

**THE
LEGENDARY SAGA
OF KING OLAF
HARALDSSON**

INCLUDING FRAGMENTS
FROM THE OLDEST SAGA
OF OLAF THE SAINT

TRANSLATED BY
JOYCE SCHOLZ AND PAUL SCHACH

EDITED BY
SUSANNE M. ARTHUR
AND KIRSTEN WOLF

WITS II, NUMBER 14
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Julie K. Allen
James P. Leary
Thomas A. DuBois
Kirsten Wolf

For copies of WITS and WITS II, use e-mail or write:

WITS
Department of Scandinavian Studies University of Wisconsin–Madison
1306 Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Drive
Madison, WI 53706

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PREFACE

Amazing things happen in universities. This manuscript is one example. Joyce Carolyn Erickson Scholz was born in 1928 in Oslo, Minnesota, to Norwegian parents (Julia and Carl Erickson). She was a stellar student, graduating from the University of North Dakota with highest honors and then earning a master's degree in microbiology from the University of Illinois around 1952. Once she had children (in 1955 and 1959), she did not work in the paid labor market. Instead, she was a remarkable mother (to Karen Scholz Bachrach and to John Karl Scholz), wife (to John J. Scholz, a chemistry professor at the University of Nebraska), and great friend to many people in Lincoln, Nebraska, where she lived from 1957 until her death in 1999.

Joyce Scholz was passionate, a good soul, and wicked smart. She always had an interest in Scandinavian studies and culture. In her early 60s, she began taking classes with Paul Schach at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Professor Schach was a linguist with a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. He taught at Nebraska from 1951 until his retirement in 1985 and was a specialist in medieval Scandinavian language and literature, medieval German literature, and German-American dialectology. He received numerous awards, including holding a chaired position at Nebraska, securing NEH grants, and editing major journals in his field. He devoted much of his retirement to the translation of the diaries of German prince Maximilian of Weid-Neuwied, who traveled and recorded his experiences in the American West in the 1830s.

I smile to think of the reaction Professor Schach must have had when teaching class, probably in his 70s, and one of his students was our mother. She had little background in German or Scandinavian language or linguistics. Her last university class had been at least 30 years ago. And she signed up for every class he taught. She had to work exceptionally hard—all the other students in class were much younger and they had better and more recent relevant training. Over time, she taught herself, with the benefit of lecture and some office hours, Old Norse. I suspect once Professor Schach grew accustomed to his “groupie,” he delighted in my mother's company. In several dimensions she was remarkable. Out of their friendship, this project grew.

My mother was passionate about this translation and all things Scandinavian. Late in her life, my wife and I invited my parents to accompany us anywhere in Europe. I suspect most would choose Paris, Rome, Vienna, London, or one or more other great European cities. My mother chose Reykjavik (Iceland) and Oslo. She cried when she saw the "Law Rock" (the "Lögberg" in Iceland)—the site of the first standing parliament in Europe. She mystified the citizens of Norway when she would try to converse (on buses or in restaurants) in a baffling mix of Old Norse, Norwegian from her childhood, and English. But she had a blast on the trip. She would complain when Professor Schach was absorbed in Maximilian's diaries and just wanted to "talk," rather than review her progress on the translation. And she persevered in the project through formidable obstacles: More than once, she lost large portions of the manuscript to computer malfunctions (she worked on a very early Macintosh). And she continued the project diligently through her battle with cancer.

She loved the heroism, courage, foibles, and accomplishments described in the sagas. After reading pieces of the translation, I asked her why didn't she make it easier to read? She was adamant about the value of writing a literal translation.

Our extended family is incredibly appreciative and grateful to the Department of Scandinavian Studies at UW-Madison for publishing this translation, 15 years after the deaths of Joyce Scholz and Paul Schach. This was truly a labor of love for my mother. We thank Kirsten Wolf and Susanne Arthur for their help in making this dream possible. And we thank readers for delving into "The Legendary Saga of King Olaf Haraldsson." I hope you find some of the delight that my mother found in the undertaking.

John Karl Scholz
November 2013

INTRODUCTION

King and Saint Olaf Haraldsson (995–1030), son of Harald the Grenlander and Asta Gudbrandsdottir, served as king of Norway from 1015 until 1028. At a very young age, he left Norway for his first viking adventure. During his stay in Rouen, France, some years later, he was baptized. He subsequently returned to Norway, and in 1015 he successfully claimed the country as his patrimony. He fought hard to convert the Norwegians to Christianity and brought about the organization of the Norwegian church. Because of his difficult temperament, however, he became unpopular among local chieftains. They subsequently joined forces with King Knut the Great of Denmark and Earl Hakon Eiriksson of Norway, who expelled him from the country. King Olaf fled to King Jarisleif of Novgorod, but after having heard the news two years later that Hakon Eiriksson had died, he raised an army in Sweden and returned to Norway, where he met with a large peasant army and was killed in the battle of Stiklestad on July 29, 1030. His body was secretly brought to Trondheim, where he was buried near the river Nid. Very soon, miracles occurred at his gravesite. Accordingly, Bishop Grimkel was summoned and opened the grave. Saint Olaf's uncorrupted body was removed and buried in the vicinity of Saint Clement's church in Nidaros. When one year later, Bishop Grimkel again opened the coffin and noticed that Saint Olaf showed no signs of decomposition, he proclaimed Saint Olaf a saint. His remains were enshrined and placed close to the high altar of the church in Nidaros. The cult of Saint Olaf spread rapidly, and miracles were worked not only in Norway, but also in faraway countries. His canonization was confirmed by Pope Alexander III in 1164.

King and Saint Olaf Haraldsson is mentioned in a variety of Old Norse-Icelandic sources, including *Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum* (Summary of the Sagas of the Kings of Norway), *Historia Norwegiae*, and Theodoric's *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*. Moreover, his life, death, and miracles are detailed in a number of Old Norse-Icelandic texts, notably Thorarin Praise-Tongue's skaldic poem *Glælognskvida* (Calm-sea Lay), Sighvat Thordarson's skaldic poem *Erfidrápa* (Memorial Lay), Einar Skulason's skaldic poem *Geisli* (Sunbeam), *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna*, Snorri Sturluson's

Heimskringla, the *Legendary Saga of King Olaf Haraldsson*, and fragments of the so-called *Oldest Saga of Olaf the Saint*.

The *Legendary Saga of King Olaf Haraldsson*, which is clearly based on the *Oldest Saga of Olaf the Saint*, is preserved in only one manuscript, De la Gardie 8 (Uppsala) from central Norway in the middle of the thirteenth century. The saga tells of Saint Olaf's childhood and youth, his years as a viking in England, his reign and Christianization of Norway, his exile in Russia, his return to Norway, his death in the battle of Stiklestad, and the miracles attributed to him. In 1849, Rudolf Keyser and Carl Richard Unger published the first edition of *The Legendary Saga of King Olaf Haraldsson* as well as the fragments of the *Oldest Saga of Olaf the Saint*. A facsimile and a transcription of *The Oldest Saga of Olaf the Saint*, which is preserved in six fragments in the National Archives of Norway (NRA 52) from around 1225, was published in 1893 by Gustav Storm. Like Rudolf Keyser and Carl Richard Unger, Gustav Storm included two additional fragments (AM 345 IV a 4to) from around 1250; Jonna Louis-Jensen (1970), however, has demonstrated that the additional fragments are not part of the *Oldest Saga of Olaf the Saint*. In 1922, Oscar Albert Johnson published a diplomatic edition of *The Legendary Saga of King Olaf Haraldsson*. It was followed in 1956 by a facsimile edition of De la Gardie 8 by Anne Holtsmark in the series *Corpus Codicum Norvegicorum Medii Aevi*. A normalized edition of *The Legendary Saga of King Olaf Haraldsson* and the *Oldest Saga of Olaf the Saint* (including the wrongfully attributed seventh and eighth fragments) was published by Guðni Jónsson in *Konunga sögur* in 1957. Finally, Anne Heinrichs, Doris Janshen, Elke Radicke, and Hartmut Röhn published an edition of the saga along with a German translation in 1982. The introductions to these various editions, especially the most recent edition by Anne Heinrichs, Doris Janshen, Elke Radicke, and Hartmut Röhn, offer detailed discussions of the manuscript and text of *The Legendary Saga of King Olaf Haraldsson* and include extensive bibliographies.

This translation of *The Legendary Saga of King Olaf Haraldsson* and the fragments of the *Oldest Saga of Olaf the Saint* is based on the text in the first volume of *Konunga sögur* edited by Guðni Jónsson in 1957. The translation follows the same chapter division and includes the same chapter titles. The division of chapters differs from that in De la Gardie 8, but it is nonetheless logical, and, as Anne Heinrichs, Doris Janshen, Elke Radicke, and Hartmut Röhn (1982: 24) point out, it is potentially more sensible than the chapter division in the manuscript.

Likely in accordance with Jonna Louis-Jensen's (1970) research, the translators did not include the seventh and eighth fragments printed in Guðni Jónsson's edition, as they are not actually part of the *Oldest Saga of Olaf the Saint*. Chapter numbers in parenthesis within the translation of the fragments of the *Oldest Saga of Olaf the Saint* (Roman numerals I–VI in the translation) indicate corresponding chapters in *The Legendary Saga of King Olaf Haraldsson*. In his review of the 1982 edition by Anne Heinrichs, Doris Janshen, Elke Radicke, and Hartmut Röhn in *Scandinavian Studies* in 1984, Paul Schach claims that in "readability the text is far superior to the diplomatic edition of Oscar Albert Johnson and only slightly inferior to the normalized edition of Guðni Jónsson" (388), but he laments that the editors of the 1982 edition did not include the six fragments of the *Oldest Saga of Olaf the Saint*. This likely explains Joyce Scholz and Paul Schach's decision to use Guðni Jónsson's edition as the basis for their translation. The editors of Scholz and Schach's translation noticed, however, that Scholz and Schach likely consulted the 1982 edition as well.

Joyce Scholz and Paul Schach's goal was to present a coherent and readable English translation. They did not attempt to imitate Old Norse-Icelandic syntax and style. Very long sentences are in the translation sometimes broken up into shorter sentences, and the order of clauses is occasionally reversed for clarity or emphasis. The translators also sometimes changed the beginnings or endings of direct speech, where Guðni Jónsson's choice with regard to the placement of quotation marks seems questionable. The historical present tense has generally not been retained in the translation, and personal names now and then replace pronouns. Personal names have been Anglicized, and the Old Norse-Icelandic characters ð, þ, and æ have been replaced with *d*, *th*, and *ae*. Bynames have been translated, unless their meaning is unclear. Unidentified place names have been treated similarly to personal names, but Scandinavian letters, such as æ, ø, and å, have been retained. Some place names have been translated. In the case of known place names, the Scandinavian term or a known English version has been used. The scaldic verses are based largely on the explanations provided in the footnotes of Guðni Jónsson's edition. Alliteration and other features characteristic of Old Norse-Icelandic poetry has not been retained. The number 100 has been translated as a so-called "big hundred," where the term *hundrað* (hundred) refers to 120. The translators provided explanatory commentary in the footnotes; the editors have added additional commentary where they saw fit.

Susanne M. Arthur
Kirsten Wolf

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THE LEGENDARY SAGA OF KING OLAF HARALDSSON

1. OF HARALD THE GRENLANDER

The son of Harald Fairhair was Bjorn the Merchant, father of Gudrod. Gudrod was the father of Harald the Grenlander,¹ father of Olaf the Saint. The mother of Olaf the Saint was Asta, the daughter of Gudbrand Kula. Her sisters were Ulfhild, the mother of Saint Hallvard, and Isrid, the mother of Steigar-Thorir. Harald the Grenlander was a powerful chieftain over his realm.

During that period, Sigrid the Imperious ruled Götaland. It so happened one time that King Harald returned from a raiding expedition and came to Götaland. Sigrid sent her men to meet him and invite him to a feast. When the feast was prepared, he came to it, and the queen was most cordial to him. In the course of the evening, a bed was prepared for him, and it is said that she offered to sleep with him during the night.

But he answered, "Asta will rest alone tonight and so shall we."

The queen turned away in great wrath. In the morning the king departed, and soon thereafter he came home to his country and realm.

2. THE DREAM OF OLAF GJERSTAD-ALF

At that time Olaf, the son of Gudrod the Hunting King, ruled over East Vik and Vestfold; he was called Big-Legged or Gjerstad-Alf. Then Olaf the Stout² summoned an assembly. Never before had there been such a large gathering. Because of their affection for him, people came to this assembly as they were bidden.

¹ Grenland was a district in Norway southwest of Vestfold.

² Olaf the Stout (Old Norse: Óláfr *digri*) is generally the nickname for Olaf the Saint Haraldsson. In this instance and again in chapter 3, however, it refers to Olaf Gjerstad-Alf. It is possible that the manuscript preserving the saga or its exemplar abbreviated Olaf Gjerstad-Alf's nickname Big-Legged 'digrbeinn'.

Now silence was requested and the king began to speak. "Thank you," said he, "for coming here. But we will not discuss weighty matters at present. I had a certain dream, and I want to tell it to you. I thought I came out and looked over the entire region of Vik. Afterward a huge ox appeared before me who grew up in Götaland. He went around throughout my domain. He came to every farmstead and blew upon people, and they fell down. And I thought I fell down just like the others. I believe this dream betokens my illness. Many lives will be lost. I want a large grave mound to be built in my memory, and I want to be placed upon a chair with all the trappings of royalty and valuable treasures. Many will have their kinsmen brought there. But I want to ask that you do not sacrifice to me."

3. OF THE DREAM OF HRANI

Now everything turned out as Olaf had dreamed. The king died, and there was a great loss of life. Afterward the king was buried in a mound and many other men with him. That ox signified terror and death.

Hrani was the name of a man, a liegeman. He dreamed that a man came to him wearing a cloak of well-woven cloth, a scarlet kirtle ornamented with lace, a gold ring on his arm, and a sword on his belt.

"Are you awake, Hrani?" said he. And Hrani said he was awake.

"No," said he, "that is not so, but it may seem as though you were awake. Here has come King Olaf the Stout, and I want you to carry out a mission for me. I have chosen you to break open my grave mound, which is at Gjerstad, and you will encounter no great obstacles if you follow my plan. Take with you a tinderbox, a pole, and a rope. Tie the rope around the pole and break into the grave mound. There you will see a man with apparel and equipment similar to mine. Go to him and take from him his cloak, ring, and sword. Then you also will see many men on both sides of him. Go without fear, for no harm will come to you. Afterward strike off his head, and that will be easy. But if you deviate from this plan, you will bring punishment upon yourself; otherwise, good fortune will come to you if you proceed according to my behest. But before you do this, unfasten his belt and knife. When you have done this, it is high time for you to leave the grave mound, and I know that you will succeed.

Afterward you are to go to Oppland to Gudbrand Kula. There something very important is happening. Asta, his daughter, is in labor but has not yet given birth, and he is heartsick over her. Furthermore all the others grieve over her affliction and can find no remedy that

will be effective. Harald the Grenlander had Asta sent back home to her father, had her accompanied there, and had been extremely angry. Now each of them sits in sadness and in sorrow. But if you came there, you would be well received, and if advice is sought from you, make the suggestion that the belt be placed around her, and I expect that it will be successful. But first say that for your reward, you wish to decided what name shall be given the boy."

Hrani answered, "I scarcely dare to do this because the people of the land feel such great affection for you."

He, however, replied, "I must tell you where Earl Svein Hakonarson,³ who has escaped from the country, lies in a hidden creek with three ships. He is in need of money. Make an agreement with him and get him to trust you. Nonetheless attack the grave mound as I have ordered you, but do not let him see these treasures. Then be prepared to leave. He would rather choose these treasures than all the other wealth. He will grant you one-third of the wealth and will say that this difference must stand, but you must avoid arguing about it. When you are ready to leave, then show him the treasures, and he will not take them from you, though he would have preferred them over all the other valuables."

4. OF THE BIRTH OF OLAF THE SAINT

Now the king disappeared, and when Hrani came into the grave mound, he saw the man who had come to him in the dream. Hrani went to him and pulled off his belt and took his ring; it was a great treasure. Afterward he drew the sword, which seemed to be very sharp. Hrani greatly feared to strike at him, but he began hewing at the man and struck his head off. It was like striking into water.

Afterward he was eager to get out from the grave mound and drew himself up onto it. He delivered the treasure, and the earl wanted to have two-thirds. Hrani declared that he was not happy about it, but nevertheless it was to be that way. He showed the earl the precious objects at their parting and went off to the place, as earlier was mentioned. He rode away and came to Gudbrand Kula, where he was well received.

³ Earl Svein Hakonarson, one of the powerful earls of Lade, was the son of Hakon the Great, the last pagan Norwegian ruler. He was forced to flee Norway when Olaf Trygvason gained power, but later returned to Norway to rule part of it along with his brother Eirik after Olaf Trygvason was defeated in the battle of Svöld.

Hrani noticed there great dejection among the people. He asked about it, and when he was told the reason, he answered, "There must be a solution."

He was asked to devise a plan. He went to Asta, placed the belt around her, and sooner than expected, she gave birth to a baby boy. Now Gudbrand wanted to have the baby put out to die and declared he did not want to rear Harald's child. People begged him not to do that, and Hrani said that this boy would become an outstanding person. Nevertheless, the child had to be abandoned.

An old, small roofless shed stood on the site. The boy was carried there and placed in a pit. The evening passed. When everyone had gone to sleep, Hrani went outside and fretted as to whether he should take the boy away during the night, but did not dare. During the night, he remained awake. He looked toward the building and thought he heard the baby. And now he saw a light shine forth over the building, and he told that to Gudbrand and said he hoped that the baby was still alive. He said that the child would become a man of great distinction and asked permission to take the baby away. But Gudbrand did not want to grant permission and said he did not believe it. Now Hrani asked another man to go outside with him, and when they again looked toward the building, they saw a still greater light than before over it, and they went inside and told this to Gudbrand. Hrani asked Gudbrand to allow him to take the baby away, and said he had a premonition that the boy would become a famous man and through him his kinsmen would receive much honor. Gudbrand said he did not want that. Now Hrani asked Gudbrand to go out with him and said he expected that the great light would again appear. Hrani and Gudbrand went out and saw the great light over the house. Gudbrand told Hrani to take the boy away, and so he did.

And now the boy was brought up by his maternal grandfather and fostered by Hrani. As soon as Hrani discovered that he had a tooth, he gave him the belt, and following that, the ring, at the time he had the boy sprinkled with water and named Olaf.⁴

5. OF SIGRID THE IMPERIOUS

During that time Sigrid the Imperious, who had married Eirik Blessed with Good Seasons, ruled Sweden. She was the daughter of

⁴ There are frequent references in the sagas to the custom of sprinkling a baby with water and giving it a name at that time. The rite, evidently done in the last centuries of pagan Scandinavia, did not need to be done by a priest.

Skoglar-Tosti. He bore no titled name but yet he was their equal. Sigrid and Emund, her son, held a certain portion of his land, and King Olaf, her son, had the other. Many said she had been given Götaland to rule because the king was unable to bear her arrogance. Because of her fame and power, she achieved great renown.

Harald the Grenlander had now left the country and considered how wrong he was to reject the invitation of Sigrid, and he went again to visit her. She prepared a magnificent feast for him, and he brought up the affair that they had talked about earlier.

She said she did not want it now and coveted neither his kingdom nor his esteem, "because Asta has become the mother of this Olaf, whom I would gladly have had as my son."

He began his entreaties and begged her. She gave no answer but served even more at the feast and entertained magnificently. Then another king from the East, who was named Visavald, also arrived. He too proposed to Sigrid. She had each of them drink in his hall. She then went from one to the other and spoke with great friendliness to the one whom she was with and said she would be his who drank the most. And they were less foresighted than she, but Harald spoke with greater confidence.

When night came, the kings fell asleep for they had drunk so hard that they were nearly dead. Then Sigrid had fires set in both of their halls, and they were burned inside. She declared she would make such petty kings loath to propose to her. She summoned the people to an assembly and told them that the petty kings had coveted her kingdom and said she did not want her people to suffer their oppression. She now earned the trust of the people of the country and asked that they be her defenders in return for her granting them security. Henceforth she was called Sigrid the Imperious.

6. SIGURD SOW MARRIES ASTA

At that time Olaf Tryggvason came into the country and immediately proclaimed the true faith. When he came to Oppland, he introduced Christianity there. And he himself stood godfather to his namesake, Olaf.⁵ Hrani chose the name. A wax candle was placed in the child's hand. Then the boy said, "Light! Light! Light!" At that time, he was five years old. The boy grew up imposing in appearance, highly intelligent, and surpassing his numerical age in all accomplishments.

⁵ Other sources claim Olaf was baptized in Rouen as a young man when on one of his viking forays.

Two distinguished men now decided to propose to Asta. One was King Sigurd Sow, the son of Halfdan, the son of Sigurd Hrisi, the son of Harald Fairhair. He was a quiet man, trustworthy, wise, but not called generous, and steadfast in disposition. The other was Gudbrand of the Dales, who was the greatest chieftain in the country, the most outstanding man, generous, and popular. More people supported his proposal, and Asta thought it better to be betrothed to him.

She arranged a great feast and invited her friends to it. Now the marriage proposals were discussed. She sat Olaf, her son, upon her knee and asked what he understood of the conversation and whether he had strong thoughts as to how he wanted this matter to be decided.

He answered, "It seems better to me to play with other boys than discuss this affair."

Asta said, "I am blind if you do not say something that is decisive, even though it might appear to be beyond your capability."

He answered, "How important does the esteem and praise of people seem to you?"

She answered, "Certainly people would call me man-crazy if I did not choose the one who proved to be the more outstanding person in power and other aspects."

"I do not know," said he, "what people's opinion would be about that, but I ask you this: Do you think it better for your son to be a king or a landed man?"

She answered, "Seldom do branches become better than the tree trunk. It is to be expected that good fortune follows the one who bears a king's name as his pedigree rather than the one who bears a landed man's name."

He ran off and amused himself. This greatly advanced the suit of Sigurd, and the match now appeared advisable to friends and relatives. A magnificent feast was prepared and Sigurd married Asta. He ruled his kingdom and fostered Olaf. He maintained the same customs as before. Olaf grew up there.

7. OLAF APPROPRIATES HIS FATHER'S SWORD

It happened one time that the queen opened up her chest and the boy Olaf, who stood near her, saw something shining and beautiful appear. She did not want to let him see it. He went over and grasped the hilt of the sword. He brandished the sword and it gleamed brightly. He asked who owned it.

She said that his father, Harald, had carried that sword, "and I intend to keep it for you until you are old enough to carry it. This sword is called Baesing."

He insisted that he could be trusted to carry it and went away with it. During the evening when men were getting ready to drink, Sigurd saw that Olaf had the sword and asked him to let go of it and said it was not suitable for him to carry it yet because of his age, "but do not doubt that it is your own."

Olaf said he would not give it up. Sigurd scolded him and Asta as well for handing it over to him and ordered Olaf a second time to give up the sword. Olaf declared he had already said he did not want to let go of it. Asta said that she wanted Sigurd to coax it from him because she did not want Olaf to hurt himself. Sigurd angrily repeated his demand for the third time.

Olaf sprang up, brandished the sword with two hands, and invited Sigurd to take it if he thought fit, "but you will not take it from me without force, and it may well be that I have the power to defend myself." He thrust at Sigurd with the point of the sword.

Sigurd gave up and did not again demand the sword.

Olaf grew up and was now ten years old. Sigurd often called on him to saddle his riding horse. One time Olaf lured a very large pet billy goat over to him, placed a bit and bridle on him, and slung a saddle upon him. When the king saw that, he asked why he did so. Olaf answered that he thought it befitting for Sigurd to ride the billy goat. He said that this mount would be as suitable for him as knightly horses were for other kings. Sigurd did not call upon him again to do this task.

8. OLAF OVERCOMES SOTI THE VIKING

When Olaf was twelve years old, he asked his mother for a company of men and said he wanted to go harrying.

She discussed this matter with Sigurd and asked him for troops to give Olaf "because he wants to amuse himself."

He answered and said that Olaf would come back in the winter with his forces, and it seemed to him that it would be his obligation to house and feed them since Olaf and all his men would be there. She answered and said it was difficult to discuss this matter with both of them. It came about that Sigurd gave him two equipped ships.

Olaf now prepared to leave the country and told Sigurd that he would give him sufficient time to acquire more cows, "and I expect that when I return, I will have not a few men."

It is said that the first victory gained by Olaf was the one he won east in Vik at those skerries that are called Soti's Skerries because a man named Soti, a fierce viking, lay at anchor near the skerries. He had command of ten ships, and they were manned by hardy men. Olaf saw that the odds were greatly in favor of Soti and his men because he had only two ships. Olaf then drew up a plan in which he placed his ships between the two breakers that dashed against the skerries, lay there during the day, and loaded as many rocks onto the ships as they could hold and still stay afloat. Soti was not able to approach with all his ships because of the breakers and thus was able to lay to along-side Olaf's ships only one or two ships at a time, and later on they began fighting. And so the battle with Olaf and Soti during the day ended with Soti's ships severely disabled. It was clear that the breakers had a greater friendship with Olaf and his men than with Soti and his followers. When night fell, Soti sailed forth with those ships that still remained and went to land. When he and his troops had come to shore and had built a fire, Olaf came sailing with his ships. Soti and all his men were captured, and Olaf had the victory. But Soti would have been killed, along with all his companions, if Olaf had not shown more mercy to him than he deserved. It is said that Olaf gave Soti quarter and all his troops with him; after that Soti remained in Olaf's following for a long time and was a man of distinction.

9. OF OLAF'S HARRYING

After Olaf had battled with Soti the Viking, he steered his ships to the Baltic Sea. He next fought east at Øsel, and the farmers there owed their lives to their feet. He stayed for a number of days, accomplished many great deeds, and gained great glory.

The third time he fought east in Finland and had the better of it. From there he steered to Balagardscoast in Zealand and harried there.

When Olaf arrived, he heard that Thorkel the Tall was west in England and that he was an outstanding man who had achieved great fame for his very good advice. Olaf decided to join company with Thorkel the Tall, since they were both in the west. Thorkel had gone to avenge his brother, who had commanded the thingmen,⁶ for his brother had been killed and all the thingmen with him. But later there was another group by the same name when Harald Sigurdarson fell. When Olaf and Thorkel were in England, they both fought together

⁶ The thingmen were the bodyguard of King Knut during his rule in England.

at the battle at Sudrvik, killed many men, took much plunder, and gained the victory.

Olaf fought the fifth battle against knights at the coast of Kinnlima. Olaf was victorious, killed many, and took property from others.

It is said that six years after Olaf Tryggvason was killed, King Svein Forkbeard, who had earlier conquered England and driven King Aethelred out of the country, died in England. Olaf Haraldsson was seven years old when Olaf Tryggvason died. And it was said by some people that after the death of Svein Forkbeard, Olaf Haraldsson with much advice and wise counsel had helped King Aethelred return to his country. He was then thirteen or fourteen years old, but his advice was followed even though he was young.

Three years after the death of Svein, Knut the Great, son of Svein, traveled westward to England with a mighty army and fought against King Edmund, son of King Aethelred, who then ruled over England. In one sweep, Knut subjugated all of England except London, which was not conquered, and the king laid siege to the city for a long time. And when Kings Knut and Edmund had fought five battles in one month, powerful men interceded and reconciled them. The agreement was that each should hold half of the land in joint tenancy with the other, but that he who survived longer should take possession of all of England. A month after the settlement of Knut and Edmund, Eirik Strjona, who was foster father to Edmund, betrayed him, and he killed Edmund, his foster son. That affair was greatly condemned, and some people declared Edmund a saint. Afterward Knut the Great took possession of all of England and ruled for twenty-four years.⁷

10. OLAF DEVISES A PLAN TO CONQUER LONDON

Now King Knut lay near the piers of London and sought for means to conquer the city, but that would not be easy. He attempted to find out if it would be possible to come from the River Thames onto the piers and into the city and thus win both of them. But that was not feasible, because great difficulties stood in the way.

When King Knut was working on these plans, it was mentioned that Olaf Haraldsson was in England. King Knut offered Olaf money if

⁷ The version of English history given here does not necessarily correspond to the English accounts.

he would devise a means to win the piers, but Olaf said he could see no scheme to accomplish this if the king were not able to see any "because you, King, and many other men who are here have much more wisdom concerning great enterprises than I would have. Nevertheless, I will do my best to try with your help to form a plan."

"What do you suggest?" said the king.

"When, according to my plan, the piers have been broken down," said Olaf, "and you succeed in controlling the access as you wish, then this shall be the agreement between us: If you think you own certain claims to Norway, you shall surrender them all to me."

It seemed unlikely to the king that this bargain would be claimed, even though such might come about, and the king agreed to the proposal. The piers were constructed in such a way that they extended out into the River Thames and were held up by pillars standing down under in the river. Buildings stood upon the piers, and there was a crowd of people in them. So it is said that Olaf placed sixty ships in the river (that was his entire force). He carried out his plan by having all the pillars that were under the piers pulled equally hard, and it came about through cleverness and great wisdom that the pillars under the piers were pulled down by rowing, so that all the buildings that were on the piers fell into the river. Then a great battle took place against the inhabitants of the city. In this battle, the city was overcome, as Knut wished, through the advice of Olaf Haraldsson. So said the skald:

(1) It is correct that the sixth attack
occurred at the place
where Olaf attacked the piers of London;
the valiant king challenged the English to battle.
Frankish swords bit there
when the vikings guarded the moat.
Some of the forces had their tents
on the flat plains of Southwark.

And when this was made known among the people, Olaf received much well deserved honor for the assistance and shrewd advice that he had given to King Knut. Because Thorkel the Tall was also with King Knut, it was said that he was never short of advice. Nevertheless, he could give no advice in this instance. Earl Eirik Hakonarson was also there, a son-in-law of King Knut. He was both wise and ambitious, but yet even he was unable to come up with a plan as to how the piers could be won. The wisest men bestowed much glory on Olaf, and all

who did this knew whom they should honor because He, before whom all people are unworthy, honored him most of all.

