the fjord was frozen all the way from the town to the island of Hofuthey [Main Island].¹

Chapter 17. King Ingi Refuses to Flee

King Ingi and his army then went out upon the ice and he placed his battle array in front of the town. Símun Skálp was in the wing which extended to Thrælaborg; and in the wing which was based on Nunnusetr, there were Guthröth, king over the Hebrides, who was the son of Óláf Klíning, and Jón, the son of Svein Bergthórsson Bukk. And when Hákon approached the battle lines of King Ingi, both armies raised the war cry. Both Guthröth and Jón made signs to Hákon's force, letting them know where they stood. Thereupon Hákon's men turned toward them, and Guthröth's troops promptly fled—they numbered nearly fifteen hundred [1800] men. And Jón and a large force with him went over to Hákon and fought together with them. King Ingi was told that. He said, "There is a great difference between my friends. Never would Grégóriús have done that while he lived."

Then the king was advised by some to mount a horse, to leave the battle, and ride to the Raumaríki District. "There you will find plenty of men even today."

"I have no desire to do so," said the king. "I have often heard you say, and I think there was truth in it, that Eystein, my brother, was little favored by fortune, once he took to flight, and he was well equipped with the qualities that adorn a king. Now it is easy to see how, with my disability, I shall have little success, if I do what caused him so much trouble, considering the difference between us in health and strength in every respect. I was two years old when I was chosen to be king in Norway, and now I am fully twenty-five. It seems to me I have had more difficulties and responsibilities in my kingship than pleasure and ease. I have had many battles, sometimes with a bigger force [at my command], sometimes with a smaller one. I have been most fortunate in that I never had to flee. May God dispose of my life, how long it shall last; but I shall never take to flight."

Chapter 18. King Ingi Falls in Battle

Now when Jón and his followers had broken the battle array of King Ingi, the men there and many in positions near them, fled, so that the ranks broke and fell into disorder, and then Hákon's troops attacked strongly. By that time it was almost dawn. Then an attack was made on the standard of King Ingi, and in this charge fell King Ingi; but Orm, his brother, kept up the battle. Then many fled up into the town. Twice after the fall of the king, Orm went up into the town to encourage the troops, and both times he returned onto the ice, keeping up the battle. Then Hákon and his men attacked the wing headed by Símun Skálp, and in this charge there fell of Ingi's force Guthbrand Skáfhoggsson, the brother-in-law of the king; but Símun Skálp and Hallvarth Hikri were pitted against each other and battled with their troops and gradually drifted up to Thrælaborg. In this charge both Símun and Hallvarth fell.

Orm, the king's brother, made a praiseworthy stand, yet in the end had to flee. That same winter Orm had been betrothed to Rogna, daughter of Níkolás Mási. Before, she had been the wife of King Eystein Haraldsson, and the marriage was to be celebrated the Sunday after. Saint Blasius' Mass was on a Friday. Orm fled to Sweden to his brother Magnús, who ruled there at that time. Their brother, Rognvald, had an earldom there. They were the sons of Ingiríth and Heinrek the Halt. He was the son of Svein Sveinsson, king of Denmark.

Kristín Kingsdaughter¹ tended to King Ingi's body, and he was interred in the stone wall on the south side of Saint Hallvarth's Church, outside the choir. He had then been king for twenty-five years. In that battle many fell on both sides, yet many more of Ingi's men. On Hákon's side, Árni Fríreksson was among the casualties. Hákon and his men ate up the marriage feast and took an immense amount of booty besides.

Chapter 19. Kristín Has a Spy Listen to Hákon's Council

Thereupon King Hákon subjected all the country to his rule, putting his men into all districts and likewise the towns. King Hákon and his followers held their meetings in Saint Hallvarth's Church when discussing the government of the country. Kristín Kingsdaughter gave money to the priest who had charge of the church keys, to conceal one of her men in the church so he could listen to what Hákon and his followers talked about. And when she got to know what their plans were she sent word to Erling Skakki in Bergen, her husband, never to trust them.

Chapter 20. King Óláf's Sword Hneitir Is Given to His Church in Miklagarth

As was written before, at the Battle of Stiklarstathir King Óláf when he was wounded had cast away his sword Hneitir. Now a certain man, of Swedish origin, had broken his own sword and picked up the sword Hneitir and fought with it. That man escaped from the battle and, together with other fugitives, got back to Sweden and returned to his farm. He had the sword in his possession all his life, and after him, his son; and then one after the other of his kinsfolk had it. And whoever handed it on to another told the name of the sword and whence it came.

Now long afterward, in the days of Kirjalax,¹ the Emperor of Miklagarth, there were numerous troops of Varangians in that city. It happened, one summer, when the emperor was on some warlike expedition, that the troops slept in their tents, with the Varangians keeping watch and guarding the king. They lay on the ground outside the camp. Between them, they divided the night into watches, and those men who had had the watch lay down to sleep. All were fully armed. It was their custom that everyone who lay down to sleep had his helmet on his head, his shield over him, and the sword under his head, with his right hand resting on its hilt. One of their comrades who by lot had had the watch during the last part of the night, awoke at dawn, and found his sword gone. But when he searched for it he saw it lying far from him on the ground. He got up and fetched it, thinking that his companions who had had the watch, might have played a practical joke on him by luring it from him. But that they denied. The same occurred three nights in succession. Then he himself marvelled greatly, and so did others who had seen it or had heard of it, and he was asked what that might signify. Then he told them that the sword was called Hneitir and had belonged to Saint Óláf and had been wielded by him in the Battle of Stiklarstathir, and he also related what had happened with the sword afterwards. In time, this was told to King Kirjalax. He had the possessor of that sword called to his presence and gave him gold for tenfold the value of the sword. The king had the sword carried to Saint Óláf's Church which is maintained by the Varangians and hung it up above the altar. Eindrithi the Young was in Miklagarth at the time these events came to pass. He related them in Norway, according to the testimony of Einar Skúlason in the *drápa*² which he composed about Holy King Óláf, where this occurrence is mentioned.

Chapter 21. Saint Óláf Gives Victory to the Varangians

The following happened in Greece, the time King Kirjalax ruled there and was on an expedition against Blokumannaland [Walachia]. When he arrived at the Pézína Plains,¹ a heathen king advanced against him with an irresistible host. They had with them a company of horsemen, and huge wagons with embrasures on top. And when they prepared their night quarters, they drew up their wagons, one beside the other, around their tents, and dug a large moat outside of that, so that altogether it made a strong fortification like a stronghold. The heathen king was blind. And when the Greek king arrived the heathens drew up their battle array on the plain outside the rampart of chariots, and the Greeks drew up theirs confronting them. They rode one against the other and fought, and the outcome was unfortunate for the Greeks. They fled, after losing many men, and the heathens won the victory.

Then the king drew up an array of Franks and Flemings, and they rode against the heathens and fought them, and they fared like the former, they lost many killed, and all fled who escaped from the battle. Then the king of the Greeks grew wroth with his warriors, but they answered him, asking him to use the Varangians, his wine bibbers. The king replied that he did not want to ruin his most precious troops by pitting a few men, though brave, against such a large army.

Then Thórir Helsing, who at that time commanded the Varangians, made this answer to the king: “Even though there were burning fire before us, yet I and my troops would leap into it if I were sure that it would procure peace for you, sir king.”

The king replied, “Pray then to Saint Óláf, your king, to aid you and give you victory.”

The Varangians numbered four hundred and fifty [540] men. They made a solemn vow, promising to erect a church in Miklagarth, at their own expense and with the support of good men, and have that church dedicated to the honor and glory of Holy King Óláf.

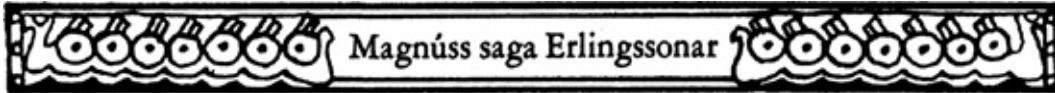
Thereupon the Varangians ran forward on the plain, and when the heathens saw that, they told their king that still another force of the Greek king was advancing—“and,” they said, “this is but a handful of men.”

Then their king said, “Who is that princely man riding on a white horse in front of their band?”

“We do not see him ” they said

we do not see him," they said.

There was such a great difference in the numbers between the two hosts that sixty heathens fought against one Christian, but none the less the Varangians most gallantly advanced to do battle. But as soon as they met, a fear and terror descended upon the heathen host so that they took to flight immediately, and the Varangians pursued them, quickly slaying a great multitude. But when the Greeks and Franks, who before had fled from the heathens, saw that, they joined in the pursuit with them. By that time the Varangians had gotten into the fortification made by the wagons, and then there ensued a great carnage. And during the flight of the heathens, the heathen king was captured and brought along by the Varangians. Then the Christians captured the tents of the heathens and the rampart of wagons.



The Saga of Magnús Erlingsson

Chapter 1. Erling Skakki Assumes Leadership

After Erling had ascertained what the plans of Hákon and his followers were, he sent word to all chieftains whom he knew to have been trusty friends of King Ingi, also to the body of his followers and retainers who had escaped, and to Grégóriús' housecarls, and set a time for their meeting. And when they came together and had held a council they agreed at once that they should keep together, and they bound themselves with fast agreements to stick to that. Then they debated whom they should choose to be king. Erling Skakki spoke and inquired whether the chieftains and other landed-men were agreeable to electing for king the son of Símun Skálp, who was also the son of King Harald Gilli's daughter and to have Jón Hallkelsson head their forces. Jón declined. Then they asked Níkolás Skjaldvararson, the sister's son of King Magnús Barelegs, if he wished to be leader of their forces. He answered to this effect, that it would be his advice to elect as king a person descended from the royal house, and to let that man who had the necessary qualifications for that task be leader of their forces, because then it would be easier to collect an army. They inquired of Árni, the husband of Queen Ingiríth, if he was agreeable to have one of his sons, brothers of King Ingi, elected king. He answered that the son of Kristín, and daughter's son of King Sigurth, was by birth best entitled to be king in Norway. "And," he said, "he will have with him, for administering the country, a man who is in duty bound to be counsellor both for him and the kingdom; and that is his father Erling, a man wise, determined, much tested in battle, and an excellent ruler. Nor will he fail in this business if [only] luck is on his side."

Many were well agreed with this proposal. Erling made this reply: "It would seem to me that most of the men who have been approached about this matter are unwilling to undertake this responsibility. There seems to me an equal chance, now that we engage in this business, whether they that would hazard to lead our forces will also achieve royal dignity; or whether matters will turn out so—as has been the case with many who have engaged in such risky business—that through it they have lost, both all their possessions and even their lives. But if success should crown this undertaking, then perchance there may be those who would like to have had this opportunity [to make good]. And then he who has ventured to undergo the risk must take strong precautions against incurring the opposition or enmity of those who now go along in this action."

All promised to join the league in complete good faith. Erling said [further], "I will say this of myself, that I would almost prefer death to being subservient to Hákon. And although this plan of ours seems to me extremely risky, yet would I

rather take the chance of following your judgment. I shall take upon myself the leadership of our forces if that is the wish and desire of you all, and if you will promise upon your oath to stick to this agreement.” All were agreed, and it was decided at that meeting to elect Magnús Erlingsson king. Thereupon they summoned an assembly in the town [of Bergen], and at this assembly Magnús was elected king over all the land. At that time he was five years old. Then all present who had been followers of King Ingi, swore him allegiance, and each of them retained the same position and title he had had under King Ingi.

Chapter 2. Erling Seeks the Help of King Valdamar

Erling Skakki prepared for his expedition by mustering ships, and took along with him King Magnús and all those retainers [of Ingi] who were there. With him were Árni, Queen Ingiríth's husband, and Ingiríth herself, the mother of King Ingi; also, her two sons. Also, Jón Kútiza, son of Sigurth Stork, the housecarls of Erling, and likewise those who had been the housecarls of Grégóriús. Altogether they had ten ships. They sailed south to Denmark and sought out King Valdamar and Búriz Heinreksson, brother of King Ingi. King Valdamar¹ was a close kin of King Magnús. Ingilborg, King Valdamar's mother, and Málmfríth the mother of Kristín, the mother of King Magnús, were sisters, being the daughters of King Harald of Garthar in the east. He was the son of Valdamar Jarizleifsson. King Valdamar received them well, and he and Erling spent a long time together in meetings and making plans, the upshot of which was that King Valdamar was to lend King Magnús all the support from Denmark which he would need to take and to maintain possession of Norway, against Valdamar's obtaining that dominion in Norway which his earlier kinsmen, Harald Gormsson and Svein Forkbeard had had; that is, all of Vík up to Rýgjarbit. This agreement was confirmed by oaths and special covenants. Thereupon Erling and his fleet made ready to leave Denmark and sailed from Vendilskagi [the Skaw].

Chapter 3. Erling Attacks the Town of Túnsberg

1161 In the spring immediately after Easter King Hákon proceeded north to Trondheim. He was then in possession of all the ships King Ingi had owned. Hákon held an assembly in Kaupang and was accepted as king of the whole country. He appointed Sigurth of Reyр earl and gave him an earldom.

Thereupon Hákon and his army returned south and all the way east to Vík. The king sailed to Túnsberg and sent Earl Sigurth to Konungahella to defend the land with part of the army, in case Erling should come from the south.

Erling and his fleet arrived at Agthir and immediately sailed north to Bergen. There they killed Árni Bríghitharskalli, a bailiff of King Hákon, then put about to the east from there in order to encounter King Hákon. Earl Sigurth had not become aware of Erling's coming from the south and remained in the east at the [Gaut Elf] River, while King Hákon was at Túnsberg. Erling moored his ships at Hrossaness,¹ remaining there several days. King Hákon made ready for the battle in the town [of Túnsberg]. Erling moved up to the town. They took a merchant ship, loaded it with wood and straw and set fire to it. The wind blew toward the town, and the merchant ship drifted up to the town. Erling had two cables fastened to the merchant ship and secured to two skiffs that were rowed in the same direction as the ship drifted. But when the burning ship had approached close to the town, the men rowing the skiffs held it by the cables so it would not set the town on fire. The smoke drifted so thickly toward the town that the men on the piers, where King Hákon had arrayed his troops, could not see anything. Thereupon Erling brought up all his fleet from windward of the fire and had his men shoot at the troops on the piers.

Now when the townsmen saw that the fire approached their houses and many were wounded by arrow shots, they held a council and sent the priest Hróald Longspeech to ask Erling for quarter for themselves and the town. And as soon as Hróald informed them that quarter would be given they forsook the ranks of King Hákon's men. But when the force of townsmen had left, the ranks on the piers were thinned out. Then some of King Hákon's men encouraged them to make a stand, but Onund Símunarson, who then commanded the greater part of the troops, said, "I will not fight to help Earl Sigurth gain power, seeing that he is not present himself." Then Onund took to flight, as did all the army, together with the king, and escaped into the country. Very many of Hákon's men fell there. About these events the following verse was composed:

599. Not e'er for the earl, said (231.)
Onund, would he battle,
from the south ere Sigurth
sailed with all his housecarls.
Briskly debarked Magnús'
brave men up the town street,
while King Hákon's hawks² as
hurriedly absconded.

Thorbjorn Skakkaskáld puts it this way:

600. Readily, roomy Túnsberg, (232.)
ruler, within, didst thou—
were reddened beaks of ravenous
ravens—gain the victory.
Townsmen feared the flight of
flashing, deadly arrows,
feared the fire and eke the
fierce bow-bending king's men.

King Hákon took the mountain road to Trondheim, and when Earl Sigurth learned that, he sailed north outside the skerries with all the ships he could procure, to join him.

