

THE SAGA OF  
HROLF KRAKI

By STELLA M. MILLS, B.A.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY E. V. GORDON,  
R.F., PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE IN  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

OXFORD · BASIL BLACKWELL · MCMXXXIII

PRINTED IN ENGLAND AT  
THE SHAKESPEARE HEAD PRESS  
SAINT ALDATES OXFORD

To  
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J·R·R·T  
and  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I SHOULD like to acknowledge with sincere gratitude my great indebtedness to Professor Gordon of Manchester, who has given me invaluable help with this translation of *Hrolfs saga*. I owe my acquaintance with Old Icelandic literature and all the pleasure it has given me to his teaching in the University of Leeds, where, some time ago, this translation was made under his guidance. Recently, he has, in addition to writing the introduction, very kindly read the proofs of this work and has suggested several improvements in the translation. I would, therefore, offer him my own and the Publishers' best thanks.

STELLA M. MILLS.

Oxford, 1933.

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## INTRODUCTION

THE saga of Hrolf Kraki comes nearer than most to the current conception of a saga. It is romantic and primitive in its matter, and the reader who is attracted by the magic name of 'saga' ought not to be disappointed in the strange fierce stories of this specimen, told by a man of wonderfully realistic imagination. Though the saga of Hrolf is 'late,' written nearly two hundred years after most of the great family sagas, there is much more of the authentic primitive in it than in the earlier sagas. Many of these 'classical' sagas were the work of men of learning and culture, who were not simple enough to make the most of witchcraft and sensational heroism. The unknown teller of Hrolf's saga had no instinct to avoid such matter, nor had he any sense of high historical truth; he knew that he was dealing only with legendary tales, and he was prepared to tell them in the most entertaining way he could. He adds homely and ludicrous touches of his own, and he has, undeniably, some knowledge of the arts of entertainment. Yet, thanks to his amazing zest in the clash of wills and weapons, to his grim sense of physical reality—seen no less in his rough comedy than in his accounts of heroic resistances—he is even more entertaining than he knew. He had the right tastes and the right kind of imagination to make the most of his material in the form in which it came to him. The saga had once been the high history of the Skjoldung kings who first built up the realm of Denmark in the fifth and sixth centuries; but, as often, the tellers of such ancient tales were apt to be a little disrespectful to the legend. It must have been a similar telling of the ancient viking Hromund that moved the Norwegian king Sverrir to exclaim: 'These lying sagas are the most entertaining of all!'

The liberties which Icelandic tradition and the saga-teller have taken with the high history of the Skjoldungs may

best be understood by reading the same history in the old English poem *Beowulf*. There the full glory of the Skjoldung dynasty is presented in the most dignified of epics. The Danish court is stately, peopled by men and woman of noble manners and gentle breeding, whose speeches can stand beside those of the Greek and Roman epics. But the saga-teller imagines another side of this same Danish court, and his picture may be almost as true. He shows us a ferocity and a grim, even brutal, sense of fun in the noble courtiers. The hero Hjalti displays the same nobility and loyalty towards his lord and comrades as is seen in the retainers of *Beowulf*; but this same Hjalti bites his mistress's nose off when she answers him too candidly, and seems often to be almost a ruffian. The cleansing of the Danish royal hall from the visitation of monster is turned by Bothvar (the counterpart of *Beowulf*) into a practical joke: he props up the dead dragon in a lifelike position and then sends Hjalti out to play the hero. It is difficult to imagine the *Beowulf* of the epic descending to such buffoonery; yet the Icelandic story-teller is not in the wrong, because many a viking prince would undoubtedly have been capable of it. The saga-teller and the tradition behind him are taking a liberty with the legend in sporting with its dignity; they do not make it less real. The ferocity of Bothvar and his brothers is just as convincingly portrayed—and it is perhaps truer of the viking age—as the noble heroism of *Beowulf*. *Beowulf* is almost too blameless to be real, whereas the savage warriors of the saga are human, and their qualities are in perfect agreement with all that history can tell us of the viking age, noble as well as brutal. Bothvar is by native instinct the protector of the weak, and most of the heroes have the usual Germanic virtues of generosity and loyalty. The saga-teller takes liberties with the reality of his picture only in introducing occasional exaggerations for mirth's

sake. The rough game of bone-throwing played at the Danish court was actual enough: it is a matter of history that Danish vikings martyred the English archbishop Ælfeah (Saint Elphege) by pelting him with bones at a feast. But the saga goes beyond all normal facts: when Bothvar came first into King Hrolf's hall, he was astonished to see a dirty hand creep from under a large heap of bones lying in a corner. It belonged to a victim of the bone-throwers who had been completely buried under their missiles. How Bothvar plucked the poor wretch out of the heap and made a hero of him is told in a chapter (xxiii) rich in the characteristic humour of the saga, a grim viking-like humour which almost always involves blows and naked terror. But in this saga excellent comedy of its kind is made from such humour.

Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that the saga-teller lost sight completely of the dignity of his matter and the heroism of his heroes. He is deeply concerned for the honour of King Hrolf and his men, so deeply that he tends to exaggerate their prowess and make them heroes of romance rather than of epic. In their visit to King Athils of Sweden whom they 'bent like a pig' they endure more than mortal men normally can, and the thirteen of them win surprising victories over hosts of Swedes. Yet the saga-teller gives them an epic end: he sees the epic quality in this part of his legend and develops it in the traditional heroic manner with all his customary force. Hrolf and his men are outnumbered and know that they are making their last stand, but Hrolf is 'as merry as when he drank his ale deepest,' and they meet their death in the same spirit as the English Byrhtnoth and his men at the battle of Maldon. The account of this last fight was once given in the *Lay of Bjarki*; this lay is now lost, but its matter is known from a Latin paraphrase made by the historian Saxo Grammaticus. The



account in the saga is as heroic as the old poem, which had been famous in the heroic age itself.

This ending, like much more in the saga, is made to turn upon the working of supernatural forces, and it is probably this element which the modern reader is most likely to misunderstand and to under-estimate as a literary property. The supernatural creatures in the last fight, the bear who fought for Hrolf and the boar on the other side, were not childish fancies such as we find in modern fairy-tales: they were part of the old heathen belief which was woven into the story at its first beginning. The bear was the 'follower' or spirit of Bothvar Bjarki whose body lay in a trance while his 'follower' was out of it, fighting for Hrolf. Hjalti's impassioned reproaches and call to battle woke him out of the trance and robbed Hrolf of his strongest champion, as the 'follower' had to return as soon as the body was awake. The boar on the other side was Othin, who had decreed that Hrolf should not have the victory, and he came in person to make sure of it. The description of the prophetess earlier in the saga is equally significant, and the details of methods followed by the prophetess authentic. The sagateller was well up in the whole technique of witchcraft and magic, and knew what he was talking about. This special knowledge and the patent sincerity of his accounts of evil spirits or Finnish magic should win the interest, perhaps even the respect, of modern readers, even though most will probably not realize how deep and vital the roots of this magic were, nor be able to follow the principles of its working. For the magic of the North was as definite in its conceptions as was everything else produced there: as definite as the laws of science. It may be asked why then it was not easily discredited; to which it is answered, for much the same reasons that it has been found difficult to discredit erroneous 'science,' once a large number of people have

come to believe in it. There was a great deal of vitality in the beliefs of the old northern religion, and it is not surprising that they died hard.

All these qualities can be seen as readily and fully in the translation as in the original. The translation is a faithful one in the truest sense of the term; it is close to the original phrasing, and yet is not over-literal. The translator has rightly placed a high value on the directness and vigour of the original and has tried to be faithful to this as well as to the sense. And she is a faithful translator in a still more difficult way; for here at last we have a translator who is willing to treat realistic writing as realistic, and has no desire to impose romantic colour upon it, as William Morris and his many imitators have done. Morris added this heavy colouring of his own with such literary mastery that it is not surprising that most translators since him have followed him as closely as they could: but such translation is not faithful to the original. It is greatly to the credit of the translator's perception and independence that she did not allow the distinguished tradition of Morris to lead her astray, even though the romantic matter of much of her saga might seem to furnish some excuse for turning to his style. Happily the events of the story are as real to her quick imagination as to the Icelandic teller, and they did not seem to her to need any different colouring: the crimes, the treachery, the violence and the generosity of those times are described in as round unsparing terms as in the saga; abuse is not softened, and the forcible retorts (for which sagatellers had an especial relish) still sound like real retorts in the translated form. This is an unusual feat. There is no other translation of a saga into English which preserves so much of the realistic imagination and the terse phrasing which are the chief virtues of the Icelandic style of narrative.

One considerable risk was taken by the translator, but she is justified by the result. The translation includes many archaic forms and idioms, though it is free from any taint of Wardour Street, where so many false antiques were sold. The habit of heavy archaism has in the past given a very misleading impression of Icelandic style. Saga-tellers and saga-writers had nothing equivalent: they used the language of their own time, almost the language of everyday use. In this translation the mild archaism is not misleading. Hrolf's saga tells of events of ancient days (the sixth century), and the fourteenth-century author was fully conscious of the antiquity of his matter. The flavour of archaism is just what is needed to express this consciousness.

E. V. GORDON.

Manchester,

*February, 1933.*

# HERE BEGINS THE SAGA OF KING HROLF KRAKI

## The Story of Frothi

### CHAPTER I

THERE lived a man named Halfdan and another named Frothi, two brothers, king's sons, and each of them ruled his kingdom. King Halfdan was courtly and distinguished, meek and goodnatured, but Frothi was exceedingly savage. King Halfdan had three children, two sons and a daughter named Signy. She was the eldest, and married to jarl Sævil; but Halfdan's sons were still young; one was named Hroar, the other Helgi. Their foster-father's name was Reginn and he loved the boys greatly. A short distance from the royal stronghold lay an island; therein dwelt a man named Vifill, an old friend of king Halfdan. Vifill had two dogs, the one named Hopp, the other Ho. This man had great store of ancient lore and was well skilled in it if hostility threatened.

Now is to be told how king Frothi abode in his kingdom, and fiercely envied his brother king Halfdan, that he should rule Denmark alone; and he considered that his own lot had not fallen out so fortunately. Therefore he gathered together the common folk and many followers, and betook him to Denmark. He came there in the dead of night, and burnt and destroyed by fire all things therein. King Halfdan put up slight defence; he was captured and killed, and those who were able fled; all the citizens of the town were compelled to swear the oath of allegiance to king Frothi, or else he had them punished with divers tortures.

Reginn the foster-father of Helgi and Hroar escaped with them and got out to the island to the man Vifill. They

greatly mourned their loss. Reginn said that all refuge was closed to them if Vifill did not guard them from king Frothi. Vifill said: "This is to pull the rope against strength," but promised to do his best to help the boys. So he received them and put them in a secret room, where they usually remained at night, whilst during the day they took the air in the woods which this man owned, for half the island was overgrown with forests; and in this manner they parted from Reginn. Reginn had great possessions in Denmark, besides a wife and children, and, after a while, he saw no alternative but to put himself in king Frothi's hands and swear the oath of allegiance to him.

Now king Frothi subjugated all the Danish kingdom to payment of tribute and tax; most acceded to this with reluctance, for king Frothi was the most unpopular of all men; so also he levied tribute on jarl Sævil.

After all this had happened, king Frothi was little at ease because he did not find the boys Helgi and Hroar; he now set a watch for them on all sides, near and far. He promised great gifts to those who would tell him anything of them, and to those who were hiding them divers tortures if it were found out, yet nobody knew anything to tell the king about them; so he had all the land searched for witches and soothsayers, and told them to explore the whole place up and down, both islands and outlying skerries, but they did not find them. Next he ordered the magicians, who pry into everything whatsoever they wish, to search for them, and they told him they were not living in that land, yet they were not far from the king.

King Frothi said: "We have made a wide search for them and to me it seems most unlikely that they may be nearer than the island close by, which we have not yet ordered to be thoroughly searched, and practically nobody lives on it, except that one poor man dwells there."

“Direct the search thither first,” said the magicians, “for thick mists and obscurity lie over the island; and we cannot clearly see what there is about this man’s homestead, and we deem him very wise and not quite that which at sight he appears to be.”

The king said: “Thither shall they search then, but it seems a wonder to me that a poor fisherman should preserve these boys, and dare in such a manner to keep them from me.”

## CHAPTER II

IT happened early one morning that Vifill awoke and said: “Very strange is this disturbance and commotion in the air and great spirits and mighty are come hither to the island. Get up, Helgi and Hroar, sons of Halfdan, and remain in my woods to-day.” They ran into the wood. Now it happened according as the man guessed—the messengers of king Frothi came to the island and sought everywhere they could think of; but they did not find the boys. To them Vifill appeared to be rather suspicious looking, but they went away from their vain errand, and told the king that they could not find them.

“Ill must you have searched,” said the king, “and this man has skill in magic; go back now to that place in the same way, so that he will be quite unprepared to hide them away if they are there.” They were obliged to do as the king commanded and now went back a second time to the island.

Said Vifill to the boys: “This is no time for you to sit at ease; betake yourselves to the woods as quickly as you can!” and the boys did so. After that the king’s men rushed in and demanded to search; and the churl let everything stand open before them, but they found nothing in the island wheresoever they searched, and they went back, with this result, and told the king.

The king said: "No longer shall half-hearted methods be tried against this man, I will myself fare to the island first thing in the morning!" And so now it came to pass that the king went himself.

Vilfill awoke rather wearily, and he made it known on the instant that they should lose no time in taking counsel. He spake then with the two brothers: "Do you two mark it well when I call loudly upon my dogs Hopp and Ho; run then to your hiding-chamber, and take it for a signal that the island is not at peace, and keep yourselves safe there, for this time your kinsman Frothi himself is in the search; he seeks after your lives with all kinds of treachery and guile, and I do not now see whether I may be able to protect you." Then Vilfill went to the shore and thither was the king's ship come; he pretended not to see it, and made such swift show of looking all around for his flock, that he never glanced towards the king nor his men. The king bade his followers seize the man, and so it was done, and he was brought before him.

The king said: "Thou art a great cunning rogue and exceedingly sly; tell me where the princes are—for that thou knowest full well."

The man said: "Prithee, good my lord, keep me not, for the wolf will tear my flock to pieces." Then he called loudly: "Help the sheep, Hopp and Ho, for I myself may not save them."

The king said: "What is that thou art calling?"

The man said: "My dogs are named thus, and search now, Sire, wheresoever thou dost please, but of this I assure thee, that thou wilt find no princes here: and, indeed, I much marvel that thou shouldst think I would keep anyone from thee."

The king said: "Thou art surely a clever, cunning rogue, but they cannot again be saved this time, though they have

been before; and it were fitting if thou wert deprived of life."

The man said: "That, indeed, thou hast now in thy power, but thou hadst a purpose to carry out on the island other than to do that sort of thing."

The king said: "I am not minded to order them to kill thee, though I think it ill counsel not to;" and he went home now leaving matters as they were. Vifill went to the boys and told them they might not stay there any longer: "I will send ye to Sævil your kinsman," said he, "and ye will both become renowned men if ye live long enough."

### CHAPTER III

**H**ROAR was at this time twelve years old and Helgi ten; he was the bigger and more valiant of the two. They went away now, and whenever they fell in with, or entered into speech with anybody, the one said he was named Ham, and the other Hrani.

The boys came to jarl Sævil's hall, but were there a week before they consulted with him about the length of their sojourn in that place. He said: "But little acquisition do I deem ye, yet will I not withhold food from ye for a short space." They remained there some time, but were rather quarrelsome; it was not known what men they were, or what their birth; the earl suspected nothing, though they did him no actual service in his pastures. Some people said they were born with scurf, and made sport of them. They each wore a cowl, always keeping the hood well down, and many thought they had scurvy heads. They remained thus for three years.

Now on a certain occasion king Frothi bade the jarl to a banquet; and he was then very suspicious that he might be



shielding the boys for the sake of their affinity. The jarl prepared for the journey, and his men were very numerous; the boys begged to go with him, but he said they might not. Signy the jarl's wife went on the journey too. Ham, who in reality was Helgi, seized an unbroken foal for himself to ride; he ran after the troop, turned his face to his horse's tail, and behaved very foolishly in every way. Hrani his brother got himself a manageable riding-horse, and turned the proper way. The jarl now saw that they rode after him, and could not control their steeds; the foals ran backwards and forwards under them, and shook off Hrani's hood. Signy their sister could see this, and she knew them at once and wept very bitterly. The jarl asked her why she wept. She said then this stanza:

“All the race of the Skjoldings,  
 Of the lord of Lund  
 Is lopped and stripped  
 Of all its branches;  
 I saw my brothers  
 Riding a-bareback,  
 But the men of Sævil  
 On saddled horses.”