Then after the attack Olaf composed these stanzas:

(2) Let us go ashore, before warriors
and great warlike hosts are aware
that the English homeland
are overrun with shields.
Let us be brave in battle;
let us brandish spears and hurl them.
The huge hordes of English troops
Take flight before our swords

(3) Many swift warriors this day
put on tattered old shirts,
such as we were born to and bred.
Let us again feed the ravens
the blood of Englishmen.
Then the battle-ready skald
will slip into
a shirt of mail.

(4) That boisterous warrior,
he who provides for the woman,
will go forth reluctantly late at night
to redden his shield.
That furious warrior
does not carry a shield early in the morning
against England
in expectation of gold.

(5) To me it seems
that Thorkel's troops, when I saw them,
did not hesitate to go into battle.
They did not fear the clash of swords.
When armies were in battle array,
the vikings made a ferocious attack
on the fighting field
We clashed in battle.

(6) The earl seems to me surpassing
 who quickly broke the raven's fast.
 The wise girl learns
 that the heaps of the slain
 were widespread.
 To the warriors, it seems
 that the king made a fierce attack
 on the bank of the Thames.

(7) Earlier Ulfkel decided
 to await the vikings
 there where spears shrieked;
 the fierce battle increased.
 And afterward you saw
 how the grim warrior could prevail
 against the Englishman.
 We were of two minds.

(8) Knut made the decision
 and commanded all Danes to remain.
 The valiant powerful warrior
 went into battle.
 The army battled near the moat.
 There is where we attacked the company of men
 with helmet and coat of mail, my lady,
 as though a man were holding a frenzied elk.

(9) The chaste woman,
 who dwells in a cloister,
 will look out
 and see—often swords gleam aloft
 over the helmeted king—
 how the victory-eager Danish king
 sharply attacks the townspeople.
 The sword clangs on British armor.

(10) Every morning the woman
 will see the sword reddened in blood
 on the bank of the Thames River;
 the raven shall not starve.
 The wielder of the shield,

early in the morning
 will not redden his sword,
 he who guards Grjotvor⁸ from north of Stad.

(11) It happened every day
 that the shields reddened with blood
 there when we were outside early
 in the company of the king, my lady.
 We can sit now
 in fair London,
 after that fierce battle
 ended recently, my lady.

Olaf the Saint himself composed these stanzas when he was with King Knut.

11. OF OLAF, KING KNUT, AND THE BISHOP

Afterward King Olaf remained with King Knut for a while. It is told of King Knut that he attended services on all the holidays at the church where the bishop performed the mass. King Knut was accustomed to lie abed a long while and was often late to services; nonetheless, he was still so honored that mass was not begun until he arrived at the church. But King Olaf was up at once when the first bell rang and all his men with him. On a certain day, it is said that people waited a long time before King Knut came to the service. But Olaf observed his usual custom, and all his party were out of bed and had come to the church with him. All his men sat on the floor of the church. Olaf, however, stood near a pillar in the church and leaned against it. When King Knut was slow to appear, the bishop asked whether Knut had arrived, but the priests said he had not come.

The bishop looked out into the church and saw where Olaf stood and said, "Now the king has arrived."

They said that he had not appeared.

"Yes, indeed," said the bishop, "that is the true king who has come because he will rather serve to praise God than have God's law serve him," and sang afterwards *Domine labia mea aperies*.

⁸ According to Heinrichs et. al. (1982: 52 fn. 40), Grjotvor is a synonym for Steinvor, a lover of Olaf the Saint.

But when King Knut heard what the bishop had said about Olaf, Olaf fell into great disfavor with King Knut because the archbishop had called Olaf 'king.' Later Olaf went away and he and King Knut parted.

Now King Knut talked with the archbishop and asked why he had called Olaf 'king,' "because he is without land and realm and I do not think he works either miracles or wonders."

The bishop answered, "Sir, certainly he is king and a very great man who excels other men."

The king answered, "But it seems to me that in his everyday living he would appear to be less saintly than I, for he both dresses in silk clothes and costly fabrics and feeds himself with expensive tidbits."

The bishop answered, "Master, it is true that he had beautiful attire as befits him, but, nonetheless, he wore armor underneath, and often he drank water when you thought he drank wine."

The king became angry and declared Olaf no holier than himself. Now King Olaf and Knut parted.

12. OLAF'S BATTLES DURING VIKING RAIDS

Olaf fought afterward in Ringmere Heath against a large army, and the outcome was as he wanted in the seventh battle. The eighth battle Olaf fought was at Canterbury, and he fought against the Danes and the Wendlanders. So says the skald:

(12) I know that warrior,
who was dangerous to the Wendlanders,
waged the eighth battle.
The valiant king proceeded against the stronghold.

He had his ninth battle at Nyjamoda, and Sighvat mentions that he fought against the Danes:

(13) Now I have counted nine battles,
warrior from the east.
The Danish army fell there
Where the spears drove mostly at Olaf.

The tenth battle was waged at Hringsfjord at Hol against vikings. The eleventh battle Olaf fought was at Gislapoll, and there he captured

an earl named Vilhjalm along with his troops and dealt with him and his troops as he wished. Olaf's twelfth battle was in Fetlaffjord, and they fought there against the heathen hordes. Earlier there had been a great band of vikings and robbers who had settled there, but Olaf attacked them with many troops. There was a fierce battle, and Olaf's forces succeeded more often in stripping the clothing from the others than the others did from them. It ended that Olaf had the clothing and all the possessions of those who were slain. Olaf won the victory and took possession of all the viking residences that were there and established peace.

13. MORE ABOUT OLAF'S HARRYING

One day it happened that Olaf had gone onto shore with his troops, and they fought, as happened frequently, against a much larger army. It ended, as always, that Olaf won the victory, and he and his men drove the fleeing army away into some woods and killed great numbers. After the enemy had been driven away, Olaf's troops went down to their ships, and when they came there, they realized that Olaf was not with the troops. When he was nowhere to be found, they became very concerned and thought that something might have happened to him. They went back and searched for him with great distress. While they searched for him, they caught sight of Olaf riding forth out of the woods and driving many men before him down to the ships. There were burdens bound on the backs of all of them. The troops were joyful when they saw Olaf safe and sound, and it seemed remarkable to them that he drove so many men with burdens down to the ships.

Afterward those who carried the burdens were asked how it could be that one man could have captured so many men. They said that he was not alone in attacking them, "but rather there was a great host of knights in company with him, and they captured us and bound us and laid on our backs these burdens that we have. After that he drove us before him until we saw your men. And later they all went away and disappeared."

When the troops of Olaf became aware of this event, they thought it to be of great significance and became very fearful. People suspected that these would have been no earthly men who were with Olaf but rather God's knights.

Now he went south and fought at Seljuvellir. From there he went to the westerly land of the Franks to the city called Gunnvaldsborg and captured Earl Geirfin in his hall and gave the inhabitants of the city a

choice: Either they would ransom the earl and consequently the city, or else he would kill Geirfin. The inhabitants ransomed the earl and the city with twelve thousand gold shillings and thus they parted.

14. OLAF VANQUISHES THE SEA-HAG

Afterward he traveled south to the river Karlsa and harried on both sides of the shore. Olaf had five ships and remained there a while and battled with the heathen hordes. In front of the mouth of the Karlsa lay a strange creature called a sea-hag, a fish or whale below but a woman up above the waist. It had killed many people before the mouth of the river and was an enormous creature. The people of the country sacrificed to it, and they thought it a great defense of the country because many a one had formerly fared badly there. When Olaf had tarried there as long as it seemed suitable, he turned to go away, and when he left the river, some of the ships went out beyond the mouth of the river. Then the sea-hag came up, and at once grabbed one of the king's ships and destroyed all of the ship's entire crew. The other ships halted at that spot, and the men said they should await the king. When Olaf came there and saw what had happened, he steered his ship first out into the mouth of the river. And as soon as his ship came into the mouth, the sea-hag came up at once and went with gaping mouth at Olaf's ship. Olaf shot a spear toward her and did not miss but struck her so that the evil creature burst asunder there. Olaf's good fortune that time exceeded that of others. Some people say that he cut off her hand and then speared her.

15. OF OLAF'S HARRYING IN SWEDEN

After all these encounters, it is now told that Olaf and his forces held a course out of the Karlsa harbor until they came east to Sweden. He had by then many ships and traveled with his men until he came to a body of water called Skarf.⁹ It lies within Sweden and is an immense, round lake that thins out into a fjord. Settlements lie in all directions around the lake. There Olaf lay with his troops during the summer and from there raided in Sweden, killed a large number of people, devastated the districts that lay next to the lake both of men and livestock, and plundered relentlessly against them. Olaf was not faint-hearted and knew where he should wreak the harshest vengeance. He was not without

⁹ Lake in Sweden, usually identified as Lake Mälaren.

due cause against the Swedes, even though he dealt with them severely, on account of **Sigrid the Imperious**. Olaf the Swede, who ruled Sweden when this took place, was her son.

But Olaf the Swede intended to go against Olaf, his namesake, when winter came and ice lay on the lake. Olaf Haraldsson then devised a plan: He had many trees cut and the wood carried upon the ice and had it piled up in a stack all around the ships in the ice. When the layers of ice were at their thickest during the winter, Olaf set fire to the wood-pile and it burned. Afterward they broke the ice with large tree trunks, and the ice was never so thick during the winter that it was not thawed around the ships. He remained there during the winter and had no more than three ships, because he had sent some of his troops away during the fall. Olaf lay there that winter with his forces, and the Swedes were unable to capture him as they intended.

During the spring, when the ice was completely off the lake, the Swedes sent word to their king, Olaf the Swede, to assemble great forces both on land and sea and said that now if they were alert, Olaf Haraldsson would not be able to escape. And so it is said that Olaf Haraldsson at first did not become aware of the plan until the ships were as thick in the mouth of the river as were able to float. Piles had been driven in to block the mouth of the river as was the custom in the Baltic region in times of war, and it was not expected that Olaf's few ships would be able to come out there when it would not be possible even if there were many. Down from the land came Olaf the Swede with such a mighty army that one could see them all along the seashore upon the land as if one was looking into a forest. Olaf the Stout was there alone with only three ships between the fleet of warships and the land army, and the companions of Olaf Haraldsson thought it would not be so easy to get away from there as it had been to come there. But Olaf the Swede, who commanded the huge host assembled both on land and sea, intended this time that the Stout Man should not escape. A meadowland called Agnafit extended forth on one side near the lake; it was a long tongue of land. There Olaf the Swede himself headed his battle array on the shore, and thus troops surrounded the shore so that no one could hope to land anywhere.

16. OLAF SLIPS OUT FROM THE ARMIES' TRAP

Olaf Haraldsson had come between these two mighty forces. Then Olaf spoke with his men, "All of you do as you see me do." He had

the sails hoisted to the top of the mast when the wind came down off Agnafit. And after the sails were hoisted on Olaf's ships, he steered at Agnafit toward the battle ranks of Olaf the Swede, and the wind went according to the wishes of Olaf Haraldsson. When he came toward land more closely than expected, so that Olaf the Swede thought he had the Stout Man and all his troops within his grasp, it is said that Olaf Haraldsson fell upon his knees and covered his face with his hands. Simultaneously, as he covered his face with his hands and his ship came to shore, a miraculous event occurred. The ness sprang apart before Olaf Haraldsson, and there at that very moment stood the wing of the army of Olaf the Swede. Olaf Haraldsson sailed through the ness with three ships and out to sea in a mighty exploit as happens to all whom God assists.

But Olaf the Swede remained behind and did not have Olaf Haraldsson in his clutches. Instead, as soon as the ness split before Olaf, a large number of Olaf the Swede's troops drowned when they sank far down and the sea rushed up under them. It afterward was called the King's Sound, and men could sail through it in their ships. For a long time after, Olaf the Swede did not want to hear that it was called the King's Sound but instead wanted it to be called the Stout Man's Sound.

17. STILL MORE OF OLAF'S HARRYING

After that, Olaf sailed with his forces west to England. Later Olaf and his men joined Earl Thorkel the Tall in plundering. Olaf then wanted to go out to the Strait of Gibraltar and lay to for a long time but no winds came. It became clear to him that God did not want him to go south but rather to go north to reclaim his inheritance. So he did. He turned back and came to Veini and went up the Loire, fought there, and burned the market town called Varrandi. This was the thirteenth battle.

That winter Olaf stayed along the Seine and sent Hrani, his foster father, to England on his behalf to gain support with gifts of money and friendly speeches. Thus Hrani did. He traveled widely around the country and finally to London and reported that Olaf was en route from the west to England on his ships and had fought his fourteenth battle near Jungafurda, where he had been victorious in his fight against vikings. His fifteenth battle was fought west off Valdi, and he won the victory.

Afterward Olaf and Thorkel the Tall engaged in raiding west along Ireland and fought there. While they lay to near the land, their

ships ran aground, and it was more than likely that their harrying expedition would be shipwrecked if a clever plan did not quickly set them free. It had come about that their ships stood in mud, and an overwhelming horde stood in all directions upon the shore in front of them. A good plan was needed at once.

All the men appealed to Olaf to make the decision, and he said, "If you wish to follow my advice, let us all call upon God Almighty; let us cease harrying and ransacking; let each of us turn henceforth to that which God has decided for him; and let each one strive to practice justice in his warfare."

When Olaf had stated this vow, all his men agreed with him, and all confirmed it with a handshake. After Olaf had stipulated the vow and their handshakes had ended, everything happened at once. The sea rose under their ships so that they were afloat in a little while, faster than they thought likely. Olaf was not at a loss as to what to do and went away with his ships out of the hands of his enemies. They shrieked after him from the place where he had been, but by then Olaf Haraldsson was gone.

18. OLAF GIVES UP HARRYING

It happened once when Olaf, Hrani, and Soti were raiding, that they came near a country where the inhabitants believed in a prophetess who foretold many things to them. Soti asked permission from the king to meet her and ask her for tidings. The king said he did not want to think about such things and did not want to permit it, but Soti harped at him unceasingly. It came to a point where the king did not answer. Soti went now to meet her and asked many things; she foretold.

"What do you prophesy about our king?" he said.

She answered, "He embodies such great might and glory that there are few things I am able to discuss, because his power and mine are in opposition. He inspires great dread; brightness and light surround him. One thing will I tell you: I think that in a short time he shall die if he makes a slip of the tongue.¹⁰ Now I am permitted to say nothing more."

Still another time when he was raiding, Olaf rode through a woods and a terrible wild boar to which people sacrificed came at him. The boar leaped at the king and wanted to attack him and placed his snout on the saddlebow. The king drew his sword and cut off his snout. Afterward he took the bristles from the boar, which uttered a loud and

¹⁰ This prophecy is fulfilled in Chapt 89.

hideous cry. Olaf had accomplished now, as earlier, still another great exploit. Olaf now ceased all his harrying, and thoughts of how he could honorably seek his native land, and gain it for his own ran through his mind. And however much has been said about his campaigns abroad, he always returned immediately, since God wished to open up Olaf's realm for him.

19. THE PROPHECY OF THE HERMIT

It is said that in England there was a hermit who was able to foretell many things, and he told people of Olaf's forthcoming arrival. Olaf wanted to test what he knew and sent to him one of his servants appropriately and magnificently attired with the trappings of royalty. He went to meet the hermit.

There were four doors in the house of the hermit, and all were locked. The monk paid little attention to him and said, "I advise you, good man, to lay down your trappings because they do not befit you. Rather be obedient to your lord."

The servant went away after this vain attempt and told Olaf. Now he himself went to meet the hermit and came late in the day. Olaf asked him whether he would become king of Norway and win back the country that belonged to him and the power and honor "that my relatives had and that I am rightly born to or not."

The hermit answered, "You have come too late in the day, and I am not able to foretell things so quickly. Meet me early in the morning, and I will then tell you what I think."

Olaf did as he said and came in the morning before men were up and about and asked him how he expected things would go.

The hermit answered, "This I can tell you. You will become king over and have greater honors than the greatest honor your relatives would have had. Not only will you be a temporal king but you will also be an eternal king."

After the hermit's prophecy, Olaf went away and asked nothing more. People thought that the hermit was not blind from smoke.

It is said that Earl Eirik summoned an assembly and announced that he had learned a king was coming who laid claim to the country and bade them to prepare themselves for they would be sorely tested.

After these events and many others that have been told and reported about Olaf, he wished now to return to Norway, his native land. He readied his merchant ship to go east from England with troops numbering no more than one hundred and forty men, all well quipped

with weapons and armor, because he trusted more the merciful support of God than of men.

20. OLAF COMES TO NORWAY

At this time, Svein Hakonarson and Hakon Eiriksson ruled over Norway. Hakon had been informed about Olaf and heard that he would come to Norway. Hakon journeyed west to England and met King Knut, his uncle, who let his kinsman Hakon have armor and a large quantity of weapons to bring back to Norway with him, because Hakon intended to fight against Olaf if he came into the country.

When Olaf's ships were equipped, he sailed his two merchant ships from England and ran into very severe weather at sea. The waves were so high that all on board came close to perishing, but because of the crew on board and the king's good luck,¹¹ it ended well. They came off the high sea outside Stad and lay to at a little island called Selje.¹² The king said that it was indeed a lucky day that they had reached land. He told them they had come to Selje and declared it a good omen that things had happened thus. Then they went up on the island. The king stepped with one foot onto muddy ground and fell down on his other knee.

The king said, "Now I fell."

Hrani answered, "You did not fall, Master; instead you gained a firm foothold in Norway."

The king laughed and said, "If God wills it, things will be to our advantage."

Then they went down to the ships and sailed south off the Fjord district. Bishop Grimkel was there in company with him, and some people say that there also would have been Bishop Sigurd, who was the court bishop for Olaf Tryggvason, and many other men.

When Olaf arrived in the country, it is told that a man came down to the beach to where the king's ships lay at anchor. The king sat in his tent and carved a spear shaft. The farmer went to him and greeted him. The king received his greetings well. The farmer asked who he was. Olaf said he was a merchant.

¹¹ Certain people, such as kings, were thought to possess an unusual amount of luck, which could on occasion be transferred to someone else. For an excellent example, see Chapter 42.

¹² Selje is an island belonging to Norway. Its Old Norse name 'Sæla' translates to 'blessed'.

"Yes, yes," said he, "a merchant, certainly. I am able to recognize here the eyes of Olaf Tryggvason, and this I know to be true: Soon a battle will take place between you and Hakon and you will win a great victory."

The king answered, "If such happens as you say, you will derive benefit from us and then come to us."

The farmer was in happy anticipation if this should occur.

21. EARL HAKON COMES INTO OLAF'S POWER

This is further told that one day when Olaf sailed forth along the land with two ships, there was a Finn in Olaf's troops.

After a time he called out and said, "I see a mighty vision."

"What is it?" they said.

"Our king sails," said he, "with great glory into his country on this day. Now Earl Hakon sails into his clutches, and Olaf will take him and his companions captive and do to them such as he wishes.

Those who stood near wanted to strike him and said that he mocked their king and told this later to Olaf. He had the Finn led to him and asked whether he spoke truthfully or not.

The Finn answered, "If it does not happen on this day as I say, then let me die such a death as you wish."

Olaf held his ships in the sound that is called Saudung Sound¹³ and prepared his troops for battle. He placed one of his ships along each side of the sound. Then he had cables strung in the sea between the two ships and lay there with tents pitched on the ships in the sound.

On this day Earl Hakon Eiriksson sailed out along Saudung Sound with two ships; one was a long ship, and the other, a skiff. Hakon sailed with a light, fair breeze and good weather. There was no shortage of drink on the ships. They felt little fear, even though Hakon could see ships in the sound before him, for he supposed them to be merchants. The earl sailed the swift-sailing ship forward between the two merchant ships. Hakon intended to sail skillfully so that it would impress those who were anchored on both sides and sailed with great arrogance so that it would impress those who lay before. But to him it happened otherwise, because that one who lay before was more heedful of his honor than drinking himself into witlessness. The earl rowed forth into the sound between the ships. Now Olaf had the cables

¹³ Saudung Sound is modern-day Sauesund (Heinrichs et. al. 1982:68 fn. 61).

that were between the ships in the sea pulled up, and when the cables were drawn up between the ships, the merchant ships drew together. The skiff toppled into the sea and sank beneath the earl and all those who were on it. At that spot the splendid journey of the earl ended disastrously because he himself was captured in the sound. Now Olaf had the cables pulled up under the keel of the skiff and wound them with a windlass. As soon as the ship was made fast, the stern rose, and the prow tilted forward so that the sea rushed in across the ship's bow filling the ship and capsizing it, but the earl and all of his men who could be reached were dragged from the sea at the king's command. But some perished both from stones and other missiles.

22. HAKON SWEARS AN OATH TO OLAF AND LEAVES THE COUNTRY

Now the earl was led up onto the king's ship. He was at the time seventeen years old and was the most handsome of men with a thick head of hair as fair as silk. Bound around his head was a gold fillet. He sat himself down in the middle room of the ship.

Then spoke King Olaf, "It is no lie that you and your paternal ancestors are more handsome than other men, and you are, Hakon, a dashing and imposing man. Nonetheless, your luck now has come to an end and also your respect and power that you have had in this journey. Now I will foretell what will happen."

"What is that?" asked the earl.

"This" declared Olaf, "that your power, which has been great in this country, henceforth will not be so. Those kings who are born to kingship will now tend to their country, their power, and their honor, and it will forever be so, but your power will dwindle away to nothing here in Norway. Things have not turned out well for you."

"I do not think you can say that, Sir," said the earl. "It has often happened that now one, now the other, gains the victory. So has it gone with us, my relatives and yours, that sometimes one had the advantage, sometimes the other. I am little more than a child, so we were not well prepared to defend ourselves. We did not anticipate a fight. It may be that it will go better for us another time than now."

The king answered, "Do you not suspect things have come to such a point that in the future you gain neither victory nor defeat? Now you have come into my hands, and I have the opportunity to do to you such as I wish and decide whether I want you to live or die. Choose

now whether you wish to live or to die. If you want to live, then you shall become my earl and follow me always."

The earl replied, "Certainly it is up to you to decide this, Sir, and I suppose it would be commendable to become your earl and follow you. But, nevertheless, I do not want that because I was placed by my father and by my uncle, the most powerful King Knut, to rule over two parts of Norway. They will say, my friends and your enemies, that I have strayed greatly from my heritage if I were to submit to such a dishonorable choice considering that I ruled the greater part of this country. I am not able to tolerate such criticism, and because of this, I will not accept this condition."

Then Olaf spoke, "It is a shame that such an honorable man die. What will you offer to do for me if I let you live whole and unharmed?"

He asked what Olaf demanded.

"Nothing other than that you leave the country and give up the kingdom and swear me an oath that you will never hold battle against me. You must be willing to leave the country as I demand and swear me the oath that you will never return to Norway while I am alive, but if you do not honor this oath, the oath will destroy you. Wherever you should encounter my men, you must shoot neither arrows nor spears against them. You shall also swear that if you become aware of any people who want to seize the country away from me, whoever they may be, and if there are conspiracies against me, you shall warn me."

The earl answered, "This I will do."

Subsequently Hakon swore to King Olaf all the things that Olaf had stipulated. Olaf gave him and all his men quarter and righted the ship back up. Afterward Olaf and Hakon parted. Hakon traveled west to England to King Knut and told him what had been done and how he and Olaf parted. King Knut gave him a particularly warm welcome, and he gave the earl a place in his court, many royal grants, and land in his kingdom. Hakon remained there a long while.

23. OLAF STAYS WITH SIGURD SOW

Olaf now traveled south along the coast and east into Vik, where he drew up his ships onto shore and went during the fall into Oppland to Ringeriki to Sigurd Sow, his fosterer and stepfather. Both his mother and his stepfather welcomed him warmly. Sigurd prepared a banquet for him and all his troops there during the winter, and it has been called the most magnificent feast given in Norway. It is said that Sigurd provided them with fresh meat and ale every other day and had the

ale cup carried around the fire whether it was a feast day or a common day. That same winter King Olaf shared gold and silver with the men from Oppland. He gave money to powerful men, gaining for himself both popularity and followers. King Olaf was with Sigurd that winter in Oppland and pondered over a not insignificant plan.

24. OLAF COWS THE OPPLAND KINGS

In Oppland there were many petty kings and some young men of royal birth who were the wisest of men in cleverness; nevertheless, they met one still wiser than they in strategy.

So people tell about Olaf that he carried out the advice he had sought during the winter in discussions with Sigurd, his stepfather, namely, that he take captive early one morning eleven petty kings or men of royal birth. He could then decide whether he wanted to kill them or let them live and give them the choice to lay aside their royal titles "and become my liege men. You will then receive great honor from me, because I bestow a king's title to no man in this country except to me alone."

Most of them chose to serve him, but those who did not want to do so made a more difficult choice because Olaf had some blinded and sent away so that they never had honor in Norway afterward. It is said that he had one named Hraerek blinded and sent him out to Iceland to Gudmund the Powerful. He died there.

25. OLAF IS CHOSEN KING IN OPPLAND

After that Olaf Haraldsson was proclaimed king of Oppland and even more widely in Norway. People tell that during the winter Sigurd often let Olaf and his troops drink milk when others drank ale, and to many that seemed strange. But Sigurd asserted that this drink would destroy neither their wits nor their strength whenever these might be urgently needed, because this was never beyond expectation.

26. EARL SVEIN AND OLAF PREPARE TO BATTLE

Earl Svein Hakonarson was staying north in the land. When he heard that Olaf had come into the country and what things had been done to Hakon, his nephew, in his dealings with Olaf and his men, and when

he learned moreover that Olaf had subjugated all of Vik, likewise all of Oppland, and had been chosen king widely throughout Norway, he bristled with anger at this news. He gathered together troops and went with them south from his estate and intended to fight with Olaf. He expected his expedition to go more smoothly than that of Hakon, his nephew. Travelling with Svein were the greatest chieftains in the land: Erling Skjalgsson from Sola, Einar Paunch-shaker (an in-law of Svein, who was married to Bergljot, daughter of Hakon the Great), Kalf Arnason, and Harek from Tjøtta. Even though only these are named, there were also many other prominent men in the journey with Earl Svein. Now Earl Svein traveled south along the coast, held assemblies far and wide, and ordered up levies of men and ships. He had difficulty recruiting men and gained few followers. The levying did not go out south beyond Stad. The earl traveled east into Vik during Lent.

When spring came and the ice began to melt, King Olaf assembled troops, and he obtained long ships for himself. Sigurd Sow, his stepfather, was with him, and they prepared now to wrest the country from Svein. Olaf had had a large ship built during the winter, and on the foremost part of the prow was a king's head. He himself carved it. That ship was called Skeggi or Man's Head. King Olaf commanded that one himself. They sailed out along the coast of Vik, and anchored near Nesjar off Grenmar on Palm Sunday. Svein arrived first.

It is said that Olaf sent men to meet with Svein to request that they not fight on such a holy day as the one coming up but instead fight on the Monday after or else make a truce during Easter week and then fight afterward.

The earl answered, "This is nothing but trickery on his part for he wants to collect troops for himself during the time, but this shall not happen."

The messengers went back and told Olaf the earl's answer. Olaf said, "Whoever does not want a truce on a holy day shall not on that same day get the victory."

Early in the morning as soon as it was light, Svein prepared for battle and awaited Olaf.

Then Einar spoke with the earl, "Grant such peace as the king requests or at least have mass beforehand."

But the earl said he did not want that. However, Olaf and all his troops had mass and all divine services, and all ate a good morning meal before they went into battle. Afterward a fierce attack broke out. Olaf said that his men should protect themselves under shields while the enemy shot spears and arrows and send nothing back before the

shower of missiles had ended. Then when their ammunition was used up, **Olaf's** men were **to attack** and return **the same missiles** and **many others**, and so it was **done**. King Olaf had **many more troops** but **nevertheless** drew his ships together. So says Sighvat the Skald, who was with Olaf:

(14) The open-handed was able to raise
more troops to battle than the close-handed,
when the cheerful followers of the king
considered escaping from the wrath of the great king.
A battle was fought before the wide sea.
But for the king who was bereft of friends,
he who spared the money,
it became thin around the standard pole.

27. OF THE BATTLE OF NESJAR

The battle progressed in such a manner that king Olaf laid Man's Head against the ship of the earl, and there was a difference in the height of the decks. Olaf's were higher. So says Sighvat:

(15) It is known to me
how the warrior lay to Man's Head
east of Agder
near the earl.

This was a most violent battle. Many of the men in the earl's forces were killed because there was no shortage of missiles returning from Olaf's ships.

When Einar Paunch-shaker saw that the battle turned against them and they suffered heavy casualties, he said to Svein, "Let us flee from here because our troops are dying in great numbers, and we will not be captured if we do so."

The earl said he did not want to flee. Einar said, "Wise counsel is not equally shared between you and King Olaf, for twice he has acted decisively, but you have lost your head. There will be a great difference in your fates because you two have pursued such unlike decisions."

Then Einar became very angry, took his bow, laid an arrow on the bowstring, and shot **into Olaf's** ship. The arrow **struck the plank** in front of the **king** so hard **that the arrow** sank into the **board**. Afterward Einar shot another arrow at the raised deck toward Olaf, but a man leaped in

front of him with a shield, and the arrow shot through both the shield and the man and pinned him against the side of the ship near the king.

Olaf said, "I will not beg for a third shot from this man. Certainly someone should strike the bow from him."

Einar for the third time laid an arrow on the bowstring and did not intend to miss the king. Then things happened so quickly that it seemed to Einar there were two men to shoot at. But when he drew his bow, it broke apart in two pieces before him, and he did not know how to explain it.

The earl spoke, "What is it now, Einar? Did you break your bow?"

Einar answered, "The bow is not broken' rather all of Norway has slipped out of your hands."

Einar told his men that they should hoist the sails on his ship. After this was done, Einar tossed up the anchor into the earl's ship and forced him to sail with him out of the battle.

