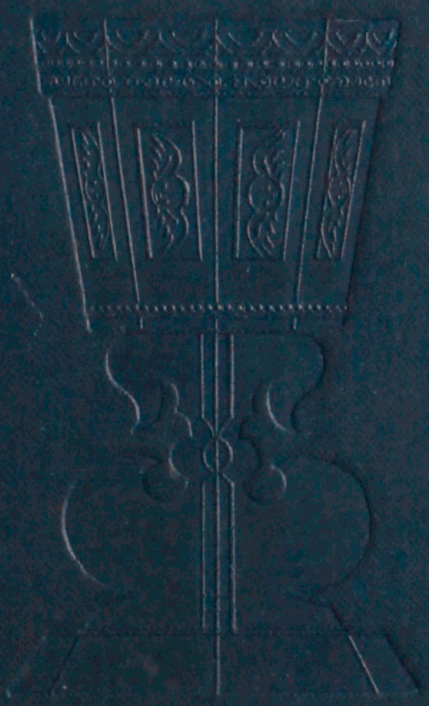
Forfatter(e) | Author(s):	translated from the Icelancic "Biskupa Sögur" by the author of "The chorister brothers" [i.e. Mary Leith].
Titel | Title:	Stories of the bishops of Iceland : I. The stories of Thorwald the Far-Farer, and of Bishop Isleif. II. Húngrvaka (the Hunger-Waker), being chronicles of the first five bishops of Skalholt...
Udgivet år og sted | Publication time and place:	London : J. Masters and Co., 1895
Fysiske størrelse | Physical extent:	iv, 126 s.

STORIES OF THE BISHOPS OF ICELAND



J. Partington

Stories

OF THE

BISHOPS OF ICELAND.

I. THE STORIES OF THORWALD THE FAR-FARER, AND OF BISHOP ISLEIF.

II. HÚNGRVAKA (THE HUNGER-WAKER), BEING CHRONICLES OF THE FIRST FIVE BISHOPS OF SKALHOLT.

III. THE STORY OF BISHOP THORLAK THE SAINT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ICELANDIC "BISKUPA SÖGUR"

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE CHORISTER BROTHERS."

[s: Mary Leith]

LONDON:
J. MASTERS AND CO., 78, NEW BOND STREET.
1895.

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LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. MASTERS AND CO.,
ALBION BUILDINGS, S. BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.

DEDICATION.

THE sea that circles all this isle of ours,
  That circles in more close, more fond embrace
This lovelier lesser isle[1] of fields and flowers,
  Giving its goodly tinge to name and race,
Girds not less faithfully by night and day,
Another Island very far away.

The great world-pulse that palpitates and throbs,
  Now thundering o'er the rocks in mighty swells,
Or vast *pianissimo* of tender sobs
  Like murmur of a thousand thousand shells,
Beats not more truly than the kindred blood
Of England's and of Iceland's brotherhood.

Therefore, mid all the buds and flowers of spring,
  And beds of fiery furze that gleams and burns,
And cuckoo-calls and skylarks' carolling,
  And southern airs of balm, my spirit turns,
For all the notes of home that sigh or smile,
To the stern grandeur of that far-off Isle.

Thy summer fields of never-melting snow,
  Thy deathless winter-fires that never slake
Their ardour, in unfathomed depths below
  And turn the springs to fury—not for sake
Of these alone I love thee, though thy skies
Be fairer than Italian to mine eyes.

[1] Isle of Wight.

Thine were the hearts of old, whose quenchless fire
  Burnt strong as Hekla's ; mighty to endure
And strive and win the strife with fortune dire,
  And win them fame immortal : spirits pure
And high to lead in triumph mortal wills,
Chaste as the snow on those unchanging hills.

The sea that kept thee pure, that keeps thee yet
  Uncursed of many vices of the south,
And stern and simple, only could beget
  And rear such race of heroes ; thine own mouth
Shall praise thee best, in such immortal songs,
As tell of Njal's and Grettir's toils and wrongs.

Yea, more—a race of hardy saints is thine,
  Doughty in faith and Apostolic zeal,
Who kept unsullied the unbroken line,
  And sought o'er land and sea the Sevenfold seal ;
Counting all earthly glory but as loss,
So mid their hills they might but plant the Cross.

Thorvald, who brought the message first from far,
  Whose fame is wheresoe'er his feet have trod,
And Thorlak, Iceland's[1] sunbeam, gem, and star,
  And Klæng, whose gifts made glad the House of GOD ;
And John the holy—and that John, whose death
In later days bare witness for the Faith.

Mother of heroes ! since thy potent spell
  Was on me from my youth, before thy feet—
If feeble note of mine the praise might swell
  With which the ages crown thee—all unmeet,
Imperfect though my work, I lay it down.
It scarce can add a sparkle to thy crown.

[1] "Geisli eðr gimsteinn." (*Saga.*)

The Stories of

THORWALD THE FAR-FARER,

AND OF

BISHOP ISLEIF.

THE STORY OF THORWALD THE FAR-FARER.

Translator's Preface.

This story is an almost literal translation of the Þáttr Þorvalds Víðförla, one of the most interesting of the "Biskupa Sögur," or Bishops' Sagas, those wonderful chronicles of the early Church history of Iceland, which tell how vigorous a graft from the true Vine flourished once in that far-away country. The chief interest of this particular Saga lies in the fact that it records the very first attempt to preach Christianity in the island, some years prior to the mission, better known, of Thangbrand, the warlike missioner of King Olaf.

It is a curious fact that, while the heroic or historical Sagas of the North have found skilled translators and appreciative readers amongst us, the ecclesiastical Sagas have been left hitherto almost entirely unregarded. Yet they are no less remarkable, and no less interesting—to Churchmen possibly more—than the secular branch of Saga: since they present a quaint,

vivid, homely and realistic picture of the infant Church of Iceland, its struggles and its successes.

And it was a grand Church. Founded in primitive times, and under difficulties almost unique in Europe, it seems to have rooted and grown and flourished abundantly among a people naturally devout, simple, hardy and persevering. It had its own line of succession, its hagiology, its architecture, its Church government and peculiar customs—notably the marriage of the clergy, which seems to have been as authorized and universal as amongst Anglicans to-day. And though in this, as in all mediæval lore, there is some admixture of the legendary and possibly unprofitable, there is far too much pure ore among the dross not to amply repay the diligent searcher. What can be more touching than the picture of Isleif, the first native bishop, undertaking the long and toilsome and dangerous journey to receive the Apostolic seal from Adalbert, Archbishop of Bremen, on Whitsunday, after a brief from the Pope; who said that "it might be hoped, through God's mercy, that lasting honour might be granted to that Episcopate, if the first bishop of Iceland were consecrated on the day whereon God adorned all the world with the Gift of the Holy Ghost?" or the church-building at Skalholt, when "in two ships were brought the great trees which Bishop Klæng caused to be hewn in Norway for that church;" or the gifts brought by Bishop Paul to the same church, of bells and decorative work and vestments?[1] or the

[1] Some extracts regarding these ecclesiological curiosities were contributed by the present translator to "The Builder" years ago.

simple holy humble life and conversation of Thorlak the saint of Skalholt; or the pathetic death by drowning of Bishop Paul's wife and daughters; or the burning of Bishop Magnus in his house, with "Tjorvi the priest, who had always served him during his episcopate," and seven other priests? While the story of Aron Hjorleif's son abounds with incidents as stirring and adventures as curious as can be found in the secular Sagas already before the public.

In the midst of the awakening or reviving interest in Norse literature which seems to be going on amongst us, it is surely a great mistake to ignore the religious branch of the Saga, giving as it does a Church history of its own, not less interesting than that of our country, and closely akin to it.

Of the present state of the Church in Iceland it is not in the translator's province to speak. It appears to have shared the fate of many of the other Northern Churches at the Reformation, and to have lost, along with what was valueless or corrupt, its Apostolical succession and orders. It possessed at least one martyr bishop, S. John of Holar, who was put to death for his faith.

Surely it is permissible to think that for a country and a Church with such a past, some future must be in store; that one day, though perhaps not in our day, the Church of Isleif and Thorlak may arise from its ashes, the torn and trampled vine bud and blossom anew: permissible at least for Catholic Churchmen in all lands to pray that the lost grace may be restored, the seal sought amid such peril and toil by these hardy

sea-roving priests of old conveyed once more to their descendants, and the old prophecy of Bishop Gizur fulfilled, that "there should always be a bishop's see at Skalholt, while Iceland is inhabited and Christianity lasts."

The Story of

THORWALD THE FAR-FARER.

THERE was a man called Eilif Örn, (the eagle,) from whom is named the highest fell at Reykjastrand, in Skagafirth. Eilif the eagle was the son of Atli, the son of Skidi the old, the son of Bard of Al. Eilif eagle had to wife Thorlauga daughter of Sæmund the southerner, who took Sæmund's-lithe: they had three sons; one was called Solmund, father of Gudmund, who was the father of Vigbard and his brothers. The second was Atli the strong, he had to wife Herdisi daughter of Thord of Hofdi; their daughter was Thorlaug, whom Gudmund the rich at Modruvale had to wife. The third son of Eilif eagle hight Kodran; he dwelt at Gilja in Vatnsdale; he was a rich man, his wife was named Jarngerda. One of their sons was Orm, the other Thorwald. Kodran loved his son Orm much, but Thorwald little or not at all; he was kept to work as soon as he could do anything. He was scantily clad, and in everything put behind his brother. He served in his father's house, as he was appointed, with goodwill to all.

At that time Thordis, a spaewife, dwelt out at Skagastrand, at a place which is since called Spaewife's fell. One summer she accepted an invitation from

Kodran at Gilja, because he was a friend of hers. But as Thordis was at the feast, and saw what a difference was made between the brothers, she said to Kodran, "This I give thee as counsel, that thou show more natural feeling to Thorwald thy son henceforward than thou hast done hitherto, because I see truly that for many causes he will become more famous than all your other relations; but if thou hast little love for him in thy soul, take thou ransom for him and let him go free, if any one will look after him while he is young."

Kodran saw that she spake so from goodwill, and said that she must certainly take some silver from him. Then he took out a purse and showed it to her. Thordis looked at the silver, and said,

"I will not have this money, because this money hast thou taken by force and overbearing from men in bribes."

Then he brought forward another purse and bade her look at it; she did so, and then said, "I will not take this money for him."

Kodran asked: "What dost thou find in this money?"

Thordis answered: "This money hast thou collected for greediness' sake, in land-tribute and usury, more than is just; therefore such money should no man deal with, who would be both just and gentle."

Then Kodran offered her a fat purse of money, and it was full of silver; Thordis weighed three marks of it to Thorwald, but took from Kodran afterwards that which was over.

Then Kodran asked: "Wherefore wilt thou rather take of this money for my son, than of that which I offered thee before?"

She answered: "Because thou hast come well by this, which thou hast inherited after thy father."

After that Thordis fared away from the feast with excellent gifts, and the friendship of Kodran; she had

Thorwald at home with her at Spaewife's fell. He was there with her for a time, and was well kept in clothes and other things that he needed, and he grew much. And when he was well grown, he fared out by the counsel of Thordis; he did not cease from his journey till he came to Denmark; there he found Svein, who was called Fork-beard. Svein was of little rank on the mother's side, but he was said to be the son of Harald Gorm's son, the Dane king. Svein was not living inland at that time in Denmark, because King Harald would not own him; so he was long in Viking voyages, and was called king by the warriors, as was the Vikings' custom. When Thorwald found Svein, the latter received him well, and made Thorwald his man, and he was with him some summers in Viking voyages in the western sea.

Thorwald had not been long with King Svein before the king esteemed him beyond other men and all his friends, because Thorwald was a great counsellor, manifest to all in valour and discretion, mighty in strength and well-disposed, warlike and strong in combats, gentle and liberal of money, and perfectly proved in trustiness and lowly service; amiable and beloved by all the soldiers, and not unworthily, for a heathen might justly discern him to be far above other heathen men. For all that booty which he took in war, he gave to the needy and to the ransom of captive men, and helped many that were injured; and if captive men fell to his share, he sent them away to their fathers or relations; so with those whom he had ransomed with money. Now because he was mightier in combat than other warriors, they made this law, that he should have the disposal of every prize; and he so used this authority that he took the sons of rich men, or those other things that they had lost, which they thought most of, but which his companions thought least of giving up, and sent them afterwards to those who owned them. Wherefore those that had been be-

fore spoiled by Svein's men loved him well, and celebrated worthily his praise. By this means he easily freed his own men, though they were taken by his enemies; and once not less than Svein the king himself.

It happened that one time Svein was harrying in Britain, and at first he was conqueror and took much booty. But as he searched far up the land, away from the ships, there came against him such a great army of knights that he had no means of resistance. King Svein was there taken, bound, and imprisoned, and with him Thorwald Kodran's son, and many other famous and very worthy men. The next day came a rich chieftain to the dungeon with a large army to take Thorwald out of the prison, because a little before he had ransomed the captive son of this same chieftain, and sent him home free to his father. The chief bade Thorwald go out and fare away free. Thorwald answered, that he would for no sake fare thence alive, unless King Svein were let loose and freed with all his men. The chief did that immediately out of obligation to him; as King Svein afterwards testified, when he sat at a great feast with two other kings. And as messengers came in one king said: "It is said, that never shall table be set so splendidly as there, where three such powerful kings ate out of one dish."

Then answered King Svein, smiling:

"I will find a foreign peasant's son, who, if he be rightly esteemed, is himself alone in nothing less famous and honourable than all we three kings."

Now upon this there was great mirth in the hall, and all asked, laughing, who or what like this man might be of whom he spoke so highly.

He answered: "This man, of whom I am speaking, is as wise as the wisest king had need to be, strong and daring as the bravest baresark, polished and well-mannered as the best-mannered sage." Then he told

that narrative of Thorwald which now has been written, how he freed the king through his gratitude, and of many famous and praiseworthy things besides.

After this, when Thorwald had fared far about the country, he took the true Faith, and was baptized by the Saxon bishop, who was called Frederick. And after that he begged Bishop Frederick with all earnestness to fare with him to Iceland, to preach God's message, and to lead his father and mother and other near relations to turn to God.

The bishop consented to this willingly, and fared to Iceland then; and their journey prospered. Kodran received his son well; they two, Thorwald and the bishop, were the first winter at Gilja, with Kodran with thirteen men. Thorwald began immediately to preach God's message to his relations, because the bishop was ignorant of the country-people's language; and several men were converted to the right Faith the same winter by the word of Thorwald.

And now shall it first be told how he led his father and his home-people to the right Faith.

On a certain high tide when Bishop Frederick with his clerks celebrated the festival and Divine service, Kodran was standing near, more for the sake of curiosity than that he expected to agree in his mind with their customs. But when he heard the sound of the bells, and the fair singing of the clerks, and perceived the sweet savour of the incense, and saw the bishop clothed with splendid vestments, and all those who served him clad in white robes with bright coverings, and the shining of fair wax tapers with mickle brightness around all the house, and those other things which belong to the keeping of high festivals; then all these things seemed unto him rather well. And on that same day he came to his son Thorwald, and said:

"Now have I seen, and somewhat considered, what heedful service ye give to your GOD; although, as I discern, our customs are very different; because, it seems to me, that your GOD must rejoice in that light which terrifies our gods; but if it is so, as I think, then is this man, whom you call your bishop, your prophet (spae-man); because I see that thou learnest from him those things which thou offerest to us on behalf of thy GOD. But I have another prophet of my own, who is of much use to me: he tells me beforehand of many unpleasant things: he guards my cattle, and warns me of what I shall do, and of what I must beware; and therefore I have much trust in him. But he misdoubts of thee much, and also of thy prophet, and your customs, and he warns me of showing you any approbation, and, most of all, of taking your customs."

Thorwald said: "Where does your prophet dwell?"

Kodran answered: "He dwells here, a short distance from my farm, in a great stone and splendid."

Thorwald asked how long he had dwelt there.

Kodran said he had there dwelt a long time.

"Then must I," says Thorwald, "set here an agreement between us two, father. Thou callest thy prophet very strong, and sayest that thou hast much trust in him; but the bishop, whom thou callest my prophet, is easily taken prisoner, and not very strong: yet if he may, in the strength of the GOD of heaven, drive forth thy prophet from his strong abode, then it will be just that thou forsake him, and turn to this mightiest GOD, thy Creator, since He is truly GOD, and no strength may conquer Him. He dwells in endless light, whither He leads all who believe in Him, and serve Him truly, that they may live there with Him in unspeakable blessedness without end. And if thou wilt be converted to this high King of Heaven, then thou shalt quickly discern that he who deters thee from believing in Him is thy perfect de-

ceiver, and he longs to drag thee with him from everlasting light to endless darkness. And if it seems to thee that he has done some good things for thee, he does all that for this purpose, that he may the more easily deceive thee if thou believest him good and necessary."

Kodran answered: "It is plain to me that the knowledge of your bishop is different from his; and none the less I know that with a great champion all his words are fulfilled: and all those things that ye two have said of him, the like things he may say of you: but what need to talk much about it? This condition that thou hast set, may be proved by proof."

Thorwald was glad of his father's counsel, and told the bishop of all this preaching, and of their conversation together. On the next day afterwards the bishop hallowed water, fared forth then with prayer and psalm-singing, and dispersed the water around the stone, and so sprinkled it above that the stone was all wet. The night after the prophet came to Kodran in his sleep, and with a sad countenance, and trembling, as if in fear, and said to Kodran:

"Ill hast thou done, that thou broughtest hither these men, who dwell with thee by fraud, so that they seek to force me away from my dwelling; because they sprinkled boiling water over my abode, so that my children suffer no little pain from the burning drops that run in through the roof; and though that hurts me not much myself, it is so grievous to hear the noise of the small children, as they cry at the burning."

The next morning Kodran told his son, after he had asked, all these things. Thorwald rejoiced at it; and egged on the bishop that he should profit by the opportunity which had arisen.

The bishop fared to the stone with his men, and did all as on the first day, and earnestly prayed Almighty God that He would drive the fiend away, and help the man.

The night after, that subtil wizard appeared to Kodran very differently: since before he was wont to show himself with bright and friendly countenance, and splendidly dressed, and now he was in black and abominable clothes of skins, dark and ill-looking in countenance, and spoke thus to the bonder with anxious and shaking voice: "These men go hard to spoil us both of our goods and useful things, and they will drive me away from my own inheritance, and deprive thee of our loving consultation and provident foresight: now do thou so like a man, that thou scatter them abroad, so that we two may not stand in need of all good things through their perfidy: because I will never flee, although it be grievous to bear long all their ill deeds and disturbances."

All these things, and many others, which that fiend said to Kodran, he told to his son on the morrow. The bishop fared to the stone the third day, with the same action as before: but that malevolent spirit appeared to the bonder the night after, for the third time, with a sorrowful countenance, and lifted up this complaint before him with faltering voice, and spoke thus:

"This evil deceiver, the Christian men's bishop, has upset all my possessions; my dwelling has he spoilt, sprinkled over me boiling water, wet my clothes, torn and made them altogether useless; and he has given me and my family bootless burning, and herewith driven me, needy, far away in desolation and exile. Now we must part both company and friendship, and that is all done through thy perfidy. Consider thou now, who shall henceforth take care of thy goods, as I have taken care of them hitherto. Thou callest thyself a just man and true, but thou hast rewarded me evil for good."

Then answered Kodran: "I have honoured thee indeed as a profitable and strong god, while I was ignorant of the True; but now, because I have proved thee to be guileful and very weak, it is just and un-

blameable for me to forsake thee, and to flee under the protection of this Deity, Who is much better and stronger than thou." With that they parted, with offence and no friendship.

After that Kodran the bonder was baptized, and his wife Jarngerda and other house-folk: only Orm his son would not let himself be baptized that time.