The jarl said: “Great tidings!—but let it not become known.” He rode back to them then, and bade them draw back; he said they were a great disgrace to a company of good men; but both boys kept on riding. He spoke in this manner to ensure that it might not be surmised from his speech what boys they were. They moved to and fro on the outskirts of the company, but were not any the more minded to turn back, and they rode finally in the rear of the troop. They came at length to the banqueting-hall, and ran backwards and forwards up and down the hall; and once they came where Signy their sister was. She said to them in

an undertone: "Stay not in the hall, for your manhood is yet slight," but they paid no heed to her.

King Frothi began to relate that he was minded to search for the songs of king Halfdan, and said he would give great honour to anybody who could tell him of them. A witch had come thither whose name was Heith. King Frothi bade her make use of her craft, and find out what she could say about the boys; he prepared a banquet in her honour and set her on a high incantation-scaffold. The king asked then what events she could see: "Because I know," said he, "that many things must now pass before thee, and I perceive great good fortune in thee, so answer me as quickly as possible." The sorceress stretched her jaws asunder, and gaped widely, and this verse fell from her lips:

"Two there are within  
But I trust neither;  
They beside the fireplace  
Gloriously sit."

The king said: "Are they the boys themselves, or those who have helped them?" She replied:

"They who in Viflsey  
Were longtime dwelling,  
And named they were by names of dogs—  
Hopp and Ho."

But thereupon Signy threw a gold ring to her; she was pleased with the present and was minded now to break off. "Why comes it thus?" she said, "that is a lie which I have told, and I have gone far astray in all my prophecy."

The king said: "Thou shalt be tortured to the telling if thou wilt not accept anything better, for I know not now any the more, among so many men, of whom thou speakest, or why Signy is not in her place; and it may turn out here that the wolves give counsel to the cubs." He was

told that Signy had fallen sick from the smoke which rose from the fire.

The jarl bade her sit up, and bear herself bravely—"for many a thing can give the boys life, if that is to happen, but do not let it readily be seen what thou art thinking, for we can then have no chance to help them."

The king now pressed hard at the sorceress, and bade her tell the truth unless she wished to be tortured; she gaped widely, and the prophecy came with difficulty, but at last she spake this spell:

"I see the spot where  
 Sit the sons of Halfdan,  
 Hroar and Helgi,  
 Both hale and whole;  
 They will plunder  
 Life from Frothi,

unless they suffer speedy destruction—and that may not be;" she said; and after that she leapt from the scaffold and said:

"Gleaming are the glances  
 Of Ham and Hrani,  
 They are noble princes  
 Wondrous bold."

After that the boys ran out to the wood with great terror. Reginn their foster-father recognized them, and took it greatly to heart. And that wholesome advice the witch gave them that they should save themselves, when she ran out along the hall. And now the king bade his men spring up and search for them, but Reginn extinguished all the lights in the hall, and one man impeded another, for some wished them to escape, and in this way they reached the wood. The king said, "But lately they went nigh us, and there must be many here plotting and in treachery with them; and a fearful revenge will I exact for this when leisure permits; now,

however, we may drink the night long, for they will be rejoicing that they have got clear, and will, first of all, make good their escape." Reginn began to serve the drink, and with many other of his friends eagerly plied the ale, so that they fell down there, one across another, in drunken sleep.

The brothers were now out in the woods, as has before been said. When they had been there a time they noticed that a man was riding towards them from the direction of the hall. They clearly recognized that Reginn their foster-father was come thither; they were joyful to see him, and greeted him well. He regarded their welcome not at all, but turned his horse back towards the hall. They wondered at that, and deliberated what it might signify. Now Reginn turned his horse towards them a second time, and glanced with frowning visage, as if at any moment he would attack them. Helgi said: "I seem to understand what he wants;" he rode towards the hall now, and they after him. "My foster-father acted thus," said Helgi, "because he does not wish to break his oath to king Frothi, and therefore will not speak to us, yet is he anxious and willing to help us."

There stood near the king's hall a clump of trees, and when they came there, Reginn soliloquized thus: "If I had great grievances against king Frothi, I should burn up these trees;" he said no more.

Hroar said: "What does he mean by that?"

"He desires us," said Helgi, "to go off to the hall and set fire to it in such a way as to prevent all exit."

"How may we, two youngsters, do that, in face of such an overwhelming force?"

"Yet shall we do so," said Helgi, "and we shall for once be ready to chance our luck at getting revenge for our wrongs!" And so they did.

Thereupon jarl Sævil came out with all his men. He spoke then: "Let us heap up the fire now, and let us help these

lads," he said, "I owe no obligation to king Frothi." King Frothi had two smiths who were masters of their craft, and both were called Var. Reginn now brought out his men to the hall door, and his friends and relations.

## CHAPTER IV

**K**ING FROTHI awoke now within the hall, and sighing deeply, said: "I have dreamt a dream, comrades, and anything but a good one; I must relate it to you. I dreamt thus: methought a voice called out to me, and thus it spoke: 'Now art thou come home, king, thou and thy men!' I seemed to answer and somewhat angrily, 'Home whither?' Then came the voice, so near me that I felt his breath who spoke, and, 'Home to hell, yea, home to hell,' said he who called, and with that I awakened."

Thereupon they heard Reginn without the hall door saying this verse:

"Reginn is without  
 With the warriors of Halfdan,  
 Valiant opponents,  
 To Frothi be it told;  
 Var smote the nails,  
 And Var hammered heads on them,  
 And Var drove for Var  
 A nail of precaution."

Then said the king's men who were within, that it was little news if it rained without, or if the king's smiths followed their craft, whether they made nails or any other thing. The king said: "Think ye that no news? that does not seem so trifling to me; Reginn will have spoken thus to us now for some reason of danger, and he hath put me on my guard, for he is very crafty and cunning towards us." Then the king went to the hall door, and saw that hostility

was afoot; and all the hall began to blaze. King Frothi asked who was the cause of the fire. They told him Helgi and Hroar his brother. The king made offers of reconciliation for himself, and bade them, alone, make the terms between them, "for it would turn out against nature's order amongst us kinsmen, for one to wish to be the slayer of the other."

Helgi said: "No man may place any trust in thee; for wouldst thou not afterwards betray us as readily as thou didst Halfdan my father? Now shalt thou suffer for that." King Frothi turned then from hall door to his secret passage-way, and he thought to escape thus to the woods; but when he reached the passage, Reginn was there before him—and not exactly peaceful. The king turned back then, and was burnt within his hall, and many of his men with him. There too was burnt Sigrith, the mother of the brothers Helgi and Hroar, because she would not go out. The brothers gave thanks for the good support of jarl Sævil their kinsman and Reginn their foster-father and all their troop, and they bestowed good gifts upon many of them; and so they took the kingdom under their rule, together with the property king Frothi had possessed, both land and chattels.

The brothers were very dissimilar in disposition; Hroar was courtly and accomplished, but Helgi was a great warrior and he seemed to be of much more importance; and so things went on for a space.

And here ends the episode of Frothi, and that of Hroar and Helgi, sons of Halfdan, begins.

## Concerning Hroar and Helgi Sons of Halfdan

### CHAPTER V

THERE lived a king named Northri; he ruled over certain parts of England; his daughter's name was Ogn. Hroar dwelt long with king Northri, commanding his home defences, and assisting him; there was the greatest friendship between them, and at last Hroar married Ogn, and settled in that kingdom with king Northri his father-in-law; but Helgi ruled over Denmark their patrimony. Jarl Sævil ruled over his own kingdom, together with Signy; their son was named Hrok. King Helgi Halfdan-son in Denmark remained unmarried. Reginn fell sick and died; everybody thought it a great loss, for he was very popular.

### CHAPTER VI

OVER Saxony at that time ruled a queen named Olof; she was like a warrior king in this wise: she wore both shield and mail-shirt, had a sword by her side, and a helmet on her head; such was her disposition, that though she was fair in personal appearance, she was stern and proud of heart. People said she was the best match in all the Northland of which men had intelligence at that time; yet she would marry no man.

King Helgi heard now of the queen and her haughtiness and he thought to gain great fame for himself by getting her for his wife, whether that was much to her liking or little. And on a certain occasion he journeyed thither with a great force; he reached the land over which the

mighty queen held sway, and came there on a sudden; he sent his men to the hall, and bade them cause the queen to be told that he desired to receive hospitality there with his men.

The messengers told that to queen Olof; it took her unawares, and there was no time to gather her force together; she therefore chose the better expedient—and invited king Helgi to a banquet with all his company. King Helgi came now to the feast, and occupied the high seat beside the queen; they both drank together during the evening, and nothing was lacking there, nor was any sadness to be discovered in queen Olof.

King Helgi spake with the queen: "So has it happened," said he, "that I desire that we drink our bridal feast this evening; here now are many men for this occasion, and we two will occupy one bed to-night."

"This appears to me to have happened overquick, Lord," she said, "and I know no man more courteous than thou, if I should happen to desire to take to myself a husband; consequently I hope that thou wilt not wish to celebrate our bridal with dishonour."

The king said that was well deserved by her haughtiness and pride—"that we too should dwell now together such time as pleases me." She said: "I should have liked to have had more of my friends here, but I am helpless now, and thou must have thy way; but thou must behave honourably to me."

They drank deeply all that evening, and well forward into the night, and the queen was very merry, nobody perceiving any sign from her but that she considered her position perfectly satisfactory. So, at last the king was led away to bed, and she was there before him. The king had drunk so much that he fell asleep in the bed on the instant. The queen took advantage of this, and pierced him with a



magic sleep-thorn, and when everybody had gone away, she got up.

She shaved off his hair and smeared him with tar; then she took a hammock and had some clothes placed therein; afterwards she took the king, and bundled him into the hammock, and finally she summoned men, and bade them carry him to his ships; she awakened his men then, and told them their lord was gone to his ships, and desired to set sail, the wind being most favourable. They jumped up as quickly as they could, but were drunk, and only knew imperfectly what to do; and so they reached the ship, but could not see the king anywhere. But they saw a hammock which had come there, an unusually big one, and they were curious to know what it contained, and they passed the time in this way while they waited for the king, thinking he would come somewhat later; but when they looked in the hammock, they found the king himself in a shameful plight. He snored away the charmed sleep, and awakened after a bad dream, and was now very ill-disposed towards the queen.

Elsewhere it is to be told that queen Olof gathered her men during the night, and great numbers were not wanting; king Helgi now saw no opportunity to attack her. A sound of trumpets and war-notes was heard upon land, and the king saw that he would take the best course by sailing away thence as quickly as was possible. The wind was then favourable, and king Helgi sailed home to his kingdom with this ignominy and dishonour; he now grew very dissatisfied with this state of affairs, and thought often how he might be revenged on the queen.

## CHAPTER VII

QUEEN OLOF remained in her kingdom for a time, and her arrogance and tyranny had never been greater than now. She had a strict watch kept ever after the banquet which she had made for king Helgi. That was reported far

and wide throughout the land, and everybody thought it the greatest enormity for her to have made sport of such a great king.

But not a great while afterwards, Helgi steered his ship out from land, and in this voyage came with the ship to Saxony where the queen had residence. She had a numerous force there. He laid his ship to in a hidden creek, and told his men that they should await him there till the third day, and go their way if he had not then returned. He had with him two caskets full of gold and silver, but he put on wretched clothes for his outer apparel; afterwards he went his way to the woods, and hid the money there, then proceeded into the neighbourhood of the queen's palace. He came up with one of her thralls, and asked him news of that land. He said great peace was there, and asked him what man he might be; he pretended to be a beggarman—"But yet have I found to hand great store of money in the forest, and it seems to me advisable to show you where the money is." They went back to the woods now, and he showed him the money, and the thrall was greatly impressed with the good fortune he had found. "Is the queen at all avaricious?" said the beggar. The thrall said she was the most covetous of women. "Then will she be pleased," said the beggar, "and will think to possess the money herself, which I have found here, because it is her land. I will not change her good hap to evil, nor hide this money, but the queen shall assign to me whatsoever portion of it she is minded to, and that will be most meet for me. Yet, will she be willing, in order to gain the money, to seek it hither?" he said. "I think so," said the thrall, "if she may come secretly." "Here is a jewel and ring which I will give thee," said the man, "if thou wilt bring her hither, alone, to the woods, and I will undertake to set matters right if she is angry with thee." Thus they arranged and bargained.

He went home now and told the queen that he had found

great treasure in the woods—enough to establish the bliss of many men, and asked her to come in haste with him for it. She said: “If that is true which thou art saying, good luck will follow the tale; if otherwise, death; but since I have proved thee a trusty man ere this, I will believe thy story.” Now she showed her avarice, and went with him secretly by night, nobody knowing except they two. When they reached the wood, king Helgi was there before them; he seized her in his clutches, and said that that was fit meeting for avenging his disgrace. The queen said she had behaved badly towards him—“But I will now make atonement to thee, and do thou fittingly prepare for my bridal.”

“Nay,” said he, “thou shalt have no choice in the matter; thou shalt come to my ship with me, and remain there such time as I please, for I have no mind, by reason of my pride, to forego my revenge on thee, so badly and shamefully as I was tricked.”

“You are in a position to have your own way for the present,” she said. The king slept many nights beside the queen, and after that she went home, with such revenge accomplished on her as has been told, and she grew now very dissatisfied with her lot. After that king Helgi went a-harrying and became a very famous man.

As time went on, Olof gave birth to a child. It was a girl; she had nothing for it but disregard. She had a dog named Yrsa, and called the maiden after it, saying her name should be Yrsa; she was very fair of face. When she was twelve years old, she was made to tend the sheep, and never knew herself to be anything other than the daughter of a churl and his wife, because the queen had gone so secretly about the matter, that very few knew that she had given birth to a child. So things went on, until the maiden was thirteen.

Then it so happened that king Helgi reached that land and desired to have tidings of it. He wore the garb of a beggar. He saw, near a wood, an immense flock, and a

maiden tending it, young in years, and so fair that he thought he had never seen a more beautiful woman. He asked what her name and race might be. She said: "I am a peasant's daughter, and am called Yrsa." "Thou hast no peasant's eyes," said he, and immediately he fell in love with her, and said it were fitting if churl took churl's daughter. She bade him not to do that, but he took her as before, and carried her to his ship, and afterwards sailed home to his kingdom. Queen Olof was deceitful and not frank about that when she heard of it; she acted as if she knew nothing of what was going on, and had it in her mind that it would bring sorrow and disgrace to king Helgi, and would be to no one's profit or happiness.

King Helgi now celebrated his nuptials with Yrsa, and loved her dearly. He had a ring to which much renown was attached, and both brothers desired to possess it, as well as Signy their sister. King Hroar came on a certain day to the kingdom of king Helgi his brother, who prepared a magnificent banquet in his honour. King Hroar said: "It may be that thou art of us the greater man, and for the reason that I have taken up my abode in Northumberland, I will bestow upon thee entirely the kingdom we both possess, if thou wilt share with me some movable treasure. I will accept the ring, the best treasure in thy possession, and we will both share it."

Helgi said: "Nought else is fitting, brother, than that thou shouldst have the ring, especially after these thy words." King Hroar went away now, home to his kingdom, and remained quiet.

## CHAPTER VIII

**N**OW it came to pass that Sævil their kinsman had breathed his last and Hrok his son succeeded to the kingdom after him; he was a stern man and very ambitious. His mother told him much about the ring which the bro-

thers owned, "and it would seem mere justice to me," she said, "for my brothers to remember us with some gift of land, since we supported them in the revenge they exacted for our father and they have not remembered to make return for this to thy father or me."

Hrok said: "The truth of that is plain as daylight, and such a thing is a scandal, but ere long I shall enquire whether they will not return some recompense for it." Afterwards he went to a meeting with king Helgi, and claimed from him a third of his kingdom in Denmark, or else his goodly ring, because he was not aware that Hroar had it. The king said: "Thy speech is very daring and exceedingly arrogant; we won this kingdom with valour, staking our life for it, with the assistance of thy father, and of Reginn my foster-father, and other good men, who were minded to give us assistance. Now, certainly, we will grant thee recompense, if thou wilt accept of it, for the sake of our kinship; but so much hath this kingdom cost me, that I will lose it for no man; and king Hroar now hath possession of the ring, and will not give it up, I imagine, for thy sake."

With that Hrok went away, and grew most dissatisfied. He sought a meeting with king Hroar now, who received him well and honourably; and he stayed with him for a time. And once when they were sailing along the coast, and anchored in a firth, Hrok said: "It would seem to me becoming of thee, kinsman, if thou gavest into my possession thy goodly ring, and wert mindful thus of our kinship."

The king said: "So much have I given to obtain the ring that I will resign it to no man."