Earl Svein sailed over the Foldenford and south along the coast. He traveled with his forces to Denmark and east through Øresund and on to Sweden to meet with the Swedish king and tell him this news. The Swedish king invited the earl to stay with him, but the earl said he wanted to harry during the summer in the eastern Baltic region. He did so and during the fall he went east into Karelia. From there he raided the land in Russia but became ill and died that fall. There Earl Svein lost his life. Einar went back to Sweden and stayed for many years in the kingdom of the Swedish king north in Hälsingland and at times in Denmark.

28. THE ADVICE OF SIGURD SOW

Now even though Erling Skjalgsson, Kalf Arnason, Harek from Tjøtta, and many other landed men were powerful chieftains, nevertheless they had to flee just as the others had, because those who fought against them were more numerous and aggressive. Svein's entire force fled when he was gone. King Olaf won the victory and went ashore with Sigurd, his fosterer. They thanked God for the victory that He had given them and they raised a large cross there on the site.

Then Sigurd spoke to Olaf, "If you want my advice, you should have all the landed men who fled away from here today killed and every living soul accompanying them."

Olaf answered, "I do not want to reward God in such a manner for that glorious victory he has given me by killing many an honorable man here today."

"Certainly that is in keeping with God's will," said Sigurd, "and I do not say this because it concerns me. I will attend to my affairs so that I will have little need of you in this world. But I will tell you that you will have great opposition in your kingdom while you and these landed men whom you have let escape today are alive. As soon as they have gained some support for themselves, they will join forces against you, and they will drive you out of your kingdom. But because of the tumult that prevails against you from your enemies as long as you rule over your realm, when you depart from this world, you will be the saintliest of men, and we will then have great need of you."

Even though Sigurd spoke this, Olaf made the decision. And it has been said that in his counsel, Sigurd had revealed very great plans, and besides he also predicted what later actually happened.

29. OF OLAF AND HIS BROTHERS

Olaf had now conquered the entire kingdom of Norway, and he was proclaimed king over all of it. Olaf did away with all the petty kings in the country and had a united Norway under him, the first person since Harald Fairhair to do so. He was the sole ruler from Ægestaf, the most northerly point, all the way to the Götaälv in the east. Olaf was then twenty years old when he came to Norway, and he was king for fifteen years.

One time when Olaf and his stepfather Sigurd were having a conversation, Sigurd's sons, Halfdan and Harald, ran to them. Halfdan was then seven years old. Sigurd took the lad upon his knee and asked Olaf whether he thought the boy would become a great person. Olaf said he was unable to see that clearly, so he now talked to the boy and asked him what he wanted most to own.

"I intend," said he, "to own as many cows as can stand packed thickly together on all sides of Lake Mjøsa."

Olaf answered, "This boy shows great ambition. I expect that he will become a wealthy man and an influential and powerful farmer."

Afterward Harald ran toward him, and Olaf set him on his knee and asked, "What would you like most to own, brother?"

"I intend," said Harald, "to own so many house servants that they are able to eat up my brother Halfdan's cows at one meal."

"Yes," said Olaf, "You have great things in mind."

He now ran away. Sigurd asked what sort of person that boy might become.

Olaf answered, "He will lack neither intelligence, power, nor followers, but I do not know how forbearing he will prove to be. He will not want for fame and he will win great honor."¹⁴

30. THE DESCRIPTION OF KING OLAF

King Olaf was a handsome man, impressive in overall appearance, solidly built but not tall, broad-shouldered, and bright eyed. He had light brown hair that fell in curls, a red beard, a ruddy complexion, regular features, a broad forehead, wide-set eyes, well-formed limbs, and small feet. He was freckled, steady of eye, amiable, and reliable. Olaf was the wisest of men and saw what was to his best advantage if he had time to consider it, but if something happened suddenly, things became dangerous. Olaf greatly respected churches, priests, and everything pertaining to the Christian faith. He bestowed gifts upon good men, clothed the cold, gave money to the fatherless, gave alms to the widows and foreigners, comforted the grieving, and supported all honest, upright men both with sound advice and other help. Olaf was harsh with highwaymen and heathens, severe with stealers, and relentless with ruffians. He kept the chieftains within bounds and thus all the common people. He punished robbers severely, those who violated God's commandments, but forgave humbly those who had transgressed against him. The opinion of the people was divided concerning his reign when he was here on this earth. Many called him hubristic and haughty, ruthless and revengeful, close and covetous, ferocious and fractious, an arrogant man and an ambitious man who wanted to be regarded as a world ruler in every respect. But those who knew better called him mannerly and modest, good-hearted and gentle, mild and moderate, astute and affable, trusty and true, foresighted and faithful to his word, munificent and magnificent, widely acclaimed and well-tempered, powerful and principled, righteous and reverent, an able ruler and well disciplined, and one who kept well the laws of God and of virtuous men. Those to whom Olaf appeared thus have judged correctly, as many examples will prove. If he suspected that certain things would not be everything he himself desired but rather God's foresight, then he often disregarded his own wishes and did God's will and sought always God's glory more than his own reputation, according to the opinion of just and honest people. And the more Olaf glorified God in his life, the

¹⁴ This statement foreshadows the career of Harald Sigurdarson, who later became king of Norway and was known as Harald the Hard Ruler.

more God allowed his glory to shine on him, but Olaf remained ever more humble both before God and man.

31. CONCERNING THE STRENGTHENING OF CHRISTIANITY IN NORWAY

As soon as Olaf had become absolute king over all of Norway, he made it his primary purpose to strengthen Christianity in the land, because the Christian faith had been in great decline from the time Olaf Tryggvason had preached Christianity in Norway to the time when Olaf Haraldsson came into the land. At that time, Norway was completely Christianized when he lived, as well as all those lands that Olaf Tryggvason had converted. Olaf Haraldsson gave money, on the advice of Bishop Grimkel, to those churches that Olaf Tryggvason had had erected, so that a mark's weight of silver should be paid every year to each district church as lease for the church lands.

Olaf decreed the laws called Sef's Laws. They prevailed afterward in Oppland and east around Vik. There are three law codes in Norway: Sef's Laws, the Frostathing's Laws, and the laws called the Gulathing's Laws, that Hakon, the foster son of Aethelstan, had drawn up.

32. THE NORTHMEN ARE COWED INTO CHRISTIANITY

King Olaf placed such importance on the observation of Christianity that there was no man in Norway who could do other than uphold the true faith or suffer death. Thus it went all throughout the country where formerly the comprehensive support for Christianity was lacking. There was no valley so remote nor island so distant in his domain where a heathen man might be found.

33. OF DALA-GUDBRAND

Gudbrand was the name of a man who was called Dala-Gudbrand. He was the most powerful man in the Dales at that time. It is told that Gudbrand had one son. When Gudbrand heard the news that King Olaf had come to Lom and compelled people who had cast off their faith to turn back to Christianity, it is said that Gudbrand had a war-arrow dispatched and summoned all the people of the Dales to the farmstead called Hundorp for a meeting with him. And all of them came;

countless people were there because the river Lågen lay nearby, and the banks of the river were densely settled. It was possible to go both by ship or on land to the assembly.

When they arrived, Gudbrand stood up and began his speech in this manner, "I have had reported to me that a man has come to Lom who is named Olaf. He calls himself our king and complains bitterly because we have turned back to the faith that our forefathers had, yet we know that in this controversy our kinsmen were both more illustrious and, moreover, wiser than we. He has heard that we possess new gods and calls them powerless because he vows to break them. He says, furthermore, that he has a better god, stronger and more powerful. It is strange how anyone would listen to him blaspheme our gods and how he dares to speak such. It seems remarkable to me if our god will not avenge himself. Nevertheless, I expect when we carry out Thor, our god who has always aided us, from his splendid house which stands here on this farmstead, Olaf and likewise his men will become frightened, and so his gods will come to naught."

When Gudbrand had said this and much more, all the farmers whooped in unison and said that Olaf should never get away from there if he came to a meeting with them "and he would not dare to travel any farther south in the Dales." Later on they decided that eight hundred and forty men were to go north scouting through the Dales to Breiden. At the head of the troops was Gudbrand's son. He was then twenty-eight years old. Many other distinguished sons of farmers were in the expedition. They traveled until they came to a farm called Hof and they stayed there three nights. Many troops came to them, those who had fled from Lesja and Vågå, and those who did not wish to submit to Christianity.

34. OF THE DISGRACEFUL JOURNEY OF THE DALES MEN

Now it is to be told that after Olaf's arrival, he left behind priests at Lom and Vågå. Afterward the king went over the mountain and came down at Sel and stayed there during the night. He was informed that there was a large host ahead of him; those who were at Breiden were also informed. The king continued his journey, and the farmers readied themselves to battle against him. It is said that the king prepared himself early during the morning to depart from Sel, clad himself and all his troops in armor, and journeyed south along the plains of Sel. He did not stop until he arrived at Breiden and saw there before him an immense

army prepared for battle. He then drew up his troops into formation, and he himself was in the foremost wing. He addressed the men of the Dales and bade them become Christians. But they said, "You must have come for another reason today other than to mock us," and they at once began fighting. There were heavy casualties and the farmers retreated. Moreover, the son of Gudbrand was captured and along with him many prominent farmers' sons. They were given quarter, and all were together during the night.

Later on the king told Gudbrand's son, "You shall go back to your father and say that I will arrive there shortly."

Afterward the son went back and told his father the bad news and of the great loss of lives, "and no more than two hundred and forty men have come back from the forces who went reconnoitering from here. I advise you, father, not to fight against this man."

"I can hear," said Gudbrand, "that all your heart has gone out of you. You left home with inauspicious omens, and your journey will be held up to you for a long time. You believe immediately the wild nonsense that that man spreads, although he has heaped total disgrace upon you and your forces." And no more is mentioned of their talk at this time, but during the following night, Gudbrand dreamed that a man came to him, radiant and awe-inspiring, and he spoke to him, "Your son went on no victory journey against King Olaf, and you will accomplish much less if you intend to fight against the king. You and all your troops will fall, and the ravens and wolves will slit open your dead bodies."

When he awoke, he was extremely frightened by this dream and thought it of great significance and told the dream to a man called Thord Paunch-belly. He was the second most important man in the Dales. When Gudbrand had told the dream, Thord Paunch-belly replied, "The selfsame one appeared to me."

During the morning they had horns blown to summon people and said that they thought it advisable to have an assembly with the king, "and find out what he proclaims in his religion and see then what is most plausible but let us first test what proof of truth he presents to us."

35. OF THE MEETING OF THE KING AND THE FARMERS

Now it is to be told that Gudbrand said to his son, "You and twelve men with you shall go to meet with this king who gave you quarter in battle," and so it was done.

After that they went and met with the king and stated their message. They said that the farmers wanted to have an assembly with him and wanted to arrange a truce between the king and the farmers. The king expressed his approval with that and thought it wise to agree that they have a truce during the beginning of their negotiations. They agreed then to a truce while the meeting was being held. And they went back when things were settled and told Gudbrand and Thord Paunch-belly that the truce was set, "and the king was completely prepared to grant you this but not because he was afraid to fight with you."

Afterward the king went to the farmstead called Listad and was there five nights. Then the king went to meet with the farmers and hold an assembly with them. The rain was heavy during the day.

When the assembly was opened, the king stood up and spoke, "Lesja, Lom, and Vågå have all accepted Christianity, which they had previously rejected, and have broken down all their carved gods and trust now in one God, The One who created Heaven and earth. We now want to ask you to make the same decision. Let us be all as one man and believe in Jesus Christ who created all things."

And when the king had spoken this and much more that was noteworthy, he sat down.

Now Gudbrand rose up and replied, "We know nothing of whom you speak. But I find in your speech that you claim this one is God, whom neither you nor anyone else can see. I cannot see how I can ask him to give me help if I am unable to perceive him. But we have a god whom we are able to see every day. He is not out today because of the rainy weather, but I expect that if you see our god, he will strike fear in your heart, and he will seem to you terrible in his greatness. But if it is true, as you say, that your god is as mighty as you maintain, then you have him cause the weather to be cloudy tomorrow, and we will meet then."

36. STILL MORE OF THE KING'S DEALINGS WITH THE FARMERS OF THE DALES

Now nothing more is told of their talk. The assembly was dissolved for that day, but they all agreed that they should meet the following day. Afterward the king went home to his quarters, and with him went Gudbrand's son as hostage, but the king gave them another man in exchange for the son.

It is also said that the king asked Gudbrand's son how their god was constructed.

He said that their god was built in a likeness of Thor, "and he is both tall and sturdy and he has a mighty hammer in his hand. This god is hollow inside and built underneath are high pedestals. They are hollow and closed from below. The statue stands upon them and between him and the pedestals there is a hollow space. He lacks neither gold nor silver adornment. Five loaves of bread, along with fresh meat, are brought to him every day."

Afterward they went to bed, but the king was awake during the night and was at his prayers. When day came, the king went to mass, then to his meal, and afterward to the assembly. The weather had turned out as Gudbrand had wished the previous day. All the people had come to the assembly. Then the bishop stood up in his bishop's robes. He had a miter on his head, held a crosier in his hand, and proclaimed the Gospel before the people. He told of many miracles that God had performed and ended his speech extremely well. Afterward he sat down.

Next Thord Paunch-belly stood up and spoke thus, "The horned man, he who has a staff in his hand bent on top like a ram's horn, has said many things. But now inasmuch as you and your companions claim your god is able to perform many miracles, let him make the sun shine tomorrow. We will meet in the morning before sunrise, and let us do then one of two things: Let us agree about this matter or fight."

Now they parted for the time being.

There was a man named Kolbein. He was in the company of King Olaf. He was born in the Fjord district. His outfit always included a sword at his side and a large coarse club in his hand. The king spoke to him and said he should remain closest to him in the morning.

Afterward he said to his men, "Go in the night if you know where the farmers' ships are and hack holes in all of them and drive away their horses from the farms where they are now."

They did as the king ordered them and performed their task thoroughly and speedily. But the king was at prayers the entire night and asked that God should aid them in their troubles with His grace and mercy.

37. CONCERNING THE SPEECH OF DALA-GUDBRAND

So it is said that the king went during the morning first to devotions, then to mass, and afterward to the assembly. Some of the farmers had already arrived. Next they saw a large crowd of farmers coming to the

assembly, and they bore among them a monstrous image in the likeness of a man, totally embellished with gold and silver. And when the farmers who were already at the assembly saw it, all of them leaped up and bowed before the monster. After that it was set down in the middle of the assembly-field. The farmers sat on one side, and on the other side sat the troops of King Olaf.

So it is told that Gudbrand rose up and said, "Where is your god now, Olaf?" I expect that he carries his chin whiskers rather low. It also seems to me as though your bragging and that of the horned man, whom you call your bishop and who sits near you, is rather less than yesterday, because now our god has come who is able to create such storms so that your god will not be able to come to the assembly. But our god looks at you with the sharpest eyes, and you are full of fear and dare not raise up your eyes to look at him. Make that decision that befits you best: Cast out your superstition and turn back in reconciliation with our god, who has borne your offences so patiently. As revengeful as he is accustomed to be, it seems to us remarkable that he spares you so long, unless it is for this reason: He foresees that you will turn back to him and worship him."

38. THE FARMERS OF THE DALES ADOPT CHRISTIANITY

But before the king stood up, he spoke with Kolbein the Strong, so that the farmers did not notice. "If it happens during my speech," said he, "that the farmers look away from their god, then strike it a blow with your club as hard as you can."

Afterward the king stood up and spoke, "You have said a great deal to us, Gudbrand, this morning, and you argue cleverly that you are unable to see our god, but we expect that shortly he will come to us. And I wonder why you threaten us with your god who is both blind and deaf and can protect neither himself nor others and never comes out of his place unless others drag him behind them. Something tells me that in a short time disaster will befall him. Everyone look now into the east and behold: There our God now comes with great light!"

Then the sun rose over the mountain. All of the farmers looked toward it, and at that moment, Kolbein struck their god so that it broke all asunder. The farmers looked back when they heard the crash and saw that their god had fallen and broken completely apart, and out of **their gold** leaped mice as **large** as cats, **adders**, toads, and **serpents**. **The farmers** became so frightened with **these** events, which **happened**

simultaneously since God wanted it to be so, that some fled to their ships and some to their pack animals. But when they went to launch their ships, the seawater rushed in and filled them. The farmers did not think it advisable to sail away in their ships in that condition, and those who ran to their horses found no animals there. Now a great din arose from the farmers.

Then King Olaf had them summoned and said that he wanted to talk with them and ordered them not to behave in such a manner. After that they turned back and reopened the assembly.

The king stood up and spoke. "I do not know," said the king, "what was the reason for this uproar and leaping about that you did. Now you can see what your god was able to do for you when you carried your gold and treasures, food and provisions to him. You saw what evil beings consumed it: mice and snakes and adders and toads. Now they will fare badly who trust in such and do not want to cease their foolishness. Take your gold and treasures that have fallen here on the ground. Take them home to your women and never again place them upon sticks or stones as sacrificial objects. And here are the two alternatives we give you: Either you adopt Christianity or fight with me today in battle, and let that one, whom the God we trust in wills, gain the victory."

Afterward Gudbrand stood up and said, "We have suffered great harm through our god. And because he is unable to help us, it seems to me that your god is mightier, and our god is very insignificant as soon as he does not have to deal with us alone. We will reward him in this way: We will cease to believe in him, and we will glorify that God whom you worship and direct all our faith to him."

Afterward all those were baptized who were unbaptized, and those who were Christians earlier turned back to Christianity and remained firm in the true faith. Subsequently many clerics from Olaf's forces were placed here in this district, and it is said that Gudbrand had a **church** built **on his farmstead** and gave to the church valuable properties **from the land he owned**.

Now King Olaf and Gudbrand parted as good friends.

39. THE RAUMAR ARE BEATEN INTO CHRISTIANITY

Afterward Olaf went to Hedmark and converted many people there to the true faith. From there he went to Hadeland and Ringeriki and all people submitted to the faith that the **king** proclaimed. **From there** Olaf went to Oslo and stayed a few days. **Now** the people of Romerike learned that

King Olaf was preparing to come up there, and they assembled together large forces. The king readied himself to go to that place and met the farmers on the other side of the river Nitja. The farmers at once set upon them and fought against King Olaf, but it soon grew too hot for the farmers. They retreated, and many of their men were slain. When they were beaten into betterment, they accepted Christianity. From there King Olaf went into Solør and did not stop until he reached Sweden.

40. THE BOUNDARIES OF KING OLAF'S REALM

These are the boundaries of King Olaf Haraldsson's realm, which he conquered with God's will, and I will now list the borderlands: Glaumstein in the south, Nanes in the north, Eidaskog in the east, and Anglesey Sound in the west. King Olaf governed these people with God's will and decreed the laws that he gave them to be the laws of the land. From that time each king was obligated to observe them.

41. OF THE STRIFE BETWEEN THE SWEDISH KING AND THE NORWEGIAN KING

For a long time, there had been great animosity between Olaf the Swede and King Olaf Haraldsson, and each had killed many of the other's people. King Olaf the Swede said that King Olaf Haraldsson had occupied his tributary lands. Both sides had killed one another's men, and each of them had burned down the other's settlements. It stemmed from this: Olaf the Stout had plundered in Sweden, and it came about that Olaf Haraldsson had acquired many valuable things belonging to the Swedish Olaf, which he had stored in Oppland. Also a part of Norway belonging to Svein and Hakon had paid tribute to Olaf the Swede before King Olaf had come into the land. Now Olaf the Swede called an assembly and told about how much damage Olaf had done them there in the country and how many could remember painful grievances against him, and in addition, how Olaf Haraldsson took into his own possession Olaf the Swede's domain in Norway, killed his friends, and drove some out of the country. He asked them now to support him and avenge him. By now there was so much hostility between them that no person dared go on trading journeys between the two countries.

42. KING OLAF SUMMONS HJALTI FOR MEDIATION

The inhabitants of Norway thought the situation very detrimental and asked King Olaf to seek a solution for the people so that the hostility might lessen. The king thought about it, but a solution appeared to be fraught with great danger.

Now he decided on a plan and sent his men on a ship out to Iceland to meet with Hjalti Skeggjason and ask him to come to King Olaf. "The king wishes that you, after careful consideration, suggest a plan to secure peace between the two countries."

Hjalti answered them, "It seems amazing to me that the king has requested this of me, but, nevertheless, at the risk of my life, I do not want to ignore his summons." He pondered the mission and how it might be accomplished.

Afterward he went on the journey with them. The trip went well, and they came off the high sea and sailed south along the coast between the market towns. King Olaf was then north in Trondheim. The people asked Hjalti why he did not want to meet the king and said that his trip would have the greatest good luck if they met. He answered, and declared that even though he hoped for the king's luck, nonetheless, he decided during the trip that their meeting would not take place at present. He devised a plan. After that they sailed and came near Rogaland to meet Bjorn, the king's marshal. Hjalti asked him to go with him. The king had stipulated that he should choose twelve landed men, whomsoever he wanted. Bjorn now joined them and they went to Kungahälla. When they came into Sweden, they procured horses for themselves and rode to meet the king. Altogether there were twenty. They greeted the king with due deference, and he asked who these splendid men were. Hjalti said they were Norwegians. The king was troubled and fell silent.

Then Hjalti said, "We who have come here, Master, now have those tax revenues that you rightly were entitled to collect. We are obliged to show honor to you."

The king answered, "You have behaved well and honorably toward us. Did you meet a certain stout man¹⁵?"

Hjalti answered, "We did not meet him." And this was in accordance with Hjalti's carefully considered plan.

¹⁵ Olaf the Swede is referring to King Olaf Haraldsson, also called Olaf the Stout.

"If it is true that you have not met Olaf and that you have brought these tokens of friendship to us, then you shall be welcome here. But we must be certain of this: You must swear you have not met the stout man."

Hjalti was prepared to swear to this, and so he did. The king now welcomed him with high spirits and made splendid arrangements for them. They were very well treated.

That winter, Egil, a powerful chieftain, came to Olaf the Swede's court. He was the foster father of Astrid, the daughter of the king. He was given a warm welcome. The king held Hjalti in high esteem, for he appeared to be a wise man, and often discussed his difficult problems with him. It seemed to the king that Hjalti offered good suggestions, and he often related in his presence how helpful Hjalti was to him. The king was accustomed to meet frequently with his daughter Ingigerd, and he told her much about this man and asked her what she thought of him.

She answered, "I think that he certainly is a wise man and has many good qualities."

The king answered, "Then I shall honor him by allowing him to talk to you."

43. THE PLAN OF HJALTI AND OLAF THE SWEDISH KING

Now it frequently happened that Hjalti went to talk to her, and they discussed many things. Bjorn had a great pain in his eye and seldom put in an appearance. Hjalti spoke to her often about King Olaf Haraldsson and how unlike he was from other men in every respect. He now told her his errand and asked her for good advice concerning the kings. She said it was unlikely that they would come to a reconciliation but asked him nevertheless to discuss this with her father, the king, because he was greatly troubled that there was such great enmity between them. She said it would be the greatest good luck if they were able to achieve a peace negotiation between them, "and it must seem to you rather unlikely that you will be able to bring him tribute so often."

Hjalti said that one thing could be hoped for, namely, that the peace treaty would stand for a long time if the king would marry her to King Olaf Haraldsson. He said also that it would be unanimously acclaimed that she had married the noblest man and that she would achieve great honor from this. Then people might also surmise that those territories that her father thought he owned in Norway would then accompany her home as a dowry and he would then be able to see

what was more praiseworthy—whether to give up these territories with such great honor, or whether to own these territories, which he now retains only with great danger, or more probably, which he might lose.

His arguments fell on receptive ears, and she said she would support his case, "because every word he says is true."

King Olaf had a great friendship with Hjalti. It happened that while they drank one evening, Hjalti brought up the matter. "Master," said he, "we, your friends, are greatly grieved that your kingdom is given over to strife, and you do not receive the royal revenues that you are entitled to have, although we would willingly uphold those collection customs with you. But Olaf the Stout's power is now so great that it seems unlikely that this would happen, and certainly it will arouse his anger."

The king answered, "We will support you with so much aid that you will be fearless before him."

"Yes," said Hjalti, "we believe that this might be so. For all the kindness you have shown me, I owe you so much that I can scarcely repay you. Now it seems to me that your honor would be greatest if you were able to make peace."

The king answered, "I trust that you are eager to gain great honor for us. But our disagreements have become too serious for a reconciliation to be possible."

"Master," said Hjalti, "that is true. It is disgraceful how much has been done against you, first in harrying, later in plundering the land, and in the slaying of noble men. But Olaf's power has increased so greatly that you can see it is not likely to diminish. Now take into consideration, Master, what earlier was done against him when his father was slain."

"It is true," said the king.

Then Hjalti spoke, "So it will come about that God still will give you wisdom so that you are able to retain completely your honor and your property, which you have owned in the beginning, and all other. God has given you power, great authority, and insight, for you were destined to understand the reasons of your Creator. What would give you greater honor than to marry your daughter to such a man and king who has become the most famous in northern lands? You would do well, Master, to take that advice which is most proper and honorable and befits your nobility and enhances you and is to the best advantage in every way to both your kingdoms."

Now the king fell silent and reflected that this appeared to be truthfully spoken. King Olaf discussed this matter with Ingigerd and took counsel with her. She gave an answer and said that he should

make the decision for her that seemed best to him. She said she wanted earnestly that his friends be more rather than fewer, and that as matters stood, it was unlikely things would come to a good end if any other decision were made.

He answered, "If King Olaf wants to come to our meeting with humility and shows that he wants friendship with us, stops the hostilities, and pursues this agreement and other concessions with all sincerity, then we shall not disregard his proposal."

Hjalti answered. "Master," said he, "may God reward you for your words. We who want to do you honor everywhere also will thank you. And we eagerly offer to go to mediate between you two. It is proper that we stay here awhile and work at it." Now this plan was concluded.

44. HJALTI COMES TO NORWAY

Hjalti now departed from Olaf the Swedish King with honor and good gifts and went to meet with King Olaf Haraldsson, joining him north in a market town.¹⁶ The king greeted him and asked where he had stayed during the winter and why he had not come to visit him.

Hjalti answered, "In the winter we were a welcome guest with Olaf, the Swedish king."

He replied, "We would not expect you to seek friendship and hospitality from our enemy."

Hjalti answered, "We did not think we would be able to fulfill this journey unless we did it in this way. We knew that we would be able to do little to enhance your honor if we said truthfully that we had met you because we did not receive any esteem until we swore that we had never called upon you. But since we didn't dare to lie or trust so greatly in our good luck as to swear falsely, we decided upon this plan to pay him land dues. And because of his sagacity, Master, in conclusion he agreed to this: You two are to arrange your meeting to take place east by the Götaälv in such a manner that brings the greatest honor to both of you."

The king was very pleased with that and now Hjalti was welcome there. The king gave him good gifts and he went home afterwards to Iceland. He felt that he had undergone the most noble journey.

¹⁶ The Old Norse term for a market town '*kaupangr*' was occasionally used to specifically denote Nidaros. The translators originally used Nidaros in this instance, but since the Old Norse text utilizes Nidaros elsewhere, the editors decided to render the more neutral 'market town.'

45. KING JARISLEIF MARRIES INGIGERD

King Olaf came to the meeting, and now the two namesakes met. They discussed the matter between them, and King Olaf Haraldsson brought forth his proposal to marry Ingigerd. Since many urged the marriage and it appeared to be the most sound counsel, Olaf the Swede thought he should not refuse to be King Olaf's kinsman by marriage. At this meeting King Olaf betrothed himself to Ingigerd, and the two kings parted at this time. Each one now turned home to his kingdom, and each now basked in his power and esteem.

It happened one time that Olaf the Swedish king went bird hunting to amuse himself. He hunted successfully during the day and came home toward evening, boasted greatly about the hunt, and showed off his catch.

Ingigerd said, "You do not need to boast so much about this catch, because this catch would seem paltry to him who overpowered eleven kings in one morning."

The king became very angry and said, "You think a marriage to King Olaf is highly desirable, but I can tell you that he shall never marry you for these words."

She answered, "Then it is because of my misfortune and your malice and arrogance."

Afterward envoys were sent between the king of Russia and the Swedish king. It ended thus that Olaf gave him in marriage his daughter Ingigerd along with a large dowry. He was named Jarisleif. Now this news was reported to King Olaf Haraldsson, and he felt he had suffered great ignominy and disgrace. It affected him so deeply that he drank little and wanted to be alone for long spells. This distressed many of his friends, and all those who wanted to receive his support were deeply grieved. The court was now very depressed over this and yet most of all the king himself at the beginning.

46. KING OLAF MARRIES ASTRID

One time it happened that Astrid, daughter of the Swedish king, made a trip from Götaland along with Egil, her foster father, and came to visit King Olaf. She went into a loft where he rested and greeted him, but he did not answer.

She said that Ingigerd sent him and his kingdom warm greetings, "and said, Master, that you should forget your sorrows and rejoice with your friends; resume your good customs as becomes you; be of

good cheer as befits a king's honor and elevates his nobility; end your grieving; receive joy from your subjects and your subjects from you."

The king was silent, but she said, "This is not an opportune time to meet you," and went away. She came to him the next day and said, "We would guess, Master, that we must seem persistent in trying to talk to you. Ingigerd sends you this article that you can see here: a silk shirt embroidered with gold. She asks you to accept it. She said that along with it you should have at your disposal anything in her realm that **you yourself might want**, and **your friends** also should come there in **high favor**. Furthermore, she said that she would spare nothing and do everything she could to increase **your honor**."

He remained silent. She went away and met with her foster father. He told her that she could look for few words from the king. She declared that it had not happened that he had contradicted her, even though he had not answered her, "but still I will go to meet him once again."

