

ICELANDIC TEXTS

GENERAL EDITORS

Sigurður Nordal and G. Turville-Petre

GUNNLAUGS SAGA
ORMSTUNGU

★

THE STORY OF GUNNLAUG
SERPENT-TONGUE

Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu

Edited with Introduction and Notes

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The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue

Translated from the Icelandic

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INTRODUCTION

I *Gunnlaugs Saga and the literary background*

The popularity of *Gunnlaugs Saga* in the past century, especially outside Iceland, is shown by the number of editions and translations of it, more than of any other saga. The reasons for its appeal to modern readers are not far to seek. The saga is short and simply told; it has unity of theme and involves few characters; and it can easily make a single and memorable impression. Both the story and the author's treatment of it are well suited to the modern taste. There is enough of an antique spirit, conveyed by incidents like the duels and deeds of revenge, and sufficient suggestion of a historical background, in Gunnlaug's visits to the courts of Scandinavia and the British Isles, to persuade the reader that the setting is the 'real' world of A.D. 1000. At the same time, the story is a romantic drama of passionate love and tender sentiment, of youthful affection, broken friendship, rivalry, chivalry, treachery and death. Further reasons for its popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may perhaps be found in the decorum with which the love-story is related, in the limited but innocent humour, the pathos (which some readers may now find dangerously near the sentimental), and the representation of ideal womanhood, tender and true, in the figure of Helga.

Since it is now nearly seven hundred years since *Gunnlaugs Saga* was written, a brief sketch of the early development of literary art in Iceland may help us to understand why the Icelanders of the late thirteenth century should have had a taste in story-telling not unlike that of our own much later period.¹

Written vernacular prose began in Iceland with the *Íslendingabók* (Book of the Icelanders) by Ari Þorgilsson *inn fróði* (the scholarly) early in the twelfth century. Ari made conscientious efforts to disentangle unquestionable facts from the many traditions known to him and his contemporaries, and he produced a brief, bare work describing important events in the nation's past. His immediate successors also produced works of learning rather than of art, but in time greater skill in presentation and a natural desire to tell a lively story as well as a true one led to the composition of historical works in which a more

¹ The best and most recent sketch of the development of saga-literature is that of Sigurður Nordal, 'Sagalitteraturen' in *Nordisk Kultur* VIII B, 1953.

continuous and dramatic record was attempted. Ari remained the great model as a historian but not as a writer. These later histories, the best of which is Snorri's *Heimskringla*, written c. 1220–30, must also rank high as literature.

In the early twelfth century we also know that oral stories were being composed on legendary heroes. We do not know exactly what these stories were like, except that verse played a large part in them and that they could include extravagant and romantic adventures. Such stories continued to thrive as oral entertainment until they received written treatment in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (the so-called *fornaldarsögur*). The important point is that they were told primarily for entertainment and gave the story-tellers scope for invention and the development of techniques of dramatic narrative—the use of speech and dialogue, for example, and the introduction of verses not as evidence in support of statements in the prose, in the manner of the historians, but as part of their characters' means of self-expression. This artistic freedom in the oral stories contrasted with the scholarly severity in the early written works, but both were influential in the development of the later sagas of Icelanders.

Throughout the twelfth century much literature of Christian edification was translated and some composed by Icelandic clerics.¹ It is difficult to assess the influence of such works on later secular writing, but there is little doubt that this widespread literary practice contributed towards the attainment of the calm and fluent style which characterises the best of the Icelandic prose of the thirteenth century.

About A.D. 1190 the first stories were written of the Icelandic heroes of the Saga-Age, approximately the period from A.D. 930 to 1030. These sagas of Icelanders were based on oral traditions and on earlier written records. Such traditions had naturally undergone change and fusion in their unwritten existence of two centuries, but they still preserved much that was substantially true, although for the most part it is now difficult or impossible to unravel tenth-century facts from the patterns into which they have been woven by thirteenth-century writers. Particularly valuable as sources for these writers were verses, whose form would often preserve them from corruption. They were remembered sometimes as poetry and often as the kernel of an anecdote or, in combination, of a longer narrative. It seems, however, that the men who knew this ancient verse were not mere repositories; they composed verses themselves, and when their memories failed them or

¹ The best account of this twelfth-century religious literature is by G. Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature*, 1953, ch. 5.

when an anecdote needed the support of a verse, they would not be unwilling to supply something of their own invention. Conversely, verses which were remembered, but whose narrative context was forgotten, might have a new story framed around them. There had arisen a certain freedom in the handling of traditional material, so that when traditions failed or conflicted, a story-teller felt himself at liberty to invent in order to provide the incidents and other material necessary for the formation of plot and delineation of character. At the same time, a writer would doubtless generally respect the information contained in earlier written records and in traditional reports that were commonly accepted as true in his time.

The broad outlines, sometimes the detailed incidents, were thus given. Within limits the authors could reject and re-shape the material as they wished. They had also to fill in all the details. In the half-century or so from the first sagas of Icelanders, their literary skill increased and their artistry grew bolder. They added to the given material, invented new characters and episodes, re-interpreted facts and traditions. Fact and fiction were mingled and the author's prime aim was not historical accuracy but artistic effect. There was, however, an essential element in the early scholarly writing which remained in the artistic writing of a century later. The pragmatic, objective approach, typical of the early history, was transferred to the imaginative realisation of character and event. While the early historians sought the truth, the later historical novelists sought to give their narrative the appearance of truth.

Such mingling of fact and fancy in a realistic style is not a simple process. The author who pays too much attention to sources, oral and written, will overload his narrative with information connected only fortuitously with the main story. The other extreme is reached with equal ease, when an author, in order to be sure of making his story as immediately effective as possible, loses sight of realism, introduces for example too many coincidences or exaggerates the prowess of his hero in the midst of impossible adventures. The authors of the sagas of Icelanders err on both sides, but the best of them follow the middle way with conspicuous success. By the end of the thirteenth century, however, the vogue of the legendary sagas meant that the tendency towards uncontrolled fantasy had become dominant in Icelandic narrative literature.

A development in the Eddic poetry of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries appears to provide a parallel to some part of the development in the later saga-literature. In that age the poets used the old stories

of legendary heroes, but concentrated their craft on a new aspect of those stories. Their poems were composed from the point of view of individual characters in the given tragedy. The characters of Gudrún and Brynhild in the Völsung story lent themselves particularly well to such a psychological treatment. The theme of passionate love seems to have interested the poets as much as the theme of heroic honour. They were led to debate whose action was the more justifiable, whose love the greater. There was fascination in the figure of a woman 'born to cause strife amongst men.' Taste for the romantic and melodramatic in poetic form existed thus in the twelfth century, and we find that the saga-writers of the following century gradually become more and more interested in gratifying a similar taste amongst their contemporaries. In *Gunnlaugs Saga* we have almost an apotheosis of romantic love.

This native romantic attraction was at once reinforced and modified by an important literary (and to some extent, social) innovation and influence, which began early in the thirteenth century. The first record of a translation from the courtly literature of France is from 1226, when a version of the story of Tristram and Iseult was translated in Norway at the command of 'worthy King Hákon.' Thereafter, translations and adaptations of the romantic literature of France and Germany came in large numbers and enjoyed increasing popularity. The ideals of chivalry, in the two great occupations of war and love, are strongly represented in *Laxdæla Saga*, written c. 1245, one of the best and most influential of the sagas of Icelanders. This foreign influence appears to have been strongest in the years following the middle of the thirteenth century. It can be detected here and there in the style of *Gunnlaugs Saga* and seems to have played a large part in forming the author's attitude towards the love of Gunnlaug and Helga.

Gunnlaugs Saga was written at a time when Icelandic authors felt it imperative to make their stories unified works of art and when, in order to achieve their purpose, they could shape traditional material with great freedom and add new material adapted from other stories, written and oral, or invented by themselves. It will help us to realise the aims and artistic ability of the author of *Gunnlaugs Saga*, if we consider his source-material and the way in which he used it.

2 *The sources of the saga*

The chief characters in *Gunnlaugs Saga* are historical. Thorstein and Illugi are well known from other sagas and, with Gunnlaug, Hrafn and

Önund, appear in *Landnámabók* (The Book of the Settlements), one of our most reliable sources for the early history of Iceland. The genealogical information in the saga seems to be almost entirely derived from the same source, although the author makes one or two mistakes of memory or transcription. The foreign princes visited by Gunnlaug are, with one exception, well-known historical figures. Helga is mentioned in no source of historical value except *Egils Saga*, where on the two occasions she is named the author adds, 'over whom Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue and Hrafn the Poet quarrelled.'¹ *Egils Saga* is thought to have been written c. 1220–30, and at that time a story of some kind containing the essential theme of *Gunnlaugs Saga* must have been known.

Gunnlaug and Hrafn are also named in *Skáldatal* (List of Poets), which exists in two versions, the earlier made not later than c. 1270, the later c. 1300.² In the former, Gunnlaug is said to have been a poet of Earl Eric of Norway, and both his name and Hrafn's appear in the list of poets of King Ólaf the Swede. In the latter, Hrafn is also counted as one of Eric's poets and Gunnlaug further appears as one of the poets who composed in honour of Ethelred of England. It seems probable that the author of *Gunnlaugs Saga* knew the earlier version, or a record similar to it, and that the later version has been expanded by someone with a knowledge of the saga.

It is difficult to say what material the author may have been able to obtain from local traditions unconnected with the verses. There is only the record in *Egils Saga* to show that such traditions existed, and it seems likely that the story of the quarrel between Gunnlaug and Hrafn over Helga was only imperfectly remembered. Some elements in the story as we have it may arise from the use of traditional material, which the author was unwilling to ignore. The mock-betrothal at the end of chapter 4 and Thorstein's offer of the horses to Gunnlaug in chapter 5 are episodes which contribute very little to the main development of the narrative, and their presence might be explained in this way.

The author's chief sources were undoubtedly the verses which he includes in the saga. Allusion to Gunnlaug as a poet is made in *Snorra Edda*, where the first half of the verse, *Alin var rýgr at rógi* (p. 32 below), is quoted.³ We may be reasonably confident that this verse is genuine, and the same may be said of the fragments of the laudatory poems, the *drápur* (pp. 15, 18). The verse, *Alin var rýgr at rógi*, shows that

¹ chs. 79, 87 : *er þeir deildu um Skáld-Hrafn ok Gunnlaugr ormstunga*

² *Skáldatal* is critically edited in *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, 1848–87, III 205 ff.

³ See F. Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, 1931, 146

Gunnlaug was engaged in a dispute over a woman, and the *drápur* fragments show that he visited the courts of Ethelred in England and Sigtrygg in Dublin. Most of the other verses, whether actually composed by the men to whom they are attributed or not, could have supplied the author with material for his narrative. Gunnlaug offers a man a mark and threatens him (v. 1); he has trouble with a man who keeps money from him (4); he has vowed to visit three kings and two earls (5); he looks upon himself as Hrafn's rival in prowess (10); he knew and loved Helga in his youth (11); Helga is married to Hrafn, Gunnlaug is despondent and blames Thorstein (13); Hrafn's marriage is not happy (12); Gunnlaug and Hrafn fight a duel at the Great Assembly (17-18); Gunnlaug fights in a battle in which he kills men named Grím and Ólaf before getting to grips with Hrafn (21); that battle is fought at a place called Dinganes (22). The dream-verses (23-24) were composed at some time for the sake of the narrative, quite possibly by the author of the saga. Verse 4, connected with the stereotyped incident, Gunnlaug's fight with the berserk in England, may well have been old when the saga was written, but that of course does not guarantee the authenticity of the episode itself. Verse 20, *Brámáni skein brúna*, is attributed to Kormák in *Kormáks Saga*, chapter 3; local tradition had presumably confused the authorship of the verse with the result that the author of *Gunnlaugs Saga* attributed it to his hero.

3 *The author and his sources : fact and fancy*

Although the verses could provide an outline of the main theme of the saga, they could not give the author material for all the incidents and situations he describes. We may note that, in fact, the author did not make use of all the information contained in the verses. In the prose, for example, Gunnlaug never claims that Helga was married to Hrafn for money, or that he himself was delayed in battle in England; nor is Thorstein overtly held responsible for any unfair or illegal action in arranging Helga's marriage with Hrafn (cf. vv. 13 and 16).

The author seems to have derived his ideas about Gunnlaug's first sojourn abroad from the fragments of *drápur* (he may have known more of these poems) and from the verse, *Koma skalk vistar vitja* (p. 17), in which Gunnlaug declares his intention of visiting three kings and two earls. The kings were undoubtedly Ethelred, Sigtrygg and Ólaf the Swede (cf. the *drápur* and *Skáldatal*), and the earls, Eric of Norway (cf. *Skáldatal*) and Sigurd Hlödvisson, a well-known historical figure.

In his story, however, the author made Gunnlaug's first encounter with Earl Eric a quarrelsome one, thereby enlivening the narrative and displaying his hero's character. That meant, however, that Eric had to be dismissed from the number of princes whom Gunnlaug visited and in whose honour he composed a poem while on his first voyage abroad. The author had two problems to solve as a result of this. He had to make up the number of earls in accordance with the verse, *Koma skalk vistar vitja*, and he had also to make it possible for Gunnlaug to return to Norway in circumstances which gave him an opportunity to become a court-poet of Earl Eric (in accordance with *Skáldatal*) and, more important, allowed him to meet Hrafn for their final encounter.

All this the author cleverly achieves by Gunnlaug's visit to Earl Sigurd in Skara. A second earl is found to serve as a subject of Gunnlaug's poetry and, through this episode, Gunnlaug is reconciled with Earl Eric and can later return to Norway in peace. It seems most likely that the author invented the episode himself. This Earl Sigurd is not mentioned in any other source, and the records we possess suggest that Rögnvald Úlfsson, a nephew of the Swedish queen, Sigríð the Ambitious, was earl in West Gautland at the time when, according to the chronology of the saga, Gunnlaug is supposed to have visited Skara.¹ The description of Gunnlaug's visit is vague; the 'comparison between men' is a conventional *motif*; the alleged effect of Gunnlaug's arbitration on the two contending parties and on Earl Eric is naïvely told and scarcely compels belief. The verse, *Segið ér frá jarli*, may possibly be older than the saga and have given the author an idea for the scene²; but it is equally likely that the author composed it himself. The episode at Skara enabled him to fulfil the requirements of his sources and materially assisted the narrative towards its conclusion. The author's powers of execution did not equal his skill in construction, and he seems to have cared little about making his invented episode more convincing.

From Skara, Gunnlaug goes to Uppsala and there meets Hrafn. An early period of friendship is brought to an end by their quarrel over precedence and poetry. There is nothing to suggest that this highly stylised and delightful episode is anything but fictitious. The meeting between the two men in Uppsala is not substantiated by any

¹ He appears to have been earl over West Gautland from shortly before A.D. 1000 until shortly before 1020; cf. Vigfússon and Unger, *Flateyjarbók*, 1860-68, I 415, 469, II 58.

² It might perhaps be argued that the phrase describing Sigurd in the prose, *ok var við aldr*, is derived from the verse (*hárr er sá karl*).

external evidence, by a verse for example, but in *Skáldatal* they are both counted poets of King Ólaf the Swede, and from such a source the author could see that his court was the one place outside Iceland where they might be supposed to have met. This meeting was necessary in order to provide an immediate motive for Hrafn's wooing of Helga on his return.

From Sweden Gunnlaug returns to England, as he had promised King Ethelred, and he is there delayed in the king's service. In Iceland, Hrafn's suit for Helga's hand is eventually successful, Gunnlaug having failed to claim her within the period stipulated by Thorstein. Gunnlaug returns to Iceland, via Norway, and arrives in the north-east a fortnight before the beginning of winter and Hrafn's wedding. Gunnlaug's ankle is sprained in a wrestling-bout with a local champion, but he rides home to Gilsbakki, arriving in the evening of the wedding-day of Hrafn and Helga. He wishes to ride down to Borg at once, but no-one supports his proposal and he is in any case incapacitated by his injured foot (although he seems to have managed the long journey home to Gilsbakki without difficulty).

Hrafn and Helga are married. One would on the face of things naturally be inclined to suspect that the neat and romantic sequence of events in the saga does not reflect the true circumstances of that marriage. It can also be pointed out that, under the conditions obtaining in that part of Iceland round about the year A.D. 1000, nothing could have been more natural than a marriage alliance between the families of Thorstein and Önund. The two families were already closely connected—Thorstein's half-sister, for example, was the wife of Grím Svertingsson, half-brother of Önund's wife. This relationship must have been common knowledge to anyone familiar with the history of the Borg family, but it would scarcely have suited the author's purpose to accept such material without alteration. Such a commonplace affair would have ruined the story as he conceived it.

The story continues. Gunnlaug challenges Hrafn to a duel at the Great Assembly, but their families prevent them from fighting it out to a finish, and duelling is then made illegal in Iceland. Hrafn's marriage is unhappy, and he proposes to Gunnlaug that they go abroad and fight. To this Gunnlaug willingly agrees. They meet at last in Norway and both are killed, Gunnlaug by a treacherous wound dealt him by Hrafn. The site of their battle is securely located by the prose narrative on a little headland projecting into a lake, called Dinganes, near Súla (modern Sulstua) in Verdal. The author has found the name Dinganes in the verse, *Oss gekk mætr á móti* (p. 37). In another source, however,

Dinganes is mentioned and described as the headland dividing the districts of Sogn and Hordland in western Norway.¹ Hordland is older *Hörðaland*, 'land of the Hörðar.' The manuscript reading of the verse in *Gunnlaugs Saga* is *a horda . . . nesi dinga*—literally, 'on Dinganes of the Hörðar,' although most editors have emended *horda* to *hørðu* and translated the phrase as 'on hard Dinganes.' The literal translation agrees admirably with the only comparative material we possess, and the verse thus suggests that Hrafn and Gunnlaug met in quite a different place from that described in the prose. The author may have preferred another tradition; he may have failed to understand the reference in the verse; or he may simply have ignored it.² The site he chooses suits his purpose well. Gunnlaug can be with Earl Eric in Trondheim, his chief residence, and suspense can be maintained by the earl's ban on the duel, by Hrafn's absence in Levanger and by Gunnlaug's pursuit of him through Verdal: 'Gunnlaug always came in the evening to the place where Hrafn had spent the previous night.' The distance between Levanger and Súla is only about twenty-five miles, but that was a fact which the author did not know or hastened to forget.

4 *The author and his material : construction, style and sentiment*

The main theme of the saga is unified and is developed logically from Thorstein's dream and the birth of his daughter, Helga, on to her death. The dream foretells the story only as far as Helga's second marriage, but her death is intimately connected in feeling with what has gone before and forms a fitting conclusion to the whole work.

Literary models existed for the essential theme of the saga and for the character of the serpent-tongued poet. Familiar to us from *Kormáks Saga*, *Hallfreðar Saga* and *Bjarnar Saga Hitdœlakappa* is the story of the poet who makes use of his craft as a weapon and who loves a girl married to another man; his own failure to marry her is due to delay or hesitation on his part; the result is enmity between husband and lover, which sometimes leads to the death of the latter. The situation is similar in the Kjartan-Bolli-Gudrún story in *Laxdœla Saga*, though there the men are not poets. All of these sagas were written before *Gunnlaugs Saga* and belong to the same narrowly delimited area,

¹ See *Flateyjarbók* I 88; cf. *Hkr.* I 247

² The most recent discussion of the battle on Dinganes is by Bjarni Einarsson in *Nordœla*, 1956, 17 ff.

Húnathing and Borgarfjord with Nordrárdal connecting them. It is not surprising that the author of *Gunnlaugs Saga* should show that he knew them. The description of Gunnlaug on page 6 below, for example, follows almost word for word the description of Hallfred in chapter 2 of his saga. *Gunnlaugs Saga* also betrays some notable affinities with *Bjarnar Saga*. Skúli Thorsteinsson is the agent who introduces both Björn and Gunnlaug to Earl Eric; in each story, as in *Laxdæla Saga*, the friend of the hero returns from abroad and, with more or less fabrication, suggests that there is no likelihood of the hero returning to claim his bride; he asks for her hand and marries her himself. Björn makes Oddný a present of a cloak, just as Gunnlaug does to Helga. (Hallfred wished to give Kolfinna a cloak, a king's gift, but she refused it.) The sight of Gunnlaug's gift after his death has a deep effect on Helga; in *Bjarnar Saga* a similar impression is made on Oddný by another token, a necklet, delivered to her after Björn's death. Direct relationship between the two sagas cannot be proved by any verbal agreement, but it seems certain that much in *Gunnlaugs Saga* is ultimately derived from *Bjarnar Saga*.

The description of Thorstein in chapter 1 and his characterisation throughout the saga agree closely with the account of him in *Egils Saga*. The use of a symbolic dream is paralleled in *Laxdæla Saga*, to which the author also refers on a point of chronology (p. 9), and there is a striking resemblance between *Gunnlaugs Saga* and *Trójumanna Saga*, which also tells of an ominous dream, followed by an order to expose a new-born child; the order is not carried out and the prophecy is fulfilled. The unsuccessful exposure of a child is found in one or two other stories of Icelandic heroes, though these seem to have been written later than *Gunnlaugs Saga*; it is more common in the legendary and romantic sagas.¹

Many of the details in the main episodes of the saga and many of the other incidents introduced by the author seem to belong to well-tried conventional types and can be paralleled in other, usually earlier, sagas. Amongst them we may note Gunnlaug's precocious and difficult youth (cf. e.g. *Egils Saga*, ch. 40); the horse taken without permission (cf. *Fóstbræðra Saga*, ch. 8); the fight with the berserk (common, but cf. especially *Egils Saga*, chs. 57, 64-5, where the origin of the vague description of the use of two swords (p. 16 below) may perhaps be found); the abortive duel (cf. *Kormáks Saga*, ch. 10); the 'comparing of men' (cf. *ibid*, ch. 15); and the dispute over precedence and poetry

¹ See Åke Lagerholm, *Drei Lygisögur (Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek 17, 1927) lvii-lviii*

(cf. the inverted situation in *Magnúss Saga ins góða*, ch. 12, in *Morkin-skinna*). Gunnlaug's viking prowess and the deeds of revenge are conventional elements, to which almost every saga will provide a parallel. The author of *Gunnlaugs Saga* was fully aware of what the necessary ingredients were for the concoction of a 'successful' saga.

Not all of these incidents contribute towards the development of the main theme, but they allow the author to display the character of Gunnlaug and they often add dramatic effect to the narrative. The absence of episodes such as the affair with the farmer at Grímstungur and most of Gunnlaug's visits abroad would not affect the main narrative, but the writer had traditional sources for these which he was unwilling to ignore, even though it was outside his interest or beyond his power to make them effective links in his story. Nevertheless, although the visits to the kings and earls are necessarily episodic, the author makes them as entertaining as he can. With Eric, Gunnlaug has a dangerous quarrel, in England he fights a berserk, and the scene with Sigtrygg in Dublin is largely comic.

The author seems eager to interest and divert the reader all the time and cares less about improbabilities that may result from his desire to produce an immediate effect. In his desire to arouse feelings of excitement and suspense in the narration of Gunnlaug's return to Iceland and of the events which delay the final encounter between Gunnlaug and Hrafn, he relies on a neat, but unconvincing, series of accidents. In his story the characters generally behave as the situation requires—the situations are not shaped by the characters themselves. One might ask, for example, why the ominous dream does not affect Thorstein's actions later in the saga; and why does Hrafn leave Levanger for Sweden, when his express purpose is to meet Gunnlaug? When Hrafn asks for Helga's hand, the immediate motive for his conduct seems to be a desire to humiliate Gunnlaug; but in his later actions the narrative demands that he should display genuine passion. Other scenes are made more forceful by an over-emphasis which may be felt to entail some inconsistency in the presentation of character. Thus, Illugi, the man of 'stern resolve,' stands amazed at the sight of a few sacks outside his farmhouse; and after Gunnlaug's death, he was always 'very despondent,' *dapr mjök*—we recall that the same adjective is used of Helga at her wedding, *heldr dapr*. If the inclusion of the mock-betrothal scene and Thorstein's offer of the horses to Gunnlaug was not due to the author's respect for a traditional tale and the scenes are of his own creation, then their presence seems to be justified only by the immediate effect they have on the reader, which again is largely

comic. There are one or two improbabilities in the account of Illugi's revenge taken on members of Önund's family after Gunnlaug's death, and not least the author's calm statement, in his glorification of the Gilsbakki family, that no retaliation came from Önund's side.

The author sets the duel between Gunnlaug and Hrafn at the Great Assembly in connection with an important event in the history of Iceland, the abolition of duelling as a legal remedy. This kind of historical reference, although it seems without foundation in fact, naturally lends significance to the narrative. The author's antiquarian notes on the custom of exposure (p. 4) and on the reason why Gunnlaug should be able to understand and make himself understood in England (p. 15) also lend the story a kind of historical plausibility.

Generally, *Gunnlaugs Saga* has the terse style, the objective presentation of events and the typical incidents of the classical sagas. But the author has been touched by chivalric and sentimental ideals, familiar to him from the translations and adaptations of foreign romantic works. The influence of such works can be detected in details of style: in the description of Helga's hair, 'as beautiful as beaten gold'; in the vague and hyperbolic description of the last battle between Gunnlaug and Hrafn; and in the description of Gunnlaug's feelings when he sees the Norwegians making a mock of his quarrel with Hrafn (p. 35): *Gunnlaugr fann at hér fylgði mikit háð ok hér var mikit spott at dregit ok gekk Gunnlaugr í brott þegjandi*. In the truly classical style, an author would have written, *ok gekk Gunnlaugr í brott þegjandi*, and left the rest to the reader.

The account of the last fight between Gunnlaug and Hrafn is one of the high points of the saga. Hrafn is wounded and asks for water. Gunnlaug agrees to bring it but tells Hrafn not to use treachery. As Hrafn reaches out to take the drink, however, he deals Gunnlaug a mortal wound in the head. They fight on and Hrafn is killed; Gunnlaug dies three days later. On a first reading one is likely to be left full of admiration for Gunnlaug's chivalry and deeply impressed by the powerful passion that drove Hrafn to such treachery. But on reflection one will see that the author has not produced a wholly consistent effect. In fact, he does not seem to have been able to make up his mind whether he is writing a chivalric romance or a realistic story. If it had been the former, then Gunnlaug would have been above any suspicion of Hrafn; if it had been the latter, Gunnlaug's guides would have brought Hrafn the water, or he would have gone without it.¹

¹ cf. Sigurður Nordal, *Borgfirðinga sögur (Íslensk Fornrit III; 1938) xli*

'All for Love' is not a phrase which expresses the usual attitude of the Icelandic saga-writer or that of the circle for which he wrote, but it might well be applied to the author's presentation of the theme of *Gunnlaugs Saga*. The reason given by Hrafn for his treacherous and fatal attack on Gunnlaug is that he begrudges his rival the embrace of Helga the Fair. In going so far, the writer differs most from the authors of those sagas in which the situation is similar to that in his own story. In *Kormáks Saga* and *Hallfreðar Saga*, where the rivalry between husband and lover is fatal to neither, and in *Bjarnar Saga*, where Björn the lover and hero is killed, the opposition is never reduced to such simple and romantic terms. In these the issue is rather one of honour and good name. The central emphasis is not placed on sexual jealousy, as in *Gunnlaugs Saga*; it is more important that the husband loses honour and prestige when another man composes slanderous verses on him and pays attentions to his wife. These feelings do not seem to interest the author of *Gunnlaugs Saga*, and we hear only of Hrafn's thwarted position as Helga's husband and, at the end, of his treacherous behaviour.

