

Magnus Barefoot's Saga

Magnus Barefoot's Saga

The greater part of the contents of this saga is also found in "Agrip", "Fagrskinna", and "Morkinskinna".

Magnus and his cousin Hakon became kings in 1093, but Hakon ruled only two years and died in 1095. King Magnus fell in the year 1103.

Skalds quoted are: Bjorn Krephende, Thorkel Hamarskald, and Eldjarn.

1. BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF KING MAGNUS AND HIS COUSIN HAKON.

Magnus, King Olaf's son, was, immediately after King Olaf's death, proclaimed at Viken king of all Norway; but the Upland people, on hearing of King Olaf's death, chose Hakon, Thorer's foster-son, a cousin of King Magnus, as king. Thereupon Hakon and Thorer went north to the Thronhjerm country, and when they came to Nidaros they summoned the Eyrathing; and at that Thing Hakon desired the bondes to give him the kingly title, which was agreed to, and the Thronhjerm people proclaimed him king of half of Norway, as his father, King Magnus, had been before. Hakon relieved the Thronhjerm people of all harbour duties, and gave them many other privileges. He did away with Yule-gifts, and gained by this the good-will of all the Thronhjerm people. Thereafter Hakon formed a court, and then proceeded to the Uplands, where he gave the Upland people the same privileges as the Thronhjerm people; so that they also were perfectly well affected to him, and were his friends. The people in Thronhjerm sang this ballad about him: --

"Young Hakon was the Norseman's pride,
And Steig-Thorer was on his side.
Young Hakon from the Upland came,
with royal birth, and blood, and name.
Young Hakon from the king demands
His royal birthright, half the lands;
Magnus will not the kingdom break, --
The whole or nothing he will take."

2. HAKON'S DEATH.

King Magnus proceeded north to the merchant town (Nidaros), and on his arrival went straight to the king's house, and there took up his abode. He remained here the first part of the winter (A.D. 1094), and kept seven longships in the open water of the river Nid, abreast of the king's house. Now when King Hakon heard that King Magnus was come to Thronhjerm, he came from the East over the Dovrefield, and thence down from Thronhjerm to the merchant town, where he took up his abode in the house of Skule, opposite to Clement's church, which had formerly been the king's house. King Magnus was ill pleased with the great gifts which Hakon had given to the bondes to gain their favour, and thought it was so much given out of his own property. This irritated his mind; and he thought he had suffered injustice from his relative in this respect, that he must now put up with less income than his father and his predecessors before him had enjoyed; and he gave Thorer the blame. When King Hakon and Thorer observed this, they were alarmed for what Magnus might do; and they thought it suspicious that Magnus kept long-ships afloat rigged out, and with tents. The following spring, after Candlemas, King Magnus

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left the town in the night with his ships; the tents up, and lights burning in the tents. They brought up at Hefring, remained there all night, and kindled a fire on the land. Then Hakon and the men in the town thought some treachery was on foot, and he let the trumpets call all the men together out on the Eyrar, where the whole people of the town came to him, and the people were gathering together the whole night. When it was light in the morning, King Magnus saw the people from all districts gathered together on the Eyrar; and he sailed out of the fjord, and proceeded south to where the Gulathing is held. Hakon thanked the people for their support which they had given him, and got ready to travel east to Viken. But he first held a meeting in the town, where, in a speech, he asked the people for their friendship, promising them his; and added, that he had some suspicions of his relation, King Magnus's intentions. Then King Hakon mounted his horse, and was ready to travel. All men promised him their good-will and support whenever he required them, and the people followed him out to the foot of Steinbjorg. From thence King Hakon proceeded up the Dovrefield; but as he was going over the mountains he rode all day after a ptarmigan, which flew up beside him, and in this chase a sickness overfell him, which ended in his death; and he died on the mountains. His body was carried north, and came to the merchant town just half a month after he left it. The whole townspeople went to meet the body, sorrowing, and the most of them weeping; for all people loved him with sincere affection. King Hakon's body was interred in Christ church, and Hakon and Magnus had ruled the country for two years. Hakon was a man full twenty-five years old, and was one of the chiefs the most beloved by all the people. He had made a journey to Bjarmaland, where he had given battle and gained a victory.

3. OF A FORAY IN HALLAND.

King Magnus sailed in winter (A.D. 1095) eastward to Viken; but when spring approached he went southwards to Halland, and plundered far and wide. He laid waste Viskardal and many other districts, and returned with a great booty back to his own kingdom. So says Bjorn Krephende in his song on Magnus: --

"Through Halland wide around
The clang and shriek resound;
The houses burn,
The people mourn,
Through Halland wide around.
The Norse king strides in flame,
Through Viskardal he came;
The fire sweeps,
The widow weeps,
The Norse king strides in flame."

Here it is told that King Magnus made the greatest devastation through Halland.

4. OF THORER OF STEIG.

"There was a man called Svein, a son of Harald Fietter. He was a Danish man by family, a great viking and champion, and a very clever man, and of high birth in his own country. He had been

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some time with King Hakon Magnuson, and was very dear to him; but after King Hakon's decease Thorer of Steig, his foster-father, had no great confidence in any treaty or friendship with King Magnus, if the whole country came into his power, on account of the position in which Thorer had stood to King Magnus, and the opposition he had made to him. Thereupon Thorer and Svein took counsel with each other, which they afterwards carried into effect, -- to raise, with Thorer's assistance, and his men, a troop against Magnus. But as Thorer was old and heavy, Svein took the command, and name of leader of the troop. In this design several chiefs took part, among whom the principal was Egil Aslakson of Aurland. Egil was a lenderman, and married to Ingebjorg, a daughter of Ogmund Thorbergson, a sister of Skopte of Giske. The rich and powerful man, Skjalg Erlingson, also joined their party. Thorkel Hamarskald speaks of this in his ballad of Magnus:

"Thorer and Egil were not wise,
They aimed too high to win a prize:
There was no reason in their plan,
And it hurt many a udalman.
The stone, too great for them to throw,
Fell back, and hurt them with the blow,
And now the udalmen must rue
That to their friends they were so true."

