



THE BOOK OF THE SAGAS

by
Alice S. Hoffman

Illustrated by
Gordon Browne

London
1913

CONTENTS

Foreword	9
The Story of Odin and the Gods	13
The Story of the Adventures of Thor	28
The Story of Baldur	46
The Story of Frey and Gerda	56
The Story of the Goddess Iduna	62
Of the Punishment That Fell On Loki	67
The Story of Harald Hairfair	72
The Story of King Olaf Tryggvison	84
The Story of Harald the Hardredy	140
The Song of the Mill	169
The Story of Volund	173
Stories of Iceland Folk	185
The Story of the Volsungs	215

FOREWORD

Look at the map of Europe. In the north-west you will see the island of Iceland. The great oceans are wide around it on every side; its northern coast is just touching the Arctic circle. How far off and apart from all the world it seems! How out of touch with the enterprise, the commerce, the strife, with all the activities that make up our ideas of a living national life!

To most people the Iceland of to-day is little more than a name, and the Iceland of the past is entirely unknown. Yet the little island in the far north has a special claim upon all Northern peoples, for she has preserved a Literature which is the record of a race whose blood runs in their own veins, and which was written in the language that was in the days long past common to all of them. In the course of years this one language developed into many languages, through the influence of different conquering races in the different lands; but the little island still kept the old language untouched by foreign invaders, for the rigours of her climate and the wide seas around her made her unattractive and dangerous, and thus protected her. And not only was she able to preserve the old language, but also the character and traditions of her people. And language, character, and traditions were enshrined in a Literature which in beauty and in human interest is as rich as any of the classic literatures of the world.

Let us see how this Literature arose. It was not until the end of the ninth century that Iceland became the home of a settled population. Before then it was probably uninhabited,

except for some few holy men who came from Ireland seeking peace and solitude in the lonely island, and for a few fishermen who came yearly from Ireland and Scotland and dwelt, during the summer season, on its coasts pursuing their industry.

But towards the end of the ninth century, many chiefs with their families and all their followers came over from Norway and settled in the land. Before this time Norway had been broken up into many small kingdoms and these chiefs had been as kings, and had ruled their own little kingdoms, but the mighty Harald Hairfair, himself a King over one of these kingdoms, had fared through the length and breadth of the land warring against all who opposed him, until he had made himself master and sole King of the whole of Norway. And many of the chiefs bowed before him and became his men, but many there were who went to death or exile rather than bend the knee to the overbearing Harald.

Some of the chiefs who escaped, having heard from adventurous seamen of an unpeopled island in the West, set sail for Iceland, and made it their home. They did not mind the ice and snow, for they had been used to these in their own land; and fair and smiling was the little island in the summer season, pleasant with pasture lands, and rich in fish. And for more than sixty years after the first families had settled there, there was a constant stream of chieftains, noble men and yeomen, who fled from the tyranny of Harald. And each chief took a part of the island, and ruled his own people, just as he had done in his own land of Norway, and they prospered and multiplied. Simple they were in their domestic life; well-ordered in their public affairs; brave and adventurous when they fared forth a-warring as far as the world was then known.

And in the new life and land they did not forget the old life and the old country. In the long dark nights of winter

they sat by their fires and, while the men made nets, and the women wove or spun, one of the household would tell or sing the old stories of their gods and kings and heroes. And the children listened, and learnt the stories by heart, and when they were grown to manhood and womanhood, they told and sang the same stories to their children. And so the past was kept alive.

And not only with regard to the past was this done, but the deeds of each chieftain and each hero in each community were kept on record in the same way, so that an almost complete history of the people and the land was made.

And the years passed on and the stories and songs were at last written down, most of them between the years 1140 and 1220. Some have been lost, but many still remain, and it is from these that the stories in this book have been taken.

In one group you will read of the ideas held by this ancient people regarding the making of the world, the wonders of nature, and the mysteries of life. In those early days they were not Christians, but worshipped many gods, of whom Odin, the All-Father, was the chief.

Other stories deal with their chieftains, with the Kings of Norway, and with their heroes, both actual and legendary. Perhaps the greatest of the legendary-heroic stories is the Story of the Volsungs. The story of its hero, Sigurd, is found in many forms in many Northern lands: in Germany it is the subject of Richard Wagner's great music drama of "Siegfried."

The stories that are collected in this book are few in comparison with the many that still exist, but it is hoped that they may arouse an interest in this old and wonderful Literature, in the people who produced it, and in the land which has preserved it.

THE BOOK OF THE SAGAS

THE STORY OF ODIN AND THE GODS AND OF THE MAKING OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Now Odin was the chief of all the gods worshipped by men. They called him the All-Father, for he was the creator of Man, and the maker of Heaven and Earth, the air and all things belonging thereto.

In the beginning there was neither sea nor land, nor air, neither was there nor moon, nor stars. Nothing was there but a great gap or space. But as the ages passed a region of fire was formed in the south, and this region was called Muspell and was guarded by a mighty one named Surtur. And in the north was formed a region of ice and frost. And the cold vapours and ice drifted

towards the fire region, and when they met the heat, they melted into drops.

And the drops took human form, and into the human form came the breath of life. And this being was called Ymir, and he was a Frost Giant, and from him descended the race of the Frost Giants.

And again the drops took form, and this time it was the form of a cow, and the breath of life was breathed into the cow, and with her milk she fed Ymir the Frost Giant. And the cow fed herself by licking the stones that were covered with salt and hoar frost.

And when she had licked the stones for a whole day, there sprung from them the hairs of a man, and at the end of the second day, the head of a man, and at the end of the third day an entire man. Beautiful he was, quick in movement, and full of grace and strength.

And he was called Bur, and he had a son, who was called Bor. And Bor had three sons, and they were called Odin, Vili, and Ve. And Odin, Vili, and Ve ruled the heavens and the earth when they were made, and Odin was the mightiest of the three.

And it befell on a day that Odin, Vili, and Ve slew the giant Ymir, and there ran from his wounds so much blood that all the giants were drowned except one. And that one was a crafty giant, and he went aboard his skiff with his wife, and so, were they saved. And they lived and from them descended all the Frost Giants.

And Odin, Vili, and Ve dragged the dead body of Ymir into the centre of the forest space, and of it

they formed the earth. From Ymir's flesh they made the land, from his blood the seas and waters, from his bones the mountains, and from his teeth and jaws and broken pieces of bones they made the stones and pebbles, and from his hair the trees. And they called the earth Midgard.

And when the seas and the waters of the earth had been made, there was still enough blood to make a vast ocean, which encircled the earth as a ring, and which none could pass. And on the outer shore of this ocean was the land of giants; therefore, on the inner shore did Odin, Vili, and Ve raise a great bulwark to protect mankind from any wicked giants who might wish ill to them. And this bulwark was constructed from Ymir's eyebrows.

And from Ymir's head did Odin, Vili, and Ve form the Heavens, and placed it over the earth. And they set a dwarf at each quarter of the Heavens, and the dwarfs were called, North, South, East, and West. And these dwarfs caught the wandering red-hot sparks that were cast out from Muspell, the region of fire, and set them in the Heavens to give light unto the earth. Thus was the sun given his home, and the moon and stars their dwelling-place. And days and nights and seasons now began.

In this wise did Day and Night come about. There was a giant who had a daughter called Night. Dark-haired she was like all her race, black-eyed and swarthy of complexion. And Night wedded Delling, who was of the race of the gods. And Delling was fair like all the gods, and beauteous, and radiant with light.

And Delling and Night had a son, and he was called Day. And he was glorious, and bright, and beautiful as the god, his father. And Odin, the All-Father, took the child, Day, and Night, his mother. And he gave to them each a horse and car, and set them up in the Heavens. And Odin bade them drive round the world one after the other, and each in twelve hours' time. Night drives first, and every morn her horse bedews the earth with his foam. And when Night has finished her task, Day enters his car, and the mane of his horse sheds light over all the Earth and Heavens.

And Odin, Vili, and Ve cast Ymir's brains into the air, and they became the clouds. And the winds were caused in this wise. At the extreme northern part of the Heavens there sits a giant in the shape of an eagle. And the spreading of his wings for flight makes the winds that rush down upon the earth.

And on a day Odin, and Vili, and Ve walked along the seashore, and there they found two pieces of wood. And they took the one and fashioned it into a man, and they took the other and fashioned it into a woman. And Odin breathed into the man and the woman the breath of life. Vili gave to them mind and the power of movement; Ve gave to them speech and fair features, hearing and sight. And from this man and woman descended the whole human race. And they dwelt within the Earth which is Midgard.

And Odin, and Vili, and Ve built a city for the gods in the middle of the universe, where they dwelt with their kindred. And they called the city Asgard. And they raised a lofty throne there. And Odin sat

upon the throne and surveyed the whole world, seeing all the actions of men, and understanding the motives of everything he saw.

And next the gods built a bridge between Heaven and Earth. And it was called Bifröst, but men call it the rainbow. It was of three colours, and its form and workmanship were of the greatest beauty.

And Odin appointed rulers to judge with him the fate of men. And the gods erected a great hall in the middle of Asgard where they met in council. And at one end was a high seat for Odin, and twelve lower seats for the gods. And the inside and the outside of this great hall were of the finest gold, and the roof was of pure silver. And they called it Glad Home. And the gods sat on their thrones and governed the Heavens and the Earth.

But the most sacred meeting-place of the gods was under a great ash tree which was called Yggdrasil. And this tree was the greatest and best of all trees. Its branches spread all over the world, and reached above Heaven. And it had three roots. And one of these roots spread to Asgard, and another to the land of the Frost Giants, and the third to Niflheim, the land of Death.

And at the root that was in the land of the Frost Giants there was a well called Mimir's Well, for it belonged to a giant called Mimir. And whoever drank of the water of that well was filled with wisdom. And Mimir was all-wise for he drank of its water every morning. And once Odin the All-Father came to the well and begged from Mimir a draught of the water.

And Mimir gave it to him in exchange for one of Odin's eyes.

And every morning did the gods ride on horseback over Bifröst, the rainbow bridge, to the root of Yggdrasil, which was in Heaven. And Odin rode upon his horse called Sleipnir. And Sleipnir had eight legs and was the best of all horses.

And near by the spot where the gods met in council was a holy fountain, and near by the fountain was a fair dwelling. And there lived those maidens who are called the Norns. And the Norns fixed the lifetime of men. And every day the Norns drew water from the fountain and sprinkled the ash with it so that its branches were always fresh and green. And the drops that fell from it to the Earth men called honeydew, and it was the food of the bees.

And there were many fair dwellings in Asgard, but fairest of all was that called Gimli. Its roof was of gold, and brighter than the sun it shone. And it was said of Gimli that it should endure when both Heaven and Earth had passed away, and that there the good and righteous should dwell for ever in bliss.

And Odin made a great hall which was called Valhalla, that is, the Hall of the Chosen. Five hundred and forty doors it had and seats for thousands and thousands of Heroes. There went all those Heroes after death, who, since the beginning of the world had fallen in battle or who had died sword in hand. There did they receive from Odin himself, welcome, and praise, and reward, and there did they live a life of continual feasting and pleasure. Therefore did all men count

the fight the most glorious thing in life, and to die in fight the most blessed end to life.

And every day a great boar was slain, and cooked and eaten by the great throng of Heroes in Valhalla, and every night did the boar become whole again and ready for the next day's feast. And a she-goat who fed on the leaves of a wondrous tree supplied them daily with mead. But Odin himself ate no meat; he drank only of wine, which was to him both meat and drink. And every day for pastime the Heroes rode out into the fields and fought till they had cut each other in pieces. But when the time for the feast came they re-mounted their steeds and returned to Valhalla.

Now Odin wedded Frigga, who knew the destinies of all men, but never revealed them. And Odin and Frigga and their offspring form the race of the Æsir, or gods. Their first-born son was Thor, the god of strength and valour, who was able to quell every living thing. Their second son was Baldur, the best and fairest of the gods, whom all mankind loved. And the third son was Njord, the god of the winds, and the

ruler of the sea, and the fire. And Njord had two children, a son called Frey and a daughter called Freyja, and mighty they were and beauteous. And Frey was the god of rain and sunshine and of summer fruitfulness, and men sought his aid to get good harvests and peace. And Freyja was the goddess of love: wealthy she was, and her mansion was magnificently adorned, and she drove forth in a car drawn by two cats.

And another god was Tyr, the daring and valorous. Warriors sued to him for help before they fought in battle.

And another god was Bragi, famed for wisdom and eloquence. And his wife was Iduna, the goddess who had charge of the golden apples of youth. These did the gods eat when old age approached, and then did they become young again.

And another god was Heimdall, who was called the White god, and also the Gold-toothed god, for his teeth were of pure gold. And Heimdall was the guardian of the bridge Bifröst, and was placed there to prevent the giants from crossing the bridge into Asgard. Little sleep he needed, and he could see in the dark as well as the light for one hundred miles around him. And so quick of hearing was he that he could hear the grass growing on the earth, and the wool growing upon a sheep's back.

And another god was called Hödur. Blind he was, but mighty. And it was owing to his blindness that he brought great sorrow upon the gods, and in Heaven and Earth. And this shall be told hereafter.

And Loki was another god, the god of fraud and cunning and treachery. And he had three children, and their mother was a giantess. And evil were these children, and evil did they work upon the gods and men. The first was the wolf Fenrir, of whom it had been prophesied that he would bring the gods to doom. The second was a serpent which the All-Father threw into the great ocean that surrounded the Earth. And the serpent, holding its tail in its mouth, encircled Midgard. And the third child of Loki was Hela, the goddess of Death, whom Odin cast into Niflheim, the underworld, the abode of all the dead who had not fallen in fight.

And of the goddesses the first was Frigga, the wife of Odin. Then there were Saga, and Eir, famed for her skill in healing, and Freyja, who wept tears of

gold because her husband, Odur, left her to travel in remote lands, and Lofna, and Vora, and Syn and Mina, and Snotra the wise and courteous. And all the gods and goddesses served and obeyed Odin as children serve and obey their father.

Other goddesses there were who served the Heroes in Valhalla, and these were called Valkyrjor. Their duty it was to ride on their swift horses to the battlefields and choose those who were to be slain.

Now, though the gods were all glorious and powerful, yet had it been foretold many times that doom was coming upon them. They knew that the day would surely come when the Earth which they had made, and mankind, and the Heavens and themselves, would all pass away. It had been told, too, how the dread event should come to pass, and they used all their wisdom and power and foresight, hoping to escape their doom.

First, it had been told them, should come six years of winter; of frost and snow and ice and wind, and all this time the sun should give no warmth or gladness. War and strife should rage throughout the Earth, and murder and hatred and greed. Then should the sun be swallowed by a great wolf and another wolf should swallow the moon, and the stars should fall from Heaven. And in the darkness that should then prevail, the Earth should tremble, and mountains fall.

Then should the wolf Fenrir, the son of Loki, opening his enormous jaws, approach, side by side with his brother, the Midgard serpent. And the serpent should pour forth floods of poison into the air, and

the Heavens should be rent in twain. Then the sons of Muspell, the region of fire, led by the mighty Surtur, should ride through, and Bifröst the bridge should break as they passed over it. And Loki, and Fenrir, and the serpent, and the followers of Hela, who is Death, should range themselves together, on the battle-field, against the gods. And it was foretold that in that battle Odin, the All-Father, and Thor, and all the gods, and Heaven and Earth, and all mankind should perish.

Now, the gods sought to save themselves by chaining up the wolf Fenrir. So they made a strong iron fetter and bound him, but Fenrir burst the chain with ease. Then the gods made a stronger fetter, and Fenrir burst this also, but with less ease. And the gods despaired. But Odin sent messengers to the country where dwelt the black elves and bade them forge a fetter that could not be broken. And the dark elves took six things that could not be broken. And these were the six things: the noise made by the footfall of a cat; the beards of women; the roots of stones; the sinews of bears; the breath of fish; and the spittle of birds.

Arid the fetter was smooth and soft as a silken cord, and yet of the greatest strength. And it was called Gleipnir. And the gods thanked the dark elves. And they took it and the wolf to an island in a lake. And they asked the wolf to let them bind him, saying that he would again show his great strength by breaking it. And the wolf would not that they should doubt his strength and courage, but he feared that there was magic in the cord, and that he might be bound for

ever. But at last he said that he would suffer himself to be bound if one of the gods would put his right hand into his mouth until he was free again. And the gods were silent for a space for they knew that whoever consented to the wolf's demand must at least lose his right hand. Then stepped forth Tyr, the god of valour, and put his right hand into the jaws of the wolf. And upon this Fenrir suffered himself to be bound. And he stretched and strained against the fetter, but the more he tried to free himself the faster was he bound. And all the gods laughed aloud — all but Tyr — for the monster had bitten off his hand.

And the gods passed the chain, which was fixed to the fetter, through the middle of a huge rock, and they sank the rock very deep in the earth, and then they fastened the end of the chain to a great stone, and sank that deeper still in the Earth. And the gods rejoiced for they deemed the power of the wolf destroyed.

And it was to help them in the last dread day that the gods encouraged men to fight, promising them welcome and rewards in Valhalla. Thus might they have a great army of heroes ready to fight for them against the powers of Loki and the wolf, the Midgard serpent, and Hela, the goddess of Death.

But those who knew the future still pronounced their doom, the passing away of Asgard and Midgard, and of gods and men; and told that all their efforts against their doom would avail them nothing; that Fenrir would burst his fetter when the time was come; that however great the host of Valhalla Heroes the gods must still be vanquished in the last great fight.

But the words of doom were followed by words of hope. The dead who were righteous, it was said, should live again and live for ever, in fair halls and in continual joy. And out of the sea should spring a new earth, lovelier by far than the first, and so fruitful that the grain should grow unsown. And a new race of men should people the new earth, and a new sun and moon should rise, and life should be glorious beyond all that was ever known before.

THE STORY OF THE ADVENTURES OF THOR IN THE LAND OF THE GIANTS

THOR AND THE HAMMER MJOLNIR

Now Thor was the mightiest of all the gods. And he owed his might chiefly to three precious possessions. One was his hammer, called Mjolnir, which the Frost-giants and Mountain-giants knew well, for it had broken many a head of their forefathers and kindred. And the second of Thor's treasures was the Belt of Strength, which, when he girded it about him, gave him strength beyond all living things. And his third treasure was a pair of iron gauntlets which he was obliged to wear when he would use his hammer.

Now it happened on a morning that Thor awoke, and stretched forth his hand for Mjolnir, the hammer, which always lay beside him. His hand groped everywhere around him, but could not find it. Then Thor arose and searched, but in vain; the hammer was gone.

And great was the wrath of Thor; his red beard quivered, his eyes were aflame, he struck his head and tore his hair.

Then called he aloud for Loki, and told him the (lire news. “Hear now, Loki,” he cried, “what I tell thee, which no one knows on earth, or in Heaven above: Thor’s hammer is stolen!”

And Loki, the god of cunning, advised that they should seek Freyja, the fair goddess of Love, and gain her aid. And they went together to Freyja’s shining hall, and Thor spake to Freyja and said: “Wilt thou, Freyja, lend me thy feather-coat, that perchance I may find my hammer.”

And Freyja answered: “I would give it thee, though it were of gold; I would grant it, though it were of silver.”

And Loki clad himself in the feather plumage and flew away till he came to the land of the giants, which is called Jotunheim. And there he found Thrym, the lord of the giants, sitting on a mound, plaiting golden bands for his greyhounds and smoothing his horses' manes.

And Thrym asked Loki: "How is it with the gods? And why art thou come alone into Jotunheim!"

And Loki answered him: "It is ill with the gods. Hast thou hidden the hammer of Thor?"

Then said Thrym: "I have hidden the hammer of Thor eight miles below the Earth. No man shall bring it back, unless he bring the fair Freyja for my bride."

And at these words Loki flew with all haste from Jotunheim till he came again to Asgard. And there, in the middle court, Thor awaited him. And before Loki reached the ground, Thor cried out to him to tell him his news.

And Loki answered him: "I have had toil, but I bring thee news. Thrym, lord of the giants, has thy hammer, and no man shall bring it back, unless he take him fair Freyja as a bride."

And together they went again to the goddess. And Thor said to Freyja: "Bind on the bridal veil, Freyja; we two must drive to Jotunheim."

Then was the goddess full wroth at his words. So fiercely she panted that the halls of Asgard trembled, and the great necklace, called the Brising necklace, which was the work of the dwarfs, and had been given her by them, burst and fell. And angrily she spoke

and said: "Eager indeed for marriage wouldst thou think me, if I should drive with thee to Jotunheim."

And the gods in despair went into council, and long they deliberated as to how they might get back again the precious weapon. Then spake Heimdall, the White god, he who could see into the future. "Let us bind on Thor the bridal veil, he said: "Let him have the great necklace Brising. Let the keys jingle by his side, and let women's weeds fall about his knees. On his breast let us place precious stones, and daintily let us hood his head."

But Thor was in no wise pleased at this. "Womanish will the gods call me," he cried, "if I let the bridal veil be bound on me."

But Loki said: "Silence, Thor, with words so witless. Soon will the Giants dwell in Asgard unless thou bring home thy hammer."

So they bound on Thor the bridal veil, and hung the gleaming necklace of Freyja around his neck, and the keys jingled at his side, and woman's raiment fell about his knees. And they placed great jewels on his breast, and the hood upon his head. And Loki arrayed himself as a serving-maid, and prepared to set out with Thor to Jotunheim. And hastily they harnessed the goats to the car, and departed.

And Thrym, the lord of the Giants, looked out

from Jotunheim and saw them approaching, and he cried to the giants: "Rise up, giants, and strew the benches! The fair Freyja, my bride, cometh! Gold-horned kine I have, oxen all-black, many treasures I own, and jewels many, only Freyja is lacking."

And the giants made a great feast and many guests assembled, and there came the bride in her bridal raiment and her serving-maiden beside her. And they sat down to the board, and the bride ate eagerly. One ox did she eat, and eight salmon, and of all the sweetmeats prepared for the women, and three casks of mead.

And Thrym, the lord of the giants, wondered at her. "Didst ever see a maid eat so bravely?" he said. And the serving-maiden made discreet answer "Eight nights has the maiden fasted, so eager was she to be in Jotunheim."

And Thrym, the lord of the giants, would fain kiss the fair bride, and he stooped and lifted the veil that fell about her. Then back he leapt the whole length of the hall. "Why are Freyja's eyes so terrible?" he cried. "Methinks that fire burns from her eyes."

And again the serving-maid made discreet answer: "Eight nights has Freyja had no sleep, so eager was she to be in Jotunheim."

Then said Thrym, the lord of the giants: "Bring in the hammer of Thor to hallow the bride. Lay Mjolnir on the maiden's knee." For it was the custom for men to call upon Thor to hallow their marriage ceremonies with the hammer, Mjolnir.

And Thor laughed in his heart at these words of

the giant, and full of glee he was when they brought the hammer and placed it on his knee. And he seized it and leapt to his feet, throwing aside the bridal veil. And first he killed Thrym, the lord of the giants, and all the race of giants he crushed.

Then he and Loki returned to Asgard and the gods rejoiced in the recovery of Mjolnir.

THOR IN THE CITY OF UTGARD

Now on a day Thor set out on a journey, in his car drawn by two he-goats. Loki was with him and they travelled on together till night fell. Then they came to a peasant's cottage, and they besought shelter of him. Thor killed his goats and put the flesh to cook in a kettle. And when it was ready he invited the peasant and his family to share the meal. And they sat down together, and Thor bade them throw all the bones into the skins of the goats which were lying by the fire. And Thjalfi, the peasant's son, broke one of the shank bones, that he might take the marrow from it, but Thor (did not notice what he had done. And after the meal they betook them to rest.

And at the dawn of day, Thor arose and took his hammer and came to the goatskins with the bones piled upon them. And he lifted up the hammer over the skins, and straightway the two he-goats took form again. Then did Thor see that one limped badly, and he knew that one of the bones had been broken. And very angry grew the god, and he knit his brows, and grasped his hammer fiercely in his hand, and came to

the peasant and his family. And they were terror-stricken, and besought pardon, offering to make amends with anything which they had. And Thor, seeing their fear and penitence, restrained his wrath, but demanded as recompense the peasant's son Thjalfi, and his daughter, Roska. And these became his bond servants, and have followed him ever since.

And now Thor set out again, taking the road to Utgard, the land of the giants. He left his car and his goats with the peasant and started on foot, with Loki, and Thjalfi, and Roska. And they came to the shores of a great sea, and over this they passed, and found themselves in a strange country. And they came to a dense forest, and wandered there all the day.

And when darkness fell they searched about for shelter, and at last came to a very large dwelling. And finding no one about they took shelter in one of the chambers. And towards midnight the whole building was shaken as if by an earthquake. And Thor started up and grasped Mjolnir, his hammer, and awakened his companions that they might seek safety together.

And they found another chamber, and while the others, trembling with fear, crept into the farthest corner, Thor stood at the entrance, with the hammer in his hand, ready for defence. And presently a terrible groaning was heard which continued through the night. And at break of day Thor went out, to find the cause of the noise, and he saw, lying near, an enormous giant. He was asleep and snoring, and his snores were the groans which they had heard all the night.

And Thor girded on his belt of strength and grasped his hammer, for he knew that he would need all his strength to encounter this monster. And at this moment the giant awakened, and stretched himself, and stood up. A fearsome sight he was, and Thor for the first time in his life could do nothing more than ask the giant his name.

“My name is Skrymir,” said the giant, “and I know that thou art the god Thor. But where is my glove?” And he stretched out his hand and picked up his glove, which, to Thor’s surprise, was the dwelling in which they had lodged during the night, their chamber being the thumb of the glove.

And now they all took their morning meal, and when it was finished, Skrymir suggested that the remainder of the provisions should be put together in one wallet. And Thor consented, and the giant put all the meat into his wallet and slung it on his back. Then they set on together, the giant leading the way and taking enormous strides. And all day long he continued without once stopping, but at dusk they came to a great oak tree, and there he told them they would pass the night.

I would fain sleep,” he said, “but you take the

wallet and eat.” And he stretched himself on the ground and was soon fast asleep and snoring loudly.

Now, unnoticed by Thor, the giant had bound up the wallet containing the meat with iron wire, and now, when Thor and his companions would eat, none of them could loosen the string of the wallet. And Thor tried every way, but still it remained as fast as ever. And angrier and angrier he waxed, till at last he grasped his hammer with both hands, and striding towards the giant, he brought it down with all his might on the giant’s head. But Skrymir, knowing his purpose, brought a rocky mountain between him and Thor, at the very moment that Thor struck at him, but the mountain was invisible to Thor.

So the great god of Strength was mightily amazed when the giant sat up and asked: “Was that a leaf that fell upon my bead?”

And Thor, shamed at his failure, answered that he was just going to rest, and he went and laid himself down. But he could not sleep. And when the giant was again snoring so loudly that the forest re-echoed with his noise, Thor rose and grasped his hammer again, and struck at the giant with all his strength. And again the giant, in the very nick of time, protected himself with the mountain, but the blow of the hammer was so great that it struck right through to his skull. But he sat up and said quietly: “What’s the matter? Did an acorn fall on any head?”

And Thor answered in shame that he was about to sleep, and hastened away. And wroth was Thor, and right sore at the failure of his strength. But he

determined to strike a third blow. And when the day was breaking and Skrymir's snores again resounded through the forest, Thor arose, and took his hammer, and summoning all his strength, he brought it down on the giant's head, and the giant was again quick enough to place the mountain between himself and Thor, but even so the hammer went right through and into the giant's cheek up to the handle.

And Skrymir sat up and stroked his cheek, and said: "Are there any birds perched on this tree? Me-thought some moss fell on my head."

And he rose and dressed, and directed them on their road towards the city of Utgard, saying that his road lay in another direction. Thereupon he threw his wallet over his shoulder and strode forward into the forest, and Thor was well pleased to part from him, for he deemed himself beaten and shamed. Yet the truth was that his three blows had been so wondrous mighty that you may still see in the mountain with which Skrymir protected himself, three deep glens, which were caused by Thor's hammer.

And now Thor and his companions went on, until, near noon, they saw a great city standing in the middle of a plain. And they went up to the gateway, and found it locked and barred. And Thor tried to open it, but in vain. So he and his companions crept through the bars, and went on through the city till they came to a large palace. And the door being wide open they went in. And in the great hall they saw a number of giants sitting on benches, and farther on they saw the King. And they saluted the King with

great respect, but he looked scornfully upon them, and asked what feats they were skilled in, saying that no one was allowed to stay there who did not excel in some feat or other, above all men.

And Loki cried: "My feat is to eat quicker than anyone else."

"That will indeed be a feat," said the King, "if thou doest what thou promisest."

And he called to one of his men, who was named Logi, to come and try his skill with Loki. And a trough filled with meat was set upon the floor, and Loki placed himself at one end and Logi was at the other end. And they began to eat as fast as they could. But when they met, it was found that Logi had devoured flesh and bone, and the trough as well, while Loki had eaten only the flesh. So all the giants cried out that Loki was beaten, and so indeed it seemed. But the truth was that Logi was nothing else but a devouring flame, and therefore was it that Loki's skill availed him nothing.

And the King of the giants looked upon Thjalfi and asked him, scornfully, what feat he could perform. And Thjalfi, who was of all men the swiftest of foot, answered that he would run a race with any that might be matched against him. And the King looked scornfully upon him and said that skill in running was something to boast of, yet would he have to be very swift of foot if he would race the man that he would set against him.

And they went out to a great plain and the King called a young man named Hugi to him, and made

him run with Thjalfi. And they ran three courses, and each time did Hugi far outrun Thjalfi. And all the giants cried out that Thjalfi had failed, but in truth he had performed a great feat, for Hugi was Thought, and none can outrun Thought in swiftness.

Then said the King to Thor: "What canst thou do, O Thor, to prove thy fame?"

And Thor answered he would begin a drinking match with any one. And the King bade his cupbearer bring to him a large horn, and when it was brought, the King said: "A good drinker will empty that horn at a single draught, though some men will make two of it, but a puny drinker will do it in three."

And Thor looked at the horn, which seemed of no great size, but somewhat long. And being thirsty, he put the horn to his lips and took a long pull at the drink, thinking to empty it at the first draught. But lo, when he set the horn down, and looked into it, there seemed as much liquor there as before he had tasted it.

"I would not have believed it," said the King, looking contemptuously upon the god, "had it been told me that Thor could drink no greater draught than that."

And Thor was wroth, but he said nothing. And again he put the horn to his lips, and took a long draught, and this time the horn could be carried without spilling, but that was all.

Then said the King: "I think thou wilt hardly be called so mighty a man here as thou art among the gods, if thou can show no greater skill in any feat than thou showiest in drinking."

And Thor, exceeding wroth, again set the horn to his lips, and drank with all his might, yet, when he set it down, the liquor was only a little lower. And he was ashamed and gave back the horn to the cupbearer. Now, one end of the horn reached into the sea, therefore none could empty it, even in three draughts, but Thor had drunk so marvellously that the sea had sunk to a considerable extent.

“What new trial canst thou propose?” Thor asked of the King, ashamed at what he thought to be his failure.

“We have a very trifling game here,” said the King disdainfully, “which none but the children play. It is to lift my cat from the ground, a feat which I should not have dared to mention to Thor, had I not seen that thou art by no means so great as thy fame.”

And now a large grey cat sprang on to the floor. And Thor put his hand underneath him, and exerting all his wondrous strength tried to raise him from the floor, but he only succeeded in lifting one of his feet.

Now the grey cat was in truth the great Midgard serpent, and Thor had raised him so high from the sea that the giants were all terror-stricken at his amazing feat. But Thor deemed he had failed to lift a cat, and exceeding wroth he was, and shouted that he would wrestle with any that should come against him.

“I see no one here,” said the King coldly, “who would consent to wrestle with one so weak as thou art; but call hither that old crone, my nurse, Elli, and let Thor wrestle with her.”

And they called, and there came into the hall a

toothless old woman, and the King bade her wrestle with Thor. And they wrestled, but the tighter Thor held her, the firmer did she stand her ground. And at length, after a fierce struggle, Thor was brought down on one knee. And he was sore ashamed; but Elli was no old woman, but Old Age itself, which lays low every man in his time.

And now the King called upon them to stop, and he spoke more kindly to Thor and his companions, and showed them to their seats at the board, and they spent the night in good cheer.

And in the morning they arrayed them for departure. And the King came to them, and his men set before them the best of food and drink, and afterwards led them to the gate of the city. And as they parted the King asked Thor how he thought his journey had sped, and Thor answered that he had brought great shame on himself in that they must regard him as a man of little worth.

But the King answered that he would now tell him all the truth, seeing that if he had his way, Thor should never enter the city again. And he told Thor all the truth, praising his wondrous prowess and great strength. And when Thor heard him speak thus he was filled with rage, and lifted his hammer to strike him, but the King had disappeared. Then Thor turned to go back to the city, thinking to destroy it, but lo, where the city had stood was nothing but a green plain.

So Thor returned to Asgard, but he determined to revenge himself by attacking the Midgard serpent as soon as he might.

THOR AND THE MIDGARD SERPENT

And on a day Thor set out alone, and without his car and goats. And he took upon him the form of a young man. And at dusk he came unto the dwelling of a giant named Hymir. And he begged for shelter for the night.

And in the morning he saw how the giant made ready his boat for fishing, and he begged that he might accompany him. But the giant answered that such a weakly stripling was of no use to him, and that he would catch his death of cold if he were to stay out at sea as long as he was used to do. At these words Thor waxed wroth, and he was fain to cleave the giant's skull with Mjolnir, but he restrained himself, wishing to keep all his strength for other feats.

So he pressed the giant to let him go with him, and at last Hymir consented, telling him gruffly that he must find his own bait. At this Thor went up to a herd of oxen which belonged to the giant, and choosing the largest bull, wrung off its head and brought it back with him into the boat for bait.

And Thor took two oars, and rowed off, and Hymir rowed at the prow. And Hymir was amazed at the speed of the boat. And when they had come to a certain spot, the giant would stop there, but Thor said he would go a great way farther yet. And he went on rowing till Hymir cried out in terror that they would be in danger from the Midgard serpent.

Still farther went Thor, but at last he lay down his oars, and baited his fishing-rod with the bull's head. And the bait went right to the bottom of the sea, and

the great serpent caught at it, and the hook stuck fast in his mouth, and he struggled violently, so that the boat was nearly upset.

And now Thor gathered all his great strength and pulled so hard at the line that his feet went through the bottom of the boat, and right down to the bottom of the sea. Then with his hands he drew up the great head of the serpent to the side of the boat. And Thor glared upon the serpent in great wrath while the monster poured out floods of venomous poison upon him.

And the giant Hymir trembled with fear at the sight, and just as Thor raised his hammer to kill the serpent Hymir took his knife and cut the line, and the serpent sank back again into the sea. But Thor struck at him as he sank, and some there are who say that he struck the monster's head off, but it is more likely that he escaped in consequence of the giant's interference.

And Thor turned next upon Hymir, and struck him such a blow with his fist that he fell into the sea, and was killed. Then Thor waded back to land again, and went home to Asgard.

THE STORY OF BALDUR

Now, the second son of Odin was called Baldur, and of all the gods was he the most loved. Baldur the Fair was he sometimes called and sometimes Baldur the Good. Beautiful and majestic he was in form and feature, and so bright and fair to behold that it seemed as though golden light streamed from him. No white herb, even the whitest of herbs, could compare with the whiteness of Baldur's brow. And gentle he was, and wise, and pitiful, and a speaker of fair and gracious words. In his life there was nought but good, and in his judgments he was ever unerring and true.

And Baldur's wife was the fair and tender-hearted goddess, Nanna, and they dwelt in the great mansion called Broadbeam. A bower of radiant splendour was Broadbeam, and it was said of that abode that nothing evil could enter therein.

And it came to pass that Baldur dreamed a terrible dream, and after that no dream of joy or gladness ever came to him again, but hardly was there a night when he was at rest. Night after night did strange fearsome dreams come to him that seemed warnings of some great danger threatening his life.

And at last, on a time when the gods were assembled together in council, he told them of his restless nights of horror. And the gods talked long over the matter, and they questioned the wise seers of the future as to what these dreams might forebode, though well they guessed their meaning. And the seers answered that the dreams foreboded death to the dearest of all the gods. And Odin and Frigga were sore grieved at the words of the seers, and all the gods and goddesses grieved with them.

And Odin, the All-Father, could not rest for his grief and the great fear which was upon him of that unknown evil which was to overwhelm his dearly-loved son. He resolved to descend into the dark underworld, into those shadowy regions presided over by Death, and there find out from one who had long been dead, and who knew all secrets, what should be Baldur's fate, and by whom it should come.

And Odin mounted Sleipnir, his eight-legged coal-black horse, and rode with all speed down the yawning steep to the drear land. And when he reached the Eastern gate, he sought the tomb of a long-dead prophetess. And when he had found it, there he sat him down awhile upon the ground.

And, presently, looking about him, he saw a great

hall prepared as for the coming of an honoured guest; the benches strewn; a brave feast spread; the board glittering with its burden of golden goblets filled to the brim with honey-mead. And at the sight the All-Father was troubled and his fears grew upon him.

And he looked again and saw a golden bed, spread with rich coverings, and ready for the coming guest. And with dread in his heart, Odin sprang to his feet, and turned him to the north, and thrice pronounced the awful words which awaken the dead. And from the tomb there came a hollow, sullen sound, and a voice cried "What man, unknown to me, is he that wakes me? Snow has snowed on me, rain has beaten me, dew has drenched me; I have long been dead."

And Odin answered that he was an unknown traveller who would fain learn of the Prophetess certain things. And he asked for whom the great feast and the golden bed were spread. And the voice unwillingly replied: "Pain shall reach the sons of Heaven! Spread is the feast and spread is the bed for Baldur! Balder must die!"

And as the voice faded away, Odin cried again with a great cry, and commanded the Prophetess to speak again and tell him what was the danger that awaited Baldur, and who should bring it upon him. And the voice answered: "In Hödur's hand the hero's doom! Hödur will be Baldur's slayer, and rob Odin's son of life."

And at these words Odin leapt to his feet in horror, and to I now before him passed a long procession of women, white-veiled and solemn, who bent their mournful brows to the earth, and tore their golden tresses, while the air re-echoed their wail of woe. And in anguish, the All-Father turned upon the Prophetess, mocking at her, and denying her power of prophecy. But the voice answered him that nought should save Baldur from his doom. And Odin hastened from the spot. And he mounted Sleipnir, and returned to Asgard, downcast and sorrowful.

And Odin told the words of the Prophetess to the gods in council, and long they talked together, hoping to find some way of escape. And Frigga advised that they should exact a solemn oath from all things that they would do no harm to Baldur. And so it was done. And fire and water, iron and all the metals, stones, earths, diseases, poisons, beasts, birds, and creeping things all cheerfully swore the oath to the goddess Frigga. Then were the gods once more at rest, for they believed that they had turned aside the doom which threatened the beloved Baldur.

And so sure were the gods of Baldur's safety, that now it became their favourite pastime to make

Baldur stand up as a mark at their meetings, while some hurled darts at him, some threw stones, and others even struck at him with their swords and battleaxes. And never did harm come to Baldur from any of these exploits, for all things were true to the oath they had given.

