

**COMPOSED FOR THE NORTH
STAFFORDSHIRE MUSICAL
FESTIVAL, OCTOBER, 1896.
SCENES FROM THE SAGA OF
KING OLAF**

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EDWARD ELGAR & H. W. LONGFELLOW & H. A. ACWORTH

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NOVELLO'S ORIGINAL OCTAVO EDITION.

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SCENES FROM THE SAGA OF
KING OLAF

BY

H. W. LONGFELLOW

AND

H. A. ACWORTH, C.I.E.

SET TO MUSIC

FOR SOPRANO, TENOR, AND BASS SOLI, CHORUS, AND ORCHESTRA

BY

EDWARD ELGAR.

(Op. 30.)

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KING OLAF.

INTRODUCTION.

SOLI AND CHORUS.

There is a wondrous book
Of Legends in the old Norse tongue,
Of the dead kings of Norrway,—
Legends that once were told or sung
In many a smoky fireside nook
Of Iceland, in the ancient day,
By wandering Saga-man or Scald;
Heimskringla is the volume called;
And he who looks may find therein
The story that we now begin.

No. 1.—RECIT. (*Bass*).

*Summon now the God of Thunder,
Him who rides the heav'ns arunder,
Sing the words of mighty Thor
Challenging the world to war.*

THE CHALLENGE OF THOR.

No. 2.—CHORUS.

I am the God Thor,
I am the War God,
I am the Thunderer!
Here in my Northland,
My fastness and fortress,
Reign I for ever!

Here amid icebergs
Rule I the nations;
This is my hammer,
Mjölner the mighty;
Giants and sorcerers
Cannot withstand it!

There are the gauntlets
Wherewith I wield it,
And hurl it afar off;
This is my girdle;
Whenever I brace it,
Strength is redoubled!

The light thou beholdest
Stream through the heavens,
In flashes of crimson,
Is but my red beard
Blown by the night-wind,
Affrighting the nations!

Jove is my brother;
Mine eyes are the lightning;
The wheels of my chariot
Roll in the thunder,
The blows of my hammer
Ring in the earthquake!

Force rules the world still,
Has ruled it, shall rule it;
Meekness is weakness,
Strength is triumphant,
Over the whole earth
Still is it Thor's-Day.
Thou art a God too,
O Galilean!
And thus single-handed
Unto the combat,
Gauntlet or Gospel,
Here I defy thee!

(*Longfellow.*)

KING OLAF'S RETURN.

No. 3.—SOLO (*Tenor*).

And King Olaf heard the cry,
Saw the red light in the sky,
Laid his hand upon his sword,
As he leaned upon the railing,
And his ship went sailing, sailing
Northward into Drontheim fiord.

There he stood as one who dreamed;
And the red light glanced and gleamed
On the armour that he wore;
And he shouted, as the rifted
Streamers o'er him shook and shifted,
"I accept thy challenge, Thor!"

To avenge his father slain,
And reconquer realm and reign,
Came the youthful Olaf home,
Through the midnight sailing, sailing,
Listening to the wild wind's wailing,
And the dashing of the foam.

To his thoughts the sacred name
Of his mother Astrid came,
And the tale she oft had told
Of her flight by secret passes
Through the mountains and morasses
To the home of Hakon old.

KING OLAF.

Then strange memories crowded back
Of Queen Gunhild's wrath and wrack,
And a hurried flight by sea ;
Of grim Vikings, and their rapture
In the sea-fight, and the capture,
And the life of slavery.

Then his cruisings o'er the seas,
Westward to the Hebrides,
And to Scilly's rocky shore ;
And the hermit's cavern dismal,
Christ's great name and rites baptismal,
In the ocean's rush and roar.

Norway never yet had seen
One so beautiful of mien,
One so royal in attire,
When in arms completely furnished,
Harness gold-inlaid and burnished,
Mantle like a flame of fire.

* * * * *

Thus came Olaf to his own,
When upon the night-wind blown
Passed that cry along the shore ;
And he answered, while the rifted
Sreamers o'er him shook and shifted,
" I accept thy challenge, Thor !"
(Longfellow.)

No. 4.—RECIT. (*Bass*).

*Tell how Olaf bore the Cross
To the folk at Nidaros,
Norland, Iceland, lands and seas
Winning to the God of peace.*

THE CONVERSION.

No. 5.—SCENE (*Tenor and Bass Soli
and Chorus*).

Chorus.

King Olaf's prows at Nidaros
Furrowed the golden shore,
His axemen and his bowmen
Lay round the shrine of Thor.

Round the stately fane at Mærin
King Olaf's housecarles lay,
And watch'd the men of Drontheim
Gather at break of day.

