

**THE SAGAS OF OLAF
TRYGGVASON AND OF
HARALD THE TYRANT
(HARALD HAARDRAADE)**

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The sagas of Olaf Tryggvason and of Harald the Tyrant (Harald Haardraade) by Various

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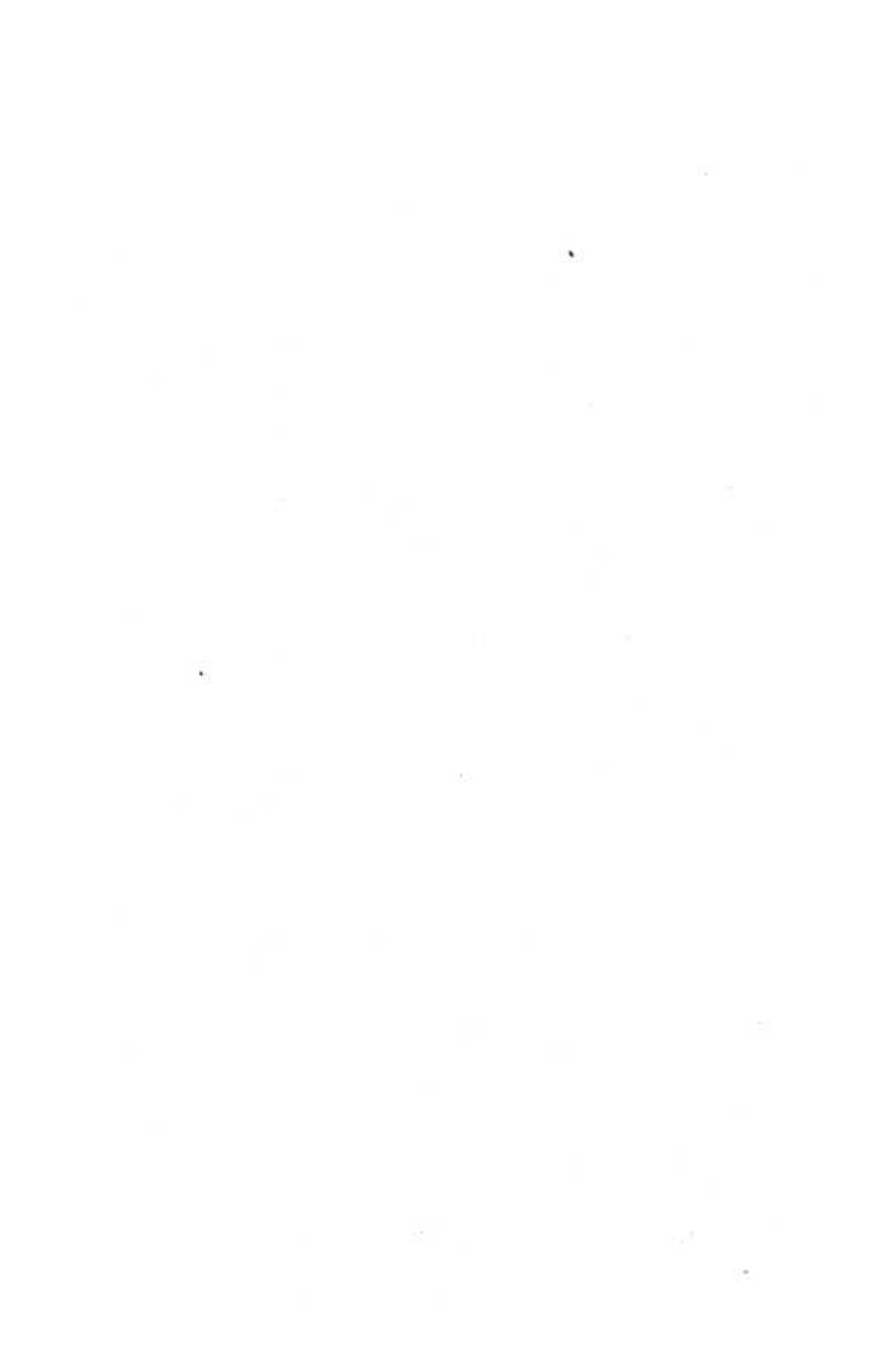
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THE SAGA OF OLAF
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The places of notes in the text are indicated thus §. The relative matter will be found at the end of the book in due order as to page and line.



NOW it befell in the days of King Tryggvi Olafson that the woman he had wedded was Astrid & she was the daughter of Eirik Biodaskalli, a wealthy man who dwelt at Oprostad. ¶ When the downfall of Tryggvi had been accomplished, Astrid fled away bearing with her what chattels she might. And with her went her foster-father Thorolf Louse-Beard, who never left her, whereas other trusty men, loyal to her, fared hither and thither to gather tidings of her foes or to spy out where they might lurk. Now Astrid being great with child of King Tryggvi caused herself to be transported to an islet on a lake & there took shelter with but few of her company. ¶ In due time she bare a man-child, and at his baptism he was called Olaf after his father's father. All that summer did she abide there in hiding. But when the nights grew as long as they were dark and the weather waxed cold, she set forth oncc more and with her fared Thorolf and the others of her train. Only by night could they venture into those parts of the country that were inhabited being in fear lest they should be seen of men or meet with them. In time, at even, came they to the homestead of Eirik of Oprostad. And since they were journeying by stealth, Astrid sent a messenger to the goodman of the house, who bade them to be led to an outhouse & there had set before them the best of cheer. Thence, when Astrid had abided for a while, her followers went unto their homes, but she remained there & with her to bear her company were two women, her babe Olaf, Thorolf Louse-Beard and his son Thorgills who was six winters old. They rested in that place until the winter was done. ¶ ¶ After they had made an end to slaying Tryggvi Olafson, Harald Grey-Cloak and Gudrod his brother hied them to the homesteads that had been his. But ere they came thither Astrid had fled & of her learned they no tidings save a rum-