Egil left the decision to her. She said she would visit him a third time, and went to the king and said, "May the all powerful God watch over you now and evermore and at all times and give you victory, honor and prosperity in all things. Ingigerd has ordered me to honor you in every respect above all men. And because you are so filled with sorrow, then there is all the more need to gladden you. Even though it was not the good fortune of our king that such a marriage should take place as intended, one might still gain a certain redress out of this, because there will be no consensus about which dishonor is greater—that which King Olaf did to you in breach of promise or that he shall neither decide nor know in advance to whom my hand in marriage is given. But rather than not attain your happiness, I will, with Ingigerd's recommendation, pledge myself to you without my father's consent or advice. It is better to ask for a good marriage and a good king than to marry a dishonorable man, even though he bears a king's name. And even if it is borne out that Ingigerd is the most outstanding person, it is the words of wise men that that woman is most noble who serves." She stood up then and intended to go away and bade the king and all his kingdom to live in God's peace.

The king rose up and begged her not to go away. She sat down and they discussed the matter. In conclusion King Olaf betrothed himself to her and **held** a wedding and a magnificent feast. The king regained his cheerfulness and tended to his kingdom. King Olaf at that time owned the entire kingdom of Norway as an independent country. King Olaf and Astrid had a daughter, who was called Ulfhild. She was given in marriage to a duke in Saxony named Otto. They had a son, who was called Magnus. Later on he became a duke in Saxony. He

was the handsomest of men. His hair on one side of the part was blond, and the other side, red. King Olaf Haraldsson also had a son named Magnus, called Magnus the Good, with a woman named Alfild. She was the washerwoman of Astrid, but she was scarcely without luck.¹⁷

Olaf the Swede also married a woman who was called Astrid. She was Wendish. Their son was Onund, whose other name was Jacob. Their daughter was Ingigerd, who was betrothed to King Olaf and whom King Jarisleif married afterward in Russia.

47. OF THE TRIBUTE CLAIMS OF KING KNUT

It happened one summer that King Knut sent a ship from England and selected the most trusted of his men, a man called Sigurd. He ordered him to collect tribute from King Olaf, as his forefathers had done, and make Olaf either pay tribute or justify his refusal legally. Sigurd said that certainly he would try but said he did not know whether the taxes would be collected or not. Now twelve altogether went on the journey and arrived in Norway. They met the king east in Vik, delivered Knut's message, and promised his friendship if King Olaf would yield.

The king answered and said he still had not decided whether he wanted to accept a bribe or a negligible amount and thus deprive the land of its freedom. "Give me a little while in order that I may seek counsel from my friends as to whether these laws of rights exist allowing the English king to claim tribute here."

Afterward an assembly was summoned. The king addressed it, and no one bore witness that he was obligated to pay any taxes. He summoned another assembly in Hordaland. There the same matter was discussed and it ended the same way. The king summoned a third assembly in Oppland. He spoke and wanted advice from his countrymen saying he would not oppose any laws if they were brought as testimony.

A man named Thorgrim stood up at the assembly and said, "There is no one, be he ever so old, who can remember a time when the people of Norway were tributary to the Danes. We remember that for a while the Danes collected tribute, but we believe that we were freed from this on the day King Svein died. Thus my father told me and his

¹⁷ This cryptic remark foreshadows that Alfild's son, Magnus the Good, was chosen king of Norway after Olaf Haraldsson was killed.

father told him. Look also to the future, Master. He will always expect tribute from you if you pay out this one time."

Now the assembly closed and the messengers wanted to know his decision. The king replied, "We have no obligation at this time to pay taxes, but if King Knut covets our kingdom so much, there is the alternative that we brandish our weapons and fight. Still I suspect that to him it appears more comfortable to sleep in England than to face our weapons."

The messengers went home and told the king these words that were spoken. The king answered, "He is right. We will not fight alone against him; nevertheless, so it is said, from under each rib come cold-hearted plans. We shall remember these words."

King Olaf was greatly disliked by the Danes. They claimed that he had taken their tributary country. Up until that time there was peaceful trading with Norway, but because of these disagreements there was no peace, for all of the greatest Danish chieftains were in England at that time and could do nothing about it. King Olaf had the market town in Nidaros greatly strengthened, erected a church there, and donated much money to it. He also had churches built in each district and provided generously for their maintenance.

48. OF THE KING'S ABILITY TO GOVERN AND THE LANDED MEN

When King Olaf had become the sole ruling king over Norway, he made those laws, with the advice of the wisest men in the country, that have prevailed ever after. Then when Sigurd Sow, his stepfather, had died, there was no man in Norway called king except Olaf Haraldsson. That had not happened in Norway since Harald Fairhair had given up the kingship. Since then the rule had always been among the district kings. King Olaf won first the kingship of all of Norway and gathered tribute from the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Isles, and Ottar recited:

(16) You have held justly
the power of good kings.
The Shetlanders
are acknowledged as your subjects;
no young battle-eager king
had been east on the earth
before we recognized you as king,
and you conquered the islands in the west.

King Olaf was powerful within the country. He was prone to severe punishment, but a wise and intelligent man. It came about that the influential men resented that the king was imperious, self-willed, and allowed justice to fall equally on the rich and the poor. Likewise some of the landed men at that time were also impetuous and headstrong and wanted to yield in their affairs neither to king nor earl. There were also some who claimed title to the land because of their ancestry, tracing their pedigree to men of royal birth and great chieftains. Now powerful men stiffened their opposition against the king. The foremost of them was Erling Skjalgsson, who then was a very great man in Norway and the most powerful of all the landed men. Thorir Hound was likewise a powerful man. He had gone to Bjarmaland and killed a good man named Karli. The king sent men there, and Thorir attained with difficulty a settlement for his evil deed. Afterward he and many other landed men left the country, and they became unfaithful to the king in their plans and intentions.

Erling Skjalgsson treated his house servants better than other landed men. He held drinking parties all twelve months and entertained his men except for that one time when they had to be in his forces during the summer for a while. He also had many enslaved men. He let them work until the time when he gave them their freedom, determined how much work they were to perform, and then took others in their place. These men had acquired great wealth for themselves and owned much grain. King Olaf had banned the selling of stores of grain all over the entire northern part of the land.

49. OF ASBJORN AND THORIR SEAL

Asbjorn was the name of a man. He was the son of Sigurd and nephew of Erling Skjalgsson. This man, Asbjorn from Halogaland, left his estates to go south. It was his custom to prepare a feast every fall, but this time he received no grain, so he met with Erling and told him.

"King Olaf," said Erling, "has banned the sale of grain. But I have authority over those men who have been enslaved men, and the king has no jurisdiction in this case." He handed over large quantities of grain.

Asbjorn left afterward and came to the island where Thorir Seal, a steward of the king, had charge and lay at anchor there. Thorir's men saw that his ships were laden, so Thorir summoned Asbjorn to him and asked who had sold him grain. Asbjorn said that that one had done it who had the right to do so, namely, Erling Skjalgsson.

Thorir Seal answered, "Erling insists on defying the king's will." Thorir went to his men and had them confiscate all of the grain, and after that he took the sail that Asbjorn owned, a costly treasure made of Halogaland cloth, and he exchanged in its place one wretched sail from a merchant ship. With that they parted from one another. Asbjorn traveled back home to the north in disgrace. Like his father, he was not a mild, forbearing man. People roundly criticized him.

Another time he traveled from the north during Lent with two or three ships and two hundred and forty men. He came near the island and anchored his ships in a hidden creek. He went up alone and learned that King Olaf was to take part in a feast on the island during Easter week.

Asbjorn went that same evening to the feast where the king had arrived. He moved about among the cooks. When people were seated, they asked how it had gone with Asbjorn and his crew. Thorir recounted the story and said that the man had borne everything well until he interchanged the sails, but then he spoke with almost a sob in his throat.

At this moment Asbjorn came into the room, turned at once to Thorir, who stood directly before the king, and said, when he struck a blow at him, that now the sobbing had disappeared from his throat. He hewed so hard that the head flew off, and blood splashed onto the dish before the king. The king ordered them to seize Asbjorn and kill him.

50. OF THORARIN NEFJOLFSSON AND THE KING

There was at that time within the king's bodyguard Skjalg, the son of Erling Skjalgsson, who at once sprang over the table, went before the king, and asked the king to spare this man. The king declared the man had committed such great crimes that he could not receive clemency, for "first he broke my commandment; now he killed this man at so holy a time; and even though it is of little consequence that blood splashed on me and on my food, I will not grant pardon because it is not right for such things that so blatantly flout Christianity to go unpunished."

Skjalg asked the king for the right to have sole judgment in Asbjorn's case, but the king refused. Now Skjalg turned to where Thorarin Nefjolfsson sat, who was at that time with the king. He was a wise man and highly esteemed by the king. Skjalg asked him to see to it that Asbjorn would not be killed before Sunday. He said he would try. Afterwards Skjalg went out, and Thorarin asked the king what was to be done with the farmer. The king said that he would be killed. Thorarin answered, "Master, you will not want to break the law and

kill a man at night."¹⁸ The king answered, "Who compels you to seek quarter for this man?"

"No one," said he, "but this we know: You will not break the law."

Now the death of the man was stayed. It was the custom of the king between matins and the mass to settle disputes among his people. It was already late; the mass and the morning meal had ended. The king asked where the prisoner was and said that now the time had come to kill him.

Thorarin answered, "Master, now it is too late to kill the man."

The king replied, "You exert yourself greatly on behalf of this man."

Now that day passed and Friday came. The king held to his usual habits, and after divine services, he ordered them to take Asbjorn and kill him.

Again Thorarin spoke, "That you must not do, Master. Since you gloriously upheld the first Friday, you must not kill the man and act in the same way as the Jews did with our Lord. Rather you would want to be like Him who endured torture to redeem us. Even though Asbjorn has observed the holy Easter badly, you will want to do otherwise. Besides he has not been given sufficient time to repent."

The king said, "You have taken great pains on his behalf. Take him into your custody until the holy Sunday has passed. But do not ignore the fact that if you let him run away, then you lose your life."

He answered, "If I am able, Master, against overwhelming odds."

Now Thorarin went to where Asbjorn was held and brought him both food and drink. He unbound him and sat near him with his men. The king asked later why Thorarin did not come to the table. People told him.

51. THE ASSEMBLING OF SKJALG'S AND ERLING'S TROOPS

Skjalg came to Jadar during the night and pounded so hard on the loft where Erling slept inside that the door nearly sprang apart. Erling leaped up, took his sword, opened the door, and asked who was there. Skjalg told him. Erling asked why he behaved like a madman.

Skjalg answered, "You lie and sleep, but Asbjorn, your kinsman, is in fetters and it is more likely that by now he is already killed." He told how it happened that Asbjorn had been obliged to kill Thorir Seal and to take vengeance for the disgrace that Thorir had previously heaped upon him.

¹⁸ To put a man to death at night was regarded as murder.

On Saturday and all throughout the night Skjalg and Erling assembled forces. Afterward they set out and came during the morning to the island where King Olaf was at the Sunday service. They put their men at once in battle array; they had fourteen hundred and forty men. They went then to the chapel where King Olaf was at his devotions. Each of them, father and son, went with his own standard. The Gospel was being read when they arrived.

52. ERLING SEEKS A SETTLEMENT FOR ASBJORN

So it is said that Asbjorn sat inside near the church door. As soon as Skjalg saw where he sat, he went to him, took him by the shoulders, drew him from the church into his own forces, and broke the fetters from him. It is said that even when the din was greatest, the king did not stare out into the church but listened to the mass to the very end. Erling went to the door, and with Skjalg his son, on the other side, formed a narrow passage into the churchyard. The king turned to leave when mass was ended. He proceeded along the phalanx and did not appear to be afraid. He went to the door, where Erling turned to face him and greeted him.

The king said, "What is it, Erling? Do you want to prohibit me from leaving?"

"No, Master," said he, "I want to offer you redress for Asbjorn, our kinsman. Put as high a price on him as you want."

The king answered, "It appears to me that you want to decide."

Erling said, "I want you to decide, Master, but under the condition that the man is allowed to live."

The king answered, "You do not cow me, Erling."

Erling said he certainly did not want to do that, "but we will meet somewhere sometime when I will not have fewer troops."

Now the friends of each of them had a role in their reconciliation. It came about that the king agreed to a settlement with these conditions. In return, he was to be given due compensation for his steward, also for Asbjorn's breaking of the law, and for the disgrace done to him. In addition, Asbjorn was to become his steward and assume those managerial duties that Thorir earlier had. "If he does not uphold the settlement, then I promise him no peace."

Erling and Asbjorn agreed to this and they parted. First Asbjorn traveled back north to his home and told Thorir, his relative how the matter had ended. He said that badly as his first trip had gone, it was far

worse that he should be the king's thrall for all the rest of his life. So he declared that he would not go south but would remain at home. The king now learned that Asbjorn did not hold to what they had agreed upon and sent men to kill him. From such events one may deduce the relationship between King Olaf and Erling. They had many other clashes in their dealings with one another.

53. OF EGIL HALLSSON OF SIDA AND THE KING

One summer, so it is told, Egil Hallsson of Sida went from Iceland to Norway with a man named Tofi who was a Götaland and of noble ancestry. Tofi started harrying at a young age and took the Christian faith as a youth. He stayed with Egil during the winter and traveled abroad to Norway during the summer. At that time Olaf Haraldsson ruled over Norway. People also say that there were thirty years between the deaths of the two Olafs. Tofi and Egil came across the sea. It is told that Egil's wife, Thorlaug, and their daughter, Thorgerd, traveled with him. The king invited Tofi and Egil to stay with him, but their wives were in rented lodging. The king esteemed them highly and considered Egil to be a very remarkable man.

It happened one time that the king thought they seemed unhappy and he asked what bothered them.

Egil said, "it seems to me that it would be a greater honor if my wife and my daughter were here with us, but because of the difficulties we can scarcely request this."

The king replied that he certainly would want to allow it. Now the women went there. The king looked at the child and said that she would not be luckless, and so it later proved.¹⁹ They remained there during the winter.

When spring came, Tofi asked whether the king would permit them to trade in peace. The king said he would not be able to allow it during the summer but said a message had been sent to him from King Knut that they should hold a peace negotiation in Limfjord in Denmark. King Olaf readied nine ships and came to the appointed meeting, but Knut had not arrived. King Olaf became convinced that Knut was contriving to betray him and intended to attack him there with a large following. Olaf told his men that he did not want to wait

¹⁹ The girl later becomes the mother of Bishop Jon Ogmundarson, one of Iceland's early saints.

any longer for Knut, made a foray up on the land, and acquired much booty. Then King Olaf spoke with his men and said that they should capture males fifteen years old or older and lead them to the ships. They took much plunder and many prisoners. Olaf's men pursued the fugitives but the people escaped. The king commanded the troops to halt. The king turned back and said that he knew their tricks and suspected they would offer resistance if they had more forces. He returned to the ships and ordered his men to prepare to leave. They were on the point of departure, but some tents were back on the land.

The captured men were in the tents. There was great wailing and weeping. Egil discussed this with Tofi. "These are such sorrowful and distressing cries that I want to free these people immediately."

Tofi asked him not to do that, "because you will provoke the king's rage."

Egil said he gave no heed to that, sprang up, released the men, and let them run away. The king was told that the men had escaped. He was very angry and said that the person who released them should suffer his wrath. During the morning when they were ready to sail, a man came down from the land. He called at the ships and said he urgently needed to meet the king. They paid no attention to him. But when one ship came forth from behind a certain cliff, the man cast his glove out on the ship, and a cloud of dust flew out from it. Afterward a sickness broke out on the ship, so severe that men could not bear it and cried out. Many lost their lives.

54. OF THE SICKNESS OF EGIL

It is said that Egil now became so gravely ill that no one was more stricken. However, he bore it manfully and no one heard him cry out. Egil asked Tofi to tell the king that he wanted to meet him. Tofi did so but the king did not answer. Tofi begged urgently and told of Egil's greatly failing strength. The king was very angry and did not want to meet him. Tofi told Egil how matters stood and that the king did not want to see him. Egil asked him to go a second time to meet the king.

He did so and talked to the king about the situation, saying Egil was near death "and he wants to repent of his offenses against you and to place everything in God's power and yours. Be so kind as to show mercy to him, so pitiful is his condition."

The king looked angrily at him and ordered him to go away quickly. Tofi told Egil how matters stood. Egil took it greatly to heart that he had incurred the king's wrath and that he himself had fallen into

such great hardship and said that he would not get this request. "You go again and fetch Finn. Ask him to go before the king and the two of you beg for mercy for me."

Finn went with Tofi. "Master," said Finn, "do this by reason of your majesty. Help this man who has now come close to death."

The king answered, "We think that no one should be so bold as to break our command, but because of your words, I will go to him. I will ask God to let him live so that I am able to punish him."

"Yes, Master," said Finn, "that is within your power."

Now the king went to him and looked at the weak, exhausted man.

Egil greeted the king. He did not return his greeting. Egil asked the king to touch his chest over the heart and asked that he grant him mercy even though he did not deserve it. The king drew a cloth around Egil, placed his hand upon his chest near his heart, and said that Egil had been sufficiently heroic in sickness. At the touch of his hand, Egil's sickness abated. Now the king went away. Egil improved and soon he was healthy again. People say that King Knut had bargained with a Finnish man to make the king and his troops sick if it would delay Olaf's departure. King Olaf came home to Norway from this trip. Egil and Tofi asked the king not to be angry with them and first sought to make amends with him with money. The king said he did not want money and said there was only one thing that would free them from his anger.

"What is that, Master?" they asked.

He replied, "You will never again enjoy our friendship unless through your cunning and cleverness you are able to bring Valgard to meet with us. You shall then be free."

Tofi answered, "Above all we do not ever want to incur your anger, but I fear that we will not be able to achieve this unless it is with your good luck. The reason I am not with my father is that he rejects Christianity with all his might."

The king told them that this should be done.

55. THE ERRAND OF EGIL AND TOFI

Now they went to meet the earl and greeted him. He welcomed his son and invited him to remain there in honor with him and rule the land. Tofi said that was not the way it would be, "for we are here because our lives depend upon it, even though you receive us now with good cheer." He said that the king had ordered him to bring the earl to meet with him or else he would not have his friendship. He called Olaf a great and excellent man, unlike other men, and said how great were the

differences between the religions of the earl and the king. Tofi asked him now to show his magnanimity and grant him his wish.

The earl sprang up, swore in great anger, and declared that never before had something so preposterous been spoken to him as when Tofi suggested that he should give up his faith and should go to meet this king who was to him the most offensive of all men. He said that Tofi had severed their friendship and ordered him cast into a dungeon, so enraged was he.

The next day people went to the earl and asked him to yield to his son and make a good and honorable decision.

The earl answered, "Where is that big man who accompanies him? Bring him here to speak with me."

This was done. Egil went before the earl. The earl asked Egil who he was. He told him.

"What can you tell me of the king and how it came about that you aroused his anger?"

Egil told him and spoke his message eloquently. Such great courtesy and power accompanied his speech that all marveled at his oratorical skill. Egil said also what a very illustrious man Tofi was and begged the earl to show him honor and esteem.

He called Tofi Valgardsson to him. Then the earl answered, "It looks to me that you believe your king has my fate in his hands if I go to meet him. But because you are so devoted to him and want to do his will and have sworn him an oath and your life is at stake, I expect that your king will not force me into anything even though I go to meet him—thus will the power of the gods protect us. But because of this man's eloquence and since it is not seemly to allow Tofi to be harmed, I will go with you at once and not with overwhelming forces, if you are then absolved when the king sees me. However, I do not intend to adopt Christianity, because previously many villages and castles in my domain were burned and many good and brave men killed."

They started on their journey, came to the king, and declared themselves released from the charges. He said that it should be so. He urged Valgard to accept the true faith, but Valgard said that would not happen and the matter should not be pursued further. The king said it seemed to him that he had the power to force him, but he would not do that, and said that it worked best if one did not serve God under compulsion. He allowed Valgard to leave. And when Valgard came to a woods he became very ill and sent men to the king to say that he wanted to speak with him. The king went to see him, and when they met, he asked Valgard to accept the true faith. Valgard let himself be baptized

and asked the king not to go away. He declared he had a premonition that he would not live long and asked that a church be built there on the spot and that money be donated to it.

He died and it was done as he had requested. Tofi ruled the kingdom after his father and was a very distinguished man. Egil was now a friend of the king and returned to his native land.

56. OF SIGURD AKASON

It is told that a powerful man in Denmark was named Sigurd, son of Aki Vagnsson. One summer he went out of the country to Wendland to acquire valuable wares. While he was there, a man named Jon came to him and offered to go trading with Sigurd's money and to purchase expensive objects for him. Such people who handle the business of buying and serve as interpreters are called brokers. He went forth with the money and spent some on treasures. The money was well spent. Sigurd gave him silver for payment and invited Jon to remain with him but he did not want that. Now they parted. Jon had a mistress and visited her. Her father lived in a certain dale.

During the evening when they had gone to bed, there was a great roaring din. After that came a terrible voice. The farmer went out and saw a hideous woman. She ordered him to pay his debt and to surrender either himself or his guests. Jon heard that and leaped out through the doorway and toward the sea. She ran after him. He came to a tent and asked Sigurd to help him. Sigurd ran toward the tent doorway, and Jon slipped inside the tent. Sigurd had drawn his sword. The troll woman came to the tent and ordered him to come away. He certainly did not want that. She thrust at him with a short sword, and it went into his shield and through it. Afterward she turned away from him and fell down. Sigurd made a side blow toward her with his sword and hewed off her hand. She ran away shrieking.

After that she turned back and told him he had won a great victory. "But this I decree," said she, "that henceforth you shall never be able to see blood."

Sigurd went back home into the kingdom and was often with the king. Queen Alfifa told the king that Sigurd had gained a great victory. It had been done secretly, and people did not know how she was aware of it.²⁰ She said that it was a defect if he were unable to see blood. The king said this could not be true. She declared she would

²⁰ The text implies that Queen Alfifa may have been the troll woman.

test it, made herself bleed, and showed the blood to Sigurd. With his cleverness, he found a way out and his handicap was not discovered, but after that there were doubts about his case. Now the king suspected him and scorned him. One time the king went away out of the country on a military expedition and said Sigurd should go with him. Thorarin, the foster father of Sigurd, concocted a plan at Sigurd's behest where Thorarin would make himself drunken with wine, run after the troops, and thrust a spear at Sigurd. He was now disabled. The king became very angry and wanted to have Thorarin killed. Sigurd asked for clemency for him and it was given. Alfifa related this before the king and said that the crafty scheme was not free from guile. The king banished Sigurd from him and ordered him not to remain there in the land.

After that Sigurd went to visit King Olaf; he came in the first week of Lent. On Easter day he went to talk with the king and greeted him. The king asked who he was. He told him.

The king replied, "I once knew a Sigurd, but I did not expect him to be here now."

Sigurd related all the events preceding his arrival there, recounted every injury that had been done him, and told about the parting of him and King Knut. The king grieved greatly over his troubles—that a worthy man should bear such misfortune—and said he thought it strange that King Knut wanted him disgraced over this. The king carved the sign of the cross on his hand and said, "Look here, Sigurd." Sigurd did so, and now he was able to see the blood. Never afterward did this handicap afflict him, although later on he was often in life-threatening battles. He remained with the king amidst honor and high favor.

King Knut heard of this and sent men to invite Sigurd to join him. Sigurd declared he did not want to part with King Olaf, who had rewarded him with so much good. He thought now he had discovered whom it was a greater honor to serve.

57. OF THORMOD AND KING KNUT

People also tell that Thormod Coal Brow's Skald was staying in Denmark. King Knut heard of him and sent men to fetch him. It was reported to Knut that Thormod greatly surpassed other men in his bravery and aggressiveness and also in his proficiency in poetry. Thormod came to meet the king and greeted him cordially.

The king welcomed him in return and invited him to stay with him "because the word has gone out that you are well suited for the king's retinue."

He answered, "Master, I am not qualified to sit in the seat of these great skalds who have been here because I do not have the experience to compose about such great chieftains."

"This we want, that you make a decision."

He answered, "Master, we are hardly suited for that. We are of a rather difficult disposition; also it may be that we will not be suitably rewarded. Do not blame me, Master, if I speak frankly, but it is said that those who are with you barely get full payment."

The king answered, "Thorarin Praise-Tongue was with us and also Stein Skaftason."

Thormod replied, "It appeared unlikely for a while that Thorarin would be able to get away from here, and it would end this way for me also, because I am not so good a skald."

"For a while we will try hard to win you over, and then you will soon discover that we want to have your services."

"May God reward you for that, Master," said Thormod. "Nevertheless, we are in need of your support, and we know that the greatest honor would be for us to serve you."

The king answered, "Rather than have you go away, I will give you the same wages as Thorarin received; that was a mark of gold."

He replied, "Master, if we accept these terms, then we need your guidance and support."

The matter was now settled, and Thormod was highly esteemed by the king's retinue. He entertained the king, and it was generally agreed that he did that the best of all men. He often recited verses. The king was pleased with this, but Thormod did not receive any more than he expected. Now the summer passed.

During the winter, a man entered the king's retinue who was called Harek, a viking, an evildoer, and a friend of the king. He brought the king much booty. The king esteemed him greatly. The king inquired about his journey. Harek said he had lost his forecastle-man on his ship and asked the king to give him another. He said that a replacement would not be easy to get for "he was very skillful with words if retorts were needed, such as bandying insults or doling out words of praise."

The king reflected about this. He invited Harek to stay with him and ordered him to cease harrying for a while. Harek said he still wanted to raid but nevertheless, he would remain for a while with the king. The king treated Thormod well and made Thormod and Harek messmates. Harek often brought before the king the matter concerning the forecastle-man. Thormod provided good entertainment and because of this aroused envy. It came about that Harek wanted to select Thormod.

"Is this something you have discussed with him?" said the king.

Now the king asked Thormod to undertake the journey with Harek, but Thormod said he did not want to and said that he did not know the man well enough. The king requested him and said he should have his friendship if he did this during the summer.

"Master," said he, "I would rather be with you. Nevertheless, because you request this, I do not want to refuse you—but with this condition that I will decide where in the harbor we shall anchor or when to pull away."

The king said it would be so.

58. THORMOD COMES TO KING OLAF

Now things had come to the point where it seemed to Thormod that the gifts from the king were slow in forthcoming, and he recited this stanza:

(17) You gave Fafnir's hoard²¹ for a long time
to Praise-Tongue;
but to me, you give
only expectations of gold.
I am worthy, land-rich destroyer of miscreants,
of the same rights,
or shall I rather put out to sea
and hope for nothing?

The king pulled a ring, which weighed half a mark, from his arm.

"Have great thanks for that, Master," said Thormod. "Do not accuse me, Master, of being overly insistent, but you decided that I should receive a mark of gold."

"That is true, skald," said the king.

He now gave him a second ring. Then Thormod recited this stanza:

(18) Everyone sees
how I have both arms
beautifully adorned with gold
from the vast courtyard of the great king.
I, the young man,
owe the gold to that king

²¹ In ancient eddic poetry, Fafnir was a dragon that guarded the hoard of golden treasure belonging to the Nibelungs.

who satisfies the hunger of the gluttonous eagle;
I bear gold on both arms.

Thormod went to the ship and now he and King Knut parted. Thormod traveled throughout the summer. He was good at his job, and Harek was very pleased with him. One time they pulled into harbor late in the evening near a certain island and some ships came forth. A man called over from the ship that was the lead ship and the most splendid. It was a dragon ship out of the king's mooring. Harek ordered them to strike the awnings. Thormod reminded them that he should decide. They asked him not to do that. The dragon ship rushed toward them faster than expected. The forecastle-man drew his sword and hewed at Thormod. He struck back and killed the man. Afterward he leaped on the ship holding his shield before him and in such a manner made his way back to the raised deck. An outcry arose on the ship and people asked what was happening. The man was captured, but the vikings sailed away and did not care about Thormod.

Now the king was told. He ordered them to kill the man. Finn Arnason went to the man and asked why he was so foolhardy as to want to leap onto the king's ship. Thormod said that he had little concern for his life if only he were able to come into the power of the king. Both Finn and Bishop Sigurd reported this to the king and told how boldly he had acted. They asked the king to speak with Thormod. The king asked how he dared come into his power. Thormod answered:

(19) I would think myself
to have received the world,
brave warrior,
if you were to take me
into your keeping.
I wish with you [and Finn]
to live and die, warrior.
Let us carry out the shields to the ships.

"Yes," said the king, "it is obvious that you have little regard for your life if you proceed in this way," and took him into his following afterward.

59. OF THE KING AND CERTAIN MEN

King Olaf greatly built up the market town in Trondheim. One time a large number of people had come to the town and some people had gone up into Gauldal. It was Easter morning. It so happened that a broad-shouldered man went with them in a hooded cloak and white leggings. One of them asked, "Who are you, comrade?"

The man was silent. "Indeed," said the other, "I shall ridicule him." He ran after him and scraped him with his shoe around the outside of the leg. The soil there was soft and muddy. A very muddy spot could be seen. Afterward they parted.

On the second day of Eastertide the king's men came into the quarters of these men and said that the king wanted to meet them. They wondered greatly at that and did not know what he wanted of them, but they went to the king and greeted him.

He welcomed them and said, "What has happened to the comradeship that the king has with you?"

They drooped down their heads and said they knew nothing about their comradeship. "Yes, indeed," said he, "you certainly claimed to be his comrades."

They became very downcast. The king continued, "You do not need to be sad. But the advice I give you is to ridicule people only if you know who they are."

60. OF OTTAR THE BLACK AND KING KNUT

Now it is further told that Ottar the Skald traveled abroad from Iceland as a young man. He stayed with Olaf, the Swedish king, composed verses about him, and received much honor in return. He went later to Knut the Great and stayed there during the winter.

King Knut went from vespers, came into the hall, and said, "I saw a man who is not from this country. I believe this man to be a skald. I would prefer to have someone else against me in single combat, and I would not trust him to be alone with my wife."

Now Ottar came into the hall before the king and spoke:

(20) Thus will I hail
the king of the Danes,
the Irish, the English
and island inhabitants.

May his praise
be borne
with Heavenly power
widely throughout all lands.