Chapter 4. Hákon Escapes to Trondheim

Erling Skakki captured all the ships in Túnsberg which had made up King Hákon's fleet, among them the one named Bækisúthin, which King Ingi had possessed. Thereupon he proceeded to subject to Magnús the whole District of Vík as well as all the districts to the north of it, wherever he went; and during the winter he resided in Bergen. Then Erling had Ingibjorn Sipil executed. He was a landed-man of King Hákon in the Fjord District to the north. King Hákon remained in Trondheim during the winter, but in the spring following he summoned a levy and prepared to proceed south against Erling. At that
1162 time there were in his company Earl Sigurth, Jón Sveinsson, Eindrithi the Young, Onund Símunarson, Philippús Petrsson, Philippús Gyrtarson, Rognvald Kunta, Sigurth Cape, Sigurth Doublet, Frírek Køena, Áskel of Forland, Thorbjorn, the son of Gunnar the Treasurer, and Strath-Bjarni.

Chapter 5. Erling Spreads the Rumor that He Will Stay in Bergen

Erling was in Bergen with a large army. He took the measure of putting an embargo on all merchant ships intending to sail north to Kaupang, because he thought that, with ships sailing between the towns, Hákon might too soon find out about his purpose [and] that the townspeople of Bergen would find it more advantageous to obtain the wares on these ships, even though they bought them more cheaply from the owners than they [the owners] might think reasonable, “rather than to have them fall into the hands of our enemies and opponents, to be of use to them.” Now ships were gathered in the town, because many arrived every day and none left. Then Erling ordered his lightest ships to be drawn ashore and had the rumor spread that he intended to stay there and defend himself with the support of his friends and kinsmen.

But on a certain day Erling summoned the skippers to a meeting and there gave permission to all skippers of merchantmen to depart to wherever they wished. Now as soon as the men in command of the merchant ships lying there, all ready to depart with their wares, were given permission by Erling to leave—some had bought goods, some had other errands, and there was a breeze favorable for sailing north along the land—all those ready to sail had left before early afternoon, those with the fastest ships pushing on, each vying with the other. And when this flotilla arrived in Mœr to the north, they encountered King Hákon’s fleet. He himself was there, gathering troops and getting his ships ready, summoning landed-men and the levies. For a long time he had not had news from Bergen, but now he learned one and the same thing from all the ships coming from the south, which was that Erling had drawn his ships up on land in Bergen and that they would have to find him there. They told him that Erling had a large army there.

From there, Hákon sailed to Véey Island and sent Earl Sigurth and Onund Símunarson into the Raums Dale District to recruit for him men and ships. And likewise he sent men into both North and South Mœr. And after King Hákon had remained a few days in the market town [of Véey], he put out again, sailing somewhat farther to the south, thinking that in so doing they could accomplish their business more speedily and that auxiliary troops would join him faster.

It was on Sunday that Erling had given the merchantmen permission to leave from Bergen, and on Tuesday, as soon as the matins had been sung, a signal was given by the trumpet on the royal ship summoning both troops and townsmen to launch the ships that previously had been pulled ashore. Erling called a meeting with his troops and the levied men and informed them of his intentions. He

named the men to captain the ships and had the list read to those enrolled on the royal ship. The meeting ended with Erling ordering everyone to betake himself to the station in the ships assigned to him. He announced that any person remaining behind in the town when his ship Bækisúthin put out should forfeit life or limbs. Orm, the king's brother, sailed at once in the evening, and most other vessels had been set afloat before then.

Chapter 6. King Hákon's Fleet Is Taken by Surprise

On Wednesday, before matins had been sung in the town, Erling departed with all the fleet. They had twenty-one ships. There was a brisk breeze from the south along the coast. Erling had with him his son Magnús. Many landed-men were along, and they had a picked crew. When Erling was sailing north, outside the Fjord District, he sent a skiff from the inner passage to the estate of Jón Hallkelsson and had them capture Níkolás, the son of Símun Skálp and Mária, the daughter of Harald Gilli, and they brought him with them out to the fleet, where he was put on the royal ship. Friday, early at dawn, they sailed into Steinavág Bay.

King Hákon was anchored then in the harbor called——, ¹ with fourteen ships. He himself and his men had gone up on the island to divert themselves, and his landed-men were sitting on a certain rise. They saw a boat rowing toward the island from the south. Two men were in it. They bent down to the keel in rowing and rowed with all their might; and when they made land they did not fasten the boat but took to their heels. Now when the chieftains saw that they said to each other that these men might be able to give them some information. They got up and went toward them. And as they came upon them, Onund Símunarson asked them, “Can you perhaps tell us about Erling Skakki, running as you do?”

Then the man who first caught his breath said, “Here comes Erling sailing from the south toward you with twenty ships or thereabouts, and many of them plenty large, and you may soon see their sails.”

Then Eindrithi the Young said, “Too close to the nose,’ said the fellow when he was shot in the eye.” Then they hurried to the men who were disporting themselves; and forthwith the trumpet was blown and the battle call sounded for all the troops to go on board the fastest they could. It was the time of the day when the meal was about ready. All headed toward the ships. Then everyone boarded the ship nearest to him, so that the crews were unevenly divided. They took to the oars, some raising the platforms, ² and steered north to Véey Island, because they expected to find many auxiliaries from the townsfolk there.

Chapter 7. King Hákon Is Vanquished and Slain

Soon they saw the sails of Erling's fleet, and Erling's men, theirs. Eindrithi the Young had the ship called Draglaun, a large warship of broad beam. It lacked a sufficient crew, because those who had been on it before had rushed aboard other ships. It was the slowest in Hákon's fleet. And when Eindrithi was off the island of Sekk, the ship Bækisúthin which Erling steered came up with it and made fast to it. But Hákon had barely arrived at Véey Island when they heard blasts of trumpets, because the ships nearest to Eindrithi's turned around, wanting to help him, and both sides gave battle just as opportunity offered. Many sails fell athwart the ships. They were not fastened together and lay side by side. This battle did not last long before disorder broke out on King Hákon's ship. Some fell; some leapt overboard. Hákon cast a grey cloak over himself and leapt onto another ship. But he had not been there long before he realized that he had landed among his enemies, and when he considered the situation and saw none of his men or ships close by, he boarded Bækisúthin and went forward to the forecastlemen and asked for quarter, and the forecastlemen accepted him among themselves and gave him quarter.

In this fray many men had fallen, but more on the side of Hákon. On the ship Bækisúthin Níkolás, the son of Símun Skálp was among the dead, and his slaying was attributed to Erling's men themselves.

After that, there was a lull in the fighting, and the ships separated from one another. Then Erling was told that King Hákon was on his ship and that his forecastlemen had taken him into their company and threatened to defend him. Erling sent a man forward, bidding him tell the forecastlemen to take care that Hákon did not get away; also that he had no objection to giving the king quarter if the chieftains so advised, and if an agreement was reached between the two parties. His forecastle guard as a man called out hailing his decision.

Thereupon Erling had the trumpets blown furiously, bidding his men attack the ships which had not yet been cleared of their crews, saying that they never would have a better chance to avenge King Ingi. Then all raised the battle cry, each urging on the other, and went to the attack. In this tumult King Hákon received a mortal wound. Now when his men became aware of his fall they rowed hard to the attack. They discarded their shields and hewed with both hands, not caring for their lives. This foolhardiness cost them dear, because Erling's men could see where they were exposed. A great part of King Hákon's troops fell there. The chief cause for that was that the odds were altogether on

Erling's side; also, Hákon's men did not shield themselves. But there was no use for Hákon's men to ask for quarter, excepting those whom some chieftain or other took under his protection and ransomed. The following fell in Hákon's army: Sigurth Cape, Sigurth Doublet, Rognvald Kunta. However, some ships escaped, the crews rowing into the fjords and thus saving their lives. The body of King Hákon was brought to Raums Dale and interred there. [Later] King Sverri, his brother,¹ had King Hákon's body moved north to Kaupang and entombed in the stone wall in Christ Church, on the south side of the choir.

Chapter 8. King Hákon's Appearance and Character

Sigurth, Eindrithi the Young, Onund Símunarson, Frírek the Keen, and still other chieftains held their troops together. They left their ships in Raums Dale, and from there journeyed to the Uppland District. Erling Skakki and King Magnús with their fleet proceeded north to Kaupang, subduing all the country to their overlordship wherever they came. Then Erling summoned the Eyrathing Assembly, and there Magnús was elected king over all Norway. Erling remained there but a short time as he did not trust the people of Trondheim to be loyal to him and his son. Magnús was now considered king over all the land.

King Hákon was rather handsome, well-grown, tall and slender. He was very broadshouldered, for which reason his followers called him Hákon the Broadshouldered. Because he was still young, other chieftains aided him in the government. He was merry and friendly in his speech, playful, and had a youthful disposition. He was popular among the people.

Chapter 9. Sigurth Sigurtharson Is Proclaimed King

Markús of Skóg was the name of a man from the Uppland District, a kinsman of Earl Sigurth. Markús had brought up the son of King Sigurth, who was also called Sigurth. Later, on the advice of Earl Sigurth and other chieftains who had followed King Hákon, this Sigurth was by the people of Uppland proclaimed king. These chieftains still had a considerable force, and this force often proceeded in two parts, the king and Markús keeping to the less exposed locations, while Earl Sigurth and other chieftains with their troops stayed where there was more danger. Their troops kept mostly to the Uppland districts, though sometimes they came down to Vík.

Erling Skakki always had with him his son Magnús. He had command of all the fleet and took charge of the defence of the land. He resided for some time in Bergen during the fall, and journeyed from there east to Vík, settling in Túnsberg, which he prepared to use as winter quarters; and round about Vík he collected the taxes and tribute owing to the king. Also he kept a large and picked force about him. But Earl Sigurth, having but a small part of the land to draw on and a large force of men, soon ran out of money, and where there were no other chieftains near, he laid his hands on properties in a most lawless fashion, some by unfounded charges, some by open robbery.

Chapter 10. The Lawlessness of Markús' Band Is Resented

At that time the dominion of Norway flourished greatly. The farmers were rich and powerful and unused to tyranny and lawlessness on the part of [roving] bands. It was quickly noised abroad and much was made of it when such robberies occurred. The people of Vík were altogether the friends of Magnús and Erling, for the most part because of the popularity of King Ingi Haraldsson, the people of that district having always served under his banner. Erling had a watch set around the town, with twelve men standing on guard every night. He always met with the farmers, and there was frequent mention of the raids of Sigurth's men; and what with the representations of Erling and other men in his army, there arose a great clamor among the farmers to the effect that it would be fortunate if a halt were called to the doings of this band. Áрни, husband of Queen Ingiríth, made a long speech about this matter, concluding it with harsh words, urging all those present at the assembly, whether enlisted men, farmers, or townsmen, to pass a resolution, according to law, condemning Earl Sigurth and all his followers to hell, both the living and the dead. And owing to the excited feelings and the vehemence of the people, all consented to this. This unheard of decision was made and confirmed according to the laws decreeing how to proceed with judgments at assemblies. Hróald Longspeech, who was a man of great eloquence, talked about the same matter, and largely concurred in
1163 what had been said before. Erling gave a banquet in Túnsberg at Yuletide, and paid off his men at Candlemas [February 2nd].

Chapter 11. Philippús Is Slain by Sigurth's Men

Earl Sigurth with a picked troop went about Vík, and many swore allegiance to him, being overborne by superior force, and many paid money. Thus he went up and down the countryside, appearing in various places. There were some among his troop who secretly sought quarter from Erling; and this reply was made to them, that all who requested it would be given quarter, but only those would be given permission to stay in the country who had not committed serious offences against him. But when the men in Sigurth's troop heard that they would not be allowed to stay in the country, that kept the troop together, because there were many who knew themselves guilty of having committed grave misdeeds against Erling. Philippús Gyrtharson came to terms with Erling, regained possession of his properties, and returned to his estates. A short time later, Sigurth's men came upon him and killed him. Many skirmishes took place between the two parties, with pursuits and manslaughter, but none were put down in writing except where chieftains were concerned.

Chapter 12. Erling Counsels His Men to Wait for Daybreak

Toward the beginning of the Lenten Season, the information came to Erling that Earl Sigurth intended to attack him—he was rumored to be now here, now there, sometimes nearby, sometimes far away. Erling sent out spies to learn where he might be expected, and every night by trumpet signal he summoned his troops out of the town. Several nights they lay gathered there, with all the troops assigned their position. Then Erling was informed that Earl Sigurth and his forces were close by at Ré. Thereupon Erling started from the town, and had with him all the townsmen who could bear arms and had weapons, also merchants, excepting the twelve men whom he left behind to guard the town. He

1163 left the town on Tuesday during the second week of Lent [February 19th], in the afternoon, and every man carried provisions for two days.

They travelled during the night, being delayed in moving the troops out of the town. There was one horse and one shield for every two men. When the troops were counted their number was found to be about thirteen hundred [1560]. And when the men sent out to reconnoiter returned, Erling was told that Earl Sigurth was at Ré on the farm called Hrafnssness, with five hundred [600] men.

Then Erling had his troops called together and gave them the information he had received. All urged him to make haste and surround them in the farm or else at once attack them in the night. Erling spoke as follows: “It seems likely that we shall soon encounter Earl Sigurth. There are in that band also many others whose deeds we may well remember, they being the ones who cut down King Ingi and many others of our friends whom it would take long to enumerate. They did that with the aid of the devil, with magic, and with villainous tricks; because it is written in our laws and statutes that it shall be accounted a rank villainy or murder if men kill one another at night. Now this band, following the counsel of warlocks, has sought its fortune at nighttime, and not when the sun is shining. And with such maneuvers they have been victorious and have overcome and laid low such a chieftain [as Philippús]. Now we have often said and shown how disreputable this habit of theirs seems to us, going to battle at night. For that reason we shall rather follow the example of those chieftains we know better and whom it seems wiser to follow; which is, to do battle in bright daylight and with a regular battle array, rather than to steal on sleeping men at night. We have a good army to fight them, though not a larger one than they. We shall bide daylight and hold together our ranks, in case they want to attack us.”

Thereupon all the troops sat down. Some tore up some haystacks to make

bedding, some sat on their shields and waited for the dawn. The weather was chilly, with sleet and rain.

Chapter 13. The Opposing Armies Take Up Positions

Earl Sigurth had just received information about the foe when Erling's force was close by. His men got up and armed themselves, but were uncertain how large an army Erling had. Some wanted to flee, but most of them wanted to remain. Earl Sigurth was a resourceful man, and eloquent, but not very daring. He too was for fleeing, which brought him much reproach from his followers.

Now when day dawned both parties began to array themselves in battle formation. Earl Sigurth set up his ranks on a certain hill above the bridge, between it and the farm. A small creek runs there, and Erling placed his men on the other side of the creek. Behind their lines were stationed men on horseback, well-armed. They had the king among them. Earl Sigurth's men saw that the odds in numbers would be greatly against them and said it would be advisable to take to the forest. The earl made this answer: "You say I have no courage, but now we shall test that. Let everyone take care that he does not flee or flinch before I do. We have a good defence here, let them then cross the bridge, and as soon as their standard is carried over it, let us fall upon them from above, and now let no one desert the others."

Earl Sigurth wore a brown kirtle and a red cloak with the tails tucked in, and had on shoes of reindeer hide. He was armed with a shield and a sword called Bastard. The earl said, "God knows, rather than have much gold, I would like to deal Erling Skakki a blow with Bastard."

Chapter 14. Earl Sigurth Is Defeated and Slain

Erling Skakki's troops wanted to advance to the bridge, but he said they should turn up along the creek. "This creek is small and presents no difficulty, because there is flat land on either bank." They did so. The earl's troops went along the ridge opposite Erling's force. But when the ridge ended and levelled off, and it thus was easy to ford the creek, Erling bade his men sing the Lord's Prayer and pray that they might be victors who had the right on their side. Then all sang the Kyrie Eleison [Lord, be merciful] aloud and beat on their shields with their swords. Hearing this din, some three hundred [360] of Sigurth's men took to flight. Erling and his men forded the creek, and Earl Sigurth's men raised their battle cry, but nothing came of their rushing down the hill at Erling's ranks, and the battle started in front of the ridge. First, spears were hurled, then right away they fought at close quarters. The earl's banner fell back, so that Erling and his men got up on the slope of the hill. It was not long before the earl's men fled into the woods which lay in their rear. Earl Sigurth was told that, and his men begged him to flee. He answered, "Forward now whilst we may." Then they advanced most boldly, wielding their swords with both hands. In this charge, Earl Sigurth fell, and also Jón Sveinsson, with nearly sixty men. Erling's men suffered few losses and pursued the enemy to the woods. Then Erling mustered his troops and turned back. He came upon some of the king's thralls who were about to pull the clothes off Earl Sigurth. He had not yet altogether breathed his last, but was unconscious. He had stuck his sword into the scabbard lying by his side. Erling took it up and belabored the thralls with it, bidding them to be gone. Thereupon Erling returned with his force and settled in Túnsberg. Seven days after the earl's death, Erling's men captured Eindrithi the Young and slew him.