Thorer and Svein collected a troop in the Uplands, and went down through Raumsdal into Sunmore, and there collected vessels, with which they afterwards sailed north to Throndhjem.

5. OF THORER'S ADVENTURES.

The lenderman Sigurd Ulstreng, a son of Lodin Viggiarskalle, collected men by sending round the war-token, as soon as he heard of Thorer and the troop which followed him, and had a rendezvous with all the men he could raise at Viggia. Svein and Thorer also met there with their people, fought with Sigurd, and gained the victory after giving him a great defeat; and Sigurd fled, and joined King Magnus. Thorer and his followers proceeded to the town (Nidaros), and remained there some time in the fjord, where many people joined them. King Magnus hearing this news immediately collected an army, and proceeded north to Throndhjem. And when he came into the fjord Thorer and his party heard of it while they lay at Herring, and they were ready to leave the fjord; and they rowed their ships to the strand at Vagnvik, and left them, and came into Theksdal in Seluhverfe, and Thorer was carried in a litter over the mountains. Then they got hold of ships and sailed north to Halogaland. As soon as King Magnus was ready for sea, he sailed from Throndhjem in pursuit of them. Thorer and his party went north all the way to Bjarkey; and Jon, with his son Vidkun, fled from thence. Thorer and his men robbed all the movable goods, and burnt the house, and a good long-ship that belonged to Vidkun. While the hull was burning the vessel keeled to one side, and Thorer called out, "Hard to starboard, Vidkun!" Some verses were made about this burning in Bjarkey: --

"The sweetest farm that I have seen
Stood on Bjarkey's island green;
And now, where once this farmhouse stood,
Fire crackles through a pile of wood;
And the clear red flame, burning high,

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Flashes across the dark-night sky.
Jon and Vidkun, this dark night,
will not be wandering without light."

6. DEATH OF THORER AND EGIL.

Jon and Vidkun travelled day and night till they met King Magnus. Svein and Thorer proceeded northwards with their men, and plundered far and wide in Halogaland. But while they lay in a fjord called Harm, Thorer and his party saw King Magnus coming under sail towards them; and thinking they had not men enough to fight him, they rowed away and fled. Thorer and Egil brought up at Hesjutun; but Svein rowed out to sea, and some of their people rowed into the fjords. King Magnus pursued Thorer, and the vessels struck together while they were landing. Thorer stood in the forecastle of his ship, and Sigurd Ulstreng called out to him, and asked, "Art thou well, Thorer?" Thorer replied, "I am well in hands, but ill on my feet."

Then all Thorer's men fled up the country, and Thorer was taken prisoner. Egil was also taken prisoner, for he would not leave his wife. King Magnus then ordered both of them to be taken out to Vambarholm; and when they were leading Thorer from the ship he tottered on his legs. Then Vidkun called out, "More to the larboard, Thorer!" when he was being led to the gallows he sang:

--

"We were four comrades gay, --
Let one by the helm stay."

When he came to the gallows he said, "Bad counsel comes to a bad end." Then Thorer was hanged; but when he was hoisted up the gallows tree he was so heavy that his neck gave way, and the body fell down to the ground; for Thorer was a man exceedingly stout, both high of stature and thick. Egil was also led to the gallows, and when the king's thralls were about hanging him he said, "Ye should not hang me, for in truth each of you deserves much more to be hanged." People sang these verses about it: --

"I hear, my girl, that Egil said,
When to the gallows he was led,
That the king's thralls far more than he
Deserved to hang on gallows-tree.
It might be so; but, death in view,
A man should to himself be true, --
End a stout life by death as stout,
Showing no fear; or care, or doubt."

King Magnus sat near while they were being hanged, and was in such a rage that none of his men was so bold as to ask mercy for them. The king said, when Egil was spinning at the gallows, "Thy great friends help thee but poorly in time of need." From this people supposed that the king only wanted to have been entreated to have spared Egil's life. Bjorn Krephende speaks of these things: --

"King Magnus in the robbers' gore
Dyed red his sword; and round the shore
The wolves howled out their wild delight,
At corpses swinging in their sight.
Have ye not heard how the king's sword

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Punished the traitors to their lord?
How the king's thralls hung on the gallows
Old Thorer and his traitor-fellows?"

7. OF THE PUNISHMENT OF THE THRONDHJEM PEOPLE.

After this King Magnus sailed south to Throndhjem, and brought up in the fjord, and punished severely all who had been guilty of treason towards him; killing some, and burning the houses of others. So says Bjorn Krephende: --

"He who despises fence of shields
Drove terror through the Throndhjem fields,
When all the land through which he came
was swimming in a flood of flame.
The raven-feeder, will I know,
Cut off two chieftans at a blow;
The wolf could scarcely ravenous be,
The ernes flew round the gallows-tree."

Svein Harald Fletter's son, fled out to sea first, and sailed then to Denmark, and remained there; and at last came into great favour with King Eystein, the son of King Magnus, who took so great a liking to Svein that he made him his dish-bearer, and held him in great respect. King Magnus had now alone the whole kingdom, and he kept good peace in the land, and rooted out all vikings and lawless men. He was a man quick, warlike, and able, and more like in all things to his grandfather, King Harald, in disposition and talents than to his father.