The saga closes with the pathetic death of Helga. Her chief delight had been to gaze at the cloak Gunnlaug had given her and she died with it before her eyes. The manner in which the author conveys Helga's grief and describes her death is not typical of the Icelandic sagas. It presupposes an attitude which was uncommon in Iceland, where, by the conventions as they are revealed in most of the records we possess, grief and love were not allowed to be demonstrative in such a way.¹ There are other instances in the sagas of Icelanders of women sorrowing for their husbands and lovers, even of women who are said to have died of a broken heart, but Helga's exhibition of her feelings is strange. In many ways, self-control and reticence are the keynotes of character and style in the classical sagas, but, although Helga is generally a passive figure, there is little reticence in her behaviour after Gunnlaug's death. The transformation of taste and ideal, to which the emphasis on passionate love and its open expression bears witness, also seems to have been largely due to acquaintance with the chivalric romances of continental Europe.

The author of *Gunnlaugs Saga* shows his literary skill chiefly in the construction of his story, imperfect though it is, in the conversational passages and important scenes—'set pieces' in which he excels—and in a fluency of style which can persuade us to overlook such discrepancies as result from his eagerness to make every scene, as it were, a separate

¹ See Sigurður Nordal, *op. cit.* liii-lv

entertainment. As we have seen, the saga is in some ways not a typical one, nor can it be regarded as a great saga, but it is an interesting and by no means wholly unsuccessful experiment in combining the objective realism of the native Icelandic literature with the idyllic sentiment of the foreign romantic stories. As such, it must be significant for the student of Icelandic literary history; and the general reader will continue to be entertained and moved by it.

5 *The date and place of composition*

The incidents and their treatment in *Gunnlaugs Saga* must make us presume a long history of saga-writing before it. We know that it was written after *Laxdœla Saga* (c. 1245), and the influence that can be detected from foreign romantic literature also points to a date after the middle of the thirteenth century. We may safely say that it was written at some time between about A.D. 1260 and 1300, but there is no evidence to lead us to a more precise conclusion.

It is probable that the saga was written at Borg or one of the neighbouring farms, rather than at Gilsbakki. The author seems to show some partiality for Thorstein Egilsson, and Thorstein's remark, 'Keep your bullying for those up among the mountains; it won't do you any good out here in the fens' (p. 11), and the term of direction in 'up at Skáney' (p. 27, see map pp. xxx-i), suggest that the author was himself at home in Thorstein's country rather than in Gunnlaug's.

6 *Chronology*

The author is not clear about the exact dating of events. He connects the early part of the story with the Conversion of Iceland, A.D. 1000, but seems to believe that Skapti, Law-Speaker from 1004 till 1030, held office before that date. Grím Svertingsson, Law-Speaker before Skapti, lived at Mosfell until his death, c. 1004, but in the saga he is not mentioned (he was Thorstein's brother-in-law and half-brother of Önund's wife; as we saw earlier, there was good reason for the author to ignore his existence), and Önund is said to be living there before that date. The author also appears to be mistaken in setting the marriage of Húngerð to Sverting after Helga's marriage. It is evident from other sources that Húngerð was as much as twenty years older than Helga, and it is incredible that a woman of such distinguished

birth should wait so long for a husband. Sverting, the son of Goat-Björn, also belonged to an older generation than Hrafn, his kinsman. The author had no wish to emphasise any prior connection between the families of Borg and Mosfell, and he needed a suitable occasion for a meeting between Gunnlaug and Helga after her marriage—another wedding to which both Thorstein's and Illugi's families would have to be invited was a convenient opportunity.

On one occasion the author qualifies his statement about the timing of an event in order to make his chronology appear possible. He refers to Audun Fettered-Hound as the man in *Laxdœla Saga* (ch. 51) who refused to take the sons of Ósvífr abroad after the slaying of Kjartan, and he adds, 'but that was later than this' (p. 9). He knew from the same chapter in *Laxdœla Saga* that Audun was supposed to have perished at sea in the same year as Kjartan was killed, probably in 1003, and he felt it necessary to make it clear that Gunnlaug's voyage took place at an earlier date.

The early chronology is slightly complicated by the fact that the two manuscripts of the saga give different ages for Gunnlaug when he first asked to go abroad. The older manuscript says he was twelve, the younger fifteen. He spent one year at Borg and then six years variously at Borg and Gilsbakki, according to the older manuscript, two years according to the younger. The latter is more consistent, since both manuscripts agree that he was eighteen when he finally went abroad. The statement of the older could, however, be explained by counting the first year Gunnlaug was at Borg in the six he spent alternately there and at Gilsbakki. In the sagas of Icelanders twelve is frequently given as the age of the hero when he accomplished his first exploit, and the author of *Gunnlaugs Saga* might well be expected to follow the convention.

According to the saga, Gunnlaug's voyage must have taken place between the conversion and the death of Audun. There is nothing to prove that Gunnlaug in fact sailed with Audun, but if we accept this and a date A.D. 1002 for the voyage, the following table can be made. The one alternative date, according to the reckoning of the younger manuscript, is given in parenthesis.

984	Gunnlaug (and Helga) born
996 (999)	Gunnlaug goes to Borg
1000	Conversion of Iceland
1002	Gunnlaug goes abroad
1002-3	In London

1003-4	In Skara
1004	Gunnlaug and Hrafn meet in Uppsala in the spring
1004-6	Gunnlaug with Ethelred in England
1005	Hrafn asks for Helga's hand at the Great Assembly
1006	Hrafn and Helga married in the autumn ; Gunnlaug returns to Iceland
1007	Gunnlaug and Hrafn fight at the Assembly ; they go abroad in the autumn
1007-8	Gunnlaug in the Orkneys ; Hrafn in Trondheim
1008	Gunnlaug goes to Norway
1008-9	Gunnlaug spends the winter at Hladir, Hrafn in Levanger
1009	Gunnlaug and Hrafn meet, fight and are killed

7 Manuscripts

Gunnlaugs Saga is preserved in two vellum manuscripts :

Perg. 4:o nr 18 in the Royal Library, Stockholm (*A*) ;
A.M. 557 4to in the University Library, Copenhagen (*B*).

A is commonly assigned to the second half of the fourteenth century, *B* to the fifteenth century.

There is, in addition, a number of paper copies, all of which appear to be derived from these vellums and thus have no independent value. In the present edition, none of these transcripts is cited, with the exception of A.M. 157 H fol. (previously Addit. 4 fol.), A.M. 500 4to and A.M. 552 L 4to, all in the University Library, Copenhagen.¹

Both *A* and *B* seem to have been copied from the same original or from texts closely related to one another. *B* is defective at the end of the saga (see p. 33), and the remainder of the text is considerably abbreviated. Sometimes *B* has a better reading than *A*, but the text of *A* as a whole is preferable. Since the text in *B* is abbreviated throughout, it might be argued that those passages in it which are not in *A* belonged to the original and were overlooked by the scribe of *A*. This may be true, for example, of the phrases quoted in the textual notes *b* and *c* on p. 10.

¹ See Jón Sigurðsson, *Íslendinga sögur* II, 1847, xx ff. A few emendations in the verses are to be traced to these paper copies and are here cited from Jón Sigurðsson's edition.

Chapter 1 in the text of *A* contains some long passages derived chiefly from *Egils Saga*. These should probably be regarded as interpolated, since they appear only in the one manuscript, and *B*, although abbreviated, nowhere else omits such long passages as these.

The text in the present edition is based on *A* and when an emendation is made, or when a reading is adopted from *B*, the reading of *A* is invariably given in the textual notes. The more important variants of *B* are also quoted in the notes. These variants to the prose text are given in normalised spelling (not, however, in note *d* on p. 19). Variants quoted in the notes to the verses are given in their literal manuscript form (with the silent expansion of ligatures and abbreviations). The origin of all emendations to the verses (except for such minor rearrangements as *mátt* and *heitik* for the manuscript's *mattu* and *ek heiti*) is also indicated in the textual notes.

EDITIONS OF GUNNLAUGS SAGA

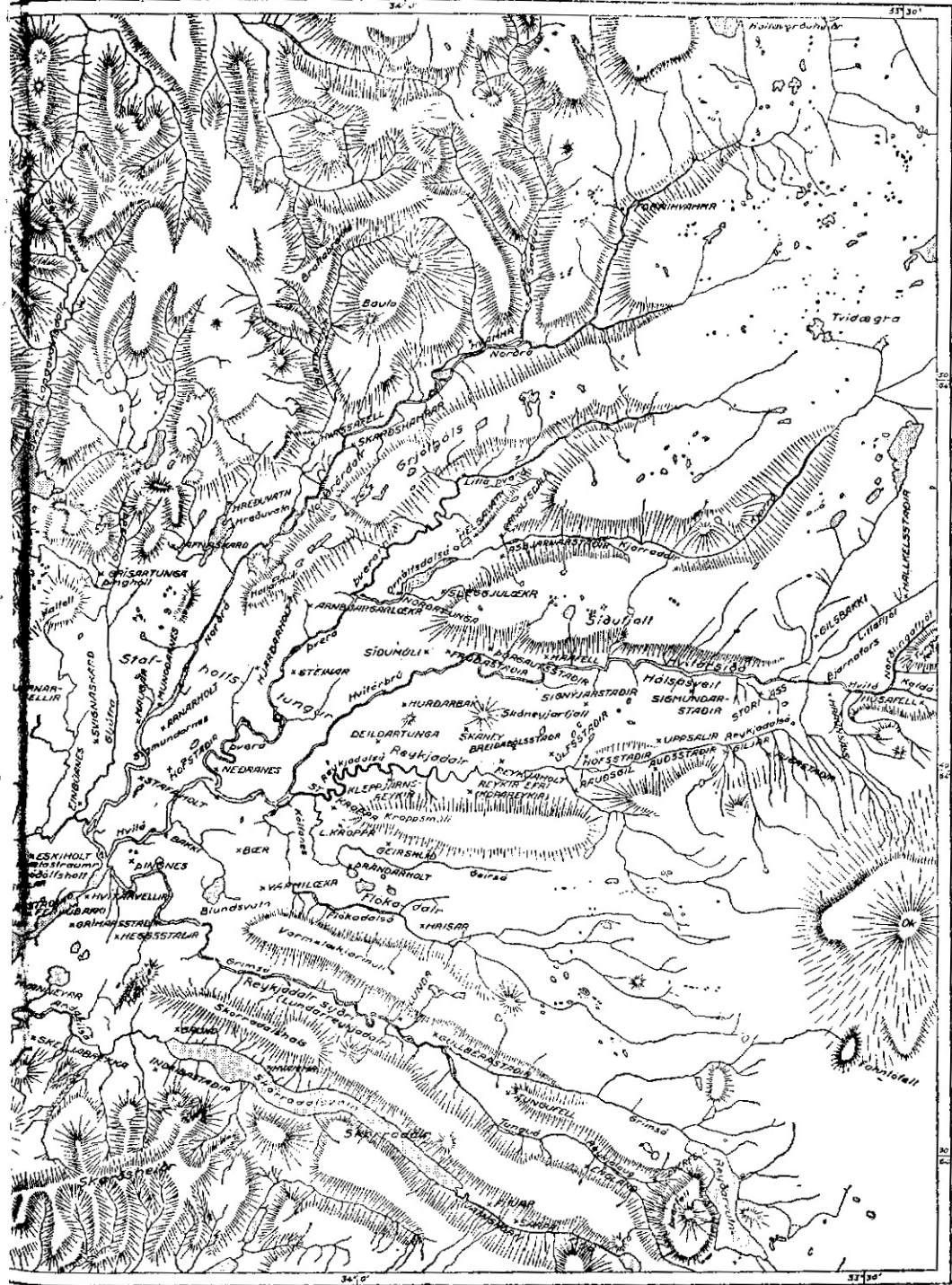
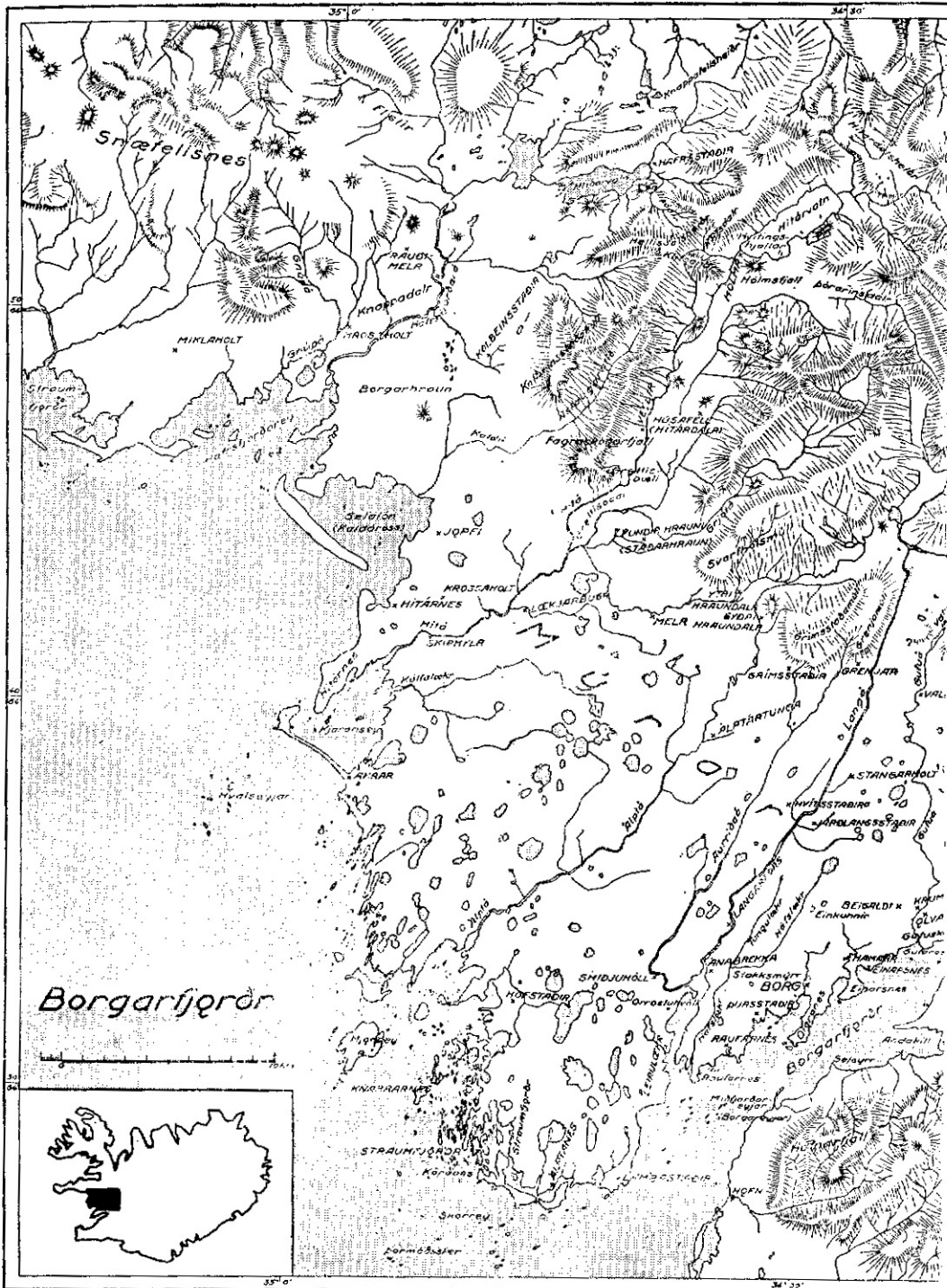
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- Skj.* See Jónsson, Finnur
- SnE.* See Jónsson, Finnur
- Udvalg* See Gíslason, Konráð
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- Porkelsson* (1880) *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, 1880

ICELANDIC TEXT
AND
ENGLISH TRANSLATION



Map showing the area of Iceland in which the events related in the Saga took place

GUNNLAUGS SAGA ORMSTUNGU^a

I

Þorsteinn hét maðr ; hann var Egilsson, Skalla-Grímssonar, Kveld-Úlfssonar hersis ór Nóregi, en Ásgerðr hét móðir Þorsteins ok var Bjarnardóttir.

Þorsteinn bjó at Borg í Borgarfirði. Hann var auðigr at fé ok höfðingi mikill, vitr maðr ok hógværr ok hófsmaðr um alla hluti. Engi var hann afreksmaðr um vøxt eða afl sem Egill, faðir hans, en þó var hann ^b it mesta afarmenni ok vinsæll af allri alþýðu. Þorsteinn var vænn maðr, hvítr á hár ok eygr manna bezt.^c Hann ^d átti Jófríði Gunnarsdóttur Hlífarsonar ^e ; hana hafði átt fyrr Þóroddr, sonr Tungu-Odds, ok var þeira dóttir Húngerðr, er þar fæddisk upp at Borg með Þorsteini.¹ Jófríðr var skörungr mikill. Þau Þorsteinn áttu mart barna, en þó koma fá við þessa sögu ; Skúli var ellstr sona þeira, annarr Kollsveinn, þriði Egill.²

^a Title in *A*: Saga þeira Hrafns ok Gunnlaugs ormstungu eptir því sem sagt hefir Ari prestur inn fróði Þorgilsson, er mestr fræðimaðr hefir verit á Íslandi á landnámssögur ok forna fræði. Title in *B*: Gunnlaugs Saga, and in a later hand: Saga af Gunnlaugi ormstungu.

^b en . . . hann *B*, því at svá er sagt af fróðum mönnum at Egill hafi mestr kappi verit á Íslandi ok hólmgöngumaðr, ok mest ætlat af bóndasonum ; fræðimaðr var hann ok mikill ok manna vitrastr. Þorsteinn var ok *A*

^c *A* adds : Svá segja fróðir menn at margir í ætt Mýramanna, þeir sem frá Agli eru komnir, hafi verit menn vænstir, en þat sé þó mjök sundrgreiniligt, því at sumir í þeiri ætt er kallat at ljótastir menn hafi verit. Í þeiri ætt hafa ok verit margir atgörvismenn um marga hluti, sem var Kjartan Ólafsson þá ok Víga-Barði ok Skúli Þorsteinsson. Sumir váru ok skáldmenn miklir í þeiri ætt : Björn Hítðælakappi, Einarr prestur Skúlason, Snorri Sturluson ok margir aðrir

^d hann *B*, Þorsteinn *A*

THE SAGA OF GUNNLAUG SERPENT-TONGUE

I

There was a man called Thorstein who was the son of Egil Skalla-Grímsson. Skalla-Grím was the son of Kveld-Úlf, a chieftain from Norway. Thorstein's mother was called Ásgerd and she was the daughter of Björn.

Thorstein lived at Borg on the Borgarfjord. He was a rich man and a notable chieftain, wise, gentle and just in all things. He was nothing like so great in stature or strength as his father Egil, but still he was a very outstanding man and well liked by everyone; he was a handsome man, fair-haired and with very fine eyes. He was married to Jófríd, the daughter of Gunnar Hlífson. She had been married earlier to Thórodd, the son of Tungu-Odd, and they had a daughter Húngerd who was brought up by Thorstein at Borg.¹ Jófríd was a woman of great character. She and Thorstein had many children, though few come into this saga; their eldest son was Skúli, the next Kollsvein and the third Egil.²

^e *A* adds: Gunnarr hefir bazt vígr verit ok mestr fimleikamaðr verit á Íslandi af búandmönnum, annarr Gunnarr at Hlíðarenda, þriði Steinþórr á Eyri. Jófríðr var átján vetra er Þorsteinn fekk hennar; hon var ekkja

¹ On Jófríd, her father and her first marriage, see *Hænsa-Þóris*. (*Íslensk Fornrit* III, 1938).

² In *Egilss.* ch. 79, the names of two daughters and eight sons are given. Skúli was the second son, but Grím, the eldest, was killed at the age of ten (*Egilss.* ch. 84); Kollsvein was the fourth son and Egil the seventh.

Eitt sumar er þat sagt at skip kom af hafi í Gufuárós. Bergfinnr er nefndr stýrimaðr ^a fyrir skipinu, norrœnn at ætt, auðigr at fé, ok heldr við aldr; hann var vitr maðr. Þorsteinn bóndi reið til skips ok réð jafnan mestu hver kaupstefna var ok svá var enn.¹ Austmenn vistuðusk, en Þorsteinn tók við stýrimanninum fyrir því at hann beiddisk þangat. Bergfinnr var fátalaðr of vetrinn, en Þorsteinn veitti honum vel. Austmaðrinn hendi mikit gaman at draumum.

Um várit einn dag rœddi Þorsteinn um við Bergfinn, ef hann vildi ríða með honum upp undir Valfell. Þar var þá þingstoð þeira Borgfirðinga ²; en Þorsteini var sagt at fallnir væri búðarveggir hans.³ Austmaðrinn kvezk þat víst vilja, ok riðu þeir heiman of daginn, þrír saman ok húskarl ^b Þorsteins, þar til er þeir koma til bæjar þess er at Grenjum heitir. Þar bjó einn maðr félítill er Atli hét. Hann var landseti Þorsteins, ok beiddi Þorsteinn Atla at hann færi til starfs með þeim ok hefði pál ok reku. Hann gerði svá. Ok er þeir koma upp undir Valfell ^{c4} til búðartóptanna, þá tóku þeir til starfs allir ok færðu út veggina.

Veðrit var heitt af sólu, ok varð þeim Þorsteini ok Austmanni erfitt. Ok er þeir hófðu út fært veggina, þá settisk Þorsteinn niðr ok Austmaðr í búðardyrnar,^d ok sofnaði Þorsteinn ok lét illa í svefni. Austmaðr sat hjá honum ok lét hann njóta draums síns. Ok er hann vaknaði, var honum erfitt orðit. Austmaðr spurði hvat hann hefði dreymt, er hann lét svá illa í svefni.

Þorsteinn mælti, 'Ekki er mark at draumum.'⁵

Ok er þeir riðu heim um kveldit, þá spyrr Austmaðr enn at ^e hvat Þorstein hefði dreymt.

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Ef ek segi þér drauminn, þá skaltu ráða hann sem hann er til.'

Austmaðr kvezk á þat hætta mundu.

^a Bárðr hét stýrimaðr *B*

^b húskarlar *A*, om. *B*

^c upp undir Valfell: in both MSS this stands before *til bæjar* in line 12, but it is impossible to reconcile this original statement of the text with the topography (see B. M. Ólsen, *Om Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu*, 5)

^d búðardyrnar *B*, búðartóptina *A*

^e enn at *B*, om. *A*

¹ The laws say that a committee of three men in each district were to decide the maximum prices to be paid for imported goods (see *Grágás* Ib 72). In the earlier period the local chieftain alone seems to have performed this duty.

² See Glossary, s.v. *Alþingi*

The story goes that one summer a ship put in from sea into the mouth of the Gufuá. The skipper of the ship was called Bergfinn, a Norwegian by birth; he was well-to-do and getting on in years; he was an intelligent man. Thorstein the squire rode down to the ship; he had always had the greatest say in arranging the market, and so he did on this occasion.¹ The men from Norway found themselves somewhere to stay and Thorstein entertained the skipper himself, because he had asked him to. Bergfinn had little to say during the winter, but Thorstein looked after him well. The Norwegian took a great interest in dreams.

One day in the spring, Thorstein asked Bergfinn whether he would like to ride with him up to Valfell. At that time the Borgarfjord men had their assembly-place² there, and Thorstein had been told that the walls of his booth had collapsed.³ The Norwegian said he would certainly like to go, and the pair of them set out during the day with a manservant of Thorstein's and rode until they came to a farmstead known as Grenjar. A certain poor man called Atli lived there. He was Thorstein's tenant, and Thorstein asked him to come and work with them, and to bring a turf-spade and a shovel. He did so, and when they came up under Valfell⁴ to the site of the booth, they all set to work and built up the walls.

The sun made it a hot day and Thorstein and the Norwegian found it heavy going, so when they had finished the walls, Thorstein sat down with the easterner in the entrance to the booth. Thorstein dozed off and was restless in his sleep. The Norwegian sat beside him and let him have his dream out. When he awoke, he was in some distress. The Norwegian asked him what he had been dreaming to make him toss about so in his sleep.

'There's no meaning in dreams,'⁵ said Thorstein.

And when they were riding home in the evening, the Norwegian asked again what Thorstein had dreamt.

'If I tell you the dream,' answered Thorstein, 'you must explain it to me as it really is.'

The Norwegian said he would hazard an explanation.

³ The walls of these temporary dwellings were made of turf and stone; when occupied, they were roofed with awnings of homespun cloth.

⁴ The name Valfell occurs elsewhere only in *Bandamannas*. ch. 12; it is thought to refer to the mountain now called Kambur.

⁵ A proverbial expression

Þorsteinn mælti þá, ' Þat dreymði mik at ek þóttumk heima vera at Borg ok úti fyrir karldurum, ok sá ek upp á húsin ok á mœninum álpt eina væna ok fagra, ok þóttumk ek eiga ok þótti mér algóð.

' Þá sá ek fljúga ofan frá fjöllunum ǫrn mikinn. Hann fló hingat ok settisk hjá álptinni ok klakaði við hana blíðliga, ok hon þótti mér þat vel þekkjask. Þá sá ek at ǫrninn var svarteygr ok járnklær váru á honum ; vaskligr sýndisk mér hann.

' Því næst, sá ek fljúga annan fugl af suðrætt. Sá fló hingat til Borgar ok settisk á húsin hjá álptinni ok vildi þýðask hana. Þat var ok ǫrn mikill. Brátt þótti mér sá ǫrninn er fyrir var ýfask mjök er hinn kom til, ok þeir þorðusk snarpliga ok lengi, ok þat sá ek at hvárumtveggja blæddi. Ok svá lauk þeira leik at sinn veg hné hvárr þeira af húsmœninum, ok váru þá báðir dauðir. En álptin sat eptir hnipin mjök ok daprlig.

' Ok þá sá ek fljúga fugl ór vestri ; þat var valr. Hann settisk hjá álptinni ok lét blítt við hana, ok síðan flugu þau í brott bæði samt í sömu ætt, ok þá vaknaða ek. Ok er draumr þessi ómerkilig,' segir hann, ' ok mun vera fyrir veðrum, at þau mœtask í lopti ór þeim ættum er mér þóttu fuglarnir fljúga.'

Austmaðr segir, ' Ekki er þat mín ætlan,' segir hann, ' at svá sé.'

Þorsteinn mælti, ' Ger af drauminum slíkt er þér sýnisk líkligast, ok lát mik heyra.'

Austmaðr mælti, ' Fuglar þeir munu vera manna fylgjur.¹ En húsfreyja þín er eigi heil ok mun hon fœða meybarn frítt ok fagrt, ok munt þú unna því mikit. En gofgir menn munu biðja dóttur þinnar ór þeim ættum sem þér þóttu ernirnir fljúga at, ok leggja á hana ofrást ok berjask of hana ok látask báðir af því efni. Ok því næst mun inn þriði maðr biðja hennar ór þeiri ætt er valrinn fló at, ok þeim mun hon ^a gipt vera. Nú hefi ek þýddan draum þinn svá sem ^b ek hygg eptir munu ganga.'

Þorsteinn svarar, ' Illa er draumr ráðinn ok óvingjarnliga,' sagði hann, ' ok munt þú ekki drauma ráða kunna.'

Austmaðr svarar, ' Þú munt at raun um komask hversu eptir gengr.'

Þorsteinn lagði fæð á Austmanninn, ok fór hann á brott um sumarit ok er hann nú ór sögunni.

^a hon *B*, *om. A*

^b svá sem *B*, *om. A*

¹ See Glossary, s.v. *fylgja*

Thorstein said, 'In my dream, I seemed to be at home at Borg, standing outside and in front of the main doorway, and up on the roof-ridge of the house I saw a swan, a fine and lovely pen; I felt she was mine and I prized her highly.

'Then I saw a big eagle flying down from the mountains. He flew towards us and settled beside the swan and chattered gently to her, and at that she seemed well pleased. Then I saw that the eagle had black eyes and claws of iron; he looked active and bold.

'Next, I saw another bird flying from the south. He flew here to Borg and landed on the house beside the swan and tried to win her favour; this bird was a big eagle too. Now, it seemed to me that the first eagle soon got very angry when the other arrived, and they had a long fierce fight, and I saw that both of them were bleeding. The struggle ended with both of them falling off the roof, each on his own side; and they were both dead. The swan stayed there, very sad and dejected.