Hrok said: "Then wilt thou permit me to see it, for I have the greatest curiosity to know whether it is so costly a thing as is said?"

"That is but little to grant thee," said Hroar, "and it will

certainly be allowed to thee;" and he brought him the ring. Now Hrok looked at the ring for some time, and declared that one could not overpraise it—"I have never seen such a treasure," he said, "and there is the greatest excuse for your thinking it a most precious ring; the best thing now will be for neither of us to possess it;" then he flung the ring from his hand, and out into the sea, as far as ever he could.

Hroar said: "Thou art a most villainous fellow," and afterwards he caused Hrok's feet to be hewn off, and him to be conveyed thus to his kingdom. He quickly became so far recovered that the stumps healed; then he gathered his men together and wished to avenge his shame. He brought a great troop, and descended on Northumberland on a sudden, when king Hroar was banqueting with very few retainers. Hrok attacked immediately, and a fierce battle was fought there with great odds; Hroar the king was slain therein, and Hrok took the kingdom under his rule. He assumed the title of king, and afterwards asked in marriage Ogn, daughter of king Northri, who had been married before to his kinsman king Hroar.

King Northri considered himself to be in great difficulty, for he was then an old man, and but poorly prepared to engage in battle. He told what had happened to Ogn his daughter and said he had no intention of refusing to put up a fight, old as he was, if that (request) went against her inclinations. She said with great sorrow: "Of a surety is that against my will, but yet I see that thy life lies at stake, and consequently I will not reject the proposition, except for the reservation that some delay be granted, since I am with child, and that affair must first be disentangled; and king Hroar begot the child upon me." Now the affair was taken before Hrok, who was willing to grant the respite, if he should thereby come more easily into a kingdom and the marriage. Hrok considered himself to have achieved great

distinction on the expedition where he had slain so famed and mighty a king. But, at this issue, Ogn sent men to king Helgi, and bade them say thus to him, that she would not enter in wedlock with king Hrok if she might exercise her own free will and not suffer compulsion: "For the reason that I am with child of king Hroar." The messengers went and said thus as they were bidden. King Helgi said: "That is wisely said on her part, and I will avenge Hroar my brother."

But Hrok had no suspicion of this.

## CHAPTER IX

QUEEN OGN now gave birth to a son, who was named Agnarr; he quickly grew big and full of promise, and when king Helgi heard of that, he gathered his men and went against Hrok. A battle was fought which ended in such a way that Hrok was captured. Then said king Helgi: "Thou art a most wicked chief, but yet I will not kill thee, for there is greater shame for thee in a tormented life." Afterwards he had his legs and arms broken, and sent back to his kingdom in such a condition that he was no longer of any consequence.

And when Agnarr Hroarsson was twelve years old, it seemed that such a man had never before been seen, for in all accomplishments he far excelled all other men. He became a great man of war, and was so famous that he is spoken of in the ancient sagas as being the greatest hero of old times and of new. He inquired for the situation of the firth where Hrok had thrown the ring overboard; many men had sought after it with every kind of device, but nobody had succeeded in recovering it. And then it is told that Agnarr brought his ship to the firth and said: "It would be a

smart feat to dive for the ring if men have a clear mark." They told him where it had been cast into the sea: then Agnarr prepared himself, and dived into the sea, but came up without the ring; down he went a second time, but he did not reach it. Now he said: "This is but feebly sought," and so dived in a third time, and came up with the ring. From this time forward he became exceedingly famous—more famous even than his father.

King Helgi now remained in his own land during the winter, but went a-viking in the summer; he was a very famous man. He and Yrsa loved each other dearly, and had a son whose name was Hrolf; and he became a very worthy man in later years.

## CHAPTER X

QUEEN OLOF heard that king Helgi and Yrsa loved each other dearly and were well-pleased with their marriage; she did not like it at all, and set out to meet them. When she reached their land, she sent word to Yrsa the queen, who when they met asked her back to the hall with her; she said she had no mind to come, and declared that she had no honourable treatment to repay to king Helgi.

Yrsa said: "But scornfully didst thou treat me when I was with thee, but canst thou not tell me something of my parentage, as I suspect it is not such as is known to me, namely, that I am the daughter of a peasant and his wife."

Olof said: "It is not beyond hope that I may be able to tell thee something of it, for my errand hither was that I wished to make it known to thee; but say, art thou well contented with thy marriage?" "Yea," she said, "and I may well be so, since I have wedded a most goodly king, and a most famous one."



“That is not such a ground of satisfaction to thee as it seems,” Olof said, “for he is thy father, and thou art my daughter.”

Yrsa said: “I deem my mother most dire and wicked, for such things are monstrous, and never, never will they be forgotten.”

“Thou hast suffered this on account of king Helgi and my wrath,” said Olof, “but now will I take thee to myself with honour and esteem, and treat thee hereafter in every respect as best I know how.”

Yrsa said: “I know not how that will turn out, but I will no longer stay here, once I know the monstrous thing connected with it.” Afterwards she met king Helgi, and told him how grievously things had fallen out.

“A mother cruel enough hadst thou,” said the king, “but my desire is that things stay as they are.” She said such a state of affairs could not be, that they should continue living together from that time forward. Yrsa went off now with queen Olof, and remained in Saxony for some time. So much was king Helgi hurt thereby, that he kept to his bed and was exceedingly gloomy. There did not anywhere seem to be a match so good as Yrsa was, but yet kings were slow to set about asking her hand, and the fact that there seemed always the chance of king Helgi coming after her and showing himself ill pleased if she were married to another, was the chief cause of this.

## CHAPTER XI

**A**THILS was the name of a powerful and ambitious king; he ruled over Sweden, and resided at Uppsala. He asked for Yrsa to wife, and then made ready his ship. He went to meet Olof and Yrsa. Olof prepared a banquet in honour of king Athils and received him with every court-

esy. He asked for her daughter Yrsa for his wife. Olof answered: "You must have heard the state of the case in which her affairs stand, and to this, upon her own counsel, we proffer no denial." The matter was now brought before Yrsa. She spoke thus, and said it would be anything but a good bargain—"for thou art an unpopular king." But it went forward then, whatever she might say about it, many words or few, and Athils went away with her, no leave being asked of king Helgi, since Athils thought himself to be the more powerful king of the two.

King Helgi heard nothing of this before they had come home to Sweden; then king Athils made a most seemly bridal for Yrsa, and king Helgi was informed of it, and grew far more discontented than before. He slept in an out-lying house without any attendants. Olof at this point makes her exit from the saga; and thus things went on for a space.

But one Yule Eve, when king Helgi had retired to rest, the weather without being stormy, it is told that somebody knocked on the door—and very faintly. It entered his head now that it were very unkingly to leave some poor soul outside whom he might help, so he went and unlocked the door. He perceived there a poor battered mortal, who said "Thou hast done well, O king!" and afterwards came into the house. The king said: "Get straw and a bearskin for thyself, that thou mayst not feel the cold."

The creature spake: "Grant me of thy bed, Lord, and let me sleep beside thee, for my life is at stake!"

The king said: "My heart is aghast at thee, but if it be thus as thou sayest, lie here in thy clothes at the edge of the bed, and it will do me no harm." Now she did so, and the king turned himself from her. A lamp burned in the house, and after a time he looked over his shoulder at her; then he perceived that there lay a woman so fair of face that he seemed never before to have beheld her like for beauty; she

wore a silk kirtle. He turned speedily towards her then, and joyfully.

She spake: "Now must I fare hence," she said, "and thou hast freed me from sore straits, for that was my step-mother's curse, and I have visited many kings in their homes, but now do not lie here with dishonour; I do not wish to remain here any longer."

"Nay," said the king, "thou shalt have no choice to go so speedily, nor will we part thus! I will now contract a hasty marriage with thee, for with thee I am well pleased."

"Thou art in a position to have thy way, Lord," she said, and thus they slept that night. In the morning she began to speak: "Thy lust hath worked its way with me," she said, "and this thou shalt know, that we may have a child; do now as I say, king; send for the child this time next year to thy slip-sheds, or thou shalt suffer if thou dost not so." After that she went away.

King Helgi was now somewhat more cheerful than before; the time went forward, but he paid no heed to this, and at the end of three years it came to pass, that three men came riding to the house where the king was sleeping; it was about midnight. They brought a baby girl with them, and set her down near the house. The woman who was with her began to speak; "Thou shalt know, O king," she said, "that thy kinsfolk must pay for this, since thou didst set at nought that which I bade thee; but this shall benefit thee, that thou didst free me from sore straits; and know too that the maiden is named Skuld, and she is our daughter." After that the men rode away; she had been an elfin wife, and never afterwards did the king set eyes upon her. Skuld grew up there, and quickly became ferocious in disposition. It is told that on a certain occasion, king Helgi prepared to make a journey from the land, and thought thus to forget his sorrows. He left Hrolf his son behind

him. He now went a-freebooting, and performed many great feats.

## CHAPTER XII

**K**ING ATHILS resided at this time in Uppsala; he had twelve berserks who were there with him to protect the land against all dangers and hostility. King Helgi now made ready for a journey to Uppsala, that he might take away queen Yrsa. He reached that land, and when king Athils was informed of the fact that king Helgi was in the country, he asked queen Yrsa how she would wish him to be welcomed.

She said: "Thou art thyself master of that, but this thou dost know beforehand, that there is no man alive more closely related to me than he." And with that, king Athils saw fit to invite him to a banquet; but he had no intention that this should be free from deceit.

King Helgi accepted the invitation; he went to the banquet with a hundred men, but the majority were left aboard ship. King Athils received him with open arms. Queen Yrsa thought to reconcile the kings, and acted in a most seemly manner to king Helgi. He was so overjoyed with the queen, that he stayed beside her all the time. He wanted to use in speech with her every moment that he possibly could, and sat thus at the banquet.

It so happened that Athils' berserks had come home; and as soon as they had reached the land, king Athils went to meet them, that they might not be seen by other folks. He told them to go into the wood which was between the town and king Helgi's ships, and bade them fall thence on king Helgi when he was going to his ship.—"I will also send a force to assist ye, which will come upon them in the rear so that they are caught in a trap; for I will now, of a truth,

contrive that king Helgi does not escape, since I plainly see that he cherishes great love for the queen, and I will not risk what he may do.”

King Helgi sat, meanwhile, at the feast, and this guileful design was closely concealed from him, and also from the queen. Queen Yrsa told king Athils that she desired him to bestow gifts of great magnificence on king Helgi at parting, and so he did; he bestowed gold and treasure on king Helgi, remembering meanwhile that they were really for himself.

With that king Helgi went away, and king Athils and the queen escorted him on his journey, the queen and both kings parting very amicably. But no great time after king Athils had turned back, king Helgi and his company were made aware of hostility, and at once they began to fight. King Helgi put up a good defence, and bore himself with exceeding bravery, but on account of the odds which were against him, he fell there, his fair renown untarnished, with many and great wounds; and there came a troop of king Athils' men at king Helgi's rear, and so they were between the hammer and the anvil, and were slain. Queen Yrsa was not aware of this until king Helgi had fallen, and the battle was finished. With Helgi fell all those men who had come ashore with him, but the rest fled away home to Denmark.

And here ends the story of king Helgi.

## Of Svipdag

### CHAPTER XIII

**K**ING ATHILS now boasted of victory, and thought he had greatly distinguished himself by defeating so renowned a king as Helgi was and so far-famed.

Queen Yrsa said: “To brag so much is not all thou hast to do, though thou hast betrayed the man to whom I owed

most, and whom I most loved; for this I will never be loyal to thee when thou hast dealings with king Helgi's henchmen. I will encompass the death of thy berserks so soon as I may, if any be so valiant as to do that for my sake and their own honour."

King Athils bade her concern herself neither with himself nor his berserks, "for that will avail thee nought; yet am I minded to compensate thee for thy father's death, with magnificent gifts, things of great value, and good treasures, if thou wilt consent to that."

The queen was appeased with this, and accepted compensation from the king, but afterwards she grew very dissatisfied with her fortune, and often she watched her opportunity to do the berserks injury and disgrace. Never indeed, did men find the queen quite happy or blithe of mood after king Helgi's death; henceforth there was more bickering in the hall than ever before had been; nor was the queen at all disposed to attend on king Athils if she could help it.

King Athils now thought he had become exceedingly famous, and at the time he was reckoned the greatest man among all the champions of his following. He now remained in his own kingdom for a space, and expected that nobody would raise shield against himself or his berserks. King Athils was a great idolator and full of the black art.

## CHAPTER XIV

**A**CERTAIN homesteader was named Svip; he dwelt in Sweden far from other men. He owned rich possessions, and had been the greatest champion, and he was not in all respects what he seemed; he was skilled in many accomplishments. He had three sons who are here named: one was called Svipdag, a second Beigath, and the third

Whiteshirt; he was the eldest. All of them were great in growth and strong, and handsome in appearance.

And when Svipdag was eighteen years old he said thus to his father one day: "It is dull for us to spend a lifetime here up in the hills, in remote unpeopled valleys, never visiting other men, nor they us; it were a better and bolder course to go to king Athils, and take service in his troop with himself and his champions, if he would have us." The man Svip replied: "That does not seem advisable to me, for king Athils is a fierce man, and no true one, though he seems fair, and his men are full of envy though powerful, but certainly he is a mighty man and famous."

Svipdag said: "There is always some risk if men would win renown, and one cannot know before trying where one's fortune will turn up; certainly I will no longer remain here, whatever else lies before me." And since he was in this mind, his father gave him a huge axe, a fine looking one, and keen of edge. He spake then with his son: "Be thou not envious of others, and behave not arrogantly, for that in speech is ill, but be ready of thy hand if hostility is shown thee; for it is most manly for a man to boast little about himself, but to do great deeds of destiny if he comes to the test." He gave him all his war-gear elaborately wrought, and a good horse.

Svipdag rode away now, and in the evening came to king Athils' stronghold; he perceived that games were in progress out in front of the hall, and that king Athils sat near by on a great golden seat with his berserks beside him. And when Svipdag reached the wooden fence the gate of the fort was locked, for it was the custom there to ask leave to ride in. Svipdag, not troubling himself about that, forced open the gate, and rode so into the courtyard.

The king said: "This man goes heedlessly, nor has this ever before been tried; it may be that he has great power,

and ran no risk though he tried this." The berserks frowned greatly, and thought he acted somewhat arrogantly.

Svipdag rode before the king, and gave him courteous greeting; he had good skill in this. King Athils asked who he might be, and he told him. The king quickly became acquainted with him, and everybody thought he would be a great warrior, and of much importance. The game was continued none the less. Svipdag seated himself by a tree and watched the game. The berserks looked evilly at him, and now they told the king they would like to put him to the test.

The king said: "It is my opinion that he is no weakling, yet it seems good to me for you to test whether he is such a man as he thinks he is." Afterwards they all thronged into the hall. The berserks went to Svipdag and asked if he was in any way a champion that he acted so arrogantly. He said he was one as much as any one of them, and at these his words their anger and excitement grew, but the king bade them remain quiet for the evening. The berserks frowned, and shouted aloud, and said to Svipdag: "Darest thou fight with us? Thou wouldst need then to use more than big words alone and arrogance. We will try how great a fellow thou art in reality." He said: "I will agee to this,—to fight with one at a time, and so see if any more wish to fight." The king thought it quite satisfactory that they should make trial among themselves.

Queen Yrsa said: "This man shall be welcome hither." The berserks answered her: "We knew before this that thou didst wish us all in hell, but we are of much greater strength than to fall for mere words alone or ill-will." The queen said it would never have happened that the king should test what he had—"where ye are, if he believed in ye so staunchly." The berserk who was in command of them spoke: "I will settle thee, and bring down thy pride in such wise that we shall have no cause to fear him;" he said,



and in the morning a fierce duel was begun there, nor were there great blows wanting. Everybody saw then, that this newcomer knew how to make the sword bite with great force, and the berserk gave way completely before him, and he slew him there; and at once another would avenge him, and he went the same journey, nor did he cease until he had killed four of them. Then king Athils said, "A great injury hast thou done me, and for this thou shalt now pay," and he bade his men rise and kill him. But the queen on the other hand gathered her troop and was ready to protect him, declaring that the king might see there was much more excellence in him than in all the others. She now made peace between them, and Svipdag seemed to all a very valiant man. He sat upon a bench opposite the king, by the direction of queen Yrsa. As night came on, he looked around, and it seemed to him that his dealings with the berserks had been overbrief, and he wished to provoke a meeting with them, for it seemed likely to him that if they saw him alone, they would turn on him. And it happened just as he thought, for at once they began fighting; and then the king came there when they had been fighting for a space, and parted them. After that the king banished the berserks who were still alive, because they all could not overcome a single man, and said he had not looked before to find them such weaklings except in boastful words alone. They had to go away now, but pledged themselves in revenge, to harry in king Athils kingdom. The king declared he cared never a jot for their threats, and said there was no heart in the dogs; so they went away now with shame and dishonour. But king Athils had, in reality, first incited them to attack and kill Svipdag if they ever saw him leave the hall alone, and take revenge, so that the queen should not be aware of it. Svipdag had already killed one berserk when the king came up to part

them. King Athils bade Svipdag to give him no less help now than he had before when all the berserks aided him—"Most especially since the queen desires that thou shouldst be in place of the berserks." Svipdag now remained there for a period.