Erling and his men wade the river.

Chapter 15. Erling Pursues Markús' Band

When spring came, Markús of Skóg and his foster son Sigurth journeyed to Vík and procured some ships. And when Erling learned that he sailed east [south] after them and encountered them at Konungahella. Markús and his company fled onto the island of Hísing. There, the inhabitants of Hísing came down to the shore, making common cause with Markús and his men. Erling and his crew rowed to the land, but were shot at by Markús' men. Then Erling said to his men, "Let us capture their ships, but don't let us land to battle with the inhabitants. It is not easy to fight the men of Hísing, they are tough and thickheaded. They won't have this band [of Markús] with them for long, because Hísing is but a small land." So was done; they captured their ships and brought them over to Konungahella. Markús and his men retired to the Forest District [between Norway and Sweden], intending to make incursions from there. Both parties had men out to reconnoiter. Erling had many troops, summoning men from the country-side. Each party made forays on the other.

Chapter 16. Archbishop Eystein Demands Payment of Dues in Pure Silver

1161 Eystein, the son of Erling Himaldi, was chosen archbishop after the death of Archbishop Jón. Eystein was consecrated the same year as King Ingi fell. Now when Archbishop Eystein succeeded to the see, he was well-thought of by all the people. He was a most capable man and of noble lineage. The people of the Trondheim District gave him a good reception, because most of the leaders there were connected with him by kin or by other relationship, and all were close friends of his. He began negotiations with the farmers, mentioning first the establishment's need of funds, and also how much support it needed if he was to be maintained more suitably than before in the same measure as he was elevated higher than before, considering that now the see was established as an archbishopric. He requested the farmers to pay him in pure silver coin for fines due him. Before that, he was given current coin such as was paid the king for mulct. The difference between the two standards of money was that the pure silver coin which he demanded was worth twice as much as the other. And with the support of the kinsfolk and friends of the archbishop, as well as by his own urging, this was accepted; and it was decreed by law in all districts of Trondheim as well as in all the districts belonging to his archbishopric.

Chapter 17. Sigurth Sigurtharson Is Again Proclaimed King

When Sigurth and Markús had lost their ships in the [Gaut Elf] River and saw that they could not take Erling unawares, they turned back to the Uppland District and then marched over the mountains to Trondheim. They were well received there, and at the Eyrathing Assembly Sigurth was elected king. There, many sons of eminent men joined his force. They obtained ships, got them ready quickly, and toward summer sailed to Mœr, taking all royal taxes wherever they came. In Bergen there were set, for the defence of the realm, Níkolás Sigurtharson, Nokkvi Pálsson, and still other captains, as Thórólf Dryll, Thorbjorn the Treasurer, and many others. Markús and his fleet sailed south and heard that Erling's men had a great force in Bergen, so they sailed south outside the skerries. It was the talk of people that Markús and his men had favorable breezes that summer wheresoever they wished to sail.

Chapter 18. Markús and Sigurth Are Captured and Slain

As soon as Erling Skakki learned that Markús had marched north, he himself proceeded north to Vík and soon collected numerous troops and also had many and large ships. However, when he set out from Vík, he had contrary winds, and put in here and there in harbors all that summer. Now when Markús' fleet arrived east [south] at Listi he learned that Erling had a tremendous force in Vík, so he turned back north. And when they arrived in Horthaland, they planned to sail in to Bergen; but when they approached the town, Níkolás with his fleet rowed against them, with more and bigger ships. Then Markús saw no other way out but to row away southward. Some of his ships sailed out to sea, some to the sounds, some into the fjords. Markús himself and a part of his force sought refuge on an island called Skarpa. Níkolás and his men captured their ships and gave quarter to Jón Hallkelsson and a few others but slew most of them they got hold of. A few days later Eindrithi Heithafylja found Sigurth and Markús and brought them to Bergen. There, they beheaded Sigurth outside Grav Dale, and hanged Markús and another man on Hvarfsness.¹ That was at Michaelmas
1163 [September 29th]. Thereupon the band which had followed them dispersed.

Chapter 19. Erling Avenges Himself on the Men of Hísing

Frírek Kœna, Bjarni the Evil, Onund Símunarson, and Ornólf Skorpa had rowed out to sea with several ships, and kept outside the skerries, sailing east along the land. And wherever they touched land, they ransacked and killed the friends of Erling. But when Erling had learned of the execution of Markús and Sigurth he gave his landed-men and the men of the levy leave to depart home. He himself sailed with his force east across the Foldenfjord, for he had heard that Markús' men were there. He sailed to Konungahella, remaining there during the fall. In the first week of winter [the week following October 14th] he proceeded with a large force to the island of Hísing, and there demanded to have an assembly [with the inhabitants]. The people of Hísing complied and came to the assembly. Erling upbraided them for their having joined Markús' band and raised arms against him. Ozur, the most powerful of the farmers, spoke in their defense. The assembly lasted long, but finally the farmers gave Erling the right to pass judgment in the matter. He appointed a meeting with them after a week's time in the town and named fifteen of the farmers who were to appear there. And when they came, Erling passed sentence on them to pay a penalty of three hundred [360] head of cattle. The farmers returned home greatly put out.

A little while later, the river froze over and Erling's ships were ice-bound. Then the farmers held back the payment and gathered for a while [as though prepared to fight]. Erling got ready for the Yule banquet. But the men of Hísing had a joint drinking bout and kept their flock together. The night after the fifth day of Yule [December 29th], Erling marched to the island, surrounded
1163 the house of Ozur and burned him inside. Altogether he killed a hundred men and burned down three farms before returning to Konungahella. Then the farmers came to him and paid the penalty.

Chapter 20. Erling Captures the Remnants of Markús' Band

1164 Early in spring, Erling Skakki got ready his ships as soon as the condition of the ice allowed, and sailed from Konungahella. He had heard that some bands which had been part of Markús' force were harrying north in Vík. Erling reconnoitered where they were and went to search them out. He came upon them where they had anchored in a certain harbor. Onund Símunarson and Ornólf Skorpa escaped, but Frírek Kœna and Bjarni the Evil were captured and many of their men killed. Erling had Frírek lashed to an anchor and cast overboard. For this deed Erling earned much hate by the people of the Trondheim District, for Frírek was connected with the most eminent families there. Bjarni, Erling had hanged; and before his execution, Bjarni uttered the foulest indecencies, as was his wont. As says Thorbjorn Skakkaskáld:

601. East of the fjord, Erling (233.)
erstwhile to death did vikings—
many a man by Kœna
murdered lay—in East Fold.
An anchor fluke to Frírek
fastened was; and high up
above him, evil Bjarni's
body dangled from tree-limb.

Onund and Ornólf, with the men who had escaped, fled to Denmark, but sometimes came to Gautland or Vík.

Chapter 21. Erling and Archbishop Eystein Have High Words

Afterwards, Erling Skakki proceeded to Túnberg and dwelled there for a long time in spring. But when summer approached, he proceeded north [west] to Bergen. A great multitude of people was there at that time. There was the papal legate Stephanus from Rome and Archbishop Eystein, and other Norwegian bishops. There was also Bishop Brand, who was consecrated at that time to officiate in Iceland. There was also Jón Loptsson, a daughter's son of King Magnús Barelegs. At that time King Magnús [Erlingsson] and other kinsfolk of Jón acknowledged relationship to him.

Archbishop Eystein and Erling Skakki frequently conversed privately with one another. And one time in their conversation Erling asked, "Is it true, my lord, what people say, that you have increased the value of the dues owing to you from the farmers in the north of the land?"

The archbishop answered, "To be sure it is true that the farmers have conceded to me an increase in the value of the dues owing to me. They did so of their own accord and under no compulsion from me, and have by so doing increased God's glory and the wealth of the see."

Erling said, "Are these the laws of Holy King Ólaf, my lord, or have you proceeded somewhat more harshly than is warranted by the laws?"

The archbishop replied, "It is likely that Holy King Ólaf gave his laws so that he had the agreement and consent of all the people, but there is nothing said in them about forbidding to increase the rights of God."

Erling replied, "If you wish to increase your rights, then you will wish to help us to increase the king's rights as much."

The archbishop said, "You have increased even now amply the name and power of your son. And if I have unlawfully taken an increase in the value of the dues from the people of Trondheim, I consider it an even greater breach of the law that he is king over the land who is not a king's son. For that there is neither law nor parallel in this country."

Erling said, "At the time Magnús was chosen king of the dominion of Norway, that was done with your knowledge and consent, as well as with that of the other bishops in the land."

The archbishop said, "This you promised at the time, Erling, that if we gave our consent to Magnús being elected king, you were to strengthen God's rights in all places and with all your might."

“I do acknowledge,” said Erling, “that I promised to maintain God’s law as well as the laws of the land with all my, and the king’s, power. But now, instead of our accusing one the other of breach of promise, I consider it wiser that we both stick to our agreements. Do you strengthen King Magnús in his power, as you promised, and in return I shall strengthen yours in all matters profitable to you.”

Thereupon all conversation between them took a more amicable turn. Then Erling said, “If it is so that Magnús was not chosen king according to ancient custom in our land, then you can with your authority give him the crown according to God’s law and anoint him for the royal power. And though I be not king or of the royal race, yet most of the kings I remember did not know the laws and customs of the land as well as I. But King Magnús’ mother is a king’s daughter and lawfully begotten, and thus Magnús is a queen’s son and the son of a lawful wife. And if you will consecrate him king, then no one may later depose him. William the Bastard was not a king’s son, yet he was consecrated and crowned king of England, and the royal power has remained in his line in England, and all have been crowned. Svein Úlfsson of Denmark was not a king’s son, yet he was crowned king, and his sons after him, and each of his successors in that line was a crowned king. There is now in our land an archiepiscopal see. That is a great honor and a glory for our country. Let us increase its dignity even more with gifts, and let us have a crowned king as have Englishmen and Danes.”



King Magnús Erlingsson receives homage.

Later, the archbishop brought this matter up before the papal legate, and easily got him to agree with him. Following that, the archbishop called a meeting with the suffragan bishops and other clerics, explaining the matter to them, and all answered with one accord, declaring their agreement with what the archbishop desired; and all urged that the consecration be carried out, as soon as they understood that this was the archbishop's wish. Then everyone agreed to it.

Chapter 22. Magnús Is Crowned King by the Archbishop

Erling Skakki had a great banquet prepared in the great royal hall, which was hung with costly stuffs and tapestries and outfitted at very great expense. Both his following and all retainers were entertained there, with a great number of guests and many chieftains present. Magnús was then consecrated as
1164 king by Archbishop Eystein,¹ and at the coronation there were present five other bishops, the papal legate, and a multitude of clerics. Erling Skakki, together with twelve landed-men and the king swore oaths to obey the laws. And on the day on which the coronation took place, the king and Erling had as their guests the archbishop, the papal legate, and all the bishops, and that banquet was a most splendid one. Both father and son gave [the guests] many magnificent presents. At that time King Magnús was eight years old and had been king for three years.

Chapter 23. King Valdamar Reminds Erling of Their Agreement

Valdamar, the king of the Danes, now had learned the tidings from Norway that by this time Magnús was sole king. All other opposing forces in the country had, by that time, been dispersed. Then King Valdamar sent messengers with letters to King Magnús and Erling, reminding them of the special agreement which Erling had made with King Valdamar, as was written above, that King Valdamar should have possession of Vík west to Rýgjarbit if Magnús became sole king of Norway. But when the messengers appeared at Erling's court and showed Erling the letters of the Danish king and he understood the claims Valdamar made on Norway, he brought this matter up before other men with whom he was wont to confer, and they said with one accord that never should the Danes have a share of Norway, because everyone said that those times had been the worst in the land when the Danes had power over Norway. The messengers of the Danish king discussed their business with Erling, requesting him to come to a decision. Erling invited them to come east to Vík with him in the fall, saying that he would then arrive at a decision after he had spoken with the wisest men in Vík.

Chapter 24. The People of Vík Refuse to be Subjects of Denmark

In fall, Erling Skakki proceeded east to Vík and made his residence in Túnberg. He sent messengers to Borg and had them call together an assembly of four districts. Thereupon Erling proceeded to Borg with his following. And when the assembly was gathered, Erling spoke and told what agreements had been made with the Danish king at the time Erling and his friends had first gathered forces. “And I am willing,” he said, “to keep all the agreements we made at that time if that meets with your wishes and has the consent of you farmers, to be subject to the king of Denmark, rather than to the king who has been consecrated and crowned to govern this land.”

The farmers made answer to Erling, saying, “On no account will we be subjects of the Danish king while one of us men of Vík is alive.” Then the whole crowd tumultuously shouted and cried out and begged Erling not to break the oaths he had sworn before to all the people—“to defend your son’s land, and we shall all follow you.” And so the assembly dissolved.

Thereupon the emissaries of the Danish king returned south to Denmark and told about the outcome of their errand as it had turned out. The Danes heaped many reproaches on Erling and all Norwegians, saying that only evil was to be expected of them. The rumor spread that the Danish king would muster an army in spring in order to harry in Norway. In the fall, Erling journeyed north [west] to Bergen. He resided there during the winter and paid out his men.

Chapter 25. King Valdamar Suborns the People of Trondheim

That winter some Danes travelled over the mountains, alleging that—as frequently was the case—they wanted to keep vigil at the shrine of Holy King Óláf. But when they arrived in the District of Trondheim, they sought out many influential men and then revealed their errand, which was that the king of Denmark had sent them to seek their friendship and ask for their welcome if he came to the land; and that in return he promised to give them both power and money. Accompanying this message was the letter and the seal of the Danish king, as also the request that the yeomen should in return send their letter and seal. They did so, and most of them turned a favorable ear to the message of the Danish king. His emissaries returned east [south] as Lent wore on.

1165 Erling resided in Bergen, and as spring arrived his friends told him the rumor which they had heard from merchantmen who had arrived south from Trondheim, that the people there showed open enmity to him and that they had given notice at their assembly that if Erling ever came to Trondheim he would not round Agthaness alive. Erling said that these were false rumors and nonsense. He announced that he would sail south to Unarheim¹ for the assembly held there during Rogation Week [May 11th], and he ordered to be made ready a swift sailing ship of twenty rowers' benches, a skiff of fifteen rowers' benches, and also a merchant ship with provisions. And when these were ready, there arose a brisk wind from the south. On Tuesday during Rogation Week Erling had trumpet signals given that the crews were to repair to the ships, but the men were unwilling to leave the town and thought it was hard to pull against the wind. Erling put into Bishop's Harbor to the north. There Erling spoke to the men, "You complain bitterly to have to row against the wind. Now go ahead and raise the masts, hoist the sails, and let us proceed to the north." They did so, and sailed day and night to the north. On Wednesday in the evening they rounded Agthaness. Then they encountered a large assembly of ships—
1165 merchantmen, rowboats, and skiffs, with folks going [to the town] on Ascension Day [May 13th]—some went ahead of them, some followed. The townspeople for that reason paid no attention to the warships [coming in with them].

Chapter 26. Erling Mulcts the People of Trondheim

Erling Skakki arrived in the town at the time when matins were being said in Christ Church. He and his troops ran up into the town and they were told that Álf Hrothi, the son of Óttar Birting, a landed-man, was still at table, drinking with his followers. Erling fell upon them and killed him and most of his men. Few others were slain as most people had gone to church. That was in the night before Ascension. Early next morning Erling gave the signal for all the troops to assemble at Eyrar, and at this assembly Erling accused the people of Trondheim of treason against the king and himself, and named in particular Bárth Standali, Pál Andréásson, and Raza-Bárth—he was the king's treasurer for the town—and also many others. They replied, trying to clear themselves of the accusation.