'And then I saw a bird flying from the west; it was a falcon. He landed beside the swan and was gentle with her, and by and by they flew away together in the same direction. Then I woke up.

'It's a trifling dream,' he concluded, 'and must signify the winds, which will meet in the sky following the same paths as the birds seemed to take in their flight.'

'That's not my opinion of what it means,' said the Norwegian.

'Interpret the dream as you think most likely, and let me hear,' said Thorstein.

'These birds must be people's wraiths,'¹ began the Norwegian. 'Your wife is bearing a child, and she'll give birth to a fine and beautiful baby girl, and you will love her dearly. Well-born men will come from the same directions as the eagles in your dream to ask for your daughter in marriage; their love for her will be beyond all reason, they will fight over her, and both of them will die because of this. Then from the same direction as the hawk, there will come a third man to woo her, and she will marry him. There, now, is my explanation of your dream, and I think it will turn out to be right.'

'Your explanation of the dream is spiteful and unfriendly,' answered Thorstein, 'and it can't be true that you know anything about interpreting dreams.'

'You'll find out for yourself how far it will come true,' said the Norwegian.

Thorstein turned against him after this; he went away in the summer and appears no more in the story.

3

Um sumarit bjósk Þorsteinn til þings,¹ ok mælti til Jófríðar húsfreyju áðr hann fór heiman, 'Svá er háttat,' segir hann, 'at þú ert með barni, ok skal þat barn út bera ef þú fœðir meybarn, en upp fœða ef sveinn er.' Ok þat var þá siðvanði nokkur, er land var allt alheiðit, at ^a þeir menn er félitlir váru en stóð ómegð mjök til handa létu út bera börn sín; ok þótti þó illa gort ávallt.

Ok er Þorsteinn hafði þetta mælt, þá svarar Jófríðr, 'Þetta er óþínsliga mælt,' segir hon, 'slíkr maðr sem þú ert, ok mun þér eigi sýnask þetta at láta gera, svá auðigr maðr ^b sem þú ert.' Þorsteinn svarar, 'Veizt þú skaplyndi mitt,' segir hann, 'at eigi mun hlýðisamt verða ef af er brugðit.'

Síðan reið hann til þings, en Jófríðr fœddi meðan meybarn ákafa fagrt. Konur vildu þat bera at henni, en hon kvað þess litla þorf ok lét þangat kalla smalamann sinn, er Þorvarðr hét, ok mælti hon, 'Hest minn skaltu taka ok leggja sǫðul á ok færa barn þetta vestr ² í Hjarðarholt Þorgerði Egilsdóttur,³ ok bið hana upp fœða með leynd svá at Þorsteinn verði eigi varr við. Ok þeim ástaraugum renni ek til barns þessa at víst eigi nenni ek at þat sé út borit. En hér eru þrjár merkr ⁴ silfrs er þú skalt hafa at verkkaupi, en Þorgerðr skal fá þér fari vestr þar ok vist um haf.'

Þorvarðr gerði sem hon mælti; síðan reið hann vestr í Hjarðarholt með barnit ok fekk Þorgerði í hendr. En hon lét upp fœða landseta sína er bjuggu inn á Leysingjastǫðum í Hvammsfirði. En hon tók Þorvarði fari norðr í Steingrímsfirði í Skeljavík ok vist of haf; ok fór hann þar útan ok er hann nú ór sǫgunni.

Ok er Þorsteinn kom heim af þingi, þá segir Jófríðr honum at barnit er út borit sem hann hafði fyrir mælt, en smalamaðr var í brott hlaupinn ok stolit í brott hesti hennar. Þorsteinn kvað hana hafa vel gort, ok fekk sér smalamann annan.

Nú liðu svá sex vetr at þetta varð ekki víst. Ok þá reið Þorsteinn

^a at *B*, *om. A*

^b *B* adds : ok vinsæll

¹ i.e. the Great Assembly; see Glossary, s.v. *Alþingi*

² Hjarðarholt is almost due north of Borg, but to use the term *vestr* in opposition to *suðr* is a peculiarity of both the old and modern language in the west of Iceland. *Norðr* is used to refer to movement into the Northern Quarter of the country.

3

In the summer, Thorstein got ready for the assembly,¹ and before he left he spoke to his wife Jófríd: 'Now it's so,' he said, 'that you are going to have a child, and if you have a girl, it must be put out to die, but if it's a boy, then it's to be brought up.' When the land was entirely heathen, it was the custom in some places for poor men with many dependants to let their children die from exposure. Even so, it was always considered a bad thing to do.

And when Thorstein said this, Jófríd replied, 'It's not seemly for such a man as you to say a thing like that, and you can't approve of having this done, considering how well-off you are.'

'You know my temper,' answered Thorstein, 'and that things will take a nasty turn if what I say is disregarded.'

Afterwards he rode to the assembly.

Jófríd gave birth to a gloriously beautiful baby girl. Her women wanted to bring it to her, but she said there was little need for that, and sent someone for her shepherd; he was called Thorvard.

'You shall take my horse and saddle it,' she said, 'and carry this child westwards² to Thorgerd, Egil's daughter,³ at Hjardarholt, and tell her to bring it up secretly so that Thorstein doesn't get to know. I am so fond of this child that I certainly couldn't bear her to be put out to die. Here are three marks⁴ of silver which you shall have as wages for this work, and Thorgerd will arrange a passage abroad for you there in the west and find you provisions for your voyage.'

Thorvard did as she told him. Then he rode west to Hjardarholt with the baby and handed it over to Thorgerd. And she had it brought up by tenants of hers who lived at Leysingjastadir on Hvammsfjord. She arranged a passage for Thorvard in the north at Skeljavík in Steingrímsfjord, and got him provisions for his journey; from there he left Iceland, and he appears no more in the story.

When Thorstein came home from the assembly, Jófríd told him that the child had been exposed to die, just as he had said, but that the shepherd had run away and stolen her horse. Thorstein said she had done well and got himself another shepherd.

Now six years passed without this being found out. Then Thorstein

³ Thorstein's sister, Egil's eldest child, and wife of Ólaf the Peacock

⁴ See Glossary, s.v. *mork*

til heimboðs vestr í Hjarðarholt til Óláfs pá¹ mágs síns Høskuldssonar, er þá þótti vera með mestri virðingu allra höfðingja vestr þar. Þorsteini var þar vel fagnat sem líkligt var.

Ok á einhvern dag at veizlunni er þat sagt at Þorgerðr sat á tali við Þorstein bróður sinn í qndvegi,² en Óláfr átti tal við aðra menn. En yfir gegnt þeim á bekkinum sátu meyjar þrjár.

Þá mælti Þorgerðr, 'Hversu lízk þér, bróðir, á stúlkur^a þessar er hér sitja gegnt okkr?'

Hann svarar, 'Allvel,' segir hann, 'ok er þó ein fegrst miklu, ok hefir hon vænleik Óláfs en hvíti^b ok yfirbragð vart Mýramanna.'³

Þorgerðr svarar, 'Víst er þat satt er þú segir, bróðir, at hon hefir hvíti ok yfirbragð vart Mýramanna, en eigi vænleik Óláfs pá, því at hon er eigi hans dóttir.'

'Hversu má þat vera,' segir Þorsteinn, 'en þó sé hon þín dóttir?'

Hon svarar, 'Með sannendum at segja þér, frændi,' kvað hon, 'þá er þessi þín dóttir en eigi mín, in fagra mærl.'

Ok segir honum síðan allt sem farit hafði, ok biðr hann fyrirgefa sér ok konu sinni þessi afbrigði.

Þorsteinn mælti, 'Ekki kann ek ykkir at ásaka um þetta, ok veltr þangat sem vera vill um flesta hluti, ok hafi þit vel yfir slétt vanhyggju mína. Lízk mér svá á mey þessa at mér þykkir mikil gipta í at eiga jafnfagrt barn. Eða hvat heitir hon?'

'Helga heitir hon,' segir Þorgerðr.

'Helga in fagra,' segir Þorsteinn. 'Nú skalt þú búa ferð hennar heim með mér.'

Hon gerði svá. Þorsteinn var þaðan út leiddr með góðum gjöfum, ok reið Helga heim með honum, ok fæddisk þar upp með mikilli virðing ok ást af föður ok móður ok qlum frændum.

^a meyjarnar *B*; *stúlka*, the usual word for 'girl' in modern Icelandic, is rare in the old language. ^b en hvíti *B*, ins hvíta *A*

¹ On Ólaf and his family see especially *Laxdælas*. His father is said to have given him his nickname on account of his magnificence (ibid. ch. 16).

² See Glossary, s.v. *stofa*

³ In *Laxdælas*. ch. 20, Ólaf is called 'the most handsome man in appearance that anyone has ever seen.' The fair colouring of the Borg family was said to

rode west to Hjärdarholt to a feast at the house of his brother-in-law, Ólaf Höskuldsson the Peacock,¹ who at that time was the most respected of all the chieftains there in the west. As might be expected, Thorstein was given a good welcome.

And one day at the feast, it is said that Thorgerd sat chatting to her brother Thorstein in the high-seat,² while Ólaf was in conversation with other men. Over on the bench opposite them were sitting three girls.

‘ Brother,’ said Thorgerd then, ‘ how do you like the look of those girls sitting opposite us ? ’

‘ Very well,’ he said, ‘ yet one is by far the most beautiful ; she has Ólaf’s handsomeness but the fair complexion and the features of us Fen-folk.’³

‘ You’re certainly right, brother, when you say that she has the fairness and features of us Fen-folk,’ replied Thorgerd ; ‘ but she hasn’t got the good looks of Ólaf the Peacock, because she’s not his daughter ! ’

‘ But if she’s your daughter,’ asked Thorstein, ‘ how can that be ? ’

‘ To tell you the truth, kinsman,’ she replied, ‘ this lovely girl is not my daughter but yours.’

Then she told him all that had happened and begged him to forgive her and his wife for this deceit.

‘ I can’t reproach you for this,’ said Thorstein. ‘ In most cases, events turn out as they must, and you’ve well made up for my lack of forethought. I like the look of this girl so much that I count myself very lucky to have such a lovely child. But what’s her name ? ’

‘ She’s called Helga,’ said Thorgerd.

‘ Helga the Fair,’ said Thorstein. ‘ Now you must get her ready to come home with me.’

And so she did. Thorstein was given fine gifts when he left, and Helga rode home with him and grew up there, greatly loved and treasured by her father and mother and all her kin.

come from Kveld-Úlf’s wife, Salbjörg ; it appeared in their son Thórólf and their grandson Thórólf Skalla-Grímsson and again in Thorstein and Helga. Skalla-Grím and Egil were like Kveld-Úlf, dark and ugly. cf. *Egilss.* chs. 1, 31, 87.

4

Þenna tíma^a bjó uppi á Hvítársíðu á Gilsbakka Illugi svarti Hallkelsson Hrosskelssonar¹; móðir Illuga var Þuríðr dylla,^b dóttir Gunnlaugs ormstungu. Illugi var annarr mestr hofðingi í Borgarfirði en Þorsteinn Egilsson. Illugi svarti var stóreignamaðr ok harðlyndr mjök ok helt vel vini sína. Hann átti Ingibjörgu, dóttur Ásbjarnar Harðarsonar ór Qrnólfsdal; móðir Ingibjargar var Þorgerðr,² dóttir Miðfjarðar-Skeggja.³ Børn Ingibjargar ok Illuga váru mǫrg, en fá koma við þessa sögu. Hermundr hét sonr þeira, en annarr Gunnlaugr. Báðir váru þeir efniligir menn ok þá frumvaxta.^c ⁴

Svá er sagt frá Gunnlaugi at hann var snemmendis bráðgǫrr, mikill ok sterkr, ljósjarpr á hár ok fór allvel, svarteygr ok nokkut nefljótr ok skapfelligr í andliti, miðmjór ok herðimikill, kominn á sik manna bezt,^d hávaðamaðr mikill í ǫllu skaplyndi ok framgjarn snemmendis ok við allt óvæginn ok harðr, ok skáld mikit ok heldr níðskár ok kallaðr Gunnlaugr ormstunga.⁵ Hermundr var þeira vinsælli, ok hafði hofðingjabragð á sér.

Ok er Gunnlaugr var tólf^e vetra gamall, bað hann fǫður sinn fararefna⁶ ok kvazk hann vilja fara útan ok sjá sið annarra manna. Illugi bóndi tók því seinliga, kvað hann eigi mundu þykkja góðan í útlǫndum, er hann þóttisk trautt mega semja hann þar heima sem hann vildi.

Ok einnhvern morgin var þat alllitlu síðar at Illugi bóndi gekk út snemma ok sá at útibúr hans var opit ok váru lagðir út vǫrusekkar nokkurir á hlaðit⁷ sex, ok þar lénur með. Hann undraðisk þetta mjök. Þar gekk þá at maðr ok leiddi fjögur hross, ok var þar Gunnlaugr sonr hans, ok mælti, 'Ek hefi sekkana út lagit,' segir hann.

^a svá er sagt at í þann tíma *B*

^b Þuríðr dylla *B*; the scribe of *A* left a space in which the name has been added in a hand of the seventeenth or eighteenth century.

^c *A* adds: maðr

^d manna bezt *A*, vel ok inn hermannligasti í viðbragði ǫllu *B*

^e xii (= 12) *A*, xv (= 15) *B*

¹ Illugi is chiefly known otherwise from *Eyrbyggjas.* and *Heiðarvígas.* He came of a distinguished family, his grandfather Hrosskel being considered one of the noblest settlers in the Western Quarter (*Landnámabók* 125, 180). An ancestor of his mother was Björn buna, from whose sons 'almost all the great men in Iceland were descended' (*ibid.* 9).

² In *Landnámabók* and other sources she is called Thorbjörg, probably her correct name.

³ On Skeggi of Midfjord see especially *Landnámabók* 57-8, 180-1, *Kormákss.* and *Þórðars. hreðu* (ed. Guðni Jónsson, in *Íslendinga sögur* VI, 1946).

At that time at Gilsbakki in Hvítársíða there lived Illugi the Black, the son of Hallkel Hrosskelsson.¹ Illugi's mother was Thuríd Sow-thistle, the daughter of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue. After Thorstein Egilsson, Illugi was the greatest chief in Borgarfjord; he was a great land-owner, a man of very stern resolve, and one who championed his friends. He was married to Ingibjörg, the daughter of Ásbjörn Hardarson from Örnólfsdal. Ingibjörg's mother was Thorgerd,² the daughter of Skeggi of Midfjord.³ Ingibjörg and Illugi had many children, but few come into this story; one of their sons was called Hermund and another Gunnlaug; they were both promising lads and just grown up at this time.⁴

It is told of Gunnlaug that he was precocious, tall and strong; he had light chestnut hair which suited him very well, dark eyes and rather an ugly nose. He had a pleasing face, slender waist and broad shoulders; he was very well set up, thoroughly obstreperous in disposition, ambitious already at an early age, unyielding in everything, ruthless and an able poet, but rather a scurrilous one; he was called Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue.⁵ Hermund was the more popular of the two and had the bearing of a man of rank.

When Gunnlaug was twelve years old, he asked his father for some merchandise to meet travelling expenses,⁶ and said he wanted to go abroad to see how other men lived. Squire Illugi was reluctant to hear of this; he said that foreigners would not think highly of him, when his own father found himself scarcely able to shape him at home as he would wish.

Very soon afterwards it happened that Illugi went outside early one morning and saw that his store-house was open, and that half a dozen sacks of merchandise had been brought out onto the paving,⁷ and saddle-pads with them. He was greatly surprised at this. Then someone came along leading four horses, and it was his son Gunnlaug.

⁴ Two children, other than Hermund and Gunnlaug, are named in *Landnámabók*. Hermund is a principal character in *Bandamannas*.

⁵ cf. the description of Hallfred in *Hallfreðars*. ch. 2: (Hann) var snimma mikill ok sterkr, karlmannligr ok skolbrúnn nokkut ok heldr nefljótr, jarpr á hár, ok fór vel; skáld var hann gott ok heldr níðskár ok margbreytinn; ekki var hann vinsæll.

⁶ The merchandise would be in the form of homespun cloth; cf. Glossary, s.v. *mork*.

⁷ A stretch of stamped earth or gravel, sometimes of larger stones, in front of the farmhouse

Illugi spyr hví hann gerði svá. Hann segir at þat skyldi vera fararefni hans. Illugi mælti, 'Engi ráð skalt þú taka af mér, ok fara hvergi fyrr en ek vil'; ok kippði inn aptr vörusekkunum.

Gunnlaugr reið þá í brott þaðan ok kom um kveldit ofan til Borgar; ok bauð Þorsteinn bóndi honum þar at vera ok þat þiggr hann. Gunnlaugr segir Þorsteini hversu farit hafði með þeim feðgum. Þorsteinn bað hann þar vera þeim stundum sem hann vildi.

Ok þar var hann þau missari ok nam lögspeki at Þorsteini, ok virðisk öllum mönnum þar vel til hans. Jafnan skemmtu þau Helga sér at tafli¹ ok Gunnlaugr. Lagði hvárt þeira góðan þokka til annars bráðliga, sem raunir bar á síðan; þau váru mjök jafnaldrar. Helga var svá fagr at þat er sögn fróðra manna at hon hafi fegrst kona verit á Íslandi. Hár hennar var svá mikit at þat mátti hylja hana alla, ok svá fagrt sem gull barit. Ok engi kostr þótti þá þvílíkr sem Helga in fagra í öllum Borgarfirði ok víðara annars staðar.

Ok einnvern dag er menn sátu í stofu at Borg, þá mælti Gunnlaugr til Þorsteins, 'Einn er sá hlutr í lögum er þú hefir eigi kennt mér—at fastna mér konu.'²

Þorsteinn segir, 'Þat er lítit mál,' ok kenndi honum atferli.

Þá mælti Gunnlaugr, 'Nú skalt þú vita hvárt mér hafi skilizk, ok mun ek nú taka í hönd þér ok láta sem ek festa mér Helgu dóttur þína.'

Þorsteinn segir, 'Þarfleysi ætla ek þat vera,' segir hann.

Gunnlaugr þreifaði þá þegar í hönd honum, ok mælti, 'Veit mér nú þetta,' segir hann.

'Ger sem þú vill,' segir Þorsteinn, 'en þat skulu þeir vita er hjá eru staddir at þetta skal vera sem ómælt, ok þessu skulu engi undirmál fylgja.'

Síðan nefndi Gunnlaugr sér vátta ok fastnaði sér Helgu, ok spurði síðan hvárt þá mætti svá nýta. Hann kvað svá vera mega. Ok varð mönnum mikit gaman at þessu, þeim er við váru staddir.

¹ A chequer-board game, probably of the 'fox-and-geese' type. Chess was not introduced into Iceland until the twelfth century.

² See Glossary, s.v. *festarkona*

‘I’ve got the sacks out,’ he said.

Illugi asked why he had done so. He said that these would do to pay for his journey abroad.

‘You shall not usurp my authority, and you shall not make any journey sooner than I think fit,’ said Illugi, and he pulled the sacks back in again.

Then Gunnlaug rode off and in the evening arrived down in Borg. Squire Thorstein invited him to stay there and he accepted. Gunnlaug told Thorstein what had passed between him and his father, and Thorstein told him to stay there as long as he liked.

Gunnlaug stayed there that year and learnt law from Thorstein, and was highly regarded by everyone. He and Helga were always amusing themselves by playing draughts¹ together; they quickly took a strong liking to each other, as events showed afterwards. They were much the same age. Helga was so beautiful that learned men say that she was the loveliest woman Iceland has known. She had so much hair that it could cover her completely, and it was as fair as beaten gold. People thought there was no match as good as Helga the Fair in the whole of Borgarfjord or a long way farther afield either.

One day when members of the household at Borg were sitting in the parlour, Gunnlaug said to Thorstein, ‘There’s one point of law which you haven’t taught me: how to get engaged to a woman.’²

‘That’s a small matter,’ said Thorstein, and taught him the procedure.

Then Gunnlaug said, ‘Now you shall see whether I’ve understood it. I’ll take you by the hand and act as though I am becoming engaged to your daughter Helga.’

‘I see no point in that,’ said Thorstein.

Gunnlaug at once grasped his hand and said, ‘Let me have my way in this.’

‘As you like,’ replied Thorstein, ‘but those present here must understand that this is to be counted as unsaid, and there must be no trickery behind it.’

Then Gunnlaug appointed his witnesses and became engaged to Helga. He then asked Thorstein whether that would do, and he said it would. The people present were much amused at this.

Önundr hét maðr er bjó suðr at Mosfelli. Hann var auðmaðr inn mesti ok hafði goðorð¹ suðr þar um nésin. Hann var kvángaðr maðr ok hét Geirný kona hans, Gnúpsdóttir Molda-Gnúpssonar er nam suðr Grindavík.² Þeira synir váru þeir Hrafn ok Þórarinn ok Eindriði^{a 3}; allir váru þeir efniligir menn, en þó var Hrafn fyrir þeim í hvívetna. Hann var mikill maðr ok sterkr, manna sjáligastr ok skáld gott, ok er hann var mjök rosknaðr, þá fór hann landa á milli ok virðisk hvervetna vel þar sem hann kom.

Þá bjó suðr á Hjalla í Qlfusi þeir Þóroddr inn spaki Eyvindarson ok Skapti, sonr hans, er þá var lögsögumaðr^b á Íslandi.⁴ Móðir Skapta var Rannveig, dóttir Gnúps Molda-Gnúpssonar, ok váru þeir systra synir Skapti ok Önundarsynir. Var þar^c vinátta mikil með frændsemi.

Þá bjó út at Rauðamel Þorfinnr Sel-Þórisson ok átti sjau sonu ok váru allir efniligir menn. Þeir hétu svá: Þorgils, Eyjólf^d ok Þórir, ok váru þeir mestir menn út þangat.⁵

Ok þessir menn er nú eru nefndir váru allir uppi á einn tíma.

Ok þessu nær^e urðu þau tíðendi, er bezt hafa orðit hér á Íslandi, at landit varð allt kristit ok allt fólk hafnaði fornum átrúnaði.⁶

Gunnlaugr ormstunga, er áðr var frá sagt, var nú ýmist at Borg með Þorsteini eða heima með^f Illuga feðr sínum á Gilsbakka sex^g vetr, ok var hann þá átján vetra, ok samðisk þá mikit með þeim feðgum.

Maðr hét Þorkell svarti; hann var heimamaðr Illuga ok náfrændi ok hafði þar upp vaxit. Honum tæmðisk arfr norðr í Vatnsdal í Ási, ok beiddi hann Gunnlaug fara með sér, ok hann gerði svá. Ok riðu

^a Eyvindr *B* ^b lögsögumaðr *B*, lögmaðr *A* ^c þar *B*, om. *A*
^d ok Eyvindr *B* ^e næst *B* ^f heima með *B*, om. *A*
^g vi (= 6) *A*, ii (= 2) *B*

¹ See Glossary, s.v. *goði*. It is not known that Önund was able to inherit a *goðorð*; c. A.D. 1000 the power 'in the neighbourhood of the Nesses' was in the hands of the family at Reykjavík, descendants of Ingólf Arnarson, the first settler in Iceland.

² On Molda-Gnúp and his settlement in Iceland, see *Landnámabók* 100, 214

³ Þórarinn and Eindriði (Eyvind in MS *B*) are mentioned in no other source.

⁴ See Glossary, s.v. *lögsögumaðr*. Skapti held office from 1004 to 1030, a longer period than any other Law-Speaker; he had a great and peaceful influence, see *Íslb.* 54, 67.

⁵ Originally the seven sons of Thorfinn may have been named here; their names are given in *Landnámabók* 147, but there is no mention there of one called Eyjólf (Eyvind in MS *B*).

There was a man called Önund who lived south at Mosfell. He was a very well-to-do man and had chieftain's rank there in the south in the neighbourhood of the Nesses.¹ He was married and his wife was called Geirný; she was the daughter of Gnúp, the son of Molda-Gnúp who settled at Grindavík in the south.² Hrafn, Thórarin and Eindridi were their sons³; they were all promising men, but Hrafn was superior in everything; he was big and strong, extremely handsome, and a good poet. When he was just about grown up, he travelled from country to country and was well liked everywhere he went.

South at Hjalli in Ölfus at this time there lived Thórodd Eyvindarson the Wise and his son Skapti who was then the Law-Speaker in Iceland.⁴ Skapti's mother was Rannveig, the daughter of Gnúp Molda-Gnúpsson, and so Skapti and Önund's sons were first cousins through their mothers. The kinship between them was accompanied by great friendship.

There lived then out at Raudamel, Thorfinn Seal-Thórisson; he had seven sons and they were all promising fellows; their names were Thorgils, Eyjólf and Thórir, and they were the foremost men in that district.⁵

All these men who have been mentioned were living at the same period.

About this time occurred the best event in the history of Iceland, when the whole country became Christian and everyone abandoned the old belief.⁶

For six years now, Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue, of whom we spoke earlier, had been living partly at Borg with Thorstein and partly at Gilsbakki with Illugi his father. He was then eighteen years old, and he and his father were now on much better terms.

There was a man called Thorkel the Black who was a member of Illugi's household; he was a close relative as well and had grown up at Gilsbakki. He came in for a legacy in the north at Ás in Vatnsdal, and he asked Gunnlaug to go there with him, which he did. The two of them rode together north to Ás, where, thanks to Gunnlaug's

⁶ The conversion of Iceland took place in the year 1000; see *Íslb.* 52-4, 64-7, and *Kristnis*. There is an account of earlier missionary activity in *Kristnis*. and *Páttir Þorvalds ins víðfjara* (both in *Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek* 11, 1905).

norðr tveir saman í Ás ok fengu féit, ok greiddu þeir féit af höndum er varðveitt höfðu, með atgöngu Gunnlaugs.

Ok er þeir riðu norðan, gistu þeir í Grímstungum at auðigs bónda er þar bjó. Ok um morgininn ^a tók smalamaðr hest Gunnlaugs, ok var þá sveittr mjök er þeir fengu. Gunnlaugr laust smalamanninn í óvit. Bóndi vildi eigi svá búit hafa ok beiddi bóta fyrir. Gunnlaugr bauð at gjalda bónda mörk ; bónda þótti þat of lítit.¹ Gunnlaugr kvað þá vísu ^b :

(1) Mörk bauðk mundangssterkum
manni, tyggja ^c ranna ^d :
grásíma ^e ² skaltu góma ^f
glóðspýtis ^g ³ þat nýta ;
iðrask munt ef yðrum,
alráðs ^h flóða, ór sjóði
lætr eyðandi ⁱ líða
linns samlegu ^k kindar.⁴

Þessi varð sætt þeira sem Gunnlaugr bauð, ok riðu þeir suðr heim við svá búit.

Ok litlu síðar beiddi Gunnlaugr föður sinn fararefna í annat sinn Illugi segir, 'Nú skal vera sem þú vill,' segir hann ; 'hefir þú nú heldr samit þik ór því sem var.'

Reið Illugi þá heiman skjótt ok keypti skip hálf til handa Gunnlaugi er uppi stóð í Gufuárósi at Auðuni festargarm.^l Þessi Auðunn vildi eigi útan flytja sonu Ósvífrs ins spaka eptir víg Kjartans Ólafssonar, sem segir í Laxdæla sögu, ok varð þat þó síðar en þetta.⁵

Ok er Illugi kom heim, þá þakkaði Gunnlaugr honum vel. Þorkell svarti rézk til ferðar með Gunnlaugi, ok var fluttr varnaðr þeira til skips. En Gunnlaugr var at Borg meðan þeir bjuggu skipit,^m ok þótti glaðara at tala við Helgu en vera í starfi með kaupmönnum.

Einnhvern dag spurði Þorsteinn Gunnlaug ef hann vildi ríða til hrossa með honum upp í Langavatnsdal. Gunnlaugr kvazk þat vilja.

^a *A* adds : ok

^b Gunnlaugr . . . kindar *om.* *A*, though space is left for the verse.