But Loki, the evil god, looked on at these pastimes with malice in his heart towards Baldur, whom all things so loved, and he longed for his hurt and his downfall. And on a day as he sullenly watched the gods shooting at Baldur, he determined to question the goddess Frigga, who had taken the oath from all things, so that he might find out if there was anything that had not sworn the oath.

So he took the form of a woman, and hastened to the mansion of Frigga, and when he was come unto her, he drew her into talk concerning the gods and their doings. And Frigga asked what the gods were then doing, and the pretended woman replied that they were hurling weapons and stones at Baldur, none of which harmed him.

“Ay,” said the goddess, “metal nor wood shall not hurt Baldur, for I have taken an oath from them.”

And the woman said: “Have all things then sworn to spare Baldur?”

And Frigga answered: “All things but one; and that is a tender little shrub that grows on the eastern side of Valhalla, and is called the mistletoe. That I thought too young and feeble to crave an oath from.”

And as soon as he could after hearing this, Loki hurried away. And he took upon him his own shape,

and went to the place where Frigga had told him the mistletoe grew. And high above the meadows he saw it, slender and fair, and he cut it off, and took it to the spot where the gods were still amusing themselves with their favourite sport.

And Loki saw Hödur, the blind god, standing apart from the rest, for he could not share in the game because of his blindness. And he went up to Hödur and said: “Why dolt thou not throw something at Baldur?”

And Hödur answered: “Because I am blind, and

see not where Baldur stands, neither have I anything to throw.”

Then said Loki: “Thou must do as the others, and show honour to Baldur. Here is a twig; come, shoot it at Baldur. I will guide thine arm towards the place where he stands.”

And Hödur took the mistletoe from Loki and Loki guided his arm, and he hurled it at Baldur. And with a sharp cry Baldur fell dead, and all the gods stood still and speechless with horror. And after some moments they turned and looked in each other’s faces, and all were of one mind to lay hands on him who had done that deed, the direst deed that had ever been wrought by gods or men. But they durst not lay hands on him there, for that meeting-place was sacred. Then did they break out into loud lamentations, yet not one was able to speak the grief that was in his heart.

But greatest of all was the sorrow of Odin and Frigga, and Nanna the wife of Baldur, and they bowed them down and wept aloud. And when some of her anguish was spent, Frigga raised herself and cried: “Who is here that would gain my love and good will? Let him then ride to Hela, and offer her a ransom, that Baldur, my son, may return again to Asgard.”

And Hermod, the son of Odin, the humble and eager-hearted god, answered that he would do her will and undertake the journey. And they brought swift Sleipnir, the horse of Odin, and Hermod mounted him, and he galloped away.

Then did the gods raise the body of Baldur and sorrowfully they bore it to the seashore. There stood

Baldur's ship, "Ring-horn," the greatest of all ships. And when the ship was launched, they prepared the bale or funeral fire and placed the body of Baldur upon it. Then came Odin, and Frigga with him, and Nanna, and Frey, in his car drawn by a boar, and Freyja in her chariot drawn by cats, and all the gods and goddesses and many Frost giants and Mountain giants. And when Nanna saw the body of Baldur laid upon the ship she stretched out her arms to him, and gave a great wail of agony, so that her heart broke, and she fell dead. And the gods lifted her and placed her body beside Baldur's on the bale-fire. And they brought also Baldur's horse, in all his richest trappings, and him, too, they led to the fire. And the flames were kindled. And Odin flung into them the precious gold ring called Draupnir, which had the power of producing, every ninth night, eight rings like itself.

Meanwhile, Hermod rode on in all haste to the land ruled over by Hela. For nine days and nine nights he rode through glens so gloomy that he could discern nothing around him. Then he came to a loud roaring river, and rode over it on a glittering golden bridge which trembled under him. And the maiden who kept the bridge asked him his name and who he was. And she told him that the day before five troops of dead persons had ridden over the bridge, and had not shaken it as much as he alone.

"But why dost thou ride to the region of Death?" she asked. "Thou hast yet the bloom of Life on thee."

"I would find Baldur," answered Hermod. "Has he yet passed this way?"

And she answered “Yea,” and showed him the way he must take. Then on went Hermod, and at last he came to the barred gates of the dark land. And he leapt from Sleipnir, and tightened the saddle-girths, and remounting, spurred him forward so fiercely that he cleared the great gates without even touching them.

And on he rode again until he came to the palace of Hela. And he dismounted and entered the great hall. And there sat Baldur in the high seat. And there, too, was Nanna. And they rejoiced at their meeting, and talked together long into the night.

And in the morning Hermod sought Hela, and prayed her to set Baldur free from that dread land of shadows, telling her that in Asgard was there nothing heard but the sound of sorrow and wailing. And Hela answered: “It shall be put to proof whether Baldur is so beloved as is said of him. Therefore, if it be found that all things, living and dead, weep for Baldur, then shall he return to Asgard, but if there be even one thing that shall speak against him, or refuse to weep for him, he shall remain in this land.”

And Hermod rose and returned to Baldur, and told him the words of Hela. Then did he array himself for departure. And the horse Sleipnir was brought. And Baldur and Nanna led Hermod out and bade him farewell. And Nanna sent rich gifts to Frigga, and Baldur sent to Odin the ring Draupnir as a keepsake. Then Hermod rode forth, and came again after long journeying to Asgard, and he told the gods all that had befallen him in the land of Hela, and the words

which Hela had spoken, and the gods rejoiced in the hope that Baldur should return to them again.

And without delay they sent messengers forth throughout the world begging all things to weep so that Baldur might be delivered from Death. And right willingly did all things weep, men and all other living things, and earths, and stones, and rocks, and trees, and metals. And the messengers turned back full of content at their success. But on their way they found an old woman sitting in a cavern, and to her also they made their request. And the hag looked sullenly upon them and muttered: "Let Hela keep what is hers; nought but dry tears will I weep for Baldur: what is he to me?" And though they besought her again and again, no other answer would she give.

Now did they return in sorrow to the gods. And when their story was told, many among them believed that the hag was no other than Loki himself, who had changed his shape, and put himself in their way, to work more evil against the gods.

And never more did Baldur return to Asgard. But it was foretold that when the gods and men and Heaven and Earth had passed away, there should arise a new earth, lovely and verdant, and Baldur should live again with many others he had known in Asgard. Then should they rejoice together in happy converse, in remembrance of former knowledge, of perils undergone, and fights well fought, and all the grief of their past parting should be forgotten.

THE STORY OF FREY AND GERDA

Frey, the bright god of the summer sun and rain, and the fruits of the earth, was the son of the god Njord. It befell on a day that he seated himself on Odin's high throne from which could be seen all the worlds. And many wonderful and beautiful sights he saw, till, turning his eyes to Giantland he saw the most wondrous and beautiful sight of all. He saw a large and stately mansion, and passing from the great hall of the mansion to her bower, was a maiden of surpassing beauty. So radiant was she that it seemed to the god that a bright light shone from her and illumined the air and the waters and the worlds around.

And a great love of the maiden filled the heart of Frey, and he longed to make her his wife, yet knew he not how to win her. At this he was seized with a sudden sadness, which increased as he returned to his home. And all the day he sat alone, grieving and longing, refusing food, speaking to none, and all the night he lay awake, troubled in mind and sick at heart. And Njord and Skadi, the father and mother of Frey, called to them Skirnir, the Light bringer, who was the servant of Frey, and bade him speak to Frey, and ask him the reason of his sadness. And Skirnir feared to speak thus to his master, but he promised to do so.

And Skirnir went to Frey, where he sat alone and gloomy, and he said to him: "Tell me now, Frey, thou prince of gods! why dost thou sit alone in the hall the live-long day?"

And Frey answered him sadly: "Great is the burden of my heart: the sun shines each day as ever, but not for me."

And Skirnir brought to his mind their days of youth together, and besought him for their sake to trust him and to tell him all.

Then did Frey tell Skirnir of the maiden he had seen in Giantland, of her wondrous beauty and of his love, and of how it seemed to him that it was fated that they should not wed.

And Skirnir sprang to his feet, crying: "Give me but thy steed to bear me safe through the dim, flickering flame, and thy sword which wages war of itself against the giant race, and I will bring the maiden to thee."

Arid Frey, rejoicing, gave him the sword and eleven golden apples and the great gold ring Draupnir as gifts for the maiden, and brought him in haste to where the horse stood. And Skirnir leapt upon his back and rode forth in the darkness. And he came into Giantland and to the great mansion of Gymir, the giant. And Gymir was the father of the fair maiden whom Frey loved. And her name was Gerda.

And at the door of Gerda's hall were fierce dogs chained to protect the maiden, and Skirnir knew not how he should pass them and get speech with her. And he dismounted from the horse and let him graze upon the grass.

And Gerda, within the hall, heard a strange clashing and clanking, and it seemed to her that the earth trembled and that the great hall of Gymir was shaken. And she sent her serving-maid to see what had befallen. And the serving-maid, returning, told of the stranger that stood without the hall.

Then said Gerda: "Bid him enter our hall, and drink of the bright mead." And they brought Skirnir before her, and Gerda asked him: "Who art thou, and why hast thou fared alone through the flickering fire to visit our halls?"

Then Skirnir told her of his master, the bright god, Frey, and of his love for her. And he showed her the eleven golden apples and the precious ring which once had been burned with Baldur, and which every ninth night let fall eight golden rings like itself. And he told her that these should be hers if she would be the bride of Frey.

But Gerda answered him coldly and showed no desire for the precious gifts of Frey. And Skirnir's anger rose against her, and he showed her the magic sword which Frey had given him, and wrathfully he spake and told her that if she would not consent he would hew her head from her neck.

But the giant-maiden laughed at his threats till Skirnir, waxing ever more wroth, swore to kill her father and to bring upon her, by magic art, the direst woes and the awful anger of the gods.

Then kindlier grew the maiden, and she brought to Skirnir a foaming cup filled with the famous old mead. And Skirnir's anger passed, but still was he,

resolute in demanding the maiden. "Tell me all," he said, "before I ride hence. When wilt thou meet the stalwart son of Njord?"

And Gerda yielded to his will, saying: "In the pine-needle wood, the wood of tranquil paths, will Gerda meet the son of Njord and bestow her heart's love nine nights hence."

And Skirnir rode hastily homeward. And Frey waited without for his coming, and when he saw him, he ran to him and besought him for his tidings, even before he should unsaddle his horse.

And Skirnir told him all. Long seemed the time of waiting to Frey, but no more did he sit alone in grief. And when nine nights had passed, Gerda kept her word, and Frey brought her to the land of Asgard, and they were wedded. But it was said by those who knew the future, that dearly had Frey bought the maiden by the gift of his sword to Skirnir, for in the great day of doom which was coming he should be weaponless, and Surtur should slay him.

THE STORY OF THE GODDESS IDUNA AND HER GOLDEN APPLES

The goddess Iduna was the wife of the god Bragi. In her charge were the golden apples of youth, which she kept for security in a box. And when the gods felt old age approaching they had but to taste of the golden apples and their youth was renewed. Thus it was that the gods never grew old.

Now it happened on a day that Odin and Loki and Hœnir were on a journey. And they came to a place where some oxen were grazing. And the gods were hungry. So they killed one of the oxen. And lighting a fire, they put the flesh into a kettle and placed it over the fire to boil. But every time they looked into the kettle they found the flesh as raw- as when they put it in. And while they wondered over the strange occurrence, they heard a noise overhead, and, looking up, they saw a great eagle in the branches on an oak tree. "Give me my share of the meat and it shall be quickly boiled," said the eagle. And as they were hungry the gods said yea to this. Then the eagle flew down and carried off a leg and two shoulders of the ox.

At this Loki waxed wroth, and seizing a large piece of wood he struck the eagle on the back as he was flying away. But the eagle was none other than the giant Thjassi, clad in his eagle plumage, and to

Loki's horror he found that the one end of the piece of wood stuck to the eagle's back, while of the other end he could not let go his hold.

And the giant flew on, carrying Loki with him over rocks and forests till he was nearly torn to pieces. Then did Loki pray for peace, and Thjassi told him he should be set at liberty if he would bind, himself by a solemn oath to return to Asgard and bring back to him the goddess Iduna and her golden apples.

And Loki bound himself by oath to do this. Thereupon the giant sent him free, and Loki, torn and bleeding, returned to his companions. But he told them nothing of his oath to Thjassi.

And when they had returned to Asgard, Loki sought out Iduna, and told her, that in a forest a little distance from Asgard, he had seen much better apples than those which she kept for the gods. And he persuaded her to fetch her apples, and to go with him to the forest so that she might compare the two qualities.

And the goddess, thinking no guile, fetched the precious apples, and set out with Loki. And directly they entered the forest Thjassi, the giant, in his eagle plumage, flew down and caught up Iduna and her apples and carried her off to Giantland.

And Loki returned to Asgard and nought said he of the occurrence to the gods. And the gods were sad at the strange disappearance of Iduna and her golden apples. And time passed on, and the gods began to grow old. The bloom of youth faded from their cheeks and wrinkles showed instead and their bright hair changed to grey. And just as they began to despair, they discovered that Loki, the guileful, the mischief-maker, was the cause of their disaster, as he had been, and would ever be, of other disasters to the gods. And with such grievous punishment did they threaten him in their wrath, if he did not restore Iduna and her youth-giving apples to Asgard, that Loki at once set about devising a scheme for taking her away from the giant.

He borrowed from the goddess Freyja her falcon plumage, and flew away to Giantland. And it happened that the giant Thjassi was out at sea fishing, so Loki quickly changed Iduna into a sparrow and flew off with her. And soon Thjassi returned and he saw what had

happened. So he clad himself in his eagle plumage and flew after them.

And the gods anxiously watched for the coming of Loki, and at last they saw him flying towards them with Iduna, in the shape of a sparrow, in his claws. Then they saw the giant Thjassi with his great eagle wings outspread, getting nearer and nearer to Loki and his precious burden.

And the gods hastened and brought bundles of chips and placed them on the walls of Asgard. And the moment that Loki had flown over the walls, they set fire to the chips, and Thjassi's feathers were caught by the flames and he fell and was captured by the gods, who slew him.

Then did Loki transform the sparrow into the goddess Iduna, and he restored her and her golden apples to the gods. Joyful were they all at her return, and she gave them of her apples, and once more the gods became young and fair.

OF THE PUNISHMENT THAT FELL ON LOKI

Many evil deeds had Loki done, but the triumph of all his malice was the death of Baldur the Good. And such was the anger of the gods against him after this that Loki fled from Asgard and hid himself in the mountains.

And he built himself a dwelling with four doors, so that he could keep watch on everything around him. And a great terror was ever upon him, for he knew not how to hide him from the eyes of Odin and the gods. Often in the daytime he changed himself into a salmon, and hid under the water of a cascade. And he used his cunning and wit first to find out what the gods were doing in order to catch him, and then to defeat their plans.

And on a day, Loki sat in his dwelling and began to make a net from flax and yarn, such as fishermen now use. And Odin sat on his high throne and looked out over the world, and presently he espied the treacherous god in his hiding-place. And Odin called

the gods together, and they hastened to capture Loki before he should be aware of their coming.

But Loki saw them approaching, and he threw his net into the fire and ran and threw himself into the river, taking upon him the form of a salmon. And the gods came to his dwelling-place and found him not; but one, more observant than the rest, saw the smouldering remains of the net, and told them that it was a device for catching fish.

Then the gods sat down and made themselves a net after the pattern of the one in the ashes. And when it was finished, Thor took one end, and all the gods took hold of the other end, and they cast it into the river where Loki was hiding. And they dragged the net along, but Loki was not caught in it, for he had crawled between two stones. Yet, when the gods drew the net out again, they knew that some living thing had touched the meshes, and they guessed it must be Loki. So they cast the net in again, this time heavily weighting it, so that it raked all the bed of the river.

And the gods saw a great salmon leap over the net, and they pursued him towards the sea. And Loki, not wishing to be driven out to the sea, tried to leap over the net again, but Thor, who had thrown himself into the river, caught him in his hand. And Loki, the salmon, struggled violently, and being extremely slippery, it seemed that he would slide from Thor's hand, but Thor held him fast by the tail, and ever since then the tail of the salmon has been fine and thin.

And the gods felt no pity for the wicked Loki who had caused them so much suffering, and they dragged him to a cavern and bound him to three sharp-pointed rocks. And the goddess Skadi hung a serpent over him in such a way that his venom should fall upon Loki's face drop by drop. But one there was still who had pity for the god in his misery, that was his wife Siguna, who, from that time, stood ever by him, and caught in a cup the drops of venom as they fell from the serpent, emptying it when it became full. But while she emptied it, the drops fell upon Loki, and he howled with horror, and struggled so violently that all the earth shook. And that is the reason for what men call earthquakes.

And in that cavern must Loki lie till those days shall come to pass which have been long foretold, when he shall range himself on the side of those who shall bring about the doom of the gods, and they and Heaven and Earth and all men shall pass away.

THE STORY OF HARALD HAIRFAIR

King Harald Hairfair was the first King of all Norway. Before he conquered the land there were many kingdoms and many kings who were ever faring forth with their hosts to fight with each other.

Halfdan the Black was the father of Harald, and the wise and mighty Queen Ragnhild was his mother. A great warrior was Halfdan, and much land was his in the south, and the south-east, and the south-west of the realm of Norway.

Now Ragnhild was a dreamer of dreams, and once, soon after she was wedded to Halfdan the Black, she dreamed this dream. She thought she stood in her garden, and had a thorn in her fingers. While she looked upon it, it grew and grew till one end struck the earth, and rooted itself there, and the other end reared itself so high in the air that she could not see over its top. Wondrous great was the tree, with many goodly branches and limbs that spread, it seemed, all over Norway, and

beyond it, and she saw that the lower part of the tree was red like blood: upward from thence it was fair and green, while at the top-most it was white.

Long years after men knew the meaning of the dream, that it had foretold the power of Harald, the son that should be born to Halfdan and Ragnhild. His feats in war were foreshadowed in the blood-red trunk, his happy rule over his people in the fair green middle, and his old age and snow-white hair in the white top of the tree, while the many goodly branches were his descendants which were to spread all over Norway and beyond it.

It was soon after Queen Ragnhild dreamed this dream that Harald was born, and Halfdan and she loved him with a great love and tended him well. Strong he grew, and fair; merry and wise withal, and brave even from his youthful days.

Now it happened on a Yule-tide that King Halfdan sat at a feast with many men. But when they fain would have eaten, the goodly food and drink melted away before them. King Halfdan sat at the board, silent and grim, and his men, marvelling much, withdrew to their own homes.

Then King Halfdan sent for a wise man and besought him that he would tell him the meaning of this thing, but the wise man spoke nought. Then the King, exceeding wroth, put torments upon him, yet still he spoke not, but to cry out for help on Harald. Then Harald, who was now nigh on ten winters old, begged of his father that he would let the man go free, but Halfdan listened not to his son's prayers.

But when time served, Harald himself set the man free, and went forth with him, and they journeyed along together. And at length they came to a place where there was a great feast. And the lord of the feast gave them good welcome, and they abode with him many days. So the spring-tide fell, and on a day, the lord, who was wise in the knowledge of hidden things, called Harald to him and said: "Thy father is dead; go now thy ways home, and thou wilt get to thee all

thy father's lands, and hereafter thou shalt become the Lord of all Norway." And Harald hastened back and found that it was even as it had been told him. King Halfdan was dead. So Harald took the kingdom, being now about ten years old. And the years passed and he waxed big and strong: the fairest of all men and the wisest and a great warrior.

Now there was a certain maiden named Gyda, the daughter of King Eric of Hordaland. Exceeding fair she was, noble of mind, and virtuous. And because of these things King Harald would fain have her for his wife. So he sent messengers to the maiden and they came to her and told her their errand. But she answered them in some scorn, and looked upon them coldly while they spoke of their King's worthiness and might, and of his widespread lands, till in their displeasure against her they would have carried her off by force. But this they dared not, so they arrayed them for returning and prepared to take leave.

Then the Lady Gyda spake again to them in this wise: "Give this my word to King Harald, that only so will I say yea to being his wife if he twill first do so much for my sake as to lay under him all Norway; for only so meseems may he be called aright a King of the People."

And King Harald's messengers fared back to him with this message of the maiden. And Harald saw their anger against her because of her words, and that they would fain have him force her to him, but he answered that she had not spoken ill but well. "For," he said, "she has brought to my mind that matter

which it now seems to me wondrous I have not had in my mind heretofore.”

Then before them all he made an oath, saying, “This oath I make fast, and swear before that God who made me and rules over all things, that never more will I cut my hair, nor comb it, till I have gotten to me all Norway.” Well pleased were all to hear this oath, which they deemed right worthy of a king.

Thereafter did Harald gather many men together, and northwards first they fared through the Dales, slaying and burning where any strove against them, but those that sought peace became the King’s men and fared along with him. At last they came to Orkdale, and here they fought their first great battle, and Harald won. And all the Orkdale folk and their King came to him in submission and he made them his men.

And after that King Harald slew two kings at Gauldale, and took their realms to him; at Stiordale, too, he won a victory, and at Throndheim, where there were eight kings, he overthrew them all. Farther north still he took to him the land of Naumdale, and then the winter coming on, he wended back to Throndheim and abode there all the winter, and ever after he called it his home.

Many mighty men now gathered round him, men who were great of heart and great of strength, and ready, for mighty feats; such only would he have about him. Many big ships he had, too, and now in the winter days his men made him another, bigger than any other he had and furnished in goodly wise. At

the forepart was fashioned a great dragon's head, and at the aft a dragon's tail.

And when the spring came, King Harald made ready his men, and the great dragon ship and the other ships sailed out from Thrandheim. This time they turned south towards the lands called Northmere and Raumsdale. And Harald fought against the kings of those

lands and they fell, and Harald put an earl over the lands to rule them, and himself sailed away back again to Thrandheim. And wherever he conquered Harald put an earl to rule in his name, and mighty grew these earls and rich because of the taxes which they got from the people.

Now it was winter again, and Harald abode in Thrandheim till the spring came. Then he gathered a great host together, and brought his ships into the sea and fared forth again. And each spring did he thus till at last there was none to withstand him in all Norway. Many mighty men fled from before him, and they took ships and went over the sea and peopled the islands of the Faroes, and the island of Iceland; but many other mighty men came to him, and did him fealty and became his men.

And now that King Harald was at last the King of all Norway he remembered him of the wise maiden, Gyda, and the words that she had spoken which had roused him to go forth in great heart, and had strengthened him with the hope of such rich reward. And he called men unto him and sent them forth to her again, desiring her to return with them, and share his glory and his throne. And this time Gyda smiled upon them, and answered them with gracious words. And she arrayed herself in rich garments, and they brought her to Harald. Glad he was in her beauty as he had been in her wisdom, and he made a great feast, and they were wedded.

But although King Harald was now Lord over all Norway, there was not yet peace in the land.

Vikings from west over the sea harried the country far and wide. Ever as Harald descended upon them, they fled from him in their ships. And the King was sore vexed. Till at last on a summer he gathered his host together, and sailed away to the lands west over the sea, to seek the Vikings on their own ground.

First he came to the Shetland Islands, and there he slew all the Vikings that could not flee from him. Then on he fared, sailing now south to the Orkneys, and there, too, the Vikings fell before his wrath. One again he went to the South Isles, as they called the islands lying off the coast of Scotland, then to Scotland itself, and ever the victory fell to Harald.

And now the fighting being done, and quiet restored, King Harald sailed home to Norway. And on a day there was great feasting in the hall of Earl Rognvald, who ruled over the Mere-folk. Splendid was the feast, for Rognvald was a mighty earl, and King Harald was his guest. And seeing that his vow to conquer all Norway was accomplished, King Harald bathed, and he let his hair be combed, and Earl Rognvald himself did cut it. Before this time it had been neither combed nor cut for ten years, for so long had the performance of his vow held him, and his hair being grown exceeding long and thick and tangled, men called him Harald Shockhead. But now they gave him a new name, Harald Hairfair, so bright and goodly were his locks, and ever after was he thus known.

And many winters passed, so peaceful and plenteous that all men rejoiced in them, and in the wise rule of their King which had brought such happy days. But

now it happened on a day at Yule-tide that King Harald went a-guesting in the Uplands. And on the Yule-eve, as he sat at meat, there cometh to his door one Swasi, a Finn. And Swasi sent a messenger to the King desiring that he will come to him. And the King waxed exceeding wroth at the message and returned angry answer by the messenger. But Swasi would not be denied, but bade that the message be again carried to the King, who, he said, had not long since granted him as a boon that he might set up his cot in that land.

At this the King rose and went out to the Finn, who now begs him to fare home with him. And though many of his men would have hindered his going, Harald answered him yea, and went forth with him. And when they reached the cot, and entered it, there sat Snowfair, the daughter of Swasi, and the fairest of all women was she. And she rose to meet the King, and King Harald's eyes lingered long on her wondrous beauty. Then she brought to him a cup of honey mead, and the King took it from her, and held for a moment the white hand that bore it. And straight way he loved her and desired to wed her, for kings in those days might wed as many wives as they chose.

And Swasi the Finn seemed not over eager for the match, yet in the end consented, and King Harald made Snowfair his wife. And they abode in that place, and with such love did Harald love Snowfair, that he was ever at her side, and he thought no more upon his kingdom, and his people, or of his kingly honour and duty. And the years passed and the people waited

and waited for his coming and sorrowed ever as he came not.

But at length Snowfair died, and now men thought that surely the mighty Harald of old would return to them. But even as love had held him, now grief held him still. Snowfair lay upon her bed as fair as when she was alive, the red and white as fresh upon her cheek as when he had first beheld her. And Harald sat by her side and watched her, and in his heart he deemed that she still lived. So none dared to prepare the fire for her body, as was the custom in those days, and three more winters came and went, and hope died in the hearts of the people.

But now arose Thorlief the Sage, a wise and noble man, who had known Harald all his life, and been held in high honour by Harald's father, Halfdan the Black. Thorlief bethought him that he would go unto the King and see what could be done to turn him from his beguilement. And he came to the King where he sat beside the still form of Snowfair. And Thorlief looked upon her and marvelled at her beauty, yet presently he saw a way to the King's restoration. He spoke soft words to Harald, saying that it was no wonder that he should thus honour the fair dead with long watching, with rich raiment, and soft pillows and goodly coverings, but in his grief he had not observed that their freshness had faded, and that it was needful for her honour that the linen and coverings should be changed and kept as fair and fresh as she herself.

And the words pleased King Harald, and he called women to him and bade them array Snowfair in new

raiment and cover her with clean linen. But when they raised her in her bed, there arose evil smells and rottenness, so that in all haste they kindled the balefire (as the fire for the burning of the dead was called) and gave her body to the flames. And lo, all her freshness faded and all the red and white became of a sudden blue and hideous to the sight, and from her crawled worms and frogs and all manner of loathsome creeping things. And they burnt her to ashes.

And the King sat long alone, and thought over all these happenings, and of his many years of forgetfulness of his people and his country. And his mind was turned to them again, and he grieved over his wrong-doing, for he knew now by the signs that had been given him that Swasi the Finn and Snowfair had beguiled him by magic art. So he thrust the thought of Snowfair from his mind as of an evil thing that had sought his ruin, and he rose and went among his people and ruled them once more with wisdom. And his people were glad in him, and he in them, and again the land prospered and there was peace.

Now Harald had many sons, and as the years sped on and they grew to manhood, full discontented they were that their father had given them no lordship in the country, but had given it instead to earls who were not of kinship with him. And they fought against the King's earls, and some they killed, and some they drove forth from their lands. Yet did not the brothers hold together, but quarrelled much among themselves.

Sorely grieved was King Harald at them, and at

last he was minded to call together a Thing, or assembly of the people in council, to talk over the matter with him. And when the Thing was met, King Harald made known his will that all his sons should take the name of king, and a portion of the land to rule over in place of the earls. He himself was still to be King over all, and to keep his right to sit in the high seat, they sitting always a step lower than himself, and a step higher than others of noble degree. Even now were they not satisfied, but each one waited for the time when King Harald should die, thinking to sit in the high seat himself, and be king over all, but King Harald was minded that his son, Eric, whom he loved the most of all his sons, should have it.

And in spite of much quarrelling over the matter, when Harald was eighty years old, and found himself burdened by age, he took Eric by the hand and led him to the high seat, and gave him rule over all Norway. And three years after Harald died. It had been the custom to burn the bodies of the dead in the bale-fire, but, in accordance with a new custom which was gaining favour at that time, Harald was laid beneath a hove or mound.

Thus ended Harald Hairfair, the first King of all Norway, who long lived in men's minds as the fairest, the strongest, the bravest, and the friendliest of all men.

THE STORY OF KING OLAF TRYGGVISON

Thirty-three years before his death, King Harald Hairfair divided his realm of Norway between his sons, and gave to each of them the title of King. Nevertheless he was himself still the supreme ruler, and they held their lands under him. But although Harald thus divided his kingdom, he was minded that at his death his favourite son, Eric, should be King of all Norway, as he himself had been.

And thirty years later, when he was eighty years old, and he was no longer able to fare through the land, King Harald led his son Eric to the high seat and gave him lordship over all the land and over all his brothers. And three years later King Harald Hairfair died.

Now some of the brothers had fallen in fight and some had come by their deaths in other ways, and Eric was minded to get all the land to him, even as his father had held it before he divided it between his sons. And of all his brothers that were left, Olaf gave him the most trouble, and Eric was ill content at his

might in the south-east of the land. So he gathered a great host of men and ships and went to the land of the Wick where Olaf held rule. And after a great battle Eric gat the victory and Olaf lay slain. And Eric subdued the people of the Wick, and took rule over them. But Olaf's son, who was named Tryggvi, escaped from the land of the Wick and reached the Uplands.

Now it happened that King Harald Hairfair had had another son, named Hakon, born to him in his old age, long after he had divided the kingdom between his other sons. So Hakon had been given no lands, but he had been sent to Athelstan, the King of England,

and Athelstan had been his foster-father. And he had been brought up in the Christian faith and Athelstan and all men loved him dearly, for he was good at heart and courteous of bearing.

And when the news came to England of the death of King Harald Hairfair, Hakon besought King Athelstan that he might return to the land of his birth, and King Athelstan gave him men and goodly ships, and furnished him in princely fashion. Moreover, he gave him a sword, the hilt of which was of gold, but the blade was the better part. And with it Hakon cut into a quern, or mill-stone, up to the centre, and so it was called Quern-biter, and it was known afterwards as the best sword in Norway. And Hakon thanked him well, and arrayed him for departure.

And when he was come to Norway, he heard how his brother, King Eric, was in the Wick, and had overthrown Olaf there. And Hakon joined him to strong men and wise, for he was minded to become king of the land. Chief of these men was Earl Sigurd of Ladir, who ruled over Thrandheim. He was the greatest of Norway's counsellors and a mighty man. And he gave Hakon his aid, and Hakon promised him high honour when he should come to rule. And to the men who held lands under a bond, he also made fair promises of free lands if they would become his men and help him to gain the kingdom.

Hakon was in that time fifteen winters old. Strong and comely he was to look upon, so that men said among themselves that King Harald Hairfair had come back again grown young. And all men were glad in

him, and the tidings of his good-will and bounty spread like fire through the land. And from one end to the other men thronged to him or sent messengers to him saying that they would be his men.

And many came to him complaining sorely against King Eric, and he redressed their grievances. Tryggvi, the son of Olaf, was one of these, and Hakon gave him the name of king and a portion of the land to rule for him. And these doings of Hakon touched the hearts of the people, and ever as he grew dearer to them did their hatred wax towards Eric.

Now when Eric saw the might of his brother Hakon, he fled west oversea, and Hakon took to him all Norway. And soon after Eric fell in battle, but he left many sons, and when they grew to manhood, they harried the land of Norway, and sore they troubled the realm. And at King Hakon's death they took the kingdom, and their mother, Gunnhild, helped them in the rule. Therefore was she called Kings' Mother. A woman of great cunning was Gunnhild, and skilled, it was said, in witchcraft.

But the people loved not these sons of Eric as they had loved King Hakon — Hakon the Good as they called him — but there was peace for a time, for the brothers were powerful, and the people had none to lead them. And the plenteous days which they had known under King Hakon soon came to an end, for now there were many kings whereas before there had been but one, and they were greedy of wealth, and they heeded not the good laws which King Hakon had made.

Now Earl Sigurd still ruled over Thrandheim, and Tryggvi, the son of Olaf, still ruled in the land which King Hakon had given him, and ill-content and jealous were the Kings and Gunnhild, Kings' Mother, that this should be. And at last, on a time, Sigurd was secretly followed to a homestead where he was being entertained and the homestead was burnt to the ground, and the Earl and his followers were all burnt within it. And Tryggvi was treacherously slain by one of the brothers, who had come to him in seeming friendliness.

And when Astrid, the wife of Tryggvi, heard the news of her husband's slaying, she fled, taking with her such valuables as she could. Some women, and a few trusty men of her household, and Thorolf, her foster-father, fled with her too. The men acted as spies for her, learning tidings of her foes and their whereabouts, but Thorolf ever guarded and cared for her, and never left her in all that time of danger.

And after the murder of Tryggvi, the brothers searched his steads for Astrid, but nowhere could they find her, or get tidings of her going. And Gunnhild, Kings' Mother, and the Kings, her sons, waxed exceeding wrath that Astrid had escaped them.

Now the time came when a little child should be born to Astrid, and, for fear lest she should be taken by her enemies, Thorolf and the men rowed her and her women in a boat out to a small island. And some watched with her, and some watched on the mainland ready to defend her and her babe with their lives. They knew that if her babe should be a son, Gunnhild and the Kings would be still more wroth and anxious to

destroy him, for in due time he would take vengeance on them for his father's slaying.

And when Astrid's little child was born in the island hiding-place, it was a son, and he was given the name of Tryggvi's father, Olaf. All the summer Astrid and the little Olaf lay hidden, for they dared not venture forth in the long sunny days and light clear nights for fear of their enemies who were still seeking them. But when the winter drew nigh, and brought the short days and long dark nights, they ventured forth, being careful to journey through the peopled parts of the land only in the darkness.

And at last they reached the homestead of Eric, the father of Astrid, and he gave them good welcome and shelter, and spread a table for them with good cheer. And all the winter they abode with Eric, and no search was made for them by the Kings, for they were warring that time.

But when the spring came, Gunnhild, Kings' Mother, bestirred herself, and sent spies over the land to find Astrid and her babe, and the spies came back, saying that it was likely that they would be found with Astrid's father, Eric, and Gunnhild gathered thirty men and furnished them well with weapons and horses, and she sent them forth to Eric, bidding them carry off the son of Tryggvi and bring him to her.

But Astrid's father got news of their coming, and without delay he prepared her for departure, and gave her men to guide her on her way. And he bade her go into Sweden to Hakon the Old, a man of might and a faithful friend to him. All the night they journeyed,

and all the next day, and at eve they came to a great homestead. Weary and travel-stained they were and disguised in poor raiment, but they went to the homestead and begged shelter for the night. And the holder of the stead was a rich man but churlish, and he denied them shelter, and drove them from his door.

So on they fared again till they came to a village, and there, one Thorstein gave them shelter and they rested and slept. But in the early morning they were roughly wakened by Thorstein, who bade them be gone. And they rose and prepared to fare forward again. Then Thorstein spoke more kindly and told them that news had been brought him that messengers from Gunnhild, Kings' Mother, were seeking them, and were nigh upon them. And they begged for his help, and he gave them food and good guides to take them to a safe hiding-place of which he knew. And the guide brought them to a wood where there was a small lake, and in it an island, overgrown and well hidden by reeds. And they waded out to the island and lay hidden among the reeds.

And when Gunnhild's messengers came to Thorstein, and questioned him as to whether any folk had come to him, he told them that folk had come to him but had now gone on their way into the wood. And he showed them the way into the wood, but he led them right away from the place where Astrid and her babe lay hidden. And Gunnhild's men sought all day, and found no trace of them, so they went back to Gunnhild.

Then Astrid came forth from her hiding-place and went on again, till she came into Sweden to Hakon the

Old. And he gave her good welcome, for the sake of Eric, her father, and she and the little Olaf abode with him a long while.

But very soon Gunnhild, Kings' Mother, heard from her spies how Astrid and her son were in Sweden, and how they abode there with Hakon the Old. So she sent messengers to the King of that realm with rich presents and fair words. And the King was well pleased, and welcomed Gunnhild's messengers heartily, and they abode with him. And after a while they brake to him of Gunnhild's desire that he should prevail on Hakon the Old to send Olaf Tryggvison (the son of Tryggvi) back to Norway so that Gunnhild might

bring him up as her own son. So the King of Sweden gave them men who brought them unto Hakon the Old, and Gunnhild's messengers spake fair words to him, and begged him to give them the boy.

But Hakon the Old answered them that the boy's mother must rule in such a matter and Astrid said them nay, and nothing would turn her from her word, for well she knew that Gunnhild was a woman of deceit and treacherous cunning, and in nowise (lid she put faith in her smooth words. And the messengers rode away but came again with a greater company of men. And again they craved the boy and again did Astrid say them nay. And they waxed wroth and began to threaten till it seemed that Hakon's men would strike them, and at that Gunnhild's messengers oat them away as fast then could. And they fared back to Norway, and Gunnhild, Kings' Mother, was sore displeased that they should bring her no more news than that they had seen Olaf Tryggvison and spoken with Astrid his mother.

Now Astrid had a brother named Sigurd, who dwelt in the land called Garthland (Russia). The name of the king of that land was Valdimar, and much honour had Sigurd of him. Now for two winters had Astrid and her son, Olaf, lodged with Hakon the Old, and Olaf was three years old, and Astrid was minded to fare forth again with him, and she bethought her of Sigurd her brother, and would fain go to him in Garthland. So she told her thought to Hakon the Old and he listened to her, and heeded her desire, and gave her men and goodly array for the journey. And he

placed her and her companions with certain merchants on a merchant ship. And when they were come into the Eastern Sea (the Baltic Sea) they met with Vikings from Estland (Eastern Europe) who took all their money and goods and slew some of them and shared the others between them for slaves. And when they reached Estland Olaf and Thorolf were parted from Astrid and sold to an Estlander. And Thorolf he slew for he was old and not able to do the work of a slave. But Olaf he sold again to a man named Klerk for a good he-goat, and Klerk sold him to another man named Reas for a goodly cloak.

And Astrid was also sold for a slave. And some time after it fell out on a day in summer that Lodin, a wealthy man of the Wick, in Norway, went with his ship full of merchandise trading in Estland. And in the market-place were many kinds of wares brought for sale, and among them were slaves, both men and women. And among the slaves Lodin saw Astrid, whom he had known in past years. Pale she was and lean, and poorly clad, and sorely changed since the time when he had seen her in their own land. Yet he knew her, and went to her and bade her tell him all that had happened to her. And she told him how she had been brought thither. "Sad is the tale to tell," she said: "I am a slave; and am brought hither to be sold." And she prayed him to buy her, and take her back with him to her own kin. And Lodin said he would take her back if she would wed him, and Astrid, knowing him to be a brave man and of good kin, said him yea.

And he took her to Norway, and there restored her to her friends, and after, they were wedded.