Then arose Erling's chaplain, and held up many letters and seals, and asked them if they recognized their seals which that spring they had sent to the Danish king. And the letters were read aloud. There were present also, in Erling's company, those Danes who in winter had gone about [with these letters]. It was Erling who had got them to do that; and they spoke before the people the words of each of them. "Those were your words, Raza-Bárth, and you beat your breast. And out of your breast came all these machinations, to begin with."

Bárth replied, "Out of my mind I was, my lord, when I spoke thus." There was no other way out for them than to let Erling be sole judge in this whole business. Then he forthwith took an immense amount of money from many [as punishment] and let all those who had been slain lie unatoned. Then he returned south to Bergen.

Chapter 27. King Valdamar Returns to Denmark

That spring, King Valdamar assembled a large fleet in Denmark, and with it sailed north to Vík. As soon as he arrived in the dominions of the king of Norway, the farmers gathered in great multitudes. The king [and his force] proceeded peaceably and quietly, but wherever they approached the mainland, people shot at them, even though there were only one or two of them, so the Danes understood the complete ill will of the people toward them. Now when they came to Túnsberg, King Valdamar called an assembly on Haugar Hill, but few or no one came to it from the countryside. Then King Valdamar spoke as follows: “It is easy to see that all the people of this country are against us. Now we have two alternatives, one to harry in the country and spare neither man nor beast; the other, to return south without having accomplished anything. And I am inclined rather to sail into the Baltic to heathen lands, of which there are plenty, and not kill Christians here, even though they have richly deserved it.” But all others [in his army] were eager to harry. Nevertheless the king prevailed, so that they returned south. Yet they plundered far and wide in outer islands and everywhere, whenever the king was not present. They sailed south to Denmark.

Chapter 28. Erling Pursues the Danish Fleet

When Erling Skakki learned that an army of Danes had arrived in Vík, he called for a general levy throughout the country, both of ships and men. That resulted in a great rush to arms, and with that host he sailed east along the land. But when he arrived at Cape Lithandisness he learned that the Danish fleet had returned south to Denmark, and that there had been much harrying in the Vík District. Then Erling gave all the levied army permission to return home. But he himself and some landed-men and a great fleet sailed south to Jutland to pursue the Danes. And when they arrived at the place called Dýrsá, he found there numerous Danish ships returning from the expedition. Erling attacked them and fought with them. The Danes quickly fled, losing many men, and Erling and his troops plundered the ships and also the market town. They obtained a tremendous amount of booty, and then returned to Norway. Then for a

1165 time there were hostilities between Norway and Denmark.

Chapter 29. Erling Remains as Hostage in Denmark

Kristín, daughter of Sigurth Jerusalemfarer and wife of Erling Skakki, travelled to Denmark, in the fall, to meet King Valdamar, her kinsman. They were the children of sisters. The king received her cordially and provided her with revenues so that she could maintain her retinue. She often spoke with the king, and he was exceedingly kind to her. And in the spring following, Kristín sent messengers to Erling, praying him to have a meeting with the Danish king and come to an agreement with him. During the following summer,
1166 Erling had his residence in Vík. He outfitted a warship and manned it with a picked crew. Then he sailed over to Jutland. He learned that King Valdamar was in Randarós.¹ Erling sailed there and arrived at the time when most people sat at table. And when they had tented and made fast their ship, Erling and eleven other men, all in coats of mail, with hoods over their helmets and swords under their cloaks, went to the king's quarters. Dishes with food were being taken in, and the doors were open. Erling and his companions at once went in and before the high-seat. Erling spoke, "We would have safe-conduct, sir king, both here and for our return journey."

The king looked at him and said, "Are you here, Erling?"

He answered, "Aye, I am here; and tell us quickly whether we shall have safe-conduct." In the hall there were eighty men, all unarmed.

The king said, "Safe-conduct you shall have as you ask. I shall not behave in a dastardly way to any man who seeks me out." Then Erling kissed the king's hand, and then left the hall and went to his ship. He dwelled there for a time with the king. They discussed the terms between themselves and their lands, and came to the agreement that Erling should remain as a hostage with the Danish king, and in return Ásbjorn Snara, brother of Archbishop Absalón, was to go to Norway as a hostage.

Chapter 30. Erling Becomes Earl Under Valdamar

One time, when King Valdamar and Erling were talking together, Erling said, “My lord, to come to an agreement between us it would seem to me best that you obtain all that portion of Norway which was promised you in our special agreement. And if so, what chieftain would you assign to it—some Dane, perchance? No,” he continued, “hardly any Danish chieftain would care to go to Norway, and there have to deal with a stubborn and dis-obedient people when they had it easy with you here. I have sought you out because I would on no account be without your friendship. Men have before come hither to Denmark from Norway, men such as Hákon Ivarsson and Finn Árnason; and King Svein, your kinsman, made both of them earls. I am now a man of no less power than they were in their time, and the king gave them revenues in Halland, a land of which he before had possession. Now it would seem to me you could well afford to grant me this land [of Vík], if I become your retainer and hold it in fief from you. Nor will King Magnús, my son, deny me that. But to you I would be in duty bound for all service to you, such as appertains to the title of earl.”

These arguments, and others of a like nature, Erling produced; with the result, finally, that Erling swore fealty to King Valdamar. And the king led Erling to [an earl’s] seat, giving him the earldom of Vík to govern as a fief. Thereupon Erling sailed home to Norway, and from that time on was an earl for the remainder of his life, remaining at peace with the Danish king ever after.

Erling had four illegitimate sons. One was called Hreithar, another, Ogmund. They were sons of different mothers. A third son was called Finn, a fourth, Sigurth. Their mother was Ása the Fair. They were younger than the others. With Kristín Kingsdaughter Erling had a daughter whose name was Ragnhild. She was married to Jón Thorbergsson of Randaberg. Kristín left Norway with a man named Grím Rusli. They journeyed to Miklagarth, staying there for a while, and had some children together.

Chapter 31. Erling Captures the Ships of Óláf Guthbrandsson

Óláf, the son of Guthbrand Skafhoggsson and of Mária, the daughter of King Eystein Magnússon, had been fostered up at the estate of Sigurth Agnhott in the Uppland District. And when Erling was in Denmark, Óláf and his foster father Sigurth raised a troop, and many from the Upplands joined it, and Óláf was chosen king there. With these troops they went about the Upplands, sometimes in Vík and sometimes east in the Markir [Forest] District. They had no ships. When Earl Erling heard of this band, he proceeded with his troops to Vík and was in his ships during the summer, but dwelled in Ósló during the fall, and there he prepared the Yule feast. He sent out scouts into the country to reconnoiter about this band, and himself went to look for them together with Orm Kingsbrother. And when they came to the lake called——¹ they captured all the ships lying there.

Chapter 32. Erling Is Warned of Treachery by Dreams

The priest who sang mass at the estate of Rythjokul, which is near the lake, invited the earl and his followers to a banquet at Candlemas [February 1167^{2nd}]. The earl promised to come, considering it a good thing to hear the divine service there. They rowed across the lake in the evening before Candlemas. But this priest had another plan in mind; he sent out men to inform Ólaf of Erling's whereabouts. He gave Erling and his company strong drink in the evening, and encouraged them to drink heavily. When the earl wished to go to sleep, their beds were made for them in the banquet hall. When they had slept but a little while, the earl awoke and asked if it was time for the matins. The priest said it was still early in the night, and told them to sleep at their ease. The earl said: "I am dreaming so much tonight, and I am sleeping poorly." Then he fell asleep, but woke up again and bade the priest get up and sing mass. The priest asked the earl to go to sleep, saying it was [barely] midnight. The earl lay down and slept a short while, then jumped out of his bed and ordered his men to put on their clothes. They did so and took up their arms, then went to church and deposited them outside whilst the priest sang the matins.

Chapter 33. Óláf Ill-Luck Fails to Capture Erling

Óláf got the message in the evening; and during the night they travelled six rastir,¹ which people considered a huge distance, and arrived at Rythjokul at matins. It was pitch dark night. Óláf and his men rushed at the hall, raising their battle cry, and killed some who had not gone to matins. But when Erling and his men heard the battle cry, they ran to fetch their weapons, and then took the way down to the ships. Óláf and his men encountered them by a [stone] fence, and there was a fight. Erling and his men retreated along the fence, which protected them. Their number was much smaller than that of Óláf. Many of them fell, and many were wounded. What helped them most was that Óláf's men could not distinguish them as it was so dark. Erling's men made straight for the ships. In that fight fell Ari Thorgeirsson, the father of Bishop Guthmund, and many others of Erling's bodyguard. Erling received a wound on his left side, but some men say that he accidentally directed the sword against himself when he drew it. Orm, too, was sorely wounded. With great difficulty they escaped onto the ships and at once pulled away.

It was said that Óláf and his men had the worst kind of ill luck in this encounter, seeing how Erling and his men were delivered into their hands, if only he had proceeded with more sense. Thereafter, people called him Óláf Ill-Luck, and some called his troops "hoodmen." They moved with their band around the country as before, but Earl Erling retired to Vík to his ships, and spent the following summer there. Óláf was, sometimes, in the Uppland districts and sometimes, east in the Markir District. They held that band together a second winter.

Chapter 34. Erling Defeats Óláf Ill-Luck

In the following spring, Óláf and his men came down to Vík and collected the royal revenues there, remaining there for a long time during the summer.

1168 Earl Erling learned of that and steered his fleet east to encounter them.

That took place in the eastern part of the [Ósló] fjord, at a locality called Stangir. There was a great battle and Erling won the victory. Sigurth Agnhott fell there, together with many of Óláf's men, but Óláf himself saved himself by flight. Later, he went south to Denmark and, during the following winter, stayed

in Álaborg in Jutland. In the spring following, Óláf took sick and died.

1169 He is interred by Saint Mary's Church, and the Danes consider him a saint.

Chapter 35. Erling Has Harald Beheaded

Níkolás Kúfung, the son of Pál Skoptason, was a landed-man of King Magnús. He captured Harald, the reputed son of King Sigurth Haraldsson and Kristín Kingsdaughter, and so the brother, by the same mother, of King Magnús. Níkolás brought Harald to Bergen and delivered him into the hands of Earl Erling. It was the habit of Erling that, when enemies of his were brought before him, he said nothing or only a little, and that very quietly, if he was decided to kill them, but would mercilessly berate those whom he meant to pardon. Erling said little to Harald, and so many feared what he might intend to do with him. So they begged King Magnús to intercede with the earl for Harald. The king did so. The earl answered, "This, your friends advised you to do. But you will not govern your kingdom in peace if you yield to counsels of mercy." Thereupon Erling had Harald taken to Northness, where he was beheaded.

Chapter 36. Eystein Raises the Band Called Birchlegs

There was a man called Eystein who was considered [to be] the son of King Eystein Haraldsson. It is said that he was a youth who had not yet attained manhood when one summer he appeared east in Sweden and sought out 1170 Birgir Brosa who was married to Brígitha, a daughter of Harald Gilli and paternal aunt of Eystein. [The young] Eystein revealed to them his claim, and requested them to help them. The earl and his spouse both thought well of the matter and promised him their assistance. He stayed there for a while. Earl Birgir procured Eystein some troops and gave him ample money for subsistence and good presents when he left. Both promised him their friendship. Thereupon Eystein proceeded north [west] to Norway and finally arrived in Vík. There, men flocked to him, and his band grew. They made Eystein king, and the band stayed in Vík that winter. But as they ran out of money, they robbed far and wide, so that landed-men and farmers collected troops against them. But when Eystein's men were overpowered, they fled to the forests and camped for a long time in the wilderness. Then their clothes fell off them, so that they tied birchbark about their calves, whence the farmers called them Birchlegs. Often they made incursions into the settlements, appearing now here, now there, breaking into houses wherever there were not enough people to oppose them. They had some brushes with the farmers, with now the one, now the other victorious. There were three regular battles with the Birchlegs, and they won the day in each one. In the Króka Forest they nearly met disaster. There they met a hosts of farmers. The Birchlegs made a barricade of logs against them, and then escaped into the forests. They remained two years in Vík, not venturing farther north.

Chapter 37. Of Erling's Appearance and Character

King Magnús had ruled thirteen years when the Birchlegs arose. In the third summer they procured ships and sailed along the land, making booty and increasing their troops. First they kept to Vík, but as the summer wore
1174 on, they held their course to the north and sailed so swiftly that there was no tidings of them before they reached Trondheim. Most of the Birchlegs were from the Forest District and the Gaut Elf River vicinity, and there were many from the province of Thelamork; and they were well armed. Their king, Eystein, was a handsome man with a fair complexion and small features, not of a tall stature. By many he was called Eystein Meyla [Girlie]. King Magnús and Earl Erling were in Bergen when the Birchlegs sailed north, and were not aware of their coming. Erling was a powerful and resourceful man, an excellent general in times of disturbance, a good and capable ruler. He was considered rather cruel and hard. The chief reason for that was that he gave but few of his enemies permission to stay in the country, even though they asked for leniency; and because of that many flocked to bands when such arose against him. Erling was a tall and brawny man, somewhat short-necked, with a long face and sharp features. He had a light complexion and became very gray haired. He carried his head a bit to one side.¹ His disposition was amiable and he had a stately bearing. He wore old-fashioned clothing—kirtles with long waists and long sleeves, and likewise shirts and doublets with long sleeves, French cloaks, and shoes coming high up on the calves. He had the king wear similar clothes while he was young; but when he became independent, he dressed with much finery. King Magnús was of an easy-going disposition and gay, very cheerful, and a great lover of women.

Chapter 38. Of Níkolás Sigurtharson

Níkolás was the son of Sigurth Hranason and of Skjaldvor, the daughter of Brynjólf Úlfaldi and sister of Halldór Brynjólfsson. She was also the sister, by the same mother, of Magnús Barelegs. Níkolás was a great leader. He had his estate in Hálogaland on the island of Ongul, at a place called Steig. He had a house in Nitharós below Saint John's Church [near] where Thorgeir the Chaplain had his. Níkolás frequently resided in Kaupang and was influential in all the councils of the townspeople. Skjaldvor, a daughter of Níkolás, was married to Eirík Árnason who also was a landed-man.

Chapter 39. Eirík in Vain Warns Níkolás

1176 At the time of the latter part of Marymas [September 8th], when people were coming from the matins in the town, Eirík approached Níkolás and said, “Kinsman, some fishermen who have come in from outside [the fjord] report that warships were sailing into the fjord, and people think that it may be the Birchlegs; and it would be well to have all the townsmen summoned out to Eyrar with their arms.”

Níkolás replied, “I don’t pay any attention to fishermen’s tittle-tattle. I shall send out men to reconnoiter on the fjord, but let us hold an assembly today.”

Eirík went home, and when the bells were rung for high mass, Níkolás went to church. Then Eirík approached him again and said, “I do think, kinsman, that the report is true. There are men here who say they have seen the sails. It seems advisable to me that we two ride outside the town and collect a force.”

Níkolás answered, “You are rather importunate, son-in-law. Let us first attend mass and then see about the matter later on.” Níkolás went to church; but when the mass was ended, Eirík again approached Níkolás, saying, “Kinsman, now my horses are ready. I want to ride away.”

Níkolás replied, “Farewell, then! We shall hold an assembly on Eyrar and find out how many troops we have in town.” Thereupon Eirík rode on his way, and Níkolás went into his house and sat down to table.