^c tyggja *NN.* 544, tygiast *B*

^d ranna *Ísls.* II (but in a different sense), tanna *B*

^e grásíma *Jónsson* (1934), grasena *B* ^f góma *Wimmer*, gona *B*

^g glóðspýtis *NN.* 544, glospyrr *B* ^h al- : all- *B*

ⁱ eyðandi *Þorkelsson* (1868), eyannda *B* ^k samlegu *Wimmer*, samlagar *B*

^l -gram *AB*, emended -garm ^m þeir skipit (*sic*) *A*, þeir bjuggusk *B*

¹ The legal penalty for the offence of the shepherd was a fine of three marks. For knocking him out Gunnlaug might have been sentenced to full outlawry (cf. *Grágás* Ib 61, Ia 149). ² *Grásíma* : 'grey-wire,' i.e. silver

furtherance, they got the money, and the men who had had charge of it handed it over.

When they were riding back from the north, they put up at Grímstungur with a rich farmer who lived there. And in the morning a shepherd made off with Gunnlaug's horse which was sweating heavily when they recovered it. Gunnlaug struck the shepherd and knocked him out. The farmer would not let the matter rest there and demanded compensation. Gunnlaug offered to pay him a mark, but the farmer thought that was not enough.¹ Gunnlaug replied with a verse, saying:

A mark I offered to the man of middle-strength,
this lord of dwellings ;
that grey-wire ² of the firespitter ³ shall you enjoy.

You will repent if from your purse you wastefully
let slip this bed of the ocean-mighty serpent's kin.⁴

It was agreed that Gunnlaug's offer should be accepted, and when this was settled they rode southwards home.

A short time afterwards, Gunnlaug asked his father a second time for merchandise for a voyage abroad.

'Now you shall have your way,' said Illugi. 'You're a good deal steadier than you were before.'

Illugi rode off from home straight away and from Audun Fettered-Hound bought Gunnlaug half-share in a ship which was laid up at the mouth of the Gufuá. This Audun was the man who would not ship abroad the sons of Ósvífr the Wise after the killing of Kjartan Ólafsson, as it is told in the *Men of Laxdal's Saga*, but that was later than this.⁵

When Illugi came home, Gunnlaug thanked him warmly. Thorkel the Black undertook the voyage with Gunnlaug, and their goods were carried to the ship. But while they were getting the ship ready, Gunnlaug was at Borg and thought it pleasanter to chat to Helga than to work with the merchants.

One day, Thorstein asked Gunnlaug if he would like to ride with him up to his horses in Langavatnsdal, and Gunnlaug said he would.

³ *Glóðspýtir góma*: 'live-coal-spitter of the mouth (lit. gums),' a reference to the man Gunnlaug has struck, who is spitting blood red as hot embers

⁴ *Samlega kindar linns alráðs flóða*: 'the common bed of the offspring of the serpent all-powerful in the waters'; the serpent all-powerful in the waters is Midgardsorm, his offspring is the serpent-race in general, their common bed is gold. The second half of this verse is corrupt and no wholly satisfactory emendation has so far been proposed; see *Porkelsson* (1880) and *Fornrit* for other interpretations.

⁵ cf. *Laxdælas*. ch. 51

Nú ríða þeir tveir saman þar til er þeir koma til selja Þorsteins er heita á Þorgilsstöðum, ok váru þar stóðhross er Þorsteinn átti, fjögur saman ok váru rauð at lit. Hestr var allvænligr^a ok lítt reyndr.¹ Þorsteinn bauð at gefa Gunnlaugi hrossin, en hann kvazk eigi hrossa þurfa, er hann ætlaði af landi. Ok þá riðu þeir til annarra stóðhrossa : var þar hestr grár með fjórum merum, ok var sá baztr í Borgarfirði, ok bauð Þorsteinn at gefa þann Gunnlaugi.

Hann svarar, 'Eigi vil ek þessi heldr en hin. Eða hví býðr þú mér eigi þat er ek vil þiggja ?'

'Hvat er þat ?' segir Þorsteinn.

Gunnlaugr mælti, 'Helga in fagra, dóttir þín.'

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Eigi mun svá skjótt ráðask,' segir hann, ok tók annat mál ; ok riðu heimleiðis ofan með Langá.

Þá mælti Gunnlaugr, 'Vita vil ek,' segir hann, 'hverju þú vill svara mér um bónorðit.'

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Ekki sinni ek hégóma þínum,' segir hann.

Gunnlaugr mælti, 'Þetta er alhugi minn, en eigi hégómi.'^b

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Vita skyldir þú fyrst hvat þú vildir. Ertu eigi ráðinn til útanferðar ? — ok lætr þó sem þú skylir kvángask ! Er þat ekki jafnræði með ykkur Helgu meðan þú ert svá óráðinn, ok mun því ekki verða á litit.'

Gunnlaugr mælti, 'Hvar til ætlar þú um gjaforð dóttur þinnar, ef þú vill eigi gipta syni Illuga svarta ? Eða hvar eru þeir í Borgarfirði er meira háttar sé en hann ?'

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Ekki fer ek í mannjöfnuð,' segir hann, 'en værir þú slíkr maðr sem hann, þá myndi þér eigi frá vísat.'

Gunnlaugr mælti, 'Hverjum villtu heldr gipta dóttur þína en mér ?'

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Mart er hér gott mannval — Þorfinnr at Rauðamel á sjau sonu ok alla vel mannaða.'^c

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Hvárrgi þeira Önundar² né Þorfinns er jafnmenni föður míns, því at þik skortir sýnt við hann. Eða hvat hefir þú í móti því er hann deildi kappi við Þorgrím goða Kjallaksson á Þórnessþingi ok við sonu hans, ok hafði einn þat er við lá ?'³

^a al- *A*, om. *B*

^b *B* adds : en þú munt vita hverju þú vill svara.

^c vel mennta, ok má slíks eigi mun gera mikinn *B*

¹ i.e. in horse-fighting

² There may originally have been a reference to Önund in Thorstein's speech.

³ cf. *Eyrbyggjas*. ch. 17. The dispute concerned Illugi's claim for his wife's dowry.

They rode off together till they came to Thorstein's pasture-sheds at a place called Thorgilsstadir, where there was a stud of four chestnut horses belonging to Thorstein. The stallion was particularly fine—a horse that had been little tried.¹ Thorstein offered to give the stud to Gunnlaug, but he said he had no need of horses, since he meant to go abroad. They then rode off to some other stud-horses. There, with four mares, was a grey stallion which was the best horse in Borgarfjord. Thorstein offered to give it to Gunnlaug.

'I don't want these horses any more than the others,' he replied. 'But why don't you offer me something I am willing to accept?'

'What is that?' asked Thorstein.

'Your daughter, Helga the Fair,' said Gunnlaug.

'That won't be settled so quickly,' answered Thorstein, and changed the subject. They rode homewards down along Langá.

Then Gunnlaug said, 'I should like to know what answer you will give to my suit.'

'I'm not pandering to your fancies,' replied Thorstein.

'This is sincerely meant and is not a fancy,' said Gunnlaug.

'You should have made up your mind in the first place what you wanted to do,' answered Thorstein. 'Haven't you arranged to go abroad? Yet you talk as if you must be taking a wife! You're no fit match for Helga while you're so unsettled, and I'm not going to consider it.'

'Where do you think you will find a match for your daughter,' asked Gunnlaug, 'if you won't marry her to a son of Illugi the Black? Where are the men in Borgarfjord of greater consequence than he?'

'I won't start comparing men,' retorted Thorstein, 'but if you were such a man as he is, you would not be refused.'

'Who would you sooner see your daughter marry than me?' asked Gunnlaug.

'There's a good and plentiful choice of men here,' replied Thorstein. 'Thorfinn of Raudamel has seven sons, all manly fellows.'

'Neither Önund² nor Thorfinn is my father's equal,' answered Gunnlaug, 'when even you obviously fall short of him. Now, what have you to match this: at Thórness Assembly he fought a case against Thorgrím Kjallaksson the Chieftain and his sons, and single-handed won all that lay at stake.'³

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Ek stökkða í brott Steinari, syni Qnundar sjóna, ok þótti þat heldr mikilræði.'¹

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Egils nauztu at því, fōður þíns. Enda mun þat^a fám bóndum vel endask at synja mér mægðar.'

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Hafðu í frammi kúgan við þá uppi við fjöllin, en þat kemr þér fyrir ekki hér út á Mýrunum.'

Um kveldit koma þeir heim. Ok um morgininn ríðr Gunnlaugr upp á Gilsbakka ok bað fōður sinn ríða til kvánbœna með sér út til Borgar.

Illugi svarar, 'Þú ert óráðinn maðr, þar sem þú ert ráðinn til útanferðar en lætr nú sem þú skylir starfa í kvánbœnum. Ok veit ek at slíkt er ekki við skaplyndi Þorsteins.' Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Ek ætla þó útan allt eins, ok líkar mér ekki útan þú fylgir þessu.'

Síðan reið Illugi heiman með tólfta mann ofan til Borgar, ok tók Þorsteinn vel við honum.

Um morgininn snemma ræddi Illugi til Þorsteins, 'Ek vil tala við þik.'

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Gongum upp á Borgina ok tölum þar.'² Ok svá gerðu þeir. Gunnlaugr gekk með þeim.

Þá mælti Illugi, 'Gunnlaugr, frændi minn, kvezk hafa vakit bónorð við þik fyrir sína hōnd at biðja Helgu dóttur þinnar. En nú vil ek vita hvern stað eiga skal málit. Er þér kunnig ætt hans ok fjäreign vár; skal hvárki til spara af várri hendi staðfestu^b né mannaforráð,³ ef þá er nær en áðr.'

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Þat eitt finn ek Gunnlaugi at mér þykkir hann vera óráðinn,' segir hann; 'en ef hann væri þér líkr í skaplyndi, þá mynda ek lítt seinka.'

Illugi svarar, 'Þetta mun okkr verða at vinslitum, ef þú synjar okkr feðgum jafnræðis.'

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Fyrir þín orð,' segir hann, 'ok okkra vingan, þá skal Helga vera heitkona Gunnlaugs en eigi festarkona,⁴ ok bíða þrjá vetr. En Gunnlaugr skal fara útan ok skapa sik eptir góðra manna siðum. En ek skal lauss allra mála ef hann kemr eigi svá út eða mér virðisk eigi skapferði hans.'

^a þat B, þar A

^b staðfestu B, -festa A

¹ cf. *Egilss.* chs. 80–2. The dispute was caused by the trespass of Steinar on grazing-land owned by Thorstein.

² cf. *Eyrbyggjas.* ch. 28, where Snorri the Chieftain says, 'Then we should go up onto Helgafell; counsel taken there has most rarely been unfruitful.' Hills and mountains were frequently regarded as sacred.

³ i.e. a *gōdorð* or part of a *gōdorð*; see Glossary, s.v. *gōði*

⁴ See Glossary, s.v. *festarkona*

‘ I drove away Steinar, the son of Önund Keen-Eyes,’ said Thorstein. ‘ and that was considered something of an achievement.’¹

‘ Your father Egil helped you do that,’ retorted Gunnlaug. ‘ Anyway, it won’t be safe for many farmers to refuse a marriage-bond with me!’

‘ Keep your bullying for the folk who live up in the hills ; it won’t do you any good out here in the fens,’ answered Thorstein.

They arrived back in the evening, and next morning Gunnlaug rode up to Gilsbakki and asked his father to ride with him out to Borg to make a proposal of marriage.

‘ You are an unsettled fellow,’ replied Illugi. ‘ Here you are, determined to go abroad, and now you make out that you must be busy courting. I know that such behaviour is not to Thorstein’s liking.’

‘ I still intend to go abroad just the same,’ said Gunnlaug, ‘ but nothing will satisfy me unless you support this proposal.’

Later, Illugi rode off down to Borg with eleven companions, and Thorstein gave him a good welcome.

Early next morning, Illugi said to Thorstein, ‘ I should like to talk to you.’

‘ Let’s go up on the Borg and talk there,’² replied Thorstein, and so they did. Gunnlaug went with them.

Then Illugi said, ‘ My son Gunnlaug says he has made a proposal to you on his own behalf, asking for the hand of your daughter Helga. Now I should like to know what is to be the outcome of the matter. You know what family he comes from and our wealth : for my part, I shall see that he gets a farm and authority³ too, if that makes it any better.’

‘ I’ve only one fault to find with Gunnlaug,’ replied Thorstein ; ‘ he seems to me to be unsettled. If he were like you in character, I shouldn’t hesitate.’

‘ It will mean the end of our friendship,’ responded Illugi, ‘ if you deny that a match between our families would be an equal one.’

‘ Because of your pleading and for the sake of our friendship,’ said Thorstein, ‘ Helga shall be promised to Gunnlaug but not formally engaged,⁴ and she shall wait three years. And Gunnlaug must go abroad and model himself on the conduct of noble men. But I am to be held free from any obligation if he doesn’t return accordingly or if I don’t approve of his character.’

Ok við þetta skilja þeir. Ríðr Illugi heim en Gunnlaugr til skips. Ok er þeim gaf byr, létu þeir í haf, ok kómu skipi sínu norðr við Nóreg ok sigldu inn eptir Þrándheimi til Niðaróss,¹ ok lágu þar í lægi ok skipuðu upp.

¹ Thrándheim is the district now called Trøndelag; from the settlement at Nidarós grew the modern city of Trondheim. The northernmost part of

With this they parted. Illugi rode home and Gunnlaug rode to his ship, and when they got a favourable wind they put to sea and brought their ship to the north of Norway. They sailed along the coast of Thrándheim to Nidarós,¹ and berthed there and unloaded.

Norway proper at this time was Naumdœlafylki (modern Namdal), immediately north of Thrándheim ; north of that lay Hálogaland.

Þenna tíma réð fyrir Nóregi Eiríkr jarl Hákonarson ok Sveinn bróðir hans.¹ Eiríkr jarl hafði þá atsetu inn á Hlōðum² at fōðurleifð sinni ok var ríkr hōfðingi. Skúli Þorsteinsson var þá með jarli ok var hirðmaðr hans ok vel metinn.³

Þat er frá sagt at þeir Gunnlaugr ok Auðunn festargarmr^a gengu tólf menn saman inn á Hlaðir. Gunnlaugr var svá búinn at hann var í grám kyrtli ok í hvítum leistbrókum⁴; sull hafði hann á fœti niðri á ristinni; freyddi ór upp blóð ok vágr er hann gekk við. Ok með þeim búningi gekk hann fyrir jarlinn ok þeir Auðunn, ok kvōddu hann vel.

Jarl kenndi Auðun ok spyrr hann tíðenda af Íslandi, en Auðunn sagði slík sem váru. Jarl spyrr Gunnlaug hverr hann væri, en hann sagði honum nafn sitt ok ætt.

Jarl mælti, 'Skúli Þorsteinsson,' segir hann, 'hvat manna er þessi á Íslandi?'

'Herra,' segir hann, 'takið honum vel — hann er ins bezta manns sonr á Íslandi, Illuga svarta af Gilsbakka, ok fóstbróðir minn.'⁵

Jarl mælti, 'Hvat er fœti þínum, Íslendingr?'

'Sullr er á, herra,' sagði hann.

'Ok gekk þú þó ekki haltr?'

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Eigi skal haltr ganga meðan báðir fœtr eru jafnlangir.'

Þá mælti hirðmaðr jarls er Þórir^b hét, 'Þessi rembisk mikit Íslendingrinn, ok væri vel at vér freistaðim hans nōkkut.'

Gunnlaugr leit við honum ok mælti :

(2) Hirðmaðr er einn,
sá er einkar meinn.
Trúið honum vart :
hann er illr ok svartr.^c

^a -gramr AB, emended -garmr

^b Þórarinn B (and subsequently)

^c Gunnlaugr . . . svartr om. B

¹ Eric and Svein ruled as vassals of King Svein of Denmark from A.D. 1000. In 1015 Eric came to England to support King Knút and was made earl of Northumbria. He is last heard of in 1023. See A. Campbell, *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, 1949, 66 ff.

² Modern Lade, about two miles east of Trondheim, is said to have been established by Harald Finehair as the greatest of his chief estates (*Haraldss. hárfagra* in *Hkr.* I, ch. 9).

³ Skúli fought with Earl Eric at the battle of Svöld, A.D. 1000, when Óláf

At that time Earl Eric, the son of Hákon, and his brother Svein ruled Norway.¹ Earl Eric was then staying on his family estate at Hladir.² He was a powerful prince. Skúli Thorsteinsson was at the earl's court as his retainer at this time and enjoyed high favour.³

The story goes that Gunnlaug and Audun Fettered-Hound went in to Hladir, together with ten companions. Gunnlaug was wearing a grey tunic and white stocking-breeches⁴; he had a boil on his foot down on the instep, and blood and pus oozed up out of it when he put his weight on that foot. In this fashion he went before the earl with Audun and the rest, and they greeted him suitably.

The earl recognised Audun and asked him the news from Iceland, and Audun told him all there was. The earl asked Gunnlaug who he was, and he told him his name and family.

'Skúli Thorsteinsson,' said the earl, 'what sort of a man is this in Iceland?'

'Give him a good welcome, my lord,' he said. 'He's the son of one of the noblest men in Iceland, Illugi the Black of Gilsbakki, and he's my foster-brother.'⁵

'What's wrong with your foot, Icelander?' asked the earl.

'I've a boil on it, my lord,' he replied.

'And yet you weren't limping?'

'A man mustn't limp while both his legs are the same length,' answered Gunnlaug.

At this, one of the earl's retainers, Thórir by name, remarked, 'This Icelander has a mighty opinion of himself; we should do well to put him to some test.'

Gunnlaug looked at him and said:

There is a certain retainer who is especially baleful;
Be loth to trust him—he is evil and black.

¹Tryggvason was defeated and Eric came to power in Norway (*Egilss.* ch. 87; *Ólafss. Tryggvasonar* in *Hkr.* I, ch. 105).

⁴Trousers and stockings made in one; *leist* is cognate with English '(cobbler's) last.' Gunnlaug's grey tunic and white breeches are in the natural colours of the woollen material home-made in Iceland; cf. p. 28 below, when after his voyage he is dressed in decorated and coloured clothes of foreign cloth.

⁵This does not seem to mean that Skúli and Gunnlaug had entered on a pact of foster-brotherhood, but only that they had been members of the same household at Borg.

Þá vildi Þórir grípa til oxar.

Jarl mælti, 'Lát vera kyrt,' segir hann, 'ekki skulu menn gefa at slíku gaum. Eða hvé gamall maðr ertu, Íslendingr?'

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Ek em nú átján vetra,' segir hann.

'Þat læt ek um mælt,'¹ segir jarl, 'at þú verðir eigi annarra átján.'

Gunnlaugr mælti, ok heldr lágt, 'Bið mér engra forbœna,' segir hann, 'en bið þér heldr.'

Jarl mælti, 'Hvat sagðir þú nú, Íslendingr?'

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Svá sem mér þótti vera eiga — at þú bæðir mér engra forbœna en bæðir sjálfum þér hallkvæmri bœna.'

'Hverra þá?' segir jarl.

'At þú fengir eigi þvilíkan dauðdaga sem Hákon jarl, faðir þinn.'²

Jarl setti svá rauðan sem blóð ok bað taka fól þetta skjótt. Þá gekk Skúli fyrir jarl ok mælti, 'Gerið fyrir mín orð, herra, ok gefið mannum grið, ok fari hann á brott sem skjótast.'

Jarl mælti, 'Verði hann á brottu sem skjótast ef hann vill griðin hafa, ok komi aldri í mitt ríki síðan.'

Þá gekk Skúli út með Gunnlaugi ok ofan á bryggjur. Þar var Englandsfar albúit til útláts, ok þá tók Skúli Gunnlaugi far ok Þorkatli, frænda hans. En Gunnlaugr fekk Auðuni skip sitt til varðveizlu ok fé sitt, þat er hann hafði eigi með sér.

Nú sigla þeir Gunnlaugr í Englandshaf ok kómu um haustit suðr við Lundúnabryggjur, ok réðu þar til hlunns skipi sínu.

¹ The Icelandic phrase *þat læt ek um mælt* has almost a technical sense as the introduction to the pronouncement of a curse, and Gunnlaug takes it in this way.

² Hákon Sigurdsson was murdered by his thrall in 995, when hiding in a pigsty from Ólaf Tryggvason and his men (*Ólafss. Tryggvasonar* in *Hkr.* I, ch. 49).

At this Thórir made as if to seize his axe.

‘Control yourself,’ said the earl. ‘A man takes no notice of such a thing. How old are you, Icelander?’

‘I’m just eighteen,’ replied Gunnlaug.

‘My pronouncement¹ is,’ said the earl, ‘that you’ll not see another eighteen.’

‘Never mind putting a curse on me, but pray for yourself instead,’ muttered Gunnlaug quite softly.

‘What did you say then, Icelander?’ asked the earl.

‘What I thought fit,’ answered Gunnlaug, ‘that you should not pronounce a curse on me, but rather pray for better things for yourself.’

‘What am I to pray for then?’ asked the earl.

‘That you may not meet your death in the way your father Earl Hákon did.’²

The earl turned red as blood and told his men to seize that fool at once. Then Skúli went up to the earl and said, ‘Do as I ask, my lord: spare the man, and let him clear off as fast as he can.’

‘Let him get out of my sight as fast as he can if he wants to be spared,’ said the earl. ‘And never let him set foot in my lands again.’

Then Skúli went out with Gunnlaug and down to the jetty. There was a ship for England all ready for sea, and Skúli got a passage in it for Gunnlaug and his kinsman Thorkel. Gunnlaug entrusted to Audun his ship and such belongings as he did not have with him.

Gunnlaug and Thorkel then sailed into the North Sea and arrived in the autumn in the port of London, where they hauled their ship ashore.

Þá réð fyrir Englandi Aðalráðr konungr Játgeirsson¹ ok var góðr hofðingi. Hann sat þenna vetr í Lundúnaborg. Ein var þá tunga á Englandi sem í Nóregi ok í Danmörku, en þá skiptusk tungur í Englandi er Vilhjálmr bastarðr² vann England; gekk þaðan af í Englandi valska, er hann var þaðan ættaðr.

Gunnlaugr gekk bráðliga fyrir konung ok kvaddi hann vel ok virðuliga. Konungr spyr hvadan af londum hann væri. Gunnlaugr segir sem var. — ‘En því hefi ek sótt á yðvarn fund, herra, at ek hefi kvæði ort um yðr ok vilda ek at þér hlýddið kvæðinu.’

Konungr kvað svá vera skyldu. Gunnlaugr flutti fram kvæðit vel ok sköruliga, en þetta er stefit í :

(3) Herr sésk allr inn ^a qrva
 Englands sem guð ^b þengil ^c ;
 ætt ³ lýtr ^d grams ok gumna
 gunnbráðs Aðalráði.

Konungr þakkaði honum kvæðit ok gaf honum at bragarlaunum skarlatsskikkju,⁴ skinndregna inum beztum skinum ok hlaðbúna⁵ í skaut niðr, ok gerði hann hirðmann sinn, ok var Gunnlaugr með konungi um vetrinn ok virðisk vel.

Ok einn dag um morgininn snemma þá mætti Gunnlaugr þrim mǫnnum á stræti einu, ok nefndisk sá Þórormr^e er fyrir þeim var. Hann var mikill ok sterkr ok furðu torvelligr. Hann mælti, ‘Norðmaðr,’ segir hann, ‘sel mér fé nokkut at láni.’ Gunnlaugr svarar, ‘Ekki mun þat ráðligt at selja fé sitt ókunnum mǫnnum.’ Hann svarar, ‘Ek skal gjalda þér at nefndum degi.’ ‘Þá skal á þat hætta,’ segir Gunnlaugr. Síðan seldi hann honum féit.

Ok litlu síðar fann Gunnlaugr konunginn ok segir honum fjárlánit. Konungr svarar, ‘Nú hefir lítt til tekizk — þessi er inn mesti ránsmaðr

^a inn *Þorkelsson* (1868), ins *B*, vid *A* ^b guð *Þorkelsson* (1868), guds *AB*
^c þengil *Þorkelsson* (1868), þeingils *B*, eingill *A* ^d lýtr *B*, lætr *A*
^e Þorgrímr *B* (and subsequently)

¹ Ethelred the Unready, ruled A.D. 979–1016

² William the Conqueror, ruled A.D. 1066–87, is usually given this name in Icelandic sources; he was an illegitimate son of Duke Robert of Normandy.

³ *Ætt* is to be taken with both *gunnbráðs grams* and *gumna*.

⁴ The fine cloth, *skarlat*, chiefly manufactured in Germany and the Low Countries, was not necessarily red in colour.

At that time King Ethelred,¹ the son of Edgar, ruled England and was a good prince; he was spending that winter in London. The language in England was then one and the same as that in Norway and Denmark, but when William the Bastard² conquered England, there was a change of language; from then onwards, French was current in England, since he was of French extraction.

Gunnlaug at once went into the king's presence and gave him a bold and courteous greeting. The king asked what country he was from, and Gunnlaug told him. 'And I have sought this meeting with you, my lord, because I have made a poem about you, and I should like you to listen to it.'

The king said he was willing, and Gunnlaug recited the poem in a good confident manner. In the refrain he says this:

All the host stands in awe of the generous prince of
England as of God;
the race³ of the war-swift king and all the race³ of
men bow to Ethelred.

The king thanked him for the poem, and as a reward for it he gave him a cloak of precious cloth⁴ lined with excellent furs and with an embroidered border⁵ down to the hem. He also made him one of his retainers, and Gunnlaug stayed with the king for the winter and was thought well of.

One day, early in the morning, Gunnlaug met three men in a certain street. The foremost of them was called Thórorm; he was big and strong, and an extremely difficult man to deal with.

'Northman,' he said, 'lend me some money.'

'It's not wise,' replied Gunnlaug, 'to hand over one's money to strangers.'

'I shall pay you on an agreed day,' he answered.

'Then I'll take a chance on it,' said Gunnlaug, and handed the money over to him.

A short time later, Gunnlaug met the king and told him about the loan.

'Then things have taken a bad turn,' replied the king. 'This

⁵ *Hlað*, a woven decorated band, often with fine wire of gold or silver worked into it

ok víkingr,¹ ok eig ekki við hann. En ek skal fá þér jafnmikit fé.'

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Illa er oss þá farit,' segir hann, 'hirðmönnum yðrum — göngum upp á saklausa menn en láta slíka sitja yfir váru, ok skal þat aldri verða.'

Ok litlu síðar hitti hann Þórorm ok heimti féit at honum, en hann kvazk eigi gjalda mundu. Gunnlaugr kvað þá vísu þessa :

(4) Meðalráð er þér, Móði
malma galds,² at halda —
att hafi þér við prettum^{a 3}
oddrjóð⁴ — fyr mér hoddum ;
vita mátt hitt at heitik —
hér sék á því færi⁵ —
þat fekksk nafn af nokkvi,
naðrstunga, mér ungum.

'Nú vil ek bjóða þér lög,' segir Gunnlaugr, 'at þú gjalt mér fé mitt eða gakk á hólum við mik ella á þriggja náttu fresti.'⁶

Þá hló víkingrinn ok mælti, 'Til þess hefir engi orðit fyrri en þú at skora mér á hólum, svá skarðan hlut sem margr hefir fyrir mér borit, ok em ek þessa alþúinn.'

Ok við þat skilðu þeir Gunnlaugr at sinni.

Gunnlaugr segir konungi svá búit. Hann svarar, 'Nú er komit í allóvænt efni — þessi maðr deyrir hvert vápn.'⁷ Nú skaltu mínum ráðum fram fara, ok er hér sverð er ek vil gefa þér, ok með þessu skaltu vega, en sýn honum annat.'

Gunnlaugr þakkaði konungi vel.

Ok er þeir váru til hólms búnir, þá spyrr Þórormr hvernig sverð þat væri er hann hafði.^b Gunnlaugr sýnir honum ok bregðr, en hafði lykkju um meðalkafla á konungsnaut ok dregr á hönd sér.