8. OF THE BONDE SVEINKE, AND SIGURD ULSTRENG.

There was a man called Sveinke Steinarson, who was very wealthy, and dwelt in Viken at the Gaut river. He had brought up Hakon Magnuson before Thorer of Steig took him. Sveinke had not yet submitted to King Magnus. King Magnus ordered Sigurd Ulstreng to be called, and told him he would send him to Sveinke with the command that he should quit the king's land and domain. "He has not yet submitted to us, or shown us due honour." He added, that there were some lendersmen east in Viken, namely Svein Bryggjufot, Dag Eilifson, and Kolbjorn Klakke, who could bring this matter into right bearing. Then Sigurd said, "I did not know there was the man in Norway against whom three lendersmen besides myself were needful." The king replied, "Thou needst not take this help, unless it be necessary." Now Sigurd made himself ready for the journey with a ship, sailed east to Viken, and there summoned the lendersmen to him. Then a Thing was appointed to Viken, to which the people were called who dwelt on the Gaut river, besides others; so that it was a numerous assembly. When the Thing was formed they had to wait for Sveinke. They soon after saw a troop of men coming along, so well furnished with weapons that they looked like pieces of shining ice; and now came Sveinke and his people to the Thing, and set themselves down in a circle. All were clad in iron, with glowing arms, and 500 in number. Then Sigurd stood up, and spoke. "My master, King Magnus, sends God's salutation and his own to all friends, lendersmen and others, his subjects in the kingdom; also to the powerful bondes, and the people in general, with kind words and offers of friendship; and to all who will obey him he offers his friendship and good will.

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Now the king will, with all cheerfulness and peace, show himself a gracious master to all who will submit to him, and to all in his dominions. He will be the leader and defender of all the men of Norway; and it will be good for you to accept his gracious speech, and this offer."

Then stood up a man in the troop of the Elfgrims, who was of great stature and grim countenance, clad in a leather cloak, with a halberd on his shoulder, and a great steel hat upon his head. He looked sternly, and said, "Here is no need of wheels, says the fox, when he draws the trap over the ice." He said nothing more, but sat down again.

Soon after Sigurd Ulstreng stood up again, and spoke thus: "But little concern or help have we for the king's affairs from you, Elfgrims, and but little friendship; yet by such means every man shows how much he respects himself. But now I shall produce more clearly the king's errand." Thereupon he demanded land-dues and levy-dues, together with all other rights of the king, from the great bondes. He bade each of them to consider with himself how they had conducted themselves in these matters; and that they should now promote their own honour, and do the king justice, if they had come short hitherto in doing so. And then he sat down.

Then the same man got up in the troop of Elfgrims who had spoken before, lifted his hat a little up, and said, "The lads run well, say the Laplanders, who have skates for nothing." Then he sat himself down again.

Soon after Sigurd arose, after speaking with the lenders, and said that so weighty a message as the king's ought not to be treated lightly as a jest. He was now somewhat angry; and added, that they ought not to receive the king's message and errand so scornfully, for it was not decent. He was dressed in a red or scarlet coat, and had a blue coat over it. He cast off his upper coat and said, "Now it is come so far that every one must look to himself, and not loiter and jest with others; for by so doing every man will show what he is. We do not require now to be taught by others; for now we can see ourselves how much we are regarded. But this may be borne with; but not that ye treat so scornfully the king's message. Thereby every one shows how highly he considers himself. There is one man called Sveinke Steinarson, who lives east at the Gaut river; and from him the king will have his just land-dues, together with his own land, or will banish him from the country. It is of no use here to seek excuses, or to answer with sharp words; for people are to be found who are his equals in power, although he now receives our speech so unworthily; and it is better now than afterwards to return to the right way, and do himself honour, rather than await disgrace for his obstinacy." He then sat down.

Sveinke then got up, threw back his steel-hat, and gave Sigurd many scornful words, and said, "Tut! tut! 'tis a shame for the dogs, says the proverb, when the fox is allowed to cast their excrements in the peasant's well. Here will be a miracle! Thou useless fellow! with a coat without arms, and a kirtle with skirts, wilt thou drive me out of the country? Thy relation, Sigurd Woolsack, was sent before on this errand, and one called Gille the Backthief, and one who had still a worse name. They were a night in every house, and stole wherever they came. Wilt thou drive me out of the country? Formerly thou wast not so mighty, and thy pride was less when King Hakon, my foster-son, was in life. Then thou wert as frightened for him when he met

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thee on the road as a mouse in a mouse-trap, and hid thyself under a heap of clothes, like a dog on board a ship. Thou wast thrust into a leather-bag like corn in a sack, and driven from house and farm like a year-old colt from the mares; and dost thou dare to drive me from the land? Thou shouldst rather think thyself lucky to escape from hence with life. Let us stand up and attack him."

Then all his men stood up, and made a great clash with their weapons. Then Svein Bryggjufot and the other lendersmen saw there was no other chance for Sigurd but to get him on horseback, which was done, and he rode off into the forest. The end was that Sveinke returned home to his farm, and Sigurd Ulstreng came, with great difficulty, by land north to Throndhjem to King Magnus, and told the result of his errand. "Did I not say," said the king, "that the help of my lendersmen would be needed?" Sigurd was ill pleased with his journey; insisted that he would be revenged, cost what it will; and urged the king much. The king ordered five ships to be fitted out; and as soon as they were ready for sea he sailed south along the land, and then east to Viken, where he was entertained in excellent guest-quarters by his lendersmen. The king told them he would seek out Sveinke. "For I will not conceal my suspicion that he thinks to make himself king of Norway." They said that Sveinke was both a powerful and an ungovernable man. Now the king went from Viken until he came to Sveinke's farm. Then the lendersmen desired that they might be put on shore to see how matters stood; and when they came to the land they saw that Sveinke had already come down from the farm, and was on the road with a number of well-armed men. The lendersmen held up a white shield in the air, as a peace-token; and when Sveinke saw it he halted his men, and they approached each other. Then said Kolbjorn Klakke, "King Magnus sends thee God's salutation and his own, and bids thee consider what becomes thee, and do him obedience, and not prepare thyself to give him battle." Kolbjorn offered to mediate peace between them, if he could, and told him to halt his troops.

Sveinke said he would wait for them where he was. "We came out to meet you," he said, "that ye might not tread down our corn-fields."

The lendersmen returned to the king, and told him all was now at his pleasure.

The king said, "My doom is soon delivered. He shall fly the country, and never come back to Norway as long as the kingdom is mine; and he shall leave all his goods behind."