After some time, a tale of war was told to the king, namely, that the berserks had gathered together a great company and were a-harrying in his land. King Athils now bade Svipdag to go against the berserks, declaring that to be his duty, and saying he should have from him as great a troop as he needed. He was not at all minded to be in command of the army, yet was willing to go with the king wherever he would. But the king would have no other than that he should be commander. Svipdag said: "I will accept from thee then, twelve men whom I shall choose." The king said: "That will I grant thee." After that Svipdag went out to battle, but the king remained at home; he had a large force. Svipdag had caltrops made and cast down where the battle-ground was marked, and he caused it to be prepared with many other devices. There a battle was begun, a hard fight, where the viking troop gave way entirely, and they were badly off indeed when they came to the caltrops. There was slain one berserk and many of their force, and they fled to the ships who were alive at the end, and so away.

Svipdag now returned to king Athils, able to boast of victory. King Athils thanked him well for his campaign and defence of the land. Queen Yrsa said: "Certainly that seat is more worthily assigned when such a warrior as Svipdag occupies it, than when it belonged to thy berserks." The king affirmed that it was so. The berserks again gathered their troop, such as had escaped, and harried king Athils' kingdom; and then the king urged Svipdag to advance against them, and said he would get him a fine troop. Svipdag went to fight and had a troop less by a third than that of

the berserks. King Athils promised to come and join him with his own guard. Svipdag had started off more speedily than the berserks expected; and now they met and a hard encounter ensued. King Athils gathered his men, and thought to take the berserks in the rear.

We must now betake us where farmer Svip is. He awoke upon a time from sleep, sighed wearily, and said to his sons: "Methinks your brother Svipdag now hath need of aid, for he does battle not far hence against great odds; he hath lost one of his eyes already, and hath many other wounds besides; and he hath killed three berserks, and now other three are left." The brothers started up speedily and armed themselves; they went afterwards towards the place where the battle was, and the vikings still had twice as many men. Svipdag had accomplished great things, yet was, by that time grievously wounded, and one eye was gone; and though his men were ever falling in the fight, the king did not come to his assistance. And when the brothers came to the battle, they dashed well forward to where the berserks were to be found, and matters went so with them, that all the berserks fell there before the brothers. Great slaughter of the vikings arose, and they who were given their lives, made submission to the brethren.

And after that, they went and met king Athils, and told him the tidings; the king thanked them well for their mighty deeds. Svipdag had received two wounds in his arms, he had a great wound in his head, and went with one eye all his days afterwards. He lay a-bed some time with these wounds, and queen Yrsa healed him. But when he had quite recovered again, he told the king that he wished to depart: "I will seek out some king who will do me more honour than thou, king; an ill reward hast thou paid me for my defence of thy land, and such a victory as we have won for thee." King Athils bade him remain with him, profess-

ing his intention of doing very well by the brethren, and he said he would value no man above them. But Svipdag would do no other than ride away, and chiefly on this account, that king Athils did not come to the fight till it was over, because he was indifferent who had the victory, Svipdag or the berserks; for the king was in a wood, and from there had watched their fight, and he had free choice to go when he desired; but it seemed a matter of no consequence to him if Svipdag should lose the victory, and were made to bite the dust.

## CHAPTER XV

NOW the brothers prepared to depart, and nothing availed to prevent them. King Athils inquired where they intended to go; they said they had made no plan about this, "but we intend to take our leave for the time being. I desire to make myself acquainted with the customs of other men and kings, and not grow old here in Sweden." They went then to their horses, and thanked the queen heartily for the honour she had done Svipdag; they mounted their horses and all rode away until they came to their father, and asked him to advise what they should take up—"or to what shall we turn?"

He declared it the greatest distinction to be in Denmark with king Hrolf and his champions—"and there will be most hope of some distinction to satisfy your pride, for I have it from a trusty source that thither are come the greatest champions in the Northern lands."

"What kind of a fellow is he?" said Svipdag. His father answered: "Thus am I informed concerning king Hrolf, that he is open-handed and munificent, trusty, and particular as to his friends, so that his like may not be found; he

withholds neither gold nor treasure from anyone, almost, who will receive it; he is unassuming in appearance, but mighty and difficult to test; the handsomest of men, severe with evil doers, but mild and gentle to the helpless, and to all those who offer no resistance to him; the most condescending of men, so that he answers the poor as amiably as he does the rich;—a man of such great excellence is he that his name will never be forgotten so long as the world is peopled; he levies tribute also from all kings in his vicinity, for all are eager to serve him.”

Svipdag said: “Here hast thou then this story to relate, that I have decided to go and join king Hrolf, yea, and all we brethren, if he will receive us.”

Farmer Svip said: “Thou mayst decide thine own goings and doings, but to my thinking it were best for thee to remain at home with me.” They said it would be of no avail to ask this.

Afterwards they bade their father farewell, and their mother too, and they went off on their way, and rode until they came to king Hrolf. Svipdag at once went before the king and greeted him; the king asked who he might be. Svipdag told him his name, and the names of them all, and said he had been with king Athils for a time. King Hrolf said: “Wherefore camest thou hither, for there is no great friendship between king Athils and my followers?”

Svipdag said: “I know that, Sire, yet will I apply to be thy man, if there is any possibility, and all we brethren, though thou mayst think us of slight importance.”

The king said: “I had not thought to make me friends of men of king Athils, but ye have first sought me out, and so I will receive ye; and I think it will be an advantage not to reject your application, for I see that ye are goodly heroes; I have heard that ye have won great renown, killed king Athils’ berserks, and done many other mighty deeds.”

“Where wilt thou assign me a seat?” said Svipdag.

The king said: “Sit beside that man whose name is Bjalki, and in from you let room for twelve men remain.” Svipdag had promised king Athils to return to him, before he went away.

Now the brothers went to the place which the king had assigned them. Svipdag asked Bjalki why the bench-space was to remain empty further in from them. Bjalki said that the king’s twelve berserks sat there when they came home; they were then on a viking cruise. Skur was the name of a daughter of king Hrolf, and another was named Drifa. She was at home with the king, and was the most courteous of women. Drifa was kind to the brothers, and thought well of them in every way.

So things went on through the summer, and right up to the berserks’ homecoming to the court in the autumn. And according to their custom, they went up to each man when they came into the hall, and he asked, who came up to them, whether he accounted himself equally valiant as the man who was before him; and men searched for various ways of answering which seemed best for their honour, yet it might be heard in the words of each of them, that they thought themselves to want much of being equal in prowess.

And now he went up to Svipdag and asked if he accounted himself equally valiant. Svipdag sprang up, and drew his sword and said he was in no wise less valiant than he. The berserk said: “Strike the helm then.” Svipdag did so, but made no impression on it, and after that they wished to fight. King Hrolf ran between them, and said that should not be permitted them, and that they should be called equal ever thenceforth,—“and both my friends.” And after that they were reconciled, and were ever of one accord; they went a-viking and had the victory wherever they came.

King Hrolf now sent men to Sweden to find queen Yrsa

his mother, and bade her send him the treasure which king Helgi his father had had, and king Athils had appropriated to himself when king Helgi was slain. Queen Yrsa said it were justice for her to bring that to pass if it were possible for her,—“and if thou thyself dost come after the treasure I will be loyal to thee in my actions, son, but king Athils is a man so eager for money that he cares nought what he does to get it.”

And thus she bade say to king Hrolf, and sent him honourable gifts therewith.

## CHAPTER XVI

**K**ING HROLF had an expedition ready, but delayed for this purpose, that he might go and meet king Athils. He assembled great forces under him, and all the kings he could find he made give tribute to him; and for the most part it turned out that all the greatest champions wished to be with him, and to serve no other, for he was much more generous of money than all other kings. King Hrolf established his capital in the place called Hleithar-garth; that is in Denmark, and is a great and strong town; and there was more splendour and pomp there than in any other place, and more of everything pertaining to munificence than anyone had tidings of.

Hjorvarth was the name of a powerful king; he married Skuld, daughter of king Helgi, and sister of king Hrolf. This was done by the counsel of king Athils and queen Yrsa, and of Hrolf her brother. And on a certain occasion king Hrolf asked Hjorvarth his kinsman to a banquet. One day when he was at the feast, it so happened that the kings were standing outside the hall, and king Hrolf took off his belt, and gave king Hjorvarth his sword for a while. And when king Hrolf had buckled on his belt again, he took back his sword, and spoke to king Hjorvarth: “This we

both know," said he, "that it is an old saying, that he shall ever after be another's vassal, who holds his sword while he girds on his belt; thou shalt now be my underking, and endure that as well as the others." Hjorvarth was exceedingly angry at this, but yet had to let it stand even so; he went home, leaving it at that, and was ill-contented with his lot; he paid tax to king Hrolf after that, even as the other underkings who had to pay him homage.

And here ends the episode of Svipdag.

## Of Bothvar Bjalki

### CHAPTER XVII

IT is now to be told that north in Norway the king who was called Hring ruled over Uppland. He had a son named Bjorn. It is now said that the queen died, and it seemed a great loss to the king and to many others as well. The men of the land, and his councillors, petitioned him to marry again, and it so happened that he sent men to southern lands to ask for a wife for himself; but head winds came upon them and great storms, and they were obliged now to turn their prows and run before the wind; and it turned out that they were driven north to Finland and were there for the winter.

They went one day up on land and came to a house; there sat within two women of fair appearance, who received them well and asked whence they might be come. They told all about their journeyings and what their errand was; they asked what manner of women they might be, and for what reason they were come there alone and so far from other men, such fair and beauteous ladies as they were.

The elder said: "Everything has its reason, lads; we are



here on this account, that a powerful king asked my daughter's hand, but she would not have him, and he promised her many hard things in return, and so I keep her hidden here until her father comes home, for he has gone raiding."

They asked who her father was; her mother said: "She is the daughter of the king of the Finns." They asked the ladies' names then. The elder said: "I am called Ingibjorg, and my daughter's name is White; I am the mistress of the Finnish king." They had a maid to wait upon them. The king's men were well pleased with them, and they decided to inquire whether White would go back with them and marry king Hring; the proposal was brought before her by him who had the king's mission in his charge. She did not answer this straightway, but deferred it for her mother's consideration.

"So it is, as it is said, that 'for every difficulty there is some solution,' "said her mother, "and it seems to me an ill deed to ask no leave of her father in this, but yet that must be risked in this case, if she is to get any forwarder." After that she prepared for the journey with them. Then they went their way, and came to king Hring, and at once the envoys asked whether the king would marry this woman, or if she were to go back the same road as she came. The king found the woman to his liking, and at once celebrated his nuptials with her; he cared nothing though she was not rich. The king was somewhat advanced in years, and this was soon to be evident in the queen's behaviour.

## CHAPTER XVIII

**A** MAN had a farm a short distance from the king; he had a wife and one child, a daughter named Bera; she was young in years, and fair to look upon. Bjorn, the son of the king, and Bera the churl's daughter, were playmates in

childhood, and got on very well with each other. The man was wealthy, and had, in his youth, spent much time in the wars, and he was the greatest champion. Bera and Bjorn had great affection for each other, and they were always together; so time went on for a space with nothing to relate. Bjorn the king's son grew to manhood and was both great and strong; he was well tutored in every accomplishment.

King Hring stayed long away from the land in the wars, and White stayed at home and governed the land. She was not popular with the folk, but to Bjorn she was ever gracious, and he esteemed that lightly. And on one occasion when king Hring was going abroad, the queen consulted with him, saying Bjorn his son ought to stay behind with her, to take care of the land; the king thought that advisable. The queen now grew imperious and haughty. The king told Bjorn his son that he must stay behind and take care of the land with the queen; Bjorn said he had very little inclination that way, and declared that he was very ill-disposed towards the queen. The king said that he must stay behind; now he departed out of the country with a great force of men.

## CHAPTER XIX

**B**JORN went home after his dealings with his father, and each disagreed violently with the other. He went to his seat and was very low-spirited and as red as blood; the queen entered into conversation with him, and desired to cheer him, and she spoke to Bjorn of friendship; he told her to go away, and, at the time, she did. But she came frequently to speak with him, and suggested that it would be a good thing for them to share one bed while the king was

away, for she said it would be better for them to be toge her than that she should have so old a husband as king Hring. Bjorn took this very ill, and gave her a severe box on the ear; he bade her to take herself off, and thrust her away from him. She said she was not accustomed to be struck or beaten—"and thou dost consider it preferable, Bjorn, to embrace a churl's daughter, and that seems fitting to thee which is worse and more dishonourable than the acceptance of my love and pleasure; but maybe the time is not far hence when something may come upon thy obstinacy and folly." She struck him now with her wolfskin gloves, and declared that he should become a bear, savage and fierce—"and thou shalt enjoy no food other than thy father's cattle; thou shalt kill for thy food more of them than has ever been known, and never shalt thou win free from this spell; and this thought shall be evil enough for thee!"

## CHAPTER XX

**A**FTER that, Bjorn disappeared and nobody knew what had become of him; and when people missed Bjorn a search was instituted, but he was not to be found, as was only to be expected. From that time it is told that the king's cattle were felled in heaps, and a grey bear was responsible for that—a bear both huge and fierce.

One evening it happened that the churl's daughter saw this fierce bear; the bear came to her and made great joy of her; in this bear she seemed to perceive the eyes of Bjorn the king's son, and made no attempt to avoid it. The animal walked away then, and she after it ever until it reached a certain cave; and when she reached the cave a man was out before it who greeted Bera the churl's daughter; she recognized that he was Bjorn Hringsson, and that was a very joy-

ful meeting. There they remained in the cave for a space, for she would not part with him while ever she had any choice; he said it was unseemly for her to be there beside him because he was an animal during the daytime and a man in the night.

King Hring now returned from his viking cruise and he was told what tidings had arisen while he was away—that Bjorn his son had disappeared, and also of a great bear which had come into the land and had fallen mostly upon the king's own cattle. The queen eagerly incited him to have the animal slain, but still that was delayed for a time. The king had misgivings about this, and it seemed to him to be very strange.

One night when Bera and Bjorn the son of the king were abed together, Bjorn took to words and said: "This do I suspect, that my deathday will be on the morrow, and they will get me hunted down; moreover I can find no pleasure in life on account of this evil fate which lies upon me; and this alone remains for my delight that we are here together, but yet must that now cease. I will give to thee the ring which is under my left arm. Thou wilt see, in the morning, the troop which seeks me, and then when I am dead, go thou to the king and ask him to give thee that which is under the bear's shoulder on the left side, and he will grant thee that. The queen will suspect thee when thou wishest to depart, and will give thee to eat of the bear's flesh, but thou shalt not eat that, for thou art no hale woman as thou knowest; and thou shalt give birth to three boys, thy sons and mine, and in them will it be seen if thou dost eat the bear's flesh, for this queen is the greatest troll. Afterwards, go thou home to thy father, and there wilt thou give birth to the boys. One of them wilt thou love most; and if thou mayst not guard them at home on account of their evil fate and recklessness, bring them away, and

come thou hither to the cave with them. Here wilt thou perceive a chest with three compartments; it will tell in the runes which are there beside, what each of them shall have. There are three weapons stuck in the rock, and each of them shall have that which is assigned to him. He who is thy first son shall be named Elgfrothi, the second Thorir, the third Bothvar, and it seemeth likely to me that they will be of no little strength, and their names will long be remembered.”

He spoke to her concerning many things, and afterwards he was transformed into the shape of a bear, and the bear went out, and she after him, and looking around she saw a great company ride over the brow of the hill, and many hounds and great ran before the troop. The bear ran away from the cave, and away along the hill; the hounds and the king's men came against him, but they found him very hard to deal with; he injured many men amongst them ere he was cornered, and killed all the hounds. Thereupon they surrounded him, and he roamed about the ring of men and saw in what conditions things were come, and that he might nowise escape; he turned then thither where the king was standing, and suddenly he seized the man who was nearest to him, and alive, rove him asunder. Then was the bear so exhausted that he threw himself flat down; thither then they quickly ran and slew him. The churl's daughter perceived that; she went to the king and spoke: “Wilt thou give me, Sire, that which is under the animal's left shoulder?” The king granted that, saying that this only should be on condition that it beseemed him well to grant her that. The king's men had by this time in great part flayed the bear; Bera went thereto then, and took away the ring and kept it, but no man saw what she took, so it was not sought for. The king asked who she was, for he knew her not, she told him as seemed good to her—and not what she really was. The king went home now, and Bera went with the king in

his train; the queen was exceedingly merry and received her well, and enquired who she might be. She told the same tale as before, and not the truth.