The year after the bishop and Thorwald fared westward to Vididale, with their company, and set up a farm together at Lækjamot, and dwelt there four winters; and those years they fared far around Iceland to preach GOD'S word. The first time that they were at Lækjamot, Thorwald asked in marriage a woman hight Vigdis: she was the daughter of Olaf, who lived at Hawkgill, in Vatnsdale.

But as the bishop and Thorwald came to the feast, there was there before them a crowd of heathen guests. There was a large hall, as in many places was the custom; and a little stream flowed across the hall, and wound itself around it. As neither would associate with the others, Christian men or heathen, counsel was taken that a tent should be made across the hall in their midst, where the stream was; that the bishop should be outside, in the hall, with the Christian men, but the heathen within the tent.

At that same bridal gathering there were amongst the heathen men two brothers, the strongest baresarks, and very skilful. Each of them was called Hawk. And because they stood with all their strength most of all against the right Faith, and tried hard to destroy Christian customs, they challenged the bishop, if he had any trust in his GOD, that he should make trial of those arts which they were wont to boast: to walk through blazing fire with bare feet, or to fall upon weapons, without being hurt.

But the bishop, trusting in GOD's mercy, did not refuse: there were great fires made along the whole length of the hall, as in that time it was customary to drink ale by the fire. The bishop robed himself in all his episcopal vestments, and hallowed water: then he went to the fire thus clad; he had a mitre on his head, and a crozier in his hand: he hallowed the fire, and sprinkled water over it.

Next went in those two baresarks, horribly howling: biting the edges of their shields, and with bare swords in their hands, they tried now to walk the fire. But that came forward quicker than they thought, and they hurt their feet in the flames, so that they both fell backward; but the fire seized upon them, and burnt a little while with so great vehemence, that they were drawn thence dead.

They were carried up the hillside, and buried there: wherefore that has since been called Hawkgill.

Frederick the bishop made the sign of the cross before him, and went in the midst of the fire, and so forth along the whole length of the hall; but the fire lay two ways from him, as if a wind blew; and so little did he feel the heat of the fire vehemently, that his vestments were not the least singed. Then many were converted to GOD that saw that great miracle.

Gunnlaug the monk says that he heard a very truthful man tell this story, Glum Thorgil's son: but Glum had heard it from that man hight Arnor, and who was the son of Arndisa.

Olaf at Hawkgill afterwards built a church at his farm: but Thorwald gave him the wood for it.

The bishop and Thorwald tried at all times with the utmost earnestness to lead most men to GOD, not only there in the nearest districts; rather they fared ar round Iceland to preach the word of GOD.

They came west to Hvamm in Broadfirth's dale about the time of the Althing, (general meeting.) Thorarin the bonder was not at home, but Fridgerda his housewife, daughter of Thord of Hofdi, received them well at first. Thorwald preached the Faith there before men, but Fridgerda offered sacrifice meanwhile within, and heard their every word. Fridgerda answered Thorwald's words little and ill, but Skeggi, Thorarin's and her son, mocked the word of Thorwald. Therefore Thorwald made this song:

"Forth I fared with precious fortune,
No man listened unto me;
But the false priest's son contemn'd us,
Sprinkler of the sacred blood:
And the mighty aged woman
Shamelessly the skald hath mocked,
(Heaven destroy the faithless priestess!)
Singing round the heathen shrine."

It is not mentioned that any men in the Westfirthers' quarter were made Christians by their words; but north in the district, as they fared over there, certain famous men took the right Faith. Onund in Reykjadal, son of Thorgil Grenjadarson, and Hlenni of Saurbæ in Eyjafirth, and Thorward in As with Hjaltadale. One brother of Thorward hight Arngeir, and another Thord; he was the son of Spakbodvar the son of Ondott the taker of land, who dwelt in Vidvik. These and more men were fully Christianized in the Northland quarter; but there were many who, though they would not let themselves be baptized that time, yet believed in CHRIST, and forewent idolatrous sacrifices and all heathen customs, but who would not give up their sacred pillars. On that account the heathen were enraged with Bishop Frederick, and declared hostility to all those who agreed with him.

Thorward Spakbodvarson let a church be made at his farm at As, and had with him a priest whom the

bishop brought to him, to sing the services for him, and perform Divine worship. At that Klaufi, the son of Thorwald Refsson from Bard in the Fleet, was very wroth.

Klaufi was a mighty man; he fared to find Thorward's brothers, Arngeir and Thord, on this errand, that he offered to them their choice, whether they would rather slay the priest, or burn the church.

Arngeir answered, "I would let thee, and also every other friend of mine, from slaying the priest, because Thorward my brother has before cruelly avenged lesser injuries; but this I will encourage, that thou burn the church."

Thord would not agree with them in this counsel.

A little while after, Klaufi fared thither at night with ten men, to burn the church. But as they drew nigh, and entered the churchyard, they perceived a mighty heat, and saw great sparks flying out of the windows of the church. Therefore they fared away, since the church seemed to them full of fire.

Another time Arngeir fared thither with many men, and tried to burn this same church. When they had broken up the door, he tried to set fire to the floor with dry birchwood. And because it did not flame as quickly as he wished, he laid himself across the threshold, and tried to blow the fire, as it was sufficient, yet would not catch the wood. Then there came an arrow, and stood fast in the floor of the church, right by his head; and immediately after came another, which fixed his clothes to the floor between his side and the font. Then he jumped up smartly and said, "This arrow flew so near to my side, that I am minded not to bide here for the third."

Now thus God averted harm from His house.

Arngeir fared away with his men, and heathens did not very often seek to burn that church.

This church was made sixteen years before Chris-

tianity was taken by law in Iceland; but it stood so that nothing was done to it.

One summer at the Althing, Thorwald Kodran's son preached the Faith, after the bishop had prayed publicly before all the people. But when he had recited with great eloquence many and true great miracles of Almighty God, there answered first a man great of kin and famous, though he was a heathen and cruel: Hedin from Svalbard of Eyjafirth's-strand, son of Thorbjorn Skagi's son, Skopti's son. Hedin had to wife Ragneid, step-daughter and niece of Eyjolf Valgerda's son. Hedin spoke very ill with Thorwald, and blasphemed much against the holy Faith; and so went to work with his ill-will in speaking before the people, that no man gave credit to that which Thorwald had said; rather there grew thence malevolent hostility and heathen hate towards the bishop and Thorwald, to such a degree, that they gave money to skalds to make an insulting song about them.

On that account Thorwald slew two who had made the song; but the bishop bore all injuries with the greatest gentleness. When Thorwald had slain the skalds, he went to the bishop to tell him what he had done. The bishop sat indoors, and was reading in a book; and before Thorwald went in, two blood-drops came upon the book before the bishop. The bishop knew directly that this was a foreboding; and as Thorwald came in to him, the bishop said,

"Either thou hast committed manslaughter, or thou hast that in thy mind."

Thorwald told him then what he had done.

The bishop said, "Why hast thou done this?"

Thorwald answered that he could not endure what had been said of them.

The bishop said that it was a little trial of patience,

. . . . "but that a Christian man should not seek to revenge himself, though he be hatefully esteemed, but rather bear, for GOD'S sake, enmity and injuries."

Now, though they suffered many troubles from bad men, they were not hindered from faring around the country, and bearing GOD'S message. They came out into Laxardale, and dwelt for a time under Eilif's fell with Atli the strong, uncle of Thorwald. Atli was baptized there, with his household, and many other men who came thither, because the mercy of the HOLY SPIRIT prospered their word.

Then the fame of the bishop, by the gift of GOD, came to the ears of a little boy five winters old, that hight Ingimund, son of Hafr in Gooddale; he was at foster at Reykjastrand.

Ingimund came one day to speak with the shepherd his foster-father, and prayed him to lead him secretly to Eilifsfell to see the bishop; the shepherd granted him this.

They fared over Kjartan's rift, and westward over the fell to Laxardale. But directly they got to the farm of Atli at Eilifsfell, the boy began to beg that he might be baptized. Atli took the child by the hand and led him before the bishop, thus saying, "This boy is the son of a famous man, though a heathen, but the boy asks for baptism without the counsel and consent of his father and foster-father; now see what is to be done, because it is certainly to be expected that one or other of them may much mislike if he is baptized."

The bishop answered, smiling, "Truly," says he, "so holy an office is not to be denied to the young child, especially since he has more wholesome intelligence to his counsel than his mature relations."

After that the bishop baptized Ingimund, and

taught him, before he fared abroad, what was chiefly necessary for him to attend to, in Christianity.

It is so said, that Bishop Frederick had baptized that man, hight Mani, and because he held the holy Faith with many virtues and godly living, he was called Mani the Christian. He dwelt at Holt, at Kolgamyri; he made there a church. In that church he served GOD both night and day with holy prayers, and almsdeeds which he did to many needy men.

He had a salmon-fishery, which then was scarce in the land, at that place which is now called from his name Mana-fors; because at a certain time when there was a great scarcity and famine, he had nothing wherewith to feed the hungry: therefore he fared to the water, and had a sufficient capture of salmon in the whirlpool under the waterfall. This salmon he bestowed upon the church at Holt, and Gunnlaug the monk says that this fishery has ever since belonged to it. Beside that church thou mayest see a token that he has lived like a hermit; since, as he was beyond most men in mind, so would he also in body be far removed from the noise of the world. For by the churchyard thou mayest see that there has been a certain field, where it is said that he gained by haymaking in summer enough to fodder one cow which he kept; because he preferred earning his subsistence with the labour of his own hands, rather than making use of heathens who hated him. And that place is since called Manistofts.

But to tell of a few of the many injuries and hostilities that heathen men did to Bishop Frederick and Thorwald for preaching the true Faith. It so hap-

pened that they would ride to the spring Thing[1] at Hegraness. But as they drew near to the place of meeting, there sprang up a whole crowd of heathen men, and ran against them with a great noise; some threw stones, some struck at them with weapons and shields, with tumult and loud cries, praying to the gods to confound their enemies; and there was no hope that they could get to the Thing. Then the bishop said,

"Now is that fulfilled which my mother dreamt in former days, that she thought she found wolf's hair in my head, because now are we become outcasts, and are driven away like noxious wolves with frightful noise and molestation."

After that the bishop and his party fared home to Lækjamot, and dwelt there through the summer.

That same summer, after the Althing, certain heathen chiefs collected an army, so that they had two hundred and forty men; they intended to go to Lækjamot to burn the bishop indoors and all his company. But as they were a short way from the farm at Lækjamot, they mounted their horses and were minded to threaten as they did, but hardly had they got on horseback when many birds of marvellous flight rose up beside them; at that their horses shied, and became so unmanageable, that all those who had mounted fell off, and were hurt. Some fell on stones, and bruised their feet or their hands, or took other injuries; some fell on their weapons and received thence great wounds; the horses trod upon some and hurt them; those had least trouble from whom the horses ran away, and they had to go a long way to their home. With that they turned away. Thus Almighty God's mercy shielded His men, that, so far from the bishop and his party taking any harm from the ill-will and hostility of the heathen, they were in no way ware of this transaction and conspiracy.

[1] Meeting.

They and Thorwald dwelt therefore the fourth winter at Lækjamot; but the next summer after they fared out: first to Norway, and lay for a time in a certain haven. There came out from Iceland, and lay in that same haven, that man who was mentioned before, Hedin, from Svalbard.

Hedin went up on land, and into a wood, to cut himself house-wood. Thorwald was aware of this; he called his thrall to him, and they fared to the wood where Hedin was, and Thorwald let the thrall slay Hedin. When Thorwald came to the ship, he told that work to the bishop.

The bishop answered: "For this fight we two must part, since thou wilt late leave off manslaughter."

After that Bishop Frederick fared to Saxony, and ended there his life with great sanctity; receiving eternal reward from Almighty God for his goodwill and temporal labour.

Thorwald lived many years afterwards; but because he was a great man in himself, strong and well-disposed, and everywhere wont to obey God's word with perfect loving heed, he thought it would not be well to go back to his fatherland; as he had suffered in all places, for the love of God, so much opposition and injury from his countrymen.

Therefore he took counsel not often to go out to Iceland; so he made his journey out from home, and all the way to Jerusalem to explore the Holy Place; he fared all around the kingdom of Greece, and came to Micklegarth (Constantinople); the emperor himself received him with much honour, and gave him many splendid gifts of friendship, because God had showed him so much mercy. And his fame went before him wherever he went; so that he was esteemed and glorified as well by lesser men as by greater, as a pillar

and upholder of the right Faith, and honoured as a famous confessor of our LORD JESUS CHRIST by the emperor of Micklegarth himself and all his court, and not less by all bishops and abbots in all Greece and Syria. Most of all was he honoured in Austria, being thither sent by the emperor as a ruler appointed over all the kings in Russia and the whole realm. Thorwald Kodran's son erected there from the foundation a famous monastery, by that cathedral which is consecrated to John the Baptist, and endowed it with sufficient possessions. It has been ever since called by his name, Thorwald's cloister.

In that monastery he ended his life, and was there buried. That cloister stands under a high mountain hight Drofn.

When Bishop Frederick and Thorwald came to Iceland nine hundred and eighty-one years had elapsed since the Birth of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and one hundred and six winters since the first settling in Iceland. Three winters afterwards Thorwald Spakbodvarson made the church in As.

Chronology of the Story.

The Bishop and Thorwald came out to Iceland, 981. They were at Gilja one winter (982), but four at Lækjamot (983—6). The bridal took place at Hawkgill (982). Next summer at the time of the Althing Thorwald fared west to Hvamm (983), the summer after they fared to the Althing (984). That summer Thorkell Mani was speaker of the law. The next summer they fared to the spring Thing at Hegranes (985), and the next summer they went abroad (986).

THE STORY OF BISHOP ISLEIF.

Translator's Preface.

This Saga comes next in historical order to that of Thorwald the Far-farer, although, as will be seen, there is a considerable gap in the chronology. Isleif appears to have been the first native Icelandic bishop. This story is a mere fragment, giving the early part of his life. It is continued in the famous saga, "Hungrvaka" (literally the "Hunger-Waker," or "Appetizer," because it is supposed to awaken hunger—or as we should more naturally say thirst—for further knowledge on the subjects of which it treats.)

THE STORY OF BISHOP ISLEIF.

ISLEIF, son of Gizur the white, was a handsome man and princely, not very tall: the most beloved of men. He was, when young, at school in Saxony.

This is told of him, in the first place, that he fared south,[1] and came to Norway. At that time there dwelt with Olaf the king (Harald's son), Brand the swift. The king esteemed him much, and on a certain high tide the king said to him: "Brand, accept from me this cloak;" that was a scarlet mantle, lined with gray fur.

They two, Brand and Isleif, met one another at church, and were fain of the meeting. Isleif was then a priest, and poor, when he came south out of the country: then said Brand, "Thou shalt take from me this cloak, which the king gave me."

He answered: "Thou hast not indeed lost thy bountiful mind, and I will accept that willingly."

And one high tide's day, when Brand was at the king's board, then spake the king, and turned to him: "Why hast thou not that cloak, Brand, which I gave thee?"

He answered: "Sire, I have given it to a priest."

The king said: "I would see that priest, and know what compassion he seems to need, on whom thou hast so quickly squandered the royal gift."

[1] Note A.

Men understood it so, as that he had done an extraordinary thing with such a man's gift. And at the church meeting Brand said to the king: "My lord, there stands the priest now, beside the church, and he is in the cloak."

The king went up to him, and said: "We two must change our relations now, Brand, for now will I give him the cloak, and call him to be my priest."

Brand said that might be done.

Afterwards Isleif came before the king, and addressed him.

The king took his speech well, and said: "That cloak, priest, which Brand gave to thee, the same will I give thee, and I must pay Brand the worth of it: because thou pleasest me so well, that I will commend myself to thy prayers."

He answered: "My lord! right good seemed to me before the gift of Brand, but so much the more honour to receive it from you with this speech."

After that he fared to Iceland, and his friends took counsel to establish him by marriage; he was not a rich man, but he had a good cure at Skalholt and a parish. Afterwards he fared north to Asgeirsar in Vididale; there dwelt that man who was called Thorwald, he had a daughter hight Dalla. They came there early in the day, and spoke to the bonder, and he asked them to stay there. Isleif said they must first talk together, "because it stands so, that I am come hither on a wooing journey, and I sue for thy daughter."

He said, "Good reports are going of thee, but so will I answer this time, that thou shalt dwell further north if thou wilt be wedded."

He answered, "I do not agree with that, that I should leave my parish, and my jurisdiction and district; and we must rather part."

With that they turned to their horses and rode: but Dalla was up on the hayrick, and she was the

fairest woman: Thorwald went thither. She said, "Who were those men unknown to us who came?"

He told her. She said, "What was their errand?"

He said that it was a wooing visit to her.

She said, "How answeredst thou?"

He told her that.

She said, "That would not have stood in the way of the marriage, if I had given my advice."

He answered, "Art thou much desirous of this?"

She answered, "That must go forward, because I have the ambition to possess the best husband, and the most famous son with him, that were ever born in Iceland: therefore I think it not unadvisable to go after them."

He said, "Thy counsel has no little power thereto."

After that they rode after them. Now Thorwald says that he is minded that they should not oppose the marriage, though he should not change his abode further north.

Isleif let this saying please him well. Afterwards she was given him in marriage, and they dwelt then at Skalholt, and had for sons Gizur, and Teit, and Thorwald, and they were all famous men, though one surpassed the rest. Gizur was a mickle man and strong.

Thereafter it was the counsel of the landsfolk to have a bishop over them, and Isleif was chosen to this office: and he fared out of the country, and came back and was at Skalholt, though Dalla wished to dwell in a district of the country.

There was a difficulty at that time among men about arranging property. Tithes were there none,[1] but there were tolls laid on all the land.

Isleif was the most renowned man in his doings: with him was brought up John Ogmund's son,[2] who was afterwards Bishop of Hol; and he spoke these

[1] Note B. [2] Note C, et seq.

words in praise of Isleif, when he heard speak of men who were handsome, or clever, or otherwise worthy:

"So was Isleif my fosterfather; he was the fairest of men, the cleverest of men, of all men the best." Then they would say, "What then of him?" He answered, "He comes into my mind whenever I hear mention of good men, for so have I found him to be in all things."

NOTES TO THE SAGA.

Note A.

"*He came south*," *&c.* Isleif can only have been one and twenty when this took place, as that must have been in the latest year of Olaf the Saint, (1027,) but Isleif had then been newly ordained to the priesthood.

Note B.

"*Tithes were there none*," *&c.* That is difficult to say, how little there was at this cure: it is known that tithes were not taken by law before 1096, in the days of Gizur, so that is correct; but there were no tolls in Iceland as far as we know, unless that money is so called which men gave or ordered to be given, in all the land, to the sees, immediately they were founded. But in all mention of this it is said that outgoings were great from the sees, but receipts both scanty and ill furnished. Both landsmen and bishops were very poorly off, by the account of 'Hungrvaka.' But Adam of Bremen says otherwise: he says, "They (the Icelanders) have their Bishop for king, and all people do after his betokening, and hold that for law which he appoints on GOD'S behalf, or according to the Scriptures, or after the customs of other nations." This, it need hardly be guessed, must be exaggeration. About Isleif Adam says in the same place: "At the prayer of the landsmen he (the Archbishop Adalbert) ordained the holiest man, by name Isleif; he was sent out of the country to the pope, and was by him kept there for a time in the greatest honour, and taught meanwhile that which he might most salutarily teach to that people which had newly been turned to CHRIST." (Adam of Bremen, iv. 35.)

Note C.

"*John Ogmundson*," *&c.* In the Saga of S. John the Bishop it says of this much the same as here, thus: "Now it needs be said, how much the holy Bishop John had honoured his fosterfather Bishop Isleif, because so say thoughtful and learned men, that this was on Bishop John's lips immediately, when he was stand-

ing by, and men spoke among themselves of those who were the best; 'Bishop Isleif, my fosterfather,' said he, 'was of all men handsomest, of all men most eloquent, of all men best.' Then answered those bishops who had been talking together: 'Who spoke now, my lord, of Bishop Isleif?' But holy Bishop John answered, 'I shall always speak of him when I hear good men mentioned.' Now that is a fair testimony to Bp. Isleif, that a holy man should so speak of him, but a great honour to Bp. John, that such a man should have fostered him."