"But will it not be more for thy honour," said Kolbjorn, "and give thee a higher reputation among other kings, if, in banishing him from the country, thou shouldst allow him to keep his property, and show himself among other people? And we shall take care that he never comes back while we live. Consider of this, sire, by yourself, and have respect for our assurance."

The king replied, "Let him then go forth immediately."

They went back, therefore, to Sveinke, and told him the king's words; and also that the king had ordered him out of the country, and he should show his obedience, since he had forgotten himself towards the king. "It is for the honour of both that thou shouldst show obedience to the king."

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Then Sveinke said, "There must be some great change if the king speaks agreeably to me; but why should I fly the country and my properties? Listen now to what I say. It appears to me better to die upon my property than to fly from my udal estates. Tell the king that I will not stir from them even an arrow-flight."

Kolbjorn replied, "This is scarcely prudent, or right; for it is better for one's own honour to give way to the best chief, than to make opposition to one's own loss. A gallant man succeeds wheresoever he goes; and thou wilt be the more respected wheresoever thou art, with men of power, just because thou hast made head so boldly against so powerful a chief. Hear our promises, and pay some attention to our errand. We offer thee to manage thy estates, and take them faithfully under our protection; and also never, against thy will, to pay scat for thy land until thou comest back. We will pledge our lives and properties upon this. Do not throw away good counsel from thee, and avoid thus the ill fortune of other good men."

Then Sveinke was silent for a short time, and said at last, "Your endeavours are wise; but I have my suspicions that ye are changing a little the king's message. In consideration, however, of the great good-will that ye show me, I will hold your advice in such respect that I will go out of the country for the whole winter, if, according to your promises, I can then retain my estates in peace. Tell the king, also, these my words, that I do this on your account, not on his."

Thereupon they returned to the king, and said, that Sveinke left all in the king's hands. "But entreats you to have respect to his honour. He will be away for three years, and then come back, if it be the king's pleasure. Do this; let all things be done according to what is suitable for the royal dignity and according to our entreaty, now that the matter is entirely in thy power, and we shall do all we can to prevent his returning against thy will."

The king replied, "Ye treat this matter like men, and, for your sakes, shall all things be as ye desire. Tell him so."

They thanked the king, and then went to Sveinke, and told him the king's gracious intentions. "We will be glad," said they, "if ye can be reconciled. The king requires, indeed that thy absence shall be for three years; but, if we know the truth rightly, we expect that before that time he will find he cannot do without thee in this part of the country. It will be to thy own future honour, therefore, to agree to this."

Sveinke replies, "What condition is better than this? Tell the king that I shall not vex him longer with my presence here, and accept of my goods and estates on this condition."

Thereupon he went home with his men, and set off directly; for he had prepared everything beforehand. Kolbjorn remains behind, and makes ready a feast for King Magnus, which also was thought of and prepared. Sveinke, on the other hand, rides up to Gautland with all the men he thought proper to take with him. The king let himself be entertained in guest-quarters at his house, returned to Viken, and Sveinke's estates were nominally the king's, but Kolbjorn had them under his charge. The king received guest-quarters in Viken, proceeded from thence northwards, and there was peace for a while; but now that the Elfgrims were without a chief, marauding gangs infested them, and

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the king saw this eastern part of the kingdom would be laid waste. It appeared to him, therefore, most suitable and advisable to make Sveinke himself oppose the stream, and twice he sent messages to him. But he did not stir until King Magnus himself was south in Denmark, when Sveinke and the king met, and made a full reconciliation; on which Sveinke returned home to his house and estates, and was afterwards King Magnus's best and trustiest friend, who strengthened his kingdom on the eastern border; and their friendship continued as long as they lived.

9. KING MAGNUS MAKES WAR ON THE SOUTHERN HEBUDES.

King Magnus undertook an expedition out of the country, with many fine men and a good assortment of shipping. With this armament he sailed out into the west sea, and first came to the Orkney Islands. There he took the two earls, Paul and Erlend, prisoners, and sent them east to Norway, and placed his son Sigurd as chief over the islands, leaving some counsellors to assist him. From thence King Magnus, with his followers, proceeded to the Southern Hebrides, and when he came there began to burn and lay waste the inhabited places, killing the people and plundering wherever he came with his men; and the country people fled in all directions, some into Scotland-fjord, others south to Cantire, or out to Ireland; some obtained life and safety by entering into his service. So says Bjorn Krephende: --

"In Lewis Isle with fearful blaze
The house-destroying fire plays;
To hills and rocks the people fly,
Fearing all shelter but the sky.
In Uist the king deep crimson made
The lightning of his glancing blade;
The peasant lost his land and life
Who dared to bide the Norseman's strife.
The hunger battle-birds were filled
In Skye with blood of foemen killed,
And wolves on Tyree's lonely shore
Dyed red their hairy jaws in gore.
The men of Mull were tired of flight;
The Scottish foemen would not fight,
And many an island-girl's wail
Was heard as through the isles we strife sail."

10. OF LAGMAN, KING GUDROD'S SON.

King Magnus came with his forces to the Holy Island (Iona), and gave peace and safety to all men there. It is told that the king opened the door of the little Columba's kirk there, but did not go in, but instantly locked the door again, and said that no man should be so bold as to go into that church hereafter; which has been the case ever since. From thence King Magnus sailed to Islay, where he plundered and burnt; and when he had taken that country he proceeded south around Cantire, marauding on both sides in Scotland and Ireland, and advanced with his foray to Man, where he plundered. So says Bjorn Krephende: --

"On Sandey's plain our shield they spy:
From Isla smoke rose heaven-high,
Whirling up from the flashing blaze
The king's men o'er the island raise.

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South of Cantire the people fled,
Scared by our swords in blood dyed red,
And our brave champion onward goes
To meet in Man the Norseman's foes."