"Master," said he, "I have composed a poem about you and I should like you to listen."

"So shall it be, skald," said the king. "Your poem will be good."

In the morning, the trumpet was blown to summon a gathering, and a crowd of people came. Ottar stood upon the meeting platform, recited, and received great applause. The king praised the poem and took from his head his Grecian hat ornament with gold and with gold buttons on it. He asked his treasurer to heap it above the brim with silver and give it to the skald. Ottar stretched out his hand toward it over the shoulder of a man, but the room was crowded, and the heap of silver was knocked out of the hat and onto the platform. Ottar wanted to gather it up.

The king said that he should let it be since "it is money for the poor and not yours, because you will never be short of money."

Ottar was with the king for a while.

61. OF OTTAR THE SKALD AND KING OLAF

Now it came about that Ottar wished to travel to Norway, and he did so. When Sighvat the Skald became aware of this, he met Ottar and asked him to go secretly with him. He said that King Olaf was angry with him for a love poem that he had composed about Astrid "and now I want you to recite it." Ottar recited it.

Sighvat said, "You have said too much; I advise you to alter some stanzas and leave some out."

He concealed him in the town. Sighvat asked the king what decision he would make in passing sentence on Ottar if he came to meet him. The king said he would show him no mercy.

Sighvat replied, "Do not do that, Master, because Ottar is a good man, and great honor may come to you from him. Hear the poem, Master. It may be that it has been somewhat exaggerated."

Ottar went and greeted the king. He did not answer and was very angry. Ottar began his poem and as soon as it was ended, he recited a praise *drapa*²² about the king:

(21) Give ear to my [poem], noble man...

He began at once, and all of the king's followers were addressed. Ottar received great applause, and he was now reconciled with the king.

62. OF KING OLAF AND HIS SKALDS

One time when the king sat in a loft, many swords stood before him, and the hilts were turned upward. Then spoke Ottar:

(22) The swords stand here,
adorned with gold;
We praise the swords.
The favor of the warrior king is best.
If you wished
to give the skald a sword, king;
I would accept it.
I was formerly with you, generous king.

The king gave him the sword. The king thought highly of Ottar the Skald. Sighvat was one of the king's followers as well as Ottar, Thorarin, and Thorfid Mouth, an Iclander from the north of Iceland. King Olaf held the daughter of Sighvat during baptism. Then Sighvat recited this verse:

(23) Lord, worthy is your will,
help that one
who has brought my daughter out of heathendom,
and has given her the name Tofa.
Still the wise one,
fierce brother of Harald
held during baptism my child.
I became very happy this morning.

²² A *drapa* (ON: *drápa*) is a lengthy laudatory poem, usually composed in the so-called *dróttkvætt*-meter in honor of kings and other distinguished men.

Some people say that King Olaf had composed this stanza about Ingibjorg Finnsdottir:

(24) It is almost as though a flame
rises from the embers;
I look inside at the women.
You tell me what other lady
bears herself so proudly.
In a short period of time,
Ingibjorg has almost deprived me of speech.
I go across the floor to drink.

It is further told that one day Ottar told the king of a farmer named Karli who had gone with him out in Iceland. He was a small farmer, and Ottar told the king of their dealings. He said that he had had an affair with Karli's wife and they had gone into a cavern and sat there. He recited this stanza when he looked out over the inhabited neighborhood:

(25) From this place
out of the cave
I see smoke drifting
from the houses over the fishermen.
Great are the skald's merry pranks in the dawn.
This day no one denies me energy.
I am content with you, my lady,
instead of the breakfast of milk.

The king replied laughingly and spoke to his skald:

(26) You tell Karli,
that able farmer
of the northern sea,
when you come thither,
that one must do more
on a journey
than flense a whale
with a keen knife.

When Sighvat and Ottar were with King Olaf, it came about that they were not so highly esteemed as earlier. It happened one day that the king sent them some nuts from his table. Then Sighvat recited this stanza:

(27) The glorious king sends me nuts.
That valiant noble man!
The king provides for his followers.
I will be rather slow to extend my praise.
Often conversation ends,
when the doughty king asked Ottar and me
to divide these things in two parts,
as we would a paternal inheritance.

The king said that they should so divide them as they would their paternal inheritance. Then Ottar recited this verse:

(28) The king sends nuts to me
hither from his place,
the generous person!
There was a time when I expected more.
Glorious is the great king!
Small things anticipate greater ones.
Do not humiliate us again,
great ruler.

So it is further told that King Olaf sat in his high seat one day and Thormod sat on a chair before him. The king said he should compose a poem about what was embroidered on a tapestry just opposite him. The skald looked at the scene depicted where Sigurd slew the dragon, and he recited this verse:

(29) The sword stands in the head [of the dragon].
Blood flows down
on both sword edges
when the king becomes angry.
The sword quivers
in the breast of the serpent
when that stout-hearted king
begins to prepare the steak.

63. OF STEIN SKAFTASON

So it is also told that Stein Skaftason was with King Olaf and was highly regarded for a while, but because of his bad luck, they parted company after he had killed one of the king's men. Then he ran away

to Thorberg Arnason. However, they brought him back to the king in exchange for self-judgment for the man, and the king after that took him back. But still he ran away from there to King Knut. He was such an exceedingly arrogant man that he wanted to shoe his horse in gold shoes as the king himself did. He also equipped himself with a sword and boss made out of gold, but the hilt was unadorned. He appeared later in the tavern and there was much discussion about the sword. He was asked why he did not have the hilt of the sword embellished.

"I do not have enough money to do it," said he.

The king leaned toward his treasurer and ordered him to bring Stein a gold beaker and give him half a mark from it.

Stein looked at it and said, "Why is that half mark better than the one that remains behind?"

The king said, "To us such men seem overly arrogant."

The king gave him a mark of gold and said, "This will sever our fellowship." Stein remained there only for a short time afterward.

64. WARFARE IN DENMARK

When Olaf the Swede had died, Onund inherited Sweden and his father's entire realm. King Olaf and Onund, as long as they lived, maintained a firm and steadfast friendship and kinship. Much was told about King Olaf and how in many ways, he was responsible for the great wonders taking place while he reigned over the land. But one is not able to give an account of what actually took place.

When King Olaf had been ruler over the country for eleven years, King Knut's dislike of King Olaf grew. Knut coveted the other man's honor which he had formerly gained when Knut was ruler. King Olaf and Onund sent men back and forth and formed a plan. At that time Earl Olaf ruled the Danish kingdom. Earl Olaf Sprakaleggsson was married to Astrid, the daughter of Svein Forkbeard.

One summer King Olaf levied men and ships for a military expedition out of Norway and went with large forces south along the coast to Denmark. They began harrying around Scania, Zealand, and Halland. Onund, the Swedish king, sailed with another fleet of Swedes and Gauts from the east to meet them, and they plundered and conquered throughout the entire country. It was reported to King Knut, who was in England, that there was plundering in Denmark. He went from the west with great forces as Sighvat the Skald told in the memorial *drapa* that he composed about Knut:

(30) Knut was under the heavens...
 He received news from the east,
 handsome, sharp-eyed descendant
 of the king of the Danes.
 From the west sailed a ship—
 it was embellished—
 that which bore out from there
 the adversary of Aethelred.

And further he recited:

(31) And the warships of the king
 bore blue sails
 on the sail yards in the breeze.
 Glorious was the trip of the king
 when the ships that came from the west
 to Limfjord
 made their way
 over the sea path!

In the same *drapa* Sighvat composed verses about the journey from the north of King Olaf:

(32) Knut was under heavens...
 I think, from what I have heard,
 that the kinsman of Harald
 has proven stouthearted in war.
 Olaf, that harvest-blessed king,
 had his troops
 travel a sea path
 south out of Nid.

And still he recited:

(33) Cold keels
 sped swiftly south with the king
 to the flat plains of Zealand.
 That I have heard.
 But Onund
 traveled with the other,
 the Swedish army,

on ships against the Danes.

(34) The king
 had surrounded many countries
 at the coasts
 with armored troops,
 to the amazement
 of the warrior,
 there where a wall of gray helmets
 lay before the ships.

(35) The gallant kings
 were not able
 to subdue Denmark
 with a military expedition.
 Then harried
 the foe-man of the Danes
 sharply at Scania
 ... great outstanding king!

65. OF THE OFFER OF KING KNUT

Now the kings, Olaf and Onund, traveled east throughout Øresund, plundered around Scania and the most eastern part of Zealand. As one heard earlier in the poem, King Knut came from the west to Limfjord and collected together a tremendous army. They followed Knut east.

Some people related that King Knut sent men to Onund with the message that King Knut wished to forgive him for this serious matter if Onund now wanted to part from Olaf. Knut promised him friendship and gifts of money. The messenger now brought forth the treasures. They were candlesticks, wrought from gold.

The king looked at them and said, "Beautiful playthings are these, but I do not find them sufficient to part from Olaf."

Then the messenger brought forth a drinking cup made out of gold and inlaid with precious stones.

The king spoke, "These are elegant things, but I will not barter away King Olaf for a drinking cup."

The messenger brought forth two gold rings.

The king said, "King Knut is shrewd. He knows that I am avaricious and know little of proper courtly behavior. However, I was but a

young boy when I saw King Olaf, and he pleased me so well that I did not want to part from him.”

66. THE BATTLE BY THE HOLY RIVER

Now the kings met one another in eastern Scania near a river called the Holy River. There was a hard battle and a great loss of men in both of the two forces. Neither wanted to flee, as Sighvat the Skald said:

(36) The king of the Jutlands,
having returned to his country,
did not let himself
be deprived of his land;
people found this out.
The protector of the Danes
wanted to have no plundering of the land
... great outstanding king!

Ottar recalled this battle when he composed verses about King Knut:

(37) You, headstrong king,
have defeated the Swedes
at the Holy River.
The she-wolf received much wolf food.
You held the land against two kings,
there where the ravens did not suffer hunger,
ferocious warrior.
You are quickly decisive.

Thord Hareksson composed a funeral *drapa* about King Olaf. He also mentioned this battle:

(38) The king of the people of Scania
shot rather sharply against him.
The son of Svein proved himself not cowardly.
The wolves howled over the corpses.

After the battle, the armies of the Swedish and Norwegian kings joined together east of Götaland because of the overpowering forces of the Danish king. The Danish king turned back and lay with his fleet in Øresund, intending to strike at the king of Norway when he traveled

home during the fall. Knut had overwhelming forces there. King Olaf saw that it would be very foolhardy to sail forth with so few troops against so mighty a fleet, even though he and his men were fearless. He remembered how King Olaf Tryggvason had fared when he had relied upon large ships and valiant troops and sailed in to attack a large fleet.²³ Now King Olaf adopted a wise plan, went off his ships at a place called Bardvik, and thus traveled by land across Götaland and Småland and into Vik.

67. OF HAREK FROM TJØTTA

An old chieftain, a wise man named Harek from Tjøtta, the son of Eyvind Skaldaspillir, told King Olaf that he would not be able to undertake such a long land trip and said that instead he wanted to go home with his ship to Norway. He composed this stanza:

(39) I have decided
to ride from this place
on my warship by sea
rather than go overland,
even though Knut, the warrior,
lies outside Øresund with warships;
the people know
my foolhardiness.

Harek's sympathies were really with King Knut, even though he was then in the forces of King Olaf. Harek now set out with his ship and rowed from the east along Scania with a single ship. They sailed during the night with the light of the new moon and at dawn they proceeded westward toward Øresund. Then Harek had all the ship's riggings taken down, laid down the mast, and took gray awnings and spread them over the cargo from stem to stem. He had them row on rowing benches both fore and aft, but everything amidship was empty. Thus they made their way home north into the sound aided by wind and current. There lay the entire fleet of King Knut on both sides of the ship. Some of the fleet lay near Scania and some near Zealand. As the ship sailed in the sound, the watchmen talked together.

Then said one of them, "That is probably some old ship. See how gray and short it is. It must be someone's herring boat. The ship sits low

²³ One source claims Olaf Tryggvason sailed in with a fleet of eleven ships to attack a fleet of sixty.

in the water and there are few men on it." Harek and his men traveled through the fleet and the sun rose. Harek turned toward the land, raised up the mast, brought up the gold ornaments and weather vane, and unfurled the sail. It was made from Halogalander cloth, white as snow and striped throughout. Now the long ship glided swiftly. King Knut's men looked there where the splendid ship sailed. They told the king that King Olaf had sailed past, because the ship was very handsomely outfitted.

The king said that it might be someone from the forces of King Olaf, but not Olaf himself.

"It may be," said the king, "that same fellow who sailed around us in the Great Belt whom we thought we had captured."

Harek sailed north along the coast, and when he went through Øresund he recited this stanza:

(40) I do not allow
the lasses of Lund
nor the Danish maidens
to laugh at this—
let us sail the warship
out past the island—
that I dare not travel back in the fall
in my ship over the sea, my lady.

Then he continued on his way north along the coast. It must also be mentioned that Harek came to meet King Olaf in Trondheim and had then come from the north from his state in Tjøtta.

68. OF THE OPPOSITION AGAINST KING OLAF

Thereafter, King Knut's grudge against King Olaf began anew. He recalled all the offenses done against him: first, that King Olaf captured his nephew, tortured an oath from him, and took his entire kingdom from him. King Olaf had also conquered the kingdom that for a long time had been tributary to the Danish king. In addition, King Olaf had plundered in the land of King Knut. With all these combined grievances in mind, King Knut planned a great undertaking against King Olaf. When King Olaf had ruled the country for eleven years, King Knut's hatred of King Olaf intensified, and he coveted his kingdom.

In the eleventh year of the reign of King Olaf, King Knut sent his messengers and spies from the west. They traveled secretly into Norway and came with much money into all the districts to all the wisest men and great chieftains in the land; they said that the friendship of King Knut should be theirs if they drove King Olaf out of the country. The money was accepted. And when King Olaf was told that the country was not free of treachery, he considered his plight. He had four men from among his opponents killed. One was the nephew of Thorir Hound. Another was Grjotgard, who at that time was married to a woman whom Kalf Arnason married later. After that Thorir Hound killed three men who were the dearest friends of King Olaf. Then King Olaf had him outlawed throughout the entire length of Norway. Thorir fled north into Finnmark and was there two years.

During the same fall when King Olaf, King Knut, and Onund fought near the Holy River, it is told that King Olaf had the river and also the large lakes in the vicinity blocked by means of piles. When the troop ships of King Knut came in the river, the waters from the river and the lakes flooded the ships and many of King Knut's troops drowned. Their encounter ended in such a way that King Knut never again ventured into Sweden.

69. OF ERLING SKJALGSSON

In the thirteenth year of the reign of King Olaf, Thorir Hound returned during the fall from Finnmark in the north to Norway. He relied greatly on the magical arts of the Finns against King Olaf, and of all men, he most strongly opposed the king. The following winter King Olaf went east into Vik and was there at the onset of winter. He went there with thirteen long ships. He had a ship called Bison, and upon it was a bison's head. The ship was commanded by the king himself, and it was the best of all ships. King Olaf received reliable intelligence that all summer long Knut the Great had assembled together a huge army from Denmark and England, had then sailed from the south from Jutland over Limfjord with fourteen hundred and forty ships, and had come to Agder with all his forces. King Olaf sailed north off Jadar and encountered a sharp wind. King Olaf had not been able to muster troops from the farmers as soon as they heard about the Danish army. This was before Yule, St. Thomas's Mass Day,²⁴ when he sailed with three ships into Sokn Sound from the south from Stavanger. Erling

²⁴ St. Thomas's Mass Day is on December 21.

Skjalgsson pursued him with eleven ships, one large, but the others, smaller. He sailed north after the king and wanted to fight with him.

But when King Olaf saw Erling's pursuit, he said, "Let us sail away rapidly and not let them overtake us. Now we shall reef the sail and travel thus with all our sails so that it appears to our pursuers that we are sailing away as fast as possible. We shall also have all our oars manned, and it will seem to them a great escape, but in reality we shall row backwards; let us then see what happens."

That getaway was done more with cleverness than with fear. But when Erling saw this, he thought their sailing was swift and likewise their rowing, but he clearly did not see the snare. Now Erling had the sail on his ship reefed, so that his ship should not go faster than his other ships. Olaf's ships and sails diminished in the distance.

Then Erling said, "Spread now our entire sail," and so it was done. The long ship sailed swiftly ahead of the rest of Erling's ships.

King Olaf steered his ship near the island of Bokn and lay in the sound north near those islands called Tunga.

Now the ships went north in the sound, speeding swiftly by sailing and rowing, but the long ship that Erling was on went far ahead of the other ships. King Olaf now realized the battle frenzy of Erling.

Then King Olaf spoke, "Erling acts like a madman when he sails alone in front of all his troops. I fear that it does not behoove him that we fight today. I fight unwillingly against Erling on such a holy day as today, for I fear that death awaits. But certainly if he wants to fight with us, we will clad ourselves in armor and be prepared. Take Erling captive but do not kill him, whoever captures him."

Erling sailed at a furious pace after King Olaf, but Olaf did not sail away even though he appeared to do so. Now the long ship arrived sooner than Erling expected. At once ships were laid alongside on both sides. Everything happened at once: Erling's ship was cleared from under him, and he was captured and led before the king a long time before many of his other ships arrived. The fiercest resistance took place, but in a short time every living being on Erling's ship was killed. Erling Skjalgsson stood on the quarterdeck. So said Sighvat the Skald:

(41) All of the crew from Erling's ship
had fallen near the shore of Bokn.
The young king
was able to empty the warship north of Tunga.
The valiant one,
the guileless son of Skjalg,

stood at length alone, with few friends,
on the raised deck of his empty ship.

Furthermore he recited this stanza after Erling was killed:

(42) I knew
only one other warrior like you;
that one was called Gudbrand.
The chieftain ruled far-reaching lands.
I say that you are both equal,
generous man.
Whosoever calls himself your better
is himself deluded.

And still he recited:

(43) I drank no drink very joyfully during Yule,
that day when it was told me
of the killing of Erling,
that one who ruled Jadar.
The slaying of the worthy man
will make my head droop in sorrow.
I bore my head higher formerly;
it was a harsh killing.

70. THE SLAYING OF ERLING SKJALGSSON

Then King Olaf went to the rear of the afterdeck and his men attacked Erling. He defended himself gallantly for he was the strongest of men and the best fighter in all of Norway.

The king spoke, "You confront us now today, Erling."

Erling said, "Face to face shall the eagles fight with claws now, or do you want to give me quarter?"

The king answered, "On your face something will be seen before we part."

Erling cast down his weapons and went down into the hold. The king had a little axe in his hand. Erling threw down his shield and took his helmet off his head.

The king thrust the point of the axe head in Erling's cheek and said, "This is how every betrayer of the king shall be marked."

That was before many of the other ships had arrived. Erling was advanced in years when this happened, and his hair was somewhat sprinkled with gray.

Then spoke the king, "Do you now understand that God has delivered you into my hands? If you want to have your life, then swear me an oath that you shall never oppose me henceforth."

Aslak Fitjaskalli was Erling's second cousin. He was forward on the ship, but this took place aft. When they went from the ship, Aslak attacked Erling, struck him a deathblow with a hand axe which he had under his overcloak, and said, "In such a manner we mark the betrayer of the king."

The king said, "Of all men's blows the worst! Now you struck Norway out of my hands, because Erling would not betray me for the third time, and I would not need to flee from my kingdom if he had been faithful to me."

Then spoke Aslak, "It is bad, Master, that you think this has been done with evil intent, because I intended to strike Norway into your hands. Never has anyone been so great and powerful an enemy of yours as this one."

71. THE ASSEMBLING OF TROOPS AGAINST KING OLAF

The king went back on his ship and made fast Erling's ship in the sound. Then the king allowed the companions of Erling to take his body and they went away afterward, but the king traveled north along the coast and hoisted up the sails. The sons and relatives of Erling now gathered forces. King Olaf was unable to land anywhere because of the army so he traveled north to Møre. He learned now that the people from Trøndelag were in conspiracy against him and discovered that his country had been seized from him. In this sea battle, King Olaf became aware of the treachery of those who were of high rank in the country and which of the landed men had taken money from King Knut: Erling Skjalgsson, Erlend from Gjerde, Aslak from Fitjar, Kalf Arnason, Thorir Hound, Harek from Tjøtta and many others. Now King Olaf received all this intelligence.

The sons and relatives of Erling, with immense forces, went north in pursuit of the king through Rogaland and Hordaland. King Olaf could land nowhere because of the army of farmers on the land and the fleet of ships that pursued him. This stanza was attributed to King Olaf:

(44) Little will the pale man
rejoice tonight in Jadar.
The raven eats from the corpse supplied him.
We fought a battle.
Thus has the plundering of me
done nothing but harm to him.
I paced angrily on the warship.
Greed for land is the death of men.

King Olaf went with his fleet of ships north to Møre and learned that the people from Trøndelag were against him. He discovered that the country had been seized from him, and he quit his ships at a place called Slygs. Two men traveled with the king, both of whom were named Thorleif; the one, Thorleif the White, and the other, Thorleif the Wick. These two brothers told the king that they recognized the ship of King Knut, that he had come into the country, and that they could give the names of many men in his forces.

72. THE FLIGHT OF KING OLAF

And in this one sweep, King Knut came with a large number of ships into Norway. King Olaf traveled north and came near South Møre and lay in the harbor called Steinavag and anchored there during the night. Aslak Fitjaskalli went during the evening into Borgund. It so happened that a man was there named Vigleik Arnason. During the morning, retainers of the king who had stayed at home during the summer came south out of Frekey Sound. They told the king the news that Kalf Arnason, Harek from Tjøtta, and Thorir Hound had come during the evening into Frekey Sound with a great body of men "and they want to kill you, if they have the might to do so."

Now the king sent his watchmen up a mountain out beyond Steinavag. When they came up on the mountain, they looked northward toward Bear Island and saw that many ships sailed from the north. They went back down and told the king that a fleet approached out of the north. The king's forces lay there yonder with only two ships. The king had the alarm sounded, took down the tents from his ships, and afterward his men took the oars. When they were out of the harbor, fully prepared for the undertaking, thirty-five ships sailed from the north off Thrjotshverfi. King Olaf steered forth along Nørvøya and in along Hundsver. And when they had come just opposite to Borgund, a six-oared boat came out to meet the king, and on it were those men who had accompanied Aslak

during the evening. They told the king the news that Vigleik Arnason had killed Aslak Fitjaskalli when they went to their ship, because he had killed Erling from Sola. The king expressed displeasure over this untimely news, but still he was not able to delay his journey because of the turmoil. He traveled across Vegsund, past Skot, and did not stop until he came into Taffjord and dropped anchor at Valldal. He disembarked from his ships there, drew the ships up on shore, and made provisions to safeguard his sails and all equipment.

73. OF THE JOURNEYS OF THE KING

After that he placed his land tent on a tongue of land called Sylte where there are fair meadows. The king had a splendid cross raised there on the spit. It is said that a farmer lived at Mor who was named Brusi. He was the most powerful farmer in the dale. Later on, Brusi and many farmers with him came down to visit the king, and they welcomed him cordially as was fitting. The king responded cheerfully to their greetings. The king asked them whether it would be possible to travel inland up to Lesja.

Brusi answered and said there was a great obstacle in the valley called Skjerf Boulder Field, "and neither men nor horses are able to pass over it. We have also heard that the Opplanders have renounced Christianity and permit none to travel over there who profess to be Christians."

The king answered, "We shall have to take the risk, farmer, and it will go as God wishes. Come here in the morning with your draft animals and yourselves, and let us see how matters stand if we all come together to the boulder field."

They came in the morning to the king, and he prepared for his journey up the valley. He went down from the spit to a hill called Krossbrekka and rested there on the hill. He sat for a while, gazing down the valley and into the fjord, and said, "A difficult journey Kalf Arnason and his companions have inflicted on me—those who were for a while our faithful and trusted friends."

It is said that crosses still stand that he had raised there as he sat on the hill. Afterward he mounted a horse and rode up the valley. They did not stop until they came to the boulder field. The king asked Brusi if there was any herdsman's shed where they could stay during the night.

"Yes," said Brusi, "There certainly is, Master."

It was thus arranged that they were there during the night, and the king set up his land tent. In the morning, the king ordered them to

go to the boulder field and try to find a way over it. They left, but the king remained back in his land tent. During the evening, the king's men returned home and declared that they had worked hard but had accomplished nothing. They said that there would never be any possible way to go over. They were there another night, and the king lay at his prayers throughout the entire night. As soon as he saw it was day, he ordered them to go to the boulder field. They went very reluctantly and said to themselves that they would not be able to succeed.

When they had gone away, the man who was in charge of their provisions came to the king and told him that there was no more food left than the meat of two slaughtered cattle, "and you have four hundred and eighty men in your army as well as one hundred and twenty farmers."

The king then told him to set out all the kettles and place a morsel of the meat in every one, and so it was done. The king went to the kettles, made the mark of the cross over them, and ordered the cook to prepare the meal. Afterward the king went to Skjerf Boulder Field where his men were to clear a way. When the king arrived there, all of them were sitting down and they were very tired from their labor.

Now Brusi spoke, "I told you, Master, that nothing would overcome this boulder field, but you did not believe it."

Then Olaf took off his cloak and said that they should all try to see what they might accomplish. And now when they came to the boulder field, it is said that twenty men were able to move those stones that one hundred and twenty men had not been able to do earlier. A path was cleared by the middle of the day, so that both men and pack animals were able to travel it. Afterward the king went back down to the place where their provisions were and now is called The Cave. A spring was near the cave, and the king washed himself there. When the livestock of the people in the valley became sick and then drank from this water, at once they were cured of their illness. Later the king and all his men went to their meal, and when they had eaten their fill, the king asked whether there were herdsman's huts up above the boulder field near the mountain where they might be able to stay during the night.

Brusi answered, "Certainly, Master, and they are called Grønningen, but no person is able to stay there during the night because of the troll hauntings and the evil spirits who are in the hut."

After that the king bade them prepare for their journey and said he wanted to be in the hut during the night. Then the man who was in charge of provisions came to him and said there was food in immense quantities "and I do not know, Master, from whence it has come."

The king answered, "Let us thank God for his gift." He had bundles of food made up for the farmers who then traveled back down into the valley and to their homes. The king was in the hut during the night at his prayers, as was his custom.

And during the night when men had gone to sleep, something uttered horrible screams outside, and that evil spirit said, "So do the prayers of King Olaf burn me that I am unable to remain in my home. Now I must flee and never come back to this place again."

In the morning before the king went to the mountain, he said to Brusi, "Here a farmstead shall be built, and the farmer who lives on it shall always have for himself a good livelihood. Grain shall never freeze here, even though it freezes both above and below."

74. THE KING FURTHER COWS THE FARMERS TO CHRISTIANITY

Then King Olaf continued his journey, arrived in Einbu, and was there during the night and during the next morning at Lesja. He had taken all of the best men both from Dovre and Lesja and forced them to become Christians or suffer death or flee. They did not want to agree to death or flight, so it ended that almost all of them adopted Christianity. They brought their sons to the king and promised never to backslide from Christianity. Their sons were treated well by the king and became good Christians.

It is said that the king was there during the night at a place called Bæar. That farmstead was in Lesja, and Olaf placed priests there. Afterward he went over Lorudal and came to a place called Stafabrekka. He sat there on the slope, where the farmstead called Bær lies lower down the slope. The Otta River runs through the valley. There is a beautiful settled region on both sides of the river, and it is called Lom. The king was able to see along the entire length of the settlement.

Then said the king, "It is a shame to burn so fair a settlement." Afterward he made his way down into the valley with his troops and stayed during the night at a farm called Nes. He took lodging in a loft where he himself slept; that loft stood a long time afterward unchanged.

It is said that the king was there five nights. He dispatched a war-arrow for an assembly and summoned to it people from Lom, Vågå, and Hedalen. He added the message that people were either to do battle against him or suffer burning from him or turn back to Christianity and cease all heathen practices. In addition they were to give their sons as hostages, and they would correctly be able to think it more an honor

than a constraint. It is said that almost all of those who lived in the district came to his meeting and came to terms with him. But those who did not want that fled away south in the valleys.

75. KING OLAF FLEES THE LAND

Now King Olaf sought sound advice from his people, but all left the decision up to him. The king went south to Hedmark and sought counsel from the Opplanders, his friends, and asked them to give him some shrewd advice. They said that an assembly should be called in order to talk about the matter and so it was done.

The king stated that he repudiated those "who have taken money in exchange for my head and betrayed their king, who rightfully had obtained land and power." He prayed now for strength that he might withstand the assault from his enemies. He spoke of the matter with fair and eloquent words and ended his speech by asking if they could see some good plan both for him and for themselves.

The king understood now, as did his other friends, that so great had the excitement of the people become because of the invasion of King Knut and his huge number of troops who were here in the country, that the king and all the wisest men thought the best decision was to flee and procure for himself more troops and supporters. Olaf was told that the people of the land would be disloyal to him, their king.

Now King Olaf became aware of those men who went about with money. His men begged to capture them and thus the money. The king replied, "Do not do that because we must confess that in many respects we have ruled this kingdom with arrogance and obstinacy and not with justice. We let those things be punished when God's laws were violated, but what has been done against us may we now humbly forgive."

These people traveled with the king: Queen Astrid, Gudrod and Halfdan, Rognvald and Dag, Hring and Thorleif, Aslak and Helgi, Thord and Einar, Fid²⁵ Arnason, Thorberg and Arni, Thorbjorn, and Thormod the Skald.²⁶

²⁵ Fid and Finn Arnason are the same person. The two names are used interchangeably in the saga text. The editors decided to render the names in accordance with the Old Norse text.