Mail-clad they came, and sworded,
Corslet and buckler ring
As they throng behind the Ironbeard
Who leads them to the King.

The shipmen grave of Iceland
Retir'd to give them room,
Their ring'd mail was rusted
And gray with salt sea-spume.

All halted, all were silent,
When, shiv'ring through the blue,
Smiting the walls of Asgard,
King Olaf's bugle blew.

OLAF (Tenor).

Behold me, my people, and answer and say
If the gods of your fathers ye worship to-day !
Or bend ye your will to the word of your King,
To the waters of Christ and the Cross that I
bring ?

IRONBEARD (Bass).

By my beard called of iron, O King, thou shalt
know
In the name of thy people, I answer thee, " No."
Shall thy cross and thy waters purge out the
gods' ban,
Who feed on the flesh and the life-blood of man ?

OLAF.

Shall Thor and shall Odin be high gods agen ?
Then give to their altars their guardian of men.
But shall blood of base losels and felons restore
The glow to the altars of Odin and Thor ?
Nay, a sacrifice rich to their shrines will I yield,
My fairest in bower and best under shield.
My mightiest dies there, by sun and by moon,
Ironbeard, and my fairest, his daughter Gudrun.

IRONBEARD.

Not the fair or the mighty, Gudrun or her sire,
Shall pass by thy mandate, O King, through
the fire.

See above in the sun gleams the image of gold,
Of Thor with the battle-maul gripp'd in his hold ;
If he seeks for a hero, his best thou shalt do,
Call the best of thine axemen and offer thereto.

OLAF.

O hearken, my people, behold me once more,
And may Christ lift my axe 'gainst the hammer
of Thor.

Chorus.

As leap the lights of winter
Athwart the northern sky,
Against the golden image
Flash'd Olaf's axe on high.

KING OLAF.

As falls a berg in springtime,
Far shiver'd on the floe,
The golden shards of godhead
Crash'd on the ground below.

Fierce Ironbeard sprang forward ;
A housecarle drew his bow,
And o'er the shattered image
Its champion lay low.

IRONBEARD.

All-Father, I come ! true to honour and troth,
To the faith of my fathers, and Odin the Goth.

O wide should the doors of Valhalla unroll
For a hero who gives for it body and soul.

King Olaf the Norseman ! perchance it shall be,
That thy Peace-God may rule o'er the Nor-
lander free ;

But with axe in his hand, and with sword upon
thigh,
And his face to his slayer doth Ironbeard die.

Chorus.

Then o'er the blood-stained Horg-stone
The Cross of Christ was seen,
The holy priests were praying,
The singers sang between.

King Olaf's axe was lower'd,
His bright blue eyes were dim,
As swung the golden censer,
As swelled the solemn hymn.

The men of Drontheim trembled,
They marvell'd and they knelt ;
Their helpless God was broken,
The power of Christ was felt.

OLAF.

O brothers of Iceland, behold them, they kneel !
Of my Lord and His conquest, come, be you the
seal.

Pass the gods of the Gothland ; your serfdom
shall cease,
For the sacrifice bloody I offer you peace :
The peace of the Christian ; O, join in the
prayer
That swells to the Lord of the earth and the
air.

Chorus.

Receive us, King ; we kneel to Him
Who fell by thee the War-god grim ;

Water bring, our brows to lave,
On our shields the Cross engrave ;

Blood and battle let them cease,
Knit us to the God of peace.

OLAF (with Chorus).

Lord, receive them ! King divine,
Breathe a blessing ; they are Thine.
(Acworth.)

No. 6.—RECIT. (Bass).

*Nos the child of Ironbeard dead,
Fair Gudrun, doth Olaf wed,
Hoping thus, his wergild paying,
To redeem him from the slaying.*

GUDRUN.

No. 7.—SCENE (Soprano and Tenor Soli
and Chorus).

Soprano.

On King Olaf's bridal night
Shines the moon with tender light,
And across the chamber streams
Its tide of dreams.

At the fatal midnight hour,
When all evil things have power,
In the glimmer of the moon
Stands Gudrun.

Close against her heaving breast,
Something in her hand is pressed ;
Like an icicle, its sheen
Is cold and keen.

On the cairn are fixed her eyes
Where her murdered father lies,
And a voice remote and drear
She seems to hear.

Chorus.

What a bridal night is this !
Cold will be the dagger's kiss ;
Laden with the chill of death
Is its breath.

Like the drifting snow she sweeps
To the couch where Olaf sleeps ;
Suddenly he wakes and stirs,
His eyes meet hers.

KING OLAF.

OLAF (*Tenor*).