Lagman (Lawman) was the name of the son of Gudrod, king of the Hebudes. Lawman was sent to defend the most northerly islands; but when King Magnus and his army came to the Hebudes, Lawman fled here and there about the isles, and at last King Magnus's men took him and his ship's crew as he was flying over to Ireland. The king put him in irons to secure him. So says Bjorn Krephende: --

"To Gudrod's son no rock or cave,
Shore-side or hill, a refuge gave;
Hunted around from isle to isle,
This Lawman found no safe asyle.
From isle to isle, o'er firth and sound,
Close on his track his foe he found.
At Ness the Agder chief at length
Seized him, and iron-chained his strength."

11. OF THE FALL OF EARL HUGE THE BRAVE.

Afterwards King Magnus sailed to Wales; and when he came to the sound of Anglesey there came against him an army from Wales, which was led by two earls -- Hugo the brave, and Hugo the Stout. They began immediately to give battle, and there was a severe conflict. King Magnus shot with the bow; but Huge the Brave was all over in armour, so that nothing was bare about him excepting one eye. King Magnus let fly an arrow at him, as also did a Halogaland man who was beside the king. They both shot at once. The one shaft hit the nose-screen of the helmet, which was bent by it to one side, and the other arrow hit the earl's eye, and went through his head; and that was found to be the king's. Earl Huge fell, and the Britons fled with the loss of many people. So says Bjorn Krephende: --

"The swinger of the sword
Stood by Anglesey's ford;
His quick shaft flew,
And Huge slew.
His sword gleamed a while
O'er Anglesey Isle,
And his Norsemen's band
Scoured the Anglesey land."

There was also sung the following verse about it: --

"On the panzers arrows rattle,
Where our Norse king stands in battle;
From the helmets blood-streams flow,
Where our Norse king draws his bow:
His bowstring twangs, -- its biting hail
Rattles against the ring-linked mail.
Up in the land in deadly strife
Our Norse king took Earl Huge's life."

King Magnus gained the victory in this battle, and then took Anglesey Isle, which was the farthest south the Norway kings of former days had ever extended their rule. Anglesey is a third

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part of wales. After this battle King Magnus turned back with his fleet, and came first to Scotland. Then men went between the Scottish king, Melkolm and King Magnus, and a peace was made between them; so that all the islands lying west of Scotland, between which and the mainland he could pass in a vessel with her rudder shipped, should be held to belong to the king of Norway. Now when King Magnus came north to Cantire, he had a skiff drawn over the strand at Cantire, and shipped the rudder of it. The king himself sat in the stern-sheets, and held the tiller; and thus he appropriated to himself the land that lay on the farboard side. Cantire is a great district, better than the best of the southern isles of the Hebudes, excepting Man; and there is a small neck of land between it and the mainland of Scotland, over which longships are often drawn.

12. DEATH OF THE EARLS OF ORKNEY.

King Magnus was all the winter in the southern isles, and his men went over all the fjords of Scotland, rowing within all the inhabited and uninhabited isles, and took possession for the king of Norway of all the islands west of Scotland. King Magnus contracted in marriage his son Sigurd to Biadmynia, King Myrkjartan's daughter. Myrkjartan was a son of the Irish king Thialfe, and ruled over Connaught. The summer after, King Magnus, with his fleet, returned east to Norway. Earl Erland died of sickness at Nidaros, and is buried there; and Earl Paul died in Bergen.

Skopte Ogmundson, a grandson of Thorberg, was a gallant lenderman, who dwelt at Giske in Sunmore, and was married to Gudrun, a daughter of Thord Folason. Their children were Ogmund, Fin, Thord, and Thora, who was married to Asolf Skulason. Skopte's and Gudrun's sons were the most promising and popular men in their youth.

13. QUARRELS OF KING MAGNUS AND KING INGE.

Steinkel, the Swedish king, died about the same time (A.D. 1066) as the two Haralds fell, and the king who came after him in Svithjod was called Hakon. Afterwards Inge, a son of Steinkel, was king, and was a good and powerful king, strong and stout beyond most men; and he was king of Svithjod when King Magnus was king of Norway. King Magnus insisted that the boundaries of the countries in old times had been so, that the Gaut river divided the kingdoms of the Swedish and Norwegian kings, but afterwards the Vener lake up to Vermaland. Thus King Magnus insisted that he was owner of all the places lying west of the Vener lake up to Vermaland, which are the districts of Sundal, Nordal, Vear, and Vardyniar, with all the woods belonging thereto. But these had for a long time been under the Swedish dominion, and with respect to scat were joined to West Gautland; and, besides, the forest-settlers preferred being under the Swedish king. King Magnus rode from Viken up to Gautland with a great and fine army, and when he came to the forest-settlements he plundered and burnt all round; on which the people submitted, and took the oath of fidelity to him. When he came to the Vener lake, autumn was advanced and he went out to the island Kvaldinsey, and made a stronghold of turf and wood, and dug a ditch around it. When the work was finished, provisions and other necessities that might be

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required were brought to it. The king left in it 300 men, who were the chosen of his forces, and Fin Skoptason and Sigurd Ulstreng as their commanders. The king himself returned to Viken.

14. OF THE NORTHMEN.

When the Swedish king heard this he drew together people, and the report came that he would ride against these Northmen; but there was delay about his riding, and the Northmen made these lines: --
"The fat-hipped king, with heavy sides,
Finds he must mount before he rides."

But when the ice set in upon the Vener lake King Inge rode down, and had near 300 men with him. He sent a message to the Northmen who sat in the burgh that they might retire with all the booty they had taken, and go to Norway. When the messengers brought this message, Sigurd Ulstreng replied to it; saying that King Inge must take the trouble to come, if he wished to drive them away like cattle out of a grass field, and said he must come nearer if he wished them to remove. The messengers returned with this answer to the king, who then rode out with all his army to the island, and again sent a message to the Northmen that they might go away, taking with them their weapons, clothes, and horses; but must leave behind all their booty. This they refused. The king made an assault upon them, and they shot at each other. Then the king ordered timber and stones to be collected, and he filled up the ditch; and then he fastened anchors to long spars which were brought up to the timber-walls, and, by the strength of many hands, the walls were broken down. Thereafter a large pile of wood was set on fire, and the lighted brands were flung in among them. Then the Northmen asked for quarter. The king ordered them to go out without weapons or cloaks. As they went out each of them received a stroke with a whip, and then they set off for Norway, and all the forest-men submitted again to King Inge. Sigurd and his people went to King Magnus, and told him their misfortune.