Note D.

In the Saga of Gunnlaug the monk, cap. 6, it stands thus: "It is due to say something of this, what manner of man was Isleif, fosterfather of Bishop John, because it was said by those men who knew, that this was ever on the lips of Bishop John," &c. (Vide Note C.)

HÚNGRVAKA

(THE HUNGER-WAKER.)

BEING CHRONICLES OF THE FIRST FIVE BISHOPS OF SKALHOLT.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE TO HÚNGRVAKA.

THIS quaint and interesting chronicle is next in order to the Story of Bishop Isleif. It records the history of the establishment of the Episcopal Sees of Skalholt and Hol, and the lives of the first five Bishops of Skalholt.

We in this age of travelling, of steam communication with every known land, can but wonder at and admire the zeal and courage of the old native clergy of Iceland, as we read of their multifold "farings" across the wild north sea. Those who have any, even though slight practical acquaintance with Iceland to-day, who know how with all her splendour of scenery and natural phenomena she is barren of many ordinary resources for building and beautifying, can estimate in some small degree the energy and labour and expense incurred by these hardy architects and artists before their homely shrines could be ordered and arranged with the decency and decoration suitable to the House of GOD. Those "great trees," hewn in Norway, that were brought over "in two ships," were no easily obtained or uncostly offering. Think of the days and nights of tossing and tacking, the risks and toils endured before the ships found

their desired haven, and the timber and the bells and other furnishings were landed, to be carried to their destination over moor and moss, through swamp and river, by the much enduring ponies! In no other country in Europe, at any rate, could the dangers and difficulties be quite identical with these, since the situation of the island is unique; but there can be no doubt that the churchmen, lay and cleric, rose to the occasion, and came behind in no gift of love and devotion.

They are not left without witness to-day. Any one visiting the Museum at Reykjavik cannot but be struck by the preponderance of ecclesiastical above any other relics or curiosities. There is the font from Skalholt.[1] It is made of oak, octagonal, with a strong boldly-fashioned foot and base. The panels are painted with cherubs, and round the upper rim is the text, "Suffer little children, &c.," in Icelandic. The pulpit, of the same style of workmanship, is also there. A very beautifully-embroidered frontal, supposed to be the one presented by Bishop Klæng, and looking old enough, hangs near; and the number of worked vestments, carvings, crucifixes, and hangings enable us to realize the descriptions of the old sagas as to the plentiful furnishing and decorations of the churches. Much of the altar plate, and other treasures, have besides been removed to Copenhagen.

At least they are reverently preserved, and the relics in the Museum safe, one would hope, from removal; but owing to the poverty of the country

[1] The design on the cover represents this font.

people there is danger of the silver ornaments gradually being lost to the land. The native silver is much prized by collectors; and though these may at present be few, there have been instances when even old church plate has been sold, and such treasures once lost and dispersed are little likely to be recovered. May Iceland but guard faithfully those that remain to her!

If the effort at rendering these histories accessible to English readers shall prove indeed a "Hunger-waker," in causing increased curiosity and interest regarding the old Church of Iceland, the work of translating will be amply repaid.

My grateful acknowledgments are due to my friend Mr. Helgi Pjétursson, for assistance in construing some obscure or doubtful passages in the Sagas.

HÚNGRVAKA.

HERE BEGINS "HUNGER-WAKER."

1. THIS little book I call Hunger-waker, because it must prove such to many uninstructed and therefore ignorant men who shall read it, since it will create a great desire to know the origin and life of those men of mark, whereof in this writing will shortly be told. For I have nearly always endeavoured to write that which I had firmly in remembrance; and to this end have I put together this little book, that those things may not altogether fall out of my remembrance, which I have heard say on this subject by that learned man Gizur Hall's son, and of which other renowned men besides have told the histories.

And secondly, this writing is intended to allure young men to whom our speech is known, to read that which is written in the Norse; laws, or stories, or genealogies. I set this down in writing rather than other information which has before been set down, because it seems to me of the highest importance for my children and other young men to know in what manner and with what customs Christianity has here been spread and increased, and bishops' sees established in Iceland; and then to know what remarkable men the bishops have been who lived

here, as I intend now to tell. And I am constrained to write how the see has been strengthened and increased at Skalholt, and of the counsels of those men who have had charge of it; since by GOD'S grace I have from them got all my luck in this world. For it seems to me as if to wise men this little book must be even likened to a horn-spoon: because that is the most awkward thing if it be imperfectly made; and the fairest thing when it is well finished. And those men who thus take pleasure in this little book may use it to amuse themselves and others, who would rather listen to it humbly than venture on what they happen to come across when they are suffering from dulness; because many a man experiences this, if he would seek for himself short amusement, that he comes afterwards to long repentance. I think it best that the reader should select what is most becoming in this information, and that he should then amuse himself with, and retain in his memory what he likes, but should forget that which does not fall in with his humour. And it appears to me best to beseem such, that he should seek to improve that which he thinks unworthily written, and that he may know somewhat better; rather than that one should slight it or hold it in contempt, who neither will take nor have any trouble to improve it. And therefore have I likened this to a horn-spoon, because there seems to me to be remarkable interest in it; yet I grant that there is much in it that needs improving; and I shall endeavour, while I am capable, to better it. It is due that I should say that to my error and carelessness it is owing, if there is anything in this history found to be written wrongly; and not to the fault of those men from whom I have received this information. But that is an old proverb: "The house before the household;" therefore I tell first how the farm was built at Skalholt, and after, of them who have held the see.

2. Ketilbjorn the old lived at Mosfell, and had many children. Teit hight a son of Ketilbjorn. He was such a lucky man, that he built that farm first which is called Skalholt, that now is the finest farm in all Iceland. That was another good fortune of his, that he had for son Gizur the white, who came with Christianity to Iceland, and lived at Skalholt after his father Teit. Gizur the white had three wives. First he married Halldora, daughter of Hrolf from Gautland; their daughter was Vilborg, who married Hjalti, Skeggi's son. Gizur had then an Orkney wife who was called Thordis, and their son was Ketil, who married Thorkatla Skapti's daughter. Gizur married afterwards Thordisa daughter of Thorod the good at Hjalla in Olfus, and they two had many children: their son was Isleif; him Gizur sent abroad, and placed to be taught by an abbess, in that town which is called Erfurth. Isleif came back to Iceland as a priest, and well learned; he married, and took to wife Dalla, Thorward's daughter, of As. They had three sons, Gizur was the name of one, who was afterwards bishop; the second hight Teit, that dwelt in Haukadale: the third hight Thorvald, that dwelt in Hraungerd, a mickle chief. Gizur the white had the first church built at Skalholt, and was buried there at that church; but Isleif dwelt at Skalholt after his father. Isleif was a handsome man to look at and friendly with every one, and all his life just and wise in counsel, liberal and beneficent, but never wealthy. But when Isleif was fifty years old, and Iceland had not long been christianized, then he was bidden to fare out, and chosen to be bishop by all the people of Iceland. After that he fared out, and went south to Saxony, and visited Henry the emperor, Conrad's son, and gave him a white bear that had come from Greenland, and that beast was the greatest present: and the emperor gave Isleif his brief with the seal of all his kingdom. Afterwards he fared to visit Leo

the Pope.[1] And the Pope sent a brief to Adalbert archbishop of Bremen[2] that he should give Isleif bishop's orders on Whitsunday; and the Pope said this might be hoped for, through God's mercy, that long honour might accrue to that bishopric if the first bishop for Iceland were consecrated on that day when God adorned all the world with the Gift of the Holy Spirit: and Isleif was ordained bishop on that day, at the Pope's bidding, by Adalbert, archbishop of Bremen, fourteen nights[3] before Columba's mass; and the archbishop gave him all that outfit which he needed to have with the office of bishop, according to that which the Pope had sent word to do, and the emperor.

After that Isleif fared out that same summer to Iceland,[4] and set his bishop's chair at Skalholt. He had much distress in many ways in his bishopric, on account of disobedient men; this may be some token in what straits he has been, on account of unbelief and disobedience, and bad customs of his subordinates: that the law-speaker[5] had married a mother and daughter both; and therefore some men laid themselves out in sea-roving and ships of war, and men took much scandal by that to one another, those that now must think it a bad example, if men were concerned in such. In the days of Bishop Isleif, bishops came out of other lands, and lived much more laxly than Bishop Isleif, therefore they became friendly with bad men; wherefore Archbishop Adalbert sent a brief to Iceland, and forbade men to receive any service from them, and declared some to be excommunicate; but they all fared without his permission.[6]

In the days of Bishop Isleif, came out that bishop who was called Kol,[7] and he died here. He was

[1] Note A.
[2] Note B.
[3] Note C.
[4] Note D.
[5] Probably Gellir Bolverk's son.
[6] Note E.
[7] Note F.

buried at Skalholt, and that was the first church here in the land adorned with an honoured man's grave, which may rightly be called spiritual mother of all other consecrated houses in Iceland. Bishop Isleif had always difficulty in living for means; there was little income, but much outgoing, and therefore it was always hard for him to live. Many men placed their sons with him to be taught, and they were afterwards good clerics; and two became bishops: Kol at Vik, eastward in Norway, and John, bishop of Hol.

But when Isleif had been bishop twenty-four winters, he took a sickness at the Althing, at mass, so severe and quickly that he had immediately to put off his mass-clothes; and Guthorm the priest, son of Finnolf's son out of Laugardale, put on the mass-clothes at the bishop's counsel, and began the mass where the bishop left off, and finished mass. Afterwards the bishop was brought home to Skalholt, and his room was made ready in the church. Men went there for holy counsel with him, both about choosing the bishop, and those other things that they thought it necessary to speak to him about; and he laid that counsel thereto, that they should pray Guthorm the priest to fare abroad, and said that he was the best suited of those men, who were there gathered together; but said so, that it was a slow destiny to be bishop in Iceland, if things were not more seemly with him who afterwards should come to it, than they had been with himself.

The latter part of Bishop Isleif's life brought many things to his hands which much increased his honour before those men who could perceive it; because many mad men were brought to him who went away healed after their visit. He blessed ale which had an ill flavour, and it was thenceforward good for drinking; and many another such-like thing he took in hand, though I cannot now tell what; and the wisest men thought therein lay the greatest craft.

Isleif was ordained bishop when he was fifty years old;[1] then was Harald Sigurd's son king over Norway. Bishop Isleif died on Sunday, in the church at Skalholt, at mid-day, three nights[2] before Seljaman's day. He had then been bishop twenty-four winters, and he was buried beside the grave of Bishop Kol. This was 1073 years from the birth of CHRIST.

3. It is mentioned that bishops came from abroad to Iceland, in the days[3] of Bishop Isleif; but only Frederic had come thither before, as the sagas have set forth. But these have so come, that men have distinctly known: John, the Irish bishop, and some men hold it for true that he fared afterwards to Vinland, and there turned many men to GOD; and was thereafter taken and scourged, and both hands and feet cut off, and at last beheaded, and fared through that martyrdom to GOD. The third bishop that came to Iceland was Bjarnvard Vilrad's son, who was called the book-learned; and some men say that he was from England, and had followed Olaf the holy, and had afterwards at his counsel fared to Iceland. The fourth was bishop Rudolf, who some say hight Ulf, and was of a family of Ruda[4] out of England; he was nineteen winters in Iceland, and dwelt at Bœ in Borgarfirth. Fifthly came to Iceland Bishop Henry, and was two winters in Iceland.[5] The sixth was Bernhard the Saxon bishop, and he was with King Magnus the good, Olaf's son. He fared thereafter to Iceland, and was here twenty winters. He had two dwelling-places in Vatnsdal; at Gilja and Steinstad. He hallowed many things, of which much of mark has been told; churches and chimes, bridges and burns, woods and waters, boulders and bells;[6] these things are thought to have brightened the lustre of his honour.

[1] Note G. [2] Note H. [3] Note I.
[4] Note J. [5] Note K.
[6] I have tried to follow the alliterative construction of the original sentence here.—TRANSLATOR.

Bernhard was in Iceland while King Harald Sigurd's son was in Norway, because they were not agreed. Afterwards he fared abroad, and to the court of Olaf the peaceful, the king, son of Harald; and then he travelled to Rome at the king's prayer, and interceded for the dead. When he returned the king appointed him bishop in Selja, but afterwards he fared to Bergen, and died there, and it is told that he has been the most distinguished man.

4. In the days of Bishop Isleif there were many and great events. There was in Norway the fall of the holy Olaf the king: there was eke the death of King Magnus the good, son of King Olaf, and he died in Denmark, and his body was brought north to Nidaross at Thrandheim. They both died before Isleif was bishop, but after he was bishop fell King Harald Sigurd's son in England, and a little after Harald Godwin's son: there died Magnus the king, son of Harald Sigurd's son, and Sweyn Ulf's son, the Dane king, and Thorkell Eyjulf's son, Gellir Bolverk's son, Thorstein Kuga's son,[1] Snorri the good, and other famous men.

5. Gizur, son of Bishop Isleif was born at Skalholt, but he was taught in Saxony, and ordained priest while yet young. But when he came out to Iceland he married, and took Steinun Thorgrim's daughter, who had before been married to Thorir Brodi's son, and they dwelt first at Hof in Vapnafirth. Gizur was a mickle man of growth, and stout; bright-eyed and somewhat open-eyed: of dignified appearance and the most beneficent of men, strong and prudent. Gizur was perfect in all those things that a man ought to know; he was a great seaman the first part of his life, while Isleif lived; and was always much esteemed wherever he went, and was amongst famous men, when he was out of the country.

King Harald, Sigurd's son, was then king in Nor-

[1] Note L.

way; and he spoke those words about Gizur that he said it so seemed to him that he was best suited to bear whatever name of honour might be allotted to him. To Rome they fared both together, before they fared to Iceland. Gizur was not in the same country when his father died, and he came out next summer before the Althing in Rangarmouth, and he was certain nights on board ship, and would not ride to the Thing, while there was no one chosen bishop at the Thing. But the chiefs bade Guthorm the priest to fare abroad, after they thought Bishop Isleif had rather fixed it, and it was so at last, therefore, that he consented, if there were thought to be no difficulty about the choice.

When as Gizur learnt that Guthorm the priest was chosen for faring abroad, then he rode to the Thing. But as Gizur came to the Thing, Guthorm the priest went to the pavement in front of the church, and declared there before all the assembly that there should be no choosing of his going abroad unless Gizur was chosen too. The whole meeting then turned to Gizur and bade him fare abroad; but he declined in many ways, though it came to this at last that he consented to take this difficult task upon him; but all the chiefs told him that he should hearken to all God's command, which He bids, if bishop's orders were granted to him.

After that he fared out that same summer. But when he came to Saxony, all office had been taken from Leonard the archbishop. Therefore he went to visit Gregory the Pope,[1] and told him all the state of the case regarding his journeys, and those difficulties that there seemed to be in many ways. And the Pope sent Gizur therefore to the hands of Hardwig, archbishop of Magdeburg in Saxony, and bade that he should give him bishop's ordination, and he received him with much grace and honour, and ordained him

[1] Gregory VII. (Hildebrand) was Pope 1073—85.

bishop[1] four nights before the later feast of S. Mary. He was then forty years old, and the archbishop gave him all that which he most clearly needed.

After that Gizur fared out to Iceland, and all the people received him joyfully. He took so great honour and esteem, early in his bishop's orders, and so would every man sit or stand as he bade, young and old, rich and poor, women and men, that it is correct to say that he was both king and bishop over the land while he lived. He had not all the land at Skalholt to live on first for some time, because Dalla his mother wished to dwell on her part of the land while she lived. But when she was dead and the bishop owned all the land, then he laid it all to that church which is in Skalholt, and which he himself had had built, thirty ells long, and dedicated to the Apostle Peter; and many other gifts Gizur gave to that church, both in lands and money, and said afterwards that there should always be a bishop's chair there, while Iceland is inhabited and Christianity may endure. Bishop Gizur gave to the church of Skalholt a white cope of costly stuff, that was long afterwards the best, and many other gifts.

6. These men were contemporary with Bishop Gizur: Sæmund the priest in Oddi, who was both prudent and best learned of all men. The second, Markus Skeggi's son,[2] speaker of the law, he was the greatest speaker and skald. They gave counsel together, and gave the chiefs such advice, that it was made law for men to tithe their property every half-year, and all the legal interest of their cattle, as is the custom in other lands wherein Christian men dwell. And with their judgment and wise decree was that

[1] The consecration day of Gizur was therefore 4th September. Now that agrees excellently, because precisely in the year 1082 4th Sept. fell upon Sunday (the 12th after Trinity), the next winter after Gizur was in Russia and came home 1083.

[2] Note M.

legal conclusion reached, that men were placed under a tithe tribute, and which should be afterwards divided into four parts: one part to the hands of the bishop, the second to the church, the clergy should have the third part, and the poor the fourth: and there has not been a like foundation so wise and useful in Skalholt as the tithe-tribute, which has been contributed by the benevolence and generosity of Bishop Gizur. Steinun Thorgrim's daughter had the ordering of the household in Skalholt within doors, while Bishop Gizur ruled over the see; but Dalla, while Bishop Isleif lived. But when Bishop Gizur had been seated at his see twenty winters, the people in the northern district prayed him that they should be granted a bishop to themselves alone; and to set the second bishopric there in the northland quarter, and all the dues, and that there should be two sees in Iceland; and expressed this hope secondly, that the land might seldom or never be bishopless, if there were two sees. And that request Bishop Gizur granted under God, to the Northlanders: and there was afterwards chosen bishop, by God and good men, John the priest son of Ogmund, and he fared abroad with the brief of Bishop Gizur, and sought Pope Paschal;[1] and he was ordained bishop by Ozur,[2] archbishop of Lund in Skaney, two nights before SS. Philip and James's day. John fared thereafter to Iceland and set the bishop's chair at Hol at Hjaltadale in Skagafirth.

Gizur the bishop caused the bonders[3] to be counted in Iceland; those that had to discharge the fees for travelling to the Thing: and there were 700 in Eastfirth quarter, but 1000 in Southfirth quarter, 900 in Westfirth quarter, but in the Northland quarter 1200, and that was the largest number of men in equal tale.

[1] Paschal II. was Pope 1099—1118.

[2] The archbishop's chair was set at Lund, 1104, and Ozur was the first archbishop.

[3] *i. e.* farmers or householders.

7. But when Bishop Gizur was seventy-five he took such a severe sickness that he could not rise out of his bed, and he was not able to go to the meeting. He sent therefore word to his friends and all the principal men at the Althing, that men should pray Thorlak the priest, the son of Runolf, to fare abroad. But he excused himself, both for humility's sake, and many other things. Yet so the discussion ended, that he consented to undertake that if it were the bishop's counsel. Thereafter Bishop Gizur let preparation be made for his journey, until he were in all respects well fitted out, and gave him his brief to go to Archbishop Ozur. And the sickness increased upon Bishop Gizur, and became hard and virulent and painful, and great sores brake out on his skin all over him, and great pain and discomfort followed. And as his illness advanced, and men thought they heard his bones rattle as he moved, then went Steinun his housewife to the bedside and asked on what mighty man she might call that he should pray for her husband. But the bishop answered, "They shall only call upon God as my sickness ever increases, that I may be able to bear it: because there would be no use," said he, "to pray against God's chastisement, since my life nearly comes to an end, and much else into the bargain." He was also asked where he wished to be buried: but he answered with acknowledgment and much humility, "Bury me not near my father, because I am not worthy to lie beside him."

Then he arranged all things after the way in which he wished them to be, before he died. His sons had all died before him, except Bodvar. Groa, his daughter, lived after him, and was given in marriage to Ketil, Thorstein's son.