Now the queen made a great feast and caused the bear's flesh to be prepared for men's entertainment. The churl's daughter was in the bower with the queen, and could not get away, for the queen suspected who she might be, and sooner than expected appeared with a dish—thereon was the bear's flesh—and bade Bera eat of it. She would not. "This is a monstrous state of affairs!" said the queen, "for thee to turn up thy nose at the hospitality which the queen herself deigns to offer thee; take it speedily, or it shall be worse for thee!" She took a bite to satisfy her and the issue was that she ate the bite; the queen cut another then, and forced it in her mouth, and a little grain from the bite went down and then she cast it out of her mouth, saying she would eat no more though she tortured her or killed her. The queen said: "It may be that this has already had some effect," and laughed. Afterwards Bera went away and home to her father; she had a troublesome time during her pregnancy.

She now told her father the whole account of her marriage, and how it had come to pass; and in a little while she took ill and brought forth a son though at somewhat unusual peril. He was a man above, and an elk below the navel; he was named Elgfrothi. A second son was born and named Thorir, and he had hound's feet down from his instep, and was therefore called Thorir Houndsfoot. He was of fairest appearance in every other respect. The third son was born and he was the most promising; he was named Bothvar and had no blemish. She loved Bothvar most. They grew up now like grass; and when at the games with other men they were, in everything, fierce and merciless; by them was rough treatment meted out to many men. Frothi

maimed many of the king's men, and some he killed outright. So time went forward a space, until they were twelve years old: they were by this time so strong that none of the king's men could stand up to them; and they could no longer go to the games.

Then Frothi told his mother he wished to go away—"and I may no longer live among men, for they are nought but imbeciles, and take hurt when they are touched only." She said he was unfit for human society, on account of his mercilessness. His mother went with him to the cave now, and showed him all the possessions which his father had intended for him, for Bjorn had decided upon all that each should have. Frothi desired to take more, for the least property had been assigned to him, but did not get it; and now he saw when the weapon projected from the rock; and first he grasped the sword's hilt, but the sword remained fast so that he could not get it; then he grasped the shaft of the axe, but that was no looser. Then said Elgfrothi: "Maybe he has decided, who deposited this treasure here, that the assignment of weapons shall be like the division of the other property." He seized the haft (of the third weapon)-hereupon, and that came loose immediately, and a short sword blade followed after the haft; he looked at the sword for a while, and afterwards said: "He hath been unfair who had this treasure to divide up," and with both hands he struck at the rock with it, and wished to break it in pieces, but the sword ran into the rock up to the haft, and showed not the least sign of breaking. Then said Frothi, "What does it matter how I use the wretched thing, since it is not likely that it will be able to bite." After that he went away and took no leave of his mother at parting. Frothi now made his way to a mountain pass and engaged in evil-doing there, and slew men for the sake of their possessions, and he built himself a hut and dwelt therein.

## CHAPTER XXI

KING HRING now thought that he perceived with what magical arts all this had been done, but he spoke no word of it in public, and allowed matters to be as quiet as before. In a short time Thorir Houndsfoot asked to go away, and his mother conducted him to the cave, and so to the property which was intended for him, and told him of the weapons, bidding him take the axe, and she told him his father had so ordered it. Afterwards Thorir went away and bade his mother farewell. First he grasped the sword hilt, but the sword remained fast; then he grasped the haft of the axe and found it loose, for that was intended for him; afterwards he took his belongings and went his way. He ordered his journey so that he went first to pay a visit to his brother Elgfrothi; he went into his house and sat himself down on the seat, and let his hood fall down. In a little while Frothi came home, and looked in no wise cheerily upon his visitor; he pulled out his short sword and said:

“The sword sings,  
 Out of the sheath it goes:  
 My hand is mindful  
 Of deeds of battle.”

and he drove it into a beam which was beside him, and grew very savage and evil-looking. Thorir then said:

“Even so I make  
 My axe afar  
 In quite another way  
 Give out an equal sound.”

and now Thorir dissembled no longer, and Frothi knew his brother, and offered him an equal share with himself of all that which he had gathered together, for there great wealth



was not wanting. Thorir would not accept that; he dwelt there for a space and afterwards went away.

Elgfrothi escorted him to Gautland, and told him that the king of the Gauts lay nigh unto death, and bade him go into their kingdom. He told him of many things: "It is a law of the Gauts that a general assembly be summoned to which all the Gauts are called. A great throne is placed amongst the assembly, such that two men might sit in it with room and to spare, and he shall be king who can fill all the space—and it seems to me that thou couldst amply fill the seat." After that they parted and each called down good fortune on the other.

Thorir now went his way until he reached Gautland, and came to a jarl who received him well and afforded him hospitality for the night. Every man declared who saw Thorir, that he might well be king of the Gauts by reason of his size, and said that very few such men would be there. And then when they were come to the place of the Thing, it happened in accordance with what Frothi his brother had told him. A judge was there beside the throne to decide the business with justice; many sat them in the seat but the judge declared that none were satisfactory. Thorir went last of all and seated himself on the throne at once. The judge spake: "There is seated the most fitting, and thou must be adjudged to this kingship." The men of that land gave him the title of king; and he was called King Thorir Houndsfoot, and there are great stories about him. He was popular, and fought many battles, and had the victory most times; he now remained in his kingdom for a space.

## CHAPTER XXII

**B**OTHVAR was at home with his mother. She loved him dearly; of all men he was the most accomplished and most fair of face; he was not acquainted with many other men. He asked his mother upon a time, who his father was: she told him his history and all the circumstances, and what had happened on account of his stepmother's spell. Bothvar said: "An ill return have we to repay this witch." Then she told him how she was compelled by the queen to eat of the bear's flesh—"and that is now discernable in thy brethren Thorir and Elgfrothi." Bothvar said: "There seems to me more obligation on Frothi to avenge our father on this foul witch than to kill innocent men for their possessions' sake, and do evil deeds; and I think Thorir's going was to be wondered at, when he did not first give this ogress some reminder of us. To me it seems most advisable for myself to give her some remembrance on our behalf."

Bera said: "Arrange that she may come at no magic whereby she may injure thee." He said that it should be so.

After that Bera and Bothvar went to see the king, and now, upon Bothvar's advice, she told him all that had happened, and showed him the ring she had taken from under the bear's shoulder, and told him that Bjorn his son had owned it. The king replied that he knew the ring well enough—"I had already a shrewd suspicion that it would be by her agency that all the prodigious events occurred which have happened here, but for the sake of my affection for the queen, I have allowed things to remain quiet."

Bothvar said, "Make her go away now, or we shall be revenged on her." The king said he would give him treasure in compensation according to his desire, if only he were quiet for the time being, and would give him a kingdom to

rule over and an earl's title straightway, and the kingship after his death, if no harm were done to her. Bothvar said he had no desire to be a king, and would rather remain with the king and serve him—"Thou art so much under the influence of this monster, that scarcely hast thou control of thy wits or thy rightful kingdom, and she shall never thrive here from this time forward." Bothvar was so savage to contend with then, that the king dared not go against him. Bothvar went to the queen's bower with a bag in his hand; the king came on behind, and his mother; and when Bothvar came into the queen's bower he turned to White the queen, and pulled a bag of shrunken skin over her head and tied it below at the neck; afterwards, giving her a box on the ear, he beat her to hell with various tortures, and so dragged her through all the street. To many, and indeed to most, who were within the hall, that seemed a downright good deed, but the king thought it exceedingly ill, and yet could do nothing. Queen White in this manner lost her wicked life; Bothvar was eighteen years of age when this came to pass.

In a little time king Hring fell ill and died, after that Bothvar took over the kingdom and was but little content there; later he summoned a meeting of the men of the land, and said at the Thing that he desired to go away; he married his mother to a man named Valsleit—he had been a jarl before—and gave a great feast before he went away.

## CHAPTER XXIII

**A**FTER that, Bothvar rode away alone, nor did he take along with him much gold or silver, or any other valuables, except that he was well provided with weapons and clothes; he now directed his good horse to the cave in accordance with his mother's instruction. The sword came

loose when he grasped its hilt. This nature belonged to the sword that it might never be drawn without compassing some man's death; he who owned it should never lay it under his head, nor set it upon its hilt; in all his life he should urge it but thrice, nor should he wield it another time; it was so difficult to deal with. All the brothers had desired to possess that precious treasure.

Bothvar next sought a meeting with his brother Elgfrothi; he made a scabbard for the sword from bark. There are no tidings to relate about his journey until he came next day to a huge building; Elgfrothi was lord of it. Bothvar led in his horse and thought himself to have a perfect right to all that of which he had need. Frothi came home during the evening and cast evil looks upon him. Bothvar paid no heed to that and kept quiet; the horses too had ill dealings with each other, and each wished to drive the other from the stalls.

Frothi began to speak then: "He is indeed an overbearing fellow who dares to seat himself herein without my leave!" Bothvar pulled his hood well down and answered nothing. Elgfrothi stood up and pulled out his short sword, and afterwards buried it again to the hilt, and this he did twice; Bothvar remained unmoved. A third time he drew his short sword and called upon him, now, in challenge; and he thought that this man who had come did not know how to be afraid; he tried now to lay hold of him. But when Bothvar realised the state of affairs, he would wait no longer, but stood up and ran under his hands. Elgfrothi was the stronger in his grip, and they engaged there in a great tussle, when Bothvar's hood slipped back, and then Frothi knew him and said: "Welcome, kinsman. We have pursued this wrestling much too long."

"No harm done," said Bothvar.

Elgfrothi said, "More warily, indeed, brother, wouldst

thou need to strive with me if we should ever quarrel; thou would experience here, then, a difference of strength if we were to fight and not hold back." Frothi bade him stay there and accept a half of all his possessions; Bothvar would not, and it seemed evil to him to kill men for their goods. He went away after that. Frothi set him on his journey and told him this, that he had granted peace to many men who were of small account, and with that Bothvar was glad and said that he did well: "And most men thou shouldst let go in peace, even if thou thinkest there is something to be got from them."

Elgfrothi said: "To me are all ill portions given, but it is thine certainly to go to join king Hrolf, as all the greatest champions wish to be with him, whose magnificence is much greater, as also his splendour and courage, than that of all other kings." Afterwards Frothi suddenly gave Bothvar a push, then he said: "Art not so strong, kinsman, as would befit thee." Frothi let blood from the calf of his leg, and bade him drink, and Bothvar did so; then Frothi buffeted him a second time, but he stood then in the same spot. "Now art thou strongest, kinsman," said Elgfrothi, "and I believe that the drink has come to give thee help, and thou wilt be beyond most men in strength and valour and in all prowess and manly deeds, and in this I am well pleased for thy sake." After that Frothi stamped upon the rock which was beside him so that his whole hoof sank in. Then he said: "To this hoof-print will I come every day and look what is therein; earth will be in it if thou be dead from sickness; water, if thou art drowned in the sea; and blood, if thou art dead from weapons; and in that case I will avenge thee, for I love thee best of all men."

They parted now, and Bothvar went his way until he came to Gautland, and Thorir Houndsfoot was not at home; he and Thorir were so much alike that each might be

taken for the other, and the men of the land thought that Thorir must have returned; so he was placed on the high seat, and served exactly as the king in all things, and he was put in a bed by the side of the queen, for Thorir was married. Bothvar would not lie under the same bed cover; she thought that strange, for she believed him, in truth, to be her husband, and Bothvar told her the true situation, she did not let this be discovered from her, and they conducted themselves thus each night and talked together until Thorir came home, and everybody recognized then which man was which. There was a very joyous meeting between the brothers; Thorir said he would trust no other man alive to lie beside his queen. Thorir bade him stay with him, and accept half of all his possessions. Bothvar declared that he did not wish to do that. Thorir bade him then to take with him whatever he wished or accept a guard from him; he would not. Bothvar rode away and Thorir accompanied him part of the journey, and the brothers parted in friendly wise, yet with some reserve; and nothing is told of his journey before he reached Denmark, and had come within a short distance of Hleithargarth.

One day there was a great rainstorm and Bothvar got very wet; his horse became very wearied under him, for he had ridden much, and it became terribly muddy and heavy to ride through. The night grew very dark and there was a steady downpour; Bothvar could see nothing before him, until his horse stumbled against the point of a rock. He jumped from his horse and made a search, and perceived that it was a house, and there he found a door; he knocked on the door and a man came out. Bothvar asked a lodging for the night; the householder said he would not send him away at the darkest time of the night when he was a stranger. To the householder the man seemed to be imposing—all that he could see of him. Bothvar stayed the night there

with good hospitality. He asked much about the exploits of king Hrolf and his champions and whether they were far from thence.

“Nay,” said the man, “the distance is now quite short; art thou proceeding thither?”

“Yea,” said Bothvar, “that is my intention.”

The man said that would well befit him, “for I see that thou art a great man and strong, but they think themselves very bold men.” And with that the old wife wept loudly, when they spoke of king Hrolf and his champions at Hleithargarth.

“Why dost weep, thou helpless old woman?” said Bothvar.

The old dame said, “We two, my husband and I, had a son whose name was Hott, and one day he went to the town to amuse himself, and the king’s men engaged in banter with him, and he stood this ill; afterwards they took him and set him among the refuse and bones; and it is their custom during meals, so soon as a bone is picked, to cast it at him; he gets, at times, great injury from that, if it hits him, and I know not whether he is alive or dead; and this boon would I have of thee for my hospitality, that thou cast at him smaller bones rather than greater, if he is not dead from it.”

Bothvar said: “I shall act as thou dost ask, and to me it does not seem very dauntless to smite men with bones, or destroy children and weaklings.”

“Thou dost well so,” said the old wife, “for thy hand seems strong to me, and I know, of a surety, that he will have no stand against thy blows if thou wilt not refrain.”

Afterwards Bothvar went his way to Hleithargarth and reached the king’s dwelling. Bothvar stabled his horse beside the king’s best horses and asked leave of no man; he went afterwards to the hall, and few men were there. He

seated himself near the door, and when he had been there a short time he heard a rummaging noise somewhere in a corner. He looked thither and saw that a man's hand came up from a huge heap of bones which lay there; the hand was very black. Bothvar went thither and asked who was there in the heap of bones.

He was answered and very meekly, "Hott is my name, good fellow."

"Why art thou here," said Bothvar, "and what art thou doing?"

Hott said: "I am making myself a shield-wall, good fellow."

Bothvar said: "Much good may thy shield-wall do thee." He caught hold of him now, and jerked him up out of the heap of bones.

Hott cried out and said: "Now wilt thou be the death of me! Do not do that; I have just made myself comfortable and thou hast scattered my shield-wall in pieces, now when I had built it so high around myself that it has protected me against all their blows, so that none of them have come upon me this long time; and it was not yet so well prepared as I had intended it to be."

Bothvar said: "Thou wilt build thy shield-wall no longer."

Hott wept and said: "Art going to kill me, comrade?" Bothvar bade him be quiet, and lifted him then and bore him away out of the hall to some water which was near, and he washed him from head to foot; few paid any heed to this. Afterwards Bothvar returned to the seat which he had taken before, and led Hott with him, and sat him there beside him; but he was so fearful, that he was trembling in every limb, and still he seemed to realize that this man would help him.

After that, evening drew on, and men thronged into the



hall, and Hrolf's champions saw that Hott was sitting upon the bench, and it seemed to them that the man must be bold enough, who had taken that upon himself. Hott's countenance was dismal when he saw his old acquaintances, for ill treatment alone had he experienced at their hands, and he wished to preserve his life and go back to his heap of bones, but Bothvar held him so that he could not get away; for Hott thought that he would stand less chance of their blows if he could win back thither, than where he now was.

The retainers acted according to custom, and first they tossed small bones across the hall at Bothvar and Hott. Bothvar pretended not to see that. Hott was so afraid that he took neither food nor drink, and he thought at every moment that he would be smitten.

Now Hott said to Bothvar, "Dear comrade, now doth a great knuckle bone come at thee with intent to do us great injury." Bothvar told him to be silent; he put up the hollow of his palm and caught the knuckle-bone so; the leg-bone joined on to it. Bothvar sent back the knuckle and aimed it straight at him who had sent it, with such a hard blow that it was the death of him; then great fear fell on the henchmen.