Berserkrinn mælti er hann sá sverðit, 'Ekki hræðumk ek þat sverð,' segir hann, ok hjó til Gunnlaugs með sverði ok af honum mjök svá skjöldinn allan. Gunnlaugr hjó þegar í mót með konungsnaut, en

^a prettum *A.M.* 157 *H*, frettum *B*, prettu *A*

^b hann ætlaði at vega með *B*

¹ The word 'viking' is here used in a general pejorative sense, as was customary from the twelfth century onwards.

² *Móði malma galds* : 'god (*Móði*, a son of *Thór*) of the magic chant of metal things'; metal things are weapons; their chant is battle; the god of battle is the warrior.

³ *Etja prettum við* : see *NN.* 545 for a different interpretation

⁴ *Oddrjóðr* : 'point-reddener,' i.e. warrior, here Gunnlaug

⁵ *Hér sék á því færi* : literally, only 'Here I see an opportunity for that.'

man is the greatest of robbers and pirates.¹ Have nothing to do with him and I shall make up the money to you.'

'Your retainers are a poor lot, then,' answered Gunnlaug. 'Here, we trample on innocent men, but let villains like this lord it over us! That must never be!'

A short time afterwards, he met Thórorm and claimed the money from him, but he said he would not pay. Gunnlaug then spoke this verse, saying :

It is only moderately wise for you,
god of the chant of metal,²
to keep from me my treasure :
you have behaved deceitfully towards³ the sword's point
reddener.⁴

You must learn another thing—I am called Adder-tongue ; now I see an opportunity to prove its aptness⁵ ; that name was given me young and for some cause.

'Now I'll offer a legal settlement,' said Gunnlaug. 'Either you pay me my money, or else fight a duel with me in three days' time.'⁶

The pirate laughed at this. 'No-one,' he said, 'has ever dared to challenge me to a duel before, considering how severely many have suffered at my hands. I'm all ready for it.'

With that they parted for the time being, and Gunnlaug told the king how things stood.

'Now this is a very ugly state of affairs,' he replied. 'This fellow blunts every weapon.⁷ You must now follow my advice. Here's a sword which I shall give you and with this you must fight—but show him another one.'

Gunnlaug thanked the king warmly.

And when they were ready for the duel, Thórorm asked what sort of sword it might be that he was holding. Gunnlaug showed him and drew it, but round the grip of the king's gift he had a loop and he slipped it over his wrist.

'I'm not afraid of that sword,' said the berserk when he saw it.

He struck at Gunnlaug with his sword and cut off practically the whole of his shield. At once, Gunnlaug struck back with the king's gift, while the berserk stood uncovered, thinking he had the same

⁶ See Glossary, s.v. *hólmganga*

⁷ Usually interpreted, as here, as a faculty of the evil eye, and commonly attributed to berserks ; cf. Glossary, s.v. *berserkr*.

berserkrinn stóð hlífarlauss fyrir ok hugði at hann hefði it sama vápn ok hann sýndi, en Gunnlaugr hjó hann þegar banahögg.

Konungr þakkaði honum verkit, ok af þessu fekk hann mikla frægð í Englandi ok víða annars staðar.

Um várit er skip gengu milli landa, þá bað Gunnlaugr Aðalráð konung orlofs at sigla nokkut. Konungr spyrr hvat hann vildi þá.

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Ek vilda efna þat sem ek hefi heitit^a'; ok kvað vísu þessa :

(5) Koma skalk vistar^b vitja
 viggs¹ döglinga² þriggja,
 því hefk hlutvöndum³ heitit,
 hjarls ok tveggja jarla ;
 hverfkak aptr áðr^c arfi,⁴
 auðveitir gefr rauðan^d
 ormabeð^{e 5} fyr ermar,
 odd^f-Gefnar mér stefni.

'Svá skal ok vera, skáld,' segir konungr, ok gaf honum gullhring er stóð sex aura. 'En því skaltu heita mér,' segir konungr, 'at koma aptr til mín at qðru hausti, fyrir því at ek vil eigi láta þik fyrir sakir íprótta þinna ok vaskleiks.'^g

^a B adds : ok ætlat

^b vistar *Fornrit*, vist at AB

^c áðr B, at A

^d auðveitir gefr rauðan B, auðveitul firi leita A

^e ormabeð *Hafniæ*, orma bod B, orma bod(z?) A

^f odd- B, ar- A

^g íprótta þinna ok vaskleiks B, ípróttar þinnar A

¹ *Vistar vigg* : 'entertainment's steed,' i.e. house

² *Döglingr hjarls* : 'prince of land,' i.e. king

³ *Hlutvandr* : 'one who is careful of his part (in something)'; here it may

sword as he had shown him. But at that moment Gunnlaug struck him his death-blow.

The king thanked him for the deed, and it earned him great fame in England and far and wide elsewhere.

In the spring, when ships were sailing from country to country, Gunnlaug asked King Ethelred for leave to do some travelling. The king asked him what he wanted to do.

'I should like to carry out what I have vowed,' replied Gunnlaug, and spoke a verse, saying :

I shall come to visit the courts ¹ of three princes of
land ² and two earls ;
this I have promised to men.³

I shall not return before the son of the battle-
goddess ⁴ summons me ;
he, the munificent, gives us red gold ⁵ to wear below
our sleeves.

'And so it shall be, my poet,' said the king, and gave him a gold bracelet weighing six ounces. 'But you must promise to return next autumn, because I don't want to lose you, on account of your accomplishments and courage.'

refer to people who have an interest in Gunnlaug (his family and friends in Iceland), or may simply mean 'men' in general.

⁴ *Arfi odd-Gefnar* : 'heir, son, of the point-goddess' (*Gefn* is one of Freyja's names) ; the point-goddess is the goddess of battle, or a valkyrie, and her son appears to mean 'king' (i.e. Ethelred) in this context ; cf. *NN.* 3060.

⁵ *Ormabeðr* : 'serpents' bed,' i.e. gold

8

Síðan siglir Gunnlaugr af Englandi með kaupmönnum norðr til Dyflinnar. Þá réð fyrir Írlandi Sigtryggr konungr silkiskegg, sonr Óláfs kvárans ok Kormlaðar dróttningar; hann hafði þá skamma stund ráðit ríkinu.¹ Gunnlaugr gekk þá fyrir konung ok kvaddi hann vel ok virðuliga; konungr tók honum sœmiliga. Gunnlaugr mælti, 'Kvæði hefi ek ort um yðr ok vilda ek hljóð fá.'

Konungr svarar, 'Ekki hafa menn til þess orðit fyrri at fœra mér kvæði, ok skal víst hlýða.'

Gunnlaugr kvað þá drápuna,² ok er þetta stefit í :

(6) Elr sváru ^a skæ ³
Sigtryggr við hræ.

Ok þetta er þar :

(7) Kánn ek máls of skil
hvern ek mæra vil,
konungmanna kon,
hann er Kvárans ⁴ son ;
muna gramr við mik,
venr hann gjofli sik,
þess mun grepp vara,
gullhring spara.

(8) Segi siklingr mér
ef hann heyrði ^b sér
dýrligra brag :
þat er drápu lag.⁵

Konungr þakkaði honum kvæðit ok kallaði til sín féhirði sinn ok mælti svá, 'Hverju skal launa kvæðit ?'

Hann svarar, 'Hverju vili þér, herra ?' segir hann.

'Hversu er launat,' segir konungr, 'ef ek gef honum knorrú tvá ?'

^a sváru *B*, sva nu *A*

^b heyrði *B*, heyri *A*

¹ After a short earlier period of rule in Dublin, Sigtrygg was king there from c. A.D. 996; his reign may have lasted until 1042. According to the saga, it was in 1003 that Gunnlaug visited him. The chief body of Icelandic tradition about Sigtrygg and his mother (Gorm(f)laith in Irish), in connection with the circumstances of the battle of Clontarf in 1014, is in *Njáls.* chs. 154-7; the chief Irish source is *The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill* (ed. J. H. Todd, Rolls Series 48, 1867).

² See Glossary, s.v. *drápa*

Gunnlaug then sailed with some merchants northwards from England to Dublin. At that time, Ireland was ruled by King Sigtrygg Silken-Beard, the son of Óláf Sandal and Queen Kormlöd; he had been ruling the kingdom only a short time.¹

Gunnlaug went into the king's presence and gave him a courtly and respectful greeting, and the king gave him a fitting welcome.

'I have made a poem about you,' said Gunnlaug, 'and I should like you to give it a hearing.'

'No-one has ever taken it on himself to present a poem to me before,' replied the king, 'and I shall certainly listen to it.'

Gunnlaug then recited the poem,² and in the refrain he says this:

Sigtrygg nourishes the steed of the witch³ with
carrion.

And this is also in it:

I know which scion of royal breed I wish to celebrate;
he is Kváran's⁴ son.

He schools himself to be openhanded; the prince will
not begrudge me a gold ring—of this the poet is con-
fident.

Let the king tell me if he has heard more accomplished
verse: it is in *drápa*-form.⁵

The king thanked him for the poem and called his treasurer to him and said, 'How should I reward the poem?'

'How do you wish, lord?' he replied.

'How would it be rewarded,' asked the king, 'if I gave him a couple of merchant ships?'

³ *Sváru skær*: 'witch's horse,' i.e. wolf; the word *svára* is not otherwise attested.

⁴ i.e. Óláf kváran; his nickname is from Old Irish *cuarán* 'sandal.'

⁵ The refrain of this *drápa*-fragment is reminiscent of that used by Egil Skalla-Grímsson in *Hofuðlausn*, vv. 12, 15 (*Egilss.* ch. 60). The rhymed verse-form (*runhendr háttr*) seems also to have been first used in Icelandic verse by Egil in that poem, probably on the model of Christian Latin hymns; see Stefán Einarsson, 'The Origin of Egill Skallagrímsson's Runhenda,' *Svenska Landsmål*, 66-7 årg., 1953-4, 54ff.

Féhirðirinn^a svarar, 'Of mikit er þat, herra,' segir hann. 'Aðrir konungar gefa at bragarlaunum gripi góða, sverð góð eða gullhringa góða.'

Konungr gaf honum klæði sín af nýju skarlati, kyrtil hlaðbúinn ok skikkju með ágætum skinum, ok gullhring er stóð mörk. Gunnlaugr þakkaði honum vel, ok dvalðisk þar skamma stund, ok fór þáðan til Orkneyja.

Þá réð fyrir Orkneyjum Sigurðr jarl Hlōðvisson¹; hann var vel til íslenzkra manna. Gunnlaugr kvaddi jarl vel ok sagði sik hafa at fœra honum kvæði. Jarl kvazk hlýða vilja kvæði hans, svá stórra manna sem hann var á Íslandi. Gunnlaugr flutti kvæðit ok var þat flokk² ok vel ortr. Jarl gaf honum breiðøxi silfrrekna alla at kvæðislaunum ok bauð honum með sér at vera.^b

Gunnlaugr þakkaði honum gjöfina ok boð it sama, en kvezk verða at fara austr til Svíþjóðar. Ok gekk síðan á skip með kaupmönnum þeim er sigldu til Nóregs, ok kómu um haustit austr við Konungahellu.³ Þorkell frændi hans fylgði honum jafnan. Ór Konungahellu fengu þeir leiðtoga upp í Gautland it vestra, ok kómu fram í kaupstað þeim er í Skörum heitir.

Þar réð fyrir jarl sá er Sigurðr hét ok var við aldr. Gunnlaugr gekk fyrir hann ok kvaddi hann vel ok kvazk kvæði hafa ort um hann. Jarl gaf gott hljóð til. Gunnlaugr kvað kvæðit ok var þat flokk. Jarl þakkaði honum ok launaði honum vel, ok bauð honum með sér at vera um vetrinn, ok þat þá Gunnlaugr.^c

Sigurðr jarl hafði jólaboð mikit um vetrinn, ok atfangadag^d jóla koma þar sendimenn Eiríks jarls norðan af Nóregi, tólf saman. Þeir fóru með gjöfum til Sigurðar jarls. Jarlinn fagnaði þeim vel ok skipaði þeim um jólin hjá Gunnlaugi.

Þar var qlteiti^e mikil. Gautar ræddu um at engi jarl væri meiri ok frægri en Sigurðr. Nóregsmönnum þótti Eiríkr jarl miklu framar. Ok um þetta þrættu þeir, ok tóku Gunnlaug til órskurðarmanns hvárir-tveggju um þetta mál. Gunnlaugr kvað þá vísu þessa :

^a féhirðirinn *B*, féhirzlu (?) maðr *A*

^b *A* adds : þar, followed by illegible letters

^c ok þat þá Gunnlaugr *B*, *om. A*

^d af fanga *A*, at afannga dag *B*

^e var qlteiti *B*, váru ólæti *A*

¹ Earl in the Orkneys from c. A.D. 980 until 1014; his power extended over much of northern and western Scotland, and he took tribute from the Hebrides and Man.

² See Glossary, s.v. *drápa*

³ Near modern Kungälv, about twelve miles from Gothenburg

‘That’s too much, my lord,’ answered the treasurer. ‘As rewards for poems, other kings give valuable treasures, fine swords or gold bracelets.’

The king gave him his own clothes made of new and precious cloth, an embroidered tunic, a cloak lined with precious furs, and a gold bracelet weighing half a pound. Gunnlaug thanked him gracefully and stayed there a short time. He went from there to the Orkneys.

The Orkneys were then ruled by Earl Sigurd Hlödvisson¹; he was well disposed towards Icelanders.

Gunnlaug saluted the earl appropriately and said he had a poem to present to him. The earl said he would like to hear his poem, seeing that he was a man of such noble connections in Iceland. Gunnlaug recited the poem, which was in the form of a *flokkr*² and well composed. The earl gave him a broad-axe with silver inlay all over it as a reward, and invited him to stay with him.

Gunnlaug thanked him both for the gift and the invitation, but said he had to travel east to Sweden. He then boarded a ship with some merchants who were sailing to Norway, and in the autumn they arrived in the east at Konungahella.³ Gunnlaug’s constant companion was his kinsman Thorkel. From Konungahella they took a guide up into West Gautland and arrived at the market-town called Skara.

An earl called Sigurd ruled there, a man advanced in years. Gunnlaug went before him, saluted him suitably and said he had composed a poem about him. The earl listened attentively. Gunnlaug recited the poem, and it was a *flokkr*. The earl thanked him and gave him a handsome reward and invited him to spend the winter with him. Gunnlaug accepted the invitation.

Earl Sigurd held a great Yule-feast in the winter, and on the eve of Yule-tide envoys from the north arrived from Earl Eric of Norway, twelve in all. They travelled with gifts for Earl Sigurd. The earl gave them a good welcome and seated them near Gunnlaug for the Yule season.

There was great merriment over the drinking. The Gauts said there was no earl greater or more famous than Sigurd; the Norwegians considered Earl Eric much superior. They argued over this and both sides chose Gunnlaug as umpire in the dispute. Gunnlaug recited a verse, saying :

(9) Segið ér frá jarli,
 oddfeimu stafir,¹ þeima —
 hann hefir litnar hávar,^a
 hárr karl er sá, bárur ;
 sigreynir ² hefir sénar
 sjalfr í miklu gjalfri
 austr ³ fyr unnar hesti ⁴
 Eiríkr bláar fleiri.

Hvárirtveggju unðu vel við órskurðinn, en betr Nóregsmenn. Sendimenn fóru þaðan eptir jólin með fégjöfum er Sigurðr jarl sendi Eiríki jarli. Sögðu þeir nú Eiríki jarli órskurðinn Gunnlaugs. Jarli þótti Gunnlaugr hafa sýnt við sik einqrð ok vináttu, ok lét þau orð um fara at Gunnlaugr skyldi þar friðland hafa í hans ríki. Þat frétti Gunnlaugr síðan, hvat jarl hafði um mælt.

Sigurðr jarl fekk Gunnlaugi leiðtoga austr í Tíundaland í Svíþjóð, sem hann beiddi.

^a hávar *Skj.*, *om. AB* ; added to complete the line which is too short and defective in alliteration.

¹ *Oddfeimu stafir* : ' point-woman's staves ' ; the point-woman is a valkyrie, her staves are warriors.

You speak of this earl,
 staves of the point-woman ¹;
 the old man is white-haired, but has looked on tall waves ;

yet the warrior ² Eric has himself seen,
 in great tempest eastwards,³
 more blue rollers before his sea-stallion.⁴

Both sides were pleased with this verdict, but especially the Norwegians. The envoys went away after Yule-tide with valuable gifts which Earl Sigurd sent to Earl Eric. They then told Earl Eric of Gunnlaug's arbitration. The earl thought that Gunnlaug had shown him fairness and friendliness, and let word go round that Gunnlaug would find a friendly retreat there in his country. Gunnlaug heard later what the earl had said.

At Gunnlaug's request, Earl Sigurd procured him a guide to go east into Tíundaland in Sweden.

¹ *Sigreynir* : ' battle-tree,' i.e. warrior. The first element may also be interpreted as *sigr* : ' victory ' ; *reynir* may be ' (rowan-) tree ' or ' prover ' (*reyna*, vb. ' to try, test '). The meaning of the kenning remains the same.

² *Austr* : i.e. *í austrveg*, in the Baltic

⁴ *Unnar hestr* : ' horse of the wave,' i.e. ship

9

Þenna tíma réð fyrir Svíþjóð Óláfr konungr scenski, sonr Eiríks konungs sigrsæla ok Sigríðar innar stórráðu, dóttur Skoqlar-Tósta.¹ Hann var ríkr konungr ok ágætr, metnaðarmaðr mikill.

Gunnlaugr kom til Uppsala nær þingi þeira Svía um várit,² ok er hann náði konungs fundi, kvaddi hann konunginn. Hann tók honum vel ok spyrr hvern hann væri. Hann kvazk vera íslenzkr maðr. Þar var þá með Óláfi konungi Hrafn Qnundarson.^a

Konungr mælti, 'Hrafn,' segir hann, 'hvat manna er hann á Íslandi?'

Maðr stóð upp af inum óæðra bekk, mikill ok vaskligr, gekk fyrir konung ok mælti, 'Herra,' segir hann, 'hann er innar beztu ættar ok sjálfr inn vaskasti maðr.'

'Fari hann þá ok siti hjá þér,' segir konungr.

Gunnlaugr mælti, 'Kvæði hefi ek at fœra yðr,' segir hann, 'ok vilda ek at þér hlýddið ok gæfið hljóð til.'

'Gangið fyrst ok sitið,' segir konungr, 'ekki er nú tóm til yfir kvæðum at sitja.'

Þeir gerðu svá.

Tóku þeir þá tal með sér Gunnlaugr ok Hrafn; sagði hvárr qðrum frá ferðum sínum. Hrafn kvazk farit hafa áðr um sumarit af Íslandi til Nóregs ok qndverðan vetr austr til Svíþjóðar. Þar gerisk brátt vel með þeim.

Ok einn dag, er liðit var þingit, váru þeir báðir fyrir konungi Gunnlaugr ok Hrafn.

Þá mælti Gunnlaugr, 'Nú vilda ek, herra,' segir hann, 'at þér heyrðið kvæðit.'

'Þat má nú,' segir konungr.

'Nú vil ek flytja kvæði mitt, herra,' segir Hrafn.

'Þat má vel,' segir hann.

'Þá vil ek flytja fyrr kvæði mitt, herra,' segir Gunnlaugr, 'ef þér vilið svá.'

'Ek á fyrr at flytja, herra,' segir Hrafn, 'er ek kom fyrr til yðvar.'

Gunnlaugr mælti, 'Hvar kómu feðr okkrir þess,' segir hann, 'at

^a Þar . . . Qnundarson B, om. A

¹ Ólaf ruled from c. A.D. 995 and is said to have died 1021-2. On Sigríð the Ambitious, see especially *Ólafss. Tryggvasonar* in *Hkr.* I, chs. 43, 61-2. There is little authentic information available about her; cf. L. Weibull, *Kritiska Undersökningar i Nordens Historia omkring År 1000*, 1911, 106-10, 117-26; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Hkr.* I cxxiv-cxxvi.

At this time, Sweden was ruled by King Ólaf the Swede, the son of King Eric the Conqueror and Sigríd the Ambitious, the daughter of Tósti the Warlike.¹ He was a powerful and famous king, and one very eager for honour.

Gunnlaug arrived at Uppsala near the time of the Swedes' assembly in the spring.² When he gained an audience, he saluted the king who gave him a ready welcome and asked who he was. He said he was an Icelander. At that time, Hrafn Öundurson was with King Ólaf.

'Hrafn,' said the king, 'what class of man is this in Iceland?'

A big gallant man arose from the lower bench and came before the king.

'My lord,' he said, 'he is of excellent birth and himself a most valiant man.'

'Let him go and sit by you then,' said the king.

'I have a poem to present to you,' said Gunnlaug, 'and I should like you to give it a hearing.'

'First go and sit down,' answered the king. 'There's no time now to attend to poems.'

They obeyed.

Gunnlaug and Hrafn then started to chat to one another, and each told the other of his travels. Hrafn said he had left Iceland for Norway the summer before, and had come east to Sweden at the beginning of winter. They soon got on well together.

One day when the assembly was over, Gunnlaug and Hrafn were both in the king's presence.

'Now, sire,' said Gunnlaug, 'I should like you to hear my poem.'

'That's possible now,' said the king.

'I wish to recite my poem now, my lord,' said Hrafn.

'That's also possible,' said the king.

'Then, sire,' said Gunnlaug, 'I want to recite my poem first, if you please.'

'I should recite first, lord,' said Hrafn, 'since I arrived first at your court.'

'Where did our fathers ever go with mine trailing in the wake of

² This was the occasion of a great sacrificial festival at Old Uppsala, the centre of the heathen cults in Sweden. It was called *dísablót* (sacrifice to the *dísir*, feminine tutelary spirits) or *dísaping*, and seems to have been accompanied from very early times by a market and public meeting.

minn faðir væri eptirbátr þíns föður^a — hvar nema alls hvergi? Skal ok svá með okkr vera!’

Hrafn svarar, ‘Gerum þá kurteisi,’ segir hann, ‘at vér færим þetta eigi í kappmæli, ok látum konung ráða.’

Konungur mælti, ‘Gunnlaugr skal fyrri flytja, því at honum eirir illa ef hann hefir eigi sitt mál.’

Þá kvað Gunnlaugr drápuna er hann hafði orta um Óláf konung. Ok er lokit var drápunni, þá mælti konungur, ‘Hrafn,’ segir hann, ‘hversu er kvæðit ort?’

‘Vel, herra,’ segir hann, ‘þat er stórtort kvæði ok ófagrt ok nokkut stirðkveðit, sem Gunnlaugr er sjálfr í skaplyndi.’

‘Nú skaltu flytja þitt kvæði, Hrafn,’ segir konungur.

Hann gerir svá, ok er lokit var, þá mælti konungur, ‘Gunnlaugr,’ segir hann, ‘hversu er kvæði þetta ort?’

Gunnlaugr svarar, ‘Vel, herra,’ segir hann, ‘þetta er fagrt kvæði, sem Hrafn er sjálfr at sjá, ok yfirbragðslítit. Eða hví ortir þú flokk um konunginn?’ segir hann; ‘eða þótti þér hann eigi drápunnar verðr?’

Hrafn svarar, ‘Tölum þetta eigi lengr, — til mun verða tekit, þótt síðar sé,’ segir hann.

Ok skilðu nú við svá búit.

Litlu síðar gerðisk Hrafn hirðmaðr Óláfs konungs ok bað hann orlofs til brottferðar; konungur veitti honum þat. Ok er Hrafn var til brottferðar búinn, þá mælti hann til Gunnlaugs, ‘Lokit skal nú okkarri vináttu fyrir því at þú vildir hræpa mik hér fyrir höfðingjum. Nú skal ek einhverju sinni eigi þik minnr vanvirða en þú vildir mik hér.’

Gunnlaugr svarar, ‘Ekki hryggja mik hót þín,’ segir hann, ‘ok hvergi munum vit þess koma at ek sé minna virðr en þú.’

Óláfr konungur gaf Hrafni góðar gjafir at skilnaði, ok fór hann í brott síðan.

Hrafn fór austan um várit ok kom til Þrándheims ok bjó skip sitt ok sigldi til Íslands um sumarit; ok kom skipi sínu í Leiruvág fyrir neðan Heiði, ok urðu honum fegnir frændr ok vinir. Ok var hann heima þann vetr með föður sínum.

Ok um sumarit á Alþingi, fundusk þeir frændr, Skapti lögmaðr¹ ok Skáld-Hrafn. Þá mælti Hrafn, ‘Þitt fullting vilda ek hafa til kvánbænar við Þorstein Egilsson at biðja Helgu, dóttur hans.’

Skapti svarar, ‘Er hon eigi áðr heitkona Gunnlaugs ormstungu?’

^a minn faðir . . . þíns föður *B*, faðir minn . . . föður þíns *A*

¹ See Glossary, s.v. *lögsgumaðr*

yours?' asked Gunnlaug. 'Nowhere at all! And that's how it's going to be with us.'

'Let's be courteous enough not to make a quarrel of this,' answered Hrafn. 'Let's allow the king to decide.'

'Gunnlaug shall recite first,' said the king, 'because he can't bear not having his own way.'

Then Gunnlaug recited the *drápa* which he had composed about King Ólaf, and when it was finished the king said, 'Hrafn, how is that poem for workmanship?'

'Well, my lord,' he said, 'the poem is pompous, inelegant and rather stiff, just as Gunnlaug himself is in character.'

'Now you must recite your poem, Hrafn,' said the king.

He did. And when it was over, the king said, 'Gunnlaug, how is this poem for workmanship?'

'Well, my lord,' replied Gunnlaug, 'the poem is pretty, just as Hrafn himself is to look at—but it's a puny thing. And why did you make only a *flokkr* about the king? Didn't he seem to you worthy of a *drápa*?'

'Let's not discuss this any longer,' answered Hrafn. 'We'll bring it up again, though it may be later on.'

They then parted on that note.

A little later, Hrafn was made one of King Ólaf's retainers and asked leave to go away, which the king granted him. When Hrafn was ready to set off, he said to Gunnlaug, 'Our friendship must now be at an end, because you tried to discredit me here in the presence of noblemen. Now, at some time, I shall bring no less dishonour on you than you tried to bring on me here.'

'Your threats don't worry me,' replied Gunnlaug, 'and nowhere will it be found that I am less honoured than you.'

King Ólaf gave Hrafn good gifts on his leaving, and after that he went away.

Hrafn left the east in the spring and came to Thrándheim; he made ready his ship and in the summer sailed for Iceland. He brought his ship into Leiruvág, below Mosfell Moor. His kinsfolk and friends were glad to see him, and he spent that winter at home with his father.

At the Great Assembly in the summer, Hrafn the poet met his cousin Skapti the Law-Speaker.¹

'I should like to have your help,' said Hrafn, 'in asking Thorstein Egilsson for the hand of his daughter Helga.'

'Isn't she already promised to Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue?' said Skapti in reply.

Hrafn svarar, 'Er eigi liðin sú stefna nú,' segir hann, 'sem mælt var með þeim? Enda er miklu meiri hans ofsi en hann muni nú þess gá eða geyma.'

Skapti svarar, 'Gerum sem þér líkar.'

Síðan gengu þeir fjölmennir til búðar Þorsteins Egilssonar; hann fagnaði þeim vel.

Skapti mælti, 'Hrafn frændi minn vill biðja Helgu dóttur þinnar, ok er þér kunnig ætt hans ok auðr fjár ok menning góð, frændaafli mikill ok vina.'

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Hon er áðr heitkona Gunnlaugs ok vil ek halda öll mál við hann, þau sem mælt váru.'

Skapti mælti, 'Eru nú eigi liðnir þeir^a þrír vetr er til váru nefndir með yðr?'

'Já,' sagði Þorsteinn, 'en eigi er sumarit liðit, ok má hann enn til koma í sumar.'

Skapti svarar, 'En ef hann kemr eigi til sumarlangt, hverja ván skulum vér þá eiga þessa máls?'