As for Olaf, he lived with Reas for six winters, and Reas loved him and would not put him to service, but taught him all manly exercises and gentle manners. clothed him well, and treated him in all ways as his own son.

Now on a day it chanced that Sigurd, the brother of Astrid, came to that place to collect the taxes from the people for King Valdimar of Garthland. A man of might and wealth was Sigurd, and he fared along with great state and a goodly company. And when he was come to the market-place he saw there a boy exceeding fair of face and noble of bearing, and different in many ways from the people born in that land. And Sigurd asked the boy of his name and of his parents. And the boy answered that his name was Olaf, that he was the son of Tryggvi Olafson, and that his mother's name was Astrid. Then did Sigurd know that the boy was his sister's son, and he bade him speak on and tell him what had brought him there, so far from the land of his birth and kin.

And Olaf told Sigurd the story of his father's slaying, of his mother's escape from her enemies, of his birth on the island, of their long journeying and of their separation when they were taken by Vikings and sold into slavery; and Sigurd bade Olaf lead him to Reas, his master, and when they were come to him Sigurd made known to Reas his desire to buy the boy from him. And Reas answered him: "So much do I love the boy that never will I sell him into bondage

Yet will I not refuse you if you will give me your word of truth that you will not part with him for money, and will treat him in no way worse than he has hitherto been treated by me.”

Thus did Sigurd promise, and he bought Olaf from Reas and took him back with him to Garthland. And he treated the boy in all things generously, but

as yet he said naught to any of his kingly birth. And Olaf was now nine years of age.

Now, it happened on a day that Olaf Tryggvison saw among a company of men the man who had slain Thorolf, his mother's foster father. Full angry he was as he looked again upon the man. And he went up to him and smote him on the head with a little axe which he had in his hand. And the man fell dead. At which Olaf ran home to his kinsman, Sigurd, and told him of his deed. And Sigurd feared for him, because there was a law in Garthland that whoso slew a man who was not sentenced to death should himself be slain wheresoever he should be found.

So Sigurd took the boy to Queen Allogia, the wife of King Valdimar. And he told her of his deed, and prayed her to help him. And she looked kindly upon Olaf, and said that none should harm so fair a child. And she called for armed men to protect him. And now the people, searching for Olaf, heard that he was in the Queen's house. And it seemed that there would be a fight between the avengers and the Queen's men. But the King was told of the matter and he came and besought the people to keep the peace. And when he had heard the whole story he gave judgment that a fine should be paid, and the Queen Allogia paid the fine.

And after that time the Queen took Olaf into her house to live with her, and she loved him well. And Sigurd thought it meet that she should know of the boy's kin, and he told her that he was the son of a King — Tryggvi, the son of Olaf, the son of the great

Harald Hairfair, first King of all Norway. Now in those days the wise men and seers in the realm of Garthland spake often of one who was young and a stranger in the land who should be great beyond all men. And long before this time the mother of King Valdimar, who had the power of foretelling things that should come to pass, had foretold the coming of a King's son, who should become a great leader. And Queen Allogia was the wisest woman in the land, and she knew that it was to Olaf that the words of these seers pointed. And she told the King, her husband, of the boy's parentage. And the King and Queen had him instructed in all feats of arms and chivalry, and manly exercises as well as princely behaviour, and they gave him all honourable treatment as was meet for a king's son.

And Olaf grew fair and tall and strong. Full quick he was at all learning, generous with rewards, and brave beyond all other men. But never could he find it in his heart to bow down to the heathen gods, or offer them sacrifices. And King Valdimar was often sad at this, deeming it a fault. And on a day he begged Olaf to honour the gods and humble himself before them as did all other men in that realm. But Olaf answered him: "These gods neither hear, nor see, nor speak, neither have they reason; therefore I will never worship them, but I will do them no dishonour because I wish not to offend you."

Now when Olaf was twelve years old, King Valdimar, at his requesting it, made him Captain of a host, and gave him ships of war. And he determined

to win back for King Valdimar all the cities and lands which had been taken from him by other chiefs and warriors. And forth he sailed and many battles he fought, and ever he conquered, till he had won back all those kingdoms which had been lost. And these he gave to King Valdimar, with many rare treasures, and gold, and precious stones, and costly raiment.

And with the wealth which the King gave him he himself maintained a body of warriors, and was ever faring forth with them, and giving to King Valdimar the spoils of his expeditions. And all his men served him truly and loved him well. Yet were there those about the King who envied Olaf his fame and power and the love that both the King and Queen bore him. And these spoke unto the King and said: "There is great risk in such a man lest he with his prowess and might, and the love that men bear him, do hurt thee or the realm."

And King Valdimar began to fear lest their words should come to truth, and Olaf take the kingdom from him. And his fear made him cold and harsh unto Olaf until the young man felt the change in him. And it grieved him sorely. So he went unto the Queen and laid the matter before her and told her that he was fain to fare back to the land where aforetime his kin had ruled. And the Queen would not gainsay him, and she told him that wheresoever he should go he should be honoured as a noble man. And she bade him farewell.

And Olaf got ready his men and his ships and sailed across the East-salt-sea. Swift were his ships,

answering well to the wind, and each of them carried on both sides a row of shields. And they came to the island of Borgund. And Olaf Tryggvison fought with the people of the island and won the battle and took much wealth. And after the battle they lay off the island, and great storms and fierce winds beat upon them so that they were forced to sail farther south. And they reached the shores of Wendland, on the southern coast of the East-salt-sea, and there they found a good harbour, and gat good shelter, and abode in quiet.

And there ruled over that land a Queen named Geira, and she was told that strangers of most noble bearing had come upon her shores, faring in peace, and she sent a messenger to them bidding them in friendly wise to guest with her through the winter which was nigh upon them. And Olaf went unto the Queen and they looked upon each other, and were well pleased with what they saw. So Olaf said yea to the Queen's bidding and he and his men abode in Wendland. And Queen Geira and Olaf Tryggvison talked often and long together in those days while he guested in her land, and they liked each other greatly, and it came to pass that Olaf wooed the Queen for his wife and Geira was of one mind with him in the matter and they were wedded.

And Olaf and Geira ruled that land together. And it came to Olaf's knowledge that there were towns and districts round which had ceased to pay tribute to Queen Geira and had thrown off their obedience to her. So when the winter had passed and the spring

was come, Olaf fared out with a host and harried these towns and lands, and always he got the victory and took much wealth. And he ceased not till he had restored to Geira all that had been under her rule aforetime.

And afterwards he took ships and men and fared to many lands, and he came to Denmark, where Geira's father, King Burislaf, and Otto, the lord of Saxland, fought against the Danes because they would not take the Christian Faith. And the fight was hard and fierce, but by Olaf's wise counselling and great skill they were at last victorious, and the King of the Daneland took christening and all his host. And many wondrous sights did Olaf see at that time in that land, miracles that were performed by Christian men. And he pondered them carefully in his heart and he was ever greatly pleased at all that was told him of the one God of Heaven and his mighty deeds. And Olaf came to Saxland, and there was a priest named Thangbrand. And Thangbrand wore a shield which had been given him on a time when he visited the Bishop of Canterbury. And drawn upon the shield was the Holy Cross, with the figure of Jesus Christ upon it. And Olaf looked long at the figure on the shield. And he said to Thangbrand: "Who is the person in agony on the Cross whom you Christians worship?"

And Thangbrand answered and said: "'Tis our Lord Jesus Christ."

"What evil did he that he should thus suffer?" asked Olaf.

And Thangbrand told him all the story of Jesus,

and Olaf listened to him and was much moved. And Thangbrand gave him the shield, and mightily pleased was Olaf at the gift, and he rewarded Thangbrand with the full value of the shield in money.

And Olaf returned to Wendland, and three winters passed away. And now Queen Geira fell ill and she died. And King Olaf Tryggvison mourned grievously for her, and no longer could he bear that land without her. So away he sailed with his war ships and fared to Friesland and Saxland and Flanders and England and many battles he fought in all three lands. Then farther north he fared to Scotland, and south again to the islands on the west coast, and to Man, and to Ireland. Then he made for Bretland (Wales) and the land of the Kymry (Cumberland), and then to Valland (France).

Thus did four winters pass away since his leaving of Wendland, and now he turned back towards England and came to the Scilly Isles. And while he lay in

harbour there he heard tell of a wise man who dwelt in the island, alone and apart from men. And it was said of him that he had knowledge of things yet to come to pass. And Olaf was fain to hear what things should befall him in the days to come. But first he was minded to put the man to a test. So he sent to him the fairest and goodliest of his men, in rich array, bidding him say that he was a king. Now Olaf was famed in all lands as the fairest and noblest of men, but none knew that he was a king and of kingly birth, neither did any know his true name, for in all his journeyings he had called himself Oli the Garthrealmer.

Now when Olaf's messenger came unto the wise man, saying, "I am a king," the wise man looked at him and made answer: "King art thou not, but my counsel to thee is that thou be true to thy King."

And the messenger went back and told this saying to Olaf Tryggvison. And Olaf saw by this that the man was a sayer of truth, and he longed the more to go to him himself. And he went and asked him to tell him of what should happen in the days to come. And the wise man answered him: "A glorious king shalt thou be, and do glorious deeds." And as a token of the truth of his saying he said again: "Hard by thy ship shalt thou fall into a snare of an host of men, and battle shalt thou do, and men shall fall on both sides, and thyself shalt be hurt; and of the wound thou shalt be like to die and thou shalt be borne to ship on shield; yet shalt thou be whole again within seven nights, and hereafter shalt thou be christened."

And Olaf parted from the wise man and went with his men down to his ship, and as they went other men met them and fell upon them. And all befell as had been foretold by the wise man. Olaf was wounded, and borne to his ship on a shield, and at the end of seven nights he was whole again. And Olaf wondered greatly within himself and he betook him again to the lonely man on the island. And they talked long together. And Olaf asked him to tell him from whence came his wondrous knowledge of things to come. And the man of wisdom answered: "From the very God of christened men." And he besought Olaf that he would be christened, and Olaf said him yea right heartily. And he and all his men were christened there, and they abode in that place a long time, and learned of the true faith.

And when the autumn came and they fared forth again, Olaf took with him from that island priests and learned men. And they sailed to a certain haven on the English coast, and abode there awhile doing no

violence. And none did violence to them for England was a Christian country and Christianity had taught the people more peaceful ways.

Now it happened that a certain Queen named Gyda ruled in this land. Young she was and fair and great of kin, being a king's daughter of Ireland, and sister of Olaf Kuaran, King of Dublin. Her husband had been a mighty English earl, and now that he was dead she ruled in his place. And a great warrior named Alfwin desired her for his wife, but Gyda had no mind to wed him or any. But at last she gave it out that she would call an assembly of her people, and then she would choose for herself one of the men of her own realm to be her husband.

And the day came, and Alfwin was there decked out in his finest raiment, and many others all well arrayed, and right willing and hopeful was each that he should be chosen by the fair Queen Gyda. And Olaf was there too. He had heard of the matter so he went ashore and stood with his men a little apart, watching the great gathering of people. No rich attire had Olaf, but the wet weather garb which he had worn on his ship, covered by a hairy cape, and on his head was a hood pulled well over his face.

And Gyda went here and there among all the men looking at them and passing each one by without sign. And at last she came where Olaf stood among his men, and she regarded him long. Then she pushed back the hood from his face and looked up at him. And thus she stood for a while, and then she spoke and asked him who he was and what was his name.

And he answered that his name was Oli, and that he was a stranger in that land. Then said Queen Gyda, "If thou wilt have me I will choose thee for my husband." And much talk they had together and at the end of it Olaf was well content that he should be chosen by Queen Gyda for her husband. But Alfwin was ill content at the way the matter had gone. And according to a custom in England in those days, Alfwin and Olaf met together with twelve men on each side, and fought. And Olaf had the victory. And he bade Alfwin depart from the land and never come back again, and Olaf took to him all Alfwin's wealth. Then Olaf and Queen Gyda were wedded and they abode together, sometimes in England and sometimes in Ireland.

Now on a time when Olaf was in Ireland he took to his ship and went a-warring. And he and his men were in need of meat, so the men went ashore, and drove down to the strand what cattle they could find for slaughter. And a certain man who owned some of the beasts came to Olaf and prayed him to give him back his cows. Now all the beasts were together and numbered many hundreds. And Olaf laughed at the man's request, but bade him take his cows if he

could find them. And the husbandman called to him a great dog and showed him the herd of cattle. And the dog ran all about them and drove out from the rest the cows belonging to the man, just that number which he had claimed. And Olaf saw that all these were marked with the same mark. And he and his men watched the dog and praised him and accounted him greatly wise. And Olaf would fain buy the dog for himself. And the husbandman said him yea, and the King thereupon gave him a gold ring and promised that he would be his friend. And the name of the dog was Vigi, and he was the best of all dogs, and Olaf loved him well and kept him for a long time.

Now all this time had Olaf Tryggvison been a wanderer from the land of his fathers and his birth. Yet often he thought thereon and sorely longed for his kin. Many changes had come about in the land of Norway. The sons of Eric and Gunnhild were either dead or fled from the land, and Earl Hakon held sway over all the realm. This Earl Hakon was the son of the great Earl Sigurd who had helped Hakon, the son of Harald Hairfair and the foster-son of Athelstan of England, to the kingship of Norway, and who had been burnt in a homestead where he was visiting, by the brother-kings. A great and mighty man was Earl Hakon, but such were his dealings with the people that they had no love for him, but waxed evermore in ill-content. Yet his power was such that none dared to speak or act otherwise than as he wished, and no other mighty man was there in the land in that day to help them.

Now Earl Hakon heard tell of the great doings of a man called Oli in the Westlands, and the rumour went that he was of the blood of the Kings of Norway, albeit Oli himself spoke only of his coming from Garthland. And Earl Hakon remembered him that he had been told that a son of Tryggvi and Astrid had fared to Garthland and had lived at the court of King Valdimar, and that he had been called Olaf. And often the Earl had feared that this Olaf would return some day and take the land from him. And Earl Hakon deemed that this Oli was the man.

Now Earl Hakon had a great friend named Thorir Klakka, who was a viking and had much knowledge of many lands. And the Earl determined to send him to Dublin to find out if Oli of the Garthrealm were verily Olaf Tryggvison and if this were so to get him by deceitful words into his power. And Earl Hakon also summoned to him Jostein and Karlhead, two brothers of Astrid, the mother of Olaf. And these he would have go with Thorir, that Olaf might trust the story that should be told unto him, seeing they were his near kinsmen, and thus be betrayed into Earl Hakon's hands. But the brothers said: "Never shall such shame befall us, that we so wickedly deceive our near kinsmen." But Earl Hakon bade them do his bidding or prepare them for sore torments, and death. And under these threats they consented to go with Thorir, and Earl Hakon made them swear to use all their power to help Thorir in this treacherous plot against Olaf.

So Thorir and the brothers of Astrid fared unto

Ireland, and they learned that Oli was even then with his wife's brother, King Olaf Kuaran. And Thorir went alone to the King's court and found Olaf Tryggvison and they talked together. Now Thorir was cunning in speech, and when they had talked together many times Olaf had trust in him, and he began to speak of Norway and to ask concerning the rule of the land. And Thorir told him of the might of Earl Hakon and of the much ill-content of the people, who yet durst not contend against him.

"And yet," saith he, "I know the mind of many mighty men, yea, of all the people, that they would be most fain and eager to have a king for the land come of the blood of Harald Hairfair, but none such have we to turn to."

And often did they talk thus, till on a day, Olaf told Thorir his name and kin and besought him to tell him what he thought of the people taking him for King if he should fare to Norway. And Thorir praised him and told him that the name of Oli of Garthland was well famed in Norway, and that the truth of the matter was that he had been sent to Ireland by mighty chiefs and kinsmen of Olaf Tryggvison's to find out who Oli of Garthland might be, and if he were that Olaf, the son of Tryggvi, who had been taken from the land in his childhood. And if this proved to be so, he was to beseech him to return and they would make him King of all Norway. "And to the end that you might know my story for truth," said Thorir, "I have with me here two kinsmen of yours, your mother's brothers, Jostein and Karlhead."

With great joy did Olaf hear this, and he sent for his kinsmen and heartily welcomed them, though they on their part showed no joy in the meeting. Thereafter he talked to the three, and Thorir said again all that he had already said, but the brothers spoke little, save in consenting whenever Thorir asked their consent to his words.

And Olaf yearned to the land of his fathers and would fain be sailing thither. And at length he gat together five ships and sailed out from the west. And Thorir Klakka and his two kinsmen were with him. Cheerful of mood was Olaf, for he had no thought of danger and no suspicion of his companions. Thorir planned and advised and spoke ever in fair and honest seeming, but the brothers were silent and strange and Olaf wondered in his heart at the little joy they had shown even from the first in his company.

And at last they touched land at Most Isle, and there Olaf and his men sang praises to the One God, and afterwards was there a church raised upon that spot. And Olaf gave the charge of it to Thangbrand, the priest of Saxland, who had meanwhile left that land and taken service with Olaf.

And now Thorir advised Olaf to sail northwards where Far] Hakon was, with all speed. He was anxious to keep Olaf on the sea until such time as he could deliver him into Earl Hakon's hand. He feared lest Olaf might get speech with any of the people, for he doubted not that his fame would make them eager to throng around him and thus Earl Hakon's plot would be defeated.

So Olaf, deeming the advice of Thorir wise, fared northwards with all haste, thinking to fall upon the Earl before he should beware of his coming. And on a day they came to Agdaness. And they anchored their ships, and here they heard tidings that the men of that place and in all parts of the land had risen against Earl Hakon. Thorir was amazed at the news for right meet would he the time for Olaf to make himself known. So he summoned Jorstein and Karlhead to talk with him as to what was best to be done. And Thorir decided that Olaf must be slain. Two men were to hide the next morning at a certain spot on the shore, and Thorir was to bring Olaf to the appointed place, and there would the men fall upon him and kill him.

Now when the matter was settled, the two brothers waited till night fell and all on the ships were asleep. Then they went aboard the King's ship secretly, and roused him, and besought him to go with them on shore, for they had sore need of quiet speech with him. And Olaf went with them right willingly. And they rowed to the shore and landed, and when they had walked a little, Olaf seated himself and bade them speak. And the brothers fell at his feet and told him all the treachery of Earl Hakon and Thorir, and of their own unwilling consent to it. And Olaf forgave them, and besought them now to help him. And they advised him to hold himself as he was used to Thorir, and to go with him on the morrow when he should ask his company to the shore. There would they hide and before Thorir and Olaf should reach the spot where

Thorir's men were hidden, they would rush upon Thorir and slay him.

And Olaf went quietly back to his ship and in the morning all happened as the brothers had said. And when they were come ashore the brothers slew Thorir, and then rushed upon the two men who were in hiding and slew them too.

Thus was Olaf delivered from the treachery of Earl Hakon. And now he returned to his ships with Jostein and Karlhead and they sailed into the Frith from the open sea with five ships of war.

And Erland, the son of Earl Hakon, was rowing out with three ships at the same time, and Olaf bore down upon him and Erland turned and drave his ships ashore and leapt to the land. And Olaf, who followed close upon him, seized the tiller of his

ship and cast it at Erland, and it struck his head and he fell dead.

And Olaf learnt from Erland's men that Earl Hakon had fled into hiding and that all his followers were scattered.

And the news was brought to Earl Hakon where he was in hiding that Olaf Tryggvison was come into the land, and had slain Erland his son. And he feared for his life and his thrall made him a secret place in a swine-sty, and they went in together, and the entrance was closed and covered with earth, and the swine were driven over it.

And Olaf sought the Earl far and wide, and at length he came to the place of his hiding, though he knew it not. And Olaf stood upon the very rock which overshadowed the swine-sty, and spoke to the men of that place, promising wealth and greatness to whomsoever should bring Earl Hakon to him. And when Olaf had departed, and night was come, and the Earl slept, his thrall drew his knife and killed him, and carried his head to Olaf, hoping for reward. But Olaf told him that death was the only reward for a thrall who was unfaithful to his master, and he ordered him to be put to death at once. And this was done.

And when the people heard the tidings of Earl Hakon's death, they rejoiced greatly, and they went to the hiding-place and dragged forth the dead body and none there was to show it honour. But one and all named Hakon as the Evil Earl and for long was he remembered by this name.

And now Olaf Tryggvison called a Thing, a

gathering of the people, in Thrandheim, and all men thronged to it from far and near, and with right goodwill did they take Olaf for their King. And Olaf made a journey throughout the land, and called a Thing at every place, and all Norway turned to him, and he held sway over all the realm, even as his great ancestor, King Harald Hairfair, had done before him.

And now Olaf began the work of bringing his people to the Christian Faith. First, he visited his own kin, and right warmly they welcomed him. And he called together the men of his family, Lodin, his mother's husband, his mother's brothers, and the two husbands of Lodin and Astrid's daughters. And he laid his desire before them most earnestly, and begged their aid. And they listened to him, and promised their help. Thereupon did King Olaf call a Thing in that part of the land, and when it was met he opened his mind to the people. And first his kinsmen were christened, and other mighty men, and their followers with them. And soon all men were christened in that part of the realm.

Then did Olaf fare through the country, and wheresoever he came he called a Thing and spoke unto the people even as he had done in the Wick. And when any refused he handled them sorely, or drave them from his land.

And in Hordland there were many noble and mighty men who heard of King Olaf's doings, and of how he was marching through the country with a great host, and putting aside the ancient laws and the worship of the gods, and how he was forcing men by punishments and hard dealings to take to them a new

law and a new faith. And these mighty men gathered together and talked among themselves as to how best they could stand against these things. And they deemed it good that all their wise men and their followers should meet the King, who was even then near at hand, when he should call the Thing together, and they chose their three wisest men, the fairest of speech, to answer the King when he should bid them to christening.

And now King Olaf came unto the land and, as was his custom, he called the Thing together. And thither came the mighty men and their followers, all armed. And King Olaf spoke to the people in kindly wise, telling them of the Christian Faith and of his desire that they should put aside the heathen gods and worship the one true God, the God of the Christians.

And now upstood the first of the three who had been chosen to speak before the King. The fairest of all in speech was he and therefore had he been chosen to speak first. But lo, when he would make answer to the King he was seized with such coughing and choking that no word could he utter and down he sat again. Then upstood the second, full sure of his speech, but lo, no word could he speak for stammering till all fell to laughter, and he too sat down. And now upstood the third as ready as the second had been, but when he would speak, so hoarse and husky was he that none could tell what he would be saying. And down he sat too. And there was silence. And none stood to speak against the King's will, and so it

came about that they all assented to the King's desire, and were christened before he left the realm. And so he fared through the land and none could withstand him, so mighty was he, and such a great host fared along with him that all men feared him.

In Ladir he broke down the God-house and stripped it of all its rich adornments and its gods of their vestments. And from the door he took a great gold ring which Earl Hakon had had made and placed there. And thereafter King Olaf burned the God-house. And the people were angry and ill-content but they dared not show it to the King, and everywhere did he break up the images and burn down the temples of the heathen gods, and in their places he built churches, and put priests in charge of them.

And there was a great Queen of Sweden named Sigrid, whom men called the Proud, for she would not be wooed. But Olaf Tryggvison thought that it would be a good match for him if she could be brought to wed him. And he sent messengers to her, and Queen Sigrid listened to them, for Olaf was of mighty fame in the land of Sweden, and there was good hope of the marriage. Then Olaf sent her that great gold ring which he had taken from the door of the God-house in Ladir. And Sigrid was well pleased with the ring, and all who looked upon it praised it as a right noble and seemly gift.

Now it happened that two goldsmiths were in the company of the Queen while the ring was passed from one to the other, and these took the ring and handled it, and weighed it in their hands, and spoke

to one another in a low tone. And the Queen seeing their looks called them to her and bade them tell her their mind concerning the ring. But they spoke not. Then did the Queen command them to speak, wherehereupon they told her that there was false metal in the ring. And Queen Sigrid bade them break it asunder, and then was it seen to be inwardly but brass. And Queen Sigrid waxed wroth and said she deemed King Olaf would be false in other matters as with this.

And early in the spring-tide Olaf fared to Queen Sigrid as had been agreed between them, to talk over the matter of their wedding. And they met and talked, and all looked well. Then said Olaf that he would desire Queen Sigrid first to take christening and avow the true faith. But Queen Sigrid made answer: "I will not to depart from the faith that I have holden, and my fathers before me, but neither will I account it against thee that thou hold whatsoever God seemeth good to thee."

And King Olaf waxed wroth at these words and said hotly: "What have I to do to wed with thee, thou heathen woman?" and he struck her in the face with the glove that he held in his hand. And they both stood up at these words hot and angry, and Sigrid the Proud said: "These words of thine, Olaf, may well be thy doom." And they parted and went their ways and there was no more talk of their wedding.

Now did King Olaf fare forth again to remove from his land all that by their evil works strove against the faith of Christ. First, he gave out that all wizards

and workers in magic should get them gone from the realm, and after, wherever any such were found, he decreed death unto them. But not yet were all men at one about the taping of christening, albeit they assented to the King's will, because of his great might. But often they complained among themselves.

And King Olaf sent Thangbrand the priest unto Iceland to speak to the people of the one true God, and to christen the land. And three winters he abode there and many chieftains and their households took christening at his hands, but many also withstood him.

And King Olaf fared unto Nidaros on the north-western coast, and there on the banks of the River Nid did he build a King's house, and there did he build a town, and gave men land whereon they also built them houses. And in the autumn did the King send the wherewithal to furnish his house, and his will was to abide there in the winter season. And in that same autumn did he bring with him many smiths and there did he build

him a great long-ship on the strand. And he called this ship the Crane.

And, in the next spring-tide Olaf arrayed his ships and a mighty host, and himself sailed the Crane. Northwards they fared to Halogaland, and wheresoever they came aland, there did they call a Thing, and bid the folk to a christening, and none durst say him nay.

Two men there were who lived in a Firth in God-isle. One was Rand the Strong, and the other Thorir Hart, and both were great chieftains, and both were wise in wizardry. And they heard tell of King Olaf's faring to Halogaland and they called out their men and ships and would fain meet Olaf and join battle with him. And Rand had a ship fashioned like a mighty dragon with its head all worked about in gold. Thirty benches it had for rowers and there was room for more yet. And Thorir Hart had also a great ship.

And they met the King's fleet and fierce was the fight and many men fell on both sides. And Rand sailed out with his dragon ship and by his wizardry he raised a favourable wind, but none the less Olaf triumphed and Rand sailed away home in all haste. Thorir Hart and his men fled towards the land, and leapt ashore, and Olaf and his men followed them and chased them. And King Olaf was ever foremost in pursuit and he ran fleet of foot and saw where Thorir Hart ran, and Thorir was the fleetest footed of men. And King Olaf gave chase followed by his good dog, Vigi. And he cheered Vigi on to follow Thorir, crying: "On, Vigi, on: follow the Hart." And Vigi ran

and leapt upon Thorir and Thorir thrust his sword at the King's dog, and Vigi fell. But at the same moment Olaf shot a spear at Thorir, and it struck him so that he fell dead. Then did Olaf's men carry the wounded Vigi to the ship, and the King gave him into the hands of a skilful healer, and after some days Vigi was sound again.

And now the King sailed up the Firth to find Rand, but Rand caused great storms to rise and driving winds to blow, so that Olaf's ships could not get near to him. And for a week the King waited and then he talked over the matter with Sigurd, the English Bishop of his Court, who was with him on this expedition. And the Bishop said that he would try to overcome Rand's fiendish acts, if God would strengthen him. And he lighted candles on the King's ship and bore incense, and set up the Cross in the prow of the Crane, and read many prayers and sprinkled the ship all over with holy water. Then he bade the men row up the Firth, and the King called to the other ships to follow the Crane. And suddenly the winds ceased, and the sea grew calm around the ships, and they sailed on in safety. And for a whole day and night they sailed on in calm, and then as the dawn broke they saw before them Rand's ship, the great dragon, lying off the shore.

And Olaf and his men went aland to Rand's house, and bade him take christening. But Rand cried out against Christ, and Olaf in wrath put him to tortures and death. And Olaf took all his wealth of silver and gold and weapons, and many precious things.

And the dragon ship he took, too, and steered it himself, and it was even greater and goodlier than the Crane. The fairest ship it was in all Norway. And Olaf called it the Serpent. And all that land he brought unto christening and then he fared back to Nidaros, and abode there for the winter.

And now he built another great ship, greater than any other in the land. Many smiths were at the work, some to join, some to chip, some to smite rivets. Long was the ship, and broad of beam, and high of bulwark, and all things belonging to it were of the best. It was wrought after the manner of the serpent, with the head of a dragon at the fore, and the crooked tail at the aft, and the head and the tail were all worked over with gold. And King Olaf called it the Long Serpent, and his other ship, which he had taken from Rand, he called the Short Serpent, and the best ships they were in all Norway.

And at that same time there came out to Nidaros certain Icelanders, and among them Kiartan, the son of a great chieftain of Iceland, named Olaf. And Kiartan was called the likeliest and goodliest man that ever lived in Iceland. And when he and those of his comrades who were heathen heard that King Olaf was at Nidaros, they turned their ships to sail away, for they were told that he would force them to christening if they came ashore. But the wind drave them back to Nidaros, and King Olaf sent a messenger to them bidding them let their ships lie off the town. And so they did, and sold their merchandise by the King's bridges to any who came to buy of them.

And the winter passed and the spring came and three times did they turn their ships homeward, and three times were they driven back again. And on a day when it was fair weather many men of Nidaros were swimming about the ships. And Kiartan and his fellows stood up on their ships and watched them disporting themselves. And one man there was that outdid all the rest. And Kiartan bade one of his comrades try feats of swimming with the Northman, but he said him nay. So Kiartan said: "Then shall I try." And he stripped himself of the scarlet kirtle which he wore and all his clothes, and leapt into the sea. And he struck out for the Northman, and when

he reached him he caught him by the foot, and they both went under together. Then up they came again but nought said, and down they went again and were much longer under water this time. But at length they came up again, and still nought was said between them. And the third time they went under, and for so long were they under that Kiartan deemed that he was in a sore strait. But when his strength was nearly spent, up they came again, and now they swam ashore, and each looked upon the other.

And the Northman asked Kiartan his name and Kiartan told him. "Thou art deft at swimming," said the other. "Hast thou any mastery in other matters?" And Kiartan answered him: "Small mastery is this, I trow." Then spoke the Northman again. "Dost thou ask nought of me?" And Kiartan answered: "Methinks it is nought to me who thou art, or how thou art called." Then said the other: "I will tell thee, then. I am Olaf Tryggvison the King." And Kiartan answered nothing, and having dressed himself would have gone on his way. But King Olaf bade him stay, and asked him of many things which Kiartan answered hastily, for he was minded to get him away as fast as he could. Then King Olaf took a rich cloak from his own shoulders and said: "Here is a cloak I will give thee, Kiartan." And Kiartan took it and thanked him, and returned to his ship, and showed his fellows what the King had given him.

And the time wore on to the autumn and the Icelanders still lay at Nidaros, and on a night at Michaelmas, the King held a holy feast, and the bells

were rung and psalms of praise were sung. And the Icelanders heard the voice of the bells, and the sweet sound of the singing, and Kiartan and some of his comrades went to the feast and hearkened to the fair song of praise. And they went back to their ships and Kiartan was well pleased with the ways of the Christian men. But others laughed and mocked at them. And the King heard how Kiartan had spoken well of the new faith and he sent for him. And Kiartan went to the King and Olaf greeted him well, and spoke to him of the God of Christians, and besought him to take christening. And Kiartan answered that he would say yea right willingly if so he might hold the King's friendship. And the King promised to be his good friend, and the next day was Kiartan christened, and many of his comrades with him. And they robed them in white and the King took them into his house and they abode with him, and King Olaf was full kind to them. And all men of that place deemed the Icelanders right noble men. And Kiartan became one of King Olaf's bodyguard, and Olaf gave him a complete suit of scarlet clothes, which had been fashioned for himself. And right well did they become Kiartan for he and King Olaf were of equal height and proportions.

But now came Thangbrand the priest back from Iceland, and he told King Olaf of much hard treatment that had befallen him at the hands of the Icelanders. And he further said that he had small hope of the land ever taking christening. And at this King Olaf waxed wroth and gave order for the Iceland men

to be called together, saying that he would slay them every one. But Kiartan and others that had taken christening went to him and besought him to remember the promises of friendship which he had made, and that he would forgive them even those things which most angered him if they would forsake their heathen gods, and take christening from him. And Kiartan promised that all the Icelanders then in Norway should also take christening and that they would themselves do all they could on their return to Iceland that the Christian faith should prevail in the land. And King Olaf listened unto Kiartan, for he was ever fair and wise of speech. And his wrath passed away. And the Iceland men were christened, and Olaf sent certain of them back to Iceland to preach the new Faith, but Kiartan and three others he kept with him as hostages, they being the noblest of their company. And the errand of the Icelandmen so sped that that summer the faith of Christ was taken for law in that land, and all men were christened there. And Kiartan and his friends fared back to Iceland.

And King Olaf arrayed his ships and his men to sail forth from his winter home. He himself steered the Long Serpent, and his men were the best of his company, chosen for their strength and stoutness of heart. The Short Serpent followed with her crew of mighty men. And eleven other great ships had Olaf and many smaller ships. And he fared south along the land and many of his friends joined him bringing other ships, and they sailed south along Denmark and came to Wendland.

Now Queen Sigrid the Proud, of Sweden, had married King Svein, the Dane-King. The greatest foe was she of King Olaf Tryggvison, for that he had broken their marriage treaty, and had, moreover, struck her in the face. Sore at heart and full of hate was Sigrid towards Olaf since that day, and she ever stirred King Svein to meet Olaf and do battle with him. And King Svein fretted under her words till at last she brought it to pass that he was ready to do her bidding in the matter. And he joined to him, Olaf, the Swede-King, who was the son of Sigrid, and Earl Eric, the son of Earl Hakon of Ladir. Earl Eric had fled from the land of Norway when Olaf Tryggvison took the realm, and, going to Denmark, had married Svein's daughter. And men of might were these three, and many ships they had. And they heard of King Olaf's faring to Wendland, and they made their plans to bring all their ships together and waylay him on his way back to Norway.

And King Svein sent a certain mighty Earl named Sigvaldi to Wendland to spy on King Olaf and get knowledge of his plans. And Sigvaldi met King Olaf, who thought no guile in him, and received him in friendly wise, seeing that Sigvaldi had for wife Astrid, a sister of Queen Geira, whom Olaf had wedded long ago and whom death had taken from him. And when Olaf would fain sail away to Norway, Sigvaldi ever held him back till he should get tidings from the Dane-King that the host had met and that all was ready for falling upon Olaf.

And at last Sigvaldi received tidings that the ships

lay off the isle called Svoldr, and the three chieftains bade him so to bring it about that Olaf should sail under that isle into their hands.

And there were rumours abroad that the Dane-King had a great host and would join battle with King Olaf, but Sigvaldi cunningly put Olaf's mind at rest, and said if war there was, then would he with eleven ships of his own fight on Olaf's side. But Astrid, the wife of Sigvaldi, sought King Olaf and warned him of the plot against him. Yet Olaf would not alter his plans, saying that he was in God's hands. Then Astrid besought him to accept her aid if he needed it, and Olaf promised her that he would, and they parted.

And the ships being ready they weighed anchor and departed from Wendland. Seventy-one ships in all had King Olaf that day; sixty were his own and eleven belonged to Earl Sigvaldi. And Sigvaldi led the way, saying that he knew the deepest waters for their big ships, and bidding them follow him. And when they neared the isle of Svoldr, a skiff rowed out to Sigvaldi's ship, and a message was given to the Earl that the host lay waiting in the haven on the west of the isle. So the Earl struck sail and rowed in under the isle with ten of his ships. And the eleventh ship was Astrid's ship and was manned by her own men, and she gave direction that it should hold apart and not follow the Earl's ships.

And the Dane-King and the Swede-King and Earl Eric with all their lords and many men watched King Olaf's ships as they sailed towards them in the sunshine. And they made no sign, and many of King

Olaf's ships passed on and sailed right out to sea, all unmindful of the foe that lay hidden under the island of Svoldr. Then the watching chieftains saw how one ship greater than those they had already seen came sailing on alone. And they cried together: "This will be the Long Serpent." But as they looked there came another still greater, and again they cried: "This, then, is the ship of Olaf Tryggvison." But after awhile they saw three more great ships, and King Svein was for falling upon them, but Earl Eric knew that they had yet to see the greatest of the ships and he counselled the two Kings to wait awhile. And even as they disputed as to what they should do, lo, four more great ships came a-sailing, and one was a dragon ship,

a mighty ship all done about with gold. And King Svein looked upon the ship and cried: "This night shall the Serpent bear me, and I will steer her."

And the Kings bade their men board their ships, and they went down to the strand. Then the chiefs arranged the order of the battle and drew lots as to which should lead the attack on King Olaf's ship. And the lot fell upon King Svein, and after him upon Olaf the Swede-King, and after him upon Eric the Earl, if there should be need. And now they saw three more mighty ships, and lo, a fourth mightier than all, with the head and tail of a dragon, all wrought about with gold, so that it gleamed far over the sea as the sun shone upon it. And they knew now that this ship was the Long Serpent and that sailing on it was King Olaf Tryggvison. And the first dragon ship was the Short Serpent.

And they took to their ships in haste, and arrayed them for battle, and rowed out even as King Olaf's ships sailed in towards the island. And when the men on King Olaf's ships saw the host that was come against them they besought the King to sail on. But King Olaf stood up on the deck of the Long Serpent and cried with a loud voice: "Strike sails! Let no men of mine think of flight! Never have I fled from battle. Let God look to my life, for I am no true King if ever I turn to flight!"

And the horn was blown- for the gathering of all the ships together, and there were now but eleven in all of King Olaf's ships. A small host it was beside the great force of his foes, yet Olaf would not listen

to the counsel of many round him to sail on and take flight. But he arrayed his ships for battle, the Long Serpent in the midst, and the Short Serpent on one side and the Crane on the other.

And now the ship on which Astrid sailed came up swiftly to the King's ship, and one on her decks spoke to the King and the King replied in a strange tongue so that none of those standing near understood what was said. Then the little Wendish ship sailed off again and was rowed close to shore, and there it cast anchor.

High on his ship stood King Olaf Tryggvison. Over his coat of mail he wore a short red silken kirtle, and his helmet and his shield were overwrought with gold. And he asked who these were that had come against him and they told him. And he laughed in scorn of the Danes and Swedes, but of Earl Eric and his men, he said: "We may look for fierce fight from that folk, for they are Northmen as we be."

And now fell the Kings to battle. King Svein brought his ship against the Long Serpent and the Swede-King was on his one hand and Earl Eric on his other. And then befell a fierce fight. First, arrows were shot from both crossbows and long bows, and then spears and javelins were thrown. And Olaf was the bravest of all in the battle. And it befell with the Dane-King and the Swede-King as King Olaf had said. And when they were driven back, Earl Eric laid his iron-beaked ship to the outermost ship of King Olaf, and speedily cleared it, and then to the next and the next until all were cleared but the Long Serpent.