Now this news was brought before King Hrolf and his champions up at the Castle, that an imposing man had come into the hall and killed one of his henchmen, and the others desired to have the man put to death. King Hrolf enquired whether the man had been killed without cause. "Practically so," said they. Then to king Hrolf's ears came all the truth of this matter.

King Hrolf said it should be far from them to kill such a man. "Ye have taken up an ill custom here—to pelt unoffending men with bones; there is great dishonour to me, and to you great shame in such doings; I have ever forbidden that, but ye have paid no attention, and I think this

man must be of no small worth whom ye have assailed; and call him to me now, that I may know who he is."

Bothvar went before the king and greeted him courteously. The king asked him his name.

"Thy henchmen call me 'Hott's protector' but Bothvar is my name."

The king said, "What recompense wilt thou offer me for my retainer?"

Bothvar said, "He received only what he sought."

The king said: "Wilt thou be my man and fill his place?"

Bothvar said: "I do not refuse to be your man, but Hott and I must not part so, and we must both sit nearer to thee than this man has done, else we will both go our way."

The king said: "I do not foresee much honour in Hott, but I will not grudge him food."

Bothvar went now to the seat he found pleasing, nor would he occupy that which the other had had. He pulled up three men in one place, and afterwards he and Hott seated themselves there, and higher in the hall than was assigned to them. Men thought Bothvar very overbearing, and they were full of resentment about him.

And when Yule drew nigh, men became gloomy. Bothvar asked Hott what brought that about; he told him that an animal had come there two years in succession, a huge and monstrous one—"and it hath wings on its back, and flieth always; for two autumns now it hath attacked us here, and done great damage; no weapon will bite on its hide, and the champions of the king come not home, even those that are greatest."

Bothvar said: "This hall is not so well manned as I thought, if one beast can waste the kingdom and cattle of the king."

Hott said: "That is no beast; it is the greatest troll."

Now Christmas Eve came; then the king said: "Now do

I desire that men be quiet and still during the night, and I forbid all my men to chance any risk with the beast; let it fare with the cattle as it is fated, but I will not lose my men!" All men gave good assurance that they would do as the king commanded. Bothvar stole secretly away in the night; he compelled Hott to go with him, but he did it against his will, and said he was going to his death. Bothvar said it would turn out better than that. They went out from the hall, and Bothvar had to carry Hott, so greatly was he afraid. Now they saw the animal; and thereupon Hott shrieked with the whole strength of his lungs, and said that the animal would swallow him. Bothvar said to him, "Be silent thou dog!" and cast him down on the mire, where he lay with no slight fear; but he dared not go home, any the more.

Now Bothvar advanced against the beast; it happened then that his sword was fast in his sheath when he desired to draw it. Bothvar exhorted the sword earnestly; it moved in the scabbard, and now he wrenched at the scabbard until the sword came out, and thrust it immediately through the shoulder of the animal, and so hard that it entered his heart, and the animal sank down dead to the earth. After that he went where Hott was lying. Bothvar took him up and bore him where the beast lay dead. Hott trembled violently. Bothvar said: "Now shalt thou drink the beast's blood." He was longtime unwilling, yet dared not do any other; Bothvar made him drink two great mouthfuls. He compelled him also to eat some of the beast's heart; after that Bothvar lay hold of him and they struggled for a long time. Bothvar said: "Very strong art thou now become, and I do not imagine that thou wilt fear king Hrolf's henchmen henceforward!"

Hott answered: "I will neither fear them nor thee thyself from this onward."

"Then it is well, Hott comrade! Let us go now and

lift up the animal, and so arrange him that other folk may think he is alive." They did so now. After that they went back and remained quiet a space, and no man knew what they had accomplished.

The king asked in the morning what news they had of the beast, and whether it had been there at all during the night; he was told that the cattle were all safe in fold and uninjured. The king bade his man look about and see whether there were any traces of the animal having been there. The watchers did so, and came speedily back and told the king that the animal was making thither, and rushing headlong at the castle. The king bade his henchmen be valiant, and bade each now play the men according to the spirit that was in him, and do away with that monster; and they did as the king commanded, and made themselves ready for this. The king turned to the animal and said afterwards, "I see no movement in the beast; but who will now take his chance and go against it?"

Bothvar said, "That would cure the curiosity of a very brave man! Hott lad, rid thyself now of that ill repute men lay to thy charge, that there is neither spirit nor valour in thee; go now and kill the animal, it is evident that no one else is dying to do it."

"Yea," said Hott, "I will take this in hand."

The king said: "I know not whence this valour is come upon thee, Hott, and a great change has come upon thee in a short while."

Hott said: "Give me the sword Goldenhilt, which thou dost wield, and I will then kill the animal or die."

King Hrolf said: "That sword is not to be borne except by a man who is a hero both good and valiant."

Hott said: "Thus shalt thou believe, that I am a man of this kind."

The king said: "How may that be known, that more be

changed in thy temper than can be seen. Few people would recognize thee as the same man. Now take the sword, and use it as a most valiant fellow, if this is accomplished.”

Then Hott went boldly to the beast, and smote it, when he came within striking distance, and it fell down, dead.

Bothvar said: “See, lord, what he hath done now!”

The king said: “He hath certainly changed greatly, but Hott hath not slain the beast unaided, rather hast thou done it.”

Bothvar said: “It may be that that is true.”

The king said: “I knew when first thou camest thither, that few men would be thine equal, yet it seems to me thy most honourable achievement, that thou hast made here another champion of Hott, in whom there did not seem much probability of such great luck. Now I desire that he be called Hott no longer, but he shall be named Hjalti henceforward. Thou shalt be named after the sword Goldenhilt.”

And here ends the episode of Bothvar and his brothers.

## CHAPTER XXIV

NOW winter was drawing to an end, and to the time when king Hrolf's berserks were expected home. Bothvar asked Hjalti about the berserks' habits. He said it was their custom when they came home to the court, to go before each man in turn, and first before the king, and ask if he considered himself as valiant as they; “and then the king speaks thus: ‘It were an impossibility to tell of men so valiant as ye are, since ye have distinguished yourselves in battle and bloodshed, now against this people, now against that, as well in the south as in the north;’ and the king gives them this answer more on account of his nobility than of meanness, because he knows the worth of

their support, and they win great victories for the king and much property; and then they go and ask the same of each man who is in the hall, and no man considers himself as valiant as they. Bothvar said:” “This is no very great collection of gallant warriors here with king Hrolf, if they all speak such cowardly words on the berserks’ account.” They ended their conversation now.

Bothvar had at the time been one year with the king, and it so happened the next Yule Eve, that on an occasion when king Hrolf sat at table, the door sprang open, and twelve berserks walked in with iron-grey armour, similar in appearance to broken ice. Bothvar quietly asked Hjalti whether he dared tackle one of them. “Yea,” said Hjalti, “not one only but all of them for I know no fear even in face of an overwhelming force, and one of them will not frighten me.”

The berserks walked along the hall now, and they perceived that the champions of king Hrolf had become more numerous since they went thence, and they looked closely at the newcomers, one of whom seemed to them to be of no slight importance, and it is said, that he was greatly surprised who walked at their head. Now, according to custom, they went up to king Hrolf, and interrogated him in their usual words, and the king answered in the accustomed way as seemed to him befitting the occasion, and they went so before every man in the hall, and last of all to the friends; and he who was their leader, asked Bothvar whether he thought himself as valiant as he was. Bothvar said he did not consider himself as valiant merely, but more so, whatever test was tried, and he had no need to come sidling up like any sow—and he such a foul son of a mare!—and he leapt at the berserk, and lifted him up clothed as he was in all his wartrappings, and fetched him a great fall, so that he lay with a fractured bone. Hjalti in another place did similarly.

Then there was a great commotion in the hall, and king Hrolf thought great peril likely to result, if his men struck one another down; he ran from the high seat to Bothvar and bade him let all be quiet again, but Bothvar said he should lose his life unless he owned himself the lesser man. King Hrolf said that could easily be done, and so he let the berserk stand up. Hjalti also performed the king's command. Each man sat in his seat then, and the berserks in theirs with great anxiety. King Hrolf set forth great representations on their account, that they might now realize that nobody was so famous, strong or great, that he might not suffer such things—"I forbid ye to raise any strife in my hall, and if ye break my ruling ye shall pay with your lives; but be as fierce as ye like when I have to deal with my enemies, and so win for yourselves honour and renown;— I have now such a choice selection of champions, that I have no need to depend on you." Everybody applauded the king's speech heartily, and so came to a complete reconciliation and men in the hall were so arranged, that Bothvar was the most highly esteemed and valued and sat up at the king's right hand; and next to him sat Hjalti the magnanimous, which name the king gave him. For this reason was he named "the magnanimous," that every day he went in company with the king's henchmen who had ill-treated him so much, as has before been told, and did them no injury, and now he had become a much greater man than they, and the king would have thought it excusable if he had given them something to remember him by, or even killed some of them.

On the king's left hand sat the three brothers Svipdag, Whiteshirt and Beigath, of such great importance had they become, and then the twelve berserks, and next the gathering of all the gallant warriors in the stronghold sat on both sides, and their names are not given here. The king allowed his men to engage in all kinds of games and pleasures, as

well as every amusement and pastime, and Bothvar proved himself the greatest of all his champions whatsoever he had to try, and he came into such great honour with king Hrolf that he was married to his only daughter Drifa; and now things went forward thus for a time, and they remained in their kingdom and were the most renowned of all men.

## The Visit to Uppsala

### CHAPTER XXV

IT is now told that one day king Hrolf sat in his kingly banqueting hall with all his champions and mighty men beside him, and gave a most costly feast. King Hrolf looked round on both hands and said: "A great, overwhelming force is now come together in one single hall;" then he asked Bothvar whether he knew any king so great as he was, or any one who ruled such warriors; Bothvar said he did not: "But there is one thing which seems to me to lower your kingly state." The king asked what it might be. Bothvar said: "This dost thou lack, Sire, that thou hast not recovered thy patrimony at Uppsala, which thy kinsman king Athils holds with wrong." King Hrolf said it would be very difficult to get that, or seek it—"for king Athils is a very clever man, well skilled in magic, crafty, guileful, cunning, fierce, and the very worst to contend against."

Bothvar said: "Still, it would beseem thee, lord, to seek after thy property, and see king Athils some time, and learn how he answers this claim."

King Hrolf said: "This is an important point which thou hast raised, for from him have we to seek revenge for our father's death; king Athils is a most ambitious and wily fellow, but we shall run the risk."

"I will ne'er speak ill," said Bothvar, "of any plan to test some time what we have to deal with where king Athils is."



## CHAPTER XXVI

**K**ING HROLF now prepared to depart with a hundred men and also his twelve champions, and his twelve berserks. Nothing is told concerning their travels before they came upon a certain farmer. He was standing outside his dwelling when they arrived, and he bade them all stay there.

The king said: "Thou art a valiant fellow, but hast thou the means for this? We are not so few in number that a farmer in a small way may receive us all."

He laughed and spake: "Yea, lord," said he, "I have seen betimes men no fewer in number come where I have been, and ye shall lack no drink, nor any other thing the night long, whatever ye need to have."

The king said: "We'll risk it then." The farmer was glad at that. Their horses were taken now, and given hospitable treatment.

"What is thy name, Householder?" said the king.

"Some men call me Hrani," said he.

It was so hospitable there that it seemed to them they had scarcely ever come to a more hospitable house, and the householder was ever merry, nor could any one of them inquire of him anything that he could not fully solve; and he seemed to them a most intelligent man. They went off to sleep now, and when they awakened they were so cold that their teeth chattered in their heads, and they jumped up all together and got for themselves clothes and everything they could; with the exception of king Hrolf's champions. They rested content with the clothes they had before; they endured the cold the whole night through.

Then the farmer asked: "How have ye slept?"

Bothvar made answer: "Well," said he.

Then the householder spake to the king: "I know that thy henchmen think it has been very cold in the hall during the night, and that was indeed so, but they cannot think themselves capable of enduring the hardships king Athils will try on ye at Uppsala, when they found that so troublesome; and do thou send home, lord, half thy troop, if thou wilt keep thy life, for it is not with a multitude that thou wilt have the victory over king Athils."

"Thou art no fool, householder," said the king, "and I shall adopt the plan which thou dost suggest."

He went his way now when all were ready, and bade the farmer farewell, and the king sent home half his company. They rode on their way now, and very soon they came upon another farm, a small one. Here they seemed to recognize the same householder with whom they had spent the previous night; that struck them as most strange; the farmer received them hospitably, and asked why they came so often.

The king answered: "We scarcely know with what arts we have come in contact, and thou mayst be called a right cunning rogue."

The farmer said: "Yet shall ye not be received ungraciously." They remained there another night in good hospitality, and went off to sleep, and they awoke in this state, that a thirst was come upon them which seemed to them nigh unbearable, so great that they could scarcely move the tongues in their heads; they got up and went over where a large vessel stood containing wine, and drank of it.

In the morning Farmer Hrani spoke: "Again doth it happen, Lord, that thou dost grant me a hearing, and methinks there is but slight endurance in the men who could not refrain from drinking during the night; there will be greater trials to endure when they come up against king Athils."

Of a sudden, then, a great storm arose, and they stayed there that day, and so the third night came; and in the evening a fire was lighted for them, and they felt it very hot on their arms who sat around the fire. Many of them hastily forsook the place which Hrani the householder had allotted to them, and they all fled away from the fire, except king Hrolf and his champions.

The farmer said: "Thou must make yet another selection from thy troop, Lord, and my advice is, that none go but thee and thy twelve champions, and there is then some hope that ye will return, but none otherwise."

"So does it seem to me, Householder," said king Hrolf, "that we will adopt thy plan."

They stayed there three nights; the king rode thence with twelve men, and sent back all the rest of his company. King Athils had news of this, and said it was well that king Hrolf desired to visit him,—“for he will certainly have a result to his errand hither that shall seem worthy of the telling before we part.”

## CHAPTER XXVII

**A**FTER that king Hrolf and his champions rode to king Athils' hall, and all the townsfolk crowded up into the highest towers of the town to view the gallant trim of king Hrolf and his champions, for they were accoutred with great display, and many people had great admiration for such courtly knights. First they rode slowly and magnificently until they were within a short distance of the hall; then they put spurs to their horses and galloped up to the hall, so that everybody rushed out of the way who was in their path.

King Athils had them welcomed cordially, and with

ally, and with great friendliness, and bade that their horses should be taken. Bothvar said: "Look well to it, ye servants, that neither top nor tail of the horses is kept any different from usual, and mind them well, and carefully see to it that they do not defile themselves." King Athils was immediately told what precise advice was given concerning the care of their horses.

He said: "Great, indeed, is their insolence and pride, but hearken now to my counsel, and do as I bid; cut off the tails of the horses close up near the rump, and clip off their topping so that the skin of the forehead comes off with it, and treat them as disgracefully as ever ye may in all things that ye can, so long as ye leave them their bare lives alone."

Then they were shown to the hall door, but King Athils did not make his appearance. Svipdag said: "I have previous knowledge of this place, and I will go in first; for I have the strongest suspicion of our reception, and of what may be prepared for us. Do ye not betray by a word where king Hrolf is, so that king Athils may not pick him out of our band." Svipdag walked the foremost of all, and after him his brothers Whiteshirt and Beigath, next king Hrolf and Bothvar, and so each after the other. They did not meet any servants on the way, for the men had turned back who had guided them to the hall. Each man of them had his hawk on shoulder, which in those times was esteemed an exceptional bravery; King Hrolf had a hawk called Habrok (High-breeches).

Svipdag walked foremost, and watched everything carefully; he noticed many changes as he went along, and in this wise they crossed over many impassable places which had been set in their path, and were not easy to discern; but this became more difficult as they advanced further into the hall. And now they advanced so far into the hall that they could see where king Athils sat in pride on the high-seat, and it

seemed to each a great occasion when they looked upon the other; then the champions perceived that it would not be easy to get right up to king Athils, but yet they were near enough to distinguish each other's words.

So king Athils took to words: "And now thou art come hither, O Svipdag my friend; but what may be the champions' business here? Is it not as it seems to me:

'There is a dale (cut) in his neck,  
An eye is gone from his head;  
There is a scar upon his brow;  
Two cuts are there in his arm;'

and likewise is his brother Beigath all crooked."

Svipdag spake, so loud that all might hear: "Now would I have peace of thee king Athils, in accordance with my agreement with thee, for these twelve men who are come here together."