Chapter 40. The Birchlegs Kill Níkolás

But at the very time the food was set on the table, a man came in and told Níkolás that at this moment the Birchlegs were rowing up the river. Then Níkolás called out that his men should arm themselves; and when they were armed, Níkolás ordered them into the loft. But that was a most unwise counsel, because if they had defended the yard the townsfolk would have come to their assistance, and because the Birchlegs filled the whole yard and then attacked the loft on all sides. The two parties called out to one another, and the Birchlegs offered quarter to Níkolás, but he refused it. Then they fought. Níkolás and his men had their bows and arrows, and defended themselves with spears and rocks from the fireplaces hurled down at their enemies, but the Birchlegs chopped down the houses and shot with arrows incessantly. Níkolás had a red shield starred with gold studs, a work of [smith] Vilhjálmm. The Birchlegs shot so [hard] that the arrows sank to the shaft in it. Níkolás said, “Now my shield fails me.” Níkolás fell there, and a great many of his men, and people felt much grief at his death. The Birchlegs gave quarter to all townsmen.



The Birchlegs attack Níkolás' residence.

Chapter 41. Eystein Is Acclaimed King

Thereupon Eystein was chosen king there, and all the people swore allegiance to him. He stayed for a while in the town, then proceeded into the District of Trondheim. There, many joined him, among them Thorfinn the Black from Snos with a troop. Toward winter they returned to the town. Then, Jón Kettling, Sigurth, and Vilhjálrm, the sons of Guthrun of Saltness, attached themselves to this band. From the town of Nitharós they proceeded up the Orka Dale—by that time their number had increased to nearly two thousand [2400] men. From there they marched to the Uppland districts, then to Thótn and Hathaland, and finally to Hringaríki.

Chapter 42. King Magnús Erlingsson Defeats the Birchlegs

In fall King Magnús together with Orm Kingsbrother proceeded east to Vík with part of the army. Earl Erling remained behind in Bergen with a large army to meet the Birchlegs, in case they chose to come by way of the sea. King

1177 Magnús and Orm Kingsbrother settled in Túnsberg, and there celebrated Yule. King Magnús learned of the presence of the Birchlegs at Ré. Then the king and Orm marched out of the town and arrived at Ré farm. There lay a deep snow and it was fearfully cold. Then, when they approached the farm they went outside of the enclosure onto the road, and outside along the stone fence they formed ranks and trod down the snow. Altogether they had not quite fifteen hundred [1800] men. The Birchlegs were at other farms, and some parts of their force, here and there in the houses. But as soon as they became aware of the approach of King Magnús' army, they collected and formed ranks. And when they saw the force of the king, they thought, as was the case, that their own was larger, and immediately began to attack. But when they advanced along the road, few could walk abreast, and those who ran to the side got into snow so deep that they could hardly move forward, and so their lines broke. Those who kept along the road were felled. Then their standard was cut down, those nearest it retreated, and some fled. King Magnús' men pursued them and killed one after the other whom they caught up with. Then the Birchlegs could not form ranks and stood unprotected against shots [of the king's men], many fell and many fled. So it happened, as often is the case, that men, be they ever so brave and skilled in arms, once they are defeated badly and turn to flight, rarely have the stamina to turn back. Then the main body of the Birchlegs started to flee, and a great number fell as King Magnús' men killed all they could, with no quarter given to any whom they could seize hold of, and the flight spread in all directions.

King Eystein also took to flight. He ran into some house and begged for his life and also, that the farmer should hide him. But the farmer killed him and then went to find King Magnús, and found him at Hrafnsness. The king was in the room and warmed himself by the fire, and the room was full of people. Then some men went and brought Eystein's body into the room. The king bade them come up to it and say whether they recognized Eystein. There was one man sitting on the corner seat, and he was a Birchleg, and no one had paid any attention to him. When this man saw the corpse of his chieftain and recognized it he rose suddenly and quickly. With an axe in his hand he rushed over to where King Magnús stood in the middle of the room and struck at him, and the blow

fell on his neck near the shoulders. Some man saw the axe raised aloft and pushed the king away so that the axe glanced toward the shoulder where it made a big gash. Then the Birchleg raised his axe a second time and struck at Orm Kingsbrother. He lay on the raised floor, and when Orm saw that the man wanted to kill him and the blow was aimed at his legs, he quickly threw his feet over his head and the axe struck the beam forming the edge of the dais and stood fast in it. But there were so many weapons driven into this Birchleg by King Magnús' men that he could hardly fall. And only then did they see that he had dragged his intestines after him on the floor. That man's bravery was much praised by all. King Magnús' men kept up the pursuit for a long time, killing all they could lay hands on. Among the fallen was Thorfinn of Snos, and many others from the Trondheim District were slain.

Chapter 43. Of the Ways of the Birchlegs

This band which was called Birchlegs had grown to be a very numerous army. It was composed of tough and weapon-skilled, unruly elements who pursued a headlong, reckless course after they thought they had a sufficient force. In their band they had few who could counsel them or knew the laws and could govern a land or lead an army; and though some few were more able, the great mass of them would do what seemed best to them. They relied on their numbers and their [individual] bravery. Of the force which escaped, many were wounded and had lost both weapons and clothes, and were altogether penniless besides. Some sought refuge in the Markir District, and many in Thelamork, mostly those who had kinsfolk there. Some fled all the way east to Sweden. They all tried to save their lives, for they thought there was little expectation of mercy from King Magnús or Earl Erling.

Chapter 44. King Magnús Wins Fame by the Battle of Ré

King Magnús then returned to Túnsberg, and he became very famous from this victory, because [before] everyone had said that between them Earl Erling was the shield and leader for both of them. But after King Magnús had obtained the victory over so strong and numerous a host with a smaller force of his own, everyone thought that he would surpass all [other generals] and that he would as a warrior become as much greater than the earl as he was younger.

GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION

Note that all names are stressed on the first syllable. The acute serves to mark long vowels (as for example in *Knút*).

Vowels:

a as in “artistic”

á as in “father”

e as in “men”

é as in German “*mehr*”

i as in “it”

í as in “here”

o as in “omit”

ó as in “ore”

ö as in French “*boeuf*,” German “*öffnen*”

u as in “would”

ú as in “rule”

æ as in “hair”

æ as in “slur”

y as in French “*une*,” German “*Hütte*”

ý as in French “*sûr*,” German “*Tür*”

au as in “house”

ei as in French “*paysan*”

ey as in French “*oeil*”

j before a vowel is semivocalic, as in Bjarni.

Consonants:

g as in “go,” except before *i*, *y*, where it is about like *y* in “yeast,” and between vowels, where it is as in German “*Tage*”

h before a consonant as in “when”

s is always voiceless as in “sing,” never voiced as in “wise”

p is voiceless *th* as in “thin”; *ð* is the corresponding voiced sound as in “this.”

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¹ According to Old Germanic custom the first name is a person's real name, the second, a patronymic (or sobriquet). See the Guide to Pronunciation which follows "Magnúss saga Erlingssonar."

² Óthin, the supreme deity of the Norsemen, was represented as one-eyed and guileful.

³ *Sturlunga saga*, edited by Kålund (Copenhagen: 1906-1911), I, 113.

⁴ As Snorri himself relates with evident satisfaction. See his "Magnúss saga Erlingssonar," chapter 21.

⁵ *Sturlunga saga*, I, 373. The great, or long, hundred is equal to 120 in our system of enumeration; so this would be 115,200 ounces of silver, an enormous fortune for those times.

⁶ A kenning is a metaphorical expression consisting of a basic word (a noun) qualified by another in the genitive. Thus "the dew-of-wounds" is a circumlocution for "blood," "the tumult-of-weapons," one for "battle." For a brief orientation in the system of *kenningar* and the metrical forms and other conventions of skaldic poetry, reference is made to the translator's *The Skalds* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1945).

⁷ See his saga, chapter 19, and the earlier chapters of a number of family sagas.

⁸ A step which was taken by serious European historians only in the seventeenth century.

⁹ A title of uncertain meaning.

¹⁰ Whether authentic or not, the words of King Óláf before the battle of Stiklarstathir represent the conception in old Scandinavia of the function of the skalds as reporters: "He called up his skalds and ordered them to enter the shield castle. 'You are to be here,' he said, 'and witness all that will happen here. Then you will not need to be told, but can tell it yourselves and compose verses about it later on.'" "Óláfs saga Helga," chapter 206.

¹¹ See his saga, chapter 36.

¹² "Stories of the Olden Times," also characterized as "Lying Sagas," a genre of stories filled with marvellous adventures.

¹³ "Óláf's saga Helga," chapter 133.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, chapter 85.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, chapter 117.

¹⁶ The *History* of Thucydides, translated by Benjamin Jowett (New York: 1909), Book I, chapter 22.

¹⁷ “Magnúss saga Erlingssonar,” chapter 37.

¹⁸ “Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar,” chapter 100.

¹⁹ *History* of Thucydides, Book I, chapter 22.

²⁰ *Sturlunga saga*, I, 421.

- ¹ General designation of the language spoken by Scandinavians in early times.
- ² A valley in southernmost Norway.
- ³ A Norwegian skald. See [page 12](#), note 3.
- ⁴ Inhabitants of Hálogaland, the present province of Helgeland.
- ⁵ Priest Ari died in 1148.
- ⁶ Later called Nitharós, the present city of Trondheim.
- ⁷ See [page xi](#) for the explanation of this cognomen.
- ⁸ This is evidently an afterthought to what Snorri says above about the historic value of skaldic verses.

¹ From the name of Æneas, the founder of Lavinium ?

² The Scythia of the ancients: Russia. There is much confusion in Snorri's account between Svíthjóth the Great and Svíthjóth "the land of the Svíar," Sweden.

³ The mythical Riphæan Mountains of the ancients.

⁴ Together with the Æsir, a race of gods.

¹ The abode of the Æsir [singular, As]: Snorri no doubt connected their name with Asia—It should be noted that much of Snorri’s account in this and following chapters which seems fanciful has received surprising support through the researches of Barði Guthmundsson in his *Uppruni Íslendinga*, Reykjavík, 1959.

² The chief god of the northern pantheon. For a full account of him and the other gods, consult the *Poetic Edda* and the *Prose Edda*.

³ A Celtic word for “gods.” Compare also Latin *deus*, Greek *theós*.

⁴ A Celtic word signifying “blessing”; ultimately derived from the Latin *benedictio*.

¹ They are probably hypostases of Óthin.

¹ His name corresponds exactly to that of the goddess Nerthus, the *terræ mater* of Tacitus (*Germania* chapter 40).

² “Lord,” the god of fertility.

³ His name and function, like those of Mímir and Kvasir, have not been satisfactorily explained.

- ¹ The Caucasus (?) which, however, has a northwest to southeast direction.
- ² The present city of Odense on the island of Funen which, next to Seeland, is the largest island of the Danish archipelago.
- ³ Progenitor of the Skjoldungs, the royal race of Denmark.
- ⁴ The present town of Leire, the former seat of the Danish kings.
- ⁵ The present Lake Mælaren in Sweden.
- ⁶ The first known Norwegian skald.
- ⁷ The stanza numbers on the right refer to the numbering of the stanzas in the Fornritafélag edition of the *Heimskringla*.
- ⁸ Kenning for “eyes.” This stanza is an example of the *dróttkvætt* measure, the typical skaldic unit.
- ⁹ The present town of Sigtuna, like Uppsala not far from Stockholm. Except for Uppsala and Sigtuna these are mythical localities.

¹ “Óthin of the Æsir.”

¹ By popular etymology only. Actually, like Anglo-Saxon *Eadwine* Edwin, it is from *auð* “riches” and *vin* “friend.”

¹ “The hall of the slain warriors,” Óthin’s abode.

² That is, a tenth part of an ounce of silver.

³ A Norwegian skald. His cognomen means “despoiler of skalds,” plagiarist.

⁴ “Giant.”

⁵ Kenning for Óthin. This stanza, from Eyvind’s poem *Háleygjatal*, is in *kviðuhátt* measure, as is the *Ynglingatal* (see chapters 11 ff).

⁶ “Bones-of-the-sea” is a kenning for “rocks.” No doubt Skathi, a mountain (and ski) goddess, was, in this defective stanza, referred to as a dweller among rocks.

⁷ See chapter 1, note 2.

¹ The royal race of Sweden.

² Both names signify “jewel.”

¹ Hvina is a river in southern Norway. This poem, *Ynglingatal*, has come down to us, for the most part, in stanzas 4 to 32 (exclusive of 15 and 16). It frequently is obscure, so that many passages must be translated *ad sensum*.

¹ A dwarf.

¹ An incubus supposed to oppress persons in their sleep.

² Óthin; to visit him signifies to be gathered into Valholl.

¹ Kenning for “chest.”

² Logi, “fire,” is the brother of the sea-god, Ægir.

³ Kenning for “fire.” In simple prose the stanza would mean: fire, kindled by Vísbur’s sons deprived of the throne, consumed his body.

¹ A plain at the mouth of the Fýri River near Uppsala.

² Dómar.

³ Kenning for “pyre.” The mythical hero Hálf was burned in his hall.

⁴ Dómar.

¹ Úlf's (the Fenris-Wolf's) sister is Hel, the goddess of the nether world of the dead. She is also the god Loki's daughter.

² See Snorri's Foreword, note 1.

¹ Below also called Gotland, which probably is the modern Jutland.

² A word for “king,” not used in the following translation.

¹ At the site of the present city of Stockholm.

² That is, Hagbarth, who was hanged by Signý's father, Sigar—a legend well known in the north.

¹ Álf.

¹ Formed by select warriors around the king.

¹ The inhabitants of Hálogaland, northernmost province of Norway proper.

² That is, the gallows, which is called Óthin's steed.

³ Fjolnir is one of Óthin's names; his tree, or horse, the gallows.

¹ See chapter 23, note 2.

¹ Province of West Sweden.

² “Tenth Land,” according to popular etymology.

³ Kenning for “horn.”

⁴ King Aun.

⁵ King Aun.

¹ Týr is the Old Norse god of war; his offspring, here, King Egil.

² Kine were the favorite animals of the giants.

³ Kenning for “forehead.”

⁴ A descendant of Queen Skjálf.

¹ Now, the Öresund, the sound between Seeland and Sweden.

² Kenning for “king.”

¹ Lake Væneren.

² This saga is preserved only in Arngrím Jónsson's Latin epitome.

³ To delay pursuit by the Swedes. About this see *Hrólf's saga kraka*, chapter 45.

⁴ King Athils, as one of the Ynglings. See chapter 10.

¹ In the original, the remnant of an alliterating verse.

¹ The present Nærøy, a large island off the west coast of Norway.

² The “tang-of-slopes” is a kenning for “forest”; its terror, “fire.”

¹ The mainland of Esthonia, opposite the island of Ösel.

¹ Parts of the Swedish province of Uppland. See chapter 77, “Óláfs saga Helga.”

² An illustration of the belief that drinking the blood, or eating portions of the body, of an animal would impart to one the outstanding characteristics of that animal.

³ The Swedish province of Gotland.

¹ Kenning for “stones.” According to the legend, King Jónakr’s sons, Hamthir and Sorli, were stoned to death by King Jormunrek’s warriors when weapons took no effect on them.

² This and the following references are poorly understood.

³ Kenning for “stones.”

¹ A province of central Sweden.

² See chapter 34, note 1.

³ The present province of Södermanland.

⁴ The beaker in which toasts were brought.

¹ A royal race of the North.

² Now Mörköfjärden, south of Stockholm.

¹ On which were probably written runes.

¹ In Lake Mælaren.

¹ On an island of Lake Mælaren.

² The king, Ingjald.

¹ The present Swedish province of Värmland.

² Now, Solör, in Norway.

¹ *i.e.*, “the wolf- [or destroyer] of-buildings,” a kenning for “fire.”

² Fornjót is a giant, his son, “fire.”

³ Between the present Norway and Sweden.

⁴ Now Romerike, a district in central Norway.

¹ All in south central Norway, except Westfold, with the old center of Skiringssal, on the west side of the Oslofjord.

² As guardian of the graves.

¹ This is by way of a postscript to the preceding chapter.

¹ In Eastfold, on the eastern side of the Fjorden(Oslo)fjord.

² On the coast of Westfold.

³ Byleist's brother is the god Loki; his daughter, Hel.

¹ Another name for Westfold (?).

² See chapter 46, note 3.