²⁶ It is not possible to identify all of Olaf's companions with certainty. Thorleif likely refers to either Thorleif the White or Thorleif the Wick. Thord could refer to Thord Folason (see Chapt. 99) or Thord Hareksson, but the identification is far from certain. It is also unclear, who Aslak is. Heinrichs et al. (1982: 197 fn. 152) point out that Aslak from Fitjar is named amongst Olaf's enemies in Chapt. 71, but amongst his friends in Chapt. 86, which makes him a possibility. Heinrichs et al. (1982: 166 fn. 125) suggest, furthermore, that

The king now traveled east through Eidaskog all the way into Sweden and remained there a long time with Sigtryg. From there he went east into Russia and the next winter was in Novgorod with King Jarisleif who had married Ingigerd, the daughter of King Olaf the Swede, and sister of Astrid to whom King Olaf was married.

76. OF KING KNUT AND BJORN THE MARSHAL

Knut, the Danish king, traveled north along the coast of Norway and called together assemblies here and there. He was well received wherever he went, and he did not stop on his trip until he came to Nidaros and held there an eight-district assembly with the people from Trøndelag. Then the country was sworn over to him by oath at the Eyra Thing. This journey of King Knut was narrated by Thorarin Praise-Tongue in the *drapa* that he recited about King Knut:

(45) Knut is under the sun,
My gallant friend
went hither
with great strong forces.
The resourceful king
brought out
of Limfjord
a mighty seafleet.

(46) The inhabitants of Agder,
very barrel-hardened,
feared the journey
of the warrior.
Everything of the king's ship
was embellished with gold.
The sight of such
beggars description.

(47) And coal-black ships
glided hard forward
across the sea

Gudrod and Halfdan are Olaf's half-brothers; Rognvald refers to Rognvald Brusason, later earl of the Orkney Islands; Dag and Hring likely pettykings and descendants of Harald Fairhair; and Fid, Thorberg, and Arni sons of Arni Armodsson.

off Lista.
Everywhere south in Eiger Sound
all about
the foaming sea
was swarming with ships.

(48) And the supporters
of King Knut
glided quickly
before the ancient mound of Hjörnagl.²⁷
The journey of the warrior
was not cheerless,
there where the ships
sailed past Stad.

(49) The very long slender hulls
carried the sturdy ships
past Stim.
So scudded the ships
from the south,
when the speeding warriors
came north to the river Nid.

(50) Then the valiant man,
King of the Jutes,
gave to his nephew
all of Norway;
then he gave
to his son,
Denmark.
I say that.

Here King Knut's entire journey, how he traveled from the south along the coast, is told. It happened later that he gave Earl Hakon, his kinsman, the kingship over all of Norway. Earl Hakon had earlier been captured by King Olaf and had sworn an oath to him. Knut again underhandedly gave money to all landed men in a fresh attempt to drive King Olaf out of the country, forced some to turn over their estates to him under oath, and then took their sons as hostages.

²⁷ According to Heinrichs et. al. (1982:169 fn. 130), Hjörnagl is modernday Tjernagel.

King Knut sent messengers to Bjorn the Marshal with twelve gold rings and expected from him the same treachery against King Olaf as the others had shown. The messengers talked about how unlike other men King Knut was and offered the valuables to Bjorn.

He answered, "I will not revolt against King Olaf."

The messengers replied, "King Olaf never gave you as much money as King Knut offers you now."

Bjorn replied that he would not deliver up King Olaf for a price at this time. He now had all of King Knut's messengers hanged on the gallows, took the money for himself, and went to meet King Olaf.

But before Bjorn arrived, the king told his dream: "A very large bear²⁸ appeared before me. It was frisky and romped with me playfully and placed its life in my hands."

At this moment Bjorn came to King Olaf and told him the news that men had taken money in exchange for Olaf's head. Bjorn said he had killed those who wanted to offer money to him, "but I took the money and want to show it to you."

The king replied, "The money is splendid indeed, but yet they will pay for it dearly. And you, Bjorn, proved to be as expected. You have behaved honorably as befits a good, noble man."

Olaf invited him to remain with him. Bjorn accepted the invitation and never parted from him while they lived. Many other friends of King Olaf fled out of the country east to him in Russia, but Bjorn is specifically mentioned because he was the most prominent of them.

77. OF THE TYRANNY OF SVEIN AND ALFIFA

During the following summer, Earl Hakon went west to England to fetch his fiancée. During the fall when he sailed from the west, he drowned in the English Sea with all his crew, and that was to be expected. When King Knut learned of this, he set Svein, his son, and Alfifa, his mother, to rule over the country with all of the sons of the best people held hostage. The esteem of the Danes was so great that the testimony of one of them was to equal the testimony of ten Norwegians. Also no one might travel from the country unless the king or his men permitted it, and if someone did go, then all of his property fell into the hands of the king. Whosoever had killed a man should forfeit his land and movable

²⁸ The name Bjorn means 'bear.' King Olaf the Saint's dream is, therefore, a vision of Bjorn the Marshal's meeting with the king.

property. If a man became an outlaw and an inheritance fell due to him, then the king might take that inheritance for himself. And at Yule, every farmer was to bring for each head in the household a measure of mal, a haunch from a three-year-old ox, and a pail of butter. This tax, payable by every household, was called *vinjartoddi*. Every housewife was to pay a tax on linen called *rygjarto* and the tax was to be unfinished linen thread in a skein that could be spanned between the thumb and the middle finger. The farmers were also to build all buildings that the king wanted to have on his estate. Every seven male who were five years old or older were to equip one able-bodied soldier and thereafter contribute provisions for him. Every man who rowed on the sea was to pay the king a landing tax from wheresoever he rowed, and that was to be five fish. Each ship that traveled away from the country was obliged to allow loading space for the king on the ship. Each man who went from the country was to pay land-dues, whether he was a native of the country or a foreigner, and these obligations held until Jerusalem-Sigurd abolished most of these harsh measures. Even though distress and evil obviously lay over the land, people did not trust themselves to speak out against it for the sake of their sons who were being held hostage.

78. OLAF MAKES A STAY EAST IN RUSSIA

King Jarisleif gave a warm reception to King Olaf, Queen Astrid, and all their traveling companions. Olaf told the king and Queen Ingigerd, his sister-in-law, how much difficulty he had when he had been forced to give up his country. They both comforted him and begged him to have at his disposal anything from their kingdom that he wished. King Olaf was well pleased with their invitation and hospitality and remained there the second winter with them in good favor and high esteem as was fitting.

But after a while, King Olaf told them that he must return home to Norway. He said that his countrymen who had gone on the journey with him and he himself were of one mind in that they wanted to go to their estates and land. The king wanted actually nothing other than to return. Jarisleif and Ingigerd begged him not to go away. Olaf now became aware that he would hardly be able to leave unless he told them that a sign had appeared directing him to return home to Norway. When they learned this from him, the king and queen became so joyful that they shed tears.

79. KING OLAF HEALS A THROAT ABSCESS

This event took place while still in Russia. A widow had a son who had an abscess in his throat, as is very common. The mother of the boy discussed this with Queen Ingigerd and asked her for good advice.

"You go," declared Ingigerd, "before King Olaf and ask him for help. He will say he is not a physician, but you shall say you have heard that if the king lays bread in the person's mouth, then he will get better."

She did so. The king broke off some bread, laid it in the mouth of the boy, and the boy called out at once, "Yes!"

80. KING OLAF CONTINUES TO SWEDEN

Now it is further told that Norway had been without a ruler during the winter, because Earl Hakon had died in the meantime. The friends of King Olaf sent people east into Russia to tell him that the country was without a ruler. King Olaf prepared for his journey during the winter after Yule and left his son behind to be fostered by King Jarisleif. King Olaf traveled from the east toward the coast to the sea. During the spring, he sailed across the sea to Sweden. He assembled some troops and went from there to Hälsingland. When he came to Sweden, Onund welcomed him joyfully. Later on when Olaf made known his journey, Onund gathered a great army from around his kingdom and he collected one thousand and eighty men at once. Afterward Olaf went away with his forces but left Dag behind to assemble troops and ordered him to procure only Christian men. Still more of his friends he left behind with Dag.

Gauta-Thorir was the name of one man, and Afrafasti, another. They were great fighters, men of surpassing feats of valor, and were almost berserkers.²⁹ They roamed widely over the countryside, and altogether their band numbered thirty men. They surpassed other men in strength, they did not sacrifice to the gods, yet they had not submitted to baptism.

²⁹ Berserkers were warriors who went into a fighting rage in battle. They were said to act like mad dogs, bite their shields, and foam at the mouth. It was said that neither fire nor iron could harm them. Two different origins of the word have been suggested: 'bare shirt' because they were said to fight without armor, or 'one dressed in a bear's skin,' the latter more accepted. See Chapter 92 where Thorir Hound and his companions dressed in wolf's skin capes gain invulnerability in battle.

They talked now between themselves, "Why does the king not ask us for help, when he is in great need of it?" "The king pleases me so well," said Thorir, "that I want to offer him our aid. They who serve him will have the better of it."

They met the king and offered him their support. The king asked whether they were baptized or not.

They said, "Not yet, Master."

The king replied, "We do not have in our forces those who are unbaptized because it gains us little support."

They spoke, "Have we shown less courage in a day than any of your men?"

The king did not accept their assistance. Now they went from the east through the most eastern part of the kingdom where the sea is not salty. The king ordered his men to listen to divine services before they ceased their journey. The snowfall was heavy throughout the day onto the ice.

81. THE VISION OF KING OLAF

It happened one day when the king rode on his way that people came to meet him from Norway and told him there would be a great rebellion, "and all the mightiest chieftains are against you." They said that the chieftains had taken money from Knut the Great, "and you will not have long to live if you proceed to that place. But we offer to accompany you." He agreed to this. Ingigerd had made him a magnificent banner.

One day when King Olaf traveled between Oppland and Sweden, he was morose and spoke not a word. The bishop asked why he was so gloomy.

King Olaf answered, "I saw a great vision. All of the world was before my eyes. I saw all those countries in which I have been and also those where I have not been. Furthermore I saw all of the distinguishing characteristics among them."

Then the bishop stepped down from the back of his horse, grasped the foot of the king, and bowed down to him, saying, "We accompany a holy man."

Afterward King Olaf went on until he came to the place called Stafamyrar. There he mustered the troops that Onund had procured for him, but they were heathen. Then King Olaf gave them a choice: Either allow themselves to be baptized and follow him or else turn back, because King Olaf did not want to have heathen men under his

command. Four hundred and eighty received baptism and accompanied him, but six hundred turned back.

82. KALF ARNASON MEETS THE KING

The king went then with some troops to Hälsingland and into Jämtland. One day five men rode to meet the king. One of them was Kalf Arnason.

"Why have you come here, Kalf?" asked the king.

"Master," said he, "why do you prepare yourself as though there were opposition against you? We like you the best of the rulers even though we enticed money from King Knut."

Then the king spoke to Finn Arnason, Kalf's brother, "How much shall we trust Kalf, your brother?"

Finn answered, "Let us not trust him. He is clever and full of treachery. Why do we not seize him now?"

The king replied, "It would be good to turn this man away from evil deeds because that is what is destined for him."

Kalf now turned back; he had made his observations. Next Kalf and his troops decided on the man who should bear the standard against the king. He was named Koli, a landed man. Out of his head sprang both of his eyes.

83. OF THORGEIR OF SOLA

Thorgeir of Sola came to meet the king and invited him home with him. There was no lack of generous hospitality. On the day when the king rode to the feast, there were fair cultivated fields on both sides of them. Thorgeir rode ahead. It was not easy to stop the troops who came on Wednesday. The riders proceeded slowly. Thormod and his companions rode over the fields and trampled them down severely. That displeased Thorgeir, but Thormod said that he was at liberty to ride wherever he wanted. The king said that it was wrong to cause damage and treat Thorgeir unjustly but saw, nonetheless, that nothing could be done about it.

The king responded, "Bear it well, Thorgeir. You see nothing but little honor in this; nevertheless, it may be that this is insignificant if another even greater misfortune occurs."

The king now went to the feast. The tents were set up outside, and there was feasting inside. The banquet proceeded.

It is told of Thormod Coal Brow's Skald that he awoke early one morning and considered how much had happened to him. He had

fasted now for nine Sundays, but he always ate meat on Fridays, so that he would succeed better than before to gain vengeance by killing Thorarin Troll out in Greenland. He ran into a kitchen once, grabbed a sausage, and ate it. It was on a fast day.

The cook said, "Are you one of the king's men?"

"Yes," said Thormod.

"You must be in very dire straits," said the cook.

Thormod answered, "It will take something more to separate Christ and me than half a sausage or less."

The farmer with whom the king feasted made ready to travel with the king. He had two sons; one was sixteen years old, and the other, seventeen. The king asked the farmer to go with him, but his sons were to remain at home. There were still fields blooming even though severely trampled. The king said that the troops had not conducted themselves properly. The boys wanted to accompany their father, but the king's men did not want it. The king said that the lads should have their way, if they wanted, "and may God watch over them and their safe return will be granted."

Thorgeir was called Fleck. He was treated disgracefully by King Svein.

84. WATER IS CHANGED INTO MEAD AND WINE

Now the more the king proceeded on his way, the more he heard of troops assembling. The king rode a white horse during the day. It happened that the horse ran into a hole in the ground and all four of the horse's legs were broken. The king leaped off, uninjured, and said, "Things will get worse before they get better." Each man offered him his horse. The king bound up the legs of his horse.

Now the king asked his cup-bearer to give him water to drink. He did so. The king blessed the goblet, and when he tasted it, he said, "I do not want to drink ale."

The cup-bearer replied, "I brought you water, Master." He filled the cup a second time and gave it to the king.

The king said, "This is mead. I do not want to drink it. Give me water."

The cup-bearer brought him the cup a third time. The king spoke, "Now you give me wine; I do not want to drink it."

The bishop said, "Drink, Master. To Him who has given you these drinks and transformed them, all things are possible, and such are excellent and praiseworthy miracles."

85. THE KILLING OF HRUT FROM VIGGEN

Now the king's men saw the ship that was owned by Hrut Lodinsson from Viggen. Sigurd Woolstring was his son and he established a cloister in Nidaros. "I remember," said the king, "that Hrut was once a better friend of ours. Now he sails to Kalf with troops and weapons to fight against us."

The king spoke to Gizur the Black, "Is it customary in Iceland during the fall for the farmhands to claim a sheep to slaughter when they have completed their work?"

"Yes, master," said he, "it is indeed the custom there."

The king said, "I am ever so much greater a man than those farmers in Iceland that I shall get you a much greater one to slaughter. Seize the ram³⁰ and all those who accompany him and kill them all."

Gizur was not reluctant to do this. They killed Hrut and one hundred and twenty men with him.

86. OLAF COMES WITH HIS TROOPS TO STIKLESTAD

When King Olaf arrived at Oppland, Harald Sigurdarson, his brother, came to meet him. He was fifteen years old, young in age but brave of heart. King Olaf received him with much honor. These very distinguished men were already with the king: Finn Arnason, who afterward was earl in Denmark, Rognvald Brusason, who afterward was earl in the Orkney Islands, and Aslak from Fitjar. Two hundred and forty men had accompanied Olaf out of Russia and had never parted from him. Harald his brother, came to meet him with seven hundred and twenty men and never parted from King Olaf while he lived on this earth. Dag Hringsson traveled with King Olaf out of Russia into Sweden. He remained there when King Olaf went away, assembled together troops, and intended to follow King Olaf. King Olaf waited for him in Oppland for a while. Although Dag did not arrive, Olaf nevertheless wanted to resume his journey, but when they made their way between Mjøsa and

³⁰ The name Hrut means 'ram.'

Vänern in Oppland, they were forced to carry both the ships and also the weapons on their backs, and travel was difficult. The places where they had rested for the night were later called Olaf's Shelters. Now they came toward the mountain near Sul in Verdal. Many powerful men were there when the army went down into Verdal and forth to Stiklestad. King Olaf set up camp for seven hundred and twenty and stayed there Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. He fasted on only water on both days.

When King Olaf had arrived there, he called a farmer to him. Then he gave him a large amount of money and ordered him go forth into the district and purchase masses from priests, "for the souls of those men who are against me and who fall in battle."

"You will want to give money for those men's souls who fall with you," replied the farmer.

"For those who are against me," repeated the king, "for we will all be saved together, my men and I."

87. OF AFRAFASTI AND GAUTA-THORIR

Then Kalf prepared with great fervor, immense strength, and wickedness to wage a fierce battle against Olaf. He took as his chief reason Olaf's preaching of Christianity prior to the time he came back into the country, because Kalf knew that Olaf would now zealously force people to accept Christianity as he had earlier done with great success. Kalf also gave as justification that the sons of prominent men should not be given to someone as hostages. King Olaf had now come to a certain knoll during mid-morning and he ordered his men to go to confession. A short distance from him sat thirty men who had not laid down their weapons. The king had someone inquire who they were, and he was told that they were Afrafasti and Gauta-Thorir. The king asked what they wanted. They said that they wanted to join his troops. He asked whether they were baptized but they said they were not.

The king repeated what he had said earlier, "We do not care to have you with our forces, but we certainly want to have you if you will agree to be baptized and go your way then in peace."

They said they wanted to come with him because they wanted to give him support. They said also they had been in some highly dangerous situations, "and it appears to us, Master, that the faith is best that you preach, and we ask of you that you accept us, because we are not familiar with that faith you preach to us."

The king granted them that they should be one in the true faith. Each of them said he wanted to fight in the front ranks with the king. Now they were baptized and confirmed by the bishop and each had a ribbon around his head.

88. OF THORMOD COAL BROW'S SKALD

Then the king said that Thormod should entertain them with something.

He answered, "Why doesn't Sighvat entertain us?"

The king replied, "He has no choice in the matter because he has gone south out of the country to Rome."

Thormod answered, "It will be done by the one to whom it falls," and recited the Lay of Bjarki.³¹

When he had recited it, the king spoke, "What payment do you want to have, Thormod, for your entertainment?"

Thormod answered, "I cannot put a price on it. I want nothing given to me other than this: I want to be your defender and to be in your protection; I do not want to live after you."

The king answered, "I cannot see clearly how things will come to pass, but protection I will grant you. How many men have you slain in single combat?"

Then Thormod recited this verse:

(51) I have slain altogether
six warriors
since the deadly quarrels increased for me.
I am occasionally familiar with tumult.
Still I was scarcely thirty
when I had committed slayings of men.
We did nevertheless
strike their heads.

"You are not old," said the king, "that will be in your favor. How could it then be otherwise for the seventh day than that two days count for one person slain?"³²

31 The Lay of Bjarki is an Old Norse poem about the fall of the Danish king Hrolf Kraki. It is written as a dialog between the two warriors Bodvar Bjarki and Hjalti.

32 This exchange is generally interpreted as relating to a folk belief regarding the time that a soul had to remain in purgatory for purification and the observance of the funeral feast (*sjaund*) seven days after death. Therefore the killing of five men would take up the first five days and the sixth man the other two days.

"Well and wisely spoken, Master," said Thormod.

A handsome man went to the king; he was called Arnljot Gellini. "Master," he said, "I sent you a silver dish with Thorod Snorrason. It was given as a token that I wanted to join you and fight along with you."

The king said that he should go back and be baptized, "but I do not want to have your support, for I think myself in need of no human's strength." Arnljot went back and was baptized.

89. PREPARATION FOR BATTLE

Now the armies of the farmers gathered against the king, men from Trøndelag, Helgeland, Naumdal, and Møre. Those were the chieftains supporting Kalf Arnason: Harek from Tjøtta, Thorir Hound, Erlend from Gjerde, Hrut from Viggen, Thorgeir from Sorshaug, and the greatest share of the landed men from the northern part of the country. The farmers of Trondheim assembled together immense forces of fourteen hundred and forty men. Altogether they had eight thousand and four hundred men.

It was told about King Olaf that a little while before the fighting began, he dozed fitfully. His followers heard the clash of weapons from the farmers' troops. When Finn Arnason went to the king and awakened him, the king said, "I saw a ladder rising to Heaven and Heaven opened up. I had come upon the uppermost rung when you awakened me." And it was obvious, said the one who wrote the story of this vision,³³ that the holy saint of God would before long have been at the gates of the Heavenly Kingdom when the end was reached and that reward was intended for Olaf's labors on behalf of God Almighty.

When Kalf and Erlend halted their troops to wait until Thorir Hound arrived with his company, all of the troops became highly excited. Then King Olaf ordered all of his troops to go to confession. They held mass, and everyone in his forces took Communion before they began fighting. Now the king came forward with his troops and awaited the army of the farmers.

The king spoke to Thormod, "What would be your plan if you had charge of our troops?"

Thormod answered:

(52) Burn all the houses
that we find inside Hverbjorg.

33 Adam of Bremen wrote an account of this vision.

The army shall defend the land
before the king with swords.
The people from Trøndelag should get all their houses
burned to cold ashes
if I were to prevail.
Fire will be kindled in the brambles.

"Yes," said the king, "we can rely on you for this, Thormod: you say what you feel in your heart. But we will now take another course rather than burn our own land."

It is said that there where the king had come, many low bushes grew with berries on them. The king looked at the troops of the farmers and said, "Evil and wicked berries," but he really intended to say that evil and wicked were the troops who went against him.

Then Rognvald Brusason replied, "That is a slip of the tongue, Master."

The king answered, "You take note of this, for you will not be farther from death than I am now when you make such a slip of the tongue."

And so it happened when Earl Thorfid came to the Orkney Islands, Rognvald went to a place where fires were lit. When he came into the house, he said, "We have fully lived out our lives when these fires are burned out," but he wanted to say that they would be fully warmed. He recalled what the king had said and declared, "Now Thorfid, my kinsman, has arrived on the island." Earl Thorfid came with his forces, and for Rognvald, only a few days of his life remained.

Thorfid the Skald was with King Olaf at that time. He recited this verse when the troops advanced:

(53) A great and mighty battle
is approaching.
The troops of the Verdalers
will fight against the valiant king.
Let us defend with all-powerful arrows.
Let us feed the cheerful ravens;
Let us fell the people from Trøndelag in battle.
This we urge.

90. OF THE EXCHANGE OF WORDS BETWEEN THE KING AND THE CHIEFTAINS

The farmers had twenty-four standards and a company of one hundred and twenty men under each. So it is also told that the king had an equal number of standards carried against them and had forty men under each.

Then the king spoke with Thormod, "I will place you in another wing of the army."

Thormod replied:

(54) I will dare to defend that wing of the troops
where I am chosen to stand.
That is the wish of the woman.
Let us redden the shields from rage.
Still the young man, eager for battle,
does not retreat before the spears,
there where blows resound.
Men attack hard in battle.

Thorstein Shipbuilder made a solemn vow that if he were able, he would be the first man to strike a blow against the king.

Gizur the Black spoke, "With us it is customary to claim a sheep for slaughtering and to earn it. What must I do, Master, in order that I might accomplish this?"

The king answered, "Two men stand opposite you and one of them is greater in strength. I cannot call you a coward if you slay them."

Gizur struck a foot off one and he killed the other before the battle had begun. Now Erlend from Gjerde came with those troops which he had gathered together improperly against the king. King Olaf had given him a large grant of land and valuable gifts, and nothing had happened between them until Erlend went into the enemies' camp.

Then King Olaf spoke to Erlend, "I made you a great man out of a little one, yet today you collect troops against me and want to kill me. But I can say to you truthfully that you will be slain here, and your soul will be in hell before your blood is cold on the ground."

Next King Olaf spoke to Kalf Arnason, "You are not eager, Kalf, to know your fate if my decision were to prevail."

"I know nothing, Master," said he.

The king said, "You should leave the country and seek atonement, for you are a wise man. And you, Thorir, how eager are you to know your fate?"

"I agree," said Thorir, "that we deserve little from you."

"So it is," said the king. "You might accomplish many great works here in the country or in foreign lands. And disaster is in store for you, Thorgeir," said the king. "You remember the feast that we gave for you. Then you bore high your head, which you now bear against me, and that does not befit you."

Thorgeir said he did not want to do otherwise because of Kalf's accusations. Kalf Arnason knew that Finn, his brother, was with King Olaf and spoke to him, "These troops who have gathered here today want peace with the king."

Afterward Finn talked with King Olaf, "Kalf, my brother, spoke deceitfully to you, Master. You should not trust him because he says nothing but lies when he speaks."

Then spoke the king, "There are many Norwegian men in the troops of Kalf who would be better killed with me than fighting against me."

91. OF THE BATTLE

Thorir Hound arrived then and Harek from Tjøtta with three thousand and six hundred men. King Olaf proceeded to draw up his troops into battle position. He placed Rognvald on his right with one hundred and twenty troops, and Finn on the left with two hundred and forty men. He placed Harald, his brother, with Bjorn the Marshal, his trusted friend, and Thormod and his warriors in another wing. Olaf's entire army comprised fourteen hundred and forty men, but the farmers had eight thousand and four hundred men. King Olaf had a sword in his hand and was in the front of his ranks at the beginning of the battle, but he wore neither helmet nor coat of mail. People say that Arni Arnason bore the standard of King Olaf during the day. A shield fortress was raised over the king; he was to be inside there.

Kalf went back to his troops and said, "I saw a vision that we might well do without. The red glow of war illuminates the sky sooner than blood spills on the ground. Dire threats are great, the sun cannot shine, the earthquakes are powerful, and dread overcomes us."

King Olaf ordered those who recognized their relatives in the troops of the farmers to leave him. One man answered him, "I recognize my two sons in the troops of the farmers, and I think it likely that

no one is more promising than either of those two. I may well see them slain, but I do not want to part from you, Master."

It is further told that no one wanted to part from him. Thorir Hound and a band of twelve altogether were out beyond the battle array of the king and roamed about freely. They were clad in wolf's skin capes.

Thorstein, a Halogaland man who was called the Shipbuilder, spoke, "I do not want to be in the battle formation, but I would gladly be the first to attack the king."

A man asked, "Why do you say that?"

"Yes, indeed," said he, "I resolved in my mind when Olaf burned my merchant ship, which was perhaps my best, that I would remember it."

The man replied, "You probably received a lesser penalty than was deserved." Thorstein became silent.

Thorgils Hjalmuson was the name of a man. He came to meet the king before the battle and offered to fight along with the king, even though he called himself a miserable wretch, for in his greed, he had accepted money from King Knut. Nevertheless, he submitted completely to the king's authority. His son was Grim Godi, who lived in Stiklestad and Thorgils lived there too.

The king responded, "You shall not fight; instead you shall move our wounded men into your house."

Now they parted reconciled. The king said that Thorgils had replied thus because of fear.

The king also spoke with the farmer Thorgeir³⁴ and said he should accompany Olaf's corpse to the grave and have the wounds of his followers washed in the bath where Olaf's body would be washed after death.

Thormod recited then this verse:

(55) Thethane's daughter
shall not hear of my sadness,
that rumor which has been spread about.
I prepare against the press of battle
inasmuch as wise warriors
speak of the expectation of battle.
Let us be of support to the king
in the fierce battle in the east.

34 Heinrichs et. al. (1982:193 fn. 148) suggest that this might be Thorgeir Fleck of Sola.

(56) Warrior, a mighty battle is threatening.
Frightened men should not flinch.
The strife increases.
Let us prepare ourselves for battle.
The battle-cheerful man
should avoid cowardly words
when we go
into the fray with Olaf.

(57) I will still remain steadfast
before you, all-powerful king,
until you get other skalds.
How soon do you expect them?
We will escape here alive
or we will remain lying here dead—
that is certain, king. Let us grant
an offering of the slain to the greedy raven.

The king answered, "You constantly harp on the obvious."

92. STILL MORE OF THE BATTLE

And it is said that so furiously did they attack one another, while the shower of missiles flew, that the front ranks of the king's men stood where earlier had stood the last ranks of the farmers. People tell that they egged on one another thus, "Let us strike, let us strike, king's men!" "Fiercely, fiercely, farmers!"

Now the battle formations came together and they fought boldly and with great valor. The king's men offered stiff resistance and showed then, as earlier, their great courage. Those seemed to have it best who were the bravest in attack and were nearest to the king. To all it seemed better to fall with the king than to escape, remembering his auspicious promise that they would all be saved together and the other glorious one: that God Almighty wanted to reward King Olaf the Saint for the troubles that he had endured for God's sake when Olaf had enhanced and strengthened Christianity with his might. Then the event occurred that here in this battle King Olaf lost his life.

People relate that during the day, Bjorn the Stout struck with a sword at Thorir Hound. But where the sword came down, it did not bite but rather it turned around, striking against him. Thorir and his band of twelve were in wolf's skin capes, which the Finns had made for them with great folk magic.

When Bjorn saw that the sword did not bite, he called at the king and said, "The weapons do not bite the hounds."

"Then strike the hounds," said the king.

Bjorn took a great club and struck Thorir Hound, so that he fell and ever afterward he always carried his head to one side. Then Thorir leaped up and thrust at Bjorn with a spear, saying, "Thus do we hunt bears³⁵ in Finnmark in the north."

Bjorn moved along the spear shaft and bit his beard. People tell that Erlend from Gjerde fell first from the farmers' troops in the battle. It was also early when King Olaf fell. A young relative of Kalf Arnason was in high favor with Kalf; he wounded King Olaf in the leg.

93. THE DEATH OF KING OLAF

So it is said that when King Olaf received that wound, he cast his sword away and prayed to God for his enemies. Thorir Hound and Thorstein Shipbuilder were the slayers of King Olaf, but Thorstein at once was killed at the feet of the king. He had made a solemn vow that he should be the first to slay the king if he were able. Now King Olaf gave up his life there. Great dread and terror seized everyone. The sun hid its beams, and although earlier the weather had been fair, it became dark as it had been when the Creator himself went from the earth. God aroused great terror. King Olaf died on a certain hill, and in that same spot a church has been built. Then King Olaf ascended out of this kingdom and into the glorious kingdom of Heaven. It was on a Wednesday when King Olaf died. Bjorn the Stout also fell with him. Also slain were Kolbein Arnason, Aslak from Finney³⁶, and vast numbers from the troops from Trøndelag.

When King Olaf was slain, God opened up the eyes of Thorir Hound, and he saw how God's angels went with Olaf's soul up to Heaven amidst radiant light. It seemed to him that the soul was dressed in the most glorious purple and Olaf's countenance appeared to be as white as snow. After that Thorir Hound went out of the country to Jerusalem and died there.