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Hér munum vér koma annat sumar, ok má þá sjá hvat ráðligast þykkir. En ekki tjár nú þetta at tala lengr at sinni.'

Ok við þat skilðu þeir, ok riðu menn heim af þingi. Ekki fór þetta tal leynt at Hrafn bað Helgu.

Eigi kom Gunnlaugr út á því^b sumri, ok annat sumar á Alþingi fluttu þeir Skapti bónorðit ákafliga, kváðu þá Þorstein lausan allra mála við Gunnlaug.

Þorsteinn svarar, 'Ek á fár dætr fyrir at sjá, ok vilda ek gjarna at engum manni yrði þær at rógi. Nú vil ek finna fyrst Illuga svarta.'

Ok svá gerði hann. Ok er þeir fundusk, þá mælti Þorsteinn, 'Þykki þér ek^c lauss allra mála við Gunnlaug son þinn?'

Illugi mælti, 'Svá er víst,' segir hann, 'ef þú vill. Kann ek hér nú fátt til at leggja, er ek veit eigi gørla efni sonar míns Gunnlaugs.'

Þorsteinn gekk þá til Skapta ok keyptu þeir svá at brúðlaup skyldi vera at vetrnáttum¹ at Borg ef Gunnlaugr kæmi eigi út á því sumri, en Þorsteinn lauss allra mála við Hrafn ef Gunnlaugr kæmi til ok vitjaði ráðsins. Eptir þat, riðu menn heim af þinginu. Ok frestaðisk tilkváma Gunnlaugs, en Helga hugði illt til ráða.

^a þeir B, om. A

^b á því B, at A

^c B adds: eigi

¹ The first three days of the first month of winter, which began on the Saturday between 11 and 17 October. The chief work of summer and autumn was then done and fresh stores were available from the autumn-slaughtering. In pagan times it seems to have been one of the great festivals of the year; cf. *Ynglingas.* ch. 8, *Gíslas.* (*Íslensk Fornrit VI*, 1943), ch. 10, *Víga-Glúmss.* (ed. G. Turville-Petre, 1940), ch. 6.

‘Hasn’t the period agreed between them now passed?’ Hrafn answered. ‘And anyway, he’s far too haughty now to pay attention to this or care about it.’

‘Let’s do as you please,’ replied Skapti.

Later on, supported by a good number of followers, they went to Thorstein Egilsson’s booth and were given a good reception.

‘My kinsman Hrafn wants to ask for your daughter Helga’s hand,’ said Skapti. ‘You are aware of his birth, rich fortune, good breeding, and his strength in kinsmen and friends.’

‘She’s already promised to Gunnlaug,’ answered Thorstein, ‘and I want to keep in every point the agreement we made.’

‘Haven’t those three winters which you agreed upon now passed?’ asked Skapti.

‘Yes, but the summer isn’t over,’ said Thorstein, ‘and he may still return this summer.’

‘If he hasn’t returned by the end of the summer,’ rejoined Skapti, ‘what hopes are we then to have of this affair?’

‘We shall be coming here next summer,’ replied Thorstein, ‘and we can then see what may seem best to do, but it’s no use discussing it any further at present.’

With that they parted, and the men rode home from the assembly. Talk of Hrafn’s wanting Helga was by no means kept secret.

Gunnlaug did not return that summer, and at the Great Assembly in the following summer Skapti and Hrafn vigorously pursued their suit and said that Thorstein was now released from all agreements with Gunnlaug.

‘I have few daughters to see to,’ answered Thorstein, ‘and I’m deeply anxious that they should not provoke anyone to strife. Now first I want to see Illugi the Black.’

This he did, and when they met, Thorstein said, ‘Do you consider me released from all my agreement with your son Gunnlaug?’

‘That is certainly so,’ replied Illugi, ‘if you want to be. There’s little I can say about this now, because I don’t quite know how my son Gunnlaug is placed.’

Thorstein then went to Skapti and they agreed that if Gunnlaug did not come home that summer, the wedding should take place at Borg at the Winter Nights,¹ but that if Gunnlaug arrived to claim his bride, Thorstein should be released from all his agreement with Hrafn. After that, men rode home from the assembly, and still Gunnlaug’s return was delayed. Helga loathed the thought of this marriage.

Nú er at segja frá Gunnlaugi at hann fór af Svíþjóðu þat sumar til Englands^a er Hrafn fór til Íslands, ok þá góðar gjafir af Óláfi konungi at skilnaði þeira. Aðalráðr konungr tók við Gunnlaugi allvel, ok var hann^b með honum um vetrinn með góðri sœmð.

Í þenna tíma réð fyrir Danmörku Knútr inn ríki Sveinsson ok hafði nýtekit við fœðurleifð sinni¹; ok heitaðisk jafnan at herja til Englands, fyrir því at Sveinn konungr, faðir hans, hafði unnit mikit ríki á Englandi áðr hann andaðisk vestr þar. Ok í þann tíma var mikill herr danskra manna vestr þar, ok var sá hœfðingi fyrir er Hemingr hét, sonr Strút-Haralds jarls ok bróðir Sigvalda jarls,² ok helt hann þat ríki undir Knút konung er Sveinn konungr hafði áðr unnit.

Um várit bað Gunnlaugr konunginn sér orlofs til brottferðar.

Hann svarar, 'Eigi samir þér nú at fara frá mér, til slíks ófriðar sem nú horfir hér í Englandi, þar sem þú ert minn hirðmaðr.'

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Þér skuluð ráða, minn herra, ok gef mér orlof at sumri til brottferðar, ef Danir koma eigi.'

Konungr svarar, 'Sjám vit þá.'

Nú leið þat sumar ok vetrinn eptir ok kómu Danir eigi. Ok eptir mitt sumar fekk Gunnlaugr orlof til brottferðar af konungi, ok fór Gunnlaugr þaðan austr til Nóregs ok fann Eirík jarl í Þrándheimi á Hlœðum; ok tók jarl honum þá vel ok bauð honum þá með sér at vera. Gunnlaugr þakkar honum boðit, ok kvezk þó vilja fara fyrst út til Íslands á vit festarmeyjar sinnar.

Jarl mælti, 'Nú eru ǫll skip í brottu, þau er til Íslands bjuggusk.'

Þá mælti hirðmaðr einn, 'Hér lá Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld³ í gær út undir Agðanesi.'⁴

Jarl svarar, 'Svá má vera,' segir hann; 'hann sigldi heðan fyrir fimm^c náttum.'

^a til Englands *B*, om. *A*
^c v (= 5) *A*, iii (= 3) *B*

^b hann *B*, om *A*

¹ Knút (Canute), King of England A.D. 1016–35 and of Denmark from 1018. His father Svein died in 1014, not c. 1004, as the saga-chronology suggests. The author of *Gunnlaugss.* shares this error with other Icelandic historians.

² Heming and his brother, Thorkel the Tall, were leaders of the great Danish army which came to England in 1009. See A. Campbell, op. cit. 73 ff., 87 ff. The third brother, Sigvaldi, is said to have been earl over the famous

To return now to Gunnlaug, we find that he received good parting gifts from King Ólaf and left Sweden for England during the summer in which Hrafn went to Iceland. King Ethelred gave him a very good welcome, and he spent the winter with him, greatly esteemed.

At that time, the king of Denmark was Knút the Great, the son of Svein, and he had just come into his patrimony.¹ He was continually threatening to attack England, because King Svein his father had won great dominion in England before he died over there in the west. Moreover, there was then in the British Isles a great army of Danes, under the command of a man called Heming, the son of Earl Strút-Harald and the brother of Earl Sigvaldi.² He was governing, under King Knút, the lands which King Svein had won earlier.

In the spring, Gunnlaug asked the king for leave to go away.

'In your position as my retainer,' he replied, 'it is not fitting for you to leave me when such a war is threatening us here in England.'

'It is for you to command, my lord,' answered Gunnlaug. 'But give me leave to set off in the summer, if the Danes don't come.'

'We shall see then,' replied the king.

Then that summer went by, and the following winter too, and the Danes did not come. After midsummer, Gunnlaug got permission from the king to go away, and he travelled east from there to Norway and visited Earl Eric at Hladir in Thrándheim. The earl gave him a good reception this time and invited him to stay with him. Gunnlaug thanked him for the invitation but said he wanted first to go home to Iceland to see his bride-to-be.

'All the ships that were bound for Iceland are under way now,' said the earl.

Then a retainer said, 'Hallfred the Troublesome Poet³ was lying at anchor yesterday out under Agdenes.'⁴

'That may be so,' replied the earl; 'he sailed from here five nights ago.'

Viking stronghold of Jónsborg. See especially *Ólafss. Tryggvasonar* in *Hkr.* I and in *Flateyjarbók*.

³ A well-known poet, who composed poems in honour of Earl Eric, his father Earl Hákon, and King Ólaf Tryggvason. He is best known for his relations with King Ólaf, who gave him his nickname. See *Hallfreðars.* and *Ólafss. Tryggvasonar* in *Hkr.* I.

⁴ The outermost headland of Trondheimsfjord on the southern side

Eiríkr jarl lét þá flytja Gunnlaug út til Hallfreðar, ok tók hann við^a honum með fagnaði ; ok gaf þegar byr undan landi, ok váru vel kátir. Þat var síð sumars.

Hallfreðr mælti til Gunnlaugs, ‘ Hefir þú^b frétt bónorðit Hrafns Qnundarsonar við Helgu ina föguru ? ’

Gunnlaugr kvezk frétt hafa ok þó ógörla. Hallfreðr segir honum slíkt sem hann vissi af ok þat með at margir menn mæltu þat, at Hrafn væri eigi óröskvari en Gunnlaugr. Gunnlaugr kvað þá vísu :

(10) Rækik lítt^c þótt leiki,^d
létt veðr er nú, þéttan
austanvindr at qndri^e
andness¹ viku þessa ;
meir^f séumk hitt, en hæru
hoddstríðandi² bíðit,^g
orð, at eigi verðak
jafnröskr taliðr Hrafni.

Hallfreðr mælti þá, ‘ Þess þyrfti, félagi, at þér veitti betr en^h mér málin við Hrafn. Ek kom skipi mínu í Leiruvág fyrir neðan Heiðiⁱ fyrir fám^k vetrum, ok átta ek at gjalda hálfu mörk silfrs húskarli Hrafns, ok helt ek því fyrir honum. En Hrafn reið til vár með sex tigu^l manna ok hjó strengina, ok rak skipit upp á leirur ok búit við skipbroti. Varð ek þá at selja Hrafni sjálfðæmi, ok galt ek mörk, — ok eru slíkar mínar at segja frá honum.’³

Ok þá var þeim eintalat um Helgu ok lofaði Hallfreðr mjök vænleik hennar. Gunnlaugr kvað þá vísu þessa :

(11) Munat háðvörum⁴ hyrjar
hríðmundaðar þundi⁵
hafnar,^{m6} hqrvuⁿ drifna,⁷
hlýða Jorð at þýðask,

^a við *B*, með *A*

^d leiki *B*, lieki *A*

^f meir *B*, mætr *A*

^h en *B*, om. *A*

^k v (= 5) *B*

^m hafnar *Hafniæ* and *Wimmer*, hrafnar *B*, hafna *A*

^b þú *B*, om. *A*

^e qndri *Porkelsson* (1868), anndri *B*, andra *A*

^g bíðit *Porkelsson* (1868), bidi *AB*

ⁱ fyrir norðan Heiði *A*, om. *B*

^l lx (= 60) *A*, xl (= 40) *B*

^c rækik lítt *B*, rechr liet *A*

ⁿ hqrvu *B*, hiorvu *A*

¹ *Qndurr andness* : ‘ ski of the headland,’ i.e. ski which slides round the headland, ship ; cf. *Wimmer* and *Fornrit* ; for a different interpretation, see *Udvalg* 127-9.

² *Hoddstríðandi* : ‘ treasure-destroyer,’ i.e. generous man, here Gunnlaug

³ cf. *Hallfreðars*. ch. 11 in the *Möðruvallabók* version (cf. *Flateyjarbók* I 535), where there is also a report of Hallfred’s dealings with Hrafn and of his voyage with Gunnlaug. This does not appear in the version of the saga found in the expanded *Ólafss. Tryggvasonar* (*Fornmanna sögur*, 1825-37, III 26), which in

Earl Eric then had Gunnlaug ferried out to Hallfred who was delighted to see him. A fair offshore wind promptly sprang up and they were in high spirits. That was late summer.

‘Have you heard of Hrafn Önundarson’s proposal to marry Helga the Fair?’ said Hallfred to Gunnlaug.

Gunnlaug said he had heard about it but not in detail. Hallfred told him all that he knew about it, and added that many men were saying that Hrafn might be no less valiant than Gunnlaug. Gunnlaug replied with a verse, saying :

I care little—the weather is gentle now—
though the east wind sports continually with the
headland-glider¹ this week ;
I am more afraid of the opinion that I am not
reckoned as bold as Hrafn than I am of the treasure-
destroyer² not living to have grey hairs.

‘Your dealings with Hrafn had better be more successful than mine were, my friend,’ said Hallfred. ‘A few years ago, I brought my ship into Leiruvág, below Mosfell Moor. I should have paid Hrafn’s manservant half a mark of silver, but I withheld it from him. Then Hrafn rode down to us with sixty men and cut our moorings, and the ship drifted up onto the mud-flats and was nearly wrecked. I had to surrender to Hrafn’s own terms, and paid him a mark. That’s the story I can tell about him.’³

Then they spoke of nothing but Helga, and Hallfred gave her beauty high praise. Gunnlaug spoke this verse :

It will not do for one wary of reproach,⁴
god of the fire of the sword-storm,⁵
to woo the goddess of the cloak,⁶ snow-driven with
linen⁷ ;

general gives a text closer to the original, so that at least the mention of the voyage with Gunnlaug seems to have been interpolated from *Gunnlaugss*. The story of Hallfred’s dealings with Hrafn may possibly have been original in *Hallfreðars*. and, if it were, the author of *Gunnlaugss*. doubtless borrowed it from there. He introduces it here as a reminiscence, which is stylistically unusual.

⁴ *Háðvarr* : ‘wary of scorn,’ i.e. careful not to incur blame ; it may mean ‘refraining from slander’ and be used here of Hrafn, with reference to his verse, in opposition to the snake-tongued Gunnlaug ; cf. *Udvalg* 129–31.

⁵ *Pundr hyrjar hriðmundaðar* : ‘god (*Pundr* is a name for Ódin) of the fire of the sword-storm’ ; *mundaðr* is sword (cf. *mönduðr*, poetical name for sword, *SnE.* 201) ; *hrið mundaðar*, ‘storm of the sword,’ is battle ; the fire of battle is the sword, and the sword’s god is the warrior.

⁶ *Jörð hafnar* : ‘goddess of the cloak,’ i.e. woman

⁷ *Hörvi drifinn* : ‘snow-driven with linen,’ i.e. dressed in white linen ; the adj. *drifinn* takes up the first meaning of *jörð* : ‘earth’ ; the lady is linen-clad in the same way as the earth may be snow-clad.

því lautsíkjjar ^a lékum ^b ¹
 lyngs, er várum yngri,
 alnar gims á ýmsum
 andnesjum ² því landi.³

‘Þetta er vel ort,’ segir Hallfreðr.

Þeir tóku land norðr á Melrakkasléttu⁴ í Hraunhöfn hálfum mánaði fyrir vetr ok skipuðu þar upp.

Þórðr hét maðr ; hann var bóndason þar á Sléttunni. Hann gekk í glímur⁵ við þá kaupmennina, ok gekk þeim illa við hann. Þá varð komit saman fangi með þeim Gunnlaugi. Ok um nóttina áðr hét Þórðr á Þór til sigrs sér, ok um daginn er þeir fundusk tóku þeir til glímu. Þá laust Gunnlaugr báða fœtrna undan Þórði ok felldi hann mikit fall ; en fótrinn Gunnlaugs stókk ór liði, sá er hann stóð á, ok fell Gunnlaugr þá með Þórði.

Þá mælti Þórðr, ‘Vera má,’ segir hann, ‘at þér vegni eigi annat betr.’

‘Hvat þá?’ segir Gunnlaugr.

‘Málin við Hrafn ef hann fær Helgu innar vænu at vetrnóttum — ok var ek hjá í sumar á Alþingi er þat rézk.’

Gunnlaugr svarar engu. Þá var vafiðr fótrinn ok í liðinn færðr, ok þrútnaði allmjök.

Þeir Hallfreðr riðu tólf menn saman ok kómu suðr á Gilsbakka í Borgarfirði þat laugarkveld er þeir sátu at brúðlaupinu at Borg. Illugi varð feginn Gunnlaugi syni sínum ok hans fõrunautum. Gunnlaugr kvazk þá þegar vilja ofan ríða til Borgar. Illugi kvað þat ekki ráð, ok svá sýndisk ǫllum nema Gunnlaugi. En Gunnlaugr var þó ófærr fyrir fótarsins sakir, þótt hann léti ekki á sjásk, ok varð því ekki af ferðinni.

Hallfreðr reið heim um morgininn til Hreðuvatns í Norðrárdal. Þar réð fyrir eignum þeira Galti, bróðir hans, ok var vaskr maðr.⁶

^a lautsíkjjar *Wimmer*, lesik *B*, lausikjar *A*

^b lékum *Hafniae*, lækum *B*, leikum *A*

¹ *lékum . . . várum* : plural for singular

² *leika á ýmsum andnesjum alnar gims* : ‘to play on the various headlands of the fire of the forearm’ ; the fire of the arm is gold, the headlands of gold (in the shape of rings or bracelets) are the fingers or hands ; to ‘play on’ them is to fondle them ; see *Udvalg* 131–2 and *Fornrit* for a different interpretation.

for I played when I was ¹ younger on the several headlands of the fire of the forearm ² in that land of the heather-bed of the earth-fish.³

‘That’s beautifully composed,’ said Hallfred.

They made land in the north at Hraunhöfn on Melrakkaslétta ⁴ a fortnight before winter, and unloaded.

There was a man called Thórd who was the son of a farmer there on Melrakkaslétta. He took on the merchants at wrestling ⁵ and they got the worst of it with him. Then a match was arranged between him and Gunnlaug, and on the night before, Thórd called upon Thór for victory. Next day when they met, they started wrestling. Gunnlaug knocked both Thórd’s feet from under him and felled him heavily, but the ankle of the foot Gunnlaug was standing on slipped out of joint, and he then fell with Thórd.

‘Maybe you’ll have no better luck in your next bout,’ said Thórd.

‘What do you mean?’ asked Gunnlaug.

‘Your bout with Hrafn, if he marries Helga the Fair at the Winter Nights. I was a bystander when it was arranged at the Great Assembly this summer.’

Gunnlaug made no answer. His foot was then bandaged up and the joint reset; it swelled up very much.

Gunnlaug and Hallfred with ten companions rode off together and arrived in the south at Gilsbakki in Borgarfjord on the very Saturday evening when they were sitting over the wedding feast at Borg. Illugi was glad to see his son Gunnlaug and his companions. Gunnlaug said he wanted to ride down to Borg at once. Illugi said it was very unwise, and everyone agreed except Gunnlaug; but he was disabled on account of his foot, though he showed no signs of it, and therefore the journey was abandoned.

Hallfred rode home next morning to Hreduvatn in Nordrárdal. His brother Galti, a fine man, was in charge of their property there.⁶

³ *Því landi lautsíkjjar lyngs*: ‘in that land of the heather of the earth-fish’; the earth-fish (*síkr*, a kind of salmon, *laut*, a hollow place, used here for ‘ground’ in general) is the snake; the heather of the snake is its bed, and the serpent’s bed is gold; the land of gold is a woman.

⁴ The large peninsula which extends furthest north in the extreme north-east of Iceland

⁵ See Glossary, s.v. *glíma*

⁶ An anachronism; according to *Hallfredars.* ch. 10, Galti was killed A.D. 1001.

II

Nú er at segja frá Hrafn at hann sat at brúðlaupi sínu at Borg, ok er þat flestra manna sagn at brúðrin væri heldr dǫpr. Ok er þat satt, sem mælt er, at ' lengi man þat er ungr getr,' ok var henni nú ok svá.

Þat varð til nýlundu þar at veizlunni at sá maðr bað Húngerðar Þóroddsdóttur ok Jófríðar, er Svertingr hét ok var Hafr-Bjarnarson Molda-Gnúpssonar¹; ok skyldu þau ráð takask um vetrinn eptir jól uppi at Skáney. Þar bjó Þorkell, frændi Húngerðar, sonr Torfa Valbrands-sonar; móðir Torfa var Þórodda, systir^a Tungu-Odds.²

Hrafn fór heim til Mosfells með Helgu konu sína. Ok er þau höfðu þar skamma stund verit, þá var þat^b einn morgin áðr þau risu upp at Helga vakir en Hrafn svaf, ok lét hann illa í svefni. Ok er hann vaknaði, spyrr Helga hvat hann hefði dreymt. Hrafn kvað þá vísu:

(12) Hugðumk orms á armi
 ý dǫggvar³ þér hǫggvinn :
 væri brúðr í blóði
 beðr þinn roðinn mínu ;
 knættit^c endr um undir
 ǫlstafns^d Njǫrun^e Hrafn,
 líka^f getr þat lauka
 lind,^g hǫggþyrnis^g binda.

Helga mælti, ' Þat mun ek aldri gráta,' segir hon, ' ok hafi þér illa svikit mik, ok mun Gunnlaugr út kominn.' Ok grét Helga þá mjök.

Ok litlu síðar fluttisk útkváma Gunnlaugs. Helga gerðisk þá svá stírð við Hrafn at hann fekk eigi haldit henni heima þar, ok fóru þau þá heim aptr til Borgar; ok nýtti Hrafn lítit af samvistum við hana.

Nú búask menn til boðs um vetrinn. Þorkell frá Skáney bauð Illuga svarta ok sonum hans. Ok er Illugi bóndi bjósk, þá sat Gunnlaugr í stofu ok bjósk ekki.

^a Þórdís dóttir *B*

^b þat *B*, om. *A*

^c knættit *Þorkelsson* (1868), kvænti *B*, knettim *A*

^d ǫlstafns *Hafniæ*, sus tams *B*, aulstafn *A*

^e Njǫrun *Ísls.* II, morum *AB* ^f líka *Þorkelsson* (1868), litr *B*, lik *A*

^g hǫggþyrnis *Fornrit*, hagþyrnis *B*, hagdreyrins *A*

¹ On Goat-Björn, see *Landnámabók* 101, 214; on the marriage of Sverting and Húngerð, cf. Introduction, p. xxii

² According to *Landnámabók* 140, Thórodda was not the mother of Torfi but his wife. He and Illugi the Black were second cousins.

³ *Ý dǫggvar orms*: 'yew (-twig) of the dew of the serpent'; serpent is

II

Now there is Hrafn's story to tell. As he sat at his wedding feast at Borg, most people have it that the bride was somewhat dejected. That is a true saying which runs, 'You remember long what you learn in youth,' and that was what was affecting her now.

At the feast it happened that a man called Sverting, the son of Goat-Björn, the son of Molda-Gnúp, asked for the hand of Húngerð, the daughter of Thórodd and Jófríd.¹ The wedding was to take place in the winter after Yule, up at Skáney, where Húngerð's kinsman Thorkel lived, the son of Torfi Valbrandsson. Torfi's mother was Thórodda, the sister of Tungu-Odd.²

Hrafn went home to Mosfell with Helga his bride, and when they had been living there a short time, Helga was awake one morning before they got up. Hrafn was asleep, tossing about restlessly. When he awoke, Helga asked him what he had been dreaming. Hrafn spoke a verse, saying :

In your arms I thought I was struck by a twig of the
spear-dew, and that your bed, my bride, was reddened
in my blood ;

the ale-bowl's goddess ⁴ could not bind up the wounds
of the striking-thorn ⁵ on Hrafn : the linden-tree of
herbs ⁶ may be pleased at that.

'I will never weep over such a thing,' replied Helga. 'You have all cruelly deceived me—Gunnlaug must have come back !'

Then Helga wept bitterly.

A little while afterwards the news of Gunnlaug's return was heard. Helga became then so harsh towards Hrafn that he could not keep her there at his home, and so they returned to Borg. He enjoyed little intimacy with her.

People were now turning their attention to the winter wedding. Thorkel of Skáney invited Illugi the Black and his sons. But when Illugi was getting ready, Gunnlaug sat in the parlour and made no preparations.

here taken as a poetic name for spear ; the dew of the spear is blood ; the twig of blood is the sword ; for a different interpretation see *NN.* 547.

⁴ *Olstafns Njgrun* : 'ale-bowl's goddess,' i.e. woman

⁵ *Hoggbyrnir* : 'striking-thorn,' i.e. sword

⁶ *Lauka lind* : '(linden-) tree of herbs,' i.e. woman ; herbs would mean the ingredients used in the brewing of ale or in the concoction of medicinal potions.

Illugi gekk til hans ok mælti, 'Hví býsk þú ekki, frændi?'

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Ek ætla eigi at fara.'

Illugi mælti, 'Fara skaltu víst, frændi,' segir hann, 'ok slá ekki slíku á þik at þrá eptir einni konu, ok lát sem þú vitir eigi,^a ok mun þik aldri konur skorta.'

Gunnlaugr gerði sem faðir hans mælti, ok kómu þeir til boðsins. Ok var þeim Illuga ok sonum hans skipat í ǫndvegi, en þeim Þorsteini Egilssyni ok Hrafni, mági hans, ok sveitinni brúðguma í annat ǫndvegi gegnt Illuga. Konur sátu á palli¹ ok sat Helga in fagra næst brúðinni ok renndi opt augum til Gunnlaugs; ok kemr þar at því, sem mælt er, at 'eigi leyna augu ef ann kona manni.'² Gunnlaugr var þá vel búinn ok hafði þá klæðin þau in góðu er Sigtryggr konungr gaf honum. Ok þótti hann þá mikit afbragð annarra manna fyrir margs sakir, bæði afis ok vænleiks ok vaxtar.

Lítil var gleði manna at boðinu. Ok þann dag er menn váru í brottbúningi, þá brugðu konur göngu sinni ok bjuggusk til heimferðar. Gunnlaugr gekk þá til tals við Helgu ok tóluðu lengi; ok þá kvað Gunnlaugr vísu:

(13) Ormstungu varð engi
allr dagr und sal fjalla³
hœgr, síz Helga in fagra
Hrafns kvánar réð nafni;
lítt sá hǫlðr^b inn hvíti,⁴
hornþeys,^c faðir meyjjar,
gefn var Eir⁵ til aura
ung, við minni tungu.

Ok enn kvað hann:

(14) Væn, ák verst at launa,
vín-Gefn,⁶ fǫður þínum —
fold nemr flaum af skaldi
flóðhys⁷ — ok svá móður,

^a B adds: þat er karlmannligt

^b hǫlðr B, heidr A

^c hornþeys B. M. Ólsen (*Om Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu*, 28 n. 1), hiorleiks B, hior þeys A

¹ See Glossary, s.v. *stofa*

² In the Icelandic this is a roughly formed couplet in *dróttkvætt* verse.

³ *Salr fjalla*: 'hall of the mountains,' i.e. sky

⁴ *Hǫlðr inn hvíti*: i.e. Thorstein; the adjective 'white' may describe his appearance (cf. p. 1 above) or may mean 'cowardly, ignoble' (cf. e.g. *Egilss.*

Illugi went up to him and said, 'Why aren't you getting ready, son?'

'I'm not going,' replied Gunnlaug.

'Of course you must go, son,' said Illugi. 'Don't go to such lengths as to break your heart over one woman; pretend you don't notice; you'll never lack for women.'

Gunnlaug did as his father said and they went to the wedding feast. Illugi and his sons were placed on one high seat, while Thorstein Egilsson, Hrafn his son-in-law and the bridegroom's party were placed on the other high seat opposite Illugi. The women sat on the dais,¹ and Helga the Fair was sitting next to the bride. She often turned her eyes on Gunnlaug, and the saying was borne out, 'A woman's eyes will tell if she loves a man.'² Gunnlaug was then well decked out, and had on the fine clothes which King Sigtrygg had given him. He seemed greatly superior to the other men for many reasons—his strength, good looks and figure.

