

# **THE LIGHT HEART**

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The Light Heart by Maurice Hewlett

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**MAURICE HEWLETT**

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SAGAS RETOLD

BY

MAURICE HEWLETT

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A LOVER'S TALE (KORMAK)

FREY AND HIS WIFE (OGMUND DINT)

THORGILS OF TREADHOLT (THORGISL)

GUDRID THE FAIR (WINELAND)

THE OUTLAW (GISLI)

# THE LIGHT HEART

BY

MAURICE HEWLETT

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"THE FOREST LOVERS," "RICHARD YEA AND NAY, ETC., ETC.

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## PREFACE

OF this heroic, naked story, three fragments survive in *Origines Islandicæ*, that learned repository; but to compound one plain tale of them it has been necessary to go for the catastrophe to the Saga of King Olaf. As a result of my hunting and piecing I am able to give an orderly account of the life of a young man which, I think, justifies the title I have given it. Thormod indeed had a light heart, and a high heart. Acting upon an unwritten law, which (if it were not an instinct) must be called a moral law, inasmuch as it swayed the Northmen's nature to the very roots, he feared nothing except love, and dared everything for love's sake. Very heroic was his daring; very beautiful, to me at

## P R E F A C E

least, was the transfer of his allegiance from his dead friend Thorgar to the live King Olaf, made lightheartedly upon a moment's impulse, but when made, made for life. If I can claim anything for myself as the interpreter to modern readers of a bygone day, it is to have brought up from the depths of an old tale this example of swift and final self-surrender in obedience to an intuition; not merely to have handed it on, but to have revealed it.

It is by such facts as those that Thor-mod must be adjudged poet, for of the two poems by which he obtained his recognition nothing survives. I don't regret the lay which earned him his title of Coalbrow's Poet, because it is pretty clear that he did not take Coalbrow seriously. We may infer from that the nature of the poem. That cannot be a very sincere utterance which can be improvised into an address to another person. A poem of conceits,

## P R E F A C E

I take it to have been, not unlike the affair which called it forth. Thormod was no hand with women; the story puts that beyond doubt. They were his pastime; he gave his fancy to them for a while, reserving his heart for men. On that account his lament for Thorgar must be reckoned a real loss to Icelandic literature. It would have been a great thing to have had it beside David's for Jonathan, Milton's for Edward King; beside *Adonals* too, and *In Memoriam*. It has gone, however, and it was not for me to dare a substitute. In my version of Kormak's Saga, where I paraphrased many of the hero's poems, I had in any case something to go upon. Here there is nothing.

In the shaping of *The Light Heart* I have had to contend with the formidable fact that the story splits in two in the middle. It has two endings—the consummation of the vengeance for Thorgar, and that of the second love-affair of