Gizur was consecrated bishop when he was forty years of age; then Olaf the peaceful was king in Norway, the son of Harald Sigurd's son. Bishop

Gizur died the third day of the week, twelve nights before S. Columba's day. He had then been bishop thirty-six winters. He was buried beside his father. This was 1111 years from the birth of CHRIST. So it befell to many men who had been near at the death of Gizur the bishop that they never forgot it while they lived. And it was agreed by all that a recompense could never be made him; but it has also been the opinion of all wise men that he has been, by the grace of GOD and his own responding to it, the noblest man in Iceland, both of learned and unlearned men.

8. In the year when Bishop Gizur died, there died also Pope Paschal, and Baldwin, king of Jerusalem; Arnhall, patriarch of Jerusalem; Alexius, king of Greece; Philip, king of Sweden.[1] There was also much bad weather. There was such a storm about Holy Week that the clergy might not perform the service in the northern part of the country on Good Friday; and a merchant ship was cast up under Eyjafell, and it turned aloft and came down keel upwards; and but few men could take *Corpus Domini* on Easter Day, but some were out. Another storm came as men rode to the Althing, and killed men's cattle in the north country; the church was also destroyed at Thingvellir, for which King Harald Sigurd's son had given wood. That summer thirty-five ships came to Iceland, but eight came to Norway about the autumn-tide after Michaelmas. With that grew such a number of men in Iceland, that there was much distress caused in many districts. So thought many of the wisest men, that Iceland would decline after the death of Bishop Gizur, as Rome after the fall of Pope Gregory. But the fall of Bishop Gizur foreboded an age of all suffering in Iceland, of distress, both in shipwrecks and loss of life, and scathe of cattle, which followed it; and after that dissension

[1] Note N.

and law-breaking, and thereby such death of men in all the land, that the like had never been seen since the land was inhabited. Two winters after the death of Gizur, the bishop, Haflidi Mar's son[1] was wounded at the Althing, and there was no judgment taken that summer on the affair.

9. Bodvar alone lived of the sons of Bishop Gizur when he died; but his other sons died before him: Teit, Asgerd, Thord and John. Groa also lived long after, and became a nun, and died at Skalholt in the days of Bishop Klæng. During the episcopate of Bishop Gizur were many great events: the death of the holy Knut the king at Fjon, and Benedict his brother: William, England's king: the death of Olaf the peaceful, and Hakon Magnusson in Norway: the fall of King Magnus bareleg west in Ireland at Ulasti: the translation of Saint Nicholas at Bar: the death of King Olaf Magnusson in Norway: the death of Earl Magnus the holy: the death of the law-speakers, Markus and Ulfhedin; also of Teit Isleif's son, and the other sons of Bishop Isleif; a fiery eruption of Hekla, and many other great tidings, though here they be not written.[2]

10. Thorlak, Runolf's son, Thorlak's son, Thorarin's son, son of Thorkell "Scothead," and son of Hallfrid Snorra's daughter, Karlsefni's son, was brought up with his father in childhood, but he was taught in Haukdale. He was early intelligent and well-mannered, and endeared to all good men. He was a very prayerful man, even at an early age, and quick at

[1] Note O.

[2] The dates of these events are: death of Canute the holy, 1087; William the Bastard, the same year; of Olaf the peaceful, 1093; of Hakon Magnusson, 1094; of Magnus Barefoot, 1103; of Magnus, Earl of the Isles, 1115; King Olaf Magnusson, the same year; of Markus the law-speaker, 1107, 14 Oct.; of Ulfhedin, 1116; Teit Isleif's son the priest, the brother of Ari, died 1110. The first eruption of Hekla was in 1104.

scholarship. He was devoted to priestly learning. Mild was he and humble, and not meddlesome, of wise counsel and sincere with all those who were around him, meek and merciful towards those who needed it, pious and prudent in most things, both for himself and others. Thorlak wanted two winters of his fortieth year when he was chosen bishop: and it may from this be observed what sort of man he was, whom that man chose as most suitable who was wisest and noblest, that was most intimate with him, that is to say, Bishop Gizur.

Thorlak was of middle height, long-faced and with light chestnut hair, well-favoured, but not called a handsome man by every one, nor the most noble in the account of most men. And when he came out of the country, it was so said that there must be little choice of men in the land, and he seemed to them not fit to send for such dignity: but he answered himself, that it had not come to this; and he thought it most important that he had hidden his faults more from men than from GOD. And from this answer men thought they perceived that he must be very suitable for such honour.

And when he came into the presence of Ozur the archbishop, then he saw quickly what Thorlak was, and received him with much grace and honour, yet he made some delay about his ordination, and told him he could not ordain a second bishop to a see; nevertheless, at the command sent by Bishop Gizur, he gave him consecration, and would not ordain him to the see at which there was another bishop: and bade him choose himself a see that he might be ordained thereto; yet he gave permission that he might be at Skalholt, if Gizur the bishop allowed him, if he were alive when Thorlak returned. Thorlak was ordained bishop three nights before SS. Philip and James's day, and he was appointed to the see of Reykjaholt in Borgarfirth. He was consecrated in

Denmark thirty days before Bishop Gizur died in Skalholt.[1]

11. Bishop Thorlak fared to Iceland that same summer that he was ordained, and men received him gladly, as was due. He kept the same humility in his bishop's estate as he had had before, and all his virtues increased, and in nothing diminished while he lived. He took many men to teach, and they became good priests, and in many things he strengthened Christianity in Iceland.

When Thorlak the bishop had been three winters at his see at Skalholt, John Ogmund's son, the bishop of Hol, died, and there was afterwards chosen in his stead Ketil Thorstein's son; and he went abroad south to Denmark, and was there consecrated bishop ten nights after Candlemas,[2] and came to Iceland the same summer after.

Thorlak the bishop prepared the way for this in his days, that there were set in writing the history of the founding of Christianity, with the help of the wisest men in the country, and the co-operation of Ozur, the archbishop, and they were both concerned in the forwarding of it, Bishops Thorlak and Ketil; and many another thing there was, that they ordered and arranged in their days concerning the customs of their countrymen. He offered to foster a child of Hall Teit's son in Haukdale; and therefore Gizur Hall's son[3] went to Skalholt, and the bishop was as tender with him as if he were his son, and foretold of him what afterwards followed, that such a man of

[1] The Ordination day of Bishop Thorlak is therefore the 28th of April (2nd Sunday after Easter), 1118, but Gizur the bishop died on Tuesday, 28th of May.

[2] The Consecration day of Bishop Ketil was the 1st Sunday in Lent, 12th of February, 1122.

[3] From this we may mark the age of Gizur Hall's son. He was seven winters old at the death of Bishop Thorlak, and can scarcely have been younger, for he lived to 80, and lived in the time of five bishops in Skalholt.

mark might hardly be found in Iceland; and this was afterwards proved.

The same priest always served Bishop Thorlak while he lived and was bishop; one hight Tjorvi, who was Bodvar's son, a very famous man, and he had been before with Bishop Gizur. And it may be seen from that, and other his daily noble behaviour, how unfailing he was in good during his life. He sang every day thirty of the psalms, distinctly and intelligently, and in the midst of this he taught or wrote, or read the Holy Scriptures, or gave healing advice to those men who needed it, and came to visit him: never was he unoccupied. Ready he was with alms, but called close-fisted by every one, although he yet never spared money to the needs of all necessary things.

12. But when Bishop Thorlak was three winters less than fifty years old, he took ill after that, and lay in the sleeping-place where he was wont to sleep, and his learned men. And as his sickness began to increase, he bade be read aloud to him that book which is called *Cura pastoralis;* Pope Gregory wrote that book, and sets forth plainly how in all things that man shall fare, who shall be the director of other men; and men thought that he attended better to preparing for his death than before that book was read. He prepared afterwards for his death as he chose himself, and people generally did not know what went forward in all his sickness until his death.

Thorlak was ordained bishop in the days of Pope Gelasius,[1] he was then three winters less than forty. He died the day before S. Bridget's[2] day, having then

[1] Gelasius succeeded Paschal, and was one year Pope, and died 1119, 29th of June.

[2] S. Bridget's is the 1st of February, and the date of Thorlak's death was therefore the 31st of January, but in the list of dates it is set down as 1st of February, or S. Bridget's day itself; and we do not know whether of the two is the true.

been bishop fifteen winters; and was buried beside the first bishops. Then were Eystein, and Sigurd the Jerusalem-farer, kings in Norway. It was then 1126 winters from the Birth of CHRIST.

This event happened in the northern part of the country, the same day that Bishop Thorlak died, that at that same time a pious and worthy priest, hight Arni, son of Bjorn Karleif's son, fared on his way: he heard fair singing up in heaven above him, and there was sung this *cantilena* of Bishop Lambert, "Sic animam claris cœlorum reddidit astris:" and it was known, and proved thereto, that no man had been in the vicinity. Many men thought there was much in this circumstance, and let it never fall out of remembrance.

There is much that is remarkable and honourable to say of Bishop Thorlak Runolf's son. During his episcopate there were tidings that the holy John, bishop of Hol, had died, and King Eystein and Sigurd the Jerusalem-farer. The priest Sæmund the pious died the same spring, as Thorlak the bishop died the winter before: there were also the deaths of Thorstein Hallvard's son, and Thorarin Ivard's son. There died Bergthor the law-speaker. There was the law-suit of Haflidi Mar's son and Thorgil Oddi's son; there was also their reconciliation.[1] Many chiefs were a distress to Bishop Thorlak for their disobedience, and some for dishonesty and law-breaking, but he arranged all in the best manner.

13. Magnus was the son of Einar Magnus' son, Thorstein's son, son of Hall of Side, and of Thurid Gil's daughter, Hafr's son, Sverting's son, Hafr-Bjorn's son, Molda-Gnup's son. Magnus was brought up with

[1] These events happened in the following years: death of Bishop John, 1121; of King Eystein, 1122; of Sigurd, the Jerusalem-farer, 1130; of Sæmund the learned, 1133; the slaying of Thorstein, Hallvard's son, 1119; the death of Bergthor, the law-speaker, 1123.

Einar his father, and Oddny his step-mother, the daughter of priest Magnus, Thord's son from Reykjaholt. It is said that they loved him most of all their children. Magnus was set to books, and hallowed with all orders, before he was priest. Magnus was a comely man of face, and rather a tall man in growth, fair-eyed and well-limbed, amiable and pleasant, and noblest of all men in appearance and manners. He was gentle and humble with all, large-minded and steadfast of soul, full of good counsel, attached to his kinsmen, much learned and clear of speech. He was tried and well-experienced in both household affairs and journeys, and he was always conciliatory to all men, however he was bested with the words of men, and spared neither his word nor his wealth. And whereas Bishop Thorlak had died in the winter, Magnus was chosen bishop the summer after; and that summer he thought to go abroad, and was cast back at Blondamouth, and was there at Skalholt through the winter, and fared to Norway the next summer after. That summer he fared out, and they three, he, Magnus Sigurd's son, and Harald Gilli landed at Fyrileif, and Harald pushed south to Denmark. Magnus, the bishop elect, fared to Denmark the same autumn, and gave gifts to Harald the king, and was taken much into his friendship.

Magnus went to visit Archbishop Ozur, and he received him honourably, and ordained him bishop on S. Simon's day. The next winter Magnus was bishop in Sarpsburg, till King Harald was in the country; then he fared to him, and the king received him joyfully, and with the greatest honour and favour; and he was with him there till he fared back to Iceland, and therewith valuable gifts from the king: a loving-cup, which weighed eight marks, and thereafter was made into a chalice, and many other gifts; because the king was liberal and large-hearted with his friends. Bishop Magnus came to Iceland about the time of

the Althing, and came to Eyjafirth and rode to the Thing, and came there where men were at the court of justice, and were not come to an agreement about a certain matter; but there came a man to the court and said that now rides Bishop Magnus to the Thing; and men were so glad of this saying, that immediately all went home. But the bishop went afterwards to the court before the church, and told all men those tidings, what had been done in Norway, while he was abroad; and all men thought a great deal of his eloquence and manliness.

It was then quickly perceived what a distinguished man he was in his large-mindedness and foresight, both in his own concerns and others; because he never spared money while he was bishop, to reconcile those who were before at variance, and took that ever upon him when he was in the midst of them; and thus he never quarrelled with men while he was bishop. He retained the same humility towards all as before, though he was bishop, and he was therefore more beloved than most other men, and has been thereby able to do many great deeds.

14. Bishop Magnus caused the church in Skalholt to be much enlarged, and consecrated afterwards, and there was an anniversary festival appointed at Seljaman's mass; but before it had been Holy Cross day in spring, when Bishop Gizur had consecrated it. Bishop Magnus let hangings be made to the church table, which he had had abroad, and that was the most costly treasure. He had also out that costly vestment, that cope which is called "skar-bending." He much strengthened the see with many contributions, which long have been the greatest good to it, both to the see itself, and those who have since held it. He bought for the see of Skalholt, Arness and Sandtongue, and nearly all the Westman Islands, before he died, and thought to set there a monastery, but he did not live to carry it out. But as Bishop Ketil had now

become full seventy, he fared to the Althing and commended himself to the prayers of all the learned men at the Synod; and therefore Bishop Magnus invited him home with him to Skalholt, to his dedication festival, and to that bridal which was to be. That feast was so choice, that the like has not been seen in Iceland; there was much mead mixed, and every other provision that might best be. But on Friday evening, the bishops both fared to bathe in the hot spring Laugaras after supper. And there were heard those tidings that Bishop Ketil had died there; and men thought that mickle tidings. Much sorrow was there to many men at that feast, whereat the bishop was prepared for burial. But by the persuasion of Bishop Magnus, they also drank to his renown, and that was allowed in order that they might the sooner forget their grief. And after that Bjorn Gil's son was chosen bishop of Hol, and he fared out with the brief of Bishop Magnus to Archbishop Askel, and Bjorn was consecrated bishop the next day after Holy Cross day in spring, and fared out hither that same summer, and was bishop at Hol fifteen winters.

15. But when fifteen winters had elapsed after the death of Bishop Thorlak, Runolf's son, and Magnus had been bishop fourteen winters, there broke out such ill fortune in Iceland that there has never been the like for man's scathe. Magnus the bishop had then fared over Westfirth, and was in Hitardale at Michaelmas. And the day after the holy day, there came fire into the house about supper-time, and the bishop was not at first aware of it; and it seemed to him no safety to go out, and it was as if he would not do so, to fly from the fear of death which he then saw drawing near; for he had asked this before of Almighty God that He would spare him that death which he had thought imminent in that bath-martyrdom. Bishop Magnus lost his life there in that house-burning,

and with him eighty-two men.[1] There died Tjorvi Bodvar's son, the priest, who had always served him during his episcopate. There were lost seven other priests, and all famous. The bodies of the bishop and Tjorvi were nearly unburnt, and were both taken to Skalholt; and there were sent intelligent men from Fleetslithe, Paul the priest, Solva's son, and Gudmund Kodran's son, to tell these tidings to Hall Teit's son, and Eyjulf Sæmund's son, and to the other chiefs who were at the feast with him. They fared straightway to Skalholt, and came west with the bodies of the bishop and Tjorvi; Gudmund the priest, Brand's son, and Snorri Sverting's son, and more worthy men, and reached Skalholt by S. Denys's day. And on Gereonis' day were the bodies laid down beside the grave of the first bishop: and it had been a sore calamity that men had so to sunder, since it was nearly as though every one had parted with his dearest friend in Hitardale.

Magnus was ordained bishop by Archbishop Ozur in the days of Pope Anacletus, in the days of King Harald Gilli and Magnus Sigurd's son, kings of Norway. He was then thirty-six years old,[2] and he died in the house-burning in Hitardale the fifth day of the week, one night after Michaelmas. There had elapsed 1141 winters from the birth of CHRIST: then he had been fourteen winters bishop.

16. While Magnus was bishop, the town's-people betrayed Harald Gilli, and there fell these two, King Magnus, Sigurd's son, and Sigurd "sham-deacon."

[1] Seventy-two in the annals and date-list, so there is every likelihood that this number is correct, and that Húngrvaka makes an error of ten here.

These have been the six greatest burnings in Iceland in the olden time: Blund-Ketil's burning, 964; Njal's burning, 1011; Hitardale's burning, 1168; Longlithe's burning, 1196; burning of Thorvald in Vatnsfirth, 1228; and Flugumyr's burning, 1253.

[2] Magnus the bishop was therefore born in 1098, and he was 50 when he died, 1098—1148.

There was the fall of Thoris Steinmod's son, and the death of Archbishop Ozur, and of Rafn Ulfhedin's son and Finn, speakers of the law, and of Henry, king of England, and many another event in his days which were mickle tidings.[1] After the death of Bishop Magnus, the next summer, there was to be a man chosen bishop, and Hall, Teit's son, fared abroad; and spoke everywhere their speech, as if he were a native, wherever he went. Hall died at Trekt, where they fared after, and was never ordained bishop. When the news of his death reached Iceland, and men needed to choose a bishop, it was all men's choice, and they had advice, with the prevision of Bjorn bishop of Hol, that men should choose for bishop a north-country-man hight Klæng, who was son of Thorstein and Halldora, Eyjulf's daughter.

17. Klæng was a handsome man to look at, and of middle height, lively and noble-looking, and the most learned man. He was eloquent and earnest in friendship, and the greatest skald.[2] He had been with Bishop Ketil, and had taken in many ways his good customs. Klæng fared out the same summer that he was chosen bishop, with the brief of Bishop Bjorn, to visit Archbishop Askel, and he ordained Klæng bishop twelve nights after S. Mary's day in spring, and the same summer after he fared to Iceland; and there had come northward from Rome and all through Bar,[3] Gizur Hall's son, and fared back with him: so that men had to welcome at the same time two of the best treasures of Iceland. In two ships came out great trees, which Klæng the bishop let hew in Norway for that church

[1] These events now mentioned, happened in these years. Fall of Harald Gilli, Dec. 14, 1136; of Sigurd "sham-deacon" and Magnus the blind, 1139; of Thoris Steinmod's son, 1136; death of Archbishop Ozur, 1137, and of Rafn Ulfhedin's son, 1139; of Finn Hall's son, 1145; of Henry I., king of England, 1135.

[2] Note P.

[3] ? Bavaria.

which he had built at Skalholt, which was in all things choice far above any other house that was built in Iceland, both in wood and workmanship. And when the bishop came to his see at Skalholt, he was immediately so friendly with every one, that even those men loved him best, when he had been a short time seated at his see, who had rather been set against him. And it is not wonderful that so it should be, because he was large-minded, and very liberal with his friends, and earnest and charitable to poor men. Mild and humble was he with all, merry was he and witty, and an even-tempered man with his friends, so that concessions were made to all while he was in the see, of whatever kind was needed. He let church-building begin, when he had been one winter at his see. It seemed to other men that the contribution was very large towards church-building every half-year, both in timber-carrying, and wages for work, and maintenance of them that followed; and so thought discerning men, that all movable stock needed to be contributed thereto, that which was contributed to the see in tithes and other contributions. Such large contributions needed to be prepared at each half-year, for the sake of numbers, and hospitality and other outgoings, that it seemed as though all the money must be spent that the see owned. In the third quarter he had such crowded feasts, and great gifts of money to his friends that were both many and noble, that there needed almost endless money to support it. But Almighty God, Who gives all gifts from Himself, let nothing fall short that was needful to be had, both for church-building and other supplies which the bishop would allow to be had while he lived. These were the head artificers at the church at Skalholt; Arni, who was called the architect, and Bjorn Thorvald's son, the skilful; Illugi Leif's son shaped and cut wood. And when the church was all finished, Runolf, the bishop's son, sang this song:

"Strong the Temple that is fashioned
Unto CHRIST the Merciful;
Firmly founded by the counsel
Of the ruler bountiful.
Happy fate that Igultanni[1]
Here the House of GOD should build;
Holy Peter owns with favour
Bjorn and Arni, workmen skilled."