15. KING MAGNUS AND GIPARDE.

When King Magnus was east in Viken, there came to him a foreigner called Giparde. He gave himself out for a good knight, and offered his services to King Magnus; for he understood that in the king's dominions there was something to be done. The king received him well. At that time the king was preparing to go to Gautland, on which country the king had pretensions; and besides he would repay the Gautland people the disgrace they had occasioned him in spring, when he was obliged to fly from them. He had then a great force in arms, and the West Gautlanders in the northern districts submitted to him. He set up his camp on the borders, intending to make a foray from thence. When King Inge heard of this he collected troops, and hastened to oppose King Magnus; and when King Magnus heard of this expedition, many of the chiefs of the people urged him to turn back; but this the king would not listen to, but in the night time went unsuspectedly against the Swedish king. They met at Foxerne; and when he was drawing up his men in battle order he asked, "Where is Giparde?" but he was not to be found. Then the king made these verses: --

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"Cannot the foreign knight abide
Our rough array? -- where does he hide?"

Then a skald who followed the king replied: --

"The king asks where the foreign knight
In our array rides to the fight:
Giparde the knight rode quite away
When our men joined in bloody fray.
When swords were wet the knight was slow
With his bay horse in front to go;
The foreign knight could not abide
Our rough array, and went to hide."

There was a great slaughter, and after the battle the field was covered with the Swedes slain, and King Inge escaped by flight. King Magnus gained a great victory. Then came Giparde riding down from the country, and people did not speak well of him for not being in the fight. He went away, and proceeded westward to England; and the voyage was stormy, and Giparde lay in bed. There was an Iceland man called Eldjarn, who went to bale out the water in the ship's hold, and when he saw where Giparde was lying he made this verse: --

"Does it beseem a courtman bold
Here to be dozing in the hold?
The bearded knight should danger face:
The leak gains on our ship apace.
Here, ply this bucket! bale who can;
We need the work of every man.
Our sea-horse stands full to the breast, --
Sluggards and cowards must not rest."

When they came west to England, Giparde said the Northmen had slandered him. A meeting was appointed, and a count came to it, and the case was brought before him for trial. He said he was not much acquainted with law cases, as he was but young, and had only been a short time in office; and also, of all things, he said what he least understood to judge about was poetry. "But let us hear what it was." Then Eldjarn sang: --

"I heard that in the bloody fight
Giparde drove all our foes to flight:
Brave Giparde would the foe abide,
While all our men ran off to hide.
At Foxerne the fight was won
By Giparde's valour all alone;
Where Giparde fought, alone was he;
Not one survived to fight or flee."

Then said the count, "Although I know but little about skald-craft, I can hear that this is no slander, but rather the highest praise and honour." Giparde could say nothing against it, yet he felt it was a mockery.

16. BATTLE OF FOXERNE.

The spring after, as soon as the ice broke up, King Magnus, with a great army, sailed eastwards to the Gaut river, and went up the eastern arm of it, laying waste all that belonged to the Swedish

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dominions. When they came to Foxerne they landed from their vessels; but as they came over a river on their way an army of Gautland people came against them, and there was immediately a great battle, in which the Northmen were overwhelmed by numbers, driven to flight, and many of them killed near to a waterfall. King Magnus fled, and the Gautlanders pursued, and killed those they could get near. King Magnus was easily known. He was a very stout man, and had a red short cloak over him, and bright yellow hair like silk that fell over his shoulders. Ogmund Skoptason, who was a tall and handsome man, rode on one side of the king. He said, "Sire, give me that cloak."

The king said, "What would you do with it?"

"I would like to have it," said Ogmund; "and you have given me greater gifts, sire."

The road was such that there were great and wide plains, so that the Gautlanders and Northmen were always in sight of each other, unless where clumps of wood and bushes concealed them from each other now and then. The king gave Ogmund the cloak and he put it on. When they came out again upon the plain ground, Ogmund and his people rode off right across the road. The Gautlanders, supposing this must be the king, rode all after him, and the king proceeded to the ships. Ogmund escaped with great difficulty; however, he reached the ships at last in safety. King Magnus then sailed down the river, and proceeded north to Viken.

17. MEETING OF THE KINGS AT THE GAUT RIVER.

The following summer a meeting of the kings was agreed upon at Konghelle on the Gaut river; and King Magnus, the Swedish king, Inge, and the Danish king, Eirik Sveinsson, all met there, after giving each other safe conduct to the meeting. Now when the Thing had sat down the kings went forward upon the plain, apart from the rest of the people, and they talked with each other a little while. Then they returned to their people, and a treaty was brought about, by which each should possess the dominions his forefathers had held before him; but each should make good to his own men the waste and manslaughter suffered by them, and then they should agree between themselves about settling this with each other. King Magnus should marry King Inge's daughter Margaret, who afterwards was called Peace-offering. This was proclaimed to the people; and thus, within a little hour, the greatest enemies were made the best of friends.

It was observed by the people that none had ever seen men with more of the air of chiefs than these had. King Inge was the largest and stoutest, and, from his age, of the most dignified appearance. King Magnus appeared the most gallant and brisk, and King Eirik the most handsome. But they were all handsome men; stout, gallant, and ready in speech. After this was settled they parted.