³⁵ See fn. 28

³⁶ Guðni Jónsson's edition (1957:361) has Finney here. Heinrichs et. al. (1982:196) transcribe *Fitiumæya* 'Fitjar-Island.' They explain (Ibid. fn. 152) that editors who render Finney in this instance are basing their reading on younger traditions such as Snorri Sturluson. According to Heinrichs et. al. (Ibid.), Aslak from Fitjar-Island is identical with Aslak from Fitjar.

94. OF DAG HRINGSSON

Dag Hringsson came with fourteen hundred and forty men, when King Olaf had fallen. He asked whether the king had been killed there or not. He was told that he had just fallen. He asked whether they wanted to select another as king. They asked who that one might be.

Dag said, "I volunteer myself," but they did not want that.

Then he suggested Harald, Olaf's brother, but they refused this, saying, "If we did not want to have King Olaf rule over us, then we certainly do not want to take his brother as king."

Now began a fresh spurt of fighting between Dag's troops and the farmers, but Dag was overpowered and forced to flee. Dag brought Harald Sigurdarson to a physician, because he had been severely wounded. He was healed secretly and afterward left the country. Many others escaped with difficulty. Rognvald Brusason and Dag Hringsson wandered away into unknown countries. Many chieftains fell from the ranks of the farmers, even though few are named. Rognvald later became an earl in the Orkney Islands and was a very distinguished man. Finn Arnason had been severely wounded and was healed. King Svein Ulfsson gave Finn an earldom, for he was a most outstanding man.

95. OF FATHER AND SON

Thormod roamed at large in the battle and received no great wound, which astonished him, for he did not believe he had especially protected himself.

Then a man called, "Lend me your shield."

"You take it," said Thormod, "I do not need it." The man thanked him.

Thormod leaped over a wooden fence, recalling he had said he feared he would not fall with his king. At this moment came a shot, a barbed arrow, under his left arm between the ribs, and he said, "No one drew his bow in a better hour. Now I expect that I will not be parted from the king." He broke off the shaft from the arrow and sat down.

A man called out from among the slain, and Thormod heard him. "Who of these men here is able to carry on a light conversation with us?" called the man but no one answered.

"Here are no great brave men," said that one, "if no one will answer."

A man said, "Things have gone badly for you when you have fought against your chieftain. You lie now at Hell's brink."

"I had a son who went out of the country to Jerusalem, and I have heard no reports since."

"What is the name of that man who calls thus?"

"I am called Hjarrandi."

"That name is a bad omen," said he, "My father is deceiving me.³⁷"

"For a long time, with bad advice, I have acted against my king and committed many great crimes. Come hither," said the older.

"Don't try to get me close to you, you who thinks that I want to pollute myself in your blood."

"I hope for help if I repent now, for I might be baptized in the blood of the king."

"I support myself on my knees and my entrails hang outside me. What is your injury?"

He answered, "A spear has pierced me." The old one crept to him, and both died together.

96. OF THORMOD COAL BROW'S SKALD

His wound pained Thormod greatly. There were also many others wounded. A woman came toward Thormod with a water pail. A man named Kimbi was to bandage the wounds of the men. He was an elderly man, he had not been a brave man, and he had been called unfaithful. Thormod found no space near the door but stood inside near a partition wall and propped himself up.

Now people talked about who had fared best in the battle, but they did not agree. The woman came near Thormod and asked with whom he had been. He answered:

(58) It was seen
that we were rejoicing in battle with Olaf.
I received, however, woman,
wounds and little peace.
My shield reflects this.
The skald was involved in ferocious battle.
The warriors have
nearly made me left-handed.

³⁷ The entire passage is ambiguous and particularly the reading of this sentence unclear. Another possible—potentially more feasible—reading would be "My father is good to me." See Heinrichs et. al. (1982: 198 fn. 154).

The woman asked who had defended himself best in the troops of the king. Then he recited further:

(59) I saw that the battle-happy Harald
defended himself well with Olaf.
There Hring and Dag went furiously
to the meeting of the swords.
Those four descendants of kings
resolved to stand gallantly
under red shields.
The raven received his blood.

She asked how boldly the king had attacked. He said:

(60) Bold was Olaf's heart.
The king waded forth in blood at Stiklestad.
Embellished swords bit.
He urged his troops to battle.
I saw all of the warriors, except the king himself,
shield themselves
during the continuous shower of spears.
Most were tested and proved themselves.

Thormod told Kimbi that it was ignoble of him to reproach the king's men. He replied that he would not suffer wounds worse. Now Kimbi saw a gold ring appear from under Thormod's sleeve and he ran his eyes over it.

Thormod said, "Do you think the ring is beautiful, old man?"

Kimbi declared it beautiful. "Take it then, Kimbi," said Thormod.

Kimbi stretched out his hand. But Thormod drew his short sword and cut off his hand. "Now we will test how you endure your wounds."

Kimbi wailed loudly and shrieked, but Thormod told him that never again would he betray any other person with that hand. Now Thormod went away. A young man came from one of the houses to meet him. He urged him not to go inside and said there was weeping and wailing.

Thormod asked, "Were you in the battle today?"

"I certainly was," said he, "with the farmers, who were better. With whom were you?"

"With the king, of course, who was better," said Thormod. "Are you wounded?"

"Wounded I am," said he.

"You have not behaved well toward the king," said Thormod, and he thrust his short sword at him. The young man bore it badly.

Thormod ordered him to bear it well, "and then you may revile the king's men." Now that one died sooner than expected.

97. THE DEATH OF THORMOD

Thormod met a woman who was carrying wood in her arms. When she saw Thormod, she threw down the wood and said that dead men walk about. He said he was not dead. A fleck had appeared on his nose. He recited this verse:

(61) The woman wonders
why I am pale
Few become beautiful from wounds.
I discovered the storm of arrows, my lady.
Powerfully shot, the dark arrow
flew through me.
The dangerous iron, I believe,
bit keenly close to the heart.

"What is your injury, good man?" said she. He answered:

(62) I am not red
nor can the light complexioned woman with the slender hands
cause me to blush.
Few are concerned about me
even though I am wounded.
Deep wounds pain me
from the tracks of Danish weapons after Dag's attack
and that causes my paleness, generous woman.

He showed her the wound, which was greatly swollen. The woman asked how the arrow should come out.

"Cut out the arrow," said he, "or grasp it with tongs and jerk it out of the wound, so that the flesh doesn't close together around it."

"I don't dare do it," said she.

"Cut the flesh," said he, "or give me the tongs."

He drew the arrow toward himself and said, "Well fed is this man around the heart, and we have our king to thank for that," lay his chest against the wall, and then died.

98. OF THE SONS OF ARNI

Now two of the Arnasons, Kolbein and Arni, were dead. Finn and Thorberg were badly wounded. The brothers talked with one another as they lay among the slain.

Thorberg asked, "How often have you been among the slain, Finn?"

"Often," said he, "and I always thought it bad but not now, because my wounds don't smart. It is good to be here near the king, and there is a pleasant fragrance here."

"I hear men's voices," said Thorberg.

"There is Kalf, our brother," said Finn. "I would kill him if I were able."

Thorberg answered loudly so that Kalf should hear him, "It does not befit you to do thus with our brother."

Then Finn threw his sword, which had slipped out of its scabbard, at Kalf. It struck Kalf's knee-cap and then the instep of his foot and went through it. He was lame ever after.

"You have punished me," said Kalf, "for my offences."

"Have no doubt," said Finn, "that I wanted to do more harm to you."

"Instead let us now become reconciled," said Kalf.

Finn said, "Quite the opposite shall happen to you," and with that they parted.

99. OF THE HEALINGS

After the death of King Olaf, it was made evident to all people that he was truly a saint. Three cripples regained their health when his body was borne to the church. Leprous men were restored to health, and from his body a multitude of miracles occurred. Thorir Hound testified he saw the king in such a radiant and awesome appearance that he was nearly blinded. When he went near the king, blood ran onto Thorir's axe handle. His fingers, which had been almost cut off, grew together at once as if they were bound around with silk thread, "and we acknowledge his holiness," said Thorir.

Thord Folason was also wounded on a finger that was nearly cut off where it lay upon the standard-pole. After the third day, it gained his attention, for he was stricken with sudden pain, so great that he could scarcely endure it. Then King Olaf revealed to Thord and rebuked him for his stubbornness and heedlessness. Afterward he struck Thord's finger in its place so hard that it was very sore. When Thord awakened, he was completely healed.

100. KING OLAF'S HOLINESS IS REVEALED

After the death of King Olaf, the corpse was carried out from among the slain during the evening and washed. A blind man came there, washed his eyes in the bloody water, and all at once he could see.

A prominent farmer who lived in this district went out during the night when the body lay on the bier and said to his wife when he came back inside, "I do not regret now that I did not oppose the king."

She asked what had happened. "I saw a great light," said he, "over the place where I suppose that the body of the king would be."

Furthermore when they bore the body of the king to the church, a sick man took a hard fall. He immediately rose up whole and sound when Olaf's corpse passed over him.

Afterward Olaf's body was buried in the ground at Christ Church. There occurred the first sign of the saintliness of King Olaf: A certain blind man washed his eyes in the water in which Olaf's wounds were washed, and at once he received sight. The body of King Olaf lay in the earth one year and five days, and then his body had come up out of the earth. Clergymen advised that the body should be buried down in the ground a second time. All people called upon God in his mercy to give them a revelation by raising up the body of King Olaf the Saint. Nine days passed. Then his body and the holy remains had come up a second time on the Day of Discovery of Stephan and his companions.³⁸ Bishop Grimkel took the body of King Olaf out of the earth, and that day is observed forever in his memory in Norway and extensively in other places. A large crowd of people was present. At the advice of Bishop Grimkel and King Svein, a hair was taken from Olaf's beard, and it came out with blood. It was laid in the consecrated fire and was not at all damaged.

³⁸ The Day of Discovery of Stephan and his companions is August 3.

Alfifa then said that they should lay it in unconsecrated fire and said that often learned men can consecrate a fire so that nothing would be harmed.

Einar Paunch-shaker answered that there was one who more deserved to lie in the fire, "and you yourself are that one."

She replied, "Thick is your neck, Einar, but I have seen such fish leap into the net."

He answered, "My neck is not very thick, but if many like me leap into the net, then your mesh will not hold up well."

The answer was not far from what she had expected.

101. THE TRANSLATION OF THE HOLY RELICS OF KING OLAF

Afterward King Olaf was laid in a shrine with great ceremony and magnificent miracles. The blind men took sight, the lepers were healed, and many miracles happened both from his body and blood.

King Svein came into Norway that summer when King Olaf had died. The people of the country after Olaf's death suffered great misery from the oppression of King Svein and Alfifa. It was distressing to live under their rule because of the lack of freedom and the bad crop failures. The people lived more on livestock fodder than human food, for there never was a good crop year in those days, as one may hear in this verse that Sighvat recited:

(63) The young valiant man will remember
for a long time the reign of Alfifa,
when we ate the fodder of oxen
as the goats eat scraped bark.
It was otherwise when Olaf
he who preserved the peace, ruled the land.
Then each one could boast of having
stores of dried and stacked grain.

King Olaf the Saint bore the name of king in Norway for fifteen years here on this earth until he was killed. He was then thirty-five years old, and at that time, 1029 years and 200 days had passed from the birth of Christ our Lord.

102. MAGNUS OLAFSSON IS CHOSEN AS KING

It is said that one time there was a well-attended assembly in Nidaros. At the assembly were King Svein and Alfifa, his mother. There was still much talk about the farmers' oppression. There was neither agreement nor disagreement on what to do.

Then Einar Paunch-shaker spoke, so that many people heard, "I was not a friend of King Olaf's; nevertheless, the people from Trøndelag were not good merchants when they sold their king and took in exchange for him the mare and her new foal. That king cannot speak, and his mother wants only evil; she accomplishes plenty of that."

Those who heard it howled with laughter; they repeated it to one another and thought it well spoken.

Now spoke Alfifa, "Why don't the farmers sit down and listen to the king's speech and not grumble so?"

The farmers became silent, but Einar stood up and spoke loudly, "Go home, everyone. People have come here with bad intentions both now and earlier to meet with Alfifa. People may as well suffer their injustice at home and not all come to one place and listen there to one woman's words when they did not want to listen to King Olaf, who now has truly become saintly. Great injustice has been done against him. This is punishment and much deservedly has happened to our people since this oppression has come over us. May God let this time be as short as possible, because it has already been long enough."

Now Einar and also the entire crowd left the assembly. The most prominent men volunteered to travel out of the country east into Russia and ask King Jarisleif to give into their charge Magnus, the son of King Olaf the Saint. People wanted to make atonement to his son for what they had done to his father.

The king answered that he feared they deceived him, "because we have heard nothing earlier about their request."

But they swore that the most influential men had participated in this decision: Einar, Svein Bridgefoot, and Kalf Arnason. So it came about that Magnus came into the country in the fourth year after the death of his father. He arrived in Norway with much honor, and Svein fled away. Magnus now ruled alone over the kingdom.

103. THE MIRACLE OF THE BLIND MAN

Now all the people here in the northern lands expected much aid for themselves from King Olaf, the chosen one of God. He was able to give people great help through his intercession with God, because while he had lived on this earth, he converted many a one who had strayed. He has now been exalted to such an extent that in all things he can perform much more than we can comprehend.

After the death of King Olaf, his body was taken at once and moved to a house. The king's men themselves washed his body very carefully and kept watch over it. Then came a pitiful person, totally blind, who fell on his knees there before the door and crept to where the water in which Olaf's wounds and body were washed had splashed down. He wet his hands in this water. When he stood up, he rubbed this around his eyes, and all at once God granted him the beautiful light for which he had for so long yearned. It seemed very remarkable to him and many others who were there, and for this all men revered King Olaf the Saint, who had shown them great compassion. All invoked him with veneration afterward, as was deserved, and praised God and particularly King Olaf the Saint ever after.

104. OF DUKE GUDTHORM

There was a duke in Ireland called Gudthorm who was a great leader and famous for his valor and vigor. A Norwegian in all his lineage, he was the nephew of King Olaf the Saint. He was a dear and cherished friend of a king in Dublin who was called Mardagus, and their friendship was especially close.

It happened one time that they had won a great victory and had captured an immense amount of booty in raiding expeditions. On the day they were to start for home, they were to divide this great amount of booty between themselves equally. The king wanted to have both portions and valued his friendship and fellowship with the duke so little that he ordered him to choose which terms he would rather have: to lose all of the booty that they both won together and give up his ships, or to fight in battle against him. To Gudthorm there was great difficulty with either of the two choices. He thought it disgraceful to lose his ships and property without provocation; nevertheless, it was dangerous to fight against the king because of the many troops that accompanied him. Those forces were greatly mismatched, for the king had sixteen ships and the duke had only five. He asked the king to allow him to postpone

his decision for three days to confer with his friends. He believed that he might in that interval be able to mitigate the king's greed and thus with his persuasion and good advice emerge from the affair in even greater friendship with the king. This day was the eve of Saint Olaf's Day.

As soon as he discovered that he could not with his words and counsel turn the king from his wrongheadedness, he chose for his fate to die with honor and courage and lose his life like a man rather than to live with shame and reproach, bear a coward's name, and in addition lose such a great amount of booty. He called then on God Almighty and on King Olaf the Saint, his kinsman, and asked for assistance and help. He promised them that if King Olaf the Saint prayed to God Almighty for his life and his escape, he would build a magnificent silver crucifix for the holy house in which Olaf rests.

Afterward he arranged his troops, drew them up in battle array against that great army, attacked at once, and fought against the king. But with the assistance of God and King Olaf the Saint, he struck down the king and every man who followed him, both young and old. After that great victory, he made his way home in joy and happiness bearing all of the booty. He had built out of silver a rood so large that in all dimensions it was greater and longer than any one man. There it adorns the church of King Olaf the Saint himself for the soul's salvation in commemoration and testimony to those miracles that King Olaf the Saint had performed for him with the might and strength of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of the Lord who rules and reigns now and eternally, world without end. Amen.

105. THE MIRACLE IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Glorious tales about the miracles of King Olaf the Saint went forth among all Christians and Christian countries, and in Constantinople a church was built to praise and to glorify him. So it happened one time that the king in Constantinople made ready to fight against a heathen king. They assembled their troops in battle array, immediately attacked one another, and fought. Things did not turn out well, for the evil men gained the victory. Most of those with the king were slain, mostly Greeks and members of the Varangian Guard³⁹ who followed him, but those who were still alive expected nothing else but that they too would lie there dead later. All of the king's plans had been thwarted and he

³⁹ The Varangian Guard comprised an elite group of mercenaries, mostly Scandinavians, who were in the service of the Byzantine emperors mainly during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

had almost given up hope of escape. In their distress and dire need, all of them called on God Almighty and upon King Olaf the Saint for mercy and prayed to that glorious God's friend with faith and with tears to grant them help to overcome God's enemies. They promised King Olaf and the holy Virgin Mary, our Lord's mother, that if they helped them, a church would be built in Constantinople to praise and exalt them. The difference in the number of troops was not less than sixty to one.

Now, good people, may you hear of a beautiful miracle! Immediately God's saint became visible to a large number of the king's soldiers. At once he went forth ahead of the Christian men with a magnificent standard and beckoned them all to follow him. Then they attacked the heathen hounds with great zeal when they saw that they had the help of that holy king on their side. Before their spare army fell almost all of the heathen men, but a few fled and escaped with great difficulty. From there the king traveled back to Constantinople victorious, had a church built as he had promised, and had it consecrated to the holy Mary. Such great sums of money were contributed to this holy edifice by the Varangians and all the army men, that great offerings and also other treasures went there when the church was completed and the inside adorned with all the glory and honor that they could show God. Also many treasures were sent frequently out of Constantinople to the holy place where Olaf rests to praise and glorify him for the many sublime mercies that he had granted every time when they had called upon him to save them.

106. A MIRACLE IN DENMARK

There was a certain count in Denmark, an evil and malicious man who feared neither God nor man. He had a serving woman who was raised in Trøndelag where she had family. She worshipped and trusted steadfastly in King Olaf the Saint. That enemy of God, who was mentioned earlier, doubted everything that he had heard told of this sublime man of God and his miracles. He called it nothing but rumor and gossip and made mockery and sport of the praise and glory with which the people of the land acknowledged the sanctity of the king. Now came that day when that merciful king lost his life and all Christian men commemorate. Because of the ill will that he bore against that holy man, the foolish count did not want to observe the holy day, so he ordered his serving woman, from Trøndelag, to heat the oven for bread baking and to bake at once on this day. She seemed to sense that in his madness

and rage, he would take harsh vengeance on her if she did not proceed as he commanded her. Against her will, she went to work and baked bread in the oven, complaining bitterly that she worked on so holy a day. She called now upon King Olaf the Saint and said she would trust in him no longer unless he avenged this outrage with some sign. Now you will hear of a deserving punishment and a rare miracle. Everything happened all at once: In a flash the earl became blind in both eyes, and the bread that she had baked turned completely to stone! There still are pieces of this stone as reminders in this holy man's house in Trondheim.

107. THE MIRACLE OF THE SPEECHLESS BOY

An innocent boy was charged with a serious crime, and he was punished for this crime, which had been committed by another, as happens frequently. Men cut out his tongue and left him speechless. He had asked and heard about the mercies of King Olaf the Saint and his miracles, and he wanted to go there and seek mercy for himself from that friend of God. When he came to the exalted place where Olaf rests, he kept vigil there continuously and prayed to God and King Olaf the Saint for their help and mercy, for the power of speech, and for good health, which he had lost through no fault of his own. One day when he fell asleep in the church, a man, especially handsome but not tall, appeared to him in his sleep. The man came to him out of the shrine, put his hand into the mouth of the boy, and pulled toward him that little stump that was left of the tongue. He pulled so hard and stretched it out so that the young man could not endure it in his sleep without screaming. After that he awoke, rose up whole and sound, and thanked our Lord joyfully and also that God's saint who had restored him to health. Earlier he had come there speechless to visit the holy shrine, but from there he made his way home, healed and clear in speech.

108. THE MIRACLE OF THE CRIPPLED WOMAN

A pitiful deformed woman, completely crippled so that both feet lay bent up under her abdomen, was brought to King Olaf the Saint. When she had been there a long time, often invoking him with tears, he cured her of her disability so that her feet and other limbs were straightened

out of their curvatures. Afterward every joint and limb served its proper function. Although earlier she had not been able to creep there, she now returned to her home healthy, whole, and rejoicing.

109. THE MIRACLE WITH PRIEST RIKARD

Two brothers, highborn and wealthy, lived east in Vik, where they owned ancestral property and all their landed estates. They had a sister, quite pretty but heedless of the talk of wicked men, as will be shown later. She had shown great friendliness toward an English priest named Rikard, who was there taking food and lodging with her brothers. Out of good will, she did him many favors and often was a great help to him. This went so far that malicious gossip was spread about her, and after a while it was brought to the attention of her brothers. As soon as they became aware of the ugly rumors, they considered this priest most likely to be the instigator of the great affection and friendliness that existed between him and their sister. The brothers were very unhappy about this, which was not strange, but they kept silent over it and appeared to notice nothing. One day they called the priest to them—he expected only good from them—and said that they should all work at a task together and asked him to accompany them. They had with them their servant, one who knew all about their plan. When they had come a long way from other people to a hidden spot, they took the priest unawares and broke both of his legs, cut off his tongue, and gouged out both of his eyes. When they saw that the tongue still moved to and fro, they went at the stump that remained, pulled it toward them with a tong, cut it off again, and left him to lie there half dead. After that a poor woman came to him and moved him home with her. Now he who had been badly mistreated remained with her and hoped always for God's mercy and never doubted. With a grief-filled heart, he prayed to God in his mind, even though he was speechless. The sicker he was, the more steadfast he became. He directed his thoughts to the great God's saint, King Olaf the Saint, since earlier he had heard people tell of his many glorious works, and he trusted this completely. He called upon Olaf to give help in his need, and he lay there maimed, bereft of strength, weeping bitterly, and groaning. The piteous one, harshly treated, with a wounded heart, prayed that God's saint aid him.

The following day, he took a nap and fell asleep. Then he thought he saw that holy man come to him in his sleep who declared himself to be the Olaf whom the poor man had earlier so pitifully and fervently

called upon. Next Olaf stroked his hand around the man's eyes, around his legs, and around all his limbs that were injured. Then he took the tongue and stretched toward him the roots of the tongue with such great might that the priest called out and screamed and could not bear it. But immediately after this holy man's touch, Rikard quickly became healed from all of his injuries through the mercy of the glorious king, so that it seemed to him, when he awoke, that he had been neither sick nor injured. The tongue was now healed and so were his eyes; the legs were made whole; all of his wounds also were healed. And to prove truly that his eyes had been gouged out, a white scar grew on each of the two eyelids.

110. THE KING'S MIRACLE WHILE HE WAS ALIVE

It happened one time on a Sunday, when that holy man still lived on this earth, that he sat and carved on a twig with a knife that he had in his hand. He did not notice that it was Sunday. But people of Norway observe the holy day very strictly, so that no man dares to do either large or small tasks during a feast day. Now this occurred to a man who stood before the king but who dared not tell him that it was a holy day. Nevertheless, he reminded him with these words, saying, "Master, tomorrow is Monday." And as soon as Olaf discovered that he had carved on a Sunday, he was very contrite. He collected together all the shavings and burned them on his hand, but when the wood chips were burned, his hand remained whole and uncharred as it was before. Such miracles God Almighty did for the sake of King Olaf the Saint as he did earlier with the three young men in Babylon who were placed in a burning oven for God's sake. In accordance with its nature, fire has the might and strength to burn and demolish the shavings, but the hand of the holy man could not be burned.

111. THE MIRACLE WITH A FARMER

Still another time King Olaf performed a fair and rare deed. A certain farmer, devout and innocent, through the false accusations of powerful men in the district where he lived was charged with theft, more for the sake of wickedness than truth. They quickly passed sentence on him, dragged him to the gallows contrary to the laws of God and man, and would not give him a chance to plead his innocence. Afterward when that wretched man was not granted a trial to prove his innocence even though he begged that from the evil men, he expected no help or

protection from men, so he yielded his case with complete belief and trust to God's mercy. He prayed to King Olaf the Saint to grant him help from God Almighty according to the truth, for often God mercifully protects those who call upon him even when they have done evil deeds and are truly deserving of punishment.

Now it ended thus, even though much more is told about it, that those wicked men went forth with that miserable man and hanged him, he who was innocent before the law. And that good king, whom he had often called upon, mercifully helped him in the dire situation in which he found himself. At the same moment as he was lifted from the ground, it seemed to him that the glorious king, Olaf the Saint, shoved a board under his feet, and he supported himself with that act of mercy almost all day until his wife and sons came to him and received permission to take his body down and bury it. Afterward his son took down the body and with difficulty freed the noose that was tied around his neck. When this was finished, the body tumbled down from the steep rock, and they all thought that every bone would be broken apart when he came down. But the intercession of this holy man with our Lord helped so much that neither gallows nor noose nor the deep, steep fall nor the stony earth below killed him. Now he stood up as soon as he came down, and it seemed to him, when he could comprehend what had happened, that he had been in a dream. As soon as he recovered his senses and regained his strength, he went immediately to where King Olaf the Saint rests and told the archbishop and the choir brothers from the beginning all that had happened to him and what mercy he had received from God Almighty because of the intercession of King Olaf the Saint.

112. THE MIRACLE OF THE SHRINE OF OLAF

Yet another miracle happened when a fire broke out in the market town where King Olaf the Saint rests. His shrine was borne out of the church and set before the fire. Then a foolish man leaped forth, struck the shrine, and taunted the holy king. He said that everything would burn up unless Olaf protected with his prayers both the churches and those other houses that remained unburned. Now the Son of God Almighty allowed the churches to stand unburned but sent the foolish man a great pain in the eye soon after that same night. The man lay there in that condition until King Olaf the Saint asked for mercy for him with God Almighty, and his condition improved in Olaf's holy church.

113. THE MIRACLE OF THE CAPTURED MAN

A young Danish man was captured by heathen men and moved to Wendland, where he was held in bonds and fetters along with other captured men. During the day he was alone unguarded in irons, but during the night a farmer's son was chained to him to guard that he did not escape. That miserable man had neither sleep nor rest because of his sorrow and grief, and he reflected in many ways about what might possibly be of help. He felt great apprehension over his bondage and dreaded both starvation and torture. He did not expect his relatives to purchase his freedom because they had earlier twice freed him from heathen men, and he senses that they would think it both too much trouble and too expensive to free him a third time. Fortunate is that man who does not have to suffer such evil on this earth as he thought then that he had undergone; so miserable and sad is the plight of those who find no sympathy. He felt there was no other choice but to run away and thus make his escape.

Now the night passed, and deciding quickly, he attacked and killed the farmer's son. He cut off the foot from him and made his way afterward to a woods as quickly as he was able with the fetters still on. The next morning when his captors became aware of what had happened, they pursued him at once with two hounds, which were used to track down men who had escaped. They discovered him in the woods where he lay and concealed himself from them. Now they took him captive, struck him, beat him, and mistreated him in many evil ways. They reluctantly let him live but showed him no other mercies. Afterward they dragged him home to torture him, cast him at once in a dark dungeon where inside there were sixteen other Christian men, and bound him there both with irons and other fetters as tightly as possible. It now seemed to him that those tortures that he had suffered earlier were as mere shadows compared to the adversity that now had fallen upon him. No man set sight upon him in this prison to whom he could beg for mercy. No one pitied that wretched man except those Christian men who lay bound with him. They grieved and wept both for his injuries and for their own captivity and misfortune.

One day they gave advice to him, telling him to call upon King Olaf the Saint and surrender himself to be a servant in his house of glory if Olaf would free him through God's mercy out of this prison. He agreed to this joyfully and offered himself to Olaf as they told him.

The very next night, Olaf appeared to him in his sleep and spoke with him in this manner, "Hear, you wretched man, why do you not stand up?"

He answered, "My lord, who are you?"

He replied, "I am King Olaf, whom you called upon a short time ago."

"Oh, my lord," said he, "I would stand up gladly if I were able, but I lie bound in irons and also in fetters with these men who sit here bound."

Then Olaf spoke a second time, "Stand up and do not doubt that you are free."

After that he awoke and told his companions what he had dreamed. They asked him to test whether it was true. He stood up and realized that he was free and unfettered. His companions said that it would come to naught for him because the door was locked both from the inside and the outside.

Then an old man spoke who was there in bondage with them and begged him not to mistrust the mercies of that blessed man who had released him from captivity and had performed this beautiful miracle for him in order that he should benefit from his mercy and hence become free and not succumb to misery and torture. "Now hurry and find the door, and understand that when you succeed in getting out, then you are saved."

So he did and he found the door open. After that he ran out as fast as he could. As soon as his captors became aware of this, they let loose the hounds and pursued him as quickly as possible, but he lay and concealed himself. Now he could see where they went after him. The hounds lost the trail, and all the men lost their eyesight, so that none of them were able to see him, even though he lay before their feet. Later on the pursuers turned back home, complaining and bemoaning that they had not been able to capture him. From this the glorious praise to King Olaf the Saint increased: In the first place, because he released him out of irons and out of the entire prison; secondly, because Olaf did not let him be killed when he came into the woods, and thirdly, because Olaf gave him hearing and complete good health after his captors had earlier beaten and knocked his head until he had become deaf.

Now it was further told that he came aboard a ship along with two Christian men who had been tortured for a long time. All of them contrived to escape together, and now everything proceeded well. Then he sought out that glorious house of God with great joy and prayed for all those matters that seemed to him to be of greatest importance. But when he had become healthy and had returned home, he rued his solemn vow and reneged on his promise to that illustrious king. He ran away one

day and came in the evening to a farmer who granted lodging to him out of Christian charity. During the night when he had gone to sleep, he saw three maidens, lovely and fair, come to him. At once they began to speak to him and rebuked him severely for being so bold as to run away from the blessed king who had granted him such great mercy and to forsake that beloved Lord to whom he had earlier submitted. Later he awoke full of fright and arose at once early that morning. He told the master of the house what had been said to him, and that good farmer allowed him no other choice but to return home to that holy place.