And all King Olaf's men who were still fit for fight clambered upon the Long Serpent.

And Earl Eric laid Iron Beak to the Long Serpent, and deadly was the fight. And the Dane-King and the Swede-King seeing the Earl's success brought back their war-ships and they lay all round about the Long Serpent. And spears and arrows flew upon her from all sides. Olaf's men strove to fight hand to hand with their foes, heeding no more than if they fought upon the plain mead, and many fell between the ships and down they sank with their weapons.

High up in the fore-hold of his ship, Iron Beak, Earl Eric stood, and a certain man of King Olaf's host named Einar Thambarskelfir marked him where he stood. And of all men Einar was the best shooter with the arrow. And he shot at Earl Eric, and the arrow went in just above his head, and then he shot another and that flew betwixt his arm and his side. And Earl Eric called to him the greatest of his bowmen, a Finn, and said: "Shoot me yonder big man." And the Finn answered: "That can I not for he is not fated to die yet, but I will spoil his bow for him."

So the bowman shot, and his arrow broke the bow of Einar in twain with a loud crash. And King Olaf heard the sound of the breaking of the bow and said: "What brake there so loud?" And Einar answered him, "Norway, King, from thine hands."

"No such crash as that," cried King Olaf, "my realm depends not upon your bow; it is in God's hand; take my bow and shoot." And Einar took the

bow, but it failed him, and he flung it away, crying, "Too weak, too weak, the great King's bow." Then he took his sword and shield and fought hand to hand with Earl Eric's men. And all day long the King fought, now using his bow and now hurling javelins two at a time. And his friends and foes alike were awed before his fearlessness and courage. Always he stood out in the open, and where he stood there was always the greatest noise of swords. And he watched his men how they smote with their swords, but wounded none and slew not, and he went down into the hold of the ship, and unlocked a chest and took from it many bright and sharp swords, and gave them to his men. And his men saw as he stretched out his right hand to give them the swords that blood streamed down from under his ringed coat of mail, but they knew not where he was wounded.

And now the fight waxed hotter and hotter and once Earl Eric and some of his men sprang aboard the Long Serpent, and King Olaf's men closed round them and drove them back on to Iron Beak. And once more the little Wendish ship rowed up to the Long Serpent and the men on her besought King Olaf that he would let them come on board with him, for they said they would gladly die with him there or fly with him if the Fates would have it so. But King Olaf said them nay and bade them go back to the spot where they had been anchored all day, and they obeyed him and returned to the shore and again lay at anchor.

And now Earl Eric rallied the Danes and Swedes

around him for a last attack, and whenas more men had fallen on the Long Serpent again did Earl Eric spring aboard her, and on every side did his men board her, and King Olaf's men fell back before them, and rushed aft, where the King stood. And Earl Eric cheered on his men, and they fought around King Olaf, until few were left to ward off the blows and missiles that rained about him. Some said afterwards that suddenly a bright light spread about the King, so bright that none could look upon it, and that when the light passed King Olaf was nowhere to be seen. And others said that he leapt overboard and, swimming beneath the great ships, reached the little Wendish ship, and was taken on board by Astrid and her men, who then rowed rapidly away. And in after years many stories were told of his being seen and recognized by many persons in distant parts of the world. But however it was, certain it is that never more was Olaf Tryggvison seen in his realm of Norway.

And when King Olaf disappeared from his ship there went up a great cry of victory from Earl Eric's men. And Earl Eric took the Long Serpent for himself and manned her with a mighty crew, and steered her himself. But it was only by their wondrous skill that they managed to bring the great ship into the Wick, for she was leaning to one side, and did not answer to the helm. And afterwards Earl Eric broke up the Long Serpent and burnt her.

Now when they reached the Wick one of Olaf's men went to the spot where Olaf had fought out his last battle and there lay the dog Vigi. All through

the fight he had stood beside his master, and he had not stirred since. And the man went to Vigi and caressed him and said: "We've no Master now, Vigi," and the dog sprang up with a loud yell as of anguish, and rushed from the ship on shore. And he lay down on the top of a mound, and would take no food. And tears flowed from his eyes, and he lay there till he died.

When the people of the land of Norway were told the dread story of Olaf, they sorely grieved. The longer men knew Olaf the more they loved him, and it was freely said that no such chief would ever again be born in Norway or elsewhere. Hear now what says Hallfred, the poet of Iceland, who had been at Nidaros with King Olaf:

Heaven and earth shall rend in twain ere this arise,
A King, alike in excellence to cheerful Olaf,
He was the best of mortal men,
flay Christ the Pure preserve the wise King's soul
above the earth.

THE STORY OF HARALD THE HARDREDY

After the battle of Svoldr, when King Olaf Tryggvison disappeared from his ship and was no more seen in his realm of Norway, his foes, the Dane-King, the Swede-King, and Earl Eric divided the land between them. And Earl Eric had a brother, called Svein, who had married the Swede-King's daughter, and the two brothers together took charge of the realm. And Earl Eric and Earl Svein were the sons of the great Earl Hakon of Ladir.

And there was a man named Olaf, the son of Harald of Grenland, who was a great-grandson of King Harald Hairfair. And a, mighty warrior was Olaf, and many battles had he fought in many lands. And when fifteen winters had passed since the fall of King Olaf Tryggvison, Earl Eric being dead, Olaf Haraldson came into Norway with a great host. And Earl Svein fled from the land, and the people took Olaf for their King. And soon Earl Svein died, and there was peace, and King Olaf ruled in the realm for fifteen years.

Now in those days was Knut King in England, and fain he was to be King of Norway too. And he sent spies into the land, and with bribes turned many of the mighty chiefs to be his men, and so were they lost to Olaf. And others did he lose in this wise. There was a man named Thorir, and it was told to King

Olaf that Thorir had sworn himself King Knut's man, and had taken from him a gift of a great gold ring which he wore upon his arm. And King Olaf took him by the arm, and found the ring upon it, and Thorir said he had it from King Knut. And without further knowing of the matter King Olaf had him put

to death. And much ill-will did this deed stir up against him.

And King Knut gathered his ships and a mighty host and came unto the land. And when Olaf would have met him, he found few to follow him to the fight. And he saw that he had lost his people, and he sailed away from Norway with his wife and son, who was called Magnus. And they went East to the Garthrealm where they gat much love from the King and Queen of that land. And the King's name was Jarisleif and the Queen's name was Ingigerd. And they would fain have King Olaf take to him a portion of their land, and stay with them and rule over it. But Olaf yearned for his own kingdom. And news came to him of the death of the mighty Earl whom King Knut had placed over the land, and he was minded to return and try to win back his people and his rule. So he left Magnus in the care of King Jarisleif and Queen Ingigerd and set out from Garthrealm.

And many chiefs of Norway who were his friends heard of his coming and gathered together to give him their aid. And the noblest of them all was Harald, King Olaf's brother. Fifteen winters old he was and big and brave and manly to behold. And they gathered together six hundred men and marched eastwards to meet King Olaf. And when they met him there was the greatest joy, and together they had twelve hundred men. But as they marched on they found but few of the people ready to join them. For the people trusted in the strength and the fair promises of King Knut, and listened to those who were friends of King

Knut and foes of King Olaf, and they were stirred to drive Olaf from the kingdom, and all those with him who would fain have him for King.

And Olaf and Harald, his brother, and the chiefs came into Sticklestead, and there a great host was come against them. And they arranged them for battle, and set up their banners. Then said Olaf: "I deem it well that Harald, my brother, be not in the fight, for he is but a child of years."

And Harald heard him, and answered and said: "I shall surely be in the fight." And he had his will, and took his place in the battle. And hard was the fight and Olaf was slain, and Harald was sorely wounded. And the night after the battle a certain man carried him into hiding to a house in a wood far from other men. And there was he cared for until his wound was healed. And as soon as it was safe he fared forth by woodland ways until he reached Garthrealm, where Magnus, the son of Olaf, was still in the keeping of King Jarisleif and Queen Ingigerd.

And Svein, the son of King Knut, ruled in the land of Norway, and full ill-content were the men of that land, for Knut remembered not the fair promises which he had made to them, and they repented them that they had laid the land under his evil rule, and cut off King Olaf from both life and land. And when some winters had passed and there was still disquiet among them, Einar Thambarskelfir and Karl Arnison, two mighty men of Norway, took counsel together. And Einar Thambarskelfir was the same man who had stood on King Olaf Tryggvison's ship and shot his bow at Earl Eric, and whose own bow had been shot in twain in his hand by Earl Eric's bowman.

And Einar Thambarskelfir and Karl Arnison fared East into Garthrealm to the court of King Jarisleif. And there they sought Magnus, the son of King Olaf, and prayed him to lead them hack to Norway, and with their strength should he come by his father's realm. And King Jarisleif and Queen Ingigerd held counsel together, and in the end it came to pass that Magnus set out for Norway with a great following.

And when he was come unto Norway, none withstood him, and Svein, the son of Knut, fled from the land, and Magnus made himself King over the Danerealm also, and put a certain man named Svein, the son of Earl Wolf and a great-grandson of King Svein of Denmark, to be his Earl there. And Svein Wolfson waxed strong in the land and won much friendship of the people till at last he would be King instead of Magnus. Thereupon did Magnus array his men and his ships and set out for Denmark, and many fierce

battles he fought and drove Svein Wolfson from the land. And in his wanderings Earl Svein met with Harald, the brother of King Olaf. Harald had fared away from Garthrealm, and had journeyed to many lands. To Greekland had he fared, and to Serkland, which is Western Africa, and to Sicily, and to Jerusalem land, and in all those lands he harried and gat great victories and much wealth. Then he fared back to Garthrealm and King Jarisleif gave unto him his daughter, Ellisif, for his wife.

And in the spring he left Garthrealm and came into Sweden, and there it was that he met with Earl Svein Wolfson, the foe of his brother's son, King Magnus. And Harald and Earl Svein greeted each other well, for they were of kinship by Harald's marriage with Ellisif. And they made fellowship together, and Svein Wolfson told Harald of his battles with King Magnus, and of how he had been driven from the land of Denmark. And they agreed together, and gathered a great force and sailed for Denmark, minded to lay under them that realm and also the realm of Norway.

And King Magnus heard the tidings, and he drew up a great host and arrayed him for meeting his foes. And the fame of Harald was in all men's mouths, how that he was the greatest and the strongest and the wisest of men, ever victorious in battle, and with such wealth of gold as had never before been known. And the men of King Magnus said unto him that it were better to make peace with such an one. And Magnus was of a like mind and he sent messengers with all speed to

Harald to speak secretly with him. And he offered him one half of the kingdom of Norway.

And when the messengers were come unto Harald, they declared the King's will to him, and he answered them yea and they returned to King Magnus. And Harald said naught of the matter to Svein Wolfson, but on a night as they sat together, Svein asked Harald what thing he had which he valued as the most precious of his possessions. And Harald answered him that his banner called Landwaster was the dearest thing to him, seeing that it had been told of it that it would always bring victory to the one before whom it was borne, and that it had ever been so. And Svein said: "I will believe that when thou hast fought three battles with King Magnus and gained the victory in each."

At this Harald waxed wroth and said that it might be that he and King Magnus would meet in seemlier fashion than with war shields aloft. And Svein's face looked red as blood for he liked not the answer. And he parted hastily from Harald. And that night Harald bade one of his men lay in his bed a tree-stump, and Harald betook him to sleep in another part of the ship, for he thought it likely that Svein Wolfson would do some injury upon him. And they watched and saw a man come to the ship in a boat, and when he had departed again, they found an axe stuck fast in the tree in the bed of Harald. And Harald called all his men together, and showed them the axe, and told them of the treachery of Svein. And they loosed their ships in the darkness of night, and rowed away, and day and night they fared on till they met King

Magnus. And right joyful was the meeting between Harald and King Magnus, and they talked over matters and all went in peaceful wise.

And King Magnus bade Harald to a great banquet, and there did he give to Harald's men rich presents, according to their greatness. And before all men did

he give to Harald one half of Norway realm. And the next morning a Thing was called, and King Magnus made known to all the assembly what he had done, and there was the King's name given to Harald.

And that day King Harald gave a feast to King Magnus, and in his turn did he bestow precious things of all kinds upon King Magnus' men, and to Magnus he gave the half of his gold, which, as men saw, they wondered that so much gold should come together in one place.

And the two Kings ruled over Norway. And in the next winter they fared through the Uplands, sometimes together, and sometimes each by himself. And for a time they were well of one mind, but a time came when they were not of one mind, and there were those who went about to make ill-will between them.

And it befell that Earl Svein Wolfson, hearing that the Kings were together in the north of the land of Norway, came unto Denmark and took to himself all the King's dues from that land. But when the spring came Magnus and Harald got their host together to fare to Denmark. And when Earl Svein heard of this he fled away east. And the Kings tarried together in the Dane-realm that summer.

Now in the autumn of that same year, King Magnus dreamed a dream. He thought he was with his father, King Olaf. And his father said to him: "What wilt thou choose now, my son, to fare with me, or to be of all kings the mightiest, and live long, and do such an ill deed as thou mayest scarcely think on?"

And Magnus thought he answered: "Do thou

choose for me.” And he thought the King said: “Then shalt thou fare with me.”

And the next day King Magnus told his dream to his men. And soon thereafter did he fall ill, and he knew that he should die. And he sent his brother Thorn- unto Svein Wolfson to tell him that the hand of death was upon him, and to beseech him to give aid to Thorir if ever he were in need. Moreover, he gave unto Svein the rule of the Dane-realm, and to Harald, the rule over Norway.

And soon after this King Magnus died, and his people were right downcast at his death.

And when Harald heard how that Earl Svein should have the Dane-realm, he was full sore, for he thought it to be his heritage from King Magnus as much as was the realm of Norway. And he called his host together, and opened his mind to them on the matter, and bade them follow him to Denmark. But then upstood Einar Thambarskelfir and spake out straightly to King Harald, saying that it behoved him rather to carry the body of King Magnus to the grave, and lay him beside his father, King Olaf, than to be warring and seeking to take from Svein Wolfson the realm which King Magnus had given to him. And this more he said, that for himself he would rather follow King Magnus dead than any king alive.

And King Harald saw that Einar’s words moved the people, and that he must fare back to Norway, and’ do as Einar had counselled. And Einar took men, and they bore the body of King Magnus to the King’s ship, and arranged it in full stately fashion, and men

no more talked of war but made them ready to go home with the body of King Magnus. And they bore it to Nidoyce, and laid it in earth in Saint Clement's Church, where was the shrine of his father, King Olaf, whom men now called "The Holy."

And King Harald fared through the land calling the people together and bidding them take him to King over all Norway. And the next year he gathered his ships and a great host and sailed to Denmark, and summer after summer did he this, and he harried the land and took much wealth therefrom.

And Svein Wolfson ruled the Dane-realm and had with him Thorir, the brother of Magnus, and he treated him full kindly. And year after year did Svein Wolfson harry the land of Norway, just as King Harald harried the land of Denmark. And at last King Svein offered to King Harald that they should meet in the next summer and fight out their grievances or else come to peace. And all the winter were the two Kings busy preparing their ships for the battle. And at due time King Harald came to the appointed place, but King Svein was not there. So King Harald harried about the land, till King Svein came upon him from the land with a great host, and bade him come aland and fight.

Now King Svein had twice as many men as Harald. Therefore King Harald bade King Svein to fight with him at sea. And he rowed his ships under the island of Leeseey, and lay there overnight. And a mist came up, so that they saw nothing of their foes, but when the morning sun shone out, and the mist

was clearing, they saw out at sea as if great fires were burning. And the men told King Harald, and he came upon his deck, and looked. And full quickly did he know the meaning of the brightness. "Let men fall to the oars," he cried. "The Dane-host now is come upon us, and the sun is shining on their dragon-heads, such as are overlaid with gold." And they sailed away, ere the mist had cleared, as speedily as they might, and the Dane-host followed them. And when King Svein's ships were nigh upon them King Harald called to his men to lighten the ships. And they threw out rafts and heaped on them the precious spoils which they had taken from the Dane-realm. And the Danes tarried to take the spoils, which when King Svein saw, he cried to them to speed with the rowing and leave the rafts. And this they did, and again they drew nigh to King Harald's ships. Then Harald bade his

men throw overboard the meat and drink, and the prisoners they had taken in fight. And King Svein would fain save the drowning men, and while his ships tarried to take them aboard King Harald sailed on and thus did outstrip King Svein. And the Danish host gave up the chase, and Harald went on his way.

Thus was King Harald ever quick of wit in danger, and therefore was he called the Hardredy or quick-witted. Masterful he was, too, so that none dared to say him nay in anything that he would have. And a great warrior was he, and skilful with weapons above any other man. And right friendly was Harald to the men of Iceland, and many songs did their singers make of his prowess and doughty deeds. And on a time when there was a famine in Iceland, King Harald did send four ships carrying meat to the land. And at other times did he give great gifts to the men of Iceland, who came to him. And many came to Norway in his time, and he welcomed them, and they tarried in the land for awhile.

Now Einar Thambarskelfir was a mighty man in Norway for he held much land in Thrandheim which King Magnus had given him, and also he had much wealth. But there was little dealing between him and King Harald, for he ever spake his mind against the King's masterful ways, and answered with boldness for all men at the assemblies of the people. Well he knew the law too, and would speak it forth even before the King. And the King waxed wroth at this, and often it befell that there were hot words between them. And on a time Einar spoke out and said that though Harald

was their King, the people would not suffer him to break the law. And such was King Harald's anger at this that thereafter Einar took to having many men about him at home, and many more when he fared abroad, and especially where the King was.

And it befell that once he fared to the town with a great host. Eight or nine long ships he had, and five hundred men. And King Harald happened to be at that place, and he saw the ships and the men as they came ashore. And King Harald said that Einar had more followers than an Earl, and doubtless would think himself fit to be a King, unless he were speedily brought low.

Now on a day a meeting of the folk was held and the King was to be there. And it chanced that a certain thief, who had been taken in the town, was brought there for judgment. And this man had once been Einar's man, and Einar had liked him well. And Einar was told of his taking and he deemed that the King would be harder on the man, knowing that he set store by him. And Einar bade his men take their weapons, and he went with them to the folk meeting, and took the man thence by force.

And King Harald called upon Einar to appear before him at his Council Chamber, and answer for his deed. And Einar came to the place with his son Eindridi. And he said to Eindridi: "Be thou outside with our folk; there will then be no peril for me." And Einar went into the Council Chamber, and when the door had closed behind him, there was so little light in the chamber that he could scarcely see his way, and

before he had taken many steps men leapt upon him in the darkness, and felled him to the ground. And Eindridi heard a cry, and a struggle, and he drew his sword and rushed in. And straightway he also was struck down. And Einar's men without the door cried to each other to avenge this slaughter of their chiefs, but they had none to lead them. And when King Harald came out from the Council Chamber none withstood him. Yet sore ill-will against King Harald was there among Einar's kinsfolk and the men of Thrandheim for his misdeed. And they would have brought him to battle, but none was there at that time to raise their banner and lead them forth.

Now on a winter did King Harald fare to Nidoyce, and there did he build a great ship. It was built after the fashion of King Olaf's Long Serpent. Forward was a dragon head, and aft a crooked tail, and both were wrought about with gold. Thirty-five benches were there for rowers, and the furnishing of the ship in sails and running tackle and anchors and cables were all of the best. And when the ship was finished King Harald sent word to King Svein of Denmark that he would meet him in the spring and join battle with him, and the winner should take both the kingdoms to rule.

And when the spring was come King Harald gathered a great host and sailed out from Nidoyce. And the great dragon ship was fitted out, and Harald steered it himself. And they came to the shores of Denmark, to the place appointed for the battle, and King Harald heard that King Svein was farther south

with his host. And King Harald harried the land until King Svein came upon him with three hundred ships. And when the Northmen saw the great host of King Svein they would flee, but King Harald spoke and said: "Sooner shall every man of us fall athwart the other, rather than flee."

And they arrayed their ships and King Svein arrayed his host, and the war-blast was blown, and the fight began. Fierce it was, and all night long it waged. And late in the night King Harald and his men boarded King Svein's ship, and all men were slain, save those that leapt into the sea. And when King Svein's banner was no more to be seen upon his ship all his men were full of fear. And they fled from King Harald. And none knew where King Svein was, or whether he was alive or dead.

And there was with King Harald at this time Earl Hakon Ivarson, a great-grandson of Earl Hakon the "Mighty." He was, too, a kinsman of King Svein's, for Svein had married a granddaughter of Earl Hakon the Mighty, and on a time when he had quarrelled with King Harald, Earl Hakon Ivarson had departed to Denmark, and served King Svein, and he knew the land and the people well.

Now Earl Hakon's ship had been behind the others when the battle was at its fiercest. And a small boat rowed up to the Earl's ship, and there sat a man in it, and his face was partly hidden by a wide hat. And the man called up on to the Earl's ship: "Where is the Earl?" And Earl Hakon came from tending a wounded man, and he leaned over the side of the

ship and looked at the man in the boat. "What is thy name?" he asked. And the man answered: "I am Vandrad: I will take life of thee, Earl, if thou wilt give it."

And Earl Hakon called to two men on his ship, who were his dear friends, and he said to them: "Step into the boat, and flit Vandrad ashore, and take him to Karl, my friend, and bid him let Vandrad have a horse and saddle, and his son for a guide." And the men leapt into Vandrad's boat and rowed away. And whenever King Harald's ships came nigh to the boat, Earl Hakon's men told who they were, and they passed on in peace. And at last they got beyond all the ships, and went aland to the homestead of Karl.

And the morn was dawning, and there was Karl, and they told him Earl Hakon's message. And when he had heard them, he welcomed them heartily, and set food upon the board, and brought them water and towels for washing. And the housewife came in, making sore complaint against the noise and clatter that had been around there through the night, whereby none might get sleep or rest. And Karl said: "Knowest thou not the Kings have been fighting all the night?" And she asked: "Which has had the better?" And Karl answered her: "The Northmen have got the victory, and men wot not whether our King be fled or fallen." And the housewife "said: "In sorry case we be for a King; he is a craven."

And. at this Vandrad looked up quickly and said "Nought is the King craven, but nought is he victorious." And now the men washed and Vandrad last, and

he wiped himself in courteous fashion on the middle of the towel. And the housewife pulled it from him roughly saying that he was wetting all the towel at once. And Vandrad took all with patience and said little. Then they sat down to the board and ate, and after did Karl bring the horse to Vandrad, and put his son upon another, and they rode forth together. And Earl Hakon's men returned to his ship.

Now Vandrad was King Svein, and by this means he got away safely to Sealand, and there all his host who had fled from the battle, and many others, joined him.

And this battle between King Svein and King Harald the Hardredy was called the battle of Niz. And when King Harald had returned to Norway, King Svein held the Dane-realm as before. And he sent for Karl, and thanked him for his aid, and gave him great rewards, so that he became a man of great account in the land.

But when King Harald knew that it was Earl Hakon who had helped King Svein in his flight, he was full wroth, and Earl Hakon was forced to flee from the land.

And the next winter messengers fared between Norway and Denmark bidding the King to make peace. And it befell that when spring-time came the Kings met, and talked together and came to peace on these terms, that King Harald should have Norway, and King Svein Denmark, and that warfare should cease between them. And they bound themselves with oaths and parted in friendly manner.

Now there was a King in England at this time

named Edward, and men called him the Good. His wife was Gyda, the daughter of Godwin, a mighty Earl of the land. Godwin was brave and noble, and he had five sons, also brave and noble, and they were the mightiest men in England. And Edward the Good having no children, took Earl Godwin's youngest son, Harald, for his foster-son. And Earl Harald was brought up at the King's Court, and the King loved him much.

And Tosti, the eldest son of Earl Godwin, was captain over the host, and was above all other earls.

And it befell that King Edward the Good died, and Earl Harald claimed that he had given him the kingdom. And he was taken to King by the people, and received king-hallowing in Paul's Church. But when Tosti heard these tidings he was wroth, for he deemed he was as worthy to be king as his brother Harald. And he said: "Let the lords of the land choose which shall be king." But Harald held fast to the kingdom, saying that he had been given king-hallowing, and, moreover, all the people would have him for king, and he had all the king's treasures. And seeing that his brother, Tosti, was against him, and that he was a powerful lord and a great warrior, he took from him the power that King Edward the Good had given him.

And Tosti fared from the land in anger. And he went to King Svein of Denmark and besought him to help him to get the kingdom from his brother. But King Svein answered him nay, "For," said he, "scarce can I hold the Dane-realm." Then Tosti fared into

Norway and went to King Harald the Hardredy and he besought his aid. But King Harald said that the Northmen would not be eager to fare to England a-warring and have an English lord over them. "Men say," he said, "that those England men are not all trusty."

But Tosti egged him on in the matter, saying that his fame was known to all men, and that no such warrior as he had been born in the Northlands, and he might make England his own. "And," says he, "meseems it is wonderful that thou shouldest have been fighting for Denmark these fifteen years, but will not have England which now lieth ready for thy hand."

And Harald listened to him, and fain he was to get the land. And they talked long together, and in the end it came to this, that in the summer they should fare to England together to win the realm. And messengers went over all Norway calling out the men for the war muster. And the fame of the coming fight was all over the land and many guesses were made as to what might come of it. Some spake of the great deeds of King Harald and said that this would not be beyond him. And others spake of the great numbers of the England folk, of their great fighters, and of one host they had of which the saying was that one man of them was better than two of the best of the Northmen.

In the spring Earl Tosti sailed away to get his host together, and Harald arrayed his men. And King Harald was at this time at Nidoyce, and when all was ready, he went to the shrine of his brother, King Olaf

the Holy, and unlocked it and cut the hair and nails of the dead King. Then he locked the shrine again and threw the keys into the River Nid. And never since that day has the shrine of King Olaf been opened.

And King Harald set his son Magnus to rule over the kingdom of Norway in his absence. And he fared forth from Nidoyce, taking with him Queen Ellisif and his daughters, Maria and Ingigerd. And so great was his host that men say there were well nigh two hundred ships, besides other small cutters.

And there was a man on the King's ship and he dreamed a dream. He thought that he looked landward and saw an ogress stand with a short sword in one hand and a trough in the other. And on the prow of each ship sat a raven. And the ogress sang, and in her song she said that she would follow the ships and eat the dead bodies of those who should fall in battle.

And another man in another ship also dreamed a dream. He thought that he saw the fleet of King Harald faring towards England. And he saw on the land the two great hosts arraying themselves for the fight, with all their banners aloft. And up and down before the England men there rode an ogress sitting upon a wolf. And the wolf held the dead body of a man in his mouth. And when he had eaten it, the ogress threw him another, and then another.

And King Harald himself dreamed a dream. He thought he was at Nidoyce, and there came to him King Olaf, his brother. And King Olaf said to him "I am fearsome, King, that now thy death beginneth."

And many others dreamed dreams at that time, and all seemed forebodings of death or sore mischance. And the host grew heavy of heart. But on they fared and the wind was fair, and they came unto the Orkneys. And there did King Harald leave Queen Ellisif, and his daughters, Maria and Ingigerd.

And he and his men sailed on again and they came unto Scarborough, on the north-eastern coast of England. And they came aland and did set the town afire and slew many men, and took all the wealth they could. And King Harald marched along from place to place, and all gave way before him. But when they reached the Humber, a great host of English warriors came down upon them. And the banner Landwaster was carried forth and Harald cheered on his men, and deadly was the fight. And the England men shrank back before the hard onset of the Northmen, and speedily turned to flight.

Now did Earl Tosti join King Harald and with him a great multitude that were his kin and friends. And they forced on together to Stamford Bridge. And such was King Harald's fame in that town that the people offered themselves and their town to him without battle, and gave to him as hostages the sons of highborn men.

This befell on Sunday, and King Harald directed that an assembly of the people should be held on Monday, when he would choose men of prowess to rule the town for him. And the King fared back to his ships right joyful at his victory.

Now on the evening of the same Sunday it befell

that Harald Godwinson, King of England, marched up to the town with a mighty host. And when he came to the gates, the people let him in right willingly. And he ordered that all the gates and ways should be guarded so that the Northmen should not know of his coming.

And on the morning of Monday, King Harald the Hardredy fared forth from his ships with two-thirds of his men and marched towards the town to hold the assembly of the people. And the sun shone hot and the weather was fair, and right merry were his men. No armour did they wear, but bore their shields and helms and spears, and their swords were girt about them. And as they neared the town, they saw a mighty host which rode out therefrom, and brightly shone their shields and their armour in the sun.

And King Harald the Hardredy stayed his men, and called unto him Earl Tosti and asked him what this might be. And Earl Tosti answered him that it looked most like unpeace. And the King bade all keep quiet and watch. And the nearer the host came,

the larger was it, and their weapons gleamed and flashed as they rode. “Unpeace is toward,” said King Harald the Hardredy. “This will be the King himself.”

And Earl Tosti counselled that they should turn back swiftly and fetch their weapons or else bide on their ships, but King Harald said he would have three of his briskest men on his swiftest horses to ride back and tell the rest of the host, and bring them speedily to their aid. And Earl Tosti bade the King rule in this matter, and so it was done.

And they set up the banner Landwaster and King Harald sat on his black horse and arrayed his host and scanned the host of the England men. And his horse slipped and fell under him, and he was thrown forward to the ground. But swiftly he leapt again to his feet with jesting words on his lips. And King Harald of England saw the fall and said to those around him: "Did ye know that big man who fell off his horse there with the blue kirtle and the goodly helm?" And they answered him: "There is the King himself." And Harald Godwinson said: "A big man and masterful but, belike, forlorn of luck."

And a score of horsemen rode up to the Northmen and one spake and asked if Earl Tosti were there. And when Earl Tosti stood before him he gave unto him a message of peace from his brother, Harald Godwinson, and a promise of land even to one-third of his realm. Then said Tosti: "Had this been bidden last winter many a man would be alive now who now is dead, and better would stand the Kingdom of England. But what will King Harald of England bid to King Harald of Norway for his toil in this matter?"

And the rider answered: "Seven foot of England shall he have, or so much more as he is higher than other men." Then said Earl Tosti: "Fare ye back, and tell King Harald to make ready for battle." And the England men rode back.

And King Harald of Norway said to Earl Tosti "Who was this smooth-spoken man?" And Tosti answered: "That was King Harald of England."

And now the battle began. The Northmen held

themselves well, but soon the English riders had broken down their defence of shields, and they bore on them from all sides. And King Harald the Hardredy went into the hottest part of the battle, and hewed about him with both hands, and all who were nighest him fled. And while he was thus fighting an arrow smote him in the throat, and he fell, and this was his death.

And King Harald of England again offered peace to his brother Tosti, but Tosti would not take it, and the battle went on till nigh all the great men of the Northmen were fallen. And at the end of the day King Harald of England had gotten the victory.

And news came that Maria, the daughter of King Harald of Norway, had died suddenly at the very day and hour that her father fell.

And the next winter, the body of King Harald was brought out from England to Nidoyce, and laid in earth at Mary Church which he had himself built. He was fifty years old at the time of his death, and from the day he fought for his brother, King Olaf, at the battle of Sticklestead, when he was fifteen years old, to the end of his life was nought but uproar and battle and unpeace. But it was the talk of all men that he was a great King, and noble to behold, ever victorious and brave beyond all others, the swiftest in counsel, and full generous with gifts to his friends. Therefore did his memory live long in the land of Norway, and in Iceland the stories of his doughty deeds were told and sung from age to age.

THE SONG OF THE MILL

There was a great King of Denmark named Frodi. Peace reigned over all the world in his time, and his people called it Frodi's peace, because he seemed to them all-powerful, and they thought that everything good and great was due to him. But in truth, this world-peace had been proclaimed by another mighty monarch, the Emperor Augustus.

And great wealth had King Frodi and right generous was he with his wealth, and ever ready to add to it. And it befell at this time that two mill-stones were found in Denmark, and so huge were they that no one could drag them or grind them. And Frodi was very anxious to find someone to grind them for they were magic stones, possessing the power of grinding out whatsoever the grinder wished.

And King Frodi fared to Sweden to visit the King of that land, and it chanced that he saw there two female slaves, of great strength and stature. And he bought them that they might work at his mill-stones. And the names of the two slaves were Fenja and Menja.

And Frodi took them back with him to Denmark, and set them to grind. And he commanded them to grind for him gold and peace and prosperity. And all the day they ground, and all the night when everyone

slept. And right willingly they worked, and as they worked they sang this song:

“Riches we find for Frodi,
 All happiness we grind,
 Wealth in abundance
 In gladness’ mill.
 On riches may he sit,
 On down may he sleep,
 To joy may he wake!
 Then ‘tis well ground.
 Here shall no man
 Hurt another,
 Prepare evil,
 Nor occasion death,
 Nor yet strike
 With the keen sword,
 Though his brother’s slayer
 He find bound.”

Now when at last they had wearied of their toil, they besought King Frodi that they might rest, but he commanded them to grind on, saying: “Ye shall rest no longer than the cuckoo is silent, or while I speak one stave.” And Fenja and Menja were full of wrath at his words. And now as they ground, they sang another song. And this was what they sang

“Thou wert not wise, Frodi, in buying thy handmaids,
 Thou didst choose us for our strength and size,
 But thou asked not of our race.
 Bold and mighty were our fathers,
 Bold and mighty were our ancestors,
 Sprung are we from the mountain giants.
 Mighty deeds have we maidens wrought,
 Moved have we the mountains from their places,
 Rolled rocks so that the earth trembled.
 Princes have sought our aid,
 Many have we aided and many overthrown,
 Now are we come to Frodi’s house,
 Meeting no mercy, and held in bondage,
 Mud beneath our feet, and cold above our heads.”

And as the giant-maidens sang of their wrongs, they grew angrier and angrier and angrier against Frodi for his cruelty and greed, and they ground no more for gold and peace and prosperity, but for war and fire and sword.

“Let us grind on! Let us grind on!” they sang in giant wrath as they toiled throughout the night.

And a great sea-king named Mysing came with his host, and fell upon the land of Frodi. And Frodi was slain, and his hall burnt, and Mysing took all his treasures. Then sang the giant-maidens again:

“We have ground long, O Frodi;
We have ground to our pleasure.”

And the sea-king, Mysing, took the great magic

mill-stones and the bond-maids and put them aboard his ship, and he bade them grind salt. And Fenja and Menja ground on till there was so much salt that the ship sank beneath its weight. And down it went to the bottom of the sea, which has ever since been salt. And the mill is grinding still, and will grind on for ever. And it is this grinding which we call the roaring of the sea.

THE STORY OF VOLUND

There was a King of the Finns who had three sons, named Slagfinn, Egil, and Volund. Handsome and tall, straight-limbed and brave were they all, and mighty hunters of wild beasts. Over the frozen land they would go on their snow-shoes, seeking their prey, journeying sometimes for days together, and resting at night wrapped in their reindeer skins.

And once they travelled southward to the land of Sweden, and it befell that after many days they came to a lake in a place called Wolfsdale, because of the many wolves that hid there. But the brothers had no fear of wolves, and they set about building them a house on the shores of the lake. And all the winter they abode there, hunting bears, and catching fish through the holes which they made in the ice-covered lake. And then the spring came.

And early one morning they saw on the margin of the lake three maidens sitting and spinning flax. And the brothers looked and looked again, for they deemed they must be dreaming, so beautiful were the maidens. Blue were their eyes as the sky above them; white their skins as the snow upon the mountains; and their shining tresses covered their shoulders with a mantle of gold.

And when the brothers drew nearer, they saw that beside each maiden was a swan-plumage. Then

did they know that the maidens were Valkyrjor, goddesses who choose the warriors who shall be slain in battle, and who welcome them after death and serve them in Odin's Valhalla.

And the brothers gazed at them in wonder, for often had they heard and dreamed of the surpassing loveliness of the Valkyrjor, and as they gazed, the three maidens ceased spinning, and looked smilingly upon them. And they rose and came towards the young men where they stood unable to move, and each one cried "Hall!" to one of the brothers, calling him by his name.

And Slagfinn took the outstretched hand of the maiden who had hailed him, and her name was Svanvhit. And Egil took the hand of Orlun, and Volund, Alvit. And they loved each other with a great love, and they were wedded. And the brothers took their brides to the house beside the lake, and great was their happiness.

Now it was the will of the gods that for only nine years at a time might a Valkyrjor live this life of earthly joy: after nine years she must return to the battle-field and the service of Valhalla for another nine years. So in the seventh year of their life with the brothers, the swan-maidens grew sad, in the eighth year they were restless, and in the ninth they resigned themselves to their fate, and prepared to depart. And one morning, when the brothers had gone forth to the chase, they donned their swan-plumage and flew away. And the brothers returned and found their home empty.

And for a while they hoped that the bright goddesses would return, but the days passed, and they came not. And a great sadness and loneliness came upon Slagfinn, and Egil, and Volund, and the dale that had been so lovely to them in their happiness became a dreary land. And Slagfinn and Egil were restless as well as

sad: they rejoiced no more in the chase, and only followed it for the sake of obtaining food.

But Volund, though no less sad than his brothers, said little, and worked on quietly, doing the same things which had been such joys to him when he had done them for Alvit.

And at last one day Slagfinn and Egil came to Volund and said they could bear their lives no longer there, and that they must go forth and search for Svanhit and Orlun. And Volund besought them to stay and work on in patience, saying that their love and endurance would surely be rewarded by the return of their wives. But the two brothers were deaf to his prayers. So Volund told them that he would wait on alone. And he walked with them a little on their way. Then they embraced him, and Volund parted from them, and took his way back sad and solitary.

And because of his sadness and loneliness, he worked all the harder. And one day it befell that he went to the mountains to dig, for the mountains of these parts were rich in metals. And as he threw up the earth with his axe, he saw mixed with it, not the iron he expected, but gold in huge lumps. And (lay after day he worked, glad in his discovery, until he had heaps of the precious mineral, and he piled it in his house.

And now Volund set up a forge and began to fashion the gold and the various other metals he had found into helmets and swords and suits of armour. And then, one day, to his great delight, he found in a new spot, precious stones, green, and red and blue.

And he threw all his heart into the fashioning of the metals, in setting them with the shining jewels, working hard so as to forget his loneliness, and make the time of waiting short till his beloved Alvit should come again.

Hundreds of suits of armour did he fashion, and thousands of swords, and his fame travelled and spread abroad, and all men talked of his industry and amazing skill at the forge. And he made a sword for himself, and many, many days did he work upon it patiently. And when it was finished it was so supple that he could wind it round his body, and so sharp that it cut through a rock as easily as if it had been wood. And in the handle and the sheath he set precious stones, the finest sapphires he could find.

And when the sword was finished, he took gold, and fashioned himself a breastplate, and in that, too, he set sparkling gems. And so bright was the breastplate that its shining could be seen a mile off.

Then he grew weary of making armour and swords. And he began to hammer the gold into rings, and as he hammered he thought of Alvit, and how the red gold would gleam on her white arms. Seven hundred of these rings he made, and he strung them on strips of bark and hung them in his house.