"What is that," [King Olaf said],
"Gleams so bright above thy head?
Wherefore standest thou so white
In pale moonlight?"

GUÐRUN (*Soprano*).

"'Tis the bodkin that I wear
When at night I bind my hair;
It woke me falling on the floor;
'Tis nothing more."

OLAF.

"Forests have ears, and fields have eyes;
Often treachery lurking lies
Underneath the fairest hair!
Guðrun, beware!"

Chorus.

Ere the earliest peep of morn
Blew King Olaf's bugle-horn;
And for ever Sundered ride
Bridegroom and bride!
(*Longfellow.*)

No. 8.—RECI. (*Bass*).

*How the Wraith of Odin old
Song and tale and Saga told,
Coming as unbidden guest
To the hall, to Olaf's feast;
Sing ye now, and with the strain
Ancient memories wake again.*

THE WRAITH OF ODIN.

No. 9.—CHORUS (BALLAD).

The guests were loud, the ale was strong,
King Olaf feasted late and long;
The hoary Sealds together sang;
O'erhead the smoky rafters rang.
(Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.)

The door swung wide, with creak and din;
A blast of cold night-air came in,
And on the threshold shivering stood
A one-eyed guest, with cloak and hood.
(Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.)

The King exclaimed, "O graybeard pale
Come warm thee with this cup of ale."
The foaming draught the old man quaffed,
The noisy guests looked on and laughed.
(Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.)

Then spake the King: "Be not afraid;
Sit here by me." The guest obeyed,
And, seated at the table, told
Tales of the sea, and Sagas old.
(Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.)

As one who from a volume reads,
He spake of heroes and their deeds,
Of lands and cities he had seen,
And stormy gulfs that tossed between.
(Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.)

Then from his lips in music rolled
The Havamal of Odin old,
With sounds mysterious as the roar
Of billows on a distant shore.

* * * * *

Then slept the King, and when he woke
The guest was gone, the morning broke.
(Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.)

They found the doors securely barred,
They found the watch-dog in the yard,
There was no foot-print in the grass,
And none had seen the stranger pass.
(Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.)

King Olaf crossed himself and said:
"I know that Odin the Great is dead;
Sure is the triumph of our Faith,
The one-eyed stranger was his Wraith!"
(Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.)
(*Longfellow.*)

No. 10.—RECI. (*Bass*).

*Sisters, sing us now the song
How since Olaf came a-wooing,
Sigrid wrought for his undoing,
Of the insult and the wrong.*

SIGRID.

No. 11.—SCENE (*Soprano and Tenor Soli
and Chorus of Maidens*).

Chorus.

Sigrid sits in her high abode,
The haughty Queen of Svithiod,
And to the West looks she
For Norway's King, whose suit is told
By the ring from Ladé's temple old,
Which lies upon her knee.

Lady, lady, lances gleam
On the farther side of the border stream;
Lady, the horses ford the flood,
They cross the meadow, and pass the wood,

KING OLAF.

You may hear the iron hoof-stroke beat
On the ringing stones of the village street;
Rank on rank come spearmen tall,
But the crest of Olaf is o'er them all,
And the peace strings bind his sword;
See he alights, he mounts the stair,
The Norrway King with the golden hair,
Queen Sigrid, greet thy lord.

OLAF (*Tenor*).

Sigrid, hail! with royal hand
Knit to thee Norrway's King and land,
And the ring of Ladé upon thy knee
We will change to a cross for thee and me.

SIGRID (*Soprano*).

Olaf, hail! my hand is thine,
But the gods of old I will not resign;
Bow thou to thy Cross for woe or weal,
But where I have knelt, I still must kneel.

OLAF.

Queen of Svithiod! hearken well,
Thy gods are mute on fiord and fall,
Nor ever shall their voice again
Be heard where Christ hath ris'n to reign.

SIGRID.

I hear them speak! from pole to pole
The Norland gods their thunder roll;
For Norland folk their sword—the rod
For slaves who own the Southland god.

OLAF.

I will give my body and soul to flame
Ere I take to my heart a heathen dame;
Thou hast not beauty, thou hast not youth,
Shall I buy thy land at the cost of truth?

Chorus.

King Olaf rises; sisters, say
Why does he thrust the Queen away,
Why dash his glove on the oaken floor,
And turn and stride towards the door?
The gods protect the wrong'd and weak!
The glove has struck Queen Sigrid's cheek,
See the flash of her haughty eye,
See her stately form drawn high!
Haste thee, O haste, King Olaf, fly.

SIGRID.