18. KING MAGNUS'S MARRIAGE.

King Magnus got Margaret, King Inge's daughter, as above related; and she was sent from Svithjod to Norway with an honourable retinue. King Magnus had some children before, whose names shall

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here be given. The one of his sons who was of a mean mother was called Eystein; the other, who was a year younger, was called Sigurd, and his mother's name was Thora. Olaf was the name of a third son, who was much younger than the two first mentioned, and whose mother was Sigrid, a daughter of Saxe of Vik, who was a respectable man in the Thronthjem country; she was the king's concubine. People say that when King Magnus came home from his viking cruise to the Western countries, he and many of his people brought with them a great deal of the habits and fashion of clothing of those western parts. They went about on the streets with bare legs, and had short kirtles and over-cloaks; and therefore his men called him Magnus Barefoot or Bareleg. Some called him Magnus the Tall, others Magnus the Strife-lover. He was distinguished among other men by his tall stature. The mark of his height is put down in Mary church, in the merchant town of Nidaros, which King Harald built. In the northern door there were cut into the wall three crosses, one for Harald's stature, one for Olaf's, and one for Magnus's; and which crosses each of them could with the greatest ease kiss. The upper was Harald's cross; the lowest was Magnus's; and Olaf's was in the middle, about equally distant from both.

It is said that Magnus composed the following verses about the emperor's daughter: --

"The ring of arms where blue swords gleam,
The battle-shout, the eagle's scream,
The Joy of war, no more can please:
Matilda is far o'er the seas.
My sword may break, my shield be cleft,
Of land or life I may be reft;
Yet I could sleep, but for one care, --
One, o'er the seas, with light-brown hair."

He also composed the following: --

"The time that breeds delay feels long,
The skald feels weary of his song;
What sweetens, brightens, eases life?
'Tis a sweet-smiling lovely wife.
My time feels long in Thing affairs,
In Things my loved one ne'er appears.
The folk full-dressed, while I am sad,
Talk and oppose -- can I be glad?"

When King Magnus heard the friendly words the emperor's daughter had spoken about him -- that she had said such a man as King Magnus was appeared to her an excellent man, he composed the following: --

"The lover hears, -- across the sea,
A favouring word was breathed to me.
The lovely one with light-brown hair
May trust her thoughts to senseless air;
Her thoughts will find like thoughts in me;
And though my love I cannot see,
Affection's thoughts fly in the wind,
And meet each other, true and kind."

19. OF THE QUARREL OF KING MAGNUS AND SKOPTE.

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Skopte Ogmundson came into variance with King Magnus, and they quarrelled about the inheritance of a deceased person which Skopte retained; but the king demanded it with so much earnestness, that it had a dangerous appearance. Many meetings were held about the affair, and Skopte took the resolution that he and his son should never put themselves into the king's power at the same time; and besides there was no necessity to do so. When Skopte was with the king he represented to him that there was relationship between the king and him; and also that he, Skopte, had always been the king's friend, and his father's likewise, and that their friendship had never been shaken. He added, "People might know that I have sense enough not to hold a strife, sire, with you, if I was wrong in what I asked; but it is inherited from my ancestors to defend my rights against any man, without distinction of persons." The king was just the same on this point, and his resolution was by no means softened by such a speech. Then Skopte went home.

20. FIN SKOPTASON'S PROCEEDINGS.

Then Fin Skoptason went to the king, spoke with him, and entreated him to render justice to the father and son in this business. The king answers angrily and sharply. Then said Fin, "I expected something else, sire, from you, than that you would use the law's vexations against me when I took my seat in Kvaldinsey Island, which few of your other friends would do; as they said, what was true, that those who were left there were deserted and doomed to death, if King Inge had not shown greater generosity to us than you did; although many consider that we brought shame and disgrace only from thence." The king was not to be moved by this speech, and Fin returned home.

21. OGMUND SKOPTASON'S PROCEEDINGS.

Then came Ogmund Skoptason to the king; and when he came before him he produced his errand, and begged the king to do what was right and proper towards him and his father. The king insisted that the right was on his side, and said they were "particularly impudent."

Then said Ogmund, "It is a very easy thing for thee, having the power, to do me and my father injustice; and I must say the old proverb is true, that one whose life you save gives none, or a very bad return. This I shall add, that never again shall I come into thy service; nor my father, if I can help it." Then Ogmund went home, and they never saw each other again.

22. SKOPTE OGMUNDSON'S VOYAGE ABROAD.

The spring after, Skopte Ogmundson made ready to travel out of the country. They had five long-ships all well equipped. His sons, Ogmund, Fin, and Thord, accompanied him on this journey. It was very late before they were ready, and in autumn they went over to Flanders, and wintered there. Early in spring they sailed westward to Valland, and stayed there all summer. Then they sailed further, and through Norvasund; and came in autumn to Rome, where Skopte died. All, both father and sons, died on this

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journey. Thord, who died in Sicily, lived the longest. It is a common saying among the people that Skopte was the first Northman who sailed through Norvasund; and this voyage was much celebrated.

23. MIRACLE OF KING OLAF THE SAINT AT A FIRE.

It happened once in the merchant town (Nidaros) where King Olaf reposes, that there broke out a fire in the town which spread around. Then Olaf's shrine was taken out of the church, and set up opposite the fire. Thereupon came a crazy foolish man, struck the shrine, threatened the holy saint, and said all must be consumed by the flames, both churches and other houses, if he did not save them by his prayers. Now the burning of the church did cease, by the help of Almighty God; but the insane man got sore eyes on the following night, and he lay there until King Olaf entreated God Almighty to be merciful to him; after which he recovered in the same church.

24. MIRACLE OF KING OLAF ON A LAME WOMAN.

It happened once in the merchant town that a woman was brought to the place where the holy King Olaf reposes. She was so miserably shaped, that she was altogether crumpled up; so that both her feet lay in a circle against her loins. But as she was diligent in her prayers, often weeping and making vows to King Olaf, he cured her great infirmities; so that feet, legs, and other limbs straightened, and every limb and part came to the right use for which they were made. Before she could not creep there, and now she went away active and brisk to her family and home.