18. Bishop Klæng was also such a great lawyer, if he were sought for help, that he was a great chief, on account both of wisdom and eloquence; the laws of the land were also well known to him. For this reason those chiefs held everything settled that the bishop was in agreement with; and there was no great suit but what Bishop Klæng was taken into it.

They were his trustiest friends, that were the most esteemed in Iceland; John Lopt's son, and Gizur Hall's son. Bishop Klæng also had exchange of gifts with the greatest princes in other lands which were in the vicinity, for in such things was he much beloved, both out of the country and in.

And when the church was finished at Skalholt, so that the bishop thought it ready for consecration, the bishop made a great and noble feast to his friends, and bade thither Bishop Bjorn and the Abbot Nicholas,[2] and many chiefs, and there was the greatest crowd of guests: and they two, Klæng and Bjorn, hallowed the church at Skalholt, one without and the other within, and both dedicated it to Peter the Apostle, as it had been before, but Abbot Nicholas had the saying of the preamble. That was on the day of the martyrdom of S. Vitus.

And after service, Bishop Klæng invited all those men who had been at the consecration, to have breakfast there, whom he thought most meet; and that was

[1] Igultanni is a poetic name for the bear, so this is evidently a play upon the name of the architect Bjorn.—TRANSLATOR.
[2] Note Q.

done more out of munificence than full prudence, because that is always found to be the way to avoid many foolishnesses, which a wise man may well foresee with moderation; and indeed they might well have got into difficulties over that, because that no fewer than seven hundred men had breakfast there; and the contributions were hard to estimate, but the feast was most excellent, as all those men thought who were invited to it; and all men of worth were sent away with great gifts.

Bishop Klæng caused to be adorned as well as he possibly could that church which he had built at Skalholt, until it was furnished with all things. He had a gold chalice made, and set with gems, and gave to the church: he caused also the service-books to be written much better than they were before. That was all his occupation: to teach the young priests (lit. *priestlings*) both writing, and the singing of the psalter, and he told them all that which was needful. More ascetic was he in many ways than other bishops had been, in watchings and fastings and apparel; he went often barefoot at night in snows and frost.

When Klæng had been bishop ten winters, Bjorn bishop of Hol died two nights after S. Luke's day, when he had been bishop fifteen winters. But the summer after, Brand the priest, son of Sæmund, was chosen, and took abroad with him Bishop Klæng's brief to Archbishop Eystein, and he was ordained bishop S. Mary's day the later, and was at Bergen the winter, and also John Lopt's son; but afterwards the bishop fared home the summer after, and settled at the see at Hol to which he was consecrated.

19. Klæng the bishop retained till old age his honour and friendship, so that all honoured him much, those that were most worthy. But when he began to grow old, there came to him a great sickness, and his feet first began to open with cold and sores, and those hardships which he had had. And as he began to suffer both from age and sickness, he sent

out his brief to Archbishop Eystein, and asked his leave that he should be able to hand over the manifold duties of his episcopate, and take another bishop to the see, after the example of Bishop Gizur. But that word came back from the archbishop that by his leave should a bishop be chosen and sent out, but that he should keep up the performance of the services and teaching while he was able, though he were not able to travel about.

Klæng the bishop fared to the Althing, and besought the chiefs there that a man should be chosen bishop; and that was all men's counsel that he should choose whom he would; and he chose Thorlak, Thorkell's son, who was then abbot at Thykkvaby; and it was mickle honour to Bishop Klæng that he chose this man after him, who is now canonized; and all may know that there has never been before any man his like in Iceland, except the holy Bishop Thorlak,[1] who was then to the bishopric chosen.

Nevertheless Bishop Klæng had the superintendence of the see that half-year, although he was inconvenienced to provide for it, because there belonged no gifts to the see, but the outgoings were no less. Bishop Klæng handed over the oversight of the see, and placed it in the hands of Bishop Thorlak and those men whom he had chosen to be with him; and the latter half-year that Bishop Klæng lived he hardly rose out of his bed, and prepared after this for his death, as every wise man must choose rather to do in long illnesses.

Klæng was ordained bishop in the days of Pope Eugene,[2] by Archbishop Askel and in the days of Eystein and Sigurd, kings of Norway; he had then seven winters of his fifty, and was bishop twenty-three winters. He died three nights after S. Matthias's

[1] Note R.

[2] Eugenius III. was Pope 1145—1153. Askell the archbishop, 1137—1177.

day (and four if it is not leap year); and so falls his time of death that it was Saturday in the Ember days in Lent: there had elapsed since the birth of CHRIST by universal reckoning, 1169; and he was buried by the former bishops, and the abbot Thorlak stood over him, both his burial and his death; and it befell him most fortunately in every way, that such a man should stand over him both in life and death as the holy Bishop Thorlak is now proved to be before GOD.

20. Many great tidings were heard while Klæng was bishop, though here are not mentioned many. There was the fall of those brothers, Gill's sons, Norway's kings, Sigurd first, and then Einar, and latest Ingi; and the death of Archbishop John, and the fall of Hakon the broad-shouldered, and the death of Bishop Bjorn at Hol. In the days of Bishop Klæng was the holy Thomas, archbishop of England, martyred, and in his days came up the second time fire in Mount Hekla. There was also an earthquake that caused loss of life. These men of Iceland died while Klæng was bishop: John Sigmund's son, and Abbot Hrein;[1] Paul Thord's son, and Gudmund Ketil's son, Bjarnhedin the priest, Sigurd's son, and Beinir his brother; the fall of Helgi Skapti's son, and Nicholas Sigurd's son was killed in Throndheim.[2] Now it may appear to us as if there had never been so distinguished a man, on account of many things, in Iceland, as Bishop Klæng was; we must be of opinion that his glory must remain while Iceland is inhabited.

Now is it come to that history which shall be told of the blessed Bishop Thorlak, and this story is here gathered and related for the edification of good men, as those others which heretofore are written. And so well as the history of each of them fares, yet there was never fairer example in all places than is to be said of the glorious friend of GOD, Bishop Thorlak, who rightly

[1] Note S. [2] Note T.

may be called a sunbeam or jewel most holy, both in this land and also in other parts of the world. He may with truth be called the Apostle of Iceland, as the holy Patrick has been called the Apostle of Ireland; because they forwarded the work of the Apostles themselves in their teaching, and their patience both with disobedient and unrighteous men.

NOTES TO HÚNGRVAKA.

Note A.

Leo IX. was Pope 1048—1054, but Victor II. next thereafter 1055—1057. Of the year of Isleif's consecration there is hardly any suspicion of doubt. Ari knew him in his childhood, and wrote his life after the Saga of Teit, his son, and got therefore no faulty reckoning how long he was bishop; and that Isleif died in 1080, is shown both by the Saint's day when he died, and also the age of Ari, as that was twelve winters; so that there is nothing confusing but 1056 because Victor II. was then Pope. But as Leo is named it must amount to this, that he was Pope, or that his death had at least not been heard of in Iceland, when Isleif fared out for his ordination. That he must have been delayed on his journey, may be seen by the words of Adam of Bremen, iv. 35. "He (Isleif) was sent from that land (Iceland) to the Pope, he was kept there for a while (*aliquam diu retentus est*) in the greatest honour." It is also likely that he has been delayed by the Emperor's chaplains, as he had been taken into much friendship. Henry the Emperor died 1056. This must be mentioned, that it is an error of Ari's that he names Leo VII., because he was then long dead.

Note B.

Adalbert was archbishop in 1043. There is a brief from Victor II. to Adalbert, from 1055, wherein he gives him authority over all bishops in the northern lands, and Iceland is counted therewith: it may well be, that Isleif had had that brief with him when he came south. Adalbert died 17 March, 1072.

Note C.

This is a correction: in all MSS. of Húngrvaka, stands iiij; in the year 1055, Whitsunday was five nights before S. Columba's day (9 June) but that year does not explain it, because that falls in with no reckoning: for in the year 1056, Whitsunday fell fourteen nights before S. Columba's day, (that is 26 May) but on the fourth day before S. Columba's day Whitsunday has never fallen since 1020, so the number "iiij" is wrong; and the

nearest of all numbers is, that it should be a misreading for XIV, rather than a wrong date, so that the X has fallen out (iiij for xiiij); a similar error is found later about Bishop Klæng (ij for vij) this has also been kept by Arni Magnus' son; in one Húngrvaka MS., he has written in the margin in this place: "lege (read) 14," and in another he has once written xiiij in the margin. We have thus for certain, that Isleif has been consecrated fourteen nights before S. Columba's day, 1056, on Whitsunday.

Note D.

That is not right. Ari the learned says that he has been in Norway the next winter after, and says the same in the holy John's Saga after Gunlaug the Monk, and he came out the winter after the great storm, or 1057, therefore Isleif was twenty-four winters bishop altogether, but twenty-three, when he was here in the country. It is the same in the list of speakers of the law.

Note E.

Ari mentions these bishops in Islendingabok, cap. 8. "Then there came other five, they that called themselves bishops; Ornolf and Godeschalk and three Armenian: Peter, and Abraham, and Stephen." These have all come out after 1050, because then Adalbert had become legate in the north countries.

Note F.

Bishop Kol is mentioned in Viga-Glum's Saga: but it is hardly likely to have been true that he confirmed Viga-Glum, as the latter must have been dead long before.

Note G.

Ari says the same, and therefore Isleif was born 1006; but seven years' error in Húngrvaka must have arisen because it counts so, as if Isleif were born the same year that Christianity was taken by law, and after the reckoning of Ari that was 999: according to this, the consecration of Isleif was 1049; and that year is laid as the foundation to all the chronology of Húngrvaka.

Note H.

This is a correction for iiij nights, as the MS. has it, because Seljaman's day is 8th July and the day of Isleif's death is reckoned 5th July in the Icelandic Calendar: also Ari frodi says, that he died on Sunday six nights after SS. Peter and Paul's

day, and that is 5th July: that is all right, because exactly in that year (1080) that day fell upon Sunday, but Seljaman's day fell then on Wednesday.

Note I.

"In the days" is here the same as "in the life of Isleif." These foreign bishops are mentioned in Islendingabok, and in the episcopal list in Stockholm's book.

Note J.

Rúda (Rouen) is in Normandy. It may be ventured that this is an adaptation from the name Rudolph. Normandy lay long under England's kings, but is never counted with England.

Note K.

All these five bishops were here *before* Isleif became bishop.

Note L.

The years of these deaths are: Saint Olaf, 1030; Magnus the Good, 1047 (25 Oct.); Harald Sigurd's son, 1066 (28 Sept.); Harald Godwin's son, 1066 (14 Oct.); Svein Ulf's son, 1076; Thorstein Kuggi's son, 1026 (autumn); Snorri the good, 1031 (spring); Thorkell Eyjulf's son, 1026; Gellir Bolverk's son took the speaking of the law first, 1054, and held it nine summers. After him Gunnar the wise, and thereafter Kolbein Flosi's son; after that Gellir had the office three summers, 1072—74, and must have died in that year, therefore the reckoning of Meli's book and one history that he had been speaker of the law 1080, does not correspond with the reckoning of Ari, and does not at length with Meli's book itself, and must therefore be wrong.

Note M.

Markus Skeggi's son was the friend of Ari the learned, and after his instruction he wrote his list of the law-speakers, therefore Ari might be well informed about him and his death, but Ari says that he took the speakership of law the winter after Bishop Gizur came out, or 1084, and had the office 24 years, or 1084—1107, because both years are counted in, and he died 14th Oct. 1107: all the old annals say the same, and it agrees altogether with the age of Bishop Gizur, because after Markus Ulfhedin had the law-speakership nine years (1107—1116) but the first year of Bergthor was that meeting when Bishop Gizur was sick, and could not get to the Althing, and Thorlak was chosen bishop (1117). But in the law-speakers' list in Meli's book and in one insignificant paper history is said that Markus

died 1093, though Bergthor came (1093—99): then they were without a law-speaker after Meli's book eight years (1099—1107), then Ulfhedin (1107—1116), then Bergthor the second time. And the tithe law was the best witness of this, that Markus lived after 1093.

Note N.

Thus Islendingabok, cap. 10: all the MSS. of Húngrvaka have here "Frank King." Philip, King of Sweden, son in law to Harald Sigurd's son, died 1118. Philip the Frank King died 1008. All these princes that are here named, died exactly in 1118, some earlier and some later in the year than Bishop Gizur. Only the year of the death of Arnald the patriarch we know not, but none of all these died 1111, which according to the reckoning of Húngrvaka and Gunlaug the monk is written as the year of Gizur's death.

Note O.

Haflidi Mar's son was wounded at the Althing 1120, and there was great loss of life, and in the next summer 1121 Thorgil and Haflidi were reconciled.

Note P.

Klæng the bishop was a chief skald. Snorri gives some stanzas of his in his "Hàttatali;" they are out of the song which Klæng had made about his seal to the episcopate. Gunlaug the monk mentions with great praise the authorship of Klæng.

Note Q.

Nicholas Berg's son is, in the list of abbots in Stockholm's book, counted the second abbot at Thvera. He travelled far about the country, and after his dictation are written "Guidance and List of Cities" (A. Magn. 194 8vo. printed in Werlaff's Symbolæ ad Geogr. med. ævi, 1821, 4to. and Rafn's Antiquités Russes, ii. 397, 415). He died 1159. The first abbot at Thvera was named Hoskuld.

Note R.

In the saga of Bishop Thorlak the Elder, cap. 19, are like words, "Never had been taken up the relics nor tokens of any man in Iceland before those of Bishop Thorlak." The relics of Thorlak were translated in 1198, but Bishop John's two years later (1200.) We think that Húngrvaka and Thorlak's saga are

either by the same man, or that both authors had been at the same time in Skalholt, and both sagas must have been written shortly after 1200, in the days of Bishop Paul, or a little later; for it can hardly be that they should have been written by them two years before the translation of S. John; indeed that does not lie in the meaning, if it is noted, rather only because Thorlak is counted to be the first man canonized in the land.

Note S.

Abbot Hrein Styrmi's son was of Gilsbekk by his father's family. Styrmir his father, Hrein's son, Hermund's son, son of Illugi the black, is counted among the greatest princes in the days of Bishop Gizur. In Sturlunga Abbot Hrein is called "Reinir Abbot of Thvera, but that can only be a misreading (Thvera for Thingeyri.) In the Flatey annal he is called abbot in Hitardal, and the same stands in the abbots' list, A.M. 415, which is written in 1330. But Gunlaug the monk counts him in his saga with his disciple John the holy, whom he himself had seen, and says that he was the eighth abbot at Thingeyri; and next after Asgrim Vestlid's son; the same is said in the abbots' list in Stockholm's book, and that would seem to be most correct.

Note T.

These events took place in these years. The fall of King Sigurd "mouth," 1155; of Eystein, 1157. Ingi, 1161, Hakon broadshoulders, 1162; death of Abp. John in Nidaros, 1157; Bishop Bjorn, 1163. Martyrdom of Thomas à Becket, Abp. of Canterbury, 1170. Second Eruption of Hekla, 1158. Death of John Sigmundson, 1164. Abbot Hrein Styrmir's son, 1171. Of Bjarnhedin priest of Kirkjubæ, 1173. The drowning of priest Paul Thord's son, 1171. Slaying of priest Helgi Skapta's son, 1175. Fall of Nicholas Sigurd's son, 1176.

The foregoing notes are the more important and interesting of those appended to the Copenhagen edition of "Húngrvaka." Those omitted are mostly trifling corrections or collations with other sagas, of little moment to the general reader.—TRANSLATOR.

The Story of

BISHOP THORLAK OF SKALHOLT,

COMMONLY CALLED S. THORLAK.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE TO THE STORY OF BISHOP THORLAK.

THE following biography is taken from the "elder" Saga of Bishop Thorlak, translated as far as may be literally. The so-called "younger" Saga is almost identical as to the life, but has a voluminous appendix of narratives, principally miraculous legends, with a considerable sameness of incident. Some however are more interesting, as relating the bishop's difficulties and dealings with evildoers;[1] and some of these will be found appended to the present history, while one or two typical and characteristic miracles have been selected as specimens of their class.

"Thorlak helgi"—Thorlak the saint, is still a household word with his countrymen. He it was who is said to have changed the names of the weekdays from the old heathen designations (still retained by ourselves) to third, fifth, sixth, &c., because he thought

[1] The Preface to the whole edition of "Biskupa Sögur," printed by the Icelandic Literary Society, gives this interesting reason why the "elder" saga passes so shortly over many of these. It is presumably written by a dear friend of Bishop Paul, possibly in great measure from his dictation. Paul was son of John Lopt's son and Ragneid; the historian would therefore avoid dwelling on the facts relating to their lives and dealings with the sainted Bishop Thorlak.

the old names unworthy of Christians. His festival days were the 20th July and 23rd December, and the popular Icelandic song-book contains a song for "Thorlak's Mass."

It must surely be of special interest to English Churchmen that so bright and shining a light of the far North should have been a student at our own cathedral town of Lincoln, and the similarity or identity of ecclesiastical terms is a significant note of the kinship of the Anglican and Icelandic Churches.

Besides the "elder" and "younger" sagas of Bishop Thorlak, there is a fragmentary Latin chronicle, called the "Latinsk lèsbóka-brot um Thorlák Biskup," said to be of the year 1200, and various fragmentary lections. One, headed "In festo sancti Torlaci episcopi et confessoris," has a note attached to it in the edition by the Icelandic Literary Society, stating that it is out of the "*Breviarium Nidrosiense*," and was read in Norway on the festival of Bishop Thorlak. It contains a collect, of which the following is the translation:

"GOD, Who to Thy people's eternal welfare didst give them Thy Confessor and Priest the blessed Thorlak to minister; we pray Thee now that, whom we had living as teacher on earth, we may merit ever to have as intercessor in heaven; through our LORD, &c."

IN FESTO SCTI. THORLACI.

20TH JULY OR 23RD DECEMBER.

STAR of Iceland's glorious morn-tide,
  Wielding well thy pastor's rod,
'Mid the valleys and the moorlands
  Which of old thy feet have trod,
Thorlak, still we sing thine honour,
  Mighty counsellor with GOD.

Humble in the home of childhood,
  'Mid thy simple kindred folk ;
Loving, duteous, and obedient
  To the great dream-Voice that spoke,
Thou, all earthly love renouncing,
  Bow'dst thy neck to bear the yoke.

Faithful in the lesser order,
  For thy headship fittest school,
Bearing many a brother's burden,
  Bending to monastic rule ;
Aiding, guiding, and upholding
  All, with judgment clear and cool :

Strong in prayer and supplication ;
  Strong in noble self-restraint ;
Pleading ever, striving ever,
  With a faith that could not faint ;
Blessed she, the land that bore thee,
  Loving shepherd, mighty saint !

Still the shadow of thy glory
  Seems to dwell on heath and hill.
Though the light of old be darkened,
  And the love of old wax chill,
Who dare say thine intercessions
  Rise not for thine Iceland still?

King of Saints, our one Chief Shepherd,
  Thou Whose seal Thy servants bear,
Who hast ordered holy Thorlak
  Such high dignity to wear,
Grant, with bishops Apostolic,
  Heavenly joys that he may share.

And for us, Thy priests and people,
  Grant us, of Thy Love, such grace,
Those to speak and these to hearken
  While we run the earthly race,
That Thy way may be preparèd
  Ere we see Thee face to face. Amen.

THE AUTHOR OF
"THE CHORISTER BROTHERS."

The Story of
BISHOP THORLAK.

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1. In that time when Pope Anacletus ruled over God's Christendom, and Magnus Sigurd's son and Harold Gilli were kings over Norway, there was born in the district in Iceland which is called Fleetslithe (Fljotshlid) at that farm which is called Lithend (Hlidarendi) Thorlak the holy, in the same year in which Bishop Thorlak Runolfsson died.