People did not enjoy the wedding much. On the day when the men were making preparations to leave, the women started to break up too and to get ready for going home. Then Gunnlaug went to speak to Helga, and they talked for a long time. Then Gunnlaug spoke a verse, saying:

For Snake-Tongue no whole day, under the hall of the
mountains,³ was easy, since Helga the Fair had the
name of Hrafn's wife;

the white man,⁴ the girl's father, paid little heed
—the goddess of the horn-thaw⁵ was married young for
money—to my words.

Again he spoke and said:

Beautiful wine-goddess,⁶ I have the worst injury to
repay your father and mother—
the land of the sea-fire⁷ takes joy from the poet—

ch. 84, *Laxdœlas*. ch. 52, where the word is used in this derogatory sense); *hólðr* signifies properly a landowner of a certain rank, but in poetry is used without distinction for 'man.'

⁵ *Eir hornþeys*: 'goddess of the horn-thaw'; 'horn-thaw' is ale, ale's goddess is a woman.

⁶ *Vín-Gefn*: 'wine-goddess,' i.e. woman

⁷ *Fold flóðhyrs*: 'land of flood-flame'; 'flood-flame,' or 'fire of the sea,' is gold; the land of gold is a woman.

því at gerðu Bil borða ¹
 bæði senn und klæðum,
 herr hafi hólðs ok svarra
 hagvirki,² svá fagra.

Ok þá gaf Gunnlaugr Helgu skikkjuna Aðalráðsnaut ok var þat gersimi sem mest. Hon þakkaði honum vel gjöfina.

Síðan gekk Gunnlaugr út ok váru þá komin hross ok hestar sǫðlaðir ok margir allvænligir,^a ok bundnir heima á hlaðinu. Gunnlaugr hljóp á bak einhverjum hesti ok reið á skeið eptir túninu ok at þangat er Hrafn stóð fyrir, ok varð Hrafn at opa undan.

Gunnlaugr mælti, 'Ekki er at opa undan, Hrafn,' segir hann, 'fyrir því at enga ógn býð ek þér at sinni, — en þú veizt til hvers þú hefir unnit.'

Hrafn svarar ok kvað vísu :

(15) Samira okkr um eina,
 Ullr benloga,^b Fullu,
 frægir folka Ságu,⁴
 fangs^c í brigð at ganga ;
 mjök eru margar slíkar,
 morðrunnr,^d fyr haf sunnan,
 ýtik sævar sóta⁷
 sannfróðr, konur góðar.

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Vera má,' segir hann, 'at margar sé, en eigi þykki mér svá.'

Þá hljópu þeir Illugi at ok Þorsteinn ok vildu ekki at þeir ættisk við. Þá kvað Gunnlaugr vísu :

(16) Gefin var Eir til aura
 ormdags⁸ in litfagra, —
 þann kveða menn né minna
 minn jafnoka,^e — Hrafni ;

^a al- *A*, om. *B*.

^b benloga *Þorkelsson* (1868), beimloga *A*, beinflugu *B*

^c fangs *A.M.* 552 *L*, þangs *B*, þangat *A*

^d morðrunnr *B*, motrur *A*

^e jafnoka *B*, iafn nocka *A*

¹ *Bil borða* : 'goddess of (woven) bands,' i.e. woman

² *Hagvirki* : taken by Jón Þorkelsson (1880) as a reference to Helga, but by Konráð Gíslason, *Udvalg* 132, as 'artistic skill' (*kunstfærdighed*).

³ *Ullr benloga* : 'god of the wound-flame,' i.e. god of the sword, warrior

because both together under the bed-clothes they
made the goddess of woven bands ¹ so fair :
the devil take the craftsmanship ² of that man and
woman !

Gunnlaug then gave Helga the cloak Ethelred had given him, which was a most precious object. She thanked him warmly for the gift.

Then Gunnlaug went out. By this time mares and stallions, splendid beasts many of them, had been led in fully saddled and tethered on the paving at the front of the house. Gunnlaug leapt on the back of one stallion and rode full tilt across the home field towards the place where Hrafn was standing, so that Hrafn had to draw away.

'You've no need to shrink back, Hrafn,' said Gunnlaug, 'for I'm not threatening you at present, though you know what you've deserved.'

Hrafn replied with a verse, saying :

God of the wound-flame,³ glorifier of the goddess of
battles,⁴
it is not fitting for us to quarrel about one goddess
of the tunic ⁵ ;

¹
slaughter-tree,⁶ there are very many such good women
south over the sea : I launch my sea-steed ⁷ truly
informed.

'Many there may be,' replied Gunnlaug, 'but it doesn't seem so to me.'

Then Illugi and Thorstein ran up and would not have them quarrelling. Then Gunnlaug spoke a verse, saying :

The lovely-complexioned goddess of serpent-brightness ⁸
was given to Hrafn for money—men say he is my
equal and no less :

⁴ *frægir folka Ságu* : 'glorifier of the goddess of battles,' i.e. glorifier of the valkyrie, warrior

⁵ *Fangs Fulla* : 'tunic's goddess,' i.e. woman

⁶ *Morðrunnr* : 'slaughter-tree,' i.e. warrior

⁷ *Sævar sóti* : 'horse of the sea,' i.e. ship ; *sóti* is a poetic name for horse. This sentence seems to contain Hrafn's self-commendation as an observant traveller ; cf. *Porkelsson* (1868).

⁸ *Eir ormdags* : 'goddess of serpent-day' ; the 'day' or brightness of the serpent is gold ; the goddess of gold is a woman.

allra nýztr meðan austan
Aðalráðr farar dvalði,
því er menrýris ^{a 2} minni
málgráðr, í gný stála.¹

Ok eptir þetta riðu menn heim hvárirtveggju, ok var allt kyrt ok tíðendalaust um vetrinn. Nýtti Hrafn ekki síðan af samvistum við Helgu, þá er þau Gunnlaugr hófðu fundizk.

Ok um sumarit riðu menn fjölmennir til þings: Illugi svarti ok synir hans með honum, Gunnlaugr ok Hermundr, Þorsteinn Egilsson ok Kollsveinn sonr hans, Qnundr frá Mosfelli ok synir hans allir, Svertingr Hafr-Bjarnarson. Skapti hafði þá enn lögsoðu.

Ok einn dag á þinginu, er menn gengu fjölmennir til Logbergs³ ok er þar var lykt at mæla lögskilum, þá kvaddi Gunnlaugr sér hljóðs ok mælti, 'Er Hrafn hér Qnundarson?'

Hann kvezk þar vera.

Gunnlaugr ormstunga mælti þá, 'Þat veizt þú at þú hefir fengit heitkonu minnar ok dregsk til fjandskapar við mik. Nú fyrir þat vil ek bjóða þér hólmgöngu hér á þinginu á þriggja náttu fresti í Øxarárhólmi.'⁴

Hrafn svarar, 'Þetta er vel boðit, sem ván var at þér,' segir hann, 'ok em ek ^b þessa alþúinn þegar þú vill.'

Þetta þótti illt frændum hvárstveggja þeira, en þó váru þat lög í þann tíma at bjóða hólmgöngu, sá er vanhluta þóttisk verða fyrir qðrum.⁵

Ok er þrjár nætr váru liðnar, bjuggusk þeir til hólmgöngu, ok fylgði Illugi svarti syni sínum til hólmsins með miklu fjölmenni, en Skapti lögsoðumaðr ^c fylgði Hrafn ok faðir hans ok aðrir frændr hans.

Ok áðr Gunnlaugr gengi út í hólminn, þá kvað hann vísu þessa:

(17) Nú emk út á eyri
alvangs ^{d 6} búinn ganga,
happs unni guð greppi
gort, með tognum ^e hjörvi;

^a menrýris *Udvalg* 134, menntyrir *B*, menreyrir *A*

^c lögsoðumaðr *B*, lögmaðr *A* ^d al- *B*, all- *A*

^e tognum *Wimmer*, tegnum *AB*

^b ek *B*, om. *A*

¹ *Gnýr stála*: 'noise of steel-things'; 'steel-things' are weapons, their noise battle.

² *Menrýrir*: 'necklet-diminisher,' i.e. a (generous) man, here Gunnlaug

³ See Glossary, s.v. *Logberg*

while the best of all princes, Ethelred, delayed my journey from the east in the din of steel¹: that is why the necklet-enemy's² speech-greed is less.

After that the men of both sides rode home, and everything was peaceful and without incident for the winter. Hrafn never again enjoyed intimacy with Helga after she and Gunnlaug had met.

In the summer, men rode in large numbers to the assembly: Illugi the Black, and with him his sons Gunnlaug and Hermund, Thorstein Egilsson and his son Kollsvein, Önund of Mosfell and all his sons, and Sverting the son of Goat-Björn. Skapti was still the Law-Speaker.

One day at the assembly when men had crowded to the Law-Rock³ and the legal business was over, Gunnlaug called for silence and said, 'Is Hrafn Önundarson here?'

He replied that he was.

'You know,' said Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue then, 'that you have married my promised bride and made yourself my enemy. Now, on account of this, I will challenge you to a duel here at the assembly in three days' time on Öxará Island.'⁴

'That is a fair offer, as might be expected of you,' answered Hrafn; 'I'm quite ready for it as soon as you like.'

The kinsmen on both sides were dismayed at this, but it was legal at that time for anyone who considered he had had a bad deal at another's hands to challenge him to a duel.⁵

When the three days had passed, they got ready for the combat; Illugi the Black accompanied his son to the island with a great party of supporters, and Hrafn was accompanied by Skapti the Law-Speaker, his father, and other relatives.

Before Gunnlaug went out to the island, he spoke this verse, saying:

Now I am ready to go out on to the sand-flat of the public plain,⁶ with drawn sword; God grant the poet complete victory;

⁴ The sandy island in the Öxará, where the river enters the large lake which forms the southern boundary of Thingvellir; it was customary to fight duels proposed at the Great Assembly there.

⁵ See Glossary, s.v. *hólmanga*

⁶ *Eyrr alvangs*: 'sand-flat of the public plain,' i.e. the sandy Öxará Island on Thingvellir, the site of the Great Assembly; cf. *n.* 4, above.

hnakk skal Helgu lokka,¹
 haus vinnk frá bol lausan
 loks með ljósum mæki,^a
 ljúfsvelgs^{b 2} í tvau kljúfa.

Hrafn svarar ok kvað þetta :

(18) Veitat greppr³ hvárr greppa
 gagnsæli^c hlýtr fagna —
 hér er bensigðum⁴ brugðit,
 búin er egg í leggi ;
 þat mun ein ok ekkja,
 ung mæ, þótt vér^d særimsk,⁶
 þorna spöng⁵ af þingi
 þegns hugrekki^e fregna.^f

Hermundr helt skildi fyrir Gunnlaug bróður sinn, en Svertingr Hafr-Bjarnarson fyrir Hrafn. Þrim mörkum silfrs skyldi sá leysa sik af hólminum er sárr yrði.⁷

Hrafn átti fyrr at höggva, er á hann var skorat,⁸ ok hjó hann í skjöld Gunnlaugs ofanverðan ok brast sverðit þegar sundr undir hjóltunum, er til var höggvit af miklu afli. Blóðrefillinn hraut upp af skildinum ok kom á kinn Gunnlaugi, ok skeindisk hann heldr en eigi.

Þá hljópu feðr þeira þegar á millim ok margir aðrir menn.

Þá mælti Gunnlaugr, 'Nú kalla ek at Hrafn sé sigraðr er hann er slyppr.'

'En ek kalla at þú sér sigraðr,' segir Hrafn, 'er þú ert sárr orðinn.'

Gunnlaugr var þá allæfr ok reiðr mjök, ok kvað ekki reynt vera. Illugi faðir hans kvað þá eigi skyldu reyna meir at sinni.

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Þat mynda ek vilja,' segir hann, 'at vit Hrafn mættimsk svá qðru sinni at þú værir fjarri, faðir, at skilja okkr.'

Ok við þetta skilðu þeir at sinni, ok gengu menn heim til búða sinna. Ok annan dag eptir í lögrettu var þat í lög sett at af skyldi taka hólmgöngur allar þaðan í frá, ok var þat gort at ráði allra vitrustu manna er við váru staddir, en þar váru allir þeir er vitrastir váru á

^a ljósum mæki *B*, liosu marki *A*

^b ljúfsvelgs *A.M.* 500, hufsnelz *B*, lyfsvelgs *A*

^c gagnsæli *Hafniæ*, gangsæli *B*, gagnsælli *A* ^d vér *Wimmer*, vid *AB*

^e hugrekki *B*, hugr ecki *A* ^f fregna *B*, fagna *A*

¹ *Hnakkr lokka* : 'seat of the locks (of hair),' i.e. head

² *Ljúfsvelgr Helgu* : 'love-gulper of Helga,' i.e. Helga's passionate lover, Hrafn ; cf. *Þorkelsson* (1880) ³ i.e. Gunnlaug

⁴ *Bensigðr* : 'wound-sickle,' i.e. sword

I shall cleave in two the seat of the locks ¹ of
Helga's love-gulper ²; last I shall work his head
loose from his body with my bright sword.

Hrafn answered with this :

The poet ³ knows not which poet will have it as his lot
to welcome victory ; here wound-sickles ⁴ are drawn,
the edge is ready to bite the leg ;

alone and a widow, the young maid, the metal-plate
of thorns,⁵
although I am wounded,⁶
will hear from the Thing of the valour of her
husband.

Hermund held the shield for his brother Gunnlaug, and Sverting, the son of Goat-Björn, for Hrafn. Three marks of silver were to be paid by the one who was wounded, to redeem himself from the duel.⁷

Hrafn had the first blow, since it was he who had been challenged.⁸ He struck at the upper part of Gunnlaug's shield, and so great was the strength of the blow that the sword promptly broke beneath the guard. The point of the sword flew up from the shield and hit Gunnlaug on the cheek, scratching him just a little.

Their fathers and many other men at once rushed between them.

'Now I claim that Hrafn is defeated,' said Gunnlaug then, 'because he is disarmed.'

'And I claim that you are defeated,' said Hrafn, 'because you have been wounded.'

Then Gunnlaug was furious with anger and declared that the duel had not been fought out. Illugi his father then said that there should be no further attempt for the present.

'I should like Hrafn and me to meet next time with you too far away to separate us, Father,' answered Gunnlaug.

With that they broke up for the time being, and the men returned to their booths. The following day a law was made in the Legislative Court to do away with all duelling ever after. This was done on the advice of all the wisest men who were present—and all the wisest

⁵ *Porna spong* : 'metal-plate of thorns' ; the 'thorns' are brooch-pins ; their 'plate' is a woman, here Helga ; cf. *Die Kenningar* 411-12.

⁶ *Þótt vér særimsk* : plural for singular

⁷ See Glossary, s.v. *hólmganga*

⁸ See Glossary, s.v. *hólmganga*

men in the country were in attendance there. This duel which Hrafn and Gunnlaug fought was the last to take place in Iceland. This was one of the three most crowded assemblies ever held; the others were after the burning of Njál and the Slaughter on the Moor.¹

One morning, as the brothers Hermund and Gunnlaug were going to wash themselves in the Öxará, a crowd of women were approaching the river on the other side, and among them was Helga the Fair.

'Do you see your sweetheart Helga on the other side of the river?' said Hermund.

'I see her all right,' answered Gunnlaug. Then he spoke this verse, saying:

The woman² was born to make strife amongst the sons
of men; the tree of the valkyrie³ was the cause of it:
I was passionately eager to possess the tree of
riches⁴;

now, henceforth, black eyes are of small use to me
for glancing⁵ at the swan-glorious goddess of the
light of the land of rings.⁶

Later they crossed the river, and Helga and Gunnlaug talked for a while; and when they returned eastwards over the river, Helga stood and gazed for a long time after Gunnlaug.

Then Gunnlaug looked back over the river and spoke this verse⁷:

The eyelash-moon⁸ from the bright heaven of the brows
of the goddess of ale,⁹ linen-decked, shone hawk-
gleaming on me;

but that beam from the eyelid-star¹⁰ of the gold-
necklet's goddess¹¹ works henceforth the woe of the
goddess of rings¹² and mine.

¹ *Títa*: not found elsewhere in Icelandic, but cf. Danish *titte*, Swedish *titta*, 'to peep, glance.'

² *Bauga lands lýsi-Gunnr*: 'light-goddess of the land of rings,' i.e. goddess of the light of the land of rings; the land of rings is the hand or arm, the light of the arm is gold, gold's goddess is a woman.

³ This verse is attributed, doubtless correctly, to Kormák in *Kormákss.* ch. 3.

⁴ *Brámáni*: 'eyelash-moon,' i.e. eye

⁵ *Hrist lauka brims*: 'goddess of the surf of herbs'; the surf of herbs is ale, ale's goddess is a woman.

⁶ *Hvarma tungl*: 'eyelids' star,' i.e. eye

⁷ *Friðr gullmens*: 'goddess of the gold necklet,' i.e. woman; *Friðr*, 'beautiful,' is used substantively in kennings as the name of a goddess.

⁸ *Hltn hringa*: 'goddess of rings,' i.e. woman

Ok eptir þetta um liðit, riðu menn heim af þinginu, ok var Gunnlaugr heima á Gilsbakka. Ok einn morgin er hann vaknaði, þá váru allir menn upp risnir, nema hann lá; hann hvíldi í lokrekkju innar af seti.¹ Þá gengu í skálann tólf menn allir alvápnaðir, ok var þar kominn Hrafn Qnundarson.

Gunnlaugr spratt upp þegar ok gat fengit vápn sín.

Þá mælti Hrafn, 'Við engu skal þér hætt vera,' segir hann, 'en þat er ørendi mitt hingat at þú skalt nú heyra. Þú bautt mér hólmgöngu í sumar á Alþingi, ok þótti þér sú ekki reynd verða. Nú vil ek þér bjóða at vit farim báðir á brott af Íslandi ok útan í sumar ok gangim á hólm í Nóregi. Þar munu eigi frændr okkrir fyrir standa.'

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Mæl drengja heilastr! Ok þenna kost vil ek gjarna þiggja. Ok er hér at þiggja, Hrafn,' segir hann, 'þann greiða sem þú vill.'^a

Hrafn svarar, 'Þat er vel boðit, en ríða munu vér fyrst at sinni.'

Ok við þetta skilðu þeir.

Þetta þótti frændum hvárstveggja þeira stórum illa, en fengu þó ekki at gort fyrir ákafa þeira sjálfra; enda varð þat fram at koma sem til dró.

^a Here *B* ends.

¹ See Glossary, s.v. *skáli*

After this incident, everyone rode back from the assembly, and Gunnlaug lived at home at Gilsbakki. One morning when he awoke, all the men had already risen and only he lay in bed; he slept in a bed-closet at the farther end of the room beyond the raised floor.¹ Then into the room came twelve men, all fully armed; it was Hrafn Önundarson who had come.

Gunnlaug promptly sprang up and managed to grab his weapons.

'You're in no danger,' said Hrafn then, 'and what my business is here you will learn in a moment. In the summer at the Great Assembly, you challenged me to a duel and you thought that it was not fought out. Now I want to propose to you that we both leave Iceland and go abroad next summer and fight a duel in Norway. Our kinsmen won't get in our way there.'

'Spoken like a splendid fellow!' answered Gunnlaug. 'I'll gladly accept this proposal. And now, Hrafn, here is to be had whatever hospitality you want.'

'That's a generous invitation,' replied Hrafn, 'but just now we'll ride on our way.'

With that they parted.

The kinsmen of both of them were greatly upset at this, but on account of their passion they could do nothing to stop it; and after all, what fate had decreed could not be prevented.

Nú er at segja frá Hrafni at hann bjó skip sitt í Leiruvágum. Tveir menn eru þeir nefndir er fóru með Hrafni, systursynir Qnundar fōður hans ; hét annarr Grímr, en annarr Óláfr, ok váru báðir gildir menn. Qllum frændum Hrafns þótti mikill svipr er hann fór í brott, en hann sagði svá, kvazk því Gunnlaug á hólm skorat hafa at hann kvazk engar nytjar hafa Helgu ; ok kvað annan hvárn verða at hníga fyrir qðrum.

Síðan sigldi Hrafn í haf, er þeim gaf byr, ok kómu skipi sínu í Þrándheim ok var þar of vetrinn ok frétti ekki til Gunnlaugs á þeim vetri. Ok þar beið hann Gunnlaugs um sumarit, ok enn annan vetr var hann í Þrándheimi, þar sem heitir í Lifangri.

Gunnlaugr ormstunga rézk til skips með Hallfreði vandræðaskáldi norðr á Sléttu ok urðu þeir síðbúnir mjök, ok sigldu þeir í haf þegar byr gaf ok kómu við Orkneyjar litlu fyrir vetr.

Sigurðr jarl Hlōðvisson réð þá fyrir eyjunum, ok fór Gunnlaugr til hans ok var þar um vetrinn, ok virði jarl hann vel. Ok um várit bjósk jarl í hernað. Gunnlaugr bjósk til ferðar með honum, ok herjuðu um sumarit víða um Suðreyjar ok Skotlandsfjorðu ok áttu margar orrostur. Ok reyndisk Gunnlaugr inn hraustasti ok inn vaskasti drengr ok inn harðasti karlmaðr, hvar sem þeir kómu.

Sigurðr jarl snerisk snemmendis sumars aptr, en Gunnlaugr sté þá á skip með kaupmōnnum þeim er sigldu til Nóregs, ok skilðu þeir Sigurðr jarl með mikilli vináttu.

Gunnlaugr fór norðr til Þrándheims á Hlaðir á fund Eiríks jarls ok var þar qndverðan vetr ; ok tók jarl vel við honum ok bauð honum með sér at vera, ok þat þekkðisk hann. Frétt hafði jarl áðr viðskipti þeira Hrafns, svá sem var, ok segir Gunnlaugi at hann lagði bann fyrir at þeir berðisk þar í hans ríki.¹ Gunnlaugr kvað hann slíku ráða mundu, ok var Gunnlaugr þar um vetrinn ok jafnan fálátr.

Ok um várit einn dag, gekk Gunnlaugr úti ok Þorkell frændi hans með honum. Þeir gengu í brott frá bænum, ok á vōllum fyrir þeim var mannhringr, ok í hringinum innan váru tveir menn með vápnum ok skyldusk. Var þar annarr nefndr Hrafn en annarr Gunnlaugr.

¹ In *Grettiss. (Íslensk Fornrit VII, 1936)*, ch. 19, it is said that, before leaving Norway to go to England in support of King Knút (A.D. 1015), Eric abolished duelling in his realm.

Now it is to be told of Hrafn that he made ready his ship in Leiruvág. The names are known of two men who went with him ; they were the sons of his father Önund's sister, one called Grím, the other Óláf, and both manly fellows. All Hrafn's family felt it a great loss when he went away, but he said that he had challenged Gunnlaug to a duel because he was getting nothing out of his married life with Helga ; one of them, he said, would have to fall at the other's hands.

Then when they got a fair wind, Hrafn put to sea and they brought their ship to Thrándheim, where Hrafn spent the winter. He heard nothing of Gunnlaug that winter, and waited for him there during the summer, and spent yet another winter in Thrándheim at a place called Levanger.

Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue took ship with Hallfred the Troublesome Poet on Melrakkaslétta in the north. They were very late in getting ready, and as soon as they got a favourable wind they put to sea and arrived in the Orkneys just before winter.

Earl Sigurd Hlödvisson was then the ruler of the islands, and Gunnlaug went to him and passed the winter there and was well treated by the earl. In the spring, the earl made preparations to go raiding. Gunnlaug set off on the expedition with him, and in the summer they plundered over a wide area in the Hebrides and the Scottish firths and fought many battles. Gunnlaug proved himself a most stalwart and valiant fellow and a most resolute fighter wherever they went.

It was still early in the summer when Earl Sigurd turned back, and Gunnlaug then joined a ship with merchants who were sailing to Norway, and he and Earl Sigurd parted with great friendship.

Gunnlaug travelled north to Hladir in Thrándheim to visit Earl Eric, and got there at the beginning of winter. The earl received him well and invited him to stay with him, which he accepted. The earl had already heard of the affair between Gunnlaug and Hrafn, and he told Gunnlaug that he forbade them to fight in his domain.¹ Gunnlaug said that it was for the earl to decide such things ; he stayed the winter there and was never very sociable.

One day in the spring, Gunnlaug and his kinsman Thorkel were out walking. They went away from the town, and in the fields in front of them there was a ring of men and inside the ring two armed men were fencing. The name Hrafn was given to one and the name

Þeir mæltu er hjá stóðu at Íslendingar hyggi smátt ok væri seinir til at muna orð sín. Gunnlaugr fann at hér fylgði mikit háð ok hér var mikit spott at dregit, ok gekk Gunnlaugr í brott þegjandi.

Ok litlu síðar eptir þetta, segir hann^a jarli at hann kvezk eigi lengr nenna at þola háð ok spott hirðmanna hans um mál þeira Hrafns, ok beiddi jarl fá sér leiðtoga inn í Lifangr. Jarli var sagt áðr at Hrafn var í brottu ór Lifangri ok farinn austr til Svíþjóðar, ok því gaf hann Gunnlaugi orlof at fara, ok fekk honum leiðtoga tvá til ferðarinnar.

Nú ferr Gunnlaugr af Hlōðum við sjaunda mann inn í Lifangr, ok þann morgin hafði Hrafn farit þaðan með fimmta mann, er Gunnlaugr kom þar um kveldit. Þaðan fór Gunnlaugr í Veradal, ok kom þar at kveldi jafnan sem Hrafn hafði áðr verit um nóttina. Gunnlaugr ferr til þess er hann kom á efsta bæ í dalnum, er á Súlu hét,¹ ok hafði Hrafn þaðan farit um morgininn. Gunnlaugr dvaldi þá ekki ferðina ok fór þegar um nóttina. Ok um morgininn í sólarroð, þá sá hvárir aðra. Hrafn var þar kominn sem váru vötn tvau, ok á meðal vatnanna váru vellir sléttir; þat heita Gleipnisvellir. En fram í vatnit annat gekk nes lítit er heitir Dinganes. Þar námu þeir Hrafn við í nesinu, ok váru fimm saman; þeir váru þar með Hrafni frændr hans, Grímr ok Óláfr.

Ok er þeir mœttusk, þá mælti Gunnlaugr, 'Þat er nú vel er vit höfum fundizk.'

Hrafn kvazk þat ekki lasta mundu, — 'ok er nú kost, hvárr er þú vill,' segir Hrafn, 'at vér berimsk allir eða vit tveir, ok sé jafnmargir hvárir.'

Gunnlaugi kvezk vel líka, hvárt at heldr er. Þá mæltu þeir frændr Hrafns, Grímr ok Óláfr, kváðusk eigi vilja standa hjá er þeir berðisk. Svá mælti ok Þorkell svarti, frændi Gunnlaugs.

Þá mælti Gunnlaugr við leiðtogana jarls, 'Þit skuluð sitja hjá ok veita hvárigum, ok vera til frásagnar um fund várn.'

Ok svá gerðu þeir.

Síðan gengusk þeir at, þorðusk fræknliga allir. Þeir Grímr ok Óláfr gengu báðir í mót Gunnlaugi einum, ok lauk svá þeira viðskipti at hann drap þá báða, en hann varð ekki sárr. Þetta sannar Þórðr Kolbeinsson² í kvæði því er hann orti um Gunnlaug ormstungu:

^a hann *om. A*

¹ Modern Sulstua. On the topography, cf. Introduction, p. xvii.

² A well-known poet, who is said to have composed poems in honour of Earl Eric Hákonarson and King Ólaf the Saint. Two of his poems on Eric are partially extant. He is a principal character in *Bjarnars. Hítælakappa* (*Íslensk Fornrit* III, 1938), and lived at Hítarnes, about eighteen miles from Borg. This verse was undoubtedly composed before the saga was written, but that it was composed by Thórd is unlikely.