25. WAR IN IRELAND.

When King Magnus had been nine years king of Norway (A.D. 1094-1102), he equipped himself to go out of the country with a great force. He sailed out into the West sea with the finest men who could be got in Norway. All the powerful men of the country followed him; such as Sigurd Hranason, Vidkun Jonson, Dag Eilifson, Serk of Sogn, Eyvind Olboge, the king's marshal Ulf Hranason, brother of Sigurd, and many other great men. With all this armament the king sailed west to the Orkney Islands, from whence he took with him Earl Erlend's sons, Magnus and Erling, and then sailed to the southern Hebudes. But as he lay under the Scotch land, Magnus Erlendson ran away in the night from the king's ship, swam to the shore, escaped into the woods, and came at last to the Scotch king's court. King Magnus sailed to Ireland with his fleet, and plundered there. King Myrkjartan came to his assistance, and they conquered a great part of the country, both Dublin and Dyflinnarskire (Dublin shire). King Magnus was in winter (A.D. 1102) up in Connaught with King Myrkjartan, but set men to defend the country he had taken. Towards spring both kings went westward with their army all the way to Ulster, where they had many battles, subdued the country, and had conquered the greatest part of Ulster when Myrkjartan returned home to Connaught.

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26. KING MAGNUS'S FORAY ON THE LAND.

King Magnus rigged his ships, and intended returning to Norway, but set his men to defend the country of Dublin. He lay at Ulster ready for sea with his whole fleet. As they thought they needed cattle for ship-provision, King Magnus sent a message to King Myrkjartan, telling him to send some cattle for slaughter; and appointed the day before Bartholomew's day as the day they should arrive, if the messengers reached him in safety; but the cattle had not made their appearance the evening before Bartholomew's mass. On the mass-day itself, when the sun rose in the sky, King Magnus went on shore himself with the greater part of his men, to look after his people, and to carry off cattle from the coast. The weather was calm, the sun shone, and the road lay through mires and mosses, and there were paths cut through; but there was brushwood on each side of the road. When they came somewhat farther, they reached a height from which they had a wide view. They saw from it a great dust rising up the country, as of horsemen, and they said to each other, "That must be the Irish army;" but others said, "It was their own men returning with the cattle." They halted there; and Eyvind Olboge said, "How, sire, do you intend to direct the march? The men think we are advancing imprudently. You know the Irish are treacherous; think, therefore, of a good counsel for your men." Then the king said, "Let us draw up our men, and be ready, if there be treachery." This was done, and the king and Eyvind went before the line. King Magnus had a helmet on his head; a red shield, in which was inlaid a gilded lion; and was girt with the sword of Legbit, of which the hilt was of tooth (ivory), and handgrip wound about with gold thread; and the sword was extremely sharp. In his hand he had a short spear, and a red silk short cloak, over his coat, on which, both before and behind, was embroidered a lion in yellow silk; and all men acknowledged that they never had seen a brisker, statelier man. Eyvind had also a red silk cloak like the king's; and he also was a stout, handsome, warlike man.

27. FALL OF KING MAGNUS.

When the dust-cloud approached nearer they knew their own men, who were driving the cattle. The Irish king had been faithful to the promises he had given the king, and had sent them. Thereupon they all turned towards the ships, and it was mid-day. When they came to the mires they went but slowly over the boggy places; and then the Irish started up on every side against them from every bushy point of land, and the battle began instantly. The Northmen were going divided in various heaps, so that many of them fell.

Then said Eyvind to the king, "Unfortunate is this march to our people, and we must instantly hit upon some good plan."

The king answered, "Call all the men together with the war-horns under the banner, and the men who are here shall make a rampart with their shields, and thus we will retreat backwards out of the mires; and we will clear ourselves fast enough when we get upon firm ground."

The Irish shot boldly; and although they fell in crowds, there came always two in the place of one. Now when the king had come

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to the nearest ditch there was a very difficult crossing, and few places were passable; so that many Northmen fell there. Then the king called to his lenderman Thorgrim Skinhufa, who was an Upland man, and ordered him to go over the ditch with his division. "We shall defend you," said he, "in the meantime, so that no harm shall come to you. Go out then to those holms, and shoot at them from thence; for ye are good bowmen."

When Thorgrim and his men came over the ditch they cast their shields behind their backs, and set off to the ships.

When the king saw this, he said, "Thou art deserting thy king in an unmanly way. I was foolish in making thee a lenderman, and driving Sigurd Hund out of the country; for never would he have behaved so."

King Magnus received a wound, being pierced by a spear through both thighs above the knees. The king laid hold of the shaft between his legs, broke the spear in two, and said, "Thus we break spear-shafts, my lads; let us go briskly on. Nothing hurts me." A little after King Magnus was struck in the neck with an Irish axe, and this was his death-wound. Then those who were behind fled. Vidkun Jonson instantly killed the man who had given the king his death-wound, and fled, after having received three wounds; but brought the king's banner and the sword Legbit to the ships. Vidkun was the last man who fled; the other next to him was Sigurd Hranason, and the third before him, Dag Eilifson. There fell with King Magnus, Eyvind Olboge, Ulf Hranason, and many other great people. Many of the Northmen fell, but many more of the Irish. The Northmen who escaped sailed away immediately in autumn. Erling, Earl Erlend's son, fell with King Magnus in Ireland; but the men who fled from Ireland came to the Orkney Islands. Now when King Sigurd heard that his father had fallen, he set off immediately, leaving the Irish king's daughter behind, and proceeded in autumn with the whole fleet directly to Norway.

28. OF KING MAGNUS AND VIDKUN JONSON.

King Magnus was ten years king of Norway (A.D. 1094-1105), and in his days there was good peace kept within the country; but the people were sorely oppressed with levies. King Magnus was beloved by his men, but the bondes thought him harsh. The words have been transmitted from him that he said when his friends observed that he proceeded incautiously when he was on his expeditions abroad, -- "The kings are made for honour, not for long life." King Magnus was nearly thirty years of age when he fell. Vidkun did not fly until he had killed the man who gave the king his mortal wound, and for this cause King Magnus's sons had him in the most affectionate regard.