He did not bear the same name because he was called after Bishop Thorlak: but rather from this, that He Who grants and rules all, willed to do this honour to the former Bishop Thorlak, even that his name should be loved and prized by all those men who should afterwards come to hear and know of the fame of the blessed Bishop Thorlak: since Almighty God has given that honour to the name of the blessed bishop, of which Solomon the Wise spake aforetime, that "better were a good name than much wealth." For that was indeed truly good, which was sanctified in holy baptism and afterwards blessed with episcopal dignity. The proverb has also proved true in this, "it is wisdom that the wise speaks," that that name should be better than much gold, to those who invoke it in their needs. That is no less proved, as is said in another place in Holy Scripture, that "better is a good name than precious ointment;" because

many injuries have been quickly healed by calling upon his name, which might otherwise be healed neither by those ointments or leechcrafts which men had before brought or tried.

2. The father of Thorlak was Thorhall, and his mother Halla; they were much beloved, and well-looking. He was a seafaring man before he set up a farm, and she was thrifty and prudent. They were both of good family, and from the kin of famous men. And it may now be plainly seen that God hath fairly fulfilled that towards us which He spake by the mouth of David the Prophet, that blessed shall be the kindred of the just man; which has now been fairly brought to pass and fulfilled in the life of the blessed Bishop Thorlak.

The nearest relations of Thorlak were righteous and wise in council; they had many cares, but little wealth. Thorlak was yet young in years when his father and mother changed their home. He was unlike most young men in his upbringing, gentle and compliant in all things: popular and beloved by every man: silent and reserved about all things: able and teachable from his earliest years. He learnt the Psalter as a child before he had left his father and mother, but he had little book-learning other, at first; though he was so attentive in his early age, that many wise men admired him much. And though he had not much teaching in his childhood, his manners showed that he had already learnt nearly all that became him to know.

He was inclined to no sport nor loose behaviour; he was watchful and even-tempered, and early showed his inclination to that saving counsel which David gives in the Psalter, that a man should turn himself away from evil and do good, seek peace and follow it.

3. As his mother perceived by her wisdom, with God's Providence, what a famous priest Thorlak

might become with such good dispositions, if his education were carried forward, the mother and son changed their abode to the chief place in Oddi, under the protection of Eyjolf the priest, Sæmund's son, who had both great authority and good learning, greater virtue and wisdom than most others; and we hear the blessed Thorlak bear him that witness, "that he thought the like of such a famous man had hardly been known." And he has shown since that he would especially not let slip from his mind those counsels which the blessed Apostle Paul gave to his disciples, speaking thus to his hearers: "Be ye followers of me, as I am of CHRIST." And it often happened that what we held to be his good teachings, he said were the virtues of his fosterfather Eyjolf, Sæmund's son. He did that deservedly, though he honoured him much in his saying, because he owed it to him.

Eyjolf esteemed Thorlak most of all his disciples for all that belongs to the priesthood, because he saw (as was afterwards proved) that he was before them all in virtue and cleverness, as afterwards is told. Thorlak took holy orders youngest of all, since he was ordained deacon by Bishop Magnus, and he was fifteen winters old when the bishop died. And therefore was his ordination so quickly proceeded with, because the superiors found that he guided himself and turned the corner of that difficulty which attends every ordination which he took; and so fast as progressed his learning and his orders, so much the more came to him with wise steadfastness all human virtues which should belong to holy orders.

He kept that in mind, while his learning was little and his orders inferior, which the wise and holy Bishop Isidore says: "that it is useful both to learn much and to live righteously; but if both may not be, then it is more honourable to live well." He gave heed to this also, that he preferred following the humility and service of the lesser order of the ministry, to great

honour of worldly esteem; and he held worthy of all manly honour him who had followed the lesser order when he should be raised to the state of the higher grade, and honoured with the higher order. Such was his employment in his youth, that he was long at book-learning, but often at writing; at prayer in the midst of these; but before he dwelt elsewhere, he pursued the learning also which his mother was able to teach him—family history and genealogy.

4. After Bishop Magnus was dead, there was for a certain time no bishop at Skalholt, and few priests were made. Men took counsel then to ask Bishop Björn to hold ordination at the Althing; and he granted that request, and there were ordained to the priesthood Thorlak, and many other ecclesiastics. Thorlak was therefore about seventeen or eighteen winters old when he took priest's orders. And when he was priest, and himself took rule and authority over the public worship, it was well seen how heedful and observant he must needs be about his services, and all besides that appertained to the holy orders which he had taken.

He walked as humbly in his behaviour as before; and took the first half-year little that was remunerative; and there were times when he might have done well by himself both in money and friendship, because he won the love of almost every creature that came near him; many good examples have been drawn from the blessed Thorlak, that have been seldom seen in others, as that he was both young and old—he was young in years, but old in wisdom. He clothed himself anew with many virtues, and most of all those which David called the most binding upon priests, that they should adorn themselves with saving counsel and righteousness, and he showed that in all his life afterwards; for he was almost incapable of taking that which he needed, and all those who were in his neighbourhood profited by this.

And when he had for a certain time made good progress, and had also become fairly well off, he was desirous of travelling, and would fain learn the customs of other good men; and he fared forth from Iceland, and nothing is told of his voyage until he came to Paris, and was at school there, as long as he thought needful for such learning as he wished to take there.

Thence he fared to England, and was at Lincoln, and there he received much instruction, and benefited both himself and others; and he gained there much good to share with others in his teaching, since he had hardly been before so well prepared as now. And when he had been six years away from Iceland, he came back to his kinsfolk and his foster-land, and his relations and foster-brothers were fain of him, and all his dear friends; but his mother and his sisters were gladdest of all, since they had most longed for his coming, and would have been most affected by any delay in it. His mother followed him in thought since he had been away; and he gave kindly countenance to his sisters; Ragneid, mother of Paul, who was afterwards bishop, after Bishop Thorlak, and Eyvora the second; and he had had much grief about their behaviour, which was not to his liking, although that came to a good end afterwards, by the grace of God and the good ordering of those men who had part in it, and the goodwill of themselves.[1]

He showed the same humility when he came back from his travels as he had before, or even more, and he had not sought display or this world's adornment, as many another who seeks less fortune and aim in his travels than he had sought.

That is also many men's wont, that they bear themselves more showily in weapons and clothes when they come from a journey, and they come into more estimation for such things than had been given

[1] See Appendix II.

them before. But Thorlak devoted himself to widespread learning, and humility, and many good customs which he had seen in his journey amongst many good men, bishops and other learned men and counsellors with whom he had come in contact, who from the beginning had supported GOD'S Christianity, and afterwards increased it.

5. Thorlak was thus with his relations some winters, and he had much good possession amongst his hands; and many wise men who were near him saw that he was in many ways much better off than before he fared abroad. And no long time elapsed before the friends of Thorlak desired that he should establish his state yet more, and they wished that he should marry. It seemed to them that he was a rich and prudent man in most things. Since Christianity had long been strengthened and increased, and the custom grew among learned men although it was not much wont among superiors, yet the priests took wives, though now that is forbidden;[1] but at that time there were those women in the district, who thought it to be the best match, that were widows. Now was Thorlak urged to that counsel; and he then fared, and his kinsman with him, to the farm which is called Haf, and thought to ask in marriage a widow of the worthiest who dwelt there; and they had a remarkably good reception.

But as they slept, after good hospitality from them, that same night there appeared to Thorlak in a dream a man of beautiful countenance and seemly attire, and spoke:

"Why hast thou thought to make thine errand hither," saith he, "that thou mayest marry?"

Thorlak answered: "I know not how that may be," saith he.

That other said, whom he saw in his dream: "I know," saith he, "that thou thinkest to sue for a wife

[1] It is likely that Bishop Thorlak forbade it.

here, but thou shalt not let speech of that come up, because it must not be carried out. And there is another much higher bride destined for thee, and none other shalt thou take."

And when he had thus spoken, he vanished out of his sight. But Thorlak wakened, and was then so turned away from this thought, that he never thereafter sought a wife. They fared forth, and were good friends all their life after. But they thought it somewhat marvellous that he should be so changeable in this matter, before they knew what had come to pass, though all understood it well that knew.

All the same after this event, his soul was not kindled with pride, though he were so much honoured by God as to have a higher lot decreed for him than his friends desired and he himself had agreed to; rather he embraced all the more humility, after the example of all the best men, who have been ever more humble the higher they were raised in God's sight, after the counsel of Almighty God, when He said, that "Whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted," and "Come ye unto Me . . . because I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And since he has never gone far aside from that way, it shows clearly what dwelt in his mind.

6. At that time the head of the farm that is called Kirkby (Kirkjubær) at Side (Sida) was a famous priest called Bjarnhedinn,[1] and he was the most celebrated man at the public law court. He was a wise man and gracious, earnest and very eloquent, gentle and well learned. And as neither he nor Thorlak had met the other, each of them was desirous of a meeting, and God caused it to be with them as He is wont to cause the righteous to desire the society of wise men; and therefore Thorlak fared to see him at Kirkby, and was there six winters altogether; and they expe-

[1] Bjarnhedinn the priest, Sigurd's son, is mentioned in the Clergy List of 1143. He died 1173.

rienced that which GOD says, that "My yoke and My burden are light." It was with both, that the heavy yokes were taken up and carried yet easily, because they took nearly all hardships to bear for other people who dwelt in the country that lay near them. And they arranged so with their subordinates, that they took from them the heavy burdens that had been laid upon them, of contention and opposition to GOD and good men, and temptation of the devil, and laid on them instead GOD'S burdens, light and easy, in holy writings and authority. They earned well the name which Almighty GOD gave to His Apostles, the light of this world, because they showed the way of salvation to eternal joys, both with words of wise instruction, and glorious example. It might be seen by their daily behaviour that they had seldom out of their minds that which GOD said to His disciples, "Let your light shine before men," said He, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your FATHER Which is in heaven." It seemed as if they were of one accord in that, since there was hardly an hour of their lives in which they did not observe it. They were of the same heart and the same mind for good, as Luke says of GOD'S Apostles; and so one might think, it was as if they had one heart and one soul; that was shown far round the district, however unlike other men's behaviour seemed to theirs. But it was immediately the opinion of wise men that they must each be hopeful of carrying out that which was said to be the greatest difficulty in Iceland, and that was not misjudged, as was afterwards proved.

7. Over that village in the district which was second best, and was called Thykkvaby (Thykkvabær), there ruled that man who was called Thorkell, and was son of Geiri, wealthy in possessions, and wise in counsel. But as he was growing somewhat old and had no very near relations to inherit after him, he enriched his

[1] Thorkell Geirason died 1187.

friends with wealth, but freed then to himself in advance the management of the great and fair property that was over: he desired this, because he would choose CHRIST and His holy men to be his heirs for all that wealth that was after, and would raise a monastery in Thykkvaby, but that was difficult to arrange at first; and he strove first to carry that out which was most difficult, namely, to find a man that should order the rule, such as those men should follow that are called to the holy life. He fared then to Kirkby, and asked Thorlak to take the rule over it: he did not seek it too eagerly, although he had before had it in his mind to forsake the world and live under monastic rule, after the word of Almighty GOD, Who calls no one to be fully His disciple unless he leaves all his possessions for GOD'S sake, and serves Him afterwards with pure mind. And nevertheless he asked afterwards of Bjarnhedinn the priest what he might think of that, and how advisable it seemed to him that he should consent to that which was prayed of him. And Bjarnhedinn said that he must think that to have been a great day when Thorlak came from Kirkby to visit him, and though he did not allow himself to name this to hinder him much, yet he saw many men's help fall to the ground. But afterwards there was a see set at Thykkvaby, by the counsel and provision of Bishop Klæng and all the men of the district; and then Thorlak went thither, and there was established a monastery. And on that day when Thorlak fared forth out of Kirkby, all the people led him out of the garth, and all thought much of parting with him. But when Bjarnhedinn came home he looked into Thorlak's room, and spoke with much ardour; he said, that was a room which would never more be so well appointed, if he filled it not himself.

It was Thorlak's saying all his life, that they were both fortunately placed; and it is further said, that he has never so contentedly lived as those six winters that he was at Kirkby. And much and great honour

has been laid upon that place, and it was a great see, and there is now a nunnery there. And it may be thought likely that it must have been the best, which he loved best himself.

Thorlak was full thirty-five when he travelled to Ver,[1] and was there seven winters. He took canonical ordination first, and he was the first prior set over that canonry: and he ordered their life so fairly, that it fulfilled the saying of wise men, that never was monastic rule so well observed in a short time, as there. And after that Bishop Klæng hallowed Thorlak abbot at Ver,[2] and he began anew to exercise a remarkable authority over those brothers above whom he was set. He bade them keep love and concord amongst themselves, and showed before them how much is gained thereby, as the Son of God saith thus: that wheresoever two or three are gathered together in His Name, He will be in the midst of them. He was in all things most austere towards them, but each of them took it well.

8. Halla, Thorlak's mother, was with him all her life, while she lived; but he had given money to both his sisters before he went under monastic rule. He was loving to all his friends then as before, and a spiritual father to all those over whom he was appointed. He forbade to the brethren all flittings and journeys that were not necessary, and bade them that they should be as of one accord in good things in their service, after that which Paul the Apostle has taught in his epistle: "Pray ye," says he, "fervently, and give God thanks in all things." The Son of God says so also Himself, that whosoever helpeth another is confirmed in all good works unto his life's end. He bade them

[1] The cloister in Thykkvaby, in Ver, had been established there 1168, because Thorlak went to Skalholt at the end of 1175, and that winter must be taken with those seven that he was at Ver.

[2] It has been about 1170, that Thorlak took abbot's consecration.

usually to keep silence when that ought to be, but to make a good use of the tongue when speech was permitted, and to observe the word of Paul the Apostle: "Evil communications corrupt," says he, "good manners." It may be seen how one ought in this life to keep oneself from worldly and ill words, although that should be distorted that is well spoken, as David says in the Psalter: "I was lowly," said he, "and kept silence from good words." Therefore he was thought humble, because he was more desirous to speak good than ill, but refrained often from both for God's sake. Men went to the monastery of Thorlak the abbot from other monasteries or canonries, both in and out of the country, to see there and to learn good customs; and each one who had come bore witness that no one had seen the life more beautifully carried out than there, as Thorlak had ordered it. Then, for the first time, many people found that much benefit could be expected from him, on account of his goodness, such as others were not able to bring about by themselves. Many went away whole from visiting him, because he granted them blessing, and chanted over them who with various hurts came to him. Many such other things happened to him, and many esteemed them immediately a miracle. This event took place while he was living there, that the house took fire; but as soon as Thorlak came and blessed it, the fire was slaked. If cattle were sick, he cured them always with chanting over them if their lives were of value. His hallowing of water was remarkable, as it brought healing to men and beasts. If that water was sprinkled over cattle which Thorlak had hallowed, then no sickness harmed it, neither sheep nor beast. If mice did harm to meat or clothes, they would fall dead, or all ran away from the water if it was sprinkled thereover; and they did always as he counselled. That water travelled immediately round all the near-lying district, and round all Iceland, after

Thorlak became bishop; because men expected everywhere to find healing for that which they most needed. Nevertheless wise men fared warily in speaking of it, in calling those evident miracles, or in interpreting that at first of his holiness; because the holy Scriptures say thus: "Thou shalt not praise a man in his life; praise him after his life, and magnify him after the end of his life." And it is therefore so said, that it may be a caution, both to him of whom it is declared, and who at the end of his life is known perfectly; and it may also be that this thought itself closes the way to a certain pride. And it may now be seen, by him who is so minded, that men have followed this holy counsel at this time; since few praised him overmuch in his life; but he is now praised and glorified in all ways, though there was a difficulty at first in recognizing his glory and holiness.

9. As the teaching and the life of the holy Thorlak shone with such bloom of his purity of life and virtue, and fair oversight of other matters, as now has been related, Almighty God permitted, on this account, as He had before ordained, that his way should be increased and wax above what it was. And that was easily brought about, because when Klæng the bishop had become of a great age, he took a great sickness; his feet broke out, and there would have been a great risk in performing his sacred office, on account of his disorder. But he had therefore obtained leave of Eystein the archbishop for this, that a man should be chosen bishop after him. Klæng the bishop fared then to the Althing, and asked of his friends that a man should be chosen for travelling, and there were meetings taken towards it. That same summer there fared to the Althing, as if sent by God, Thorlak the abbot, because he thought it needful; for he was never wont to take needless journeys. And when there was talk about it at this time, there were three men named under election, to whom of all it should be best

thought to fall, and one of them was Abbot Thorlak. Another an abbot, hight Ogmund,[1] the most excellent man. The third was the priest hight Paul, a great scholar and the greatest farmer.

It bore fair witness to each of these, that they most desired the one which was most learned. But this showed itself in Thorlak, that he had never exalted himself much in that pride which is called self-esteem, and displayed more his good deeds in the sight of God than of men; also he prized it more to exceed other men in his virtues, than to seem to do so before the eyes of men of little sense. And it even came to this, that he seemed to many the least known of those who were there for choice; and therefore was he little known, because he had not been near many men in visiting in the country, or in journeys. Thorlak was of few words at this meeting, but many others were full of words: those that had less concern in this great affair than he. Afterwards Thorkell Geirason was questioned, who was experienced in judgment, and knew Thorlak's estimation from wise and distinguished men: what a great man Thorlak was, and how great a preacher he might be. But Thorkell answered: "I would rather credit Thorlak," says he, "with doing all that is best, than with speaking the most." This answer pleased men well, and many took immediately more liking to Thorlak when they heard such a worthy testimonial to his character from such a wise and modest man. Then followed the closing of the discourse—that the choice was laid under Bishop Klæng, that he should choose between them who were candidates; and he chose Thorlak to travel, and to take bishop's orders after him, and all that service that followed. Lord Thorlak the abbot fared from the Thing[2] afterwards to his canonry, and

[1] Ogmund Kalfsson, the first abbot at Helgafell, drowned 1188.

[2] This was the Thing of 1174, when Thorlak was chosen Bishop. He was then more than forty winters old.

asked Bishop Klæng that he might have the oversight of the chair and the see that half-year. And thereabout arose many difficulties in Skalholt: there were great outgoings, but little income; he was not ready for travelling, and he took gifts from all; and it could not be long before great stores were needed.

10. After Yule men were sent from Skalholt after the bishop elect, and he fared east at the long fast, and with him John Lopt's son, who was the greatest chief in Iceland, and they came to the see of Skalholt, half a month before Easter, and Gizur Hall's son was here to the fore. There were also other men who were friends of the bishop's, and were rulers over the district. Thorlak took there the rule of the see, and there was much needing to be done for them immediately, that required to be made ready. He had much trouble directly, both from adverse men and other inconveniences which he had around him, and he bore them all patiently. Klæng the bishop lay in bed with little strength, and Thorlak was there at Skalholt, because men did not wish him to go abroad, for the sake of that hostility which there was then between Norway and Iceland;[1] and there was a talk of that dissension that had thrown the country into the midst of fighting and cattle-lifting, and he dwelt there on that account certain winters. But when Klæng the bishop died, and it came to this, that he thought it necessary that they should no longer be bishopless at Skalholt as they had been, then he would not be longer hindered from faring out.[2] It could not come to pass that he should be hindered from travelling abroad, for the hostility's sake. He remembered the words of Paul the Apostle. "Thou

[1] In the brief of Archbishop Eystein, 1173-74, is mentioned this hostility, which was then between Norway and Iceland.

[2] Nevertheless a certain time elapsed between: Klæng died 28th Feb., 1176; but Thorlak did not travel out before the summer of 1177, and came back after 1178.

shalt not be afraid of the terror of wicked men," said he. He was thereafter prepared, and he would both take little money by what others have had, and not much travelling company (retinue,) and his journey prospered well until they came to Norway.