³ To her assembly in the nether world.

- ¹ The district at the head of the Oslofjord.
- ² The present rivers Glommen and Göta Elf, respectively.
- ³ The southernmost province of Norway.

- ¹ The central portion of Norway.
- ² Near the present town of Larvik.
- ³ The former name of the Oslofjord.

¹ “The Highly-honored.”

¹ *i.e.*, Guðbrands Dale, the upper reaches of the River Glommen (Lougen).

² A *hersir* ranked below an earl.

³ Now, Mjösen, a lake formed by the River Glommen.

⁴ West of Lake Mjösen.

¹ Lands about the Sognefjord in West Norway.

² North of the Sognefjord.

¹ At the outlet of Lake Mjösen.

¹ Now Ringerike, the district northwest of the present city of Oslo.

² A famous legendary Skjoldung king.

³ A berserker is a warrior who fights with paroxysmal fury in his bare shirt (whence the name), insensitive to pain. See “Ynglinga saga,” chapter 6.

⁴ His cognomen signifies “magic wand.”

¹ Her dream is strongly reminiscent of that of King Astyages of Media. (Herodotos, *The Histories* I, 108). For a similar dream see the one of King Sigurth Jerusalemfarer, “Magnússona saga,” chapter 25.

¹ The present Lake Randsfjorden.

¹ The king's court, consisting of his bodyguard, henchmen, *etc.*

² See Introduction, note 5.

³ Probably in Eastfold.

⁴ North of Oslo.

¹ Here Snorri is guilty of a serious anachronism: Harald was still a heathen. Also, the title of *hertogi*, here variously translated “marshal, leader of the army,” is a loan word from the Middle Low German, and anticipates a later time.

¹ The populous region around the Trondheimfjord. Note that the present city of Trondheim was called Nitharós, or simply, “the town,” Kaupang.

¹ A symbolic act.

¹ A warship with a carved dragon's head as bowsprit. The warriors' shields reinforced the gunwales.

² This was his (unexplained) cognomen. His real name was Thorbjorn, and he was a Norwegian. Portions of his *Glymdrápa* (*Resounding(?) drápa*) are preserved in stanzas 33-36, 40, 41, 48. A *drápa* is a longer, encomiastic poem with a refrain.

³ South of the Trondheimfjord.

⁴ Kenning for "ships." Rollers were used for hauling ships on shore for the winter.

⁵ Frequent kenning for the "king" as upholder of the law.

⁶ Kenning for "sword."

⁷ Kenning for "ships." They were often stained above the waterline.

⁸ Kenning for "sea."

¹ Kenning for “ship.”

² This was generally accomplished by exacting hostages.

¹ A *thing* is an assembly; the whole, here, a kenning for “battle.”

² Hild is a valkyrie; the whole, a kenning for “battle.”

¹ Noted for its storms.

² Note that, because both the main coastline and the mountain spine of Norway have a general northeast-southwest trend, a ship sailing from, say Bergen to Oslo was said to be headed east (not south, then north), one sailing in the opposite direction, north. Likewise, a person travelling overland from Trondheim across the mountains to Oslo was thought of as proceeding east (not south).

³ The legendary King Hogni's daughter is Hild ("battle," a valkyrie), the inciter of the everlasting "battle of the Hjathnings." Her tree is "a warrior."

⁴ Hákon.

⁵ Ygg is one of Óthin's names; the whole, a kenning for "battle."

¹ That is, all the land around Fold, the present Oslofjord. These districts are also called Vík.

² In old Scandinavia, as in medieval Germany, the king had no fixed residence but made visitations with his retinue to various parts of his realm to see to rights. It was the obligation of prominent men in each district to entertain the king on his “royal progress,” in lieu of taxes.

¹ In his poem *Haraldskvæði* (*Lay of Harald*) in *málaháttr* measure, to which belong also stanzas 42-47.

² Kenning for “battle.”

¹ Kenning for “warrior.”

² Kenning for “ships.”

³ Kenning for “swords” (as chewing the shields).

- ¹ Both “Westland” and “Welsh” refer broadly to western lands.
- ² Identical with “berserkers.”
- ³ *i.e.* Norwegians.
- ⁴ Kenning for “ships.” Nokkvi here is the name of a sea-king.
- ⁵ “Slovenly Person,” nickname of Harald, referring to his growth of hair.
- ⁶ Óthin’s hall, which is shingled with shields. See the Eddic “Grímnismál,” stanzas 8, 9.

¹ So called because of his fierce, bloodthirsty nature.

² The lands on both sides of the gulf between Ranríki and Grenland.

¹ The River Oykell in Scotland, between Sutherland and Ross.

¹ That is, Ganger-Hrólf.

² A *hǫldr* is the possessor of an allodium; *hǫldr*'s brother, hence, a kenning for "franklin, freeholder."

³ A wolf is, metaphorically, an "outlaw." To be wolfish against such a one is to treat him as such; and to run to the forest, "to act as an outlaw," and here, to commit depredations.

¹ Kenning for “generous prince.”

¹ The same is told about him in the *Orkneyinga saga*, chapter 7. Actually, the digging and curing of peat must have been a very old practice in the treeless portions of the North. Pliny in his *Natural History* XVI, 1 describes it as practiced in his times on the shores of the North Sea.

¹ “Improver of the seasons and their produce.”

¹ In *dróttkvætt* form, like the following three stanzas by him, but without regular *hendingar* (rimes).

² His part, as being the fourth son of Rognvald.

¹ The allodium is land held as absolute property in fee simple, free from any tax or rent.

¹ *Bóndi* signifies “farmer, freeholder.”

² “The flat (plain) of fleets” is a kenning for “sea.”

¹ This locality is close to the town of Túnsberg, and the tumulus is still to be seen.

¹ In North Mær (as are Thórsbjorg and Reinsletta) and not to be confused with the cape of the same name.

² There exist four other stanzas of her poem about Hálfðan.

¹ To set a child on one's knee was to adopt it.

¹ Comprising the inland districts of Norway.

¹ The present Hawfleet.

¹ An Icelandic skald.

² Scania.

³ Kenning for “king.” It is not certain whether Eirík or his son, Harald Graycloak, is referred to.

¹ A Norwegian skald. Of his poem we have the eight stanzas here preserved by Snorri.

² Kenning for “ships.”

³ Valkyries; the whole, a kenning for “battle.”

¹ The Old Norse form for the present Seeland.

² Kenning for “king.”

¹ Kenning for “sailor, king.”

¹ Kenning for “warrior, king.” Helmets were adorned with plaited rings.

² “Ónar’s daughter” is the earth.

¹ Encomiastic poem about King Harald Graycloak, of which considerable fragments are preserved.

² Kenning for “warrior, king.”

³ Kenning for “sword.”

⁴ Kenning for “battle”; Skogul is a valkyrie.

¹ These assemblies were located at Gula (directly south of the mouth of the Sognefjord), on Frosta (a peninsula in the Trondheimfjord), and on a spot a little south of Lake Mjors, respectively. Heithsær (“Lake of Heithmork”) is the older name of Lake Mjors. Actually, both the Gulathing and the Frostathing laws had been instituted before Hákon’s rule.

¹ The name is missing in all manuscripts of *Heimskringla*.

² Now Inderøy, a peninsula in the Trondheimfjord. This curious story has many variants in ancient and medieval lore, and ultimately goes back to Ethiopia.

³ The long ridge of mountains and plateaus separating Norway from Sweden. The word is popularly understood as meaning “a boat’s keel,” but actually signifies “wasteland.”

¹ Held yearly in midsummer.

¹ An Icelandic skald. Of the *drápa* only a few stanzas are preserved.

² A giant killed by the gods. See Snorri's *Edda*, "Skáldskaparmál," chapter 1. This sentence, as well as the last one of the stanza, forms part of the refrain.

³ The temple priest, Sigurth.

⁴ Either "a prince" or else the sword of Sigurth the Dragon-Slayer.

¹ The horse was sacred to Óthin.

¹ *i.e.* “swords”; the whole, a kenning for “warrior,” Hákon.

² Here, King Guthorm.

³ “Wound-snake” is a kenning for “sword”; the whole, “warrior.”

¹ Across the isthmus on the landward side of Cape Stath.

² Actually it is in North Møer.

¹ Hild is a valkyrie; her tempest, “battle.”

¹ When the gods had fettered the wolf Fenrir they thrust a sword into its jaws distending them. See Snorri's *Edda*, "Gylfaginning," chapter 33.

¹ Kenning for “battle”; which the avengers of Eirík wish to bring on.

² Njorth is a god; the whole, a kenning for “sailor.”

¹ *Hákonarmál*, transmitted in its entirety by Snorri in this and the following chapter. The measure varies between *ljóðaháttir* (stanzas 86, 90-101) and *málaháttir*.

² The valkyries mentioned in stanza 86. Bjorn Haraldsson's brother is Hákon.

³ *i.e.* men from Hálogaland and Rogaland, respectively.

⁴ Thus showing his equanimity.

⁵ An Icelandic skald. Of this poem four stanzas are preserved.

⁶ An old type of sword had a ring on the hilt for carrying.

⁷ Kenning for "warrior." Týr is the god of war.

¹ The “valkyries’ weather (or storm)” is a kenning for “battle”; its “wooer,” the king.

² Kenning for “sword.”

³ Kenning for “skulls.”

⁴ A long-shafted arrow or javelin.

⁵ The king as the slayer of evildoers—Hákon, who advances before his ranks. The translator has attempted to make this stanza adumbrate the involved manner of skaldic poetry.

⁶ This was King Harald Graycloak’s reputation.

⁷ Gamli Eiríksson?

⁸ Thórálfr’s.

¹ As a fact, Snorri quotes it in its entirety. It is worth noting that *málahátttr* is used for the narrative portions, *ljóðahátttr* for the dialogue and final elegiac passages.

² Óthin. Gondul and Skogul are two of his valkyries.

³ Kenningar for “swords,” and “battle-axes,” respectively.

⁴ “Sea-of-wounds” and “stream-of-arrows” are kenningar for “blood.”

⁵ Kenningar for “battle.”

⁶ *i.e.* halcyon, elysian.

⁷ The messenger god, the god of poetry, and Óthin, respectively.

⁸ Because Hákon had deserted him for Christ?

⁹ Óthin’s warriors in Valholl.

¹⁰ Kenning for “king” as subduing them.

¹¹ The sons of Harald Fairhair?

¹² The monster which in “the twilight of the gods” swallows the sun and kills Óthin.

¹³ This line, as well as stanza 97, are echoes from the Eddic “Hávamál,” stanzas 1 and 76.

¹ Ygg is one of Óthin's names; his "hawks" are the ravens or eagles.

² This is stanza 72, repeated.

³ *i.e.* ravens.

⁴ According to the legend, King Hrólf Kraki of Denmark "sowed" gold rings on the Fýri Plain to retard pursuit by the Swedes.

⁵ Ullr was a god.

⁶ As told in the Eddie "Lay of Grotti," two captive giant maidens ground gold for King Fróthi on the wishing mill.

⁷ Thór's mother is the earth.

⁸ Fulla is a goddess; her fillet, gold.

⁹ The gold hoard hidden in the River Rhine.

¹⁰ He had served King Harald Fairhair and King Hákon the Good.

¹¹ That is, I am but a supernumerary now.

¹ Both localities are east of the Trondheimfjord.

¹ “Enumeration” (genealogy) of the princes of Hálogaland. It is in *kviðuhátttr*, like *Ynglingatal*.

² Óthin; his “swans” are the ravens.

³ An Icelandic skald. The title of his poem signifies “lack of gold.” See also stanza 101.

⁴ Hethin is a legendary hero; his “red-moon-of-battle” is a kenning for the round and red-stained war shield; its “whittler” a warrior.

⁵ Njorth is a god; the whole, a kenning for “warrior.”

⁶ Norway, from the point of view of the Icelander.

⁷ Atli and Leifi are sea kings. “Leifi’s weather (or storm)” is a kenning for “battle.”

¹ The district south of Westfold, not to be confused with Greenland.

² That is, Harald Grenski and Hrani.

¹ The *Firthafylki*, the district lying between the Nordfjord and the Sognfjord.

¹ That is, the hail of missiles on helmets, “battle.”

² “The wine-of-Wayfarer (Óthin)” is “skaldship, the poem.”

³ Thrótt is a name of Óthin; the whole, a kenning for “battle.”

- ¹ Svólnir is one of Óðin's names; his mate is the earth.
- ² The livestock which has to subsist on the buds of trees.
- ³ This has not been preserved.
- ⁴ The general assembly of Iceland.
- ⁵ Out of the silver donated.
- ⁶ Gerth is a goddess; the whole, a kenning for "woman."
- ⁷ *i.e.* the fish.

¹ On the coast of Jathar, though Snorri evidently thought it was somewhere in the Uppland districts.

¹ Here also called Hólmgarth, the realm around the present Novgorod in Russia. Its king at the time was Vladimir the Great (980-1015).

¹ The last two, semi-legendary kings.

¹ He means the later King Svein Forkbeard.

² By popular etymology interpreted as “hard distress.” Actually, it is the *anгр*, “narrow fjord,” of the Horthar (the present Hardangerfjord).

¹ The Limfjord.

² Kenning for “gold.”

³ Earl Hákon.

¹ Now Cape Lindesness.

¹ An ornament worn by earls.

² Kenning for “warrior, king”; here, Earl Hákon.

³ Earl Hákon.

¹ Kenning for “battle.”

¹ “Hethin’s-stormblast” is a kenning for “battle”; its Frey, “the king.”

² Kenning for “warriors.”

³ A common practice in the earliest times for land warfare.

⁴ That is, as corpses.

¹ Icelandic skald. His *Drápa of the Gods*, of which Snorri has preserved fragments here, celebrated the deeds of Eirík.

² “Wound-flame” is a kenning for “sword.”

³ Kenning for “generous prince.”

⁴ This line is part of the refrain; which is completed in stanza 166, last line.

⁵ Kenning for “dragon ship.”

¹ An insinuation of intimacy.

² The island of Bornholm.

- ¹ The present Pomerania.
- ² The historic King Boleslav I (992-1025).
- ³ An Icelandic skald, about whom there exists a separate saga.
- ⁴ These lines hardly apply to the content of the chapter.

¹ Otto II of Germany (973-983).

² The line of fortifications extending in South Slesvik from the Baltic to the North Sea.

¹ This kenning anticipates Ólaf's later role as missionary king.

- ¹ Áli is a sea-king; the whole, a kenning for “ship.”
- ² The inhabitants of Horthaland.
- ³ The king of Denmark.
- ⁴ Earl Hákon.
- ⁵ The emperor.
- ⁶ Kenning for “sailor, warrior”; here, Earl Hákon.

¹ The Eyrar Sound (Öresund) and Scania are of course far to the south of the eastern mouth of the Limfjord.

² Small islands at the mouth of the Gaut Elf (Göta Elf) River.

³ Kenning for “warrior.”

⁴ Sorli is a legendary hero; his “house” (or “roof”) is the shield.

¹ The present town of Slesvik.

- ¹ Kenning for “battle.”
- ² The “steed-of-witches” is the wolf.
- ³ The king, as arbiter.
- ⁴ The Dutch island.

¹ He reigned 938-980.

¹ At the mouth of the Sognefjord.

² To be likened to a mare was regarded as a mortal insult.

¹ About him and other Jómsvíkings, see the *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

¹ An Icelandic skald. About him and his rival in love and skaldship, Bjorn, see the *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa*.

² The planks of the Viking ship were secured by withies.

¹ *i.e.* Earl Hákon (ironic).

² An Icelandic skald.

³ A son of legendary King Jónakr.

¹ An official appointed by the crown to administer lands and estates belonging to it.

² Here, the Jómsvíkings, who had their stronghold in Wendish territory.

¹ These cryptic words contain the reason for her otherwise inexplicable conduct: from the *Legendary Saga of Saint Óláf* we learn that she had wanted to become the mother of the saint. Note that she is called prescient about many things.

¹ The present harbor of Osmondwall which, however, is not on (South) Ronaldshay but on the island of Hoy.