Now, the King of Sweden at that time was called Nidud. Cruel and cowardly he was, and greedy of gold. And it was told him how there lived alone on the shores of the lake in Wolfsdale, a man who worked all the day in pure gold and precious stones, and who fashioned them into armour and swords and rings. And the King thought to himself that as the gold was taken from the mountains in his kingdom, he had a right to take all these treasures for himself, and also, that he would capture this clever craftsman and compel him to forge treasures for him alone, and so add to his

possessions and wealth. So King Nidud called men unto him and bade them prepare to follow him to Wolfsdale. And they arrayed them in their studded mail-coats and took their shields and weapons. And Nidud led them forth. And they came unto the house of Volund. Wide open was the door, and they peered cautiously within and saw the shining armour and the copper helmets and the golden breastplates and the swords and rings all hung upon the walls. And they dismounted and went within, and found that the house was empty.

And they looked upon the treasures in amazement. And they took the rings from the strips of bark and counted them, seven hundred in all. And they put them back again all but one, which King Nidud kept for himself. And presently they heard sounds outside, and judged that Volund was returning, and they hid themselves and waited.

And Volund came gliding along on his snow shoes. He had been hunting, and on his shoulders he carried a bear which he had speared. And he made a fire of brushwood and fir, well dried in the wind, and he prepared some of the flesh of the bear, and put it to roast before the fire.

And while the meat was cooking, he flung himself down on the bearskin and he reached out his hand to the ring-laden strip of bark, and there he sat and counted his rings, thinking of Alvit the while, and watching with delight the play of the firelight upon the ruddy gold.

And when he had counted them once, he counted

them again, for it seemed to him that one was missing. And when he had done so several times, he knew that he had not been mistaken, and a wild joyous hope leapt into his heart, for he thought that Alvit must have returned and had taken the ring in loving jest. And quite still he sat, sure that she was near, listening and waiting for her coming. But he was weary with the hunt; and the silence, and the warmth, and the deep content of his heart all invited repose, and he fell into a deep sleep.

And when he awoke heavy fetters were on his hands and feet. Nidud's men had captured him. And in fierce wrath he struggled to be free.

"Who are ye?" he cried, "that have laid bond upon me!"

And Nidud charged him with stealing the gold that was piled everywhere in the house, and bade his men carry him away. And Volund, helpless in his bonds, was forced to submit. And Nidud caused him to be thrown into a dark prison. And he sent his men back again to the house in Wolfsdale, and they carried off all the treasures that were there and brought them to Nidud. And Nidud kept the wonderful sword which Volund had made for himself, and the ring which he had taken from the strip of bark he gave unto Bödvild, his daughter.

And the King and Queen and Bödvild came and looked upon Volund in his prison. And Volund saw the sword, hanging from Nidud's belt, and he ground his teeth in rage, and the ring which he had dreamed would shine on Alvit's fair arms, he saw now worn by

Bödvild. And his eyes glistened like a serpent's at the sight.

And the Queen saw his wrath, and when they had left the prison she said unto the King: "Threateningly he looks when his eyes fall upon the sword, and upon Bödvild's ring. He wills us harm. Put him in the tower upon the island of Sævarstead, and sever the sinews of his legs, so that he cannot swim or run from us."

And the King hearkened unto her, and as she had said so it was done. And helpless, and a cripple, they imprisoned him in the tower on the island of Sævarstead. And there he forged for the King whatever he commanded him. And no one but the King visited him there.

And day and night he worked for his heart was too full for rest and sleep, and as he worked he thought out schemes of revenge for all the cruelty and misery which he had suffered. And over and over again he said to himself, and the thought made him nearly mad with helpless rage, "The sword shines in Nidud's belt which I whetted as I could most skilfully, and tempered as seemed to one most cunningly. That bright blade for ever is taken from me; never shall I see it borne into Volund's smithy. And Bödvild wears my bride's red-gold ring. Never for this can there be atonement to me."

And the remembrance of all his wrongs spurred him on to darker and darker thoughts of vengeance, and as he planned he worked on feverishly, hammering at the precious metals, fashioning them with wondrous

skill into armour, and helmets, and drinking cups, all wrought upon with stories of the gods and their great deeds, and he fashioned for himself a pair of wings, so that when vengeance was fulfilled he might fly away. And one day the gods put vengeance in his hands.

The two young sons of Nidud came to the door of the smithy and looked in at him. And, entering, they went to the great chest where the gold was kept, and demanded of Volund the keys. And Volund gave them, and the boys looked into the chest and saw there many necklaces and rings and quantities of gold. And full of desire were they for the heaped-up ruddy gold.

Then said Volund: "Come ye two alone, to-morrow come, that gold shall be given you. Tell it not to the maidens nor to the household-folk, nor to any one, that ye have been with me."

And early on the morrow the boys called each other, and escaped from Nidud's palace unnoticed. And they took a boat and hastened across to the island, and ran to the smithy and again demanded the keys of the chest from Volund. And he gave them as before and they opened the chest, and bent their heads over it to look into it. And at that moment Volund took a sharp sword and smote off their heads. And he dug a hole in the floor of the smithy and buried the bodies there, but the heads he took and set them in silver, and fashioned drinking cups from them, and sent them to King Nidud.

And of their eyes he formed precious stones, and

sent them to Nidud's ugly Queen. And of their teeth he made breast-ornaments and sent them to Bödvild.

And Volund laughed aloud in his joy that at last his vengeance had begun. And it chanced soon afterwards that Bödvild came to the smithy by stealth. She had broken the red-gold ring which Volund had made, and which her father, the King, had taken and given to her, and she feared to tell any of her mischance. So she brought it to Volund, begging him to mend it. And he beguiled her with fair words, and won her love. Then with the wings which he had made he rose in the air, and left her, weeping for his loss. Hovering above her, his mocking laughter rang in her ears, as she left the isle, sorrowing and despairing. And Bödvild returned to the palace and hid her grief, for she feared her father's anger.

And grief was ever with Nidud for the loss of his two sons. None knew how they had died, but their empty boat had been found adrift, and it was supposed that they had been drowned. Sleepless nights and joyless days made Nidud's life a burden to him. And on a day when he sat alone, now grieving for his boys

and now fillet with fierce rage at Volund's escape from him, Volund himself hovered above him in the air, and mocked at his woe.

And Nidud cried to him: "Tell me, Volund, if thou canst, what is become of my brave boys?"

And Volund told him all the story of their death, of the drinking cups which had been made from their skulls, and from which Nidud had drunk, not knowing; of the precious stones which had been fashioned from their eyes, and had been given to the Queen, and of the breast ornaments which had been made from their teeth, and which Bödvild now wore.

And Nidud shook before him in his passion and horror, and Volund mocked him. And he cried: "Listen yet again, O Nidud, who didst bind me, and torture me, and imprison me, and enslave me for gold. Hear yet more of my vengeance!"

And he told him of his beguilement of Bödvild, and mocked at her love for him. And the wretched King groaned in anguish, and strove to reach Volund where he floated just above him and kill him. And Volund laughed at him in triumph at his helpless rage, and soared higher and ever higher in the sky, rejoicing in his vengeance, fulfilled at last.

But Nidud sat alone and sorrow-stricken, mourning ever for his children.

STORIES OF ICELAND FOLK

Now, in the days when Harald Hairfair would make himself sole King over all Norway, many kings and many mighty chiefs held sway over various portions of the land. And Harald swept through the country, carrying all before him. And it was clearly seen that no other king or chief could thrive in the land. And many submitted and became king's men, and many died rather than submit. And others, when they heard that Harald was coming upon them, gathered their kinsfolk about them, and, taking what wealth and stores they could, fled from the land. And in this way were the Faroe Islands, and the Orkneys, and Iceland peopled, and many North men journeyed to England and Scotland and made these lands their home.

Now, there was a man named Ketill Flatnose, and he was a mighty and high-born chieftain. And when Ketill heard of the coining of King Harald- Hairfair, he deemed that he could in nowise hope to hold his land against him. And he called his kinsfolk to him,

and spoke unto them, saying that for his part he was willing to do battle with Harald and to suffer death as other chieftains had done.

“But,” said he, “I would not lead you by my willfulness into so great a trouble, for I know that ye would not desert me, even though it would be some trial of manhood to follow me.”

And Bjorn, the son of Ketill, made answer: “I will make known my wishes at once. I will follow the example of noble men and fly from this land.” And at these words of Bjorn’s there was a great cheer. And as no one was found to speak against this counsel, it was settled upon that they should all leave the country.

And Bjorn and Helgi, another son of Ketill, spoke of Iceland, saying that they had heard pleasing news of the place, that the land was good, and that there was plenty of whale and salmon and other fishing all the year round.

But Ketill was minded to go west over the sea, saying that he had harried there far and wide, and knew those lands well, and that there was the best chance of getting a livelihood.

So it befell that the kinsmen parted company. And Bjorn and Helgi went to Iceland, and their father, Ketill, with his daughter, Unn, the Deep-minded, and many of their relations, journeyed west oversea to Scotland. And the great men of that land received Ketill well, and gave him high station, for he was a man of renown. And Ketill and all his kinsfolk, except Thorstein, the son of Unn, settled there and prospered.

But Thorstein, who was called “the Red,” took to

warring, and harried Scotland, and fought many battles, and always did he gain the victory. And the people of Scotland made peace with him and gave him half Scotland for his own. And soon after this, Thorstein was treacherously murdered. And about this time too it befell that Ketill died. And it was a time of warring and great unrest, and Unn, the Deep-minded, deemed that she and her kinsfolk would have no further prosperity in Scotland. And she ordered a great ship to be built secretly in a wood, and when it was built she furnished it and stored much wealth upon it.

And they brought the ship to the seashore, and Unn took with her all her kinsmen who were still alive. And men deemed that never had a woman done such a deed as this before, to get so much wealth and folk safely away in secret in a time of war. But in all things was Unn wise, and peerless among women.

And Unn sailed away with many men of worth and high birth. And one of the worthiest was named Koll. And they sailed to the Orkneys, and there Unn gave one of the daughters of Thorstein the Red in marriage, and from her descended all the kin of the Orkney earls.

Then they sailed on again to the Faroe Isles, and there another daughter of Thorstein the Red was married, and from her descended the noblest race of that land.

And they sailed on again to Iceland. And off the south of that land their ship was broken in splinters, but all their people and goods were saved. And Unn sought out Helgi, her brother, who had fared to Iceland

at the same time that Ketill fared to Scotland. And Helgi came to meet Unn, and she had with her twenty followers, for Unn was high-minded. And Helgi bade her send ten of her men away, and come and stay with him. But Unn turned from him in anger, calling him a churl.

And she journeyed to Broadfirth, where on the southern shore dwelt Bjorn, who was also her brother. And Bjorn heard of her coming and went to meet her with many followers, for he knew her pride and worth. And he greeted her in hearty fashion, and invited her and all her followers to stay with him. And Unn was well pleased, and thanked him for his honourable dealing.

And Unn stayed all the winter with Bjorn, and he entertained her in lordly fashion, for he was wealthy and spared not his means.

And in the spring Unn and her people took ship from Broadfirth and came to a ness where they ate their mid-day meal, and since that day has the place been called Daymealness. And then they sailed on and came to another ness, and there Unn lost her comb, and that place has ever since been called Combness.

And Unn went about throughout the Broadfirth Dales and took to herself lands as much as she would.

Now, it was the custom for voyagers to a new land to take aboard with them the sacred pillars of the high seat from their old abode. And when the ship neared the shore where they would dwell, the pillars were thrown overboard, and they drifted with the wind and waves till they were flung up on the

beach. And it was believed that at this spot the gods willed that the house should be built.

And Unn bethought her that she would build her a house. And she steered her ship to the head of the bay where it washes the shores of the Broadfirth Dales. And she commanded that the pillars of the high seat should be cast over the side of the ship. And where they were washed ashore there did Unn deem it fit to build her a house. And it was called Hvamm, and

there Unn dwelt. And there did Koll marry Thorgerd, daughter of Thorstein the Red.

And Unn gave the bridal feast, and Thorgerd took for her dowry all Salmon River Dale, and there did they set up their house. And brave was Koll, and mighty, and of high birth. And the son of Koll and Thorgerd was called Hoskuld.

And to many of her followers did Unn give part of her land-take. But to Olaf Feilan, who was the youngest child of Thorstein the Red, she was minded to give all her belongings when she should die. And tall and strong and goodly to look at was Olaf, and Unn loved him above all men.

And the burden of age came now upon Unn, and one day she called Olaf Feilan to her and said: "It is my mind, kinsman, that you should settle down and marry." And Olaf answered that he was well pleased to have all things governed by her. And Unn said that she would wish the bridal feast to be held at the end of the summer, "for," said she, "our friends will come hither in great numbers, and it is the easiest time to get in the means needed. And I have made up my mind that this will be the last bridal feast arranged by me."

And Olaf thanked her and said that only such a woman would he wed who would not rob Unn of her wealth and rule. And Unn chose Alfdís for the bride of Olaf. And she bade many guests to the feast. And hither came Bjorn and Helgi and Koll o' Dales, as he was now called, and many other great men.

And it was a custom with Unn, now that she was

grown old, to go early to bed and to remain in her sleeping chamber till mid-day, and no one was allowed to disturb her between these times. Yet would she not be regarded by those about her as in any way feeble, and very angry she grew if any asked her how it fared with her strength.

And on the day of the wedding-feast Unn kept to her bed somewhat later than usual. However, she

was ready to meet her guests on their arrival, and she greeted them and her kinsfolk with the greatest courtesy. And when they were all assembled, Unn made a speech unto them, in stately fashion, thanking them for journeying so far at her bidding. Then she led the way to the great hall, and they took their seats, and everyone was struck by the magnificence of the feast that was spread before them.

And Unn rose and said: "Bjorn and Helgi, my brothers, and all my other kindred and friends, I call witnesses to this that this dwelling with all its belongings that you now see before you, I give into the hands of my kinsman Olaf, to own and to manage." And soon after she had said this she retired to her bower to rest, but before going she bade each one to do that which pleased him most, and she directed that the common folk should have good cheer and ale. And with that she passed out along the hall, so tall and stately, and springing of step, that her graceful bearing was the subject of talk with all the guests.

And the wedding-feast was kept up all through the night. And the next day Olaf went to the bower of Unn, and found her sitting up against her pillow, and she was dead. And everyone marvelled at the great dignity with which Unn had borne herself to the end.

So it befell that Olaf's wedding-feast and Unn's funeral honours were now drunk together, and on the last day of the feast, Unn was placed in a ship, within a mound, and buried, together with much treasure. And this was the end of Unn the Deep-minded.

And Olaf took over Unn's household and all her wealth. And he became a great ruler, and had many children, and lived to a good old age.

And on a time it befell that Koll o' Dales fell sick, and came to his death.

And Hoskuld, his son, was young at the time, but wise he was beyond his years, and strong, and a hopeful man. And Hoskuld took over his father's household, and all his goods, and ruled it well. And he called his house Hoskuld-stead, and many friends gathered round him there, and many kinsmen of Koll's.

But Thorgerd, the mother of Hoskuld, no longer cared for Iceland, and she yearned to the land of Norway, which was the land of her kin. And soon she told her mind to Hoskuld, saying that she wished to fare abroad, and she desired that he would give her the share of Koll's goods which was hers.

And Hoskuld took her wish to leave Iceland much to heart, but he would not gainsay her. And he bought the half part of a ship, which was standing off Daymealness, and he gave it to his mother. And Thorgerd parted from Hoskuld and went aboard the ship, and sailed out to Norway. And there she found many who were kin to her, for she was the great granddaughter of Ketill Flatnose, who had been a mighty chieftain in the land. And her kinsfolk greeted her well, and gave her whatsoever she would. And Thorgerd settled among them and was well content.

And it befell soon after that a man named Herjolf wooed her and they were wedded, and they loved each

other right dearly. And Thorgerd abode with him in Norway till he died. Then was she filled with a great desire to see again Hoskuld, her son, whom she loved best of all men.

And she set out for Iceland, and sought Hoskuld at Hoskuld-stead in Salmon River Dale. And Hoskuld received her with high honour, and she abode with him till she died.

And Hoskuld was by this time a man of great renown in Iceland. And in Norway also was he held of good account. And the King of Norway in those days was Hakon, the youngest son of Harald Hairfair and the foster-son of King Athelstan of England. And Hoskuld was one of King Hakon's bodyguard, and he went to his court and stayed there every other year. And Hoskuld looked about him for a wife. And he heard tell of the beauty and wit of Jorunn, the daughter of Bjorn. And Bjorn was of high birth, and it was said of him that he was the wealthiest man throughout these parts.

And Hoskuld took with him ten men, and rode to Bjorn's house. And Bjorn received him in full friendly fashion, for Hoskuld's fame was known to all men. And Hoskuld told Bjorn his errand, and Bjorn was well pleased, but he answered that his daughter's mind should rule in the matter.

And they went together to Jorunn, and Bjorn told her of Hoskuld's desire to make her his wife, and Jorunn answered him well, saying: "From what I have heard of you, Hoskuld, I cannot but think that the woman would be well cared for who should marry

you, and I will agree with whatsoever my father may say in this matter.”

And after more talk it was arranged that the wedding should take place as early as possible at Hoskuld-stead. And Bjorn promised much money with Jorunn, and Hoskuld returned to his home well pleased with the match.

And soon after the wedding-feast was held, and Bjorn and his daughter came to it with a great company of followers. And magnificent was the feast which Hoskuld set before his guests, and goodly gifts did he give them when they set out again after the wedding. And right pleased were all his kin and Jorunn’s and they returned to their homes in good friendship.

And Jorunn took up the management of Hoskuld’s home, and soon was she seen to be wise and well up in household ways. And clever she was, and of manifold knowledge, but at times of quick temper. And Hoskuld and Jorunn loved each other dearly, though they made little show of it. And they had many children, and they were all most hopeful. And Hoskuld prospered and became a mighty chief, and all people held him in high honour.

Now, Hoskuld deemed that his house was worse built than it should be for a man of his renown. So he bought a ship and made it ready. And he left Jorunn to take care of his house and children, and set out for Norway to buy house timber. And he brought his ship to Hordaland, to the south of Norway. And Hoskuld stayed there all that winter, for he had many kinsmen dwelling in that part, and right heartily they

welcomed him. And Hoskuld had no lack of entertainment, therefore he did not seek King Hakon that winter, but abode with one or other of his kindred.

And when the winter was past and the fair weather had come, there was tidings that the King had gone with his fleet to the Brenn Isles to meet with other rulers for the settling such matters as kings had to determine. This meeting of kings was held every third summer, and it was looked upon as a pleasure trip, and men came to it from all lands.

And Hoskuld got ready his ships and sailed forth, desiring to go to the meeting, not only for the pleasure of it, but also that he might present himself to the King. And when he was come there, he met many of his kinsfolk. And great crowds of people had gathered, and there were amusements of all kinds, and much drinking. And there was a fair, where all sorts of things could be bought.

And one day Hoskuld walked about the fair, and he saw where there was a stately tent away from the other tents.

And he went to it, and there sat a man arrayed in rich garments with a Russian hat upon his head. And Hoskuld asked him his name, and he answered that he was called Gilli the Russian. And he asked Hoskuld what he would buy of him. And Hoskuld answered that he would buy a bondswoman if he had one to sell, for in those days it was the custom to buy women as slaves, or, as they were then called, bondswomen.

And Gilli replied to this: "You think to give me

trouble by such an answer, in asking for things you think I have not, but by no means does that follow.”

And now Hoskuld saw that right across the tent there was drawn a curtain, and Hoskuld saw seated behind it eleven or twelve women. And Gilli bade Hoskuld come and look at the women if he wished to buy. And Hoskuld saw one woman sitting apart from the others, and she was very ill-clad, but exceeding fair to look upon. And he asked the price of this woman. And Gilli answered “Three pieces of silver must you give for her.”

Then said Hoskuld: “It seems to me you charge too highly for this bonds-woman, for that is the price of three.”

And Gilli answered that Hoskuld might choose any one of the other eleven and pay one piece of silver, but that he valued this one more highly than the others. So Hoskuld searched in his purse to see how much money he had. And Gilli, seeing that he was bent on buying the woman, said: “There shall be no guile on my side in this matter; there is one drawback about this woman, Hoskuld, which you must know before we settle this bargain.”

And Hoskuld asked what it was. Then said Gilli: “The woman is dumb.” But for all this Hoskuld was

still minded to buy her, and they weighed out his silver, and found that he had just enough money.

Now, it was the custom for a man to have as many wives as he desired, and often the bondswoman became the wife of her master, but always was she the servant of the chief wife who had not been bought. And Hoskuld took the bondswoman, and he clothed her in goodly garments. And right well favoured did she appear in them, and all were struck by her grace and modesty. And Hoskuld made her his wife. But no word did she speak to him or to any.

And when the meeting was over Hoskuld went to Hakon the King and greeted him. And Hakon gave a side look at him and said: "We should have taken well your greeting, Hoskuld, even if you had saluted us sooner, but so it shall be even now."

Thereafter the King talked graciously to Hoskuld, and invited him to go with him on board his ship. "Be with us as long as you care to remain in Norway," said the King. And Hoskuld thanked him and told him of his wish to get house timber for the building of his house. And the King bade him go with him to the Wick, and Hoskuld went with him, and the King got the house timber for him, and had his ship laden with it.

Then said King Hakon to Hoskuld: "You shall not be delayed here longer than you wish, though it will be difficult to find a man to take your place."

But Hoskuld would tarry no longer for he was greatly desirous of returning to Iceland. So King Hakon saw Hoskuld off to his ship, and as they parted

he said: "I have ever found you an honourable man, and now my mind misgives me that you are sailing for the last time from Norway, whilst I am lord of that land."

And he took a golden ring from his arm, and gave it to Hoskuld, and he gave him also a sword ornamented with gold. And Hoskuld thanked the King, and bade him farewell. And he put out to sea, and they had a fair wind, and sailed west to Iceland and landed at Salmon River mouth. And he had the house timber taken out of the ships and carried to his house, and he rode home with his men, and right well did all his people greet him. And he found that everything had been kept well in his absence.

And Jorunn asked him as to the bondswoman, and he told her all about the purchase of the woman, and that she was his wife, and he bade Jorunn treat her kindly while she was serving her. But Jorunn paid little heed to these words of Hoskuld's, and often was she unkind to the bondswoman. But the bondswoman behaved always with such gentleness and dignity that everyone said there was something about her which betokened high birth, and all that she did showed her to be a woman of no ordinary mind.

And when sometime had passed, a son was born to Hoskuld and the bondswoman, and Hoskuld looked upon the child, and thought that he had never seen a goodlier or fairer-looking child. And Hoskuld called him Olaf, after Olaf Feilan, the son of Thorstein the Red, and the brother of Thorgerd, Hoskuld's mother. And Olaf Feilan was just dead at this time.

And the child waxed strong and noble, and Hoskuld loved him dearly. And the bondswoman tended the child.

But Jorunn grew ever unkind to the bondswoman, and at last she said to Hoskuld: "The woman must do some work or other, or else go away." And Hoskuld said she should serve them as before, and look after the child as well. And this went on till the boy was two years old. And then had he full speech, and ran about like a boy of four.

And it befell on a morning that Hoskuld went out right early to look about his Stead. And he heard voices talking. And he went towards them, and came to where a little brook ran past the home-field. And there by the brook, the bondswoman and Olaf, her son, sat in the morning sunshine, and the mother was talking to her child. And, full of surprise, Hoskuld drew near. And he went to the bondswoman, and asked her her name. And they sat down together, and she said: "I am called Melkorka; Myrkjartan is the name of my father, and he is a King in Ireland, and I was taken a prisoner of war from there when I was fifteen winters old."

And Hoskuld blamed her for her long silence, and he went back to the house, and told Jorunn, but Jorunn willed not to take it for truth, and was no kinder than heretofore. But Hoskuld talked often with Melkorka.

And a little while after this, when Jorunn was going to bed and Melkorka was undressing her, Jorunn struck the bondswoman. And Melkorka grew suddenly angry and struck Jorunn in the face, so that the blood

flowed. And Hoskuld ran to them and parted them. And after this he sent Melkorka away, giving her a house of her own in Salmon River Dale, and everything that she needed for its upkeep. And the boy Olaf went with her.

And Olaf grew more beautiful every day, and courteous, and brave he was beyond all other men. And when he was seven years old, Hoskuld put him to fostering with Thord Goddi at Goddistead. And Thord was childless and very rich.

And Hoskuld thought it a right good thing for Olaf, but Melkorka grieved over it.

And Olaf grew up with Thord, so handsome and strong, that his equal was not to be found in all the country-side. And splendid was his raiment, and his war-gear, and all men wondered at him. And Hoskuld gave him a nickname, and called him “the Peacock,” and this name stuck to him.

And as Olaf grew older, Hoskuld looked less after Melkorka’s household, saying that now it concerned Olaf her son. And Olaf said he would give his mother all the help he could. And Melkorka would fain have Olaf travel abroad to Ireland, and seek out her kin. So she told her story to Olaf, and he asked Hoskuld for means that he might make the journey. But Hoskuld was growing old, and he liked not the, thought of Olaf’s travelling afar from Iceland. And Thord, the foster-father of Olaf, could give him no help, for although he was rich, his goods were in land and cattle, and not in those wares which could be taken and sold in other lands.

And Melkorka turned things over in her mind, and more and more she longed to send Olaf forth. Now, there was a man named Thorbjorn Skrjup, and he had the chief care of Melkorka's household affairs. And he had asked her to be his wife, but Melkorka had said him nay. Now, however, she began to think more of the matter, deeming it likely that if she consented to marry him, Thorbjorn would aid her in her plans for Olaf. And she said to Olaf: "I cannot bear your being called the son of a slave woman any longer, and if it stands in the way of the journey that you think you have not enough money, then I would rather go to the length even of marrying Thorbjorn if then you should think the journey more likely. For I think he will be willing to give you as much wares as you think you may need if I give my consent to his marrying me."

And Olaf bade his mother follow her own counsel, and as Melkorka had said so it was arranged; but the matter was kept secret from Hoskuld. And on the day when Melkorka's wedding-feast was arranged, Hoskuld sought Olaf, and desired that he would ride with him. And Olaf made answer that he was busy with household matters, an answer which pleased Hoskuld mightily, for he liked well that Olaf should attend to the affairs of the homestead.

So Hoskuld rode away alone, and the wedding-feast was held.

And after the feast Olaf took of Thorbjorn's wares all that he needed, and rode off to a ship that was lying in the Firth, ready for sailing. And when

Melkorka and Olaf came to part Melkorka said to him: "I have fitted you out as best I know how, and taught you to speak Irish, so that it will make no difference to you where you are brought to shore in Ireland." And she gave him a great gold ring, saying "This gift my father gave me for a teething gift, and I know he will remember it when he sees it." And she gave him also a knife and a belt and bade him give them to her nurse. "She will not doubt these tokens," she said. And they parted, and Olaf got on board. And there arose a fair wind, and they sailed out to sea.

And when Hoskuld heard the tidings of Melkorka's marriage and Olaf's journeying, he was wroth, but he said little.

And Olaf came to Norway, and he went to the Court of the King of that land, who was named Harald, for King Hakon was dead. And King Harald received him well for the sake of his kindred, and Gunnhild, the Kings' Mother, was right pleased to talk to him.

But as the time passed on Olaf grew sad, for he wished to go westward to Ireland, but he could hear of no ship going there. And at last he told Gunnhild of his mother's story, and of her desire that he should visit Myrkjartan the King. And Gunnhild listened to him and said: "I will lend you help for this voyage, so that you may go out as richly furnished as you please."

And the Queen had a ship arrayed, and a crew of sixty men was got together, and King Harald and

the Queen led Olaf to the ship, and wished him good-luck. And Olaf was at this time eighteen winters old, and King Harald said of him that no goodlier man had in his day come out of Iceland.

And Olaf and his men sailed away, and for days and days they journeyed, in fog and unfavourable weather, seeing no sign of land. But at last on a night the watchman roused them saying that he saw land near. And when daylight came they saw that it was Ireland. And as the light grew they saw men hurrying down to the shore, as though the coming of a ship was a great thing to them. And Olaf cast anchor. And as the day wore on crowds of people came down to the shore, and at last two men took a boat and rowed out to the ship. And they asked what men they were on that ship, and Olaf answered them, speaking in Irish, that they were Norwegians.

Then the men claimed all the goods on board as their lawful prize, but Olaf said that such a law only held good when the merchants had no interpreter with them. "And I can say with truth," said he, "that these are peaceful men, and we will not give ourselves up."

Then the Irish raised the war-cry and leapt into the sea, and swam towards the ship. And they tried to drag the ship with all on board to the shore. But Olaf cried to his men to fetch their weapons, and range themselves for battle. And standing close together their shields overlapped all round the ship, and a spear-point stood out at the lower end of every shield.

And Olaf walked to the prow arrayed in a coat

of mail, and with a gold-bedecked helmet upon his head. The hilt of his sword was inlaid with gold, the barbed spear which he held in his hand was chased and well engraved, and on his red shield was drawn a lion in gold.

And when the Irish saw him and his men drawn up for battle, they were afraid, and saw that it would be no easy matter to carry off the merchandise. So they returned to the shore, and ran back into the village. And they sent word to their King, saying that they deemed that a war-ship had come upon them.

And the King rode down to the shore with a brave company of knights, and Olaf's men feared when they saw them as to how things would go with them. But Olaf bade them take heart, saying, "This is Myrkjartan their King." And he stood forth in his

splendid war attire, and the knights wondered at his nobleness.

And they rode as near to the ship as might be, and their King called out and asked who was the master of the ship. And Olaf answered and told his name, and he asked the King to tell him his name in return. And the King answered: "I am called Myrkjartan."

And Olaf asked: "Are you, then, a King of the Irish?" And Myrkjartan answered: "That am I." And he asked Olaf for news, from whence they came, and whose men they were. And Olaf answered all these questions, but nothing further than the King asked. And Myrkjartan noticed his haughty bearing, and asked of his kindred. And Olaf answered: "My father lives in Iceland, and is named Hoskuld, a man of high birth; but of my mother's kindred I think you must have seen many more than I have. For my mother is called Melkorka, and it has been told me as a truth that she is your daughter, King. Now, this has driven me upon this long journey, and to me it is a matter most weighty what answer you give me in my case."

And at these words the King grew silent for a while; then he turned aside and spoke with his men. "Thereafter he turned again to Olaf and said: "Now I will give answer to your speech, in so far as we grant to you and all your shipmates peace; but on the kinship you claim with us, we must talk more before I give answer to that."

And Olaf and his men went ashore, and Olaf

greeted the King, taking off his helmet, and bowing low before him, and the King welcomed him right heartily. And Olaf told him all his story, and he took from his hand the great gold ring which Melkorka had given at parting, and gave it to the King, saying "It was my mother's word, King, that you gave it her as a tooth gift."

And the King looked long at the ring, and his face grew wondrous red, and he seemed lost in thought. Then he said: "True enough are the tokens, but you have so many of your mother's family features, that even by them you might be easily recognised, and because of these things I will in sooth acknowledge your kinship, Olaf. And this shall also follow, that I will ask you to my Court, with all your suite, but the honour of you all will depend thereon of what worth as a man I find you to be when I try you more."

And the King commanded horses to be brought for Olaf and his men, and directed that charge should be taken of their ship and all their goods.

And Olaf and the King and their followers rode to Dublin, and great was the desire of all men to look upon Olaf, for the tidings had spread that he was the son of their King's daughter, who had been carried off in war when she was but fifteen winters old. And the foster-mother of Melkorka was also told the tidings. And she was bed-ridden, being very old, and stricken with sickness. Yet when Olaf arrived, such was her desire to look upon him, that she rose from her bed, and walked without the support of a staff to meet him.

And the King said to Olaf: "Here now is come Melkorka's foster-mother, and she will wish to hear all the tidings you can tell about Melkorka's life."

And Olaf took the old woman in his arms, and set her upon his knee, and told her all about Melkorka. And he gave her the knife and belt, and when the old nurse looked upon them she wept tears of joy. And she fell to praising Olaf, saying he was worthy of the stock he came of. And all that winter while Olaf was there the old woman was strong and well and right cheerful of mood.

And all that winter Olaf helped the King against Vikings and raiders who ever made war on the kingdoms of the west. And they drove them from the land. And the King asked the counsel of Olaf in all matters.

And towards the end of the winter Myrkjartan summoned a Thing, and great numbers of his people came. And the King said: "You all know that last autumn there came hither a man who is the son of my daughter, and high born also on his father's side; and it seems to me that Olaf is a man of such prowess and courage that here such men are not to be found. Now, I offer him my kingdom after my day is done, for Olaf is much more suitable for a ruler than my own sons."

And Olaf thanked him with fair and courteous speech, but said that he must journey home whenever it was safe to sail, for his mother would have little joy of her life if he did not return. And the King answered that Olaf must do as he was minded.

And when the weather was fair, Olaf arrayed his ship, and the King took him on board. And he gave him a spear engraved in gold, and a gold-bedecked sword, and much money besides. And Olaf asked the King if he might take Melkorka's foster-mother back with him, but the King was unwilling to let her go, so Olaf said no more. And Myrkjartan and Olaf parted with great affection.

And the ship made a good voyage and came to Norway, and Olaf and his men got horses, and he rode to the Court of King Harald. And King Harald and Queen Gunnhild, his mother, gave them a goodly welcome. And they begged Olaf to stay with them, and Olaf took up his abode at the Court. And he gave to the King and Queen many rare gifts which he had brought from Ireland. And King Harald gave to Olaf, for a Yule gift, a set of clothes in scarlet stuff, and right well did they become him.

And Olaf stayed with the King all that winter. But when the spring came, his mind turned to his kinsfolk in Iceland, and he told King Harald of his desire to return there, and begged his leave to set out as soon as the weather served. And the King answered: "It would be more to my mind that you should settle down with us, and take whatever position in our service you like best yourself." And Olaf thanked the King for the great honour he offered him, but said he would fain return to his kin in Iceland if it was not against the King's will.

And King Harald answered him: "You shall go to Iceland in the summer, for I see you have set your

heart on it; but neither trouble nor toil shall you have over your preparations for I will see after all that.”

And the King got a ship for Olaf, and it was a merchant ship, great and good. And when the ship was launched, King Harald ordered it to be laden with wood. And when it was well fitted out, and all was ready for sailing, King Harald called Olaf to him and said: “This ship shall be your own, Olaf, for I should not like you to start from Norway this summer as a passenger in anyone else’s ship.”

And Olaf was right pleased and thanked the King for his generosity. And Olaf and the King parted with great affection, and Olaf sailed away, and came with fast winds to Iceland. And he put his ship in at Ramfirth, and Hoskuld heard of his son’s arrival, and rode forth to meet him, well pleased.

And the father and son met joyfully, and Hoskuld took Olaf home with him. And Olaf told his father all the events of his long journeying. And Olaf’s descent from Myrkjartan, King of Ireland, was now publicly proclaimed, and much renown did he get from all men for this, and for his journey.

And as soon as she heard the tidings, Melkorka came to see her son, and they greeted each other with great affection. And she asked Olaf many questions about Ireland, but first she asked of her father and her kin, and then if her foster-mother still lived. And Olaf answered all her questions, and when he told her that her foster-mother still lived, Melkorka asked why he had” not tried to please her by bringing her back to

Iceland with him. And Olaf answered that he had wished to do so but that the King was unwilling to let her go. "That may be so," said Melkorka, but it was easily seen by all that she was greatly disappointed, and had taken the matter much to heart.

Now, when Olaf had been in Iceland about a month, Hoskuld came to him and said that he desired that he should take a wife. And Olaf said that in this matter he would trust to his father's foresight. And on a day Hoskuld and Olaf arrayed them for a journey, and they set forth with a great company for the Thing, which was held at this time. And Hoskuld knew that they would meet there with one Egil, who had a daughter named Thorgerd, and she was the very best match in all that part of the land.

And Olaf arrayed himself in his scarlet suit with a golden helmet upon his head, and the gold-adorned sword in his hand which King Myrkjartan had given him. And he went to Thorgerd, where she sat on a dais in Egil's tent, and he saw that she was goodly and proud, and had the looks of one of high degree. And Olaf wooed Thorgerd and won her.

And at the end of the summer they were wedded, and brave was the feast, and rich gifts were given the guests at leaving. And Olaf gave to Egil the gold-adorned sword, King Myrkjartan's gift, and well pleased was Egil.

And Olaf and Thorgerd dwelt one year at Hoskuldstead with Hoskuld, and one year at Goddistead with Thord Goddi, Olaf's foster-father, until the death of Thord. Then Olaf had much wealth, and he became

a mighty chieftain, and was much beloved and honoured of men.

And it befell soon after this that Hoskuld was taken ill, and he called Olaf to him, and gave him the great gold ring, and the gold-bedecked sword which King Hakon of Norway had given him. And on that same day Hoskuld died.

And many sons and daughters were born to Olaf and Thorgerd. And one of their sons was called Kjartan, after Myrkjartan, the King of Ireland. And more is told of Kjartan in the story of King Olaf Tryggvison; he was the likeliest and noblest man of his time in Iceland.

THE STORY OF THE VOLSUNGS

There was a man called Sigi, and men said of him that he was a son of Odin. And Sigi was a mighty man, and of high kin. And it befell on a day that he fared to the hunting of the deer, and a thrall named Bredi fared with him. And at the end of the day, when they gathered their prey together, Bredi had slain more than Sigi. And Sigi was full wroth at this, and slew the thrall in his anger. And when the deed was known, Sigi was driven from his land.

Arid he fared far away, and gat him ships and went a-warring. And ever did he prevail in his battles, and he won him lands and lordship. And he took a noble wife, and became a mighty king of a people called the Huns.

And Sigi had a son called Rerir, and Rerir grew up comely and strong and a brave warrior like his father.

And Sigi grew old, and his enemies, and some whom he deemed to be his friends, even the brothers

of his wife, seeing that his strength had gone, came against him with a great host, and Sigi and all his folk fled.

But Rerir, his son, had fared away at this time, and when he was told the tidings he vowed vengeance against his father's slayers. And he brought together a mighty army, and won back his father's lands and kingdom. Then did he wreak his vengeance upon Sigi's murderers, slaying all those who had betrayed the old King's trust in his time of weakness.

And Rerir became a wealthy and a mighty King, wealthier and mightier even than Sigi. And he wedded a wife, and they loved each other dearly. But ill-content they were in that they had no children, and with great fervour did they pray the gods that a child might be born to them.

And Odin heard their prayers, and a son was born, but Rerir never saw him for he was a-warring, and he fell sick, and came by his death. And the Queen died as her child was born.

And the boy was called Volsung, and big and strong and daring was he from his earliest days, and the greatest of warriors did he become. And he wedded Ljod, the daughter of the giant Hrimnir, and they abode together in great love. Many children they had, and all were mighty and high-minded, but foremost and fairest beyond all were the two eldest, Sigmund their son, and Signy their daughter, and these two were twins.

And King Volsung had built for him a great hall. Earls and men of high kin wrought it, earls' wives wove

the bright stuffs of its hangings, and queens' daughters strewed its floors. Golden was its roof, and silver nails studded its doors. Hung upon its walls were the shields of the greatest warriors, and of these the least renowned was famed throughout the world. And in the middle of the great hall was a marvellous thing to see, for there stood a mighty tree whose branches reached to the roof, and wreathed it with the glorious garland of the year. And there the wild hawks dwelt, and they screamed above the heads of the drinkers of wine at the feast, and laughed when the swords were made ready for battle.