11. When Thorlak, the bishop elect, came to visit Archbishop Eystein, he received him remarkably well, and let it be widely known, that he wished all to be gladly laid to his hand that he thought should be; but he would not give him other episcopal dignity till he had the king's consent to it. They had then as kings over Norway these relations, King Magnus, and Earl Erling, his father; and they took ill all Thorlak's speaking, and there came thence threats rather than aid, so that neither money nor men were safe. But Thorlak let that trouble him little; and all his mind seemed to be, as David teaches in the Psalter, that it is better to trust in God than in princes; and therefore he bore it quietly. But the archbishop thought he was in a great difficulty, for he wished to love both, and to observe that which Paul the Apostle teaches in his epistle: "Fear God," says he, "and honour the king." And it might be seen by all, that he would observe each of those sayings. The archbishop made a feast, inviting them and other godly men, and it came to pass that the king and the earl agreed that Thorlak should take bishop's orders, and they grew friendly towards each other, and they gave gifts before they parted. And Sverrir the king often recalled that, who was both famous in speaking and wise in the knowledge of men, that all things had promoted good luck to them twain, father and son; since there was friendship between them, and Thorlak was then in the country, the second chosen both in the assembly and nigh at hand.

Therefore was Thorlak consecrated bishop by Archbishop Eystein, in the days of Alexander the Pope,

three nights after the day of the martyrdom of Peter the Apostle.[1] There was also at the consecration Eirek, bishop of Stafangr, who was afterwards archbishop of Thrandheim, after Archbishop Eystein. The third who was at the consecration of Bishop Thorlak was Paul, bishop of Bjorgyn (Bergen?) a very distinguished man, and a friend of Bishop Thorlak all his life after. Bishop Thorlak was but a short time with the archbishop after he had received consecration, because he had been given to know how quickly his return was needed by Iceland, and that flock over whom he was appointed. And as Bishop Thorlak had departed from his stay with the archbishop, those bishops speered what he thought of Bishop Thorlak. He said thus, that he thought no bishop had ever been consecrated whom he considered to have been his equal in all those good qualities that a bishop should have, as S. Paul the Apostle says, in his epistle which he sent to Titus.[2] "A bishop had to be," said he, "free from vice and well-learned, without pride, and a little-drinking man, strenuous and not greedy, pure and good-hearted, desirous of good, and hospitable, righteous and good in counsel, of pure life and ready with advice, trusty and steadfast, mild and bold of speech, loving to all men, but ready to chastise the idle." And it may be seen that it is part of a holy man to be proved thus. "I may so rather say to you, how worthy I have proved him," said the archbishop, "that I must choose that to be the highest day of my life, when I see aught of him." And that may now be seen, how wise and clearsighted he has been in his opinion of the blessed Bishop Thorlak.

[1] That is, SS. Peter and Paul's day, and so it stands in the other saga. The consecration day of Thorlak is therefore 1st July, and it comes to Sunday in the year 1178, and in 1177 Thorlak had fared abroad.

[2] The reference is, of course, to Titus i. 6, &c. In the original the adjectives are made alliterative; e.g., "örr ok óágjarn, skyrr ok skapgóðr," &c.—TRANSLATOR.

12.[1] That same summer Thorlak took ship and put to sea with his companions, and was prosperous in his journey, and they took haven as they might choose, and the bishop came home to Skalholt the day before the feast of S. Laurence. Men were immensely fain of his coming to them. And he began immediately to see to the decent ordering of those things that came before him, with faithful arguments. He kept nearly in all things to the monastic rule, although he might have dispensed with it since he had become bishop; both in dress, in watchings, in fasting, and in prayer. He began to order anew worldly customs and home manners, that were in his days thought well of in many places. Bishop Thorlak had most love and affection for those priests and ecclesiastics that lived virtuously, and guarded their consecration somewhat after their calling, and esteemed all that seemlily, and arranged things pleasantly wherein there was a difficulty. But those learned men who did not so well mind their manners, and held their orders unwarily, he admonished with gentle commands to do better, and turned his counsel one way and another that they should be admonished. But although he did not furnish himself with much admonishing, he chastised with moderate reproof and gentle correction, as Paul the Apostle taught to Timothy; "thou shalt warn and pray, and correct with all patience and learning." He took thought diligently for the property of the see, and always set men over the providing for its support, that he might himself be freest of that care; and thus the property of the see increased, after the difficulties were over, so that they had all which they needed. And he had such a wise moderation in his affairs, that all wise men were saying immediately what a good management he seemed to have in all things. And howsoever long he took to arrange about that which concerned the property, that it might all be arranged in the best

[1] See Appendix III.

manner, he nevertheless gave the greatest thought to that which concerned the churches, and things were best of all arranged for the ecclesiastics. And that therefore followed withal that he performed diligently before the priests all the services, and taught them lovingly all the sacred offices that they ought to do with their orders. He called together learned men for the highest festivals at Skalholt, and ordered what each should do in order that all should be fairly carried out in GOD's sight, in that to which they were chosen. And so much as he wrought diligently before others, therewith did he himself all best; so that well nigh all could discern how excellently beyond other the most learned men he performed in GOD's sight all the service, in which was delight to see and hearken to. Thorlak the bishop taught often precepts of virtue, and therefore was it a great misfortune that his speech was hard and slow; yet so were his words sweet and well set together, that those who listened to his teaching might always be reminded how David says in the Psalter, that "sweeter are Thy words, O LORD, in my throat," says he, "than gold and honey in my mouth." That same bare out Bishop Thorlak from GOD's word with such fair example of his life, that in no contemporary man's life might be found one equally glorious.

Thorlak the bishop watched long of nights, though others slept; and prayed therefor fervently that he might follow that which GOD said, "Blessed is that servant," said He, "that his LORD finds watching, when He shall come to visit him." That is also spoken in GOD's command, that He says Himself. "Watch ye," says He, "because ye know not at what tide the LORD may come." And the event proved that these times must have been seldom out of Thorlak's mind; wherefore that has now come to pass to him which GOD promises them that were often found in careful vigils; that he must be set over all His good things after this life.[1]

[1] Probably a reference to S. Luke xii. 43, 44.—TRANSLATOR.

13. The holy Bishop Thorlak fasted much when he was at home at his see, and bethought himself of that which the LORD said Himself in the Gospel, that there be some kinds of evil spirits which may not be conquered except by fasts and prayers; and he let that same be seen in his life, that he would overcome all the fiend's temptations. He consoled them that before were sad, and showed them that which the LORD said Himself; that they are blessed that now mourn, and they themselves shall afterwards be comforted; and in the other Gospel, which He spake to His Apostles, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy," saith He. Thorlak the bishop reconciled and made at peace those who before were wrathful and opposed, and told them that which was said, and is true, that anger much wears away the righteousness of men while it continues, as Paul the Apostle says; that the righteousness of GOD has nought in agreement with the wrath of man: and in another place, "Be not thou overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good;" that is, to conquer wrath with patience and meekness.

Bishop Thorlak looked often at holy books, and read over the holy Scriptures, because he never forgot that which John the Apostle says in his book: "Blessed is he who reads and hears the words of this book, and keeps those things which are written in it." He taught oft the clerks both to read books, and other learning that was needful for them; he saw how much necessity there is to learn good things, as David says in the Psalter, "Come here, ye children, and hearken to me, that I may teach you wherewithal GOD shall be feared." He was ever at writing, and wrote always holy books, after the example of Paul the Apostle, as he said in his epistle, "We do not write to you other things than those that there is most need for you to read and know." But that which distinguished Bishop Thorlak next, his lips were never silent from GOD's praise, and prayers; because he minded that which

James the Apostle says in his epistle: that much availeth before GOD the earnest prayer of a righteous man; and his prayers have availed much, both to himself and many others. The bishop was gentle and meek in all good counsels, and of saving counsel about all things in which he was sought to; and he has now attained that which GOD has promised them that are mild of soul, as He says in the Gospel: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall attain everlasting life."

14. Thorlak the Bishop sang every day mass, both in aid of himself and others; and commemorated fervently the Passion of GOD'S SON; and he has now taken the fairest reward for his service, since he performed that rite oftener and more remarkably than most others. He laid great importance upon loving poor men; he clothed the cold, and fed the hungry, and it was easy to see that that was seldom out of his thoughts, how it should profit at Doomsday; how much it should turn away chastisement, by how much was done to poor men in this life.

This also he added thereto, which many good men have done before; that he let call together poor men before the highest festivals, twelve, or nine, or seven, and came humbly to wash their feet, and wiped them afterwards with his hair, and gave to each of them some good alms before they fared away. And he did so rather after GOD'S example than man's, Who before washed the feet of His Apostles, and then suffered for the redemption of all mankind. And the SON of GOD said thus when He had washed the feet of His Apostles: "Do ye after My example to them that which I have done to you." Therefore the blessed Bishop Thorlak let the feet-washing precede the gift of mercy. Nowise eke might his dearest friends and faithful companions be silent over this after his death, which they thought surely to know; that he had concealed within himself his mortifi-

cations and good deeds, which he believed no one knew; as GOD commands, that the left hand should not know what the right hand doeth. And the dearest friends of the bishop hardly dared make that afterwards to be told more openly, which he would himself let be so hidden.

Bishop Thorlak was oft wont to have talks with good men and virtuous, and so taught himself their customs, and strengthened himself in their holy counsels, that they might be kept in their virtue. He gave much attention to the counselling of those men who took heed of their sin, to lead them from wrong desires, and call them back to the right directing of their conversation, though before they had not well heeded it; because the LORD said, "I will not the death of the sinful man," said He; "rather will I that he turn himself to Me and live." The holy Bishop Thorlak declared this to all them who would repent of their sins; and if they would follow his counsels, he was fain of them, and lightened them leniently with mild penance, after the saying of GOD'S Prophet, that at whatever day a man will turn himself to GOD, he must thenceforth live a good life, and die no ill death. But of those who would not be converted by his gentle remonstrances, or forego their misdoings for his reproof, he forbade some, and excommunicated some; after that which CHRIST bade His disciples; "Ye shall reprove your brethren lovingly; but if they will not take reproof, they shall be to thee as sinful men and heathens." He bore patiently the injuries of men, but regretted much the evil customs of men, yet agreed never with the bad ways of evil men; because he was in this desirous of hearkening to that which GOD speaks, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of GOD." He suffered by the disobedience of men, because he healed the spiritual wounds of his subordinates; like as Paul the Apostle was de-

voted to GOD's Christianity in his days; so that to no man was that injury or grief, that he did not think to feel in himself all their sorrows for love's sake.

15. The holy Bishop Thorlak used in such wise this authority that he was given in his consecration, to bind and loose on GOD's behalf the counsel of men, that it seemed to wise and just men equal in whichever way it was observed, so that there never followed anger nor despair; and to the last he was never so slack nor weak, though he might be very much hindered with sickness, that he might not more esteem meekness and mercy; though he should wait long, if so a right judgment might be obtained. He let that often come into his mind which David says, that the LORD loves mercy and justice, and glories in mercy.

It is also to be observed, that Bishop Thorlak loved that place most that immediately led to Skalholt, which he had before ornamented with his presence. He ordained abbot at Ver, Gudmund Bjalf's son, a good man and just, mild and without pride. Thorkell, Geiri's son, who was mentioned before in this story, placed himself there under monastic rule, and kept it well while he lived, and died in the ninth year of Bishop Thorlak's bishopric.

In the days of Bishop Thorlak it was made law to keep holy S. Ambrose's day, and SS. Cecilia's and Agnes' days, and to fast evens before the feasts of the Apostles and S. Nicholas' day. He bade strictly to keep Friday's fast, so that no one should eat twice during the space of the holy day, unless the one that is in Easter Week. He kept Friday himself so strictly that he ate only vegetable food, if he was well; but he was so gentle and easy in this, that when he was sick he ate white meat on Ember days and Fridays, if he was so ordered; and gave the example to those men that now will so do like things as it is hoped be most seemly in GOD's sight. Thorlak the bishop was sick in his bishopric, that year when Christmas Day fell on

Friday, and he was therefore able for little meat; and nevertheless tasted flesh that day, and showed by his example that so was better done.

He laid much stress upon keeping those men together who were joined to the holy household; but he laid on those men heavy burdens in fines and penances, so that from this were great changes; he thought it would be the greatest offence against God if the enjoyment of those worldly goods which He had granted to men for His love's sake, and of His mercies and yearning for men, just and blessed—that it would be a deadly sin if that were wickedly contemned and wrongfully perverted. But that money which men gave for their misdoings, he never let be put with other money; rather he used it for this purpose, that this household that behaved well and had no money, might be kept together as before; and did that to them as a certain protection and counteracting of their ill counsels who had kept back the money. Thorlak the bishop broke off all those marriages in his days which he knew to be unlawful, whether they had to do with greater men or less. He was not always of the same mind with some men, neither with princes, because he agreed only with that which was well seemly. He thought that would be a much greater downfall to God's Christianity, if distinguished men made great concessions. He esteemed it therewith to be no more distinction to keep himself from unlawful things, since he had before much reward from God both in riches and esteem of men.

16. Now it is to be said of the daily customs of the blessed Bishop Thorlak, how equal-souled he was in good things. He never said that word which did not come to be of some use, if he were therefor sought to. He was so careful in his words, that he never reviled the weather, as many do, or any of those things that were not reprehensible, and which he saw were according to God's will. He was weary no day. He feared nothing much, except the Althing and the

Ember days: the Althing for this reason, that he thought many a man there would erroneously weigh his speaking when it was worth much, and he thought much lay on it; but the Ember days for this, that he thought it a great responsibility to ordain men who had come a long way for this purpose, and he saw much disability in them, both on account of little learning and other manners, not to his mind; yet he hardly thought them to be denied, both for the sake of their own poverty, and for the sake of those men that had taught them, or had sent testimonials with them; and he told each of them carefully what was the obligation following all consecration, and laid the responsibility upon themselves, and those that sent them thereto. Thorlak let the priests often be taught, because he saw that though the written stories were often not listened to as discreetly as they ought to be, there lay therein unprofitable occupations for many men. He was so even-tempered in his fasts when he was at home, and in vigils and prayers, whether he were at home or not, that the like was never to be imagined. He needed so little food, that never might such another be; but he often would leave off that which he liked most. It was the same with him as to drinking, that never might fault be found with what he took, though he took whatsoever kind of drink. And he was so lucky in his brewing, that that ale never burst that he had blessed, and that he had signed with his hands, when it was brewing. He was so unfastidious and friendly at those feasts where drinking was, that he conformed to all that which was not unbecoming. And though Bishop Thorlak drank water or temperate drink, yet he fared so moderately withal, and so abstemiously, that he took three sups or five or seven, and almost never meat meals unless sick, if it were not at public banquets. Thorlak the bishop was never perfectly well during his episcopate, and it was as if that came to pass which Paul the Apostle

says, that "the strength is made perfect in weakness." He oft let leeches take measures to cure his disorder, and taught that GOD has ordained leeches that they should sometimes with short pains obviate long illness.

Thorlak the bishop had more intelligent ways in his prayers than most other men. He sang first *Credo*, and *Pater noster*, after that he had signed himself, and the hymn "*Jesu nostra Redemptio*," and he showed that he thought ever of that redemption whereby GOD had redeemed mankind, and true love between GOD and man, desire of eternal life and dwelling with GOD, the fear of doomsday, and the coming of the Creator to judge all mankind. All that is prayed for in this hymn. Then he sang Gregorius's prayers the while he clothed himself, and thereafter the first Psalm out of the Psalter; and never let go out of his mind that saving counsel which stands in the Psalm, that "he is blessed, who goeth not after evil counsels, and doth not agree in ill things with sinners, and doth not give wrong judgments, and always keeps GOD'S law." But when he came to the church, he sang first, praise to the Holy Trinity; after that he praised with song those holy men to whom the church was hallowed in which he was, and where the holy relics were kept. Then he read the Hours of Mary, and after that he laid himself down before the altar all upon the ground, there where it was not hallowed, and prayed long for all GOD'S Christendom; and every day he sang a third of the Psalter beyond his wonted song, whether he were at home or not: and he sang more among the Psalms than other men. He sang first "*Gloria Patri*" to the Holy Trinity; then next "*Miserere mei Deus;*" then "*Salvum fac Pater et Domine*," for all Christian folk. And if there came before him a difficult case, he sang that verse which Solomon the wise prayed to GOD in his days: "*Mitte mihi Domine auxilium de sancto;*" and as he went from the table, he sang "*Benedicam*

Dominum in omni tempore;" and when he unclothed himself for sleep, he sang that Psalm where the LORD is reminded of His solemn promise that they shall be without fear who keep His commandments justly, and do no ill to others in word or deed. This Psalm is "*Domine quis habitabit;*" and it was great delight to him to hold such customs; and he was wont that nothing must turn him away from his customs. He found amusement in stories and songs, and all stringed instruments and singing, and in wise men's counsels and dreams, and in all that was entertaining to good men; except play, because he thought such to be useless business of bad men.

17. Thorlak the bishop dreamed that dream at the Althing, that he thought he was going from church there at the Thing home to his house, and bore the head of S. Martin in his arms; but Paul, the priest of Reykjaholt, a famous man, read so that dream, that he himself must thereafter bear the holy bishop's head whither he fared; and it is now to all clear that this is true.

Whenas the blessed Thorlak had sat fifteen winters at his see in Skalholt, with honour and bright bloom of all kinds of good deeds; beloved of GOD and good men, merciful and wise in counsel, humble, righteous, and patient, wearied with the contradictions of men, and therewith in manifold illness; he resolved on this with his friends, to give up his bishopric, and place himself again under the same monastic rule. But Almighty GOD let not this be carried out, as He saw that his good and pure life well sufficed for holiness; though in nought should that dignity which He had given him be lessened before the eyes of men.

18. The blessed Bishop Thorlak fared afterwards to that quarter of the district which lay nearest to him; and in that journey he took that sickness which led him to his grave. He came home to Skalholt with little strength, and lay three months in bed, and had a grave sickness; but never such severe pain that

he might not give counsel over all, and order things as he would. There was at Skalholt Gizur Hall's son, a great chief, wise and good. He strengthened often the blessed Thorlak, by telling of the fair examples of those men who bore their pains bravely for God's sake. Paul, his sister's son, came also to visit him in his sickness, because the bishop loved him most of his friends; and many friends and men beloved of the bishop came to him, to receive of him holy counsel, and to show him their love. There came Thorvald Gizor's son, a mickle chief, and cast up for the holy Thorlak before the clergy and chiefs the money accounts of the see; and had great sorrow while he had forward this business. And therefore, with their counsel, he gave to his poor friends some money. He gave the best gift to that bishop that should come after him, and another priest; but of poor men to that one that had least money, because he let no one take part in it when he gave gifts to his friends. He gave a ring to Bishop Brand, but his episcopal ring to Paul, his sister's son, and that was prophetic of his dignity, that he should become bishop after him; and all thought it was good to possess anything that he had owned.

Seven nights before his death he called to him learned men, and received extreme unction; and before he was anointed he made a long speech, though talking was very hard to him. "I lay before in sickness with little strength, anointed," says he, "and I bade then that all men who were under my excommunication should be loosed, if I died: I thought that to show mercy to them was not to my condemnation, and they understood it so, as if I thought myself to have gone over-far against them whom I excommunicated for their sins, that would not be admonished for legal absolution; and I bade loose, because I thought myself dead. But now I bid you, that all my ordinances shall stand with these, unless they have reconciled themselves

with their redemption as I have before ordered; else shall they bide the adjustment of the bishop who shall come after me." Then he rested, and spoke the second time to those who were near him: "I will pray you that ye forgive me, if I have so done that you have not thought well." But all said that they had nothing to be displeased with. And Gizur Hall's son spoke thus on behalf of all. "We pray you, sir! that you forgive us those things which we have done ill against you, that must be both many and great." The blessed Thorlak consented to their forgiveness gladly. Then spoke Gizur that speech, which it may plainly be seen that the HOLY SPIRIT spoke in him; "We pray thee, sir, while thou art now in bodily presence visibly with us, be thou to us ghostly father, earning mercy with Almighty GOD; because we firmly believe that thou wilt have in the eternal life no less power with GOD than now." But Thorlak the bishop answered nothing, after the example of the SON of GOD, when He agreed with something silently; as he had no word against it, for he granted all that now which was then asked; yet for humility's sake he would not make known that he was able to do this. And few might for grief restrain their tears that were present. As the bishop saw that, he said: "Do not grieve at our parting company, though I fare after my destiny; I should have been able for little, if others had not helped me: you have little loss in me, for next after me will come a mickle prince; but I will comfort you in this, for I think to know certainly that GOD will not judge me worthy of hell."