Thou art gone! nay, spur not through the
gate;
I am one that can watch and wait;

By yonder glove on the oaken floor,
By my father's head and the soul of Thee,
By the hand she offered, Sigrid saith,
That Sigrid yet shall be Olaf's death.
(*Acworth*.)

No. 12.—RECIT. (*Bass*).

Hark! she flies from Wendland forth,
Slighted Thyri, to the North:
There, as Olaf's wedded dame,
Will she set the North aflame!

THYRI.

No. 13.—CHORUS (BALLAD).

A little bird in the air
Is singing of Thyri the fair,
The sister of Svend the Dane;
And the song of the garrulous bird
In the streets of the town is heard,
And repeated again and again.
(Hoist up your sails of silk,
And flee away from each other.)

To King Burialaf, it is said,
Was the beautiful Thyri wed,
And a sorrowful bride went she:
And after a week and a day,
She has fled away and away,
From his town by the stormy sea.
(Hoist up your sails of silk,
And flee away from each other.)

They say, that through heat and through
cold,
Through weald, they say, and through wold,
By day and by night, they say,
She has fled: and the gossips report
She has come to King Olaf's court,
And the town is all in dismay.
(Hoist up your sails of silk,
And flee away from each other.)

It is whispered King Olaf has seen,
Has talked with the beautiful Queen;
And they wonder how it will end;
For surely, if here she remain,
It is war with King Svend the Dane,
And King Burialaf the Vead!
(Hoist up your sails of silk,
And flee away from each other.)

O, greatest wonder of all!
It is published in hamlet and hall,
It roars like a flame that is fanned!
The King—yes, Olaf the King—

KING OLAF.

Has wedded her with his ring,
 And Thyri is Queen in the land !
 (Hoist up your sails of silk,
 And flee away from each other.)
 (Longfellow.)

No. 14.—DUET (*Soprano and Tenor*).

THYRI,

The gray land breaks to lively green,
 Bespangled all with flowers ;
 The throats sing to greet the spring
 Through lengthening sunlit hours.

But what care I for flowers on sward,
 Or bursting buds on tree ?
 My lands restor'd from Wendland's lord
 Were better cheer to me.

A landless, dowerless bride am I,
 The bride of Norway's King,
 What boots me, while I sit and sigh,
 The coming of the spring ?

OLAF.

Thyri, my beloved,
 Hither come I bearing
 Angelicas uprooted,
 Sweet and fair as thou.
 Earliest boon of springtime,
 Sign of snow departing,
 In their welcome fragrance,
 Bathe thy snowy brow.

THYRI.

Sweet are thy words, but O ! meseems,
 A sweeter gift would be,
 The boon that haunts Queen Thyri's
 dreams,
 Her dowry over sea.
 Wide spread they from the Wendland shore,
 And rich with fruit and flower,
 The lands I weep for evermore,
 O ! give me back my dower.

OLAF.

Fear not, doubt not, weep not,
 As a Queen triumphant,
 Towards the happy sunlight
 Lift thy radiant eyes ;
 To the strife of favours,
 For thy love I gird me,
 And the lands of Thyri
 Shall I win for prize.

BOTH.

Comes the spring unchaining,
 Sunshine on his pinions,
 All the world imprisoned
 In the Ice-King's hall ;
 So the golden promise
 Passed from lord to lady,
 Warm with words of loving,
 Lifts the heart from thrall.
 (Acworth.)

No. 15.—CHORAL RECIT.

*After Queen Gunnild's death,
 So the old Saga saith,
 Pledged King Svend his faith,
 To Sigrîd the Haughty,*

*Still on her scornful face,
 Blushing with deep disgrace,
 Bore she the crimson trace
 Of Olaf's gauntlet.*

*Oft to King Svend she spake,
 " For thine own honour's sake
 Shalt thou swift vengeance take
 On the vile coward ! "*

*And to avenge his bride,
 Soothing her wounded pride,
 Over the waters wide
 King Olaf sought he.*
 (Longfellow.)

THE DEATH OF OLAF.

No. 16.—CHORUS.

King Olaf's dragons take the sea,
 The piping south-wind drives them fast,
 The shields dip deep upon the lee,
 The white sails strain on every mast.
 Leaping from wave to wave they round
 The cape that bars the stormy sound,
 And where the ocean opens wide
 They see far stretched on either side
 The Danish ships and Svithiod's ride ;
 High on his deck King Olaf stands,
 The war-axe grasp'd in both his hands,
 With helm of gold and jerkin red,
 And fair curls blowing round his head,
 First of his fleet, he leads the van
 And seeks the battle, man to man.

But seaward, landward, cape and bay
 Cast forth their foes on Norway ;
 Ten thousand shaven ear-blades sweep
 The bosom of the troubled deep ;