And men called the tree the Branstock, and the throne of King Volsung was set there in the midst of a blossoming bower. And they dwelt together there, merry of heart, meeting good and evil days alike, and never forgetful of their gods. But even in those days of youth and hope, now and again there came a far-off murmur as of a threatening doom to the great Volsung, and here is now set down the beginning of that end foretold by the wise men of old.

It was an even of May, and King Volsung sat in his great hall, and there sat with him his ten sons and Signy, his daughter, and many mighty men and fair women. And the feast was spread, and song and speech and laughter rang out around the board. When lo, there entered into the hall a man seeking King Volsung. And he hailed the King and told him that he was a messenger from Siggeir, the mighty King of the Goths.

And Siggeir had heard of the beauty and wisdom

of Signy, and he craved her for his wife, saying that in return he would give King Volsung his friendship and his aid in battle. And King Volsung and his sons were well pleased at this, for they fain would get to them more lands, and the King of the Goths was an exceeding mighty King. And they dreamed of themselves as kings of all the north, and even of far southern lands.

And the messenger of King Siggeir stood before them bearing precious gifts, and gold and a ring, and other tokens of troth. And the snow-white Signy sat still, with folded hands upon her lap, gazing at him with wide, clear, dauntless eyes, that made the messenger's heart grow cold.

And King Volsung spoke and said: "Wilt thou be a great king's wife, daughter, and bear great kings for thy sons, so that our name may never die?"

And a hot flush spread over the whiteness of Signy's face, and she answered with a voice that was as a cry: "E'en as thou say'st will I do."

And Volsung saw the fiery light in her face, and heard the cry, but nought did he understand of its meaning. But kindly and tenderly now he spoke, as one that loved her well, and would fain know her grief if grief there were. But Signy stretched forth her hand, and smiled upon him, and the flush faded from her face. "Would God it might otherwise be!" she said, and her voice was lowly and soft so that only he could hear, "Yet do I will to wed him."

Then in a louder voice she spake again and bade King Volsung be of good cheer, "for," said she, "all

well-counselled deeds of thine are fair and goodly, and those that are not so, have been willed by the mighty gods, and none may gainsay them. And, methinks, at my wedding there shall come a sign which shall bring joy to thy heart, whatsoever may follow after.”

And she sate again at the board, and King Volsung was fain to be content with her words. And he feasted the Goth-King’s messenger, and song and laughter and merry talk rang out as they passed the brimming wine-cup. And none heeded fair Signy as she sate wan and white, and her words of boding were forgotten in the mirth.

And King Siggeir's messenger fared back on the morrow, bearing gifts and gold, and a bidding from King Volsung that King Siggeir should come ere the summer passed and bear away his bride.

So it befell on a midsummer eve that King Siggeir wended his way through the thicket in the glimmering twilight to the Volsung hall. Great was the company, and many the mighty earls that followed King Siggeir, and their chain-mail rang as they rode, and their spears and swords clanked in the stillness of the dying day.

And as they drew near to the threshold of King Volsung's hall, they saw how King Volsung himself stood amid the blossoms of his garden on the grassy sward, with five sons on either hand. And King Siggeir leapt from his horse and the two Kings hastened to meet. As the bramble to the oak was King Siggeir by the side of the glorious Volsung, nor did his helmet reach to the shoulder of even the least of Volsung's sons.

And they entered the hall, and the board was spread, and far into the night they feasted and drank the bright wine. And Signy was told the tidings, and close she kept in her bower; there she sat and strove within herself, watching wide-eyed the death of the day, and the passing of the moon-bright hours, and the birth of the morn which should make her the wife of the Goth-King.

And when the sun was high they led her forth, a glorious bride to the bridal. And the feast was spread, and she sat beside her lord. No word did she speak, and no smile came to her lips, and cold and hard were

the eyes which now and again she turned side-long on the Goth-King.

And Sigmund, her twin-brother, looked upon her with a great fear in his heart, and he watched her till their eyes met. And at what he saw hatred awoke in him against King Siggeir, and he would have stayed the bridal but for the plighted word of the Volsungs. And Siggeir saw the glances of the brother and sister, and well he understood their meaning yet he made no sign, but bided his time. And King Volsung saw nought but laughed aloud with King Siggeir in the content of his heart dreaming of glories to come when his kindred should rule the world.

So they feasted and sang and told old tales when lo, over the cloudless blue of noon-day, a long deep roll of thunder passed, and to some it seemed that it was a man that laughed out. And they looked around them and turned to the door, and in that moment there strode into the hall a mighty man. One-eyed he was and seeming old, yet was his form erect and his visage bright. Grey as the stormy sky was his kirtle, and cloudy blue was the hood which was drawn over his

head, and both were fashioned as was the raiment of men of old. None gave greeting to him, and no greeting did he give to any, but strode to the Branstock and drew from the grey folds of his garment a great gleaming sword.

And he thrust the sword into the trunk of the huge oak, while the wild hawks screamed and laughed over his head. Then at last he spoke: "Earls of the Goths and Volsungs," he cried. "Lo, in the Branstock a worthy sword. Whoso draweth the sword from the stock shall e'en take it as a gift from me, and never shall it fail him except his own heart falter. All hail to thee, King Volsung! Farewell for a little while!"

No man moved as he spoke, for his voice was as music in their ears, and they sat as in a happy dream, dreading awakening. And slowly down the hall floor and out at the door did the stranger pass, and none stayed him or cast at him a question, for well they deemed that the sword was Odin's gift.

And at last King Volsung broke the silence and bade the Volsungs and the Goths set their hands to the hilt, and see who was the warrior fated to take it for his own. And King Siggeir, deeming it an easy task, and that he would have the best chance who should first lay hand to the sword, asked King Volsung that he might be the first of all men in the trial. And King Volsung answered: "Herein, I ween, is the first as the last, for as the gods have willed so shall it be; yet, O guest, begin."

And King Siggeir went to the tree, and put his hand to the golden hilt, and strained with all his might

to draw the sword forth. Yet was it as firm as ever in the Branstock. And his heart was black with envy and hatred as he wended his way back to his seat, and never a word he spake. And a hot flush burnt on the pale cheek of Signy, as Siggeir sat him down beside her, and her heart was nigh to bursting with shame of the man that was now her lord.

And now did King Volsung bid all the followers of King Siggeir make their trial, and each upstood in his turn, and mighty warriors were they all, who had done many wondrous deeds on the battle-field. Yet did not the sword in the Branstock move for any of them.

And now did the Volsung home-men and shepherds, hunters and seafarers, gather round the oak to try their strength, and deft though they were in labour, in vain did they pull at the sword.

And next did King Volsung lay his hand to the hilt, and he drew and strained, but in nowise could he move it. Yet did his mirth not forsake him in his failure. Laughing, he wended his way back to the high seat, and called upon his sons to stand forth and try their skill. And the ten uprose and stood about the tree, and from the youngest upwards did they put

their hands to the fateful sword till nine had tried and failed. Then Sigmund drew near, and caught the bright hilt in careless fashion, as though he deemed the trial all for nought. But lo, aloft in his hand shone out the glittering naked blade, drawn from the heart of the oak as easily as if it had lain all loosely there. And in triumph Sigmund shook it over his head while a great shout went up from all the Volsungs and the Goths.

Right glorious was Sigmund then to look upon, a king over kings. And with the sword still in his hand he betook him slowly to his seat. Sober now was his face, for he deemed that there was some great work that Odin would have him do. And he lifted his eyes to Heaven as the solemn thoughts stirred within him, thoughts of dread and of longing both of the hour when the gods would use him for their will.

And as his eyes fell they met King Siggeir's smiling and blithe. And King Siggeir spake unto him and said: "Seeing that the sword came to my wedding, methinks it is fit that it shall be mine, O best of the sons of the Volsungs." And he offered Sigmund gold and silver, gems and precious stuffs as much as he would, but Sigmund laughed and answered: "Thou mightest have taken the sword no less than I, if it had been thy lot to bear it, but now since it has fallen to my hand, I will hold it, though thou biddest therefor all the gold thou hast."

And Siggeir was wroth at the answer of Sigmund, for he deemed that he had scorned him, but he made no sign, and hid his wrath with a smile. But full were his thoughts of hatred and revenge.

And the next day, the weather being fair, King Siggeir made known his will to set out for Gothland, lest, as he said, the wind should rise and the sea become impassable. And King Volsung besought him to stay longer, for this short feasting at a marriage was not according to the wont of men. Yet in nowise would Siggeir consent. But he bade King Volsung and his sons and all the mighty men of the Volsungs journey to Gothland before the summer was over, and abide there through the winter.

And King Volsung thanked him and answered "No king might scorn such a bidding, Siggeir: surely will I come."

And the matter was settled that on the morrow King Siggeir and Signy should sail for their Gothland home. And that night the feast was braver than before, and song and laughter and speech rang out till, late in the undark night, the feasters went to slumber.

But Sigmund was heavy of heart, and Signy lay on her pillow, full of boding for the days to come. And wise was Signy and many a thing she knew of future hap. And in the silence of the midnight she knew the doom that was coming upon her and her Volsung kin. And she stole from her bed and crept to the chamber of King Volsung. And he sat up and kissed her, and bade her speak what had brought her there. And she said: "Hearken, O my father, and when the morning cometh, think upon my words. Let me go forth with King Siggeir, but do ye abide in this land, nor trust the guileful heart of the Goth-King, lest the kin of the Volsungs shall perish."

And King Volsung smiled upon her, and held her close as when she was a child. "My word is given," he said. "To death or to life must I wend when the time shall come, but this will I give to thee, that thy brothers shall not wend with me."

Then did she cling to him, and swiftly cry: "Nay, but if thou goest, have thy sons with thee, and a host and a mighty company. Meet thou the guile and the death-snare with battle shout, and with blood-drenched sword."

"Nay," said he gently, "my troth-word is e'en plighted, and I must go as a guest as my word was."

And Signy wept upon his bosom, but nought more would she say to turn him from his purpose. And back she wended to her pillow and lay there, wan and open-eyed, till the dawn broke, and the sun shone out on the Volsung hall. And the silence of the darkness ended, and now was heard the stir of the departing folk as they arrayed them for their journey.

And when King Volsung entered the hall, there stood Signy by the Branstock, clad for faring, with the earls of the Goths around her. Queenly and calm she stood, with the flush of youth and loveliness upon her cheek. And King Volsung looked upon her, and deemed that the happenings of the night were but a vision in his slumber. And he was fain to be content, though sad was the parting.

And down they rode to the sea, and there stood the ships ready for sailing. And Signy kissed her brothers, and then she hung awhile about her father's neck and kissed him many times, and whispered fond

parting words that none other might hear, and none may tell.

And King Siggeir left the Volsungs with fair words and blessings on his lips, while his heart was full bitter towards them. And the horn sounded, and Signy was borne away from her kin and the land she loved. And she bowed her head, not trusting herself again to look upon them. And the Goth lords gazed at her pityingly, and none there was but blessed her from all harm.

Now, when two months were well-nigh past, King Volsung called his sons and his men of counsel to him, and then did he tell them of Signy and her words of warning. "Now, not over much will I hold her word," said he, "nor will I doubt it, for Signy is wise among women. But this now will I do. In peace will I go to King Siggeir's bidding, but ye, my sons, shall tarry

in this land and keep the realm for me, lest our race shall come to nought.”

But with one voice they answered that they would go with him, and take honour, or fall beside him as the gods should will. Then said King Volsung: “So be it; we will go together, a band of friends, and if the worst betide, the gods must e’en look to our land and people.”

And they arrayed three ships, and King Volsung went aboard with all his sons and a goodly company. And on a day, at eventide, they drew near to the shore of the Gothland. And a little skiff with a grey sail put out to meet them. And seated in the skiff they saw Signy, the Queen. And she came aboard the King’s vessel, and her pale face lighted up with joy as she looked again upon the well-loved Volsung faces. And she held her father long in her arms, and kissed her brothers with warm, quivering lips. “O strange!” she cried, “O sweet, the well-known ships to see!”

Then did she speak again in hasty words, telling of the purpose of her coming. “Short is the time,” she said, “for telling that which I would tell. But that which I spoke aforetime as a boding of my heart is even now a truth. Siggeir hath prepared to war against you. The death-snare is laid. But fair winds have wafted you to our shores ere the time appointed, and Siggeir looks not to meet you yet. O my father, O my brethren, I pray you to turn back ere it be too late. Take me with you, my father, to my own dear land again.”

Then did King Volsung strain her to his breast

and kiss her pale cheeks and brow again and again, seeking to give her the comfort that his words could not give. "Never yet," he said, full gently, "have I turned me backward from my word. Wouldst thou have me do it now? And look thou upon thy brethren. Are they not goodly and great? Wouldst thou have them mocked at the feast that they feared the sword of Siggeir?"

Then did Signy weep, crying: "Let me, then, bide death with thee and them!"

But he bade her return and take her fate from the hands of the gods, remembering ever the love wherewith they loved her. Quietly then she kissed them again, and fared back in the gathering darkness.

And she sat beside King Siggeir at the board, and grim was the side-long gaze that he turned upon her, and well he guessed the deed which she had done.

And on the morrow when the sun shone out over land and sea, King Volsung and his company went ashore, and wended their way towards the dwelling of the Goth-King. And they came to the top of a grassy hill, and lo, they saw below them a great army gathered and their shields and spears glittered in the brilliant sunshine.

And King Volsung bade his people halt and array themselves for battle. And shield to shield they placed, and drew their swords from their sheaths. Glorious was the glint of the gold, and glorious their forms, and the light upon their faces, as they turned them to the approaching foe, but more glorious than all stood Volsung the King in the very front of his people, his

visage calm and lovely as he awaited his doom. And he drew his sword, and cast the sheath from him, and raised the gleaming blade to Heaven.

And up from the valley carne the foe, shaking the earth with their might, but sounding no battle cry. And the Volsungs, too, were silent. Then at last the Goth-folk fell upon them, and many times were they driven back from the Volsung wall of shields. Thereafter, when many a mighty man had dropped to earth, the wall was broken, and fierce then raged the fight within it.

And King Volsung stood still in the place which had been the forefront of the battle, and watched across a line of corpses the long struggle. Then at last did the throng of spears press near and close around him. And he threw his blunted sword among the crowding foemen, and flung his shield far from him, and stood awaiting the onslaught of the weapons. And thrust back by the spears which clashed amid his breast, with body rent and torn, he fell with a ringing thud upon the dead men's shields. And none of his foes durst look upon him dead for it seemed as if a god had fallen, and they feared the wrath of Heaven.

And they took the sons of Volsung, sore, wounded, and hound them, and carried them before Siggeir. And they told him the tale of the fall of Kin, Volsung, for Siggeir had not come into the battle.

And when Queen Signy heard the tidings she hastened to the hall, and stood before the King as he sat in his high seat, flushed with his triumph. Wan and white, but tearless, Signy stood, and prayed that

her brethren might live, if only for a day or two, before he gave them to death. Then spake Siggeir, commanding that the Volsung men be taken into the forest and there fettered to a mighty beam. "There," said he, "shall they live till Queen Signy come again and pray me for their death."

And as Siggeir bade so was it done. And the days and nights passed, and each day was the tale brought how wild beasts had eaten the brothers one by one, till only Sigmund was left. And each day Signy watched and waited, hoping to carry succour to her brethren, but so well guarded she was that she might not stir from her dwelling. And well-nigh mad was she for woe, and her heart was as a flame in her bosom.

And the next day she strove no more to depart from the watching eyes, but sat in the high seat, looking at none and speaking to none. And the darkness came, yet she stirred not, and to Siggeir's messengers she gave no heed, but still sat on alone, wan and cold and unmoved. And when the morning came, Siggeir entered the hall with his men of counsel, and he sat him down beside her on the high seat. And the woodman came unto Siggeir and told that no man now was left on the oaken beam, but only bones, and the bonds that had once bound the Volsungs. And a sudden wail rang out from Signy, and she stood up, and thrust all people from her, and fled, fleet of foot from the hall to her bower. And her maidens were frightened at her wild glances and the strangeness of her face, and they ran from her.

And there she sat in silence till the night fell; then did she arise and fare forth alone in the darkness, but none hindered her, for they deemed the story of the Volsung race was done. And on she went till she came to the forest, and there she took to a trodden way which she guessed had been made by the messengers of King Siggeir. And she followed it by the light of the moon till she saw before her a wide sward. And lo, in its midst stood a mighty man, who threw up the earth with a great branch which he had torn from a tree.

And she looked but once, and knew that it was her brother, Sigmund the Volsung, and she cried out his name and ran to him. And she saw that his raiment was foul and torn, and his eyes great and hollow and wild as those of a famished man.

And joyfully he hailed her, saying how he had looked for her each day, but that he had guessed her plight when she came not to the aid of her brethren. "This labour of mine," he said, "is to bury the bones of the Volsungs, and well-nigh is it done. Draw near, thou daughter of Volsung, and pile with me the stones upon these goodly sons."

And the white-handed Signy toiled with him through the night until the task was done. Then did she seat herself upon a fallen tree, and draw him down beside her. And she said: "Now shalt thou tell me the tale of how our Volsung brethren met their end, and then will I wend my way back to King Siggeir's dwelling, sick-hearted and sorrowful for them and for thee."

And Sigmund told her of the coming of the wolves

each night, and of the deaths of his brethren, and of his own escape. "I, Sigmund the Volsung," he cried, "who have borne the sword among the kings of men, in my fury and flaming wrath, I became wolfish too. And I snarled to the she-wolfs snarling, and snapped with teeth as greedy as hers. I caught her with my teeth, and with her writhing, the bonds that bound my hands burst, and I smote the beast and caught her by the throat, and held her till she fell dead. And I hid in the thicket till the morning and then came Siggeir's watchers. And I looked upon them from my hiding-place, and fain I was to slay them, but I deemed it wiser to let them go. But hereafter, because of my childhood's days, and my father's precious love, shall there come a time when nought shall hinder or turn back this hand of mine from the slayers of the Volsungs; yea, though a swordless outcast, a hunted beast of the forest I may bide, as well I may, long years of waiting."

Wild were his eyes, and aflame with ruthless hate was his face, as he foretold the doom of the Goth-King, and Signy listened, white and calm and motionless, as though she were wrought of stone. But when he had finished, she rose and stood before him with kindling eyes that shone like stars in the grey dawn. "My brother," she said, "strong thou art and wise, and the day shall surely come when the Goth-King shall pay for his treacherous work, and surely shall I live to see it. But the heavy burden of thy wrath shall pass away, and thou shalt live a glorious King, and all men shall tell of thy deeds. Never again, O brother, shalt thou be alone in thy waiting; make thee a dwelling in the wild wood, and ere many days I will come to thee again, and bring thee help and comfort."

And she kissed him and left him, and returned to the King's dwelling, as the morning sun shone out.

And quietly now did she bend her to the will of King Siggeir. Nought was there in her pale lovely face to tell of the raging fire within her breast, and nought in the calm gaze of her gentle eyes to tell of her constant watching and patient waiting for the day of vengeance. And never a word she spake when Siggeir took to himself Odin's sword which Sigmund had wrenched from the Branstock, or when he sent his mightiest men to seize the dear Volsung land.

And when a half month had worn away, again did Signy wend her way to the wild wood. There by the river, in the heart of the thicket, she saw Sigmund again. And her heart leapt as she beheld him, so mighty and fair was he, and she said within herself

that once more had she looked upon a man. And Sigmund greeted her with joy, but his words were few, for none did he see to speak with, and ever did his thoughts dwell on sorrow and vengeance. Yet were the few words he spoke to Signy full of love, and her sad heart was gladdened by the sound of his voice and the sight of his face. And he showed her his dwelling-place, a strong cave well hidden in the thicket, and washed by the river's wave.

And when it was time to part, Signy held him close and wept, for she deemed that never again might she see this last of her kindred. And she wended her way back to the hall of Siggeir, and men say that never again did she weep or smile. Lovely as ever was her face to all men, but never again did it change for fear, or longing, or pity. It was as though her heart were dead within her living body.

And the years passed by, and Sigmund lived on in the forest, gathering to him the wherewithal for his vengeance in the future. Sometimes he fell upon mighty earls of the Gothland as they journeyed through the forest. Then would he take their war-gear and their gold, and these he would store for the coming day. And he set up a forge, and made himself a master in the smithy's craft. And hunters saw the light of his fire in the darkness, and the fishers heard the ring of his hammer, and folk said among themselves that a giant had awakened in the forest, and it were well to keep out of his hands. And all memory of the Volsungs and their doom passed from the minds of the people, and Sigmund worked on and waited.

Now, when some ten summers had passed, it befell on a day that Sigmund sat on the green sward outside his dwelling, fashioning a golden sword. And along the banks, on the other side of the river, came a maiden, leading a child, a boy of some ten summers old. And when she saw Sigmund she hastened towards him and cried: "O forest dweller! harm us not, we bear thee a word from Signy, the Queen. And thus does she say to thee: "I send thee a man to foster if he be strong of heart, he may help thee in thy need, but if he be weak of heart, weary not thyself with such as he, but let him wend his ways to his fate."

And when she had thus spoken, the maiden turned and left him, and the child stood there alone, smiling and fair and well content. And Sigmund saw the meaning of Signy's words, how that she would send him a helper in his vengeance, but that she doubted the courage of any son of Siggeir's. He knew, too, that Signy would have him slay the child, if it should prove that he followed after the Goth-King and had not the Volsung heart.

And Sigmund rose and crossed the river and took the boy on his shoulder. And he bade him hold his sword, and then he plunged into the rushing river, and waded across, thinking to try the child's courage at once.

But the boy heeded not the foaming water as he sat on Sigmund's shoulder, but prattled of this and that and questioned him of all he saw. And Sigmund deemed that he was bold of heart. And for three months the boy lived the hard, simple life in the woods,

and strong he grew and skilful, and now was Sigmund minded to put his courage again to trial.

So on a morn he called the boy to him and said: "I go to the hunt: bide thou here and bake the bread whiles I bring the venison." And he returned at noon with the flesh and said: "Is the morn's work done?" And the boy answered not for a space, and Sigmund looked upon him and his face was white and fearful. Then said the lad: "I went to the meal-sack, and something there was within it that moved, and methought 'twas a serpent, and I feared, and durst not open the bag again." And Sigmund laughed aloud, and went to the meal-sack and thrust in his hand, and drew out a deadly adder, and he went to the door of the cave and threw it from him into the grass.

And he came hack to the boy and drew his sword and cried: "Dost thou fear this, O Son of the Goth-King, that men call the serpent of death?"

And the boy answered: "I am yet young for the fight, but such a blade shall I carry ere long."

And Sigmund went out into the night and leaned long upon his sword, and thought of the words of Signy. And many an hour he stood there, but at last he sheathed his sword and went to the door of the cave, and called: "Come forth, King Siggeir's son." And the boy came, and he looked into Sigmund's face and trembled.

And Sigmund bade him follow him, and he led him through the wood till they came to that spot where his brethren lay buried. And there Sigmund lingered awhile, looking upon the fair June blossoms

which clustered about the place. And then they went on again, till they came to the edge of the forest, and there Sigmund stayed him and said: "King Siggeir's son, no longer will I foster thee. Get thee to the house of the Goth-King and find thou Signy, the Queen, and say unto her the word, "Mother, I come from the forest, and he who hath fostered me saith that the sons of the gods may help him, but never the sons of kings."

And Sigmund turned and strode back to his dwelling, and the boy went on till he reached the hall of Siggeir, the Goth-King. And he sought Signy, the Queen, and spake unto her the words of Sigmund. And Signy hearkened to him, and long she pondered the words, and sad she was at the failing of her hopes.

And it befell that when some months had passed away that another son was born to Signy. And the child was a Volsung to the heart from his earliest days, and Signy watched him carefully and tended him wisely.

And lo, when ten more years had passed away, Sigmund sat on a day by his stony dwelling and wrought a helmet of gold. And on a sudden a voice called to him from the other side of the river. And the voice said: "Thou surely art the dweller in the wood of whom my mother spake." And Sigmund looked up and beheld a boy of some ten summers. Fair he was and strong, with eager, fearless eyes that fell not before the stern gaze that Sigmund cast upon him.

And the boy flung himself into the rushing water, and past his chin it rose, but he heeded it not, but struck out with strong stroke till he reached the shore

where Sigmund stood. And he came to him, and looked up at him wonderingly. And the Volsung laughed and said: "Thou runnest to me as fast as others run from me; what wouldst thou, son of a king?"

And the boy answered: "Wondrous it is: here is the cave and the river, and all that my mother spake of. Yet did she say that none might behold thee without fear, but I fear thee not."

Then said Sigmund: "And by that token only shalt thou live with me. But tell me thy name, and thy years, and the words of Signy, thy mother."

"Sinfiotli is my name," said the boy, "and ten summers have I seen, and this is the word which I bear from Signy, the Queen: That once more she sendeth thee a man-child to foster, but whether he be of the kings or the gods time shall show thee."

And the heart of Sigmund yearned unto the lad, but he thrust the thought of love from him, saying to himself that this, too, was Siggeir's son, and would doubtless fail him as the first had done. But he took the boy to live with him, and he tried him with weary and dangerous tasks, and Sinfiotli bore all well. Hardy he grew, fierce of heart, and cunning of hand.

And on a day Sigmund said unto him: "I will wend to the hunting of deer; do thou bide here and bake the bread against my coming."

And he went and returned, and the boy met him as ever, glad of his coming back. "Hast thou kneaded the meal?" asked Sigurd. And Sinfiotli answered "Yea, but hearken to a wonder. When I would handle the meal, something moved in the bag; but since we must needs have bread, I kneaded it all together, and the wonder is baked in the bread."

And Sigmund laughed aloud at the boy and said "Thou hast kneaded into the bread the deadliest of all adders, so eat not to-night, or thy death will come of it."

And full glad was Sigmund and no longer did he stifle his love towards Sinfiotli. And he taught him all deeds of the sword and feats of war. And in three

years a mightier warrior was he than any full-grown man. And through good and evil days did they abide together, and ever greater and greater grew the love between them.

And it befell on a day that Sinfiotli said unto Sigmund: "Methinks there was a lesson for me to learn, and a lesson that thou hadst to teach, and therefore was it that I left the dwelling of the Goth-King. Teach me then, O master, what thou wouldst have me to do."

And Sigmund looked at the lad, and dark and grim was his face, and his eyes blazed with a strange light. And he answered Sinfiotli: "Behold, this is the deed thou must do; we twain shall slay my foe; and what if that foe were thy father?"

And never a word spoke Sinfiotli. But he fixed his eager eyes on Sigmund, and his breath came fast and short, as Sigmund told him the story of the slaying of the Volsungs. And when it was told, Sinfiotli laughed out aloud, and said: "Well wot I that Queen Signy is my mother, and her will I help at her need, but never has King Siggeir been father to me: never gave he me a blessing but many a curse. No father have I but thou, who hast cherished me and taught me and loved me these many years. Lo, here is my hand ready to strike where thou wilt. I am the sword of the gods; do thou, O my father, hold the hilt."

Joyful was Sigmund at the words of Sinfiotli, and fierce glowed his eyes and hot his cheeks at the thought of his long-awaited vengeance so nigh. And the twain talked together of the time which should best serve them and of the manner of their vengeance.

And at last when the winter drew on and the nights were long and dark, they fared unto Siggeir's dwelling and hid them in a bower beside the great hall where the King's wine-casks were kept. And so near were they that they saw the light of the torches, and heard the mirth of the feasters. And calm was Sigmund and his eyes clear and bright, but Sinfiotli was haggard and white, and he bit at the rim of his shield and fretted for the fight to begin.

Now, it befell that two little children, the youngest born of Queen Signy, played about the hall, trundling a golden toy. And a ring fell from the toy and rolled away into the bower and lay at Sigmund's feet. And the children followed it, and came face to face with the strangers, all glorious in their shining armour. Then they fled before they could hold them, back into the hall.

And they cried out what they had seen, and on a sudden all was din and tumult. And Sigmund and Sinfiotli sprang to their feet and stood ready with their weapons, resolved to strike with all their might ere they should die. And as they thus stood, lo, Signy came to them, and fierce was the light in her eyes at their betrayal by her babes, and she looked into Sigmund's face and wondered at its calmness. "Thou smilest, and thy eyes are joyful and clear," she cried, "yet the end is come."

And now the clash of arms and the hurry of feet came nigh them, and Signy was swept aside in the throng of the Goth folk. And in the midst of the naked blades stood Sigmund as firm and unbending as is the great oak in the forest to the herd-boy's

assaults. But Sinfiotli rushed hither and thither wherever the spears were thickest, and fiercely he laid about him till at last he slipped and fell.

Then thicker came the throng about Sigmund, and they bore him down unwounded, and cast bonds about him. And Sinfiotli, too, did they bind, and they carried them away.

And when the morning dawned King Siggeir bade his bondsmen make an earthen mound, and divide it by a great stone into two chambers. And when it was done, they brought Sigmund and Sinfiotli to the mound, and put one into each chamber. Then did they begin to roof in the chambers with turfs. And at the eve of the day all was done but the roofing of Sinfiotli's chamber.

Then came Signy, the Queen, all white, and wan, and great-eyed. And she gave gold to the thralls and bade them hold their peace of the deed she was about to do. And she drew forth from beneath her mantle something wrapped in straw, and swiftly she cast it into Sinfiotli's chamber. And then she fled away into the King's dwelling. And the thralls deemed that it was food that she had brought to Sinfiotli, and they laid the roof on his chamber, and left the two men to their doom.

And Sigmund listened, and he heard Sinfiotli speak and say: "Behold, my mother hath sent me meat." And then there was silence, and Sigmund called to him: "Hath aught happened to thee? Is there an adder in the meat?" And Sinfiotli laughed aloud and answered: "Yea, indeed, an adder; the sword of the Branstock."

And Sinfiotli smote the stone wall with the point of the sword, and slowly in the darkness he bore through the wall, till Sigmund could set his hand to the blade on the other side. Then they sawed together till the stone was cleft and they looked upon each other again. And full of joy they kissed, and again they sawed at the roof of their prison till the winter stars shone down upon them. Then out they leapt, and straight for the hall they made. And they slew the night-watch one and all. And they took the faggots which were stored for the winter, the cloven oak trees, and the ash and the rowan, and made a mighty pile around the dwelling of Siggeir. And they laid a torch to it, and watched till the flames rose high above them.

Then they drew their swords and stood one at each of the two doors, that none might escape. And Siggeir awoke and saw the great fire all around him, and he cried out that he would give all his heaped-up treasure and half of his kingdom if his life might be spared. And Sigmund answered him and cried in a loud voice: "No treasure do we seek or kingdom, but vengeance for our kin. Nought can buy thy life, O Siggeir! death now shalt thou take from the hands of those whom thou wouldst have done to death."

And a great fear entered the hearts of all who heard him, and the silence of dread fell upon them. And again the voice cried aloud: "Come forth, ye women of the Goth-folk, and go your ways; and thou, Signy, my sister, come forth, that once more we may dwell in peace together beneath the Branstock."

And forth came all the women, hurrying in terror,

and Sinfiotli lowered his sword and let them pass, but Signy was not amongst them.

Then the men rushed to the doors and sought to pass, but Sigmund and Sinfiotli drove them back into the flames. And now came Signy to the women's doorway, clad in queenly raiment, and Sinfiotli lowered his sword point before her. And she folded him in her arms and kissed him, praising him for his mighty deeds. And she bade him farewell and departed and came unto Sigmund. And he looked upon her face, and he deemed it fair and fresh as in the days of their youth long past, but as he gazed, the tears filled her eyes, and sobs shook her breast. And she said: "I have come but to greet thee, Sigmund, then back again will I wend and meet death with my husband, the Goth-King. Yet fear not that I shall forget thee. A mighty king in the Volsung land shalt thou be, and then shalt thou remember me and my love of the Volsung name. Happy was my youth with my kin, loathed since has been my life, yet now as it endeth, softened seems my heart, and I would not that it had been otherwise; only I long for rest." And softly and sweetly she clung about him and kissed him, murmuring: "Farewell, my brother."

Then she turned her back and passed from his sight, and never again did he behold her.

And the walls of the great hall crashed and fell, and when the sun rose high nought but ashes remained of the golden dwelling, and the ashes of Siggeir and Signy and all their mighty men were mingled in its ruin

And Sigmund and Sinfiotli gathered a mighty host

together and sailed from the Gothland to the land of the Volsungs. And there the people met them with joy, and once more did the Volsungs rule beneath the Branstock's boughs. And oft did Sigmund think of Signy, and oft did he tell of her life and fame, and her love of the Volsung people, and her noble death.

And Sigmund became a mighty king, and he wedded a fair and lovely wife, named Borghild. And it befell that through her Sinfiotli came to his end. And in this wise was it. There was a man named Gudrod, and he was the brother of Borghild.

And he broke troth with Sinfiotli in a certain matter, so that they quarrelled and fought, and Sinfiotli slew Gudrod. And when the deed was known, Borghild bade Sigmund send Sinfiotli from his kingdom, but Sigmund answered her that Gudrod had broken troth with Sinfiotli and therefore was to blame; but for atonement he gave unto Borghild much gold and precious gems. And Borghild made as though she was satisfied, but in her heart was she full of hate to Sinfiotli.

And on a day she made a funeral feast for Gudrod. And mid the feasting she gave to Sinfiotli in seeming good-will a cup of wine. And it was poisoned, and he drank and fell dead without a word or groan. And Sigmund ran to him with a great cry, and he sorrowed over him exceedingly, so that none durst come to him. And he gazed long upon him, and took the body in his arms and ran forth from the hall. And the wind was wild and the night dark with storm-clouds, but on he went till he came to a mighty water. And lo, as the morning dawned there came a white-sailed boat to

the shore, and in it a man, mighty, grey-clad, one-eyed, and seeming old.

And he hailed Sigmund and asked him whither he fared. And Sigmund answered that he would cross the water and seek a new life, for the light of his old life had gone. And the man looked up at Sigmund and said that he had been sent there to fetch a great king, and he bade Sigmund set his burden upon the ship. And lo, when Sigmund had done this, and would have followed into the boat, both man and boat had disappeared.

And long hours did Sigmund stand upon the shore, gazing out on the water. Then he turned and made his way back to the Volsung land. And he sent Borghild the Queen from him, and for long he lived alone.

Now, there was a king of the islands named Eylimi. Small was his kingdom, but wise and valiant was he. And he had one only daughter, named Hiordis, and exceeding wise she was and fair, and her fame reached Sigmund and he was fain to have her for his wife. And he sent one of his earls to King Eylimi with gifts and tokens, asking Hiordis in marriage. And King Eylimi knew not what to say, for that very day had come an earl from King Lyngi, and he, too, would wed Hiordis. And Eylimi thought how Sigmund was growing old and his realm was afar off, while Lyngi was young and eager for fight, and a mighty king, and his realm was nigh; therefore did Eylimi fear to make a foe of him.

So he went to Hiordis where she sat in her bower,

working in silk and gold the stories of the deeds of old, and the stories of the deeds to come. And he told her of the two kings, and of his fears should she deny King Lyngi, but he bade her choose, saying that her will should rule in the matter.

And Hiordis straightway answered him: “Well I wot that strife may come of this, yet can I give but one answer. King Sigmund will I wed, and deem it the crown of my life to live in the Volsung land and share with him strife and peace.”

And fearful was Eylimi as to what might come of it, but in nowise would he gainsay the word of Hiordis. But he sent rich gifts to King Lyngi and a message that Hiordis had plighted her troth to King Sigmund. And to King Sigmund he sent bidding him come with all speed for his bride, and to come with a goodly company, arrayed for war, lest evil should betide.

And right contented was Sigmund at the message, and he made him ready. Yet did he ponder the word of King Eylimi that he should come in war array, and it suited not with his joy. And he remembered his father, and how he scorned to go to the court of King Siggeir with a war-host. So Sigmund gathered to him the best of his mighty men, and splendid was their raiment, and of precious metals were their shields and weapons. And they went aboard ten longships. Nought more would he take with him than he deemed would do honour to the Volsungs and to the fair and wise Hiordis.

And they came to Eylimi’s kingdom, and a goodly

welcome awaited them. And Sigmund looked on Hiordis and loved her exceedingly, and right happy was Hiordis when she looked on the glorious King. And Eylimi made a great feast, and Sigmund and Hiordis were wedded. And day by day did they love each other more, and ever their joy grew. And Eylimi was glad in Sigmund, and he forgot his fear of King Lyngi.

And when more than a month had passed, they arrayed the ships to return to the Volsung land. And lo, tidings came that a great host and many ships lay off the coast waiting for battle. Then was King Eylimi sore afraid, but Sigmund comforted him and bade him go forth with him to the fight, and take whatever the gods should give.

And Sigmund drew the sword of Odin from its sheath, and he and Eylimi led their men down to the sea strand. All golden did Sigmund shine in the noonday sun, and right glorious did all men deem him as they looked upon him. And he called upon them to fight well for the Volsungs, and he raised aloft the mighty sword of the Branstock and blew on his father's horn the call to battle.

And King Lyngi's hosts rushed upon them, and surrounded them. But Sigmund slashed right and left with his mighty blade till the dead were piled around him, and none could get at him to smite him. His shield had been torn from his arm, and his helmet from his head. All white his hair streamed on the wind, and blood-stained and dust-covered was his raiment. But in his eyes was the light of victory, and he sang out sweet-voiced and clear the battle song of

his kindred, and ever gleamed the bright sword as it struck its death-dealing blows.

And just as he thought of triumph, lo, through the hedge of weapons came a mighty man. Seeming old he was, and one-eyed, and his face was as a flame. His kirtle was of the grey of the clouds, and his hood of misty blue. And he bore a great two-handed bill, and when he had come to Sigmund, he raised it to strike him. Then once more the gleaming sword of Odin circled around the head of Sigmund, and he shouted again the war cry of the Volsungs. But as his sword met the bill, it shivered to pieces, and fell from his hand. And when Sigmund looked again the grey-clad man had vanished, and in his place thronged his foes.

Weaponless, unshielded, unhelmed, the war-light gone from his eyes, he stood before them. And there they smote him, and he fell upon the heap of the dead, whom he had himself smitten down. And now that their King was fallen his men struggled no longer against the oncoming host, and they fell before them. And right well fought King Eylimi in the forefront of the battle, but he, too, fell.

Now did King Lyngi fare to the dwelling of King Eylimi to seek Hiordis and to take her by force. But she had left her bower when the fight began and hidden in a thicket, whence she could watch the battle. And she saw the triumph of King Lyngi, and beheld him as he rushed from the field towards their dwelling. And she guessed that he would take her.

And heartbroken she made her way to the strand,

and sought for the body of Sigmund. And soon she found him. Many and grievous were his wounds, but he still lived. And glad were his eyes as she bent over him and laid her wan face to his. And he spoke and said: "Sorrowful is thy heart, O Hiordis, and young thou art to bear such grief alone."

But she stopped him, crying: "Thou livest, thou livest, and thou shalt live: thou shalt be healed."