our that she was with child of King Tryggvi. ¶ In the autumn fared they to the north, as has been related beforetime, and when they were face to face with their mother Gunnhild, told they her all that had befallen them on their journey. Closely did she question them concerning Astrid, and they imparted to her what they had heard. But because the sons of Gunnhild were that same autumn and the next winter at strife with Earl Hakon, as hath already ere now been set forth, made they no search for Astrid and her son. ¶

¶ When the spring was come, Gunnhild despatched spies to the Uplands, and even as far as Vik, to get news of Astrid. And when the spies returned it was with the tidings that she was with her father Eirik & there most like was she rearing the son that she had borne to King Tryggvi that was dead. Forthwith Gunnhild chose messengers and equipped them handsomely both with weapons and wearing apparel: thirty men chose she, and their leader was Hakon, a man of influence and a friend to herself. She bade them make their way to Oprostad to Eirik and from thence take the son of Tryggvi and bring him unto herself. ♦ Thereupon the messengers set out on their way, but when they were come nigh to Oprostad learned the friends of Eirik concerning their journey and went one evening unto him with the tidings. ¶ Straightway when night had fallen, Eirik bade Astrid make ready to leave, furnished her with sure guides, & set her eastwards with her face towards Sweden, to his friend Hakon the Old, who was a man in the exercise of potent sway. They adventured when the night was not far spent, & next day, towards even, were they come to a country-side called Skaun, and seeing there a homestead thither went they craving lodging for the night. Of their names they made a secret & their garb was but meanly. The yeoman who abode in the place was called Biorn Venom-Sore, a wealthy man was he but withal churlish, and he drave them away, & they came that same evening

to another homestead which was called Vizkar. ♦ Thorstein was the yeoman who dwelt there & he gave them shelter and good cheer for the night, and there they slept in good beds. ¶ Next day betimes came Hakon with the men of Gunnhild to Oprostad and asked for Astrid and her son, but Eirik said that she was not there, so Hakon and his men ransacked the homestead and bided till late even toward sundown, and gat them some tidings of Astrid's road. Then rode they forth the same day and came almost as night fell to the house of Biorn Venom-Sore in Skaun, and there took harbour. ♦ Then Hakon asked Biorn if he had aught to tell concerning Astrid; and he said that some wayfarers had come there during the day and had asked for a night's lodging, 'I sent them away, and it is likely they sought a refuge elsewhere in the neighbourhood.' Now a workman that had been of the household of Thorstein, being on his way to pass out from the forest, that same even happened to chance on the homestead of Biorn and learned that guests were tarrying, & further of what fashion was their errand; and all this he forthwith sped back to tell to Thorstein the yeoman. ¶ So while there was still a third of the night unspent, Thorstein aroused his guests and bade them begone, urging them harshly to bestir themselves. When they had passed a little way from the house then did Thorstein open unto them that the emissaries from Gunnhild were hard by at the house of Biorn seeking for them. ♦ They besought him for succour, and he set them on their way with a guide & some food, and their guide led them into the forest where there was a lake & an islet overgrown with reeds. They were able to wade out unto the islet & thereon hid they themselves among the reeds. ♦ Early on the morrow Hakon rode out from the homestead of Biorn over the countryside, asking withersoever he went for Astrid. When he was come unto the house of Thorstein demanded he if they had thither been and Thorstein said that certain folk had fared thither & had

gone on at daybreak eastwards through the forest. Then did Hakon bid Thorstein come with him because he was skilled in the knowledge of the tracks and hiding-places: and Thorstein set forth. But when they were come to the forest led he them away from where Astrid was. ☉ The whole of that day did they go seeking for them, but found them not. Then they came back on their road & related unto Gunnhild what had befallen. Astrid & her followers went forth on their way till they were come unto Sweden to the home of Hakon the Old, and there Astrid and her son dwelt a long while, and it was well with them. ☐

¶ Gunnhild, she that was mother to the King, hearing that Astrid & her son Olaf were in Sweden, once more sent forth Hakon and a brave following with him, this time eastward to Eirik King of Sweden, with goodly gifts and fair words. The messengers were made welcome and given good entertainment, and thereafter Hakon made known his errand to the King, saying that Gunnhild had sent craving the King's help so that he might take Olaf back with him to Norway: 'Gunnhild will foster him,' quoth he. ☐ Then did the King give him men to go with him, and they rode to the house of Hakon the Old, and there Hakon offered with fair words to take Olaf with him. Hakon the Old returned a friendly answer and said that it must so happen that the mother of the child should decide about his going, but Astrid would in no wise suffer the boy to fare forth with them. So the messengers went their way & brought back the answer unto King Eirik and they made them ready to return home; but once more prayed they the King to grant them help to bear off the boy whether Hakon the Old were willing or not. So the King yet again gave them a company of men & the messengers returned to Hakon the Old and demanded that the boy be allowed to fare forth with them, but as Hakon was unwilling that this should be, resorted they to big words and threats of violence,