King Athils replied: "I will grant thee this, and come along into the hall now, speedily and manfully, with undaunted heart." They thought they could discern then that pitfalls were prepared within about the hall, and they would not be allowed peace to try what lay in store for them; and so dark a shadow lay over king Athil's face, that they saw him but indistinctly. They noticed this also, that the hangings which hung around the king's hall for adornment were brought forward, so that it was possible for men to be behind them with weapons. That proved to be the case, and a mailed man rushed from behind each fold when they had passed the pitfalls; so king Hrolf and his champions engaged there in a most fierce fight, and clove men down through the teeth. Matters went so for a time, and king Hrolf knew not where he was, but folk fell all about like broken waves. King Athils on the high seat swelled with rage now, when he saw that king Hrolf cut down his troop like so many dogs, and realizing that this play was of no

avail, he stood up, and said: "What may be the meaning of this great tumult? These are the greatest rascals! What are ye about, that ye proceed to attack such distinguished men, who have visited us? and cease speedily now and seat yourselves, and let us enjoy hospitality together, kinsman Hrolf."

Svipdag said: "Small regard hast had for the truce, king Athils, and scant glory dost thou gain from this." They sat them down after that. Svipdag sat farthest in, then Hjalti the magnanimous and Bothvar together, and the king after them; for they did not wish him to be recognised.

King Athils said: "I see clearly that ye look to win no honour in an unknown land, else why hath Hrolf my kinsman no larger company?"

Svipdag said: "I see clearly that thou dost not refrain from plotting treachery against king Hrolf and his men, and it is nothing to you whether he rides hither with few men or many." And so they ended their talk.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

**A**FTER that, king Athils had the hall cleared; the dead were all carried out, for many of king Athils' men had been slain, and many wounded. King Athils said: "Let us have fires along the whole length of the hall now, for our friends, and show our affection for such men, that we may please everyone well." Then men were procured to light the fires for them. King Hrolf and his men sat ever with weapons in hand, nor would they ever leave hold of them. The fire lit up quickly, for they spared neither pitch nor dry firewood. King Athils seated himself at one side of the fire with his henchmen, and king Hrolf and his champions sat opposite, and they sat along each of the long-settles and chatted most agreeably with each other.

King Athils said: "No exaggeration has been told us of the valour of you champions of king Hrolf, and your

hardihood, rather do they seem much much greater than was said, and no lies have been told of your might. Make the fire burn up now," said king Athils, "for I cannot see clearly where the king is, and ye will not flee the fire, I feel sure, although ye may become somewhat warm."

And so it was done now, as he ordered, and he desired in this way to learn which was king Hrolf, for he imagined he knew that king Hrolf would not be able to stand the heat so well as his champions, and he thought it would be easier to get hold of him when he knew which was he, since, of a truth, he desired king Hrolf's life.

Bothvar saw through that, as did many others, and they gave him such protection against the heat as they could, and managed so, that he was no more recognizable than before. And when the fire burnt at its highest, king Hrolf collected his thoughts, and called to mind that he had before promised to flee for no fire nor steel, and he saw now that king Athils would make trial of that, and that they must burn there, or else be compelled to break their vow. They perceived also that king Athils' seat had moved quite out to the wall of the hall, and also those of his men; fuel was piled fast on the fire now, and they perceived that burning was their portion unless something could be done about it. Their clothes were mostly burnt on them, and they threw their shields into the fire. Then spake Bothvar and Svipdag:

"Let us stoke up the fire now  
In Athils' hall—"

and each of them seized hold of one of the men who had kept up the fires, and they flung them out upon the fire and said: "Have the benefit of the warmth of the fire yourselves now, in return for your handiwork and labour, for we are at last quite baked; bake yourselves now, since ye were so zealous at one time in lighting a fire for us!" Hjalti seized

hold of the third man, and flung him into the fire at his end, and so each of them as the upkeep of the fire demanded. They burnt to ashes there, and they got no succour, for none dared to come so near; after that king Hrolf began to speak:

“He doth not flee the fire  
Who leapeth o’er it—”

and thereupon they all jumped over the fire, with intent now to go for king Athils and capture him; but when king Athils saw that, he saved his life by running to a tree which stood in the hall, and which was hollow, and thus he won free of the hall by spells and magical arts. Then he entered queen Yrsa’s bower, wishing to hold council with her. She turned on him, and spoke many hard words to him: “Thou didst first cause my husband king Helgi to be slain,” said she, “and didst behave in a dastardly way to him, withholding his property from its rightful owner; and now, over and above such doings thou dost desire to kill my son, and thou art a worse and more ferocious creature than any other alive: now will I try my best to bring it about that king Hrolf shall have his money, and thou shalt suffer dire disgrace, as is only befitting.”

King Athils said: “This is the way of it then, that neither may trust the other; I will not come into thy presence ever henceforward.” After that they ended their conversation.

Then queen Yrsa went to see king Hrolf, and welcomed him right cordially. He also received her greetings with courtesy; she brought a man to serve him and do them good hospitality, and when he came before king Hrolf he said: “This man is indeed thinfaced and in appearance like a pole-ladder: is he your king?”

King Hrolf said: “Thou hast given me a name which will stick fast to me, methinks, and what gift wilt give me now for a name-fastening?”



Vogg answered: "I have nothing at all to give thee, for I am penniless."

The king said: "He who hath it then, must needs give to the other." He drew a gold ring from his finger, and gave it to this fellow.

Vogg said: "Of all men thou dost give most generously, and this is the greatest treasure." And when the king found he considered it of such importance he said: "A little thing rejoiceth Vogg."

Vogg spake, and put one foot up on the bench: "This do I now swear that I shall avenge thee if I live longer, if thou art vanquished by any man."

The king answered: "That is handsome of thee," said he, "yet it would be expected more from others than from thee." Then they realized that this man would be loyal and true in what little he could, but they thought he would be able to do but little, for he was of little account. After this they concealed nothing from him.

Now they determined to sleep and felt pretty certain that they would be able to lie unafraid in the quarters the queen had procured for them. Bothvar said: "In this place are all things well prepared for us, and the queen wishes us well, but king Athils wishes us as much evil as he can; it will be a wonder to me if we are allowed to have things rest thus."

Vogg told them that the king was the greatest idolator—"such that his equal may not be found; he worships a boar, and I do not think such another fiend can exist. Take ye good heed to yourselves, for he will be at great pains by every means to destroy you."

"There seems to me," said Bothvar, "more chance of his remembering this about us, how he ran out of the hall on our account one evening."

"Thou must consider also," said Vogg, "that he will be

sly and malignant." They slept after that, and awakened to find a great tumult audible outside the hall and echoing everywhere, so that the house in which they were sleeping quivered, as if balanced on the point of an awl.

Vogg took to words then: "Now is the boar afoot and sent to avenge king Athils upon ye, and this is so great a troll that no one may withstand it." King Hrolf had a huge hound named Gram, and it was there with them; it was of surpassing prowess and strength. Thereupon there entered a monster in the likeness of a boar, and it made a horrible noise in that troll form. Bothvar set the dog on the boar, nor would he let himself be intimidated, but rushed upon the boar, and a hard encounter ensued. Bothvar aided the dog and attacked the boar, but nothing would bite on its back; the hound Gram was so fierce that he tore off the ears of the boar and all of the flesh from the cheeks therewith, and so it happened all at once, that the pig went down whence he had come. And then king Athils came to the house with a great following, and immediately set fire to it; and thereupon king Hrolf and his men became aware that there was no likelihood of them lacking fuel.

Bothvar said: "An ill death-day shall we have if we burn herein, and rather would I choose to fall before weapons on a level field; and evil will the ending of king Hrolf and his champions be, if it dóth happen so. Now do I see no plan that is likely to succeed except we rush so hard at the lower wainscotting that it will give way, and break ourselves a way out of the house, if that may be done"—and indeed that was no child's play for the house was very strongly built—"and let each man maintain his own ground when we win through, and those without will then quickly give way."

"That is an excellent plan," said king Hrolf, "and will meet the case full well."

## CHAPTER XXIX

THEY adopted this plan now, and ran so hard and recklessly at the panelling that they broke it to pieces, and so escaped. The street of the town was densely crowded with mailed folk; with these the fiercest battle ensued, and king Hrolf and his champions waded grimly forward. Many were laid low before that band; they met there none so proud or haughty that he did not have to bend before their mighty blows.

And during this fierce fight, king Hrolf's hawk came flying from the town, and perched upon his shoulder, acting as if it could boast of some great achievement. Bothvar said: "Verily, now doth he proceed as if he had got him some fame."

The man who had care of the hawks hastened to the loft in which they were kept, and he thought it strange that king Hrolf's hawk was absent—and he found all king Athils' hawks dead.

The battle ended in such a way that they killed many men there, and none were able to withstand them; at the end king Athils had disappeared from sight, and they had no knowledge of what had happened to him. Those of king Athils' men who were yet whole asked peace for themselves, and they granted them that.

Afterwards they made their way to the hall, and entered boldly; then Bothvar asked on which bench king Hrolf desired to sit. King Hrolf answered: "On the king's own dais shall we take our seat, and I shall sit in the high seat." King Athils did not come into the hall, and he considered that he had suffered much hard treatment and great disgrace in every treacherous trick he had attempted. They remained for a time now in peace and quietness.

Then said Hjaltithemagnanimous: "I should advise that one of us visit our horses, and see that they lack nothing they have need of." And now it was so done, and immediately he came back he told of the disgraceful treatment meted out to the horses, and he gave particulars of their maltreatment, as has before been told. King Hrolf did not concern himself about this, except that he said that it should go with king Athils in the same way.

Now queen Yrsa came into the hall, and went up to king Hrolf and greeted him with pleasure and courtliness; he received her salutations graciously. She said: "Thou art not receiving the entertainment I would wish thee to have, kinsman; and thou shalt not remain here any longer, my son, in face of such inhospitable treatment, for a great levy of troops is being raised throughout Sweden, and king Athils intends to slay ye all, as he hath long desired; but he hath not managed that yet, for thy good fortune hath had more might than his witchcraft. And here now is a silver horn which I will give thee, and in it are kept all king Athils' best rings, including the one named Sviagris, which he considers better than all the others." And therewith she brought them much gold and silver in other forms; the treasure in the bulk was so great that its worth could scarcely be estimated at all. Vogg was standing near by, and received much gold from king Hrolf for his faithful service.

The queen had twelve horses led out, all of them roans but one, which was as white as snow; on this king Hrolf was to ride. These were the horses that had been proved to be the very best king Athils had, and they were all fully caparisoned. She brought them shields and helms and war-gear, with other good clothes, the best that could possibly be found, for the fire had spoiled their own weapons and apparel. She brought them everything they needed to have, and all most costly things.

King Hrolf said: "Hast thou delivered to me all such possessions as were mine by right and which my father owned?"

She said: "That is very much greater than thou hadst to claim, and thou hast won here great renown, thou and thy men. Make ready now as best ye may, so that none may overcome you, for ye will still be put to the test."

After that they mounted their horses. King Hrolf spake lovingly to his mother, and they parted in friendliness.

### CHAPTER XXX

**K**ING HROLF and his champions now rode on their way down from Uppsala and through the district called Fyrisvol, and king Hrolf perceived a great gold ring shining on the road before them, which tinkled as they rode over it. "It cries out so loud," said king Hrolf, "because it seems ill to it to be alone"—and he slipped a gold ring from his own hand on to the road to it, and said: "I shall forbear to pick up gold though it lies on the road, and let none of my men be so bold as to pick it up either; it has been cast here that it might stay our journey." They promised him that, and thereupon heard the sound of trumpets in all directions, and they perceived an innumerable force riding after them. That force was riding so furiously that each man galloped with all the speed his horse was capable of. King Hrolf and his men rode forward exactly as before. Bothvar said: "These ride hard after us, and certainly I would they had something for their trouble, and they will surely catch us." The king said: "Let us have slight concern about that; they themselves will delay." He reached out his hand now to the horn which contained the gold, and which Beigath rode with, and held in his hand; he scattered the gold wide on the road they were traversing all along

Fyrisvol, so that the way shone like gold. And when the company in pursuit of them saw the gold glittering far and wide in the road, most of them leapt from horseback, and he thought himself best in the sport who could pick it up quickest; and there was the greatest contention and brawling there, and he who was strongest got most. For this cause the pursuit made slow progress.

And when king Athils saw this, he was on the brink of taking leave of his senses, and he rebuked them with hard words and said they picked up the lesser and let slip the greater part between them,—“and will this foul shame be known in every land, if ye should let a bare dozen of men escape us, such a countless multitude as I have now rallied from all the districts of Sweden.” King Athils now galloped away from them all, for he was most enraged, and a crowd of men after him. And when king Hrolf saw king Athils galloping near him, he took the ring Sviagris then, and flung it on the road; and when king Athils saw the ring he said, “More loyal has he been to king Hrolf than to me who has given him this treasure, yet none the less I shall now have it, and not king Hrolf.” He reached his spear-shaft now to where the ring lay, and desired by all means to get hold of it; he bent far down on his horse when he stuck the spear into the circle of the ring. King Hrolf perceived that; then he turned his horse back and said: “Like a pig have I made him stoop now, who is greatest of the Swedes!” And when king Athils thought to draw the spearshaft to him and the ring with it king Hrolf rode at him, and cut off both his buttocks right down to the bone with the sword Skofnung, which was the best sword ever carried in the Northern lands. King Hrolf spake then to king Athils and bade him endure this shame for a time—“and now thou mightest know king Hrolf Kraki, and where he is whom thou hast longtime sought.” A serious bleeding then assailed

king Athils, so that he grew weak from it, and he had to turn back now, worse off than before, but king Hrolf took up Sviagtris. They parted there for the time, and it is not told that they have met since. And they slew all the men who had ridden farthest forward, and put themselves into most danger, for they had no need to wait long for king Hrolf and his champions, and none of them thought himself over good to serve them, and none of them left it to another's decision if any opportunity of this was given.

King Hrolf and his men now went their way, and rode nigh the whole day through. And when night fell they came upon a farmhouse, and went up to the door; Farmer Hrani was there, and he offered them all entertainment and declared it had not turned out so far different on their journey from what he had guessed. The king affirmed that, and said he was no smoke-blind fellow!

"Here are weapons, Lord, which I will give thee," said Farmer Hrani.

"Wondrous weapons are these, fellow," said the king, and there were shield, sword and mail-coat. King Hrolf would not accept the weapons. At this, Hrani nearly lost his temper and thought great dishonour done him therein, — "Thou art not so clever in this, king Hrolf, as thou dost think thyself," said Hrani, "and thou art not so wise as thou dost imagine;" and the farmer took it as a slight. Lodging for that night was not available now, and they were minded to ride off though the night was dark. Hrani preserved a hostile appearance with lowering brows, and considered slight honour paid him when they would not receive his gifts; he made no opposition to their riding where they liked. They now rode away with matters thus, and no farewells were spoken.

They had not gone far when Bothvar Bjarki stopped; he spoke: "Sense comes late to the mind of the unwise, and

so it must be with me now; I suspect that we have not acted altogether wisely in refusing what we should have accepted, and we may have refused victory."

King Hrolf said: "I suspect the same, for that must have been Othin the old, and certainly he had but one eye."

"Let us turn back now as quickly as possible," said Svipdag, "and put this to the proof." They returned hereupon, but the farm and the man had both vanished away.

"It is of no avail to look for him," said king Hrolf, "for he is an evil spirit." They rode on their way now, and no more is told of their journey until they came to Denmark to their own kingdom, and settled themselves in peace.

This counsel did Bothvar give the king, that he should have little to do with battles henceforward; it seemed likely to them that few would attack them if they were quiet; but he said he had some fear as to how the king would be blessed by victory from this onwards, if he risked anything on it. King Hrolf said: "Fate governs the life of every man, and not this evil spirit." Bothvar said: "It will be long ere we leave thee if we have ought to do with it, but yet have I a great suspicion that short will be the time to events of great moment for us all."

They ended their conversation thus; and they became greatly renowned from this journey.

## The Battle with Skuld

### CHAPTER XXXI

LONG periods of time elapsed now, in such wise that King Hrolf and his champions dwelt in peace in Denmark; nobody attacked them; all his tributary kings remained true to their allegiance to king Hrolf, and paid him tribute, as also did Hjorvarth his brother-in-law.



Now it happened on one occasion that queen Skuld spake to her husband, with a deep sigh: "This pleases me little that we are obliged to pay tribute to king Hrolf, and are forced under him, and no longer shall it befall that thou art his underling." Hjorvarth said: "It will pay us best, as it does others, to put up with that, and let all remain quiet."

"That is<sup>1</sup> . . . thou art a feeble creature," said she, "to endure every kind of shame that is put upon thee." He said: "It is not possible to contend with king Hrolf, for no man dares to raise shield against him."