¹ At the mouth of the Nith River.

² An Icelandic skald.

¹ Earl Eirík.

² King Ólaf.

³ Earl Hákon.

⁴ King Ólaf. As to the kenning, see what is said about King Hrólf Kraki in chapter 29 of the “Ynglinga saga.”

⁵ Eirík. See his part in King Ólaf’s fall, chapter 98th ff.

¹ There is a gap here in all manuscripts of *Heimskringla*; but their names are known from other sources.

¹ Not to be confused with Ástríth, the widow of King Harald of Grenland.

¹ The intention of this symbolic act seems to be that Ástríth's contrariness robs the king of the opportunity to raise Erling to the earldom. See the following chapter.

¹ “Mouth of the Nith River,” the old name for the present city of Trondheim.

² They carried with them a token in the shape of a carved stick or axe, which was sent from farm to farm.

¹ Possibly identical with the persons of similar names in chapter 18 of “Hákonar saga Góða.”

¹ The verses of both these skalds have come down to us in other sources.

¹ The present Saltström, a powerful tidal current in and out of the Skjerstadvjord.

¹ About him see the *Laxdæla saga*.

² That is, of Njál and his family; about which see the *Njáls saga*; chapter 129.

³ Concerning the office of *goði*, see Introduction, [page xi](#).

⁴ Vandræðaskjald. See chapter 22, note 3.

¹ That is, the “main” street of the town of Nitharós.

² That is, if I do such a thing.

³ He who bestowed a name or cognomen on someone, whether child or adult, was expected to add a gift.

¹ Now called Hornelen, on the island of Bremanger.

- ¹ They are stanzas 161, 162 repeated.
- ² Of Eyólf Dáthaskáld, see chapter 20.
- ³ Lines 4 and 8 are parts of the refrain.
- ⁴ On the German island of Fehmarn.
- ⁵ Lines 4 and 8 are parts of the refrain.
- ⁶ The raven.

¹ The present town of Ladoga, near the lake of that name in Russia.

² Esthonia and the island of Ösel, respectively.

³ Kenning for “sword.”

⁴ Lines 4 and 8 of each stanza are parts of the refrain.

⁵ Kenning for “king.”

¹ The northern angelica is a large umbelliferous plant growing to a height of several feet. The stalks are used much like celery.

¹ An Icelandic skald.

² Olaf of Sweden (?).

³ Kenning for “ravens.”

¹ The exact location of it is not known. In all probability, though, the battle took place near the German island of Rügen, and not, as Adam of Bremen would have it, in the sound.

¹ King Ólaf Tryggvason.

² Earl Eirík or Sigvaldi?

¹ This effective crescendo account of the approaching fleet of Ólaf Tryggvason ultimately goes back, over Odd Snorrason and Fagrskinna, to the Monk of Saint Gall's story of Desiderius, the King of the Langobards, who from a high tower in Pavia watches the approach of Charlemagne's army.

¹ In his *Funeral Drápa of Óláf*.

¹ In the original, the two adjectives alliterate.

² That is, fleeing.

¹ The Swedes were still largely heathen at the time.

¹ An Icelandic skald.

² Eirík (?).

³ Kenning for “battle.”

⁴ They had sailed ahead.

¹ Earl Eirík.

² *i.e.* the Long Serpent's. Fáfnir was the name of the dragon slain by Sigurth in the legend.

¹ Two lines are evidently missing here, though none of the manuscripts gives an indication of that fact.

² Kenning for “ships.”

³ Kenning for “king.”

¹ Garm is the hell-hound; the whole, a kenning for “battle-axes,” which “bite” the shields with their thin (keen) edges.

² That is, I am a skald.

- ¹ King Ólaf Tryggvason.
- ² Earl Eirík.
- ³ Island off southern Hálogaland.
- ⁴ King Svein: a false rumor.

¹ An Icelandic skald, nephew of Sigvat.

¹ Kenning for “oars.” It was not considered beneath the dignity of kings to take a hand at the oar.

¹ An Icelandic skald. The poem referred to is now called *Víkingavísur* “Stanzas Dealing with a Viking Expedition.”

² The “long ship,” *navis longa*, is a battleship.

¹ The present town of Sigtúna, on a branch of Lake Mælaren.

² The outlet of Lake Mælaren, at the present site of Stockholm.

¹ The island of Ösel, off Esthonia.

² Kenning for “battle.”

¹ The southern coast of Finland.

² Kenning for “ships.”

¹ On the west coast of Jutland.

² Gondul is a valkyrie; her game, “battle.”

¹ Part of the Dutch coast.

² The king, as warder of the laws.

¹ According to the legend, the Virgin Mary despatched Saint Mercury to kill the Apostate, and he ran the emperor through with his spear.

¹ The present Ringmere in East Anglia, the district then ruled by Earl Úlkel.

² Kenning for “battle.”

³ Ella is one of the English kings of that name; the whole, a kenning for “the English.”

⁴ King Ólaf.

⁵ King Knút’s bodyguard.

¹ Here, King Ólaf.

² It is not known who these are.

³ Unknown place name.

¹ Perhaps the village of Dol at the head of the Golfe de Saint Malo, near Saint Michel.

² Kenning for “battle.”

¹ Grislupollar, Williamsby, and Fetlafjord are unidentified.

² The Guadalquivir River in southern Spain.

³ Unidentified.

¹ The town of Guerande in southern Bretagne.

² Touraine.

³ The Loire.

¹ Ólaf Tryggvason. See “Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar,” chapter 57.

² Rognvald Úlfsson, earl of West Gautland. The second half of this stanza evidently does not belong here.

¹ Bothn is the name of the vessel in which the mead of skaldship was brewed; its “flood” (contents), “skaldship.”

¹ In *kviðuhátt* measure.

¹ Unidentified.

² The Wolds, or Lincoln Heights, are a ridge extending from Lincolnshire to Northumberland in a north-south direction.

¹ Kenning for “king.”

² Now, Selje, a small island on the southern side of Cape Stath.

³ Strait between the island of Vagsö and the mainland.

¹ Narrows between the island of Atleö and the mainland.

¹ Against gnats and flies ?

¹ This and other localities mentioned in this chapter are in the Trondheimfjord.

¹ A tax which foreigners had to pay on arrival in Norway as well as on their departure.

¹ By the Icelandic skald, Thórh Særeksson. A *flokk* is a shorter poem without refrain.

¹ The Translator has, in this half-stanza, tried to give an example of the interweaving of sentences in skaldic verse.

¹ Atli is the name of a sea-king; the whole, a kenning for “ships.”

² Kenning for “ravens.”

³ An Icelandic woman skald. Bersi was one of the skald Kormák’s adversaries. This *flokk*, of which we have only the three stanzas here translated, evidently was in the nature of a “head-ransom.”

⁴ Kenning for “warrior.”

⁵ Kenning for “the wealth-dispensing king.”

¹ Kenning for “sailor, king.”

¹ These were of lesser rank than the men composing the king's bodyguard, the *hirth*. The "guests" fulfilled the role of his executive and were used for particularly dangerous missions.

¹ His cognomen *inn digri*, “the Stout,” may also have this meaning.

- ¹ It still forms part of the boundary between Norway and Sweden.
- ² The site of the present town of Sarpsborg.

¹ A farm in Ranríki.

¹ The present city of Novgorod.

¹ It was believed that a king's "luck" was potent and could be conferred by him on one going on a dangerous errand.

¹ In the translation of this and following stanzas of Sigvat's poem *Austrfararvísur* "Stanzas About a Journey East" the attempt has been made to reproduce both the alliteration and the internal rimes of the original.

² Kenning for "ships."

³ Kenning for "ships."

⁴ Ræfil is the name of a sea-king; the whole, a kenning for "ships." They were dragged ashore on rollers for winter.

¹ That is, Sarpsborg.

¹ That is, the present Gudbrands Dale and adjoining valleys.

² This, as well as the localities mentioned in the next chapter, is located near Lake Mjors.

¹ The present town of Eidsvoll.

² Here, the forest between southern Norway and Sweden.

¹ Near Uppsala.

¹ It was etiquette to defer broaching the purpose of one's visit. The more important this purpose, the longer the wait.

¹ The present Karelia, Esthonia, and Courland, respectively.

² Very likely, Snorri is thinking of the Mórathing, the assembly near Uppsala, where the Swedish kings received the oath of allegiance.

¹ The raised platform along the sides of a hall.

¹ Lough Larne, in Ireland.

¹ The following stanzas are part of his *Austrfararvísur*, see chapter 71, note 1.

² Here the Eith Forest.

³ Ironic kennings for “boat.”

⁴ Sacrificial feasts for the elves (*álfar*), the *álfablót*, took place in fall. It has been surmised that the *álfar* were the souls of departed ancestors.

⁵ Ironic kenning for “generous man.”

⁶ The person referred to is unknown.

⁷ The Sognings are the people of the Sogn District; the whole, a kenning for “King Ólaf.”

⁸ Kenning for “ocean.”

⁹ In other words, emissaries from either ruler are to be treated well, reciprocally.

¹⁰ Earl Rognvald.

¹¹ This paragraph repeats what was said above.

¹² Jaroslav, king of Kiev and Novgorod (1016-1054).

¹ Valdimar, Vsevolod. Jarizleif's daughter by Ingigerth was Ellisif, who married King Harald Hardruler. See his saga, chapter 17.

¹ Or what he considered to be so.

² Since the verb *etja* means “to incite,” the name *Atti* probably signifies “the contentious one.” *Dælskr* denotes a “stay-at-home, a dunce.”

³ At the mouth of the Fýrisá River, near Uppsala.

⁴ After the death of King Emund the Old who succeeded his brother Jákob (Onund), Earl Steinkel was elected king of Sweden (1060). He had married Emund’s daughter.

¹ This chapter is in part a recapitulation of “Haralds saga Hárfagra,” chapters 27 ff.

² By Thorbjorn Hornklofi. See “Haralds saga Hárfagra,” chapter 9, note 1.

³ King Malcolm McKenneth (1005-1034).

⁴ For this famous battle see the *Njals saga*, Chapter 157.

⁵ An Icelandic skald, attached first to the Orkney earls, Rognvald and Thorfinn, then to King Magnús. This half stanza is part of his *Thorfinn's drápa*.

¹ In chapter 86. Eyvind had fought against Einar.

² That is, Earl Einar's.

¹ Norway, from the point of view of the Western Islands.

¹ The *Orkneyinga saga*, chapter 19.

¹ The fur trade with the Finns (or, rather, Lapps) was a royal monopoly.

¹ The heathen gods.

¹ The “lair-hoard” of the dragon is gold; its “loather” (enemy), the generous prince.

² The name of a difficult passage between the hamlets of Vági and Sil.

¹ See “Hákonar saga Góða,” chapter 11, note 1.

¹ It is, rather, on the large island of Hinney in the northern Lofoten Islands.

¹ According to the Old Norse adage *náttvíg eru morðvíg* “night slayings are murder.”

² The office of the ninth hour, three o’clock in the afternoon.

¹ It is not known what mounds are referred to nor why this warning is uttered.

² Lake Vangsmjösen.

³ That is, between Lake Vangsmjösen and the Slidrefjord.

¹ Carolus Magnus, Charlemagne.

¹ A fair held in spring at the end of the fishing season.

¹ An Icelandic skald, so called because he is said to have composed a poem (now lost) on his paramour, “coalbrows.” There exists a separate saga about him.

¹ An Icelandic skald, see chapter 50, note 2.

¹ Permia.

² On the island of Ringvatsöy (latitude 70).

³ Finnish *Jumala* “God.”

⁴ On the island of Mageröy, not far from the North Cape.

⁵ Settlement opposite the large island of Senja.

¹ Small island northwest of Bergen.

² Island off Horthaland.

¹ This is a repetition of the account given in greater detail in “Hákonar saga Góða,” chapter 12.

- ¹ An Icelandic skald.
- ² That is, the lampooning verse Stein had composed about him.
- ³ Just west of the city of Trondheim.
- ⁴ Small island not far to the northwest of the town of Álesund.
- ⁵ As a baptismal present.
- ⁶ The name of the place is not given in the best manuscripts.
- ⁷ At the entrance of the Trondheimfjord.

¹ A *mark* is equal in weight to eight ounces.

² Note that the fine was assessed in gold, but that the payments made are in silver.

³ This is a hint as to the role Thórir plays in the battle of Stiklarstathir.

¹ On the day following?

¹ A group of small islands west of Ålesund.

¹ There is a lacuna here in the best manuscripts and the remainder are vague. Obviously words are missing to the effect that the king was enraged and vowed vengeance, but...

² The reference is to the *Færinga saga*, from which much of the preceding account is taken.

¹ Ólaf Tryggvason.

² Ólaf Haraldsson.

¹ This is part of the refrain of the *drápa*. It is completed in stanzas 287, 288. The measure of the *Knútsdrápa* is *töglag*; which consists of eight four syllable lines, with the odd and even lines held together by alliteration, the even lines (in the original) showing *aðalhending* (complete inner rime), the odd lines, irregularly, *skothending* (consonant inner rime).

² That is, Óláf.

¹ The stanza does not seem to fit the context. Nothing is known about Earl Hákon (Eiríksson) having tried to reconcile the king with his yeomen.

¹ Icelandic skald. Only this one stanza of his *drápa* is preserved.

² The Egthirs and Skanings were the inhabitants of the districts of Agthir and Scania.

³ Knút.

¹ Inlet in the Swedish province of Blekinge.

¹ The present town of Roskilde.

¹ Points of land near the present town of Skanör, at the southern entrance to the sound.

² Smaller island off the coast of Halland.

³ Fróthi is a sea-king; the whole, a kenning for “the sea.”

¹ Of Heithmork. See chapter 75.

¹ On the boundary between the districts of Grenland and East Agthir.

¹ Which is all that has come down to us of this poem.

² Concerning its measure see note on stanza 279.

³ The portion of the refrain completing this line is not transmitted.

⁴ A bold headland just west of Lithandisness.

⁵ The present Tjernagel, a cluster of houses some fifteen miles north of the town of Haugesund; or, more likely, the peak of Hornelen. See “Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar,” chapter 85, note 1.

⁶ Now, Stemshesten, a high promontory north of the town of Molde.

⁷ Eelhome is the sea.

⁸ The valley (?) of the Nith River in Trondheim.

⁹ That is, the ravens.

¹ An Icelandic skald. Only a few stanzas of his poem on King Knút are preserved.

² Kenning for “warrior.”

¹ A cluster of small islands west of Cape Lithandisness.

¹ The single sail, fastened to a boom, could be hoisted or lowered by a halyard along the mast.

¹ Small islands between the island of Bókn and Tunguness, northwest of the present city of Stavanger.

² Kenning for “the sea.”

³ Erling.

⁴ Kenning for “the earth.”

⁵ On the island of Mosterey, near the present town of Ålesund, at the southern entrance of Bóknfjord.

⁶ The people of Horthaland.

- ¹ *i.e.* the possession of land, of which he strove to deprive Ólaf.
- ² An Icelandic skald. Eight stanzas are preserved of this poem.
- ³ Gríthr is a troll woman; her “steed” is “the wolf.”
- ⁴ West of Ålesund, as are the localities mentioned in the next chapter.

¹ Northwest of the town of Molde.

¹ Near Lesjar in the Guthbrands Dale.

¹ Between lakes Veneren and Vettern. His route apparently lay over the frozen Veneren, then through the Tiveden Forest.

² Euphemistic for “beheaded.”

¹ Something of the spirit of the previous rightful owner was supposed to reside in a treasured possession of his which would take revenge on the unlawful owner.

² On his return from Russia.

¹ King Ólaf.

² Russia. The two helmings seem to be from different poems.

³ That is, with King Ólaf.

¹ Name of the tidal current in the Pentland Firth.

¹ That is, Great Bulgaria, a dominion about the middle course of the Volga.

¹ The present Swedish province of Dalarna.

¹ Kenning for “fire.”

² People of the district of Trondheim.

¹ All Icelandic skalds.