These miracles are well known to us since we found that man in God's service in King Olaf the Saint's church, and he showed us on his limbs the marks from the irons and fetters.

114. THE MIRACLE OF ANOTHER CAPTIVE MAN

Olaf restored another man to health, one whom the Wendlanders had captured and whose tongue they had cut out. He then made his escape. After he had escaped, he directed his thoughts to King Olaf the Saint and begged with much weeping that King Olaf the Saint grant him speech and restore him to health. After that he received speech and mercy from that good king and at once became his servant for all the rest of his life.

115. THE MIRACLE OF THE CRIPPLED WOMAN

A pitiful deformed woman was crippled so completely that both feet and legs were bent upward. Later on she was brought to King Olaf the Saint. When she had been there a long time and repeatedly prayed for help and mercy with pitiful weeping, he cured her of the great affliction so that her feet and legs straightened out of their curvatures and after that every other limb performed its proper role. She then went from there to her home restored to health.

116. THE MIRACLE OF THE EPILEPTIC WOMAN

In the town where King Olaf the Saint rests was a woman who had epilepsy. She was married to a young man but she concealed this illness

from him as long as she was able. But one night while in bed, she was stricken by a bad attack. Her husband awakened in great terror, for she lay there making rattling noises in her throat, flung herself backward, and became unconscious. He thought himself cursed with bad luck, and he grieved greatly over so hopeless a malady because he could find no means of relief for her. He tried to find out from her how often the attack came over her and whether any remedies would relieve her. She said that the terrible affliction visited her every month and said no medicines could help her. Both husband and wife were filled with the greatest sorrow, but then she called upon the holy Mary, who certainly was a mother of true mercy, and on King Olaf the Saint. She prayed with tears that they grant her mercy in her sickness and great sorrow. Afterward the wife related their plight to a priest during confession, told him their troubles, and sought sound advice from him. He quickly considered what God's word said in the Gospels and told her that no person could be restored from sickness to health except through prayers and fasting.

After that admonition, they both went to the church of King Olaf the Saint. They had with them wax candles, and they celebrated that holy festival with fasting and kept vigil there during the night with many other people afflicted with illness. The next day was the feast day of King Olaf the Saint. Later in the morning when matins honoring the holiday when God's saint gave up his life were finished, they traveled home with such sublime mercy that from that day to her final day, she never again knew such misfortune. The ailment had previously been so severe that never a month went by when she escaped it after she had become an adult. From then on, so much joy filled them from God's gift that on the same day each year on the evening of the Mass of Olaf the Saint from whom she had received restoration of her health, they kept vigil, fasted, and commended themselves into God's hands with charitable deeds and prayers.

117. THE MIRACLE AGAINST THE FIRE DANGER

It happened one time east in Russia that a fire broke out in the market town of Novgorod, and it did not stop until there was no small danger that all of the city would go up in flames. All the people became alarmed and turned to a cleric named Stephan who served there in the church of King Olaf the Saint. As soon as the priest heard their entreaty, he grasped in his clutches the statue of that glorious ruler and placed it in

front of the fire. Afterward the fire never advanced farther than it had before, and thus the greatest part of the city was saved.

118. THE MIRACLE OF THE CRIPPLE

Alvald was the name of a crippled man whom King Olaf the Saint healed. He fell asleep outside one day. A distinguished-looking man came toward him and asked where he wanted to go. He bade him travel to Olaf's Church in London "and there you will be healed."

Alvald set out and came at last to London Bridge. He asked where Olaf's Church was. A man came toward him and said that they both should go together, and "I will show you the way to the church."

The threshold before the door was high, but Alvald was able to roll himself over it inside. After that he became healed, but nowhere did he see his travel companion.

119. THE MIRACLE OF THE TONGUE-EXCIZED MEN

There was a woman named Thora Gudthormsdottir, the mother of Sigurd, who had the tongue cut out of the head of a man named Kolbein for no other reason than that he had taken something from her plate of delicacies. He went afterward to King Olaf the Saint and fell asleep during matins at the later Saint Olaf's Mass Day.⁴⁰ He saw that King Olaf the Saint came to him, grasped the stump of the tongue, and tugged. As soon as he awoke, he was healed.

The Wendlanders took captive a man named Halldor on the day when Cardinal Nicholas came to Norway, half a month before the first Saint Olaf's Mass Day.⁴¹ They first wanted to hang him, but the noose always broke. Then they pulled his tongue out from his throat and cut it off there. They thought that it would be hidden. He became healed through King Olaf. The monk Hall saw both these men healed.

120. THE MIRACLE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING

Furthermore this is told about what King Olaf the Saint brought about in the district called Telemark. One day all the farmers met and talked

⁴⁰ The later Saint Olaf's Mass Day is August 3.

⁴¹ The first Saint Olaf's Mass Day is July 29.

about how they wanted to build a stone church to the praise and glory of King Olaf the Saint, but a suitable quarry of loose stone was nowhere to be found in the immediate vicinity where they had searched. On the day when the stone mason who was selected for the work was to go away, God Almighty caused a great mountain to break asunder in the vicinity, and from there all of the stones were moved afterward to the church building. The people of the district then erected the church with good will.

121. THE MIRACLE OF THE LOST BOY

In the district which lies next to a market town, a little boy became lost from his relatives when they were present at a banquet. At once they assembled a large group of people and went to search for the child, but when all the usual places were thoroughly searched, they found the boy nowhere. For two whole days they searched and could find him nowhere. Then they called upon King Olaf the Saint for mercy and collected together shares of money, each according to his means, and sent it at once on the same day to his holy church. Trusting to his mercy, they searched a third time for the child and immediately found the boy sleeping near a certain house where they had often searched earlier. They went home joyful, when earlier they were in despair, and they thanked our gracious Lord for the glorious miracle that he performed for this holy man's sake every time he was begged for mercy.

122. THE MIRACLE OF THE SINFUL MAN

I have heard tell of the miracles of King Olaf the Saint, those our Lord has worked for his sake, but this one, which now stirs the heart of many good people and God's friends, appears to be the most sublime. Just as the soul of every Christian man is more noble in its nature than the body, so also the death of the soul is more dangerous and perilous, and thus salvation is more glorious. But the enemy of all mankind never ceases to work against us each day as happened once in Paradise. He attempts to corrupt the mind and soul of every person so that the devil will capture every person with treacherous deceit. He asks us to believe what he proclaims, and he says God's anger and the breaking of God's commandments are of little significance. But he promises great worldly honor, and thus he betrays many with this promise. God's judgment and the torments of Hell no man need fear, he declares. With this heresy he betrayed the first man; therewith every day he deceives his offspring.

He used a crafty scheme against one man whom he deceived with such deadly drink that the man forgot all of God's commandments and lived in arrogance and in the devil's delusions. That wretch was from the district called Ørland. So miserably had Satan blinded him that he deemed another world's tortures insignificant against his lust and worldly desires. Was he then not deceived when for the vainglory of this world he gave himself into the devil's power, denied his Creator, and declared himself out of the communion and joy with all holy men? Afterward he followed the devil's advice and pursued his abominable activities.

As the day of Saint Olaf's Mass drew near during the summer, a great crowd of people went forth to the place where that saint, the holy King Olaf, rests to seek his mercy. That wretched man also went there for only one reason: that he might be able to see, hear, speak, and lead the unclean life in which he had so firmly ensnared himself through the devil's deceit and companionship. But our Lord is so merciful that to Him this one seemed all the more pitiable, whom he found more pitifully deceived than any Christian man.

During one day when the body of King Olaf the Saint was carried out with stately ceremony, that wretched man began to reflect on the glory of this holy man and his own misery and the eternal sorrow that he knew was in hand for him when he parted from this world. After that, because of the presence of God's saint, the sublime mercy of the graceful King came upon him and evoked in him such great remorse, that people thought they could tell from his outward appearance how miserably he thought he had sinned. When the shrine was moved out of one place and to another, that wretched man moved to the site where the body of the holy man had earlier been and began with all his mind and heart to call upon that compassionate man with weeping, with tears, with sorrowful pleas, and heavy sighs. That wretched one prayed to the generous king that with God's assistance he would loosen from him the unyielding bonds of sin in which the devil had entangled him. God then granted him the benefit of the intercession of King Olaf the Saint and redeemed him from Satan's power and turned him to eternal glory and joy if he would henceforth forsake the devil's enticements.

Afterward when the time came when he was to go to confession and tell the priest of his wicked and lecherous life, he dared not tell it but forgot it and did not want to change his sinful life. Then our Lord sent him an intense and severe illness so that he was not able to overcome it until he had been restored to health by going to confession and confessing all of the faithlessness against God that he had committed. After that he became whole in his body and soul, and it seemed to

him that during his weakness, he had clearly discovered that because of his arrogance and sensual pleasures, he had gone astray and turned away from God and thereby lost his soul. Afterward he became in all ways more God-fearing and more faithful, for he knew he had earlier behaved abominably and moreover had committed sins that denigrated God and all God's saints. He glorified our Lord and King Olaf the Saint during all the days of his life forever as long as he lived.

123. THE MIRACLE OF THE BLIND AND SPEECHLESS

Many people sought out King Olaf the Saint at those anniversaries when the church of King Olaf the Saint was adorned with the pallium and the archbishop's chair. Three sick persons had been carried from a long way to the holy grave, where they commended themselves to his mercy and healing, especially on that exalted day when that saint of God left this earth and went to joy and eternal glory. One of those three, who had come there sightless, received his sight on the eve of the festival day.

And on the Mass Day itself, when the holy relics were borne out and the shrine was set down in the churchyard according to custom, a speechless man who previously had been miserably dumb for a long time received mercy, and he then praised our Creator with fluent and facile speech.

The third person was a woman who had come there not from a short distance but from the east out of Sweden. She had suffered great hardships and difficulties in her journey and had been greatly exhausted for many days because of her blindness and struggle. She trusted in the mercy of God Almighty and came travelling to the place on the festival day that earlier was mentioned. Later she was led into the church of King Olaf the Saint at mass during the day. Before the service was ended, she saw with both eyes his holy shrine. She went from the place cheerful and bright-eyed, filled with sublime joy, because previously she had been blind for thirteen years.

124. THE MIRACLE OF THE SPEECHLESS MAN

A Varangian in Russia bought himself a young slave who was dumb; he was unable to speak but, nevertheless, intelligent and clever in many

things. Now no one knew what his lineage was, because he was not able to tell it even though he was asked. Many people guessed nonetheless that he might be a Norwegian because he always made those weapons adorned in a way the Varangians alone employed. This wretched man with his affliction had known many masters and frequently had been sold for profit up to the time when a merchant purchased him and gave him freedom out of mercy. Afterward he went as a free man to the city called Novgorod, where a good woman granted lodging to him, and he stayed there for many days. That good woman always attended all divine services honoring King Olaf, and she glorified that great and generous king with much love and trust.

Now during one night when she had gone to sleep, Olaf the Saint appeared to her and told her that the young boy should accompany her to matins the next morning. Thus she did as he bade and had the boy with her to services in the church. And as soon as he had come into the church, he grew very drowsy, lay down, and fell asleep while the priests conducted the service. Next he saw that same man in his sleep, and the man came to him in the same apparel and with the same facial features as he had earlier appeared to the woman during the night, gave him speech, and restored him to health through the compassion and mercy of God Almighty with the help of King Olaf the Saint.

125. THE MIRACLE WITH A KING

A long period elapsed between the time when King Olaf the Saint was disinterred and glorified with stately ceremony, as was fitting, and when a church was built at Stiklestad in that holy place where his blood had been shed and he had left this world. When the church was to be consecrated and the bishop had come there, it happened that a certain king had also come there into the district who was gravely ill and in an especially bad way. A large tumor on his knee had grown so that the leg all the way up to his thigh had become swollen and caused him much pain and stiffness. In increasing pain, he wanted to go to divine services there and observe the majesty of God and King Olaf the Saint. Hence he came to the church and his retinue carried him inside the church. During the day, when matins were ended, the king was told of the stone upon which King Olaf the Saint was slain and was furthermore said to be splashed with his blood. That stone jutted out in the uppermost part of the altar. Afterward the king moved over to it and pressed his knee, the one that was most painful, against the stone. All at once he knew the sublime mercy of the Almighty Creator, for on the

same evening, all of the pain and swelling disappeared completely and thus the stiffness, and at once he became nimble and fleet of foot, both when riding and running, just as if he had never been injured.

126. THE CONCLUSION OF THE SAGA

Now we shall end this discourse so that our lengthy tale does not become tedious to those who have listened. It is a weighty and exhausting task, nearly beyond one's strength, to record or to tell this glorious work in which He, the highest born of men, has worked glory and honor for the sake of King Olaf the Saint and does forever, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, He who lives with the Father and Holy Spirit, rules and reigns, one God eternally forever and ever. AMEN

FRAGMENTS FROM THE OLDEST SAGA OF OLAF THE SAINT

I.

1. (62.) OF OLAF AND HIS SKALDS

The king said, when he sent nuts to them, that they should divide them as they would their paternal inheritance. Then Ottar recited this verse:

(1) The king sends nuts to me
hither from his place,
the generous person!
There was a time when I expected more.
Glorious is the great king!
Small things anticipate greater ones.
Do not humiliate us again,
great ruler.

So it is further told that King Olaf sat in his high seat, and Thorfid Skald sat on a chair before him. Then the king said, "Now compose a poem, skald, about what is embroidered on the tapestry opposite you."

He looked at the scene depicted there where Sigurd slew the dragon, and then recited this verse:

(2) The sword stands in the head [of the dragon].
Blood flows down
on both sword edges
when the king becomes angry.
The sword quivers
in the breast of the serpent
when that stout-hearted king
begins to prepare the steak.

2. (48.) OF THE KING'S ABILITY TO GOVERN AND THE LANDED MEN

King Olaf was a powerful man within the country. He was prone to severe punishment, but a wise and intelligent man. It came about that the influential men resented that the king was imperious, self-willed, and allowed justice to fall equally on the rich and the poor. Likewise some of the landed men at that time were also impetuous and headstrong and wanted to yield in their affairs neither to king nor earl. There were also some who claimed title to the land because of their ancestry, tracing their pedigree to men of royal birth or other great chieftains. Now because of this, prominent men stiffened their opposition against the king. The foremost of them was Erling Skjalgsson, who then was the most powerful landed man in Norway. Thorir Hound was likewise a powerful man. He had gone to Bjarmaland and killed a good man named Karli. The king sent men to Thorir, and he attained with difficulty a settlement for his evil deed. Afterward he and many other landed men left the country, and they became unfaithful to the king in their plans and intentions.

Erling treated his house servants better than other landed men. He held drinking parties all twelve months and entertained his men except for that one time when they had to be in his forces during the summer for a while. He also had many enslaved men. He let them work until the time when he gave them their freedom, determined how much work they were to perform until then, and then took others in their place. These men had acquired great wealth for themselves and often owned much grain.

3. (49.) OF ASBJORN AND THORIR SEAL

Now the story takes up where King Olaf had banned the selling of stores of grain all over the entire northern part of the land. Asbjorn was the name of a man. He was the son of Sigurd and nephew of Erling Skjalgsson. This man left his estates to go south from Halogaland. It was his custom to prepare a feast every fall, but this time he received no grain, so he met with Erling and told him.

"King Olaf," said Erling, "has banned the sale of grain. But I consider myself to have authority over those men who have been enslaved men, and the king has no jurisdiction in this case." He handed over large quantities of grain.

Asbjorn afterward made his way homeward and came to the island where Thorir Seal, a steward of the king, had charge and lay at anchor there near the island. Thorir's men saw that his ships were laden, so Thorir summoned Asbjorn to him and asked who had sold him grain. Asbjorn said that that one had done it who had the right to do so, namely, Erling.

"Erling insists," said Thorir, "on defying the king's will."

Thorir went to his men and had them confiscate all of the grain, and after that he took the sail that Asbjorn owned, a costly treasure made of Halogaland cloth, and he exchanged in its place one wretched sail from a merchant ship. With that they parted from one another. Asbjorn traveled back home to the north in disgrace. Like his father, he was not a mild, forbearing man. People roundly criticized him.

Another time he traveled from the north during Lent with two or three ships and two hundred and forty men. He came near the island and anchored his ships in a hidden bay. He went up alone and learned that King Olaf was to take part in a feast on the island during Easter week.

Asbjorn went that same evening to the feast where the king had arrived. He moved about among the cooks. When people were seated, they asked how it had gone with Asbjorn and his crew. Thorir recounted the story and said that the man had borne everything well until he interchanged the sails, but then he spoke with almost a sob in his throat.

At this moment, Asbjorn came into the room, turned at once to him where he stood before the king, and said, when he struck a blow at him, that now the sobbing had disappeared from his throat. He hewed so hard that the head fell on the table before the king, and the blood splashed onto the dish. The king ordered them to seize Asbjorn and kill him.

4. (50.) OF THORARIN NEFJOLFSSON AND THE KING

There was at that time within the king's bodyguard Skjalg, son of Erling Skjalgsson. At once he sprang forth over the table, went before the king, and asked him to spare this man.

The king replied, "That man has committed such great crimes that he cannot receive clemency. First he broke my commandment; now he killed this man at so holy a time; and even though it is of little consequence that blood splashed ...

II.

5. (58.) THORMOD COMES TO KING OLAF

As the time approached when Harek and Thormod were to leave the court, those gifts did not come forth from the king that Thormod thought had been promised to him. And when they were both together at the same place, Thormod recited this verse:

(3) You gave Fafnir's hoard for a long time
to Praise-Tongue;
but to me, you give
only expectations of gold.
I am worthy, land-rich destroyer of miscreants,
of the same rights,
or shall I rather put out to sea
and hope for nothing?

The king pulled a ring, which weighed half a mark, from his arm and gave it to Thormod.

"Have great thanks for that, Master," said he, "but do not accuse us of being overly insistent, even though I speak of this somewhat further. You decided, Master, that we should receive a mark of gold from you as payment for services."

The king answered, "It is true exactly as you say, skald, and payment shall not be withheld." He now took a second ring and gave it to him. And when Thormod received the ring, he recited this verse:

(4) Everyone sees
how I have both arms
beautifully adorned with gold
from the vast courtyard of the great king.
I, the young man,
owe the gold to that king
who satisfies the hunger of the gluttonous eagle;
I bear gold on both arms.

Now Thormod and King Knut parted, and Thormod went to the ship with Harek and became his forecastle-man. They traveled throughout

the summer. Thormod was considered good at his job both in his skill with words and his aggressiveness in fighting, and they were very pleased with him.

It is told that one time, as the summer progressed, they lay their ship at anchor late in the afternoon near a certain island, and they saw that some ships came gliding forth near them. The ship traveling in the lead was a dragon ship, a splendid ship.

And when the dragon bore down near the ship that Thormod was on, a man upon the dragon called out, "Get out of the king's mooring immediately."

The crew wanted to strike the tents at once and leave the harbor.

When Thormod saw that, he ordered the crew not to move away, "and remember," said he, "that I should decide such."

They answered him and begged him not to be so rash, "but you have the power to decide such for us, and moreover that is the way it will be."

The dragon ship now rushed toward them faster than expected, as I mentioned earlier, and came near Thormod's ship. It is said that the forecastle-man on the dragon drew his sword and hewed at Thormod, who allowed no inequality, but struck back, and killed that man. He leaped then from his ship and onto the dragon. He had his shield before him and in such a manner made his way back to the raised deck. Now in the midst of this, there was an outcry on the ship, and someone asked what was happening. He was then seized, but the vikings sailed away and did not care about what happened to Thormod.

Now King Olaf was told what had taken place and how the slayer had been captured. The king ordered them to kill him, and he said that this had to be done.

But when Fid Arnason heard what the king said, he went to see Thormod and asked, "Why you were such a foolhardy fellow that you dared to leap onto the king's ship as you just have done?"

Thormod answered, "It comes down to this: I have little concern for my life if only I were able to come into the power of the king."

Now Fid told this to Bishop Sigurd and asked him to use his powers of persuasion with the king to ask for quarter for this man. The matter was discussed, and it seemed to him that everything had happened so quickly. They asked the king to give Thormod quarter, and many words passed between them. The king asked why Thormod had come into his power, since he had earlier been on the other ship and had so poorly explained his actions.

Thormod himself heard this and answered the king:

(5) I would think myself
to have received the world,
brave warrior,
if you were to take me
into your keeping.
I wish with you [and Finn]
to live and die, warrior.
Let us carry out the shields to the ships.

"Yes," said the king, "it is obvious that you have little regard for your life if you proceed as you wish," and took him into his following afterward.

6. (59.) OF THE KING AND CERTAIN MEN

King Olaf greatly built up the market town in Trondheim. One time a large number of people had come to the town and some people from among those who had come there had gone up into Gauldal. It was Easter morning. It so happened that a lone man walked near those merchants. Two men walked together. This man, whom I mentioned before, was broad-shouldered and was dressed in this manner: he wore a hooded cloak and white leggings.

One of them asked, "Who are you, comrade?" But the man in the cloak was silent and did not answer.

"Indeed," declared the one who had inquired, "I shall ridicule him." He then ran after the cloaked man and scraped him with his shoe down his leg. The soil there was soft and muddy where they walked, and the spot was very noticeable on the white leggings; nevertheless the cloaked man acted as if he knew nothing about it, and now they parted for the time being.

On the second day of Eastertide, it is told that the king's men came into the quarters ...

III.

7. (61.) OF OTTAR THE SKALD AND KING OLAF

... Ottar, and he now went before the king and greeted him with great respect. The king did not answer, but he looked very angry and was swollen with rage. All at once, Ottar began his poem and recited until it was ended, and then, when it was finished, he immediately began another poem. It was a *drapa* that he had composed about King Olaf himself, and this was the beginning:

(6) Give ear to my [poem], noble man...

He began, and all of the king's followers were addressed. This poem received great praise from people, and the first *drapa* was not considered to be as dangerous as had earlier been told. Ottar was now reconciled with the king and was with him for a long time.

8. (62.) OF KING OLAF AND HIS SKALDS

It is told that one time King Olaf sat in a loft and before him stood many swords. The hilts on all were turned upward. Ottar the Skald then recited this verse:

(7) The swords stand there,
adorned with gold;
We praise the swords.
The favor of the warrior king is best.
If you wished
to give the skald a sword, king;
I would accept it.
I was formerly with you, generous king.

The king said, "I certainly shall give you ...

9. (63.) OF STEIN SKAFTASON

... should pay an entire mark, and the king heard it and said, "To us such men seem overly arrogant." He ordered them to give him the other half mark of gold and said, "This will sever our fellowship," and so it came to pass. Stein remained there afterward for only a short time and then went away. It is not told here what he perpetrated later.

10. (64.) WARFARE IN DENMARK

Now we take up the story from where it turned aside earlier. When Olaf the Swede had died, Onund inherited Sweden and his father's entire realm. Onund and King Olaf, as long as they lived, maintained a firm and steadfast friendship and kinship. There would be much to tell about Olaf and how in many ways, he was responsible for the great wonders taking place while he reigned over the land. But one is not able to give an account of what actually took place, because there are no witnesses regarding all these things who are reliable.

But when King Olaf had been ruler over the country for eleven years, Knut's dislike of Olaf grew. Knut coveted the other man's honor, most of which Olaf had gained when he was serving him. ...

IV.

11. (65.) OF THE OFFER OF KING KNUT

King Knut sent men to Onund with the message that King Knut wished to forgive him for this serious matter if he now wanted to part company from Olaf, his brother-in-law, and harry no longer in Knut's land. He promised him in return his friendship and gifts of money. Now the messengers traveled on this errand until they met King Onund. They delivered the message entrusted to them, which was previously stated. They now bore forth those treasures that King Knut had sent to King Onund. They were candlesticks, wrought from gold.

So it is told that King Onund looked at them and said, "Beautiful playthings are these, but I do not find them sufficient to part from Olaf, even though I own these precious things."

Now they brought forth a valuable drinking cup. It was made out of gold and inlaid with precious stones. It was the greatest treasure.

The king still continued to speak in this manner, "It is fair to say that these are magnificent objects and great treasures, but I will not barter away King Olaf for a drinking cup."

Now Knut's messengers saw that to Onund King Olaf was ...

12. (66.) THE BATTLE BY THE HOLY RIVER

After the battle the armies of the Swedish and Norwegian kings joined together east of Götaland because of the overpowering forces of the Swedish king.⁴² The Danish king turned back and lay with his fleet in Øresund, intending to strike at the king of Norway if he wanted to travel home during the fall. Knut had overwhelming forces. But King Olaf saw that it would be very foolhardy to sail forth with so few troops against such a fleet, even though he was brave and had excellent troops. He remembered how Olaf Tryggvason had fared when he had relied upon large ships and valiant troops to sail into a large fleet such as was before him here. Now King Olaf adopted a wise plan, went off his ships at a place called Barvik, and thus traveled by land across Götaland and Småland, and thus across western Götaland and down into Vik.

13. (67.) OF HAREK FROM TJØTTA

An old chieftain, a wise man named Harek, who was from the north out of Tjøtta, the son of Eyvind Skaldaspillar, told the king that he would not be able to undertake such a long land trip and said that instead he would ...

V.

... the sound, and one of them said, "That is probably some old ship. See how gray and very bleached out it is. It must be someone's herring boat. The ship sits very low in the water and there are few men on it."

Harek and his men traveled through the fleet and the sun rose. Harek and his crew turned toward the land at a certain place, raised up the mast, brought up the gold ornament and weather vane, and unfurled the sail. It was made from Halogalander cloth, white as snow, and

⁴² This appears to be a mistake by the scribe of the fragments. The Swedish king, Onund Jacob Olafsson, and Norwegian king, Olaf Haraldsson, are fighting against the enormous army of the Danish king, Knut the Great. This mistake is corrected in the younger copy of the *Legendary Saga* (see Chapt. 66)

interwoven with red stripes. The swift-sailing long ship made its way off the coast.

The forces of King Knut looked there where the ship sailed in great splendor. They told the king that they thought King Olaf had sailed through the sound, because the ship was very handsomely outfitted.

The king answered, "This might be someone from the forces of King Olaf, but not Olaf himself. It may be that same fellow has sailed there who sailed around us earlier in the Great Belt, whom we thought we had captured."

But Harek from Tjøtta sailed north along the coast, and when he had sailed one day with a good breeze, he composed this stanza:

(8) Laugh not the lasses of Lund...

14. (68.) OF THE OPPOSITION AGAINST KING OLAF

... was earlier. Thorir fled and went north into Finnmark and was there two years.

Because of all the hostility arising in the country between Olaf and the landed men and those messages which went forth from Knut, Olaf sailed his troop ships east into Sweden to meet with his in-law Onund to discuss how they should support one another in opposing their enemies. But then when he wanted to go back to Norway, Knut lay before him in Øresund with three hundred and sixty ships. At that time Olaf drew his ships up on shore at Barvik and went the land route into Norway.

During the same fall when Olaf, Knut, and Onund fought near the Holy River, some people say that Knut set out on an expedition because he had received information about that which was before them. They tell that Olaf had the river and also the large lakes in the vicinity blocked by means of piles. When the troop ships of Knut came in the river, the waters from the river and the lakes flooded Knut's ships, and many of his troops drowned. Their encounter ended in such a way that Knut never again ventured into Sweden.

15. (69.) OF ERLING SKJALGSSON

In the thirteenth year of the reign ...

VI.

16. (71.) THE ASSEMBLING OF TROOPS AGAINST KING OLAF

... that the journey should proceed as planned, with matters as they now stood, but no final decision was made by them, and everyone deferred to the king. And it is further told that the king adopted a plan whereby he had all his ships that were at the site brought up on shore. It was in Slygs in North Møre.⁴³ They went from their ships and afterward traveled until they came into Oppland and stayed there.

17. (75.) KING OLAF FLEES THE LAND

Now again the king sought advice from his friends and asked them to suggest a good plan. Those men who were advising him proposed that he should call an assembly in the next thing-district and after that talk of the matter there. They said he then would be able to learn what people's opinion would be about him if he were to proceed in this way. The king took this advice, summoned an assembly, and he himself spoke there about the matter. In his speech he told how wrong and cowardly it had been of those who took money in exchange for his head. He said they were scoundrels who betrayed their king, who rightfully had been chosen to ... done against us may now leniently forgive and may there still be some improvement in this matter."

And now the king allowed those men who went about with money to go in peace and confiscated none of the money from them.

These people were in the journey with King Olaf whose names we know, as I shall now list: Queen Astrid, Gudrod, Halfdan, Rognvald, Dag, Hring, both Thorleifs, Aslak, Helgi, Thord, Einar, Fid Hareksson, Thord, Fid Arnason, Thorberg, Arni, Kolbjorn, Thormod Skald, Tofi, and Egil. All of them left the country with the king and went east through Eidaskog into Sweden and remained there a long time with Sigtryggvi, the father of Ivar, the father of Soni, the father of Karl. In the spring he went from there east into Russia, and the next winter was in Novgorod

⁴³ Slygs lies in South Møre. This appears to be a mistake by the scribe of the fragments.

with King Jarisleif and Ingigerd, the daughter of Olaf the Swede, and sister of Astrid to whom King Olaf was then married.⁴⁴

18. (76.) OF KING KNUT AND BJORN THE MARSHAL

And King Knut, when he came ...

⁴⁴ It is not possible to identify everyone with certainty. Compare with fn. 26. In contrast to the same passage in the younger *Legendary Saga* (see Chapt. 75), the fragments refer to two Thords. Tofi and Egil could be Tofi Valgardsson and Egil Hallsson, who are closely connected earlier in the saga (see Chapt. 53–55). However, the saga text reports that Egil returned to Iceland (see Chapt. 55). Egil could also refer to Queen Astrid's foster father.

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