But he answered her gently. "Nay: to-day mine eyes have looked upon Odin and my heart hath heard his bidding. I live but to tell thee of the days that are to be, and to comfort thee a little. Lo, yonder where I faced the foemen lies the best of all good swords in pieces. Take them and keep them secure. Odin's was the gift and to-day hath Odin shattered his gift. Yet do I know full well that a greater than I shall bear it. Guard it for thy son and mine. Mine eyes shall not see him, but I joy in his days that shall be. Cherish him, and for him shall this sword be smithied again, and great shall his deeds be on the earth. And sorrow not, O my wife, for sweet and good has been our short life together. And fain am I to rest: full of strife and battle din and longing have been my days, but now is the journey done, and I stand in the lighted doorway, and the king cometh to welcome me; arrayed is the banquet for the feast, and prepared is the bed for rest and quiet dreams."

And the voice of Sigmund faded away, and no more word did he speak. But yet he lived, and Hiordis sat and sorrowed by him till the darkness of night covered them. And when the day broke and the sun

rose, Sigmund turned his head and the first soft beams of sunlight bathed his eyes. And Hiordis bent over him, and lo, he was dead.

And Hiordis sat on till the sun rose high in the heavens. And on a sudden she heard a noise out at sea, and she looked up and beheld a great war-ship and many men upon her arrayed for war. And they prepared to beach the ship. And Hiordis rose and flew into the thicket.

And the lord of that ship was King Elf, the son of another mighty king who was called the Helper of Men. And King Elf sought water for his shipmen upon the island. And as they drew nigh the shore, they saw that there had been fought a mighty battle. And they beheld the piles of the dead, and among them a living woman, a queen in purple and gold with a crown upon her head. And as they neared the strand she turned and saw them and fled away.

And King Elf and his men came ashore, and they looked upon Sigmund, and his face was as the face of a god. And they deemed that here had fallen a great man. Then said King Elf: "Fare we unto the thicket, and there belike we shall find the woman who fled, and she shall tell us the story of these deeds."

So they went into the thicket and found Hiordis, and they spake kindly unto her, and bade her tell them who she was and what had befallen. And when King Elf heard that the mighty man who lay upon the battle-field was Sigmund the Volsung he was amazed, and heavy tidings he deemed it.

And Hiordis went with the King and his men

again to the strand. And they set their hands to labour and raised a great mound for Sigmund, and placed him within it. And his right hand was clenched, but it held no sword, and nowhere could they find his helmet or his shield, but they hung the walls of the mound with the cloven shields of the foemen and the banners they had borne.

And Hiordis spake to the shipmen concerning the sword of Sigmund and his commands. And they gathered the pieces, and Hiordis took them, and she went aboard the ship of King Elf, and he carried her to his land. And there she abode in the house of King Elf and his father, the Helper.

And it befell that the heart of King Elf yearned to Hiordis, and he would fain make her his Queen. And he spake unto her and told her of his desire. And Hiordis answered him: "Thankful am I for thy goodness and thy love, and nought will I gainsay thee, when the time shall serve. But I pray thee, wait till the son of King Sigmund shall be born."

And King Elf rejoiced at her answer, and fain he was to do all as she bade him. And the summer passed, and the winter, and the spring drew on, and Hiordis lived in peace, thinking of the happy past, and dreaming of the happy future. And peace and joy reigned ever in this land of the two kings, and men lived merrily, toiling willingly, and resting quietly when the toil was done. None were over rich, and every hireling had enough, and it was said that a child might go unguarded through the length and breadth of the land, though gold were in his purse and rings of gold

upon his hands. A goodly kingdom it was, well hidden by great mountains, and safe-guarded by a perilous ocean which few men dared to sail.

Here abode Hiordis till on a morn of spring the son of Sigmund was born to her. And a great dread fell on all around in that hour, as though some fateful thing had come upon the world. And the serving women looked upon the child and shrank back from the glance of his eyes, so bright and dreadful were they.

And Hiordis took him in her arms, and held him to her heart, and spake to him as to one that had understanding. And she told him of the mighty King Volsung, and of Sigmund, his father, and of his last battle and of his death on the island shore. Then she gave him into the hands of the women, and bade them bear him to the Kings, the Helper of Men, and Elf, his son, that they, too, might rejoice with her.

And the Helper of Men sat with King Elf and his earls in the great hall, and on a sudden it seemed that they heard sweet voices and the sound of harps, and a great joy came upon them, though they knew not why. Then there entered to them the serving women of Hiordis, and one, who held to her breast a precious burden, stepped to the high seat and unfolded the purple wrappings and gave the babe into the hands of King Elf. And the woman spake and said: "Queen Hiordis sends thee this gift, and she saith the world shall call her son and Sigmund's by the name that thou shalt give it."

And a great shout of joy from the earls shook the ancient hall, whiles King Elf looked long into the

face of the child. And he deemed that he looked upon a god, so gleaming were his eyes and so bright his face. And at last Elf raised his head and cried: "O Sigmund, King of Battle, the darkness has passed, and lo, here is the dawn: tell us, O mighty Sigmund, how shall we name thy son?"

And then uprose an ancient man and he cried "Hail, Dawn of the Day!" and he sang of the mighty deeds which should be wrought by this son of Sigmund. "O, thy deeds that all men shall wonder at, and all gods shall rejoice in! O Sigurd, son of the Volsung!" he cried.

And men caught the name and echoed it, and it was heard without the hall, and cried again and again at feast and fair, in street and market, through meadow and forest, over mountain and sea. And Hiordis heard it as she lay in her golden chamber, and her heart rejoiced. And her women came back to her, and gave her the babe, and she cherished him at her breast.

And all the glorious Volsung past blossomed again in the minds of men, and they told and sang of the marvellous deeds of old as they sat at the feast, and ever they looked to the coming years for still mightier deeds and still greater wonders.

And when the summer came Queen Hiordis was wedded to King Elf, and fair were their days together. Peace and plenty was ever in the land, and the child Sigurd grew up amidst it, waxing in beauty and in strength, and all men blessed him. And as the years sped on, keen and eager of wit and full of understanding did he grow, and oft he sat among the wise

men and listened to their talk of weighty matters. Yet joyous was he withal, and kindly unto every man.

Now, there was a man named Regin who dwelt in the house of the Helper. Exceeding old he was, so that none could remember when he came there to dwell. King Elf he had fostered and his father, the Helper, and the Helper's father before him. Learned in all wisdom was he, and deft in all cunning save the deeds of the sword. Sweet of speech was he, too, so that every word he spake took its right meaning, and skilled he was with the harp strings, and drew from them delight and sorrow; and a great teller of tales was he, and the Master of Masters in the smithying craft, and well he knew the lore of the wind and the weather, and the sea.

And on a day Regin came before the Kings, and he said: "O helper of men, I fostered thy youth, and thine, King Elf. Now would I foster Sigurd, for my heart tells me that he shall be a mighty man in the days to come, and no greater master is there than I."

And the Helper answered: "Do thy will herein, O Regin, for thou art the Master of Masters."

So Sigurd abode with Regin, and Regin taught him all things save the craft of battle: the smithying of the sword, and the war coat, the carving of runes, the tongues of many countries, soft speech and song and the music of the harp. And wondrous strong grew Sigurd in body, and he chased the deer of the forest, and the wolf of the wood, and the sea had no terror for him.

And on a day he sat with Regin in the smithy, and Regin worked at the gold and told tales of the

Volsungs and the days gone by. And the boy's heart swelled, and his eyes brightened as he listened. Then said Regin: "Thou, too, must ride through the world as the kin of early days. Ask now a battle steed of the Helper of Men and King Elf; crave of them that thou mayst choose from among the horses of Gripir."

Now, Gripir was the son of the Helper's father, but his mother was of giant kin. Far from the seastrand, among the great mountains, he dwelt. A man of few words he was, but all the deeds that had been did he know, and times there were when he saw the deeds that were to come. No sword had he borne since his father fell, and no vengeance had he sought on the slayers. Yet fearless he was, but he desired nought but to learn of the past and to watch the coming days.

And Sigurd did as Regin bade him, and he left the smithy and ran to the Kings and said: "Will ye do so much for my asking as to give me a token for Gripir and bid him let me choose a horse from those that run in his meadow?"

And King Elf smiled upon him, and told him he should have his will in the matter, and he gave him a token to carry to Gripir. And well pleased was Sigurd. And in the morning, as soon as the dawn broke, he wended his way unto Gripir.

On a crag of a mountain was his dwelling built, and the wild birds flew around it, and the mountain winds swept through every chamber. And Sigurd entered the hall, and there in the midst sat Gripir upon a great chair of ivory. His white beard fell over his golden gown almost to the floor, that was green as the ocean: in his hand he held a kingly staff knobbed with white crystal.

And Gripir cried: "Hail, King with the bright eyes! Nought needest thou to show thy token nor to tell thy message. Go choose a horse in my meadow, and he shall bear thee to mighty deeds."

And Sigurd went to the meadow, and lo, by the way he met a grey-clad man, one-eyed and old, and the man said: "Tarry, Sigurd; wilt thou follow my counsel, and get thee the best of all steeds?" And Sigurd answered: "I am ready, what is the deed to be done?" And the man said: "We shall drive the horses to the water and then do thou note what shall happen next?"

And they drave all the horses till they came to a great rushing river, and the horses plunged in, but the flood was too strong for them. And some were swept downward and some struggled back to the bank, and some sank: only one of them all swam over to the other side. And he scrambled up the bank, and

they saw his mane of grey as he galloped in the meadow. Then he wheeled and took to the water again.

And the man said: "Once, O Sigurd, did I give thy father, Sigmund, a precious gift, which thou shalt hold dear when the time shall serve. But now do I give thee this horse."

And Sigurd would fain ask him many questions, but the man turned and strode away to the mountains and soon was he lost to sight. And Sigurd hastened to the river bank, and took the grey horse as he came to the shore. And Sigurd thought him the best of all horses, and he leapt upon his back, and named him Greyfell; and the horse seemed to know him, and went gladly beneath him. And men said that this horse was of the blood of Sleipnir, the tireless horse of Odin.

And a joyous song poured from Sigurd as he wended his way to the Helper and King Elf borne on the back of Greyfell.

And the days passed, and Sigurd waxed ever fairer and stronger, and well-loved was he by all, and happy were his days. Yet oftentimes, he looked towards the

mighty mountains with a great wonder in his heart as to what lay beyond them, and a great longing sprang up in him for the wide world and its knowledge and its deeds. And he said to himself: "This land is not the land of my blood, and my mother bath other sons, and they shall be kings, and I must needs serve them. Fain would I go forth and do great deeds, yet must I wait till Odin calleth me."

And it befell on a day that he sat in Regin's hall, and Regin told him many stories of old kings who had fared forth and sought their kingdoms. And Sigurd's heart was heavy as he listened. And at last when he had made an end of his story Regin cried: "Thou art the son of King Sigmund! Why dolt thou waste thy years in this little land, where others will be kings and thou must serve them."

And Sigurd answered him: "Well do I love this sweet and peaceful land, yet full fain is my heart for the land of my fathers. But, meseemeth, when the deed is ready, Odin shall call me to it, and in nowise shall I lack."

Then said Regin: "The deed is ready even now, yet to hold my peace is best, for thou lovest this land and thy life of quiet days too well to fare forth into strife and danger. Yet do they say that Sigmund was thy father: but fear nought from him; he lieth quiet in his mound by the sea."

Then shone the eyes of Sigurd like a flame at Regin's words of scorn, and his voice rang out like the thunderpeal.

"Tell me," he cried, "thou Master of Masters.

what is the deed that is ready? Mock me no longer or the day of my birth thou shalt rue.”

Then answered Regin: “The deed is the righting of wrong, and the winning of untold treasure that should make thee more than a king. Long is it since I first came here to seek a man for my need, for the treasure is mine, but nought can I do to end the days of my waiting and my woe, for my hand is frail, and my heart herein avails not. Yet have I long known that in this land should I find the man for the deed, and I knew that my waiting was done when I looked on thine eyes in the cradle.”

Then said Sigurd: “I will do the deed, and thou shalt have the treasure, but on thy head be the curse, if curse there be with the gold. But full strong in my heart to-day are the dreams of my youth, and I long to look on the world and meet with mighty men, and try my skill at their feats. So tell me, O Master of Masters, the tale of this treasure of thine, and the deed to be done.”

And the look of scorn went from the face of Regin, and now was he full content. “Sit,” he said, “thou son of Sigmund, for hereof must a tale be told: sit, and hearken of wondrous matters, of things unheard, and deeds of my beholding.”

And Sigurd sat him down upon the heaped-up unwrought gold, and Regin began his story.

“Know first,” he said, “that I was born of the race of the dwarfs. Mighty we were in the days that I speak of, but now our days are done. Before the gods came upon the earth, and before the days of

men, did we live, and fair was the earth, and exceeding glad was our life. Bear with me, O Sigurd, for while I speak of the days that are past, I scarcely can think they are wholly o'er. Then came the gods to earth, and hopes and fears arose within us, and unrest, and toil. We fell to the working of metals, and we fashioned spear and bow, and sought out the secrets of the deeps of the earth, and dealt in venom and leechcraft.

“Reidmar the Ancient was my father, a king he was, old and covetous. His youngest born was I, and to me and my brothers' twain did he give such gifts as would work his will. To Fafnir, the eldest born, he gave the fearless soul, the pitiless heart, and the greedy hand. To Otter, his second son, he gave the cunning for the snare and the net, and restless longing and mighty strength; and to me, grief and fear, the skill of the smithy craft, toil, and the longing unsatisfied heart.

“Worse were we now than the gods, for of all our ancient might but one thing had we left: the power to change our bodies into bodies of the beasts, or the fishes, or the fowls.

“So did we live together. I toiled and toiled, building my father a hall. And fair it was, but my toil had made me grim and cold-hearted, and my hands were twisted and foul, and nought did I know of the glorious world, of the sun, and the wind and the flowers, nor had I the skill of the sword and the shield.

“But Fafnir, my brother, fared forth, leaving no wrong undone, and Otter would change his shape with the beasts and the fowls and the fish, and he knew

their joy and their grief, and all knowledge of them he had, that he seemed the king of the creatures.

“Now, it befell on a day that three gods came to the earth in the shape of men: Odin the All-Father, and Loki the Evil-hearted, and Hœnir the Blameless. And they came to a mighty water, and upon the shore lay my brother Otter, his body changed to an otter indeed. And Odin and Hœnir passed on, but Loki saw through the shape of the otter and beheld the mighty dwarf. And, ever evil of heart, he tore a piece from the rock and hurled it, and smote my brother, Otter, that his man’s life passed away. And wroth was Odin at this deed of Loki, but he said nought, and the three fared on again together till they came to a grassy plain. And there they saw a noble house and a hall full glorious and fashioned with great craft. And night was falling, so they sought shelter there. And they went up to the porch, all smooth wrought with gold, and into the hall, so wondrous fair with its windows and pillars and golden hangings that even the gods marvelled at its beauty.

“And in the hall sat a king upon a throne, clad in purple robes, with a crown upon his head. And seeming kindly were his words as he bade them rest and join the feast and be merry. And they sat at the board and joined in the laughter, yet did they feel themselves caught as in a net, and no escape could they think of from their man-like bodies.

“And anon the old king’s laughter lost its mirth and seemed full of mockery. And at last he spake and said: ‘Well I know ye to be gods, but guilty are

ye of a great wrong, and to no feeble folk shall ye make answer. Time was when we knew you not, and needed you not, and fair were our days, but now do we toil and strive and suffer, and our might is gone from us. Well do ye wot that I am Reidmar, and that ye have slaughtered my offspring, and to-day will I undo the work of your hands, and run the web of the world backward unless ye give one my heart's desire!'

"And Odin answered him: 'Wrong indeed have we done thee, and if thou wilt amend it with wrong, nought can we gainsay thee. For thine heart's desire is gold, and gold thou shalt have, yet best it were that thou lackest it.'

"Then cried Reidmar, and Fafnir, his eldest son, and I, Regin the Smith: 'Pay us the ransom of blood or ye shall die and we will be gods!'

"Then said Odin, and his voice was awful: 'Give doom, O Reidmar! What is the gold thou wilt have?'

"And Reidmar answered: 'Give me the gold that Andvari hideth at the bottom of the sea.'

"And Odin bade that Loki should be loosed, and I loosed him, and he went at Odin's word to seek the golden hoard. And over the mountains he went to a mighty water, and there dwelt Andvari, and an Elf of the Dark is he. Once was he wise and great, but now did he heed nought but the gathering of gold. And the all-guileful Loki set his snare and entrapped the Elf, and forced him to give up the treasure. There was the Helmet of Dread, and the Hauberk of Gold, and great heaps of precious things. And Loki commanded Andvari to bring them all up to the earth, and this the

Elf did, while Loki laughed aloud at his groans and grief and weariness.

“And when all was done, and Andvari hurriedly turned to go back, Loki saw upon his hand the gleam of gold in the sun. And he cried: ‘Come hither again and deliver the ring from thy finger.’ And the Elf gave up the ring, and his anguish was great as he parted from it. And he cried in his wrath: ‘Could I give thee worse than what thou bearest, right fain am I to give it, but a curse thou bearest, and the woe that is now mine shall come to many another with my gold. Brethren and fathers and kings shall it slay, and the hearts of fair queens shall it break, and the light of day shall be as darkness!’

“But Loki laughed at his woe, and gathered up the treasure, and carried it with all haste to the hall of Reidmar. And when we saw it gleaming there, we stood before it panting, so great and rich and glorious was the sight.

“And Odin spake, and his voice was cold and dread: ‘O Kings, behold the ransom, duly paid,’ he said.

“And for a space Reidmar answered nought, but ever his eyes peered up and down and athwart the pile as though he searched for something more. Then he caught the flash of the golden ring on Loki’s hand, and wroth, he cried: ‘O Loki, master of guile, cast down Andvari’s ring.’ And Loki drew off the Elf-ring and cast it upon the pile, saying: ‘Right joyful am I that all of the gold thou shouldst take, that none of the curse thou mayst lack.’

“And I loosed the gods, and mighty they stood for a moment, then turned and went out into the night.

“And there the treasure lay, and its golden gleam fell upon Reidmar and Fafnir and me. And my heart was full of greed and longing to hold it as my own. Yet did I smile, and bid my father keep the more part for himself, but give unto Fafnir and me a little as recompense for such deeds of help as we had wrought.

“But Reidmar answered me nothing, but sat on his ivory throne, gazing with glistening eyes upon the flaming pile. And Fafnir spake never a word, but glared upon our father with fiery, wrathful eyes.

“And the night fell and the morning dawned, and still sat Reidmar there in his purple robes gazing upon the gold. And Fafnir took his sword, and I took my smithy hammer, and we went our ways in the world. And when the evening was come, I went back to the hall. But weary and spent was my heart, and so great was still my longing for the gold, that I durst not look upon it again. So I lay in the smithy and slept, and methought now and then that I heard the tinkling of metal, and that I saw a light in the hall. But I held all as dreams, till a dreadful cry rang out in the darkness, and there was a sudden clashing of swords.

“And I leapt from my bed and ran to the hall, and there by the pile of the gold stood Fafnir, my brother, and there at his feet lay Reidmar, and his blood flowed amid the glittering hoard. And I rushed to my father’s side, but even as I bent and looked into his eyes they darkened in death. Then I turned me and looked upon Fafnir, and I trembled as I saw

upon his head the Helmet of Dread, and on his body the golden Hauberk, and in his hand was his sword, and both hand and sword were red with our father's blood. Nought could I speak, but at last he cried with a dreadful voice: 'Dead is Reidmar at my hand, that alone I may hold the treasure. Alone will I dwell henceforth and be a mighty king, and the gold shall grow in my keeping. Be thou gone, or thy blood will I add to my guilt.'

"And cold and terror-stricken I fled from the hall which my hands had fashioned so gloriously, with nought in the world of my own but my longing heart and my craft-skilled hands.

"And I came unto this land, and I taught its people many things. And for many generations have I wrought among them. And once I journeyed back to the land of my birth, and I found the golden house which my hands had builded, ruined and open to the sky, and I looked within the great hall, and piles upon piles of gold I saw, and lo, a mighty serpent crawled to and fro amongst it. And I remembered our ancient power of changing our bodies at will, and I knew that the serpent was Fafnir.

"And again I fled and returned to this land, and greater and greater grew my longing for the gold, and lesser and lesser my hope. But then, O Sigurd, was thy father's father born, the mighty Volsung, and I began to dream dreams. And the years passed on and thy mother came to this land, and thou wert born. And I looked upon thy eyes, and my heart told me that thou wert he who should bring me rest. And

the gold shall he mine, and the craft, and the gathered wisdom of Fafnir, and great deeds will I do, that shall win the love of all people, and my name that once was as naught shall be remembered and sang, and death shall be no more, and the world shall be ever fair!”

And Regin’s words faded away, and his eyes closed, and seemed to fall into slumber. And the flames leapt up in the smithy and shone upon the Master, and Sigurd sprang to his feet and drew his sword, and cried: “Awake, O Regin, for the days go by Awake, for the deed is yet to do.”

And Regin wakened with a groan, and sad and worn and old was his visage. And he seemed as a man bowed down by a burden. And he looked upon Sigurd and spake, and his words came thick and fast “Hast thou hearkened, Sigurd?” he said. “And wilt thou help a man that is old and weak to avenge his father? Wilt thou win back the Treasure of Gold? Wilt thou rid the earth of a wrong, and my heart of its sorrow and woe?”

And he drooped and trembled before Sigurd, fearful for his answer. And Sigurd said: “Thou shalt have thy desire and the treasure, O Regin, but take thou also the curse on thy head.”

And they parted.

And on a day Sigurd came again to Regin in the smithy, and said: “A gift at thy hands I ask: Forge me a sword for the deed.”

And the Master answered: “Lo, here is a sword wrought for thee with many a spell and charm and all the craft of the Dwarf-kind. Be glad and sure in

it and well shall it stead thee in the task.” And Sigurd said never a word, but he looked on the sword, and saw its gemmed and golden hilt, and its blue, bleak blade. And with flaming eyes he sprang to the anvil, and smote it with the sword. And lo, the sword fell shivering in pieces to the earth.

And wroth was Sigurd, and he cast the jewelled hilt amongst the ashes, and strode from the smithy, and for many a day he came not back. And Regin toiled, night and day fashioning another sword, and at last when two moons had come and gone, Sigurd stood before him once more. And he said to Regin “What hast thou done, O Master, in the forging of the sword?”

And Regin answered: “Lo, a blade have I forged which shall surely please thee. Night and day have I toiled at it, and the cunning has left my hand, if this be not to thy mind.”

And Sigurd took the sword, and Regin shrank from the flaming brightness of his eyes. And again Sigurd stood before the anvil, and he smote it, and again the sword lay broken upon the floor of the smithy. And no word did he say, but he cast the hilt from him, and strode off to the hall of the kings, and merry he was that night at the feast.

And when the morn was come, he went to his mother and said: “Give me the sword, my mother, that Sigmund gave thee for me, and let me fare forth in the world.”

And Hiordis looked into his face and saw the fire in his eyes, and she said: “Gladly will I give it thee.”

And she took his hand and led him to her treasure-chamber. And she unlocked a golden chest, and opened it, and lifted the purple coverings that lay within. And there were the pieces of the sword of Sigmund. No spot of rust stained them, and the gems in the hilt were as bright and glorious as when they had first flashed in the Volsung hall.

And Sigurd rejoiced, and he bent and kissed Hiordis as he took the pieces from her hands. But never a word she spake, but stood and gazed upon him. So glorious and fair was his face, and young as are the immortal gods. And long she stood there after he had left her, like one awakening from sad dreams to glorious life.

And Sigurd went swiftly to the house of Regin. And there in the doorway of the smithy stood the Master. And Sigurd put the pieces of the sword into his hands, and Regin looked upon them long. And his face was dark and grim as he spake. "Will nought serve thee but this blade of thy father's?" he asked.

And Sigurd answered: "Get thee to thy craft. Nought will I have but this sword, and if thine hand fail me in this, then will mine own hand fashion it, for here is the slayer of the serpent."

And Regin said: "Thou speakest truth. This sword shall slay the serpent, and do many another deed. But now get thee gone, and come to me again when the May month is upon us, and thy sword shall be ready for thee."

And Sigurd went his way to the dwelling of the kings, and quiet and joyous passed his days till the

May month dawned. Then on a night he betook him again to the house of Regin. And Regin stood in the smithy, faint and weary, and his eyes were dim as they met the brightness of Sigurd's. And he cried: "Hail, son of the Volsungs, behold, thy sword is ready!"

And Sigurd saw the sword where it lay on the ashes. And without a word stooped and took it. Eager was his face and his lips moved as with strong desire. Then he raised the sword and stood before the anvil. White it leapt above his head, and it seemed as if red flames darted from it and played around him. And he smote the anvil, and a wild cry of triumph rang out from him, for the sword was whole, and its edges undulled, and the anvil was cleft to the floor and he held it out at arm's length, as though he would show it to all the world, and his face shone glorious as a god's.

Then said Regin: "Thou hast cleft the anvil which is hard and heavy, but canst thou shear the fine and the soft? Come forth and try again thy skill with the sword."

And they wended their ways to the river, and there Regin cast against the stream a lock of fine-spun wool. And Sigurd smote it as it whirled about on the eddy, and when the wool met the edge of the sword it was straightway sheared. Then said Regin: "It is well; and now surely shall the deed be done."

And Sigurd sheathed the sword in its golden sheath, and they returned to their dwellings. And on the morrow Sigurd arose as soon as it was dawn, and gat him upon Greyfell. The sword was girded to his

side, and happy he was, and softly and sweetly he sang as he rode.

And over the mountains he fared till he came to the dwelling of Gripir, and he entered the hall, and there sat the old King, clad in his golden raiment upon his ivory throne. And Sigurd stood before him, leaning upon his sheathed sword, and their eyes met, and joyful was the welcome as each looked upon the other.

And Gripir cried: "Hail, Sigurd!" And Sigurd answered: "Hail, father! Behold the fateful sword! Forth in the world do I wend, and I would know many things of thee before I go."

Then Gripir bent his head over the crystal ball that topped his kingly wand and gazed long into its cold and shining depths. Round was it as the world of men, and wrought in it, clear to the eyes that had wisdom to read, was the fate of men. And Sigurd waited, still standing before him gleaming with glorious light, which shone upon the floor green as the ocean flood and brightened the walls as they cast back to each other his golden rays.

And at length the voice of Gripir rang out, foretelling all the great deeds of Sigurd, all the joy and all the sorrow of his life, the shortness of his days but their long remembrance.

And the voice of Gripir died away, and Sigurd still stood before him pondering the words he had heard, and there was silence for a little.

Then Sigurd looked up at Gripir with bright, clear, smiling eyes, and Gripir said: "Come, thou kin

of the gods, sit by my side, and be glad for a while with me.”

And Sigurd came unto Gripir, and he kissed him, and they sat together on the ivory throne, and Gripir told him of many wonders that are hidden from the children of men. And long Sigurd sat and marvelled, but at last he rose. And he said unto Gripir: “Lovely are thy days of peace, and glorious is thy wisdom which thou hast garnered, and great thy guileless heart which knows not anger or pain. But for me the gods have willed the days of strife, the war-horse and the keen blade, and forth must I ride whatsoever may befall.”

And again they kissed each other and they parted. And Sigurd turned and left the hall of Gripir, and he leapt upon Greyfell and rode back to the dwelling of Regin.

And on the morrow Sigurd and Regin rode forth together, and all day and all night they fared till the little land of the Helper lay below them far away, and before them rose the great mountains. And on and on they rode over and between mighty mountains, through desert places, and into a narrow pass, high-walled on either side, windless and silent and black. On and on and ever upward they wended, and when the dawn came Sigurd saw a great deserted land, and he knew they had reached the Glittering Heath. And the sword sang in its sheath, for here was the home of the dread serpent, and his doom was nigh.

And Sigurd leapt from Greyfell and made his way in the twilight. Nought could he see of Regin, but he heeded not that, but pressed on, hungering to meet his foe, and Greyfell paced behind him.

And presently in the wan light it seemed to Sigurd that a grey cloud glimmered before him, changing and growing till it took the form of a mighty man. One-eyed he was and seeming old. Cloud-grey was his raiment, and his visage was glorious to behold. And he spake, and his voice was as the wind when it blows over the winter sea. And he cried: "Hail, Sigurd Give me greeting ere thou wend on thy way."

And Sigurd cried: "Hail, my friend and my father's friend!"

And the wise one said: "Hearken, O Sigurd, and learn of me in what wise thou shalt smite the serpent Fafnir. There is a hollow path by which he wends to the water in the dawn. Dig thou there a pit and lie therein and bare thy sword and await his coming. Then shall thy blade of the Branstock serve thee, and thou shalt slay him."

And Sigurd answered: "Thy bidding I will do," and lo, he was alone again upon the Glittering Heath.

And on he went again till he came to the path worn by the serpent as he wended his way to the water. Then leapt the heart of Sigurd, and he drew his sword, and began to dig a pit as the grey-clad man had bidden. And dark was the night all round him, but he toiled on till the work was done. Then he lay there like one dead with his sword ready to his hand, and he waited. And the dawn broke and there came a far-off sound, and a twinkle as of gold dragged over the earth.

And the sound became a rattle, and nearer and nearer till the mighty serpent passing above him hid

the light of the day and the heavens from him. And he saw the face of the monster man-like but hideous, with lips that writhed in horrible laughter and eyes that were bleared and blinded.

And Sigurd shook off the dread that held him and laughed aloud, and as he laughed he thrust at the heart of the serpent. Then he leapt from the pit, where now the red blood rushed like a river, and he stood with his sword uplifted, glorious with the joy of a god in his work fulfilled.

And the serpent lay there huddled and grey, and he looked upon Sigurd and cried in a terrible voice: "Fierce child, thou hast cleft my heart, and I die far off from the gold, but thee, thee also, shall it bring to doom."

And dreadful was the voice, and long was it ere its groans and lamentations ceased. And Sigurd stood leaning upon his sword till all sank into silence and he knew that the serpent was dead.

And the sun rose, and the wind blew, fresh and sweet, over the heath, and a new day dawned upon the world.

And Sigurd wiped the blood of Fafnir from his blade, and Greyfell, beside him, neighed with joy. And Sigurd looked up, and lo, Regin stood before him staring at him, marvelling at his surpassing beauty. And Regin turned from him and saw the serpent where he lay dead in the pool of his own blood. And he grovelled on the ground and lapped at the blood like a dog. Then dark and wrathful he came to Sigurd and cried: "Thou hast slain my brother: wherewith wilt thou atone for thy murderous deed?"

“’Tis thy deed as well as mine,” answered Sigurd.

“Thou hast slain my brother,” cried Regin again.

“Take thou the gold, then, as ransom,” said Sigurd.

“Thou hast slain my brother,” cried Regin, “and now shalt thou be my servant, though thou art a King.” And he drew his sword and crept to the serpent, and cut the heart from him. And he said: “If thou wilt be free of this deed, gather fire together, and roast this heart for me. For herein is might and wisdom and the hoarded lore of the past, and I would eat it and live.”

And Regin fell back and seemed to slumber, with his unsheathed sword still in his hand. And Sigurd took the heart of Fafnir, and gathered wood and kindled a fire, and put the heart to roast. And the eagles came and pitched about the fire and sang their song. And Sigurd put his hand to the roast to see if it were well cooked, and the blood and the fat burst from it and scalded his fingers. And he put them in his mouth to soothe the burning, and lo, there came a change upon him, and the speech of the birds he knew, and the ways of the beasts, even as the dwarfs of old.

And he heard the birds tell of Regin’s evil will, and of his intent to kill him when he should awake and eat of the serpent’s heart. And the birds cried “Arise, O Sigurd, ere it be too late!”

And wroth was Sigurd, and he arose and took again his sword and bared it. And he went unto Regin where he slept, and he smote his head from his body.

Then did Sigurd eat of the heart of Fafnir, and

wise did he grow with the wisdom of old. And he leapt upon Greyfell and turned him along the hollow path along which the serpent had wended, and far over the heath it led him, till when the night was come, he saw before him the great dwelling builded by Regin in the days when the world was young. High it reared itself to the heavens, and deep below the earth it went, and within it was the gold of Andvari.

And Sigurd strode through the door, and saw the great heaps of the golden hoard, and the golden war-gear, and piles of ruddy rings, and huge blocks of the precious metal that only the dwarfs could mine from the middle of the earth. And amidst all the gleaming spoil was the Helmet of Dread, and the Hauberk all of gold, whose like is not in heaven or in earth, and the great ring of Andvari. And Sigurd stooped and put the ring upon his finger, and then he put upon him the Helmet of Dread and the Hauberk of Gold,

And glorious as a god he stood. And he loaded Greyfell with the glittering spoil till the war-steed shone in the moonlight. And he dragged the rest of the gold out from the hall on to the heath, giving it back again to the earth.

Then did Sigurd take Greyfell's rein and turn him the way he deemed must be his way, but in nowise would Greyfell move. And Sigurd pondered awhile, and then he leapt to the saddle and let the rein fall loosely from his hand. And Greyfell neighed and tossed his head, and lightly and swiftly sprang forward over the broken rampart and out to the wide desert land.

And on and on they sped till on a morning Sigurd saw before him a mighty mountain. And it seemed as though a torch burned at its topmost amid its wreath of clouds. And Sigurd urged Greyfell towards the height, for he would fain see the earth from that mountain's peak. And Greyfell neighed with delight, and the heart of Sigurd bounded with joy.

And as higher and higher he rode, he saw the fiery torch grow great and strange, and long tongues of flame leap out from the misty clouds. Then the clouds settled thick upon the mountain and the strange fire was hidden. And on and upward he rode, and the wind rose and lifted the mass of clouds from the mountain's head. And the light that had seemed a torch was now a river of fire that enwrapped the topmost peak. And night fell, but on and upward rode Sigurd, without a thought of rest, till he reached a wall of rock. And round it he rode till he found

a breach in the wall. Long he sat upon Greyfell and gazed on the marvellous sight that was now before him, for nought could he see within the wall but a world of flames betwixt the earth and the heavens.

And great grew the heart of Sigurd with desire, and he cried to Greyfell with kindly words of encouragement, and Greyfell stretched his neck and snuffed at the leaping flames. Then Sigurd turned in his saddle and drew the girths tighter, and he lifted the reins and cried aloud to Greyfell. And Greyfell leapt towards the flames and into them, and through the wild roaring Sigurd rode. And the white tongues of fire licked his raiment, and swept through Greyfell's mane, and played about their golden war-gear. But, unharmed, rider and horse passed on, nor was their raiment scorched or

their shining armour dulled. And on they went till suddenly all grew calm around them, and Sigurd looked and now the flames were left behind them.

And Sigurd saw before him a high wall, and on its topmost rim instead of a banner there hung from a staff a glorious golden buckler. And Sigurd leapt to his feet, and around the wall he wended till he came to a gate. And none guarded its entrance, and no sound of life was there within it. And awhile he stood and pondered, for he feared some guile of the dwarfs, or of giants.

But at last he drew his sword and entered the gate, and within he saw another wall, and within that the highest head of the mountain rose. And there, at the base of the peak, he saw a great mound raised, and on the mound lay a figure. Pale and grey and wan and strange it gleamed in the misty dawn: well-shapen, and clad from head to feet in silvery war-gear. The glittering hauberk seemed to have grown to the flesh, so shapely it was; a great shining helmet covered the head.

And Sigurd knelt beside the figure and deemed it to be some king of days forgotten. And he would fain see if the man were dead, and he bent over the face and felt soft breath upon his cheek. And he said to himself that whatever befell he must look upon the face. And he drew the helmet from the head, and In, he saw a snow-white brow and smooth unfurrowed cheeks and fair lips: the face of the fairest woman his eyes had ever seen.

And long he looked upon her beauty, till his

heart was sorely moved with love, and he longed to awaken her, to hear her voice, to see her eyes unveiled. And tenderly he touched her hands and breast, and cried "Awake, I am Sigurd!" but motionless still she lay.

And Sigurd took his sword and cut through the hammered rings of her armour from neck to feet, and either sleeve. And now she lay wrapped about in gleaming linen with fair bare arms, and sun-bright hair that flowed free on her breast and shoulders.

And her breath came quicker, and a flush rose upon her cheeks, and she sighed. Then her eyelids quivered and opened, and she gazed wide-eyed on the light of day around her, and on Sigurd, who knelt at her side. And long their eyes were fixed upon each other, and he saw the love dawn in her heart, and he listened, motionless, for her voice. And her wise lips moved and she said: "What mighty thing hath awakened me from my long sleep and torn me from my woe?"

And he answered her: "The hand of Sigurd, and the sword of Sigmund's son, and the heart of the Volsung."

And together they rose, and the sun bathed them in its golden light. And she cried aloud, outstretching both her palms to the heavens: "All hail, O Day! Hail thou dear earth!"

And they turned together and saw the love in each other's eyes, and, folded in each other's arms, they kissed and rejoiced together. And Sigurd held her from him and looked upon her and said: "O, thou art the fairest on the earth, and the wisest of the wise! Who art thou that lovest me? Behold, as I have told thee

aforetime, I am Sigurd; the serpent have I slain and Andvari's gold is mine. But greatest of all gifts were the gain of thy love, and that we twain should never sunder. O, who art thou that lovest? And what means thy sleep in this wilderness forlorn?"

And she answered: "I was born of earthly folk, but Odin took me and called me his Victory Wafter, and I chose the slain for his war-host. But pride came upon my heart, and I wrought against the will of Odin. To the death-doomed I gave life, and to him fated to live I brought death. And I came to the head of this mountain called Hindfell, and there the vengeance of the All-Father followed me. The Sleep-thorn pierced me, and I fell into a deep sleep, and Odin raised around me the wall of fire, so that none might waken me or aid me, till one, all fearless, the mightiest among men, should come and find me and set me free."

And Sigurd cried: "Fairest and wisest, teach me thy wisdom, for long hast thou lived, and great is the lore thou hast gathered, and I would shape my soul to thine."

And they sat together on the side of Hindfell, and she told him of things hidden from men; of the framing of the world, and the courses of the stars, and the birth of the winds; of vengeance, and wrong, and hate, and grief, and bliss. And Sigurd listened to her words and stored them in his heart.

And they rose, and hand in hand they climbed the peak of Hindfell. And there they stood with arms entwined, looking down upon the kingdoms of the earth. And she bade him look upon a spot between

a wood and the silver sea, and she said: "There in that land, the little land of Lymdale, is the house that cherished me. There dwelleth my earthly sister and the King she hath wedded: there was I once called Brynhild in the days when my father lived. And there must I return, and there thine eyes shall meet mine again."

And Sigurd cried: "O, Brynhild, hearken! The sun shall die in the heavens if I seek thee not in Lymdale!"

And she answered: "The day shall die for ever if I forget thee, Sigurd, in that little land of Lymdale!"

And he took from his hand the golden ring of Andvari, and set it on her finger, and once again they kissed each other. And thus did they plight their troth.

And they parted. And Brynhild sought her kindred, and abode with them. And Sigurd fared forth to look upon the kingdom of the world.