² “Hethin’s leman” is the valkyrie Hild, whose name signifies “battle.”

³ That is, in Norway.

⁴ Thund is one of Óthin’s names; his “thing-of-arrows” is a kenning for “battle.”

¹ In *fornyrðislag* meter. (Bothvar) Bjarki was one of the heroes among the legendary Danish King Hrólfr Kraki's warriors who fell fighting for his lord. These stanzas are the only ones of the lay preserved in the original. The remainder are found in Saxo Grammaticus' Latin version, *Gesta Danorum*, Book II, 7. For a restoration of it see Axel Olrik's *The Heroic Legends of Denmark*, vol. I, chapter II.

² King Hrólfr's ally.

³ "Wound-snake" is a kenning for "sword."

¹ *Hrút* signifies “ram.”

² Kenning for “battle.”

¹ Some twenty-eight stanzas of this *drápa* are preserved, but not the burden.

² That is, Thóρθ.

¹ In Nitharós; see chapter 245.

¹ Not to be confused with King Óláf's bishop of the same name.

¹ One of Kálf Árnason's brothers.

¹ That is, after Óláf was declared a saint.

² Kenning for “warriors.”

¹ Ygg is one of the names of Óthin; the whole a kenning for “warrior.”

² Kenning for “warrior.”

³ Perhaps Sigvat returned from Rome by way of England.

¹ The Old Norse *bjorn* means “bear.”

¹ Kenning for “warrior.”

² Kenning for “woman.”

¹ Actually, the 31st of August (1030), as determined by the occurrence of the eclipse.

² Kenning for “blood.”

¹ In the *kviðuhátt* measure. See chapter 245 for the rest of the poem. Its title apparently means “Sea-calm-lay”—why is not known.

² “Descendant of the mythical King Dag, prince.”

³ The royal race of Denmark, descendants of King Knút.

¹ This miracle is not reported elsewhere.

¹ Referring to King Óláf's army before the battle of Stiklarstath.

¹ See “Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar,” chapter 32.

¹ Attributed to Sigvat. No more of it is preserved.

² The only stanza preserved of this poem by an unknown skald.

¹ In *dróttkvætt* measure, as distinguished from his *Magnússdrápa* in *hrynhent*, stanzas 374, 375, which has an extra foot.

² This locality has not been identified.

³ That is, Harald Fairhair's.

⁴ The son of the skald Arnór. His poem, called *Magnússflokkur*, appears to have been preserved in its entirety.

¹ See chapter 1, note 1, for the metre.

² Kenning for “battle.”

³ The *ægishjálmr* of the original is probably (like the corresponding Greek, *AIγis*) a helmet (or shield) decorated with the terror-inspiring Medusa or dragon. It is here used figuratively.

⁴ The ravens.

¹ The “market town,” here, Nitharós.

¹ It is uncertain what locality or occasion is referred to.

² Sigvat's father.

¹ East of Cape Lithandisness.

² The warriors' shields were hung along the gunwales of the warships.

³ Nothing of this has come down to us.

¹ See “Óláfs saga Helga,” chapter 122.

¹ See “Óláfs saga Helga,” chapter 203.

² The following lines are in the *fornyrðislag* meter.

¹ That is, Harald Hardruler's, Magnús.

¹ Not to be confused with Thorgeir Flekk; see “Óláfs saga Helga,” chapter 203 and chapter 13 above.

¹ Probably preserved in its entirety.

² See “Haralds saga Hárfagra,” chapter 39.

³ Probably to the effect to let bygones be bygones.

⁴ Probably from the color of its parchment binding.

- ¹ Probably the side planks of the beak.
- ² This stanza is from his *Magnúss drápa hrynhent*.
- ³ The present city of Stavanger.

¹ In north central Jutland.

¹ See “Óláfs saga Helga,” chapter 153.

¹ Stanzas 39, 40 are in *hrynhent*.

¹ Western Pomerania and the island of Rügen, respectively.

¹ “Sea-glow” is a kenning for “gold” (from the treasure of the Niflungs thrown into the Rhine). Its “keepers” are the kings.

² Hethin’s maid is the valkyrie Hild, “battle.”

³ Kenning for “king.”

⁴ Kenning for “warriors.”

⁵ Kenning for “battle.”

¹ That is, who was the leader of the enemy.

² Earl Svein.

³ Men of the Raums Dale.

⁴ Scandinavian term for franklins, farmers.

¹ Earl Svein.

² Inhabitants of Scania.

¹ A Norwegian skald. Only two stanzas of his poem about King Magnús have come down to us.

² See chapter 1, note 1 for the verse.

³ Kenning for “blood.”

⁴ Kenning for “battle.”

¹ Reference to a later exploit of Harald not told by Snorri but evidently known to Thjóthólf.

¹ A brother of Thjóthólf. Of his *drápa* about Harald, only this stanza and 80, 98, and 102 have come down to us besides a few other fragments.

² Kenning for “warrior.”

³ In the *hrynhent* measure, which has end rimes. Of this poem about Harald only a few verses are preserved.

¹ She ruled 1028-1052; Michael Katalaktes, 1034-1041.

² The name of the North Germanic mercenaries serving under the Greek empire.

¹ Mercenaries from the Romance countries; or, possibly, Normans who spoke French.

² An Icelandic skald. Only a few verses of his poem on Harald have come down to us.

³ The legendary king of the Huns who with treacherous intention invited the Burgundian kings Gunnar and Hogni to his court. See the Eddic lay of “Atlakviða.” In the original the sentence forms part of the refrain.

¹ Stúf the Blind was an Icelandic skald at the court of Harald. Some eight stanzas of his *drápa* have come down to us.

² This is part of the refrain, completed in stanzas 452 and 475.

³ The people of the district of Agthir.

¹ He ruled (with Zóë) 1042-1054.

¹ An Icelandic skald. No other verse by him has been preserved.

¹ The harbor of Byzantium.

² The lagoon at the mouth of the Dniepr.

³ Of these, only three stanzas besides the one cited here have come down to us.

⁴ Gerth is a goddess; the whole, a kenning for “woman.”

¹ “Palace-plundering.”

¹ An Icelandic skald. Besides this stanza and 459-462 we have some eight stanzas by him of a poem about Harald.

¹ This sentence is supplied from other sources.

¹ Harald.

- ¹ The present Randersfjord.
- ² Kennings for “woman.”
- ³ Kenning for the fluke of an anchor.
- ⁴ A skald unknown otherwise.

- ¹ Of this poem we have some twelve stanzas.
- ² That is, the inhabitants of the inner reaches of the Trondheimfjord.
- ³ That is, with warlike intent. Red shields indicated that.
- ⁴ Buthli is a sea-king; his pathway, “the sea.”
- ⁵ The present Danish district of Thy which, however, is on the the west side of Jutland.
- ⁶ Incomplete refrain.

¹ Ironic, of course.

¹ About 350 pounds.

² The general assembly of Iceland.

¹ An Icelandic skald. Stanza 497 seems to be the only one of his *Úlfsflokk* that has come down to us.

¹ That is, be slain.

¹ That is, he had to cut Kálf down to prevent his acquiring more power.

¹ King of Dublin 1035-1038 and 1046-1052.

¹ The cross, with the image of Christ on it.

¹ A type of merchant vessel also used for war.

¹ Kenning for “storm.”

² That is, a meeting.

³ A point of land near the mouth of the Gaut Elf River.

¹ The archipelago south of Funen.

² Now called Laholms Bay.

³ In his *Nizarvísur* (*Níz River Strains*), of which seven stanzas are preserved.

¹ Kelpland is “the sea”; the whole, a kenning for “ships.”

¹ Here, honorific for “kings.”

² That is, Harald’s ship.

³ Kenning for Svein.

¹ “One who is in trouble.”

² Which his exhumed skeleton proved to be true.

³ Supplied from the *Friisbok* version.

¹ Snorri evidently does not know who composed it.

² “Blueland” is a poetic synonym for “sea.”

¹ Their present name is Trollhättan Falls, in the Gaut Elf River.

² King Harald.

³ King Steinkel.

¹ Logi is “wild-fire,” and also the name of the divinity of fire; the whole, a kenning for “conflagration.”

¹ Because of a lack of seed corn and draft animals.

¹ Ironic: to join the company of the departed.

² That is, with the prince who feeds them.

¹ Giant, troll.

² The repetition of the last line is a feature of the *galdralag* or “magic measure.”

¹ Meaning Óláf the Stout.

² Kenning for “wolf,” which is the troll women’s mount.

¹ This is the first line of the refrain of Stein's *Óláfs drápa*, continued in stanza 535, and completed in a stanza handed down elsewhere. We have about seventeen stanzas of this *drápa*.

² "Short poem about Harald," in the *fornyrðislag* measure. Its author is not known.

¹ Rime here in the original. The measure is *fornyrðislag*, considered inferior to *dróttkvætt*.

² Hild is a valkyrie; the whole, a kenning for “proud woman.”

¹ An Icelandic (?) skald. Of his poem only this and the following stanza are preserved.

² Valthjóf is the Old Norse form of Old English Wæltheow.

³ Ygg is one of Óthin's names; the whole, a kenning for "warrior."

⁴ Kenning for "wolf" as the mount of troll women.

¹ See the estimate given of King Harold, chapter 91.

² Equivalent to eight ounces of gold.

¹ The reference both here and in the following verse is probably to Saint Ólaf.

¹ See “Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar,” chapter 85, note 1.

¹ Which would have been a fire hazard with the open *langeldar* (long fire) in the middle of the hall.

² The guilds were secular brotherhoods that functioned for the mutual protection of the members.

³ “The town’s help, or improvement.”

¹ The wolves.

¹ For these functionaries, see “Óláfs saga Helga,” chapter 57, note.

¹ In a procession.

¹ A short distance west of the town.

² East of the town.

¹ An Icelandic skald. Nine stanzas of his poem are handed down by Snorri in the following chapters.

² That is, Magnús.

¹ An Icelandic skald. Besides this one, four other stanzas of his poem are preserved.

¹ Svein, Egil, Skjálgr, and Thórir himself.

² Kenning for “woman.”

³ “The fire-of-fray” is a kenning for “sword”; “its waster,” “the warrior.”

¹ The wolves.

¹ District in southern Norway.

¹ Saint Columba's Church on Iona.

¹ Inhabitants of Horthaland.

¹ Muirkertach, the son of Tirdelvagh, was king of Munster 1086-1119.

¹ See “*Magnúss saga ins Góða*,” chapter 11, for his name and genealogy. We are not told of his being outlawed.

¹ An Icelandic skald. The following stanza, as well as stanzas 562 and 563 are part of a *drápa* (in the *second töglag* meter) of which some seven stanzas are preserved.

² An Icelandic skald and King Eystein's marshal. Of him we have more verse material than of any other skald, barring Sigvat (whom he resembled in some respects).

¹ The Holy Land (?).

² Kenning for “the sky.”

³ Of Compostella, in Galicia.

⁴ An Icelandic skald, who seems to have accompanied Sigurth on this expedition. Of his *Útferðar drápa* (*Drápa about a Journey Abroad*) all we have is preserved by Snorri.

¹ That is, Mohammedan.

² Not identified with certainty. Arabic *al-kasr* means “fortification.”

¹ Here, the Barbary Coast.

² The southwesternmost of the Balearic Islands.

³ A *fornyrðislag* stanza, as in 564.

⁴ Kenning for “ships.”

⁵ Kenning for “ships.”

¹ A short distance north of Forminterra.

¹ The Norwegian king.

¹ For *βλαχέρνα* the location of the imperial palace.

¹ Close to, or identical with, Slesvík.

¹ Not identified.

¹ Actually, Lund, on the west side of Scania, is about seventy-five miles distant from Thumathorp.

¹ The present St. Halvard's Street in Oslo.

¹ This *drápa* of 71 stanzas, also called *Geisli (Ray)*, is preserved in its entirety.

¹ Or *Plenarium*: book containing all the material required for the Roman Catholic liturgical service.

¹ Earlier Eirík had fled from his father's brother, Níkolás, to Norway, and had probably received aid from Harald.

¹ Njorth is a god; the whole, a kenning for “prince.”

² King Sigar’s enemy is the hero Hagbarth, who seduced his daughter and was hanged; the whole, a kenning for “the gallows.”

³ English *Husting*, originally a meeting called by the king.

¹ Concerning these see “Óláfs saga Helga,” chapter 57, note 1.

¹ *Múgi* means “mob, multitude of men.”

¹ The present Øvregaten in Bergen.

¹ Snorri's foster father.

¹ Ratibor, duke of Pomerania, († 1152).

¹ Concerning these see “Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar,” chapter 32.

² Contrary to the king’s command?

¹ On the island of Munkholm, outside of the town of Nitharós.

² Weeds (garments)-of-Óthin is a kenning for “armor”; their reddener, “the warrior.”

¹ An Icelandic skald. His poem, of some forty-six stanzas, in *fornyrðislag*, seems preserved in its entirety.

¹ Held at Sarpsborg.

¹ An Icelandic skald. Six stanzas of his *drápa* about King Ingi have come down to us.

² Part of the refrain, which has not been handed down completely.

³ In the Ranríki District.

¹ The patron saint of the Vík District.

² Near Oslo.

¹ The present Ærø, south of Funen.

- ¹ Small island near the present town of Florø (Søndfjord).
- ² So that it would not be visible above the water when sunk.
- ³ The largest island of Norway, lat. 68.30-69.
- ⁴ In *fornyrðislag*, as is 584.
- ⁵ Of Hálogaland.

¹ The fortieth day after Easter.

¹ Island group south of Eastfold, at the entrance of the Oslofjord.

² That is, in heaven.

¹ About him, see introduction p. xvii.

¹ A lacuna in the manuscripts of *Heimskringla* at this point is supplied from the *Fagrskinna* codex.

¹ Kenning for “shields”: the sword blows break against them as the waves on a ness.

¹ An Icelandic skald. Only three stanzas of his poem are preserved.

² Kenning for “warriors.”

¹ In his poem on Eystein (in riming *hrynhent* measure) of which ten stanzas are preserved.

¹ 1135-1154.

² Location unknown.

³ Location unknown.

⁴ Substituted here for the (unidentified) *Partar* of the original.

⁵ There is a Great and Little Langton in the North Riding of Yorkshire.

¹ Inhabitants of Raumaríki.

¹ Not far from the present town of Skien.

² The present village of Etne in Hardanger.

¹ It is not clear which place by that name is meant.

² This statement is not supported.

¹ Unidentified.

¹ “(Ship) clinker-built with beech planks.”

¹ Kenning for “wolf,” the ogresses’ mount.

² Karmt is an island off the southwest coast of Norway; its “ring,” the sea surrounding it.

³ Kenning for “ships.”

⁴ Only these two stanzas of it are handed down to us.

¹ It empties into the sea at the present town of Uddevalla, Sweden.

² “Fated to die.”

³ Near the present town of Skien.

¹ Meaning, to heaven.

¹ The localities mentioned here and in the following chapters are near Oslo.

¹ That is, daughter of King Sigurth Jerusalemfarer.

¹ See “Magnússon saga,” chapter 9.

² That is, in the poem called *Geisli*, stanza 43. See “Magnússon saga,” chapter 30, note 1.

¹ Inhabited by Petchenegs, a Turkish tribe, along the lower Danube.

¹ Waldemar I, “The Great.” He ruled 1157-1182.

¹ Close to Tunsberg.

² “Brave warriors.” Here, ironical.

¹ There is in all manuscripts a lacuna here for the name.

² Apparently a kind of scaffold by the mast (to fight from?).

¹ Both claiming direct descent from King Harald Gilli.

¹ Both in the environs of Bergen.

¹ It is to be borne in mind that no previous king of Norway was crowned nor given the clerical unction.

¹ On the island of Tysnäsø off the southwest coast of Norway.

¹ The present town of Randers.

¹ There is in all manuscripts a lacuna here for the name; but the lake clearly is Lake Mjors.

¹ From twenty-five to thirty English miles.

¹ Whence his cognomen Skakki, which means “Wry-necked.”