Gunnlaug to the other. Those who were watching said that Icelanders struck puny blows and were slow to remember their vows. Gunnlaug could see that there was a great deal of contempt in this, and that it was made a subject for much ridicule; he went away without speaking.

A short time later, he told the earl that he no longer felt like enduring the scorn and ridicule of his retainers over his affair with Hrafn. He asked the earl to get him guides to Levanger. The earl had already heard that Hrafn had left Levanger and gone east to Sweden, so he gave Gunnlaug leave to go and got him two guides for the journey.

Gunnlaug now travelled with six companions from Hladir in to Levanger; he arrived there in the evening, but Hrafn's party of five had left there that same morning. From there Gunnlaug travelled up into Verdal, and always arrived in the evening at the place where Hrafn had spent the previous night. Gunnlaug pressed on till he came to the farm farthest up the valley, called Súla,¹ and Hrafn had left there that morning. Gunnlaug made no halt, but travelled straight on throughout the night, and in the morning at sunrise they saw each other. Hrafn had come to a place where there were two lakes, and between the lakes there was a stretch of flat land called Gleipnir's Fields. A small headland, called Dinganess, projected into one lake. There on the headland Hrafn and his men took their stand and they were five all told; Hrafn's kinsmen, Grím and Oláf, were with him.

When they came face to face, Gunnlaug said, 'It's good that we have now met.'

Hrafn said he had no fault to find with it. 'And now,' he said, 'you can choose whichever you like: whether we all fight, or just the two of us; but let both sides be equal.'

Gunnlaug said he would be well satisfied with either arrangement, but Hrafn's kinsmen, Grím and Óláf, then declared they would not stand by while the fight was on, and Thorkel the Black, Gunnlaug's kinsman, said the same.

Then Gunnlaug said to the earl's guides, 'You two must sit by and help neither side, and be there to tell the story of our encounter.'

And so they did.

Then they set to and all fought bravely. Grím and Oláf both attacked Gunnlaug alone and their battle ended with his killing them both, although he was not wounded. Thórd Kolbeinsson² vouches for this in the poem which he made about Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue:

(21) Hlóð áðr Hrafni næði
 hugreifum Óleifi
 Gøndlar þeys ² ok Grími
 Gunnlaugr með hjör þunnum ^{a 1} ;
 hann varð hvatra manna
 hugmóðr, drifinn blóði,
 Ullr réð ýta falli
 unnviggs, ^{b 3} bani þriggja.

Þeir Hrafn sóttusk meðan ok Þorkell svarti, frændi Gunnlaugs, ok fell Þorkell fyrir Hrafni ok lét líf sitt. Ok allir fellu fõrunautar þeira at lykðum.

Ok þá þorðusk þeir tveir með stórum höggum ok øruggum atgangi, er hvárr veitti qðrum, ok sóttusk einart í ákafa. Gunnlaugr hafði þá sverðit Aðalráðsnaut ok var þat it bazta vápn. Gunnlaugr hjó þá um síðir til Hrafns mikit högg með sverðinu ok undan Hrafni fótinn. Hrafn fell þó eigi at heldr, ok hnekkði þá at stofni einum ok studdi þar á stúfinum.

Þá mælti Gunnlaugr, 'Nú ertu óvígr,' segir hann, 'ok vil ek eigi lengr berjask við þik, ørkumlaðan mann.'

Hrafn svaraði, 'Svá er þat,' segir hann, 'at mjök hefir á leikizk minn hluta, en þó myndi mér enn vel duga ef ek fenga at drekka nõkkut.'

Gunnlaugr svarar, 'Svík mik þá eigi,' segir hann, 'ef ek færi þér vatn í hjálmi mínum.'

Hrafn svarar, 'Eigi mun ek svíkja þik,' segir hann.

Síðan gekk Gunnlaugr til lækjar eins ok sótti í hjálminum ok færði Hrafni. En hann seildisk í mót inni vinstri hendinni, en hjó í hqfuð Gunnlaugi með sverðinu inni hægri hendi, ok varð þat allmikit sár.

Þá mælti Gunnlaugr, 'Illa sveiktu mik nú ok ódrengiliga fór þér, þar sem ek trúða þér.'

Hrafn svarar, 'Satt er þat,' segir hann, 'en þat gekk mér til þess, at ek ann þér eigi faðmlagsins Helgu innar fõgru.'

Ok þá þorðusk þeir enn í ákafa, en svá lauk at lykðum at Gunnlaugr bar af Hrafni, ok lét Hrafn þar líf sitt. Þá gengu fram leiðtogar jarls ok bundu hqfuðsárit Gunnlaugs. Hann sat þá meðan ok kvað þá vísu þessa :

^a þunnum *A.M.* 157 *H*, þungum *A*

^b unnviggs *Þorkelsson* (1868), undvigis *A*

¹ *Þunnr* : literally 'thin'

Before he got to Hrafn, Gunnlaug slew with his keen¹ sword Grím and Óláf, men glad in the thawing-wind of the valkyrie²;

he, the brave man, covered with blood, was the slayer of three bold men; the god of the wave-steed³ dispensed death to men.

Meanwhile, Hrafn was fighting with Gunnlaug's kinsman, Thorkel the Black, and Thorkel fell before Hrafn's onslaught and lost his life. In the end, all their companions fell.

Then the two of them joined battle, and each gave the other great blows and fearless combat; they fought on fiercely and incessantly. Gunnlaug was using the sword which Ethelred had given him and it was an excellent weapon. At last he struck a great blow at Hrafn with the sword and cut his leg off. Even then Hrafn did not altogether fall, but drew back to a tree-stump and propped the stump of his limb on it.

'Now you're unfit for battle,' said Gunnlaug then, 'and I'll no longer fight with you, a maimed man.'

'It's true that things have gone heavily against me,' answered Hrafn. 'Yet I'd still do well enough if I could get something to drink.'

'No trickery, then,' replied Gunnlaug, 'if I bring you water in my helmet.'

'I shan't trick you,' answered Hrafn.

Then Gunnlaug went to a stream, fetched some water in his helmet, and brought it to him. But as Hrafn reached out for it with his left hand, he struck at Gunnlaug's head with the sword in his right hand, and it made a terrible wound.

'Now you've been foully treacherous to me,' said Gunnlaug, 'and it was unmanly to act so when I trusted you.'

'That's true,' answered Hrafn, 'but this was my reason for it, that I grudge you the embrace of Helga the Fair.'

At that, they fought again hotly, but it ended at last with Gunnlaug overcoming Hrafn, and Hrafn lost his life there. The earl's guides then came forward and bound Gunnlaug's head-wound; he sat meanwhile and declaimed a verse, saying:

² *Gondlar þeyr* : '(thawing-) wind of the valkyrie,' i.e. battle

³ *Ullr umviggs* : 'god of the wave-steed,' i.e. 'god of the ship,' man

(22) Oss gekk mætr á móti
 mótrunnr í dyn spjóta,¹
 hriðgervandi ³ hjörva,²
 Hrafn framliga jafnan ;
 hér varð mǫrg í morgin
 malmflaug ⁴ um Gunnlaugi,
 hergerðandi, á Hǫrða,⁵
 hringpollr,⁶ nesi Dinga.

Síðan bjuggu þeir um dauða menn, ok færðu Gunnlaug á hest sinn eptir þat ok kómusk með hann allt ofan í Lifangr. Ok þar lá hann þrjár nætr ok fekk alla þjónustu af presti ok andaðisk síðan, ok var þar jarðaðr at kirkju. Qllum þótti mikill skaði at um hvárntveggja þeira, Gunnlaug ok Hrafn, með þeim atburðum sem varð um líflát þeira.

¹ *Dyn spjóta* : 'din of spears,' i.e. battle

² *Hjörva mótrunnr* : 'tree of the meeting of swords,' i.e. 'tree of battle,' warrior

³ *Hriðgervandi* : 'storm-making,' i.e. giving battle, attacking fiercely

Against us in the din of spears ¹ the splendid warrior ²
Hrafn in fierce attack ³ advanced ever boldly ;

here this morning came many a metal-flight ⁴ round
Gunnlaug on Dinganess of the Hörðar, ⁵
O warlike ring-tree ! ⁶

Then they attended to the dead men, and after that they lifted Gunnlaug on to his horse and managed to get him right down into Levanger. There he lay for three nights and received the full rites from a priest, and afterwards died. He was buried at the church there. The death of both Gunnlaug and Hrafn in these circumstances seemed a terrible loss to everyone.

⁴ *Malmflaug* : 'metal-flight,' i.e. weapons hurled

⁵ See Introduction, pp. xvi-xvii.

⁶ *Hergerðandi hringboltr* : 'host-protecting ring-tree,' i.e. a man who protects or leads an armed host, warrior ; *gerðandi* is from *gerða* vb. 'to enclose,' cf. NN. 1102.

Ok um sumarit, áðr þessi tíðendi spurðusk út hingat til Íslands, þá dreymði Illuga svarta, ok var hann þá heima á Gilsbakka. Honum þótti Gunnlaugr at sér koma í svefninum ok var blóðugr mjök, ok kvað vísu þessa fyrir honum í svefninum. Illugi mundi vísuna er hann vaknaði, ok kvað síðan fyrir qðrum.

(23) Vissak Hrafn, en Hrafni
 hvöss kom egg í leggi,
 hjaltugguðum hoggva
 hrynfiski mik brynju ¹ ;
 þá er hræskæri ^a hlýra
 hlaut fen ari ² benja,³
 klauf gunnsproti ^b Gunnar
 Gunnlaugs hofuð runna.^{c 4}

Sá atburðr varð suðr at Mosfelli ina sòmunaátt, at Qnund dreymði at Hrafn kæmi at honum ok var allr alblóðugr. Hann kvað vísu þessa :

(24) Roðit var ^d sverð, en sverða
 sverð-Rognir ⁵ mik gerði ⁶ ;
 váru reynd í røndum
 randgølkⁿ ⁷ fyr ver handan ;
 blóðug hykk í blóði
 blóðgøgl ⁸ of skqr stóðu,
 sárfíkin hlaut sára
 sárgammr ^{e 9} enn á ¹⁰ þramma.

Ok um sumarit annat eptir á Alþingi, mælti Illugi svarti til Qnundar at Lögbergi, ' Hverju villtu bæta mér son minn,' sagði hann, ' er Hrafn sonr þinn sveik hann í tryggðum ? '

Qnundr svarar, ' Fjarkominn þykkjumk ek til þess,' sagði hann,

^a hræskæri *Ísls.* II, hreskiærri *A* ^b -sproti *Þorkelsson* (1868), -spioti *A*
^c runna *Skj.*, nunna *A* ; cf. *Þorkelsson* (1868) ^d var *Wimmer*, om. *A*
^e -gammr *A.M.* 500 (correction by Ární Magnússon), gramur *A*

¹ *Hjaltuggaðr hrynfiskr brynju* : ' hilt-finned clanging-fish of the mail-coat ' ; the fish which has guard and pommel instead of fins and which clangs on the mail-coat is the sword.

² *Hræskæri ari* : ' corpse-slitting eagle,' i.e. the raven

³ *Fen hlýra benja* : ' liquid of warm wounds,' i.e. blood

⁴ *Gunnsproti runna Gunnar* : ' war-twig of the trees of the valkyrie ' ; ' trees of the valkyrie ' are warriors ; the ' war-twig ' of warriors is the sword.

⁵ *Sverð-Rognir* : ' sword-god ' (*Rognir*, a name for Óðin), i.e. warrior, here Gunnlaug

In the summer, before news of this was heard out here in Iceland, Illugi the Black had a dream while at home at Gilsbakki. It seemed to him that Gunnlaug came to him in his dream; covered with blood, he spoke this verse to his father. Illugi remembered the poem when he awoke, and later repeated it to others:

I know that Hrafn (but the sharp edge bit in Hrafn's leg) struck me with the hilt-finned clanging-fish of the corselet¹;

when the corpse-slitting eagle² drank the water of warm wounds,³ the war-twig of the trees of the valkyrie⁴ split Gunnlaug's head.

On the same night, south at Mosfell, this incident occurred: Önund dreamt that Hrafn came to him, all covered in blood, and spoke a verse, saying:

My sword was reddened, but the sword-god⁵ sworded me⁶ also;
shield-fiends⁷ were tested on shields over the ocean;

I think that blood-stained blood-goslings⁸ stood in blood around my head;
once more it was the lot of the wound-eager wound-vulture⁹ to wade the river of wounds.¹⁰

In the following summer at the Great Assembly, Illugi the Black addressed Önund at the Law-Rock.

'How do you propose to compensate me for my son,' he said, 'since your son Hrafn betrayed him in a sworn truce?'

'I don't think I'm in any way obliged to pay compensation for him,' answered Önund, 'since their encounter has left me such a

⁶ *Gerði sverða mik*: 'did sword me,' cf. Konráð Gíslason, *Njála*, 1875-89, II 181-2

⁷ *Randgolkn*: 'shield-monsters,' i.e. swords

⁸ *Blóðgogl*: 'blood-goslings,' i.e. carrion fowl

⁹ *Sárgammr*: 'wound-vulture,' i.e. carrion fowl

¹⁰ *Á sára*: 'river of wounds,' i.e. blood.—The verse-form used here, with the double repetition (*sverð—sverða—sverð*, etc.), is called *iðurmæltr háttr* ('repetitive metre'); cf. *Háttatal* II 19, 131 (v. 47). The example here is imperfect in line 3.

‘ at bæta hann, svá sárt sem ek helt á þeira fundi. Mun ek ok engra bóta beiða þik fyrir minn son.’

Illugi svarar, ‘ Kenna skal þá nokkurr at skauti þinn frændi eða þinna ættmanna.’ Ok eptir þingit um sumarit var Illugi jafnan dapr mjök.

Þat er sagt um haustit at Illugi reið heiman af Gilsbakka með þrjá tigu manna ok kom til Mosfells snemma morgins. Qnundr komsk í kirkju¹ ok synir hans, en Illugi tók frændr hans tvá; hét annarr Björn en annarr Þorgrím.² Hann lét drepa Björn, en fóthoggva Þorgrím. Reið Illugi heim eptir þat, ok varð þessa engi réttung af Qnundi.

Hermundr Illugason unði lítt eptir Gunnlaug, bróður sinn, ok þótti ekki hans hefnt at heldr, þótt þetta væri at gort.

Maðr hét Hrafn ok var bróðursonr Qnundar at Mosfelli; hann var farmaðr mikill ok átti skip er uppi stóð í Hrutafirði.

Ok um várit reið Hermundr Illugason heiman einn samt ok norðr Holtavörðuheiði ok svá til Hrutafjarðar ok út á Borðeyri til skips kaupmannanna. Kaupmenn váru þá búnir mjök. Hrafn stýrimaðr var á landi ok mart manna hjá honum. Hermundr reið at honum ok lagði í gegnum hann spjótinu ok reið þegar í brott; en þeim varð qlum bilt, félogum Hrafns, við Hermund. Engar kómu bætr fyrir víg þetta, ok með þessu skilr skipti þeira Illuga svarta ok Qnundar at Mosfelli.

Þorsteinn Egilsson gipti Helgu dóttur sína, er stundir liðu^a fram, þeim manni er Þorkell hét ok var Hallkelsson; hann bjó út í Hraunsdal, ok fór Helga til búsk með honum ok varð honum lítt unnandi, því at hon verðr aldri afhuga Gunnlaugi, þótt hann væri dauðr. En Þorkell var þó vaskr maðr at sér ok auðigr at fé ok skáld gott. Þau áttu börn saman eigi allfá; Þórarinn hét sonr þeira ok Þorsteinn, ok enn fleiri börn áttu þau³.

Þat var helzt gaman Helgu at hon rekði skikkjuna Gunnlaugsnaut, ok horfði þar á lǫngum. Ok eitt sinn kom þar sótt mikil á bæ þeira Þorkels ok Helgu, ok krömdusk margir lengi. Helga tók þá ok þyngð ok lá þó eigi. Ok einn laugaraptan sat Helga í eldaskála ok hneigði

^a liðu *om. A*, but added in margin in a somewhat later hand

¹ Until some time in the first half of the twelfth century, the church at Mosfell stood at Hrísbú, nearly half a mile from the home-farm (*Egilss.* ch. 86). The author of the saga does not seem to have had this in mind when he wrote the story of Önund's escape.

² These men and Hrafn, Önund's nephew, are not known from other sources.

³ Thorkel and the children of his marriage with Helga are not known from other sources.

painful wound to heal. Moreover, I shall ask you for no compensation for my son.'

'Some of your kith and kin will suffer for it then,' replied Illugi. And in the summer after the assembly, Illugi was always very despondent.

The story goes that in the autumn, Illugi rode off from Gilsbakki with thirty men and arrived at Mosfell early in the morning. Önund and his sons managed to get into the church,¹ but Illugi seized two of his kinsmen, one called Björn and the other Thorgrím.² He had Björn put to death and Thorgrím's foot cut off. After that Illugi rode home, and Önund took no redress for this.

Hermund Illugason felt the death of his brother Gunnlaug very keenly and thought that he was still unavenged, even though this had been done.

There was a man called Hrafn who was the son of a brother of Önund of Mosfell. He was a great merchant and owned a ship which lay up in Hrótafjord.

In the spring, Hermund Illugason rode from home all alone north over Holtavarda Moor and so to Hrótafjord. Then he went out to Bordeyr to the merchants' ship. The merchants were almost ready to sail; Hrafn the skipper was ashore, and there were many men with him. Hermund rode up to him, thrust his spear through him, and immediately rode away, throwing all Hrafn's companions into confusion. There were no amends made for this killing, and from this time onwards nothing passed between Illugi the Black and Önund of Mosfell.

After some time had elapsed, Thorstein Egilsson married his daughter Helga to a man called Thorkel Hallkelsson. He lived out in Hraunsdal, and Helga went home with him, but she did not love him much, for her heart never ceased to be Gunnlaug's, even though he was dead. But Thorkel was nevertheless a man of fine character; he was a rich man and a good poet. They had no small number of children; they had sons called Thórarin and Thorstein, and there were other children besides.³

It was Helga's special delight to spread out the cloak which Gunnlaug had given her and gaze on it for a great while. There came a time when a terrible sickness fell on Thorkel and Helga's household, and for a long while many suffered from it. Then Helga fell ill as well, but did not take to her bed. One Saturday evening,

höfuð í kné Þorkatli, bónda sínum, ok lét senda eptir skikkjunni Gunnlaugsnaut. Ok er skikkjan kom til hennar, þá settisk hon upp ok rakði skikkjuna fyrir sér ok horfði á um stund. Ok síðan hné hon aptr í fang bónda sínum ok var þá ørend.

Þorkell kvað þá vísu þessa :

(25) Lagðak orms at armi
arms góða ^a mér tróðu,¹
guð brá Lofnar ^b lífi
líns,² andaða mína ;
.

þó er beiðondum bíða
bliks ³ þungara miklu.

Helga var til kirkju færð, en Þorkell bjó þar eptir, ok þótti allmikit fráfall Helgu, sem ván var at.

Ok lýkr þar nú sögunni.

^a arms góða *Þorkelsson* (1868), armgoda *A*

^b Lofnar *Þorkelsson* (1868), leydrar *A*

Helga sat in the living-room, resting her head on her husband Thorkel's knee. She sent for Gunnlaug's gift, the cloak, and when it was brought to her, she sat up and spread out the cloak in front of her and gazed upon it for a while. Presently she sank back into her husband's arms and was dead.

Thorkel then spoke this verse and said :

I laid dead in my arms my good staff of the gold-
ring¹ ; God took the life of the goddess of linen² . . .
Yet for me³ it is much heavier to live on.

Helga was carried to the church, but Thorkel lived on there. As was to be expected, he felt Helga's death as a most terrible loss.

And there the saga ends.

¹ *Tróða orms arms* : 'slender pole of the serpent of the arm' ; the 'serpent of the arm' is the twisted gold ring ; the 'pole' (cf. the 'tree' kennings) of the gold ring is a woman.

² *Lofn líns* : 'goddess of linen,' i.e. woman

³ *Beiðandi blikis* : 'demander of the brightness,' i.e. man. (*Beiðandum* is plural for singular). The verse lacks two lines and in them this kenning was probably completed to give a phrase like 'brightness of the sea' or 'brightness of the arm,' i.e. gold.

GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS

Alþingi Great Assembly. About A.D. 930 the *goðar* of Iceland combined to form the Great Assembly, which met annually in June at Thingvellir. The details of its composition and organisation in this period are obscure. When the Constitution was revised, c. A.D. 963, Iceland was divided into geographical Quarters (*Fjórðungar*), North, South, East and West, and the Assembly was composed of thirty-nine *goðar*, nine representing each Quarter, except the Northern one, which was represented by twelve. The twelve *goðar* from the Northern Quarter were not, however, able to exercise greater influence on the decisions of the Assembly than the nine representing each of the other Quarters.

The Great Assembly was divided into the Legislature (*Loðgrétta*) and the Judicial Courts, both of which were controlled by the *goðar*. The Judicial Courts numbered four, one to try cases pertaining to each Quarter, and were called Quarter Courts (*Fjórðungsdómar*). About the year 1005, a Court of Appeal (*Fimmtardómr*) was instituted.

All householders whose capital wealth was above a certain standard were obliged to attend the Great Assembly in the following of the *goði* to whom they owed allegiance, or else pay a tax (*þingfararkaup*) to the *goði*.

Provision was made for lesser assemblies, the *várping* in spring and the *leið* in autumn, at local meeting places (*þingstöð*), of which there were three in each Quarter, except in the Northern one, where there were four. Three *goðar* presided at each local assembly. (See Aage Gregersen, *L'Islande. Son statut à travers les âges*, 1937)

Berserkr a man capable of fits of frenzied rage, or running amok. Berserks were said to fight without corselets, raging like wolves with the strength of bears, and might be regarded almost as shape-changers, who acquired the strength and ferocity of beasts. During pagan times, berserks were highly prized as warriors, but under Christian law those who 'went berserk' were liable to heavy penalties. The word *berserkr*, 'bear-shirted,' implies perhaps that berserks sometimes disguised themselves as bears. The berserk-fury is described in *Ynglingas.*, ch. 6.

Drápa a sequence of strophes in scaldic form generally composed in praise of a king or great prince. The *drápa* is normally and properly embellished with a refrain (*stef*), which usually recurs at regular intervals in the central section of the poem (cf. the construction of *Hofuðlausn* in *Egilss.*, ch. 60). The *flokkr* was a sequence of strophes without refrain and commonly shorter than the *drápa*. Because of its more intricate form the *drápa* was thought to be more suitable as homage to a king, but lesser princes must be content with a *flokkr*, as in *Gunmlaug's Saga*. The poet Þórarinn loftunga is said to have incurred King Knút's wrath by composing a *flokkr* in his honour (a *dræplingr*, as the king called it). He saved himself by revising it and introducing a refrain, thus turning it into a *drápa* (cf. *Ólafss. helga*, ch. 172, in *Hkr.* II). (See J. de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, 1941-2, I 87 ff.)

Festarkona a woman formally betrothed before witnesses in accordance with the provision of the law. The term *heitkona* is not found in the laws, but seems to have been used for a bride promised without legal formalities. (See K. Maurer, *Vorlesungen über altnordische Rechtsgeschichte*, 1907-10, II 517-18)

Fylgja a personification of the essential nature or power of an individual or family. It often appeared in the form of an animal whose nature corresponded to the name or character of the individual it represented. The family wraiths (*ættarfylgjur*) were protective spirits who were often seen in female form. (cf. J. de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 1935-7, II 351-5; G. Turville-Petre, 'Liggja fylgjur þínar til Íslands' *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* XII (1937-45), 119-26)

Glima a form of wrestling still popular in Iceland. The combatants take a grip in each other's belt and attempt to make a throw by the use of various tricks, chiefly by rapid foot movements. (See Björn Bjarnason, *Nordboernes legemlige Uddannelse i Oldtiden*, 1905, 102 ff.)

Goði literally 'the godly one,' priest, and the title assumed by the chieftains of Iceland, whose office, called *goðorð*, combined secular with religious authority. At the beginning each *goði* was sovereign ruler over his followers (*þingmenn*).

The *goðorð* in Iceland probably numbered thirty-six when the settlement was first completed; their number was increased to thirty-nine c. A.D. 963 and to forty-eight on the institution of the Court of Appeal, c. A.D. 1005 (see *Alþingi*).

After the Conversion to Christianity (A.D. 1000) the *goðar* maintained their titles and secular authority, presiding at local assemblies, acting as legislators and appointing judges at the Great Assembly. The office of *goðorð* could be bought, sold, divided and even lent.

Hólmganga duel, literally 'island-going,' since duels were traditionally fought on islands, although a piece of ground, measured and marked out, was often substituted. Each principal might have a second, who protected him with a shield (*halda skildi fyrir e-n*). Blows were exchanged in turn, the challenged party striking first. A wounded dueller could escape further injury by payment of a stipulated sum, usually three marks of silver.

According to the sagas, the duel was a legal form of redress. Its abolition probably resulted from the institution of the Court of Appeal (see *Alþingi*), which greatly reduced the chance of legal deadlock. (See Gwyn Jones, 'Some characteristics of the Icelandic "hólmganga"' *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* XXXII (1933), 203-24; Eiríkr Magnússon, *The Saga Library* VI, 1905, 349 ff.)

Logberg the eminence at Thingvellir, the site of the Great Assembly, where the Law-Speaker had his seat and where all important announcements were made, whether by him or by other speakers.

Logsgumaðr Law-Speaker, the highest officer of the Icelandic Commonwealth and President of the Great Assembly (see *Alþingi*). He was elected by the *goðar* for a term of three years and could be re-elected for further terms. As his title implies, it was part of the Law-Speaker's duty to recite the laws at the Great Assembly, one-third of the code each year, covering the whole code in his three years of office.

The term *Logmaðr* (Lawman) was at first applied in Iceland to anyone learned in law. In Norway, on the other hand, *Logmaðr* was the title of the President of an assembly. After Norwegian law was introduced in Iceland (A.D. 1271-3), the title *Logmaðr* replaced that of *Logsgumaðr*, in accordance with Norwegian practice.

Mörk approximately half a pound in weight. It contained eight *aurar*, each *eyrir* weighing just under an ounce. Homespun cloth (*vaðmál*) formed, with silver, the chief staple of exchange and in the early period was Iceland's chief export. About A.D. 1000, one *eyrir* of refined silver was worth approximately twenty-four yards of *vaðmál*; unrefined silver had half the value of the refined. (See Þorkell Jóhannesson, *Die Stellung der freien Arbeiter in Island*, 1933, 37-42)

Skáli originally small house, hut, hence apartment, room (cf. *eldaskáli*, kitchen), hall (cf. *drykkjuskáli*, drinking hall). *Skáli* came later to be used especially for 'sleeping room' (also called *svefnskáli*). A raised floor or dais (*set*), which ran along the greater part of each side wall, was used as a sleeping place for the household. The chief persons of the family often slept in a separate bed-closet (*lokrekka*), which could be closed by a door or sliding panel. The *lokrekka* was commonly placed at the inner end of the dais (*innar af seti*), between it and the gable-end. (See Valtýr Guðmundsson, *Privatboligen på Island*, 1889, 206 ff.)

Stofa principal room of the house, where the inmates would dine and occupy themselves by day. Along each of the side walls ran a boarded dais (*pallr*, *langpallr*), while a cross-dais (*þverpallr*) often filled the gable-end. In early times the fire burned on the low earthen floor, which extended down the middle of the *stofa* between the raised flooring on each side. This raised floor sometimes rose in steps, which served as seats; sometimes, however, benches were placed upon it.

The central section of the dais on one side was called the (*æðra*) *öndvegi*, 'upper high seat,' and was occupied by the master of the house and his closest associates. The corresponding section on the opposite side was called the *óæðra* or *annat öndvegi*, 'lower' or 'second high seat,' and was commonly occupied by the chief guests. The cross-dais was often reserved for women. (See Valtýr Guðmundsson, *Privatboligen på Island*, 1889, 171 ff.)

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