And it befell that after some days had passed the heart of Sigurd yearned to behold Brynhild again and he sought the little land of Lymdale. And he came unto Heimir, the King, whose wife was the sister of Brynhild. And Heimir and his sons and his warriors looked upon Sigurd clad in his golden war-gear, and they marvelled at his glorious beauty, and the treasure of gold and gems which Greyfell bore. And Sigurd told them his name, and of his kin and of his deeds.

And Heimir was a mighty King and he rejoiced in Sigurd and bade him welcome to his hall. And Sigurd abode there and was held in honour and love of all men.

And it befell on a summer morning that Sigurd

rode forth alone with his hound and his falcon. And Greyfell bore him joyously, and Sigurd's heart was full of the thought of Brynhild and their love. And on he fared through the flowery meadows until he saw before him a white-walled house with a golden roof whereon doves clustered in the glancing sun. And Sigurd drew rein and stayed him there, looking upon the dwelling with delight.

And as he looked, lo, the falcon flew from his hand and up above the tree-boughs. And Sigurd feared that he would fall upon the doves. And he called the backward cry again and again, but the falcon heeded not his master's voice, nor did he seek to harm the doves, but flew straight up to a high-built tower and perched upon the sill of a window for a space, then passed within the open casement.

And Sigurd rode through the gate and up to the open door of the great pillared hall. And he leapt from Greyfell and entered the fair abode. And lovely was it fashioned within, and rich were its hangings inwoven with the deeds of kings and heroes. But neither man nor maiden nor any life was there.

And Sigurd looked about him and saw a door all wrought with gold. And he lifted the golden latch and opened the door and came upon a marble stair. And he mounted the stair and at the top another door he saw. And he opened it, and within was a kingly chamber all wrought and adorned with gold. And there by the window perched his falcon in the sunshine. And Sigurd looked again, and lo, upon the high seat sat a woman, glorious to behold. A crown of gold shone

upon her head, and golden rings upon her arms, and a golden girdle held the rippling folds of her snowy linen raiment. And a web of gold was before her and her quick white fingers plied the shuttle. And. Sigurd looked again and saw that she wrought the deeds of the Volsungs. And marvelling, he turned his eyes from the golden web to the face of the woman. And lo, he looked into the eyes of Brynhild. So glad and joyful was

his heart that he could not move or speak, and Brynhild sat and gazed upon him, motionless as he, drinking in his beauty, and glorying in the wonder of their love.

Then, at last, above the sweet summer sounds, rang Sigurd's voice, clear as a silver trumpet, "Hail!" he cried, "Hail! my lady and my queen! Hail, thou fairest of all the earth! I have sought thee, O Brynhild, and I have found thee!"

And she answered: "O welcome, welcome hither!" and she rose from the high seat and stood there trembling for a space. Then Sigurd sprang towards her and clasped her in his arms. And the soft summer breeze blew in and stirred the folds of her garments, and the birds sang out clear in the heavens, and the sun bathed them in its golden beams. It was as though the gods themselves rejoiced in their wondrous joy.

Then did Brynhild lead him to the high seat, and he sat him down beside her, and long they talked. And the morning gave place to noon, and the noon to even. And they swore again the vows they had sworn on Hindfell and again they kissed, and long they gazed in each other's eyes.

Then said Brynhild: "Thy heart is mine, O Sigurd, and ever as thou wendest through the world helping the people of earth shalt thou bear my love in thy bosom. Every morn shalt thou wake anew to it; every night shalt thou sleep in the knowledge of it. It shall be as a banner in thy hand as long as thou livest, and in death it shall rest in the arms of thy glory and thy fame. O thou glorious Sigurd! O thrice-happy Brynhild to love thee, and be so loved!"

Then she stooped and laid her lips to the hilt of the sword. And her tears fell sweet and soft as she wound her arms around him and kissed him a long farewell. And she sent him forth to accomplish the deeds foretold by the Fates.

And Sigurd rode out into the night, strong with enduring love and endless hope, ready to face whatever the gods should send.

And he returned to the house of Heimir. And on the morrow he arrayed himself in the Hauberk of Gold, with the Helmet of Dread upon his head and the Sword of Wrath at his side. And he kissed the good King Heimir, and bade farewell to him and the people of his land. And he leapt upon Greyfell and fared forth into the world. And the glad shouts of the people rang in his ears as he wended along, for well they loved him.

And on went Sigurd, while Greyfell neighed with joy beneath him. And over a desert heath they passed, and on and on until in the distance rose huge mountains. And when Sigurd had come to the top of a hill, he saw below him a wide plain with orchards and fair meadows, and a river that wound about them and sparkled in the bright sunshine. And at the foot of the great mountains there rose a mighty many-towered dwelling, with great walls, red and worn and ancient, to guard it. And Sigurd hastened forward, eager, to learn the name of the land and its people and the lord of that noble house.

And as he drew nearer, ever greater grew the dwelling, and higher the many towers. And anon he saw that the mighty wall enclosed many other dwellings of men, and he heard their voices and the noise of their labour, and saw the smoke as it arose from their fires. And Sigurd's heart burned within him, and he rode on till he came to a great gateway.

And he heard the call of the warders from tower to tower, and they blew on their horns, and gave token to all that a stranger entered their city.

And Sigurd cried aloud: "Ho, men of this mighty city, what is the name of your King, and what the name of this land?"

Then he heard a noise as of the stirring of a great host, and a voice answered him, crying aloud "Giuki is the name of our King, and this land is the land of the Niblung people."

And he rode under the gateway, and into a great fore-court, and many men came about him, and their spears and swords glittered in the pale evening light. And the Niblung men looked upon the face of Sigurd, and hushed their voices, so wonderful was the glory of his face.

And a messenger came unto King Giuki as he sat at the feast with his wife and his sons, and told him of the coming of the god-like stranger, And Giuki uprose and came unto Sigurd, and said: "Tell me thy name, O stranger, for I bid thee abide with us here and take all good from our hands."

And Sigurd sprang from Greyfell and took the hand of Giuki and kissed him. And he answered Giuki and said: "Sigurd is my name, and my father was Sigmund the Volsung. Peace do I bring to thee, and to all kings who bear the sword aright, but to evil kings I bring battle and death. And thankfully will I bide with thee, O King, and learn of thy wisdom, and fare forth with thee to the field when deeds are to be wrought."

And Giuki led him into the hall while the Niblung people shouted for joy. And there on the high seat sat Grimhild, the Queen, and the three sons of Grimhild and

Giuki, Gunnar, and Hogni, and Guttorm, and their daughter Gudrun, sweet as the morning dew, and white as the winter snow. And they all welcomed Sigurd and smiled upon him. And they sat at the feast together.

And the summer waned and winter fell upon the land, and lo, Giuki arrayed his war-host, and forth they fared to fight the men of the Southlands. And Sigurd rode in the front with Gunnar on his right hand and Hogni on his left, and fair and bright he shone in his golden war-gear amid the dark-haired Niblung folk clad in their mail-coats of dusky blue. And the Kings of the Southlands went down before them.

And the Niblung host returned to the Niblung land, and the people welcomed them back right joyously. And fair songs did they sing as they sat at the feast, of Sigurd and his wondrous deeds, of the oppressor brought to nought, and of the meek brought to honour, of a once desert land laughing with fields of plenty, of peace and contentment where once was strife and hatred.

And the spring came and again the war-host was gathered together, and Sigurd led forth the Niblung men to the fight, and again was he victorious over the kings of greed and hate, and again did he leave joy and freedom in the land. And great was the spoil of gems and gold and silken raiment that he brought back to King Giuki. And the old King and Grimhild, the Queen, kissed him, and their hearts yearned to him as though he were their son.

And the dark-haired Gudrun welcomed him back, but sad were her eyes and grave as she brought him

the wine-cup. And long she gazed upon him, and as she gazed her sadness grew. And Sigurd saw that she grieved, though he knew not wherefore, and he spoke kindly to her, and bade her be merry. And she smiled upon him and went her way. But ever the Niblung maid grew quieter, and drooped as a flower that is blighted. But Sigurd cherished in his heart the thought of Brynhild, and he looked ever to the day when his deeds should be accomplished and he should seek Brynhild again in the little land of Lyndale.

And when the summer returned, once more did Sigurd fare forth with the Niblung host to fight the Vikings that plundered on their seas. And again was he victorious and the land was freed from the ocean spoilers. And he returned to the Niblung hall, and men deemed him more glorious than ever before. And he sat beside Giuki and his sons on the high seat, and all did him honour, and the minstrels sang of his mighty deeds. And silent was Sigurd, but withal joyful, as he sat at the feast, for he said in his heart that his deeds were but the blossoming of his love, and the fruit was yet to come. And strong as a god did he grow with the thought, and he longed to bring love and peace and rest to all the world.

And Giuki looked upon him and wondered at his silence, and he bade him sing to them of the deeds of old. And Sigurd took the harp and sang of Odin, of Regin, of Volsung, of Signy, and of Sigmund. And then he would fain sing of Brynhild and their deathless love, but his heart was filled with sore longing, and his fingers fell from the harp strings and he sang no more.

And Grimhild the Queen was wise in hidden things, and she saw the love and longing of Sigurd for Brynhild. And wroth she was, for she would have him love Gudrun. And she brought wine, and came and stood before him, and bade him drink. And Sigurd took the cup and thanked her and drank. And the drink had been mingled in such wise by Grimhild that the heart of Sigurd was changed within him, and his love of Brynhild was as if it had never been. And a strange sorrow came upon the face of Sigurd so that men looked and wondered what had befallen. And Grimhild looked, and she laughed, for she saw that her will was accomplished.

And men said that after that night Brynhild abode no more in Lymdale, but hard by, in the desert, there rose a glorious dwelling and around it flamed a great fire. And they said that within it sat Brynhild, thinking ever upon that mighty one who rode through the flames and awakened her from her long sleep.

And in Giuki's hall there was silence for a space, till Grimhild cried for the harp to sound and the minstrels to sing. But no joy was there now in the song, and Sigurd sat there silent, without wrath, or hope, or wonder, or fear, like a god that is smitten. And at last without a word he rose and strode from the hall, and none durst speak to him.

And he went to the stables of King Giuki, and therefrom he took one of the king's horses, for no memory had he now of Greyfell. And forth he rode into the night, and came to the dwelling of Brynhild in Lymdale. And round about it he rode, and he

gazed and wondered, for nought could he remember of what it had once been to him. And long hours he stayed there, striving to pierce through the darkness that had fallen upon his mind, and to understand the meaning of that lone white house with the golden roof. But at last in despair he rode away, and the horse carried him wherever it would. And they came to a many-towered city with a river winding about it, and the horse neighed for joy as they came to the gates. And the warders cried to each other, and the cry was as the greeting of a friend. And Sigurd looked about him, and remembered the Niblung hall, though he knew not what his life had been there, or why he had left it.

And suddenly men ran out shouting, "Hail, Sigurd! welcome art thou home again." And he went into the hall, and there sat Giuki the King, and Grimhild the Queen, and their three sons, and Gudrun their daughter, and right well they greeted him. And Grimhild came to him and took him by the hand, and led him to the high seat. And the Niblung men shouted in salutation, and the harps rang out, and the minstrels sang the praises of Sigurd.

And Sigurd looked about him as though he sought for something, and he strove to remember what had passed. But nought did he know but that a great flood of sorrow had drowned all the loveliness of his life. And he saw the anxious looks of the people, and in kindness he shook off his own grief of heart. "I must wait," he said within himself, "the darkness shall pass, and the morning shall return, and I shall do again the deeds that I did erstwhile."

And he raised his head, and forced the trouble from his brow, till the people deemed him like a god, and they cast away their fears. But ever and anon, as the brethren spake to him, his thoughts were tangled and strange, and he knew not what he should speak. Still he thrust the strangeness by, caring only that the people should be glad in him. But no smile or laughter came to his lips; he sat as an all-wise and mighty king, who had finished his deeds and asked no more of the world.

And Grimhild bade Gudrun bring the wine-cup to Sigurd, and comfort his weariness with words of welcome. And Gudrun rose and took the cup. Deathly pale was her face amid the dark tresses of her hair, and trembling were her limbs as she stood before Sigurd. And she held out the golden cup, but no word came to her lips, though she strove to speak. And Sigurd looked upon her, and in that instant he knew the truth. And a great pity swelled in his heart, for he knew that the gods themselves could not help her, or any other man but himself.

And she saw the pity in his face, and shame at her weakness made her strive again to speak. But swift was he to say the words which should put her trouble to rest for ever. "O maid of the Niblungs," he said, — and his voice was gentle and kind, — "all men are joyous around us, but we twain are sad as folk that dwell apart. Fain would I gladden thy soul Fain would I take peace from thy lips! Thou bearest before me a cup of good-will, and thy greeting is yet to be said. O let thy words speak of love, for I love thee more than all these that are around us, and let

thy cup be the sweet cup of our love, that never shall die! “

And he took the cup and her hands, and she bowed herself before him, trembling and silent and fearful. Then Sigurd's arms upraised her, and he drew her to his heart, and close she clung to him, as one who had found rest after long strife and joy after long anguish. And words of peace and comfort he whispered, and her love seemed wondrous sweet to his troubled mind.

And they came unto Giuki, and Grimhild, and the three brethren. And right glad were they all at the love of Sigurd and Gudrun. And they blessed them. And on the morrow was a great feast spread, and Sigurd and Gudrun were wedded. And well they loved each other, and lovelier and lovelier did Gudrun grow in the joy of her love's fulfilment.

And Sigurd abode with the Niblungs, and it befell on a day that he and Gunnar and Hogni fared to the meadows. And Guttorm was from home, sailing afar in* the Eastern seas. And Sigurd and the brothers opened a vein in each of their arms and let the mingling blood fall to the earth. Then they knelt and placed their hands upon the blood-soaked earth, and they swore eternal brotherhood. And the three fared ever together, and loved each other well.

And the life of Sigurd was fair and happy with Gudrun, his wife, and nought he remembered of the past. And noble above all others was he, and gracious; to all men he listened, and awarded justly, and to the poor his heart was ever turned. Yet never was he

seen to smile, and the joyous laugh of the young Sigurd was gone for ever. Few of words had he grown, and seldom was his voice heard in song.

And it befell that King Giuki died, and they buried him with all honour in a great mound. And Gunnar became King in his stead.

And on a day Grimhild came to Gunnar as he sat on the high seat, and spake unto him, bidding him take a wife. And Gunnar asked her: "Who is the maid that thou wouldst I should wed?"

And Grimhild answered: "Brynhild is she called; wise is she, the daughter of kings of the world, and the sister of queens. In a ring of flame doth she dwell, for no man will she wed but he that knows not fear. Speak, O Gunnar, who but thou shouldst wed with Brynhild?"

And Sigurd heard her words, and a strange longing and wonder came upon him, and he knew not why.

And Gunnar laughed and said: "Thou shalt have thy will, O mother." And he bade Sigurd and Hogni ride with him on the morrow. But Grimhild would not have it so, and she bade them wait till she should send them forth. And Grimhild dwelt apart for many days, and she mingled the might of the earth, and the sea, and the air, guile, and blindness, and strong compelling force, and wild desire, and made it into a drink, and gave it to her sons.

And on a day she sent them forth with Sigurd. And they rode unto Lymdale, and afar in the desert place they saw the fire roaring up to heaven. And Gunnar spurred his horse forward, but when they.

reached the flames, the horse shrank away and shrieked in terror, and bore him back to his brethren.

And Sigurd stood silent by the side of Greyfell, staring at the red flames as they shot upwards to the heavens.

And Hogni said unto Gunnar: "Thy steed hath failed, O Gunnar, but let Sigurd lend thee his horse that hath borne him through many deeds."

And Sigurd looked upon the brethren as though he would speak, but no answer came to his lips. Then at last he said, and the words seemed not his own "O brother, take my steed, and don my helm and hauberk, and take my sword in thy hand, for thus should kings ride through the flickering fire."

But Hogni said: "Nay; take the steed, O Gunnar, but wear thine own war-gear, the coal-blue gear of the Niblungs." And Gunnar took Greyfell and sprang to the saddle, and spurred him forward to the flames, but in nowise would Greyfell stir.

And Sigurd stood motionless, staring into the very heart of the fire, as one in a dream.

Then a sharp cry came from Gunnar, and he leapt from Greyfell, his dark face full of fierce anger. "Dost thou mock me, O Sigurd?" he cried.

But Hogni spake and said: "Forbear thy anger, O Gunnar, and stand thou face to face with Sigurd, and take his hand in thine, and make thy will one with his will. Then shall the might of our mother prevail, and thou shalt gain thy desire."

And Gunnar did as Hogni bade him, and he gazed into Sigurd's eyes, and Sigurd gazed into Gunnar's.

And long they stood thus, when lo, Sigurd saw before him, in place of Gunnar, a man in golden war-gear, and the face was his own. And he looked down at his arm and his hand clasping Gunnar's, and behold there was the coal-blue war-gear of the Niblungs, and the hand of Gunnar. And he looked on his sword, and lo, it was the sword of Gunnar, and he turned his head over his shoulder, and there was the long black hair of the Niblung. And by the power of Grimhild had they changed semblances.

And Sigurd cried to Gunnar, and his voice was Gunnar's, and he said: "Well do I know thy bidding, O brother, and never will I draw back from my oath of brotherhood. This night shall I do a deed for thee that, none else may do, and never may I repent of it, and never mayst thou grieve over it."

And he leapt on Greyfell, and the steed bounded forward with joy, and on he went through the fire as though it were a meadow in summer. And he came to a fair dwelling, and into the hall he strode. And golden were its hangings, and of gleaming marble were its pillars. And at one end was a golden throne, and on it sat a woman fair and glorious. A golden crown shone upon her sun-bright hair, which rippled over her snow-white raiment. No word did she speak, but her eyes were fixed upon the dark face of the stranger.

And the man in the semblance of Gunnar looked upon her and could not speak, for the eyes that met his were dreadful. And he trembled and shrank from her. Then she spake, and there was anguish in the weary tones of her voice.

“Who art thou, O King? And what deed canst thou do for the stricken of heart?” And the words were like a sword in the heart of Sigurd, and he longed for death. But the voice of Gunnar answered her and said: “I am Gunnar the King, and this eve have I passed through the fire. Therefore remember thy oath, and plight me thy troth.”

And long was she silent, but at last she cried out as one that is stricken: “I know no answer to give thee!”

Then the voice of Gunnar asked again: “Wilt thou forget thine oath that thou wouldst wed him who should pass through the fire? Wilt thou forswear thyself, O Brynhild?”

And for long again was there silence, but at last she spoke and said: “Hail! Gunnar, come sit in my father’s seat. To-night will I plight my troth with thee!”

And she took the hand of the wooer, and set him beside her on the high seat, and they plighted their troth. And when this was done they sat awhile together, but looked not on each other, and their hands fell apart; and no word did they speak. And at length he rose, and took a ring from his finger and set it upon her hand, and she took a ring from her finger and gave it to him, saying: “I thank thee, King. Take now this gift from me, once the dearest treasure that I held, but now thou art its master, and the lord of my life.”

And lo, on Sigurd’s hand shone the Ring of Andvari, and long he looked upon it, and sore troubled was he, but no memories came to him of the bygone days.

And in most exceeding sorrow, Sigurd returned unto the brothers. And Hogni hailed him as their helper and brother. And never a word spoke Sigurd, but he leapt from Greyfell and stood before Gunnar, and took his hand, as one that claimed his own. And the power of Grimhild prevailed, and they returned to their own semblances.

Then said Sigurd: "Thou art troth-plight, O Gunnar, to Brynhild, and ere ten days are past will she come to thine hall."

And the brothers rejoiced and rode home with Sigurd. And they came unto Grimhild and told her of the deed of Sigurd, and happy was Grimhild that her will had come to pass.

And when the feast was over, Sigurd came unto Gudrun, and she saw the ring upon his hand, and she asked him how he had come by it. And he told her all the story, kindly, and with words of love. And joyful was the heart of Gudrun as he kissed her, and drew the ring from his finger and put it upon her hand, and bade her wear it when he should have passed from the world.

And when ten days were over Brynhild came to the land of the Niblungs. Glad was Gunnar as he met her, and held her in his arms, and listened to her praise of his great deed. And he took her to Hogni, his brother, and to Grimhild, his mother, and they greeted Brynhild well. And Gunnar said: "A third there is of us brethren who waits thee in the hall beside my sister."

And Brynhild said: "I thought ye were but three: who is this fourth?"

And he answered her: "He is not akin to us, but our brother sworn, and Sigurd the Volsung is he called."

And her face changed not at the name, and she suffered him to lead her to the hall, and there before her on the high seat sat Sigurd. And Brynhild stood with her hand in Gunnar's, looking up at Sigurd. And she saw no more the great hall of the Niblungs, and the host of the Niblung folk, but once more she deemed she stood on Hindfell, and her lips were speaking the words that plighted her troth to Sigurd.

And in that moment the power of Grimhild passed away, and Sigurd remembered all the past. And he saw Brynhild his beloved, and he knew that she was the bride of Gunnar, and that his was the deed that had brought her there. And his thoughts flew back to Hindfell, and all the time between was as a dream.

But Brynhild's eyes looked into his, cold and strange, and her lovely face was stern and hard. And he bowed his head before her, to hide his agony. And she cried "Hail, Sigurd the Volsung! Mayst thou win all thy desires, and forget not their worth!" And her voice was full of grief and scorn and longing.

And Sigurd stirred himself and answered her quietly, with greeting gracious and noble. And they sat at the board together and the song rang out, and joy was over the feast. And Sigurd's eyes often wandered to Brynhild and rested upon her, and he rejoiced in his heart that she should live among them in the Niblung hall. And he said to himself that together they should fashion great deeds to be done, and win enduring fame, and the love of dear friends should be over them all.

And the days passed, and often Brynhild and Sigurd sat together in the council of the Kings, and he listened to her words of wisdom. And often they met in the wild wood and the meadows and on the heath, and their words were few but kind, and none might guess the furious fire that flamed and burnt within the heart of each.

And Sigurd strove for peace, and kinder than ever was he to Gudrun, his wife. But she knew now the truth of the past, and fear and envy were upon her.

And Brynhild hid her sorrow with her queenly air, but when the night came, forth would she wend to the windy mountains, and cry out her love and sorrow and her hunger for vengeance. Yet, often as she talked to Gudrun, she humbled herself before her, fearful of contention which might lead them to speak of dearer things.

And Gudrun bore herself proudly, and thought with scorn upon all but Sigurd. And when the minstrels praised the deeds of Gunnar, and told of his ride through the fire, her eyes shone with an evil light, and only the will of Sigurd kept her from speaking out the truth.

And in Gunnar's heart the truth rankled, and he thought now with shame of that night, and full of fear he was as he looked upon Brynhild's lovely face, so changeless, and never smiling. And often Grimhild spoke to Gunnar of Sigurd and his wondrous deeds, and Gunnar deemed that she would drive him on, though whither, and wherefore, he knew not. But his heart changed towards Sigurd, and envy of Sigurd

and shame of himself brought a burden upon his life, and his face grew gloomy and careworn, and no joy did he find in Brynhild.

But calm as a god went Sigurd in the Niblung house of doubt and unrest. And the wisdom that he gained from the heart of the serpent sprang up afresh in his soul. And he saw the heart of his brother Gunnar, and the heart of Brynhild, and he knew their lonely cry. And sore he grieved over them. Yet in those days of sorrow it was that his fame grew greatest. For ever was he to be found helping the helpless, fighting the oppressor, overcoming the wronger. His name was on every lip; mothers lifted their babes that his eye might fall on them as he passed; the dread of the cruel was he, and the hope of the weary.

Now, it befell on a morning in summer that Queen Brynhild rose and wended her way to the river, to bathe in the cool waters. And Gudrun was there before her, and when she saw Brynhild, a flush of anger rose upon her cheek. And Brynhild saw it, and cried unto her with kindness: "Hail, sister of my lord!"

And they loosed their fair white raiment, and Brynhild spake again and said: "Thou art sister of my lord of Gunnar, the best of the earth, therefore I bid thee go before me into the water."

And Gudrun tossed her head and answered: "Since thou biddest I will go before thee, but not that I am sister of Gunnar, but that I am wife of a greater than Gunnar, of Sigurd the Volsung."

And she laughed and leapt into the water. And

Brynhild strove to laugh with her, but her face grew pale and wan. And she, too, leapt into the sunny stream and waded swiftly out into the deeps. And Gudrun cried to her: "Why dost thou wade in the deeps and leave me here below?"

And Brynhild forgot all patience and pity, and laughed aloud and cried: "So shall it ever, be with us both now and when we sit in Odin's hall. For I am the wife of the greatest, of Gunnar the King, who rode through the fire, and mocked at death that he might win my love. Best of the kings of the earth, and master of masters is my lord."

And Gudrun answered not, but waded up the stream till she came close to Brynhild. And she stretched forth her hand, and Brynhild saw upon it the ring of Andvari. And while she stared upon it, wondering, Gudrun cried: "By this ring thou mayst know if thy lord is best of the kings of the earth, and master of masters!"

And Brynhild's face grew white and still, and she cried: "Tell me the truth, who hast given thee the ring?"

And Gudrun laughed in triumph, and answered "Sigurd gave me the ring, O Brynhild, on the night that followed the morn when in Gunnar's shape he rode through the fire, and wooed thee a bride for the Niblung. Henceforward, rejoice in that, O Brynhild!"

And Brynhild's face was as the dead, and she opened her lips to speak, but no word came. Then she swam to the shore, and cast her raiment upon her, and fled over the green sward.

And Gudrun came from the water flushed with triumph; yet as she wended her way to the Niblung dwelling, fear came upon her and she remembered many a word of warning that Sigurd had spoken. And all day long she strove against her fears, and said in her heart that she would amend all wrong by humble speech and kindly deed to Brynhild. And in the even as she wandered in a leafy place, lo, there sat Brynhild alone. And Gudrun went to her and said: "I repent me, O Brynhild, of the words which I spake this morning. Give me thy pardon, and let us twain be friends."

And long was Brynhild silent, and she sat, still and cold and white, as one who fought within herself. But at last she spake and said: "I, too, spake words of evil and do repent me. But one thing I do beseech of thee: tell me that it was Gunnar, thy brother, that gave thee Andvari's ring, and not Sigurd thy lord. Then will I serve thee for ever, and thou shalt save my life and soul. Speak, O Gudrun, I beseech thee!"

But Gudrun hardened her heart and cried exultingly: "Dost thou think that Gudrun, the wife of Sigurd, will lie? Nay, look again on the ring, and hear again that it was Sigurd who wooed thee for Gunnar, and set the ring on my hand, with words of sweetest love!"

Then for a space did Brynhild cry out her woe; but presently came the sound of men's voices from the hall, and they shouted the name of Sigurd. And at that name was Brynhild silent for very anguish, and she turned from Gudrun and fled through the summer

night, unwitting where she went. And not till the light of morning gleamed upon the world did she return to the house of Gunnar.

And in the morning Gudrun spake unto Sigurd and said: "What aileth Brynhild, and why should the queen of the mighty Gunnar grieve?"

And Sigurd said: "Is it so?" And he was silent for a while, and a great fear came upon Gudrun as she watched him. And at length he spake again and said "Hearken, O my wife, the day is nigh when thou must harden thy heart to bear great sorrows: for thou hast told the tale of the wooing to Brynhild, and shown her the ring upon thine hand. And from this deed shall come the slaying of many, and the end of my life. For know, O Gudrun, that Brynhild was my beloved in days long gone, but by guile was our love driven from my heart and my thought, and by guile was I made to woo her for Gunnar, all unwitting the deed I did."

And he left her, and went forth to the Council of Kings, and calm and lovely was his face, and his eyes as bright as in the days of joy.

But Brynhild lay on her bed as one dead, and no word would she speak to any. And her women called Gunnar the King, and he went unto Brynhild and prayed her to rise and strengthen him with her wisdom. And for long she lay silent, while slow tears forced themselves from her closed eyelids. And Gunnar spake again and still was she silent, and wrath arose in him, and he cried aloud and bade her tell him what was the wrong under which she sickened,

And Brynhild raised herself and said: "O Gunnar, tell me that thou gayest Andvari's ring to thy sister, Gudrun! O tell me this that I may live!"

And Gunnar stood staring upon her, and found no word to say, for he knew now that the tale of Sigurd's wooing had been told, and he turned and left the chamber.

And Gudrun sat in her bower among her maidens, and hushed were they as they sat at their looms. And Gudrun asked them wherefore their joy had fled, and they told her of Brynhild and her strange sickness. And Gudrun rose and went to Gunnar, where he sat alone and gloomy, arrayed in his war-gear. And she besought him to go to Brynhild and to bring her forth.

But Gunnar answered heavily that he had no help to give.

Then Gudrun sought out Hogni. And he too sat in his war array. And she bade him go in and comfort Brynhild. But Hogni answered her even as Gunnar had answered. And a great trembling came upon Gudrun, and she hastened from Hogni and sought out Sigurd.

But her words died on her lips when she beheld him clad in the Helmet of Dread and the Hauberk of Gold, with the Sword of Wrath in his hand. But he spoke gently unto her, and said: "Fear not, O Gudrun, but speak what thy heart would say."

And she cried: "O Sigurd, my lord, go thou to Brynhild, and tell her my heart is full of ruth and woe!"

And Sigurd spoke words of comfort to her, and

bade her leave him. And she rose and went forth. And Sigurd sat on alone, and the light of day faded, and the night came and the dawn of another day. Then Sigurd arose and went unto the chamber of Brynhild. And the door was open, and he stood upon the threshold and cried: "Awake, O Brynhild, and greet the sunshine of another day!"

And she raised herself and looked at him with burning eyes. And she cried: "Dost thou come here, thou pitiless betrayer, to look upon my woe?"

And he answered: "I bring thee life, O Brynhild, if thou wilt but take it."

But she cried again: "O, what hast thou done, O Sigurd? And why didst thou cast me aside? No life, but death in life hast thou brought me! "

"O Brynhild, live!" cried Sigurd, "and bless the world as thou Overt went to do! Hearken to the truth that my love was for thee alone till a snare was laid for me, and a sleep came over my senses, and I knew no more till I waked and found thee the bride of Gunnar. How may I tell thee of my woe? But I thrust it aside, and laboured and toiled for men, daring not to remember the past, yet rejoicing that thou and I should dwell in one house together!"

And she answered: "Too late! too late! Thou hast made my life forlorn, and nought is there now but death!"

And Sigurd came nearer and stood all golden in the sunlighted chamber. And glorious did she behold him as he spoke again for the last time.

"Hearken, O Brynhild," he said. "I am Sigurd

the Volsung, and I bid thee live if thy love be as great as mine. O live, beloved! and thee will I wed, and all others shall be as a dream that is past!”

And Brynhild looked upon him and answered: “I will not wed thee, O Sigurd, or any man!”

And he left her, and came unto Gudrun, where she sat alone and wan. But for fear she could not speak, and she asked him nought of Brynhild, and silent was he too.

And lo, in the noontide, Brynhild arose, and called to her women and bade them tell King Gunnar that she would speak with him. And Gunnar came and stood before her in his war-gear. And he said: “Speak

the desire of thy heart, and make known the deed to be done, thou mightiest of women!”

And she said: “The desire of my heart, and the deed to be done, is the slaying of Sigurd the Volsung!”

And she left him. And Gunnar went into his mother’s chamber, and there sat Grimhild with Hogni. And they saw the deed in his face, before they saw the sword ready in his hand. And Grimhild asked “For whom is thy sword made ready, O son?”

And he answered: “For Sigurd the Volsung.”

Then said Hogni: “Is not Sigurd our foster-brother? Have not our bloods mingled? All the world shall wonder if such a deed he done by thee!”

But Grimhild, the wise in witchcraft, said: “Where is Guttorm? He mingled not his blood with Sigurd’s and swore not the oath of foster-brothers.”

And Hogni laughed and cried: “Behold, he stands on the threshold!” And they looked, and lo, Guttorm stood before them, returned from his long warfaring. And Grimhild took a cup filled with wine which she had brewed, and gave Guttorm to drink. And she said: “A great deed waits to be done, and thy hand shall do it, and thou shalt crown thy life with glory.”

And he drank of the cup, and his eyes flamed, and he craved for battle, and his hand sought for a sword, but only his hunter’s knife was in his belt. And they spoke the name of Sigurd, and again Grimhild gave him to drink, and as he drank he forgot all kindred and friendship, and his heart was fain for murder.

And Grimhild brought him his war-gear and arrayed him, and put a sword in his hand, and gave

him again of the drink. And all night Gunnar and Hogni sat upon the high seat in the Niblung hall, and Guttorm stood before them, leaning upon his unsheathed sword, and no word did they speak.

And as the dawn broke, Guttorm went forth from the hall, and made his way to the chamber of Sigurd. And the door was open before him, and he stood on the threshold, and saw how Sigurd lay on his bed, calm and still, with wide-open eyes. And their glory chilled the hate in Guttorm's heart, and he shrank back, and hastened from the chamber. And he stood again before his brothers, and they saw his unstained sword, but no word did they speak.

And the murderous hate awoke again in Guttorm, and again he strode to the chamber of Sigurd. But once more he shrank from those gleaming eyes, and once more he returned to the Niblung hall.

And as he stood again before the brothers, the sound of steps drew near, and a white thing entered the hall and sat by the side of Gunnar, and behold, it was Brynhild! And without a word, Guttorm strode a third time from the hall, and came to Sigurd's chamber. And now he tarried not on the threshold, but hastened towards the bed where Sigurd lay with Gudrun on his breast. And Guttorm saw that his eyes were closed. And he laughed aloud and cried a wild cry of triumph as he raised his sword and thrust it with all his might through the body of Sigurd. And he turned to flee from the chamber, but Sigurd seized the sword of wrath that lay above his head, and hurled it at him, and Guttorm fell dead upon the threshold.

Then rang out the cry of Gudrun, and Sigurd raised himself and strove for life and breath, that he might speak to her his last words of comfort and courage and farewell. Then there was silence, and Gudrun bent to his lips, waiting and longing to hear him speak again. And at last she touched him, and the morning sun fell upon his face, and she knew that she was alone.

And Brynhild heard her cry of anguish as she sat on the high seat, and she laughed aloud. And soon the cry echoed through all the house, "Sigurd the Volsung is dead!" And a, sudden confusion came upon men, and cries and shrieks were mingled with the clashing of swords.

And Gunnar spake unto the people and bade them mourn two days for Sigurd the Volsung and Guttorm the Niblung. And then arose the sound of the weeping of men and the wailing of women. And they took the body of Sigurd and bore it to the hall and covered it with fair linen and purple cloths. And Gudrun sate her down beside the body, and no cry came forth from her. And her women came about her and sorrowed over her, and they besought her to live and rest in the love that was still around her. And still was Gudrun silent. And one of the women came and uncovered the face of Sigurd and turned it towards Gudrun. And Gudrun's eyes fell upon the dead face, and she gazed and gazed till the depth of her woe and all her loneliness came upon her anew. And she fell upon the body of Sigurd with a great cry, and long she lay there moaning out her anguish,

And lo, as she wailed, a laugh rang out, and there by a pillar stood Brynhild. And Gudrun rose and came towards her, and the twain stood face to face. And Gudrun cried aloud for vengeance on her and on the slayers of Sigurd, and she cursed her Niblung kindred and the Niblung land. Then forth from the hall she fled, and on and on till the Niblung land was left far behind, and she came to a lonely waste, where none

might find her. And for long thereafter none knew of her biding place.

And all day long in the Niblung hall stood Brynhild by the careen pillar, and when the night fell still she stood there, gazing on the wound in Sigurd's breast, moving nor hand nor foot, nor speaking a word to any.

And on the morrow morn the Niblung folk gathered together in the meadow, and there they laboured in the fair sunshine, raising a mighty pile for the burning of the body of Sigurd. Oak and ash they piled, and gold and steel, and precious stuffs, and sweet savoured spices. And while they toiled the mighty horn from the topmost tower wailed out its blasts of woe.

And Brynhild lay on her bed, and her women went in and out but none durst speak to her, and to none did she speak. But at length she bade them call Gunnar, the King, to her, and they sought him and he came and stood beside her.

And Brynhild turned to him and said: "O King, what is the noise without that I hear? Why do the hammers ring, and shield and sword clash upon the pavement? What hurrying feet are these that throng? Why calleth the horn so long and loud? Tell me, Gunnar, do the Niblung folk pile up the bale for Guttorm the slayer?"

And Gunnar turned his face from her longing, burning eyes, and answered her: "Not so, O Brynhild; last night did we give to the bale-fire the body of Guttorm."

And silence fell between them, and neither spake

again. And Gunnar bent his eyes to Brynhild's, then with a low cry of despair he strode from the chamber.

And now Brynhild called to her women, and bade them bring her queenly raiment and gems, and array her as a bride for the mighty. And they wept as they did her bidding, but soft she laughed as their fingers moved about the fair linen and rich cloths and fastened the red-gold rings. No longer wan was her face, but radiant with joy and youth.

And she cried: "Bring me the sword that I bore long since when I chose the slain for Odin."

And trembling they brought her the sword, and she drew forth the naked blue shining blade, and laid it upon her knees. And the women wept before her, and cast their arms about her. But gently she put them from her, and said, softly: "Peace, if ye love me!"

And she bade them seek Gunnar again and bring him to her, and they went to do her bidding. Then she raised herself and stood upright and thrust the sword into her breast. Deep was the thrust, and Brynhild would have fallen, but her women, returning, caught her in their arms and bore her to her bed. And following close came Gunnar, and his feet were wet with Brynhild's blood as he crossed the chamber.

And Gunnar bent low over the bed, hearkening for the words that Brynhild strove to speak. And at last she said: "Give ear, O Gunnar, to my prayer, the last that ever I shall speak! Bear me, I beseech thee, to the bale that is raised for Sigurd, and lay my head beside his head, and my hand in his hand. Then when the flames flare upward shall Sigurd remember,

and lead me on the road he wendeth, and together shall we enter Odin's hall."

And she raised herself a little, and cried: "O my beloved! now at last thou art mine; together, through all the ages, shall we dwell, never again to be sundered, O my King!"

Faint as a sigh were her words, and she fell back on the bed, and they saw that she was dead.

And the wailing of the women burst forth, and sounded through the Niblung hall, and men gazed upon each other in awe.

And Gunnar cried: "Wail on, O women, but set your hands to the glorious dead, and bear her forth and lay her beside Sigurd, on the pile. Haste ye, for we do wrong to hold them back from the All-Father!"

And they bore the body of Brynhild to the pile, and placed her beside Sigurd, where he lay with eyelids peacefully closed, clad in the Hauberk of Gold, with the Helmet of Dread upon his head, and his shield and sword beside him.

And a great silence fell. And the earls of the Niblung folk took the torches and bore fire to the pile. And the flames leapt up. Gone now are the mighty, and as with one voice a great shout went up from the people. And they stretched forth their hands to the heavens in prayer to the gods, sorrowing yet glorying in the remembrance of the god-like Sigurd and the splendour of his deeds, which should never fade while men lived upon the earth.

This e-book was brought to you by the efforts of Gabriella at
<http://www.vaidilute.com/>



It is free, of course, for anyone to download and read. However, if you want to put it on your own website, please make sure to credit me. Linking back to the Vaidilute website would be highly appreciated as well.