"Thou art so much of a weakling," said she, "because there is no spirit in thee, for he never has, who nothing risks; and one can never know before giving it a trial whether hurt may be done to king Hrolf and his champions or not; and now it has come to this," said she, "that I think he will lack victory entirely, and that does not strike me as being difficult to test; even though he be akin to me I shall not spare him, and for this reason doth he remain ever at home, that he himself suspects that he will go short of victory. I shall now prepare a plan for this, if only it could be effective, and I shall leave no magic untried in the attempt to overcome him." Skuld was the greatest sorceress and was come of elfin stock on her mother's side, and king Hrolf and his champions paid up for this.

"I shall now, first of all, send men to king Hrolf and ask him this, that he will allow me to pay no tax for the next three years, and then I will pay him it all at once, in accordance with what he has a right to; it seems to me very likely that this trick will avail, and if nothing comes of it, then we shall remain quiet." Now messengers went between them after this as the queen commanded. King Hrolf granted the request which was made about the tribute.

<sup>1</sup> Deficiency in the Icelandic text.

## CHAPTER XXXII

AT this time Skuld gathered together all the men who were the best fighters, as well as all the rabble, from the neighbouring districts. This treachery, however, was concealed so that the king Hrolf was not aware of it, and his champions suspected nothing of it, because it took rise in the greatest magic and witchcraft. Skuld employed the greatest spells to overcome king Hrolf, her brother, so that in league with her were elves and norns and other countless evil sprites, and human nature could not withstand such power. But king Hrolf and his champions had great joy and delight at Hleithargarth, and every kind of game that men had knowledge of they practised with skill and courtesy. Each of them had a mistress for his pleasure.

And now is it to be told of this, that when the force of Hjorvarth and Skuld was completely equipped, they went to Hleithargarth with this numberless host and came there at Yuletide. King Hrolf had had great preparations made against Yule, and his men drank deep on Yule Eve. The men of Hjorvarth and Skuld raised their tents without the stronghold; they were both large and long, with wondrous adornment. There were many waggons, and all laden with weapons and armour. King Hrolf gave no heed to this; he was thinking more now of showing his magnificence and splendour and nobility, and all the valour which abode in his breast, to all those who had come there, and that his fame should be carried far and wide, and he had for this purpose all that might adorn the honour of a king of this world. But it is not told that king Hrolf and his champions had at any time sacrificed to the gods; they trusted rather to their own might and strength, for the holy faith had not been preached here in the Northern lands, and they who

dwelt in the northern regions had little knowledge of their Creator.

It is to be told next, that Hjalti the magnanimous went to the house where his mistress was. He saw clearly then that all was not peaceful under the tents of Hjorvarth and Skuld; he behaved unconcernedly, however, and did not let this appear in his countenance. Now he lay beside his mistress; she was the fairest of women; and when he had been there a time he sprang up and said to her, "Which dost thou think better, two at twenty-two, or one at eighty years of age?"

She answered: "Two twenty-two years old seem better to me than old men of eighty."

"For these words shalt thou pay," said Hjalti, "thou whore!"—and he went to her, and bit off her nose. "Lay it to my charge if any should fall out about thee, but I imagine that to most, thou wilt not seem much of a treasure from this forward."

"Fouly hast thou now acted towards me, and I did not deserve it!" said she.

"There cannot be one opinion about everything," said Hjalti.

He took up his weapon, for he perceived that all around the stronghold mailed men were densely packed, and the standards set up; he understood now that there was no need to doubt that hostility was afoot. He made his way to the hall and thither where king Hrolf and his champions were. Hjalti said: "Wake, lord king, for hostility is at the door, and there is now more need to fight than to embrace women, and I believe that the gold in the hall will be but slightly increased by the tribute of Skuld thy sister. She has the grimness of the Skjoldungs, and this may I tell thee, that here is no small force, and they have hard swords and warlike weapons, and they are surrounding the stronghold with their swords drawn. King Hjorvarth can have no

friendly errand with thee, and he will never ask his kingdom from thee henceforward. It is now for us," said Hjalti, "to lead the army of our king who has withheld nothing from us. Let us now make good our vows that we would protect well the noblest of kings who now is in the Northern lands, and let us have that known in every land, and repay him now for his weapons and armour and many another kindness, for we must not act meanly in this. There have been many indications of this given, though we have failed to see them for a long time, and I have strong suspicions that great events will happen hereafter, which will be memorable; and some may say that I speak it from fear, but it may be that king Hrolf drinks now for the last time with his champions and retainers—up now, all ye champions!" says Hjalti; "and speedily make your parting with your mistresses, for something else now lies before your eyes—to make you ready for what comes after! Up, all ye champions to the hard onset, and arm yourselves!"

Then started up Hromund the fierce and Hrolf of the speedy hand, Svipdag and Beigath and Whiteshirt the active, Hakland the sixth, Harthrefill the seventh, Haki the valiant the eighth, Vott the mighty the ninth, Starolf the tenth, Hjalti the magnanimous the eleventh, Bothvar Bjarki the twelfth; and he was so called because he drove away all the berserks of king Hrolf on account of their tyranny and bullying, and killed some, so that none of them prevailed against him; for they were like so many women beside him, when it came to the test, and yet they always thought themselves the stronger, and continually plotted against him.

Bothvar Bjarki stood up at once and put on his armour, and said that now king Hrolf had need of valiant warriors—"and heart and courage must do good service to them, whose lot it was to stand at king Hrolf's back." King Hrolf sprang up then, and took to words with no fear:

“Let us drink of the best drink we have, for we shall drink first and be merry, and so show what manner of men these are, the champions of king Hrolf, and be intent only on this, that our courage shall be memorable, because hither have come the greatest champions of all lands in the neighbourhood, and the mightiest. Say this to Hjorvarth and Skuld and their doughty men, that we will drink ourselves merry before we receive their tribute.”

It was done as the king said. Skuld answered: “Unlike all others is my brother king Hrolf, and such a king is the greatest loss, but still matters must move to the end.”

So great a spirit was in king Hrolf that he was praised by both friend and enemy.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

**K**ING HROLF now sprang up out of the high seat where he had been drinking for the time, and all his champions; they now parted from the good drink for the nonce, and went out thereupon, with the exception of Bothvar Bjarki. Him they saw nowhere, and they marvelled greatly thereat, but they deemed it not unlikely that he was taken prisoner, or slain. And as soon as they had come out, a terrible battle commenced. King Hrolf himself preceded the standard with his champions on both sides of him, and then all the rest of the men of his stronghold, who were not few to recount though they made but a small force. There might be seen great blows on the helm and mail coat, many a sword and shield might there be viewed aloft, and so many carrion corpses, that all the ground was covered.

Hjalti the magnanimous spake: “Many a shirt of mail is slit now, and many a weapon broken, many a helmet is shivered too, and many a gallant rider struck from his

steed; but our king is light of heart, for now is he as merry as when he drank his ale deepest, and he smites ever with both hands, and very unlike all other kings in battle is he, for he seems to me to have the strength of twelve men; many valiant fellows hath he killed, and now may king Hjorvarth see this, that the sword Skofnung bites, and singeth loud for their heads;" and the nature of Skofnung was this, that it cried aloud whenever it struck the bone.

The battle now became of the fiercest, so that nothing at all could stand against king Hrolf and his champions. King Hrolf fought with Skofnung in a way that seemed miraculous, and he worked a great effect on the men of king Hjorvarth, and they fell in great numbers. Then Hjorvarth and his men saw that a great bear advanced before king Hrolf's men, and ever nearest where the king was; he killed more men with his paws than five other of the king's champions; blows and missiles glanced off from him, and he felled down both men and horses of king Hjorvarth's army, and all that were near him he crunched to pieces with his teeth so that a murmur of fear arose in king Hjorvarth's host. Hjalti looked about him now but could not see Bothvar, his comrade, and he said to king Hrolf: "What can this mean, that Bothvar takes care of himself thus, and cometh not near to the king, such a champion as we thought him to be, and as he often proved himself?"

King Hrolf said: "He will be somewhere that is of most service to us, if he hath his own will; keep up thine own courage and prowess and slander him not, for no one of you is his equal, nor yet do I depreciate any of you, who are all most valiant champions."

Hjalti now made a charge, and rushed back to the king's hall, and perceived where Bothvar sat doing nothing. Hjalti said: "How long must we await the most famous of champions? This is a most monstrous thing, that thou dost

not stand straight on thy legs and try the strength of thine arms, which are as strong as a bear's. Up now, Bothvar Bjarki my master, else I will burn the house and thee; and this is the greatest scandal, such a champion as thou art, that the king should lay himself open to dangers for us, and thou shouldst so lose the great fame thou hast longtime enjoyed."

Bothvar stood up, sighed and said: "Thou hast no need, Hjalti, to threaten me, for I am not afraid, and now I am quite ready to go. When I was young I fled from neither fire nor steel; fire have I seldom tried, but the force of steel have endured betimes, and, in spite of both, have lived till now. Yet, thou shalt say truly that I will fight full well, and king Hrolf has ever called me champion before his own men; I have much to repay him too; first our marriage connection and twelve farms which he gave me, together with many valuables in addition. I slew Agnarr, a berserk and a king, no less, and that deed is held in memory"—he recounted to him now many deeds which he had done, and how he had become the slayer of many men, and bade him believe this, that he would go fearlessly to battle—"and yet I think we have to do with a much greater marvel here than anywhere we have been before, and thou hast not done the king so great a service as thou dost think by this behaviour, since it was already near to being decided which side had the victory; but thou hast done this more from paucity of wit, than that thou didst not wish well to the king; and from no other of his champions would I have taken this, than from thee, to call me out, except it were the king, and any other would I have slain; yea, things will now take their course, as it is fated, to this, that no counsel shall avail. I say thee forsooth, that now I can give less help to the king in many things, than before thou didst call me out hence."

Hjalti said: "It is clear that I owe the greatest obligation to thee and king Hrolf, yet is it difficult to find counsel when things turn out so."

After this egging of Hjalti, Bothvar got up, and went out to the battle; the bear had disappeared from their midst, and now the battle began to be adverse for them. Queen Skuld achieved no results with her arts while the bear remained in king Hrolf's host, where she sat in her black tent, weaving her spells. Now the change was such as when dark night follows after bright day.

King Hrolf's men now perceived a monstrous boar coming from Hjorvarth's force. He was no smaller in appearance than a three years' old ox, and he was wolf-grey in colour; an arrow flew from each of his bristles, and he struck down the retainers of king Hrolf in heaps in this wondrous fashion. Bothvar Bjarki made a clearance round him and smote with both hands, and only thought of achieving as much as possible before he fell; and now one fell across another before him, and both his shoulders were reddened with blood; and a heap of slain grew in a ring around him; he went on as if he were mad; and so many men did he and the other champions of king Hrolf slay, that it was a marvel that their enemy's force never lessened any the more, but remained as if they had done nothing, and they thought they had never experienced such a marvel. Bothvar said: "Skuld's army is everlasting, and I suspect that the dead stir and rise up again and fight against us, and it is hard indeed to fight with ghosts, and here many a leg is cloven, many a shield broken and helm and corslet hewn into small pieces, and many a chieftain hewn to pieces—and now when dead they are most difficult to deal with, and we have not the strength to contend against these. Where now is that champion of king Hrolf who most did



challenge my courage and summoned me again and again to the fight before I answered him? I do not see him now, and I am not wont to reproach men."

"Thou sayest sooth," said Hjalti then, "thou art no fault-finder. Here stands he who is named Hjalti, and I have yet some work for my hands to do, nor is there any great space between us. I have need now of good men, for all my armour is hewn from me, foster-brother, and though I still fight most fiercely, I shall get me no vengeance now for all my wounds; but we must not, at this time, spare ourselves, if we are all to lodge to-night in Valhalal; and certainly never before have we happened upon such a marvel as is now here. These events were long ago foretold to us, which now have come to pass."

Bothvar Bjarki said: "Give heed to what I say; I have fought in twelve great battles, and ever been called a man of full courage, and never have I given way to any berserk; I urged king Hrolf to seek out king Athils and we met with some treachery there, but that was but slight in comparison with this devilish play; that has now so oppressed my heart that I am not so merry for the fight as before. I met king Hjorvarth a short while ago in the first attack, so that we came against each other and neither of us cast any taunting word against the other; we engaged in sword play for a time, and he reached me a thrust which gave me a sight of the road to hell, but I hewed from him his hand and foot, and there came another blow on his shoulder and I clove him down so, side and back, and he dropped down and ceased to breathe as if he were put to sleep for a time, and I thought him dead; and few such may be found, for later he was fighting no less boldly than before, and I know not what restored him. Here now are many men both noble and great come against us who have come from all quarters of the globe, so that no resistance may avail, but Othin I do not

yet recognise here; nevertheless I strongly suspect that he comes here against us, Herjan's son, the foul and the untrue, and if anyone could point him out to me, I would crush him like any other of the worst and most insignificant vermin—that evil, poisonous creature should be ignominiously handled if I could lay hands on him. Who might have more bitterness of heart, if he saw his lord thus betrayed as we now see ours?"

Hjalti said: "It is not easy to bend Fate, nor stand against nature." And so they ended their talk.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

**K**ING HROLF fought well and manfully, and with more courage than any man knew the equal of. They attacked him fiercely, and there was formed around him a ring of the chosen warriors of king Hjorvarth and Skuld. Skuld had come to the battle now, and fiercely incited her ruffians to attack king Hrolf, because she perceived that his champions were not all near him, and this it was which grieved Bothvar Bjarki sorely, as it did the other champions, that he could not assist his lord; for they were now as ready to die with him as to live with him, they who were then in the flower of youth. All the king's henchmen had now fallen, so that not one was left standing; and most of the champions were wounded to death, and that was what might be expected.

Master Galterius said that human power might not stand against such fiendish craft, unless the power of God had intervened, and that alone stood in the way of thy victory, king Hrolf, that thou hadst no knowledge of thy Creator.

The enchantments brought it about now, that the champions began to fall one across the other and king Hrolf

came without the shield wall, and was as good as dead from weariness. There is no need to prolong the account of how king Hrolf and all his champions fell there with good repute; but how great a slaughter they had made there cannot be described in words. There king Hjorvarth fell with all his host, except that a few skulkers survived with Skuld.

So she took the kingdom of king Hrolf under her rule, and governed it ill for a short time; and Elgfrothi avenged Bothvar Bjarki his brother as he had promised him, with king Thorir Houndsfoot, as is said in the fourth episode; and they obtained great assistance from Sweden from Queen Yrsa, and they say that Vogg was the leader of this force. They went in full force to Denmark, when queen Skuld had no expectation of it. They got her in their clutches, so that she could practise no witchcraft, and they slew all her evil retainers, and put her to death with manifold tortures, and brought the kingdom back in this way to the daughter of king Hrolf, and so each betook him home to his own kin. A mound was raised over king Hrolf and his sword Skofnung laid beside him, and a mound over each of his champions, and some weapon beside him too.

And here ends the saga of king Hrolf Kraki and his champions.

## NOTES

PAGE 10. There are puns in this verse which have not been rendered in the translation. 'Reginn' in the first line is interpreted by the king's men as *regn* 'rain'. The name Var borne by the two smiths means 'wary'. 'To drive a nail of precaution' represents an Icelandic phrase which means either 'to drive a safety nail' or, figuratively, 'to give a warning'. Hence the real meaning which Reginn meant to convey was: 'One wary man (Reginn) gives warning to the other (King Frothi).'

PAGE 36. Hleithargarth is now the small town of Lejre in Zealand.

PAGE 49. 'in all his life he should urge it but thrice'. There is some doubt about the rendering 'urge', although this is the usual sense of the verb *eggja*. The passage must be connected with the similar passage on page 56, where Bothvar has difficulty in drawing the sword, and the same verb *eggja* is used of his treatment of the weapon. Professor Chambers, in his admirable translation of the passage in his *Introduction to Beowulf*, page 145, renders the verb 'tug at', a sense which accords excellently with the context. But this sense is not admitted by lexicographers and is of very doubtful authenticity. It is quite strange to modern Icelandic usage too. Mr Sigurour Pálsson of Akureyri Grammar School, who was consulted, states that in his opinion the verb must be given its normal sense 'exhort', 'urge' in these passages. It was of course characteristic of the old conception of a famous sword to endow it with a life—and even a temperament of its own.

PAGE 87. 'Master Galterus' was Philippus Gualterus (Philippe Gautier de Chatillon), author of a Latin poem on Alexander the Great, dating from the end of the twelfth century. It was translated into Icelandic prose as *Alexanders saga*, in which the author of *Hrolfs saga* doubtless saw his sentiments. Master Galterus makes a comment of the kind referred to here when moralizing about the death of Alexander.