Afterwards he admonished the priests, and gave them his blessing, before he was anointed. But after the unction he would not speak beyond what was most necessary; though his lips always moved in prayer while he lived.

But when seven nights had passed since he received unction, he requested early on this day change of

clothes; but Orm the priest, his chaplain, answered thus: "We think, sir, there is danger in moving you; rather will you not be removed in these clothes, if you are short-lived?" The bishop answered, "You may well delay to move me, for of the unction I hope for mercy from GOD, and not from these clothes." Then there were brought to him other clothes, and he observed that day all the same good customs; and as evensong was ended there fell on him a certain weakness, and as he lifted up his eyes, he said, "Whither fared Thorkell[1] now?" But Gizur Hall's son, the wisest man, judged so, that Thorkell had appeared to the bishop at his death, and visibly allured him from the worldly life to the pure life. And as Bishop Thorlak was at the point of death, he asked to drink; and as it was borne to him he bowed gently and fell asleep blessedly to GOD; and GOD granted him that honour, that he thirsted at his death like the SON of GOD Himself, and that it might not be soothed but in spiritual life, which GOD shows to them that even thirst for Him. GOD has made that clear in the death of the holy Bishop Thorlak which he spoke by the mouth of David, that honourable must be the death of holy men; because that to all it seemed better to be beside him dead than with many living men. That happened also after his death, that his face was much brighter than other men's, and seldom have living man's eyes been so bright as his, even those who have good sight. Many wounds had befallen his body, great and small, but all were healed immediately he was dead; and all were much surprised at this, but Gizur the most, as he was keener to see than others. Then was the body boune, and his hair shaven. Men had then holy relics open, and made many cures from them. Thorlak the bishop died on Thursday, one night[2] before Christ-

[1] No doubt this meant Thorkell Geiri's son, the pious founder of the monastery at Ver.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] This stands quite right with the reckoning of time: in the

mas eve, 60 winters old, and had been fifteen winters bishop. There had elapsed since the birth of CHRIST 1186 winters.[1]

19. After the bishop's death his body was borne into the church, and was in the choir three nights waiting for burial. But the second day of Yule he was laid in the earth; and there were present Paul the priest his kinsman, who was bishop after him, and many other learned men. There came also the body of that poor man, who was a leper, and the bishop had taken him from poverty, and kept him till his dying day; and GOD willed to let thus be seen his work of charity, that was one of many others. But before men went away from the burial of the blessed Bishop Thorlak, Gizur Hall's son then spoke of what had happened, as the custom was at distinguished men's burial. He declared first, what a useful man Bishop Thorlak had been, both to the see and to all the landsfolk. Then he spoke some words in praise of those bishops who had held the see in Skalholt before Thorlak came. After that he spoke thus: "Good is it to remember at our witness and from the histories of our forefathers about those bishops who have been before our memory; and whosoever is thought best and wisest, and howsoever illustrious men they all have been in their episcopate, nevertheless it is borne out how Thorlak has fitted himself for bishop's dignity far beyond all others. He was pure-lived all his days, well-conducted and ware of evil, strenuous and righteous, merciful and of saving counsel, humble and a wise ruler, meek and with true love and charity towards GOD and men. He received consecration in years of childhood, and it seemed to the wisest men

year 1193 Yule was on Thursday, and Thorlak's mass fell on the fifth day.

[1] This is after the time-reckoning of Húngrvaka, for by the right reckoning he died 1193. Stockholm's book has here miswritten the reckoning of age, mccc. for mc.

that his honour and holiness increased while they lasted; and in his young age he placed himself under holy rule, and kept it faithfully till death. Now though it be forbidden that we should judge according to the counsel of men, there must be few men saved if he is not perfectly blessed, so unlike as he was to most men in his life and good behaviour." He closed his speech with eloquent words. The men of the diocese and the landsfolk far around grieved much for the death of the blessed Bishop Thorlak; but many men were comforted by beautiful dreams whereby GOD celebrated further his honour. And yet thereto tended many bad seasons and misfortunes: only one bishop in the land, and he very old, and therewithal dissension in the Northern[1] district.

That event happened in Vatnsdale, that a worthy bonder dreamt that he thought he had gone out and saw a man coming southwards over the heath, and he asked how Bishop Thorlak might be. But he answered, "He is not now called Thorlak, but rather Radvald (the mighty in counsel) with GOD." The bonder told Charles the abbot the dream, and he read it so that the bishop must be dead, and have honour with GOD. Gizur Hall's son dreamed a little after the death of Bishop Thorlak, that he thought he saw him sitting in the church at Skalholt in bishop's vestments, and blessing thence the folk; and he read so the dream, that he must be indeed a superior of Christendom. Many wise men affirmed that a second time must the holy relics of Bishop Thorlak come up, else must no wealth be to Iceland; as Eirik the archbishop bare witness in his brief, which he sent to Paul the bishop, thus saying; "Our renowned brother, Bishop Thorlak, of good memory, we believe has been holy in his life, but now a glorious jewel of power before GOD, and of great authority."

[1] That is to say, the contests between Gudmund the dear and Onund in Longlithe.

20. A priest of the northern part of the country, hight Thorvald, dreamed four winters after the death of Bishop Thorlak that he came to him and said to him that the weather would soon improve, because it was a bad winter. "I give thee that counsel," he said, "that men open my grave in summer, and see my body taken out of the earth; and if any think to see tokens of holiness to be there, then let them do as they like as to invocation and keeping of my day." He then vanished. The priest told Bishop Brand the dream and asked him to swear to it.

In the winter, on the night of Maundy Thursday, after the death of Bishop Thorlak, a bonder hight Swein saw such a mickle light in Skalholt over the grave of Bishop Thorlak that hardly might the church be seen for it.

Orm the priest fared on this errand to the Althing the summer after, on behalf of Brand the bishop, to say what miracles of holy Bishop Thorlak's had taken place in that district; but in the journey his horse became so exhausted that he could not go; but immediately he called upon Bishop Thorlak, his horse started up, and he rode the full day's journey to the Thing. And as this marvel was told and many others, then were men fain of this intelligence, and immediately many men called on Bishop Thorlak in their necessities, and thought to get good from it: but that was not then done by permission of the bishop.

21. The same summer, later, Bishop Brand sent Orm the priest with other his clerks to the Althing, and let his brief be carried before Bishop Paul, and the other chiefs, and then was there witness borne to many miracles of Bishop Thorlak; there had been men called together about this matter, and Bishop Paul was easily led, and not self-willed in this matter, as many others, with other chiefs of the land, and glad of this commission. That was the counsel of men with the message of Brand the bishop; that

Bishop Paul made known as ordinance upon S. Peter's day that to all men should be granted leave to invoke the blessed Thorlak; that men should sing tides to him on his death-day. On S. Peter's day was Bishop Thorlak chosen bishop; and then was leave given to invoke him, and there was a law made for the keeping of his day the second summer next after this occasion; and as a mark that they were not thought to have offended GOD in this, there were many remarkable miracles immediately at this same Thing.

[Here follows a long catalogue of miracles. One or two specimens will suffice.—TRANSLATOR.]

At a farm in Westfirth, the house was on fire so that it seemed all the farm must burn, and no man at home but a young child: the child called on Bishop Thorlak to help, and immediately came so mickle rain out of heaven, that the fire was slaked; but the rain came no further than that farm.

A poor house-wife called on Bishop Thorlak, that he should give her child something to eat, because it was a very bad season; she went to the shore and saw a great seal: it lay quiet, and she went to it, as it was fast by a stone, and she slew it, and thus she had food enough.

A hospitable bonder had no food on account of the bad season: he called on Bishop Thorlak for help, and a little after a whale came to him washed ashore, there where many men had ownership with him. They made fast the whale; and there arose much dealing with men in dividing: then came such sharp weather that the fastenings broke, and the drifted whale brake forth to the sea and came afterwards there ashore to the land which only this bonder owned.

27. When these so many and widely-known miracles of Bishop Thorlak were celebrated and read, it was agreed with all the learned chiefs and laity in the land, to take his body out of the earth; therefore Paul the

bishop called together learned men and chiefs to Skalholt: there were first Brand bishop from Hol, Gudmund Ari's son the priest, who was afterwards bishop; Sæmund and Orm, brothers of Bishop Paul; Hall and Thorvard and Magnus, sons of Gizur, Thorleif of Hitardal, and many other chiefs. There were great floods at that time in all the land: but so God willed that that hindered no man's journey to the see: and as they were all come together, they all kept vigil that night, to the praise of God and of the holy Thorlak. The day after were his holy relics taken out of the earth, and borne into the church with hymns and songs of praise and fair procession, and all that honour and reverence that in this land might be shown. The coffin was set down in the choir, and learned men sang there "Te Deum;" and sick men crept to the coffin and many went thence whole. In the same year that the holy relics of Bishop Thorlak were taken up out of the earth, were many miracles, which I must mention in few words.

28. Many sick men took healing, in whatsoever sicknesses they lay, if they called on his name. If men were at sea or on land, in whatever risks they might be, if they made quickly prayer for his help, immediately they called on him the winds were laid and the sea was calmed, fires were slaked, waters abated, storms were quelled, property was found that men had lost; and if one bound earth out of his grave with hurts, boil or wound, it was quickly bettered. Cattle were cured of all sickness, immediately he was invoked. By these benefactions of the holy Bishop Thorlak that I have now told, much wealth accrued to the see of Skalholt from all lands where his name was known: most out of Norway, much from England, Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Gothland, Scotland, Orkney, Faroe, Caithness, Shetland, Greenland, but most in his own land; and it may thereby be noticed what love men had to him, that the first time the service of his day was

sung at the see there were 230 wax candles burnt there. Bishop Paul let a shrine be made for the holy relics of Bishop Thorlak by that goldsmith who was named Thorstein, which is there at this day; and that shrine now stands over the high altar in Skalholt, as it was made for the merits of his manifold miracles: there the blind receive sight, the deaf hearing, the cripples straightening, the lepers are purified, the lame walk, the crazed or possessed receive full healing, the captives are freed, wheresoever in the land they call on his name; the dumb are made to speak, and all kinds of inward sicknesses and diseases are bettered there; and there is no injury to men or cattle, either at sea or land, to which God gives not healing and help by the intercession of His blessed saint Bishop Thorlak, directly he is invoked. Pray we now, that by his intercession he obtain for us from Almighty God peace and happiness, and a good ending-day to this life; and may afterwards bid us to the vision of the heavenly kingdom, freed from all the devil's power, by His bounty; that with him we may live blessedly with God in the heavenly kingdom's fold, in eternal life without end. Amen.

As some vast peak beheld at morning's prime
  Supreme, above the mists that wrap its base
  And veil its vision for a mounting space,
Raises its head in sunlight, hoar with rime,
So, through the heaped-up years, the mists of time
  And cloudy folk-lore of an ancient race
  Whose blind fond faith all marvels might embrace,
This man's true life stands forth for us, sublime.

A blind fond faith, we say. Ah! whoso dares,
  Who is so wise, that he may laugh to scorn
  These simple-minded children of the morn
And early twilight? Rather be our prayers
For eyes, with all our light, as clear as theirs
  To read Heaven's message through earth's tokens borne!

APPENDIX I.

The Story of Oddaverja.

When the holy Bishop Thorlak had been one winter at his see, he began his journey the summer after to Eastfirth. And when he came south to Lomagnupsand, he took a night's lodging at Swinefell (Svinafell :) there dwelt Sigurd Orm's son, a man of great worldly honour, rich, and of good family. The lord bishop was here welcomed worthily, as should be. But because the bonder wished to have a church consecrated there, the bishop called him to talk with him the morning after, and produced the command of the lord Archbishop Eystein, in which he charged him to bring under his dominion all churches and Church property in his bishopric. Sigurd denied that flatly, and said he could not consent to place under him that which he had before held freely, on account of claim and old possession. The bishop said that the appointment of the Apostles themselves gave him power over all Church property without any distinction. "The holy fathers of Christianity, and the Popes, the successors of the Apostles, have ordered and set the same in the laws of the churches in all Christendom. And the Pope had also bidden Archbishop Eystein to carry on the same errand in Norway, and that had gone forward there. And it is not right or to be borne, that this poor land should not be placed under one law with these." Sigurd answered that "the Norsemen or foreigners may not yield over for us our own posses-

sions." Then answered the bishop: "That condition which unlearned men have here made, to choose for themselves power over those things which they have before given to God, is powerless by the law itself, and is not to be held; and wherever this affair is lawfully charged by the bishop, such men are not in the number of those who can have hope of help from God, while they keep their obstinacy; and whosoever hold back tithes or the possessions of holy men with stubbornness, they are excommunicated, after the lawful warnings, if they will not be reconciled, and leave off their wrong-doing."

The day passed, so that the bonder saw the consecration of the church would not take place unless he changed his speech. He turned now to a wise counsel, and he laid the deed of the property of the church, and the church itself, in the power of the bishop. He then consecrated the church and sang mass. And after mass he appointed Sigurd's place in fee for a certain time, and he yielded it to him to keep. The bishop fared then to Redbrook (Raudalækjar). Orm the old dwelt there. He presented there the same claim as at Swinefell; it came to much the same thing, that Orm laid the ordering of the church under the bishop, but he appointed him, and they parted friends.

Bishop Thorlak fared thereafter to Eastfirth on the same business, and they had mostly the same answer for him who dwelt in the place. And though many were the difficulties that he had in bringing over to himself all his heritage, it came to pass that Bishop Thorlak took authority of all parishes east of Hjorleif's head (Hjorleifshöfdi) out at Thvattwater (Thvatta) and Hallormstead, and that has been held ever since.

APPENDIX II.

Some further difficulties encountered by the bishop are given in the history of John Loft's (or Lopt's) son which comes under the head of the "Oddaverja Story." "In that time John Loft's son governed Oddi, he that was the greatest chief in Iceland: he was a 'goðorð's man;'[1] he was the wisest of men in clerkly learning, which he had taken from his forebears. He was a deacon in orders, a man with a fine voice in holy church. He gave eke much thought thereto, that those churches over which he had authority should be appointed in all things as was best. He was full of most accomplishments which were usual to men at that time. He was such a proud and pushing man that there hardly was a greater, because he would not give way for any one, or leave off what he began. He had a wife who was called Halldora, and was Brand's daughter. Their son was Sæmund." This John Loft's son seems to have been a man of notoriously evil life, and had contracted a bigamous marriage with Ragneid, Bishop Thorlak's sister. Nevertheless he was energetic in Church matters, for we read: "At that time John had got possession of Höfdabrekkuland, which was thought to be the best before Höfdi was destroyed. A south-westerly gale-storm had broken down two churches, and now John had let a new church be made there, and very elaborately built: the holy Bishop Thorlak had to take a night's

[1] "The Norse chiefs who settled in Iceland, finding the country uninhabited, solemnly took possession of the land; and in order to found a community, they built a temple, and called themselves by the name of goði or hofgoði, *temple priest:* and thus the temple became the nucleus of the new community, which was called goðorð." (Cleasby-Vigfusson's Icelandic Dictionary, which *vide* for more information sub Goði.)

lodging there that same autumn, as he came from Eastfirth, as before was said. It was thought that he would consecrate the church. There was prepared a splendid feast to receive him. And at the day appointed he came there with his travelling retinue. John was to the fore, and many other great men.

"In the morning the bishop got ready for the consecration; and John and those men who were in the affair with him, went to the bishop, and were speaking with him about how the Church deed should be. The lord bishop asked, according to justice, whether John had heard the archbishop's mandate regarding Church possessions. John answered, 'I may hear the archbishop's mandate, but I am minded to hold him at nought, and I think that he neither wills nor knows better than my forebears, Sæmund the learned and his sons. And I will not also condemn the conduct of our bishops here in the country who conform to that custom of the land, that laymen should rule those churches which their forefathers gave to God, and over which they appointed to themselves and their successors the power.'

"The bishop answered with the like reasons that were read before, and many others, so saying: 'Well knowest thou that, John! if thou wilt follow truth, that the bishop ought to have the Church possessions and tithes, after the disposition of the Apostles and other holy fathers; and because laymen may not have power over these things, that possession may never be freed to them from old times. I hope that to the foremen of the Church who have been before us it may be greatly excused, since it was never forbidden to them by their superiors to call under their power churches and tithes; and therefore are they excommunicate, who hold tithes and God's property with obstinacy against the will and agreement of the bishop.' John answered: 'Ye may call that excommunication if you will, but I will never lay down my possession

in your power, my church or other things that I have rule over.'

"There was this in the second place between them also, that stud at Hofdarhlaup, because it had taken many farms, that thence were acquired, and two of those that the churches owned. On this account there was less tithe and fewer houses for 'brottsöng'" (that is to say, services performed outside the curate's parish.) "John wished on that account that there should not be more than one priest and deacon at the church: but formerly there were two priests and two deacons. The bishop abhorred that for this same reason." Bishop Thorlak seems to have had infinite trouble with this contumacious John, both with his Church property, and because he would not give up his ungodly ways; especially in the matter of the bishop's sister Ragneid.

"John was much angered at bearing the bishop's reproof, for pride's sake, and this besides, that many others had an ill part in this cause, and especially Thorstein his son, who dwelt at Gunnarsholt. He egged on his father with unheard-of folly against the bishop's life; but he thought to deal with the bishop with crafty tyranny, rather than to bear arms against him; and one time that the bishop fared into his district, and took the way opposite the farm in Oddi, John thought to capture the bishop, and threaten, as he did with many. He set men between two great glens that were eastward of the farm, and thought that the bishop must fare through there, because he rode down out of Eyja and up to Rangriver-vale. And as they came over easter Rangriver, it seemed to them in Oddi, as if a thick mist lay over the water, so that they hardly saw aught. It lasted till the bishop and his men were out of sight. But those who were looking out thought that the bishop must have fared by another path. The followers of the bishop saw clearly men sitting between the great glens, but because they

knew not what that meant, they fared without fear, because these boded them no ill. And as John saw that his intention was frustrated, he rode to his dwelling in a circuit with the bishop, with the same mind, and certain men with him. He grumbled though about it to his friends, that he should have had those hardships, when he would have taken the bishop. Thorstein his son was then beside him, and said: 'I must loose this difficulty, father, and speak to this bishop, who does such enormities to men.' John answered, 'Thou mayest go against the bishop, if it liketh thee, and worse luck might come to thee than to overcome Thorlak in something: but no one must hear of that but myself alone, if I lend myself to it.' Thorstein would not believe that, and fared with certain men, and they came to Vellir where the bishop was at table; and as they saw men go out, they asked where the bishop was, they were told that he was at table. Thorstein began then to threaten much against the bishop if he should go out. Those who had been to the door came in; they were asked what men were come. They said that Thorstein, John's son, had come, and men with him much armed, and that Thorstein threatened him much if he came out. They said that his first word had been of the bishop, and the oath of his father, and also all the intention of John. The home people hindered the bishop from going out, but he, undaunted and unshaken with the terror of wicked men, answered, 'I must go to the church, as I am wont; this man shall not do me harm.' The home people said thus: 'My lord, sit within and sing your Psalter, and venture not yourself under the weapons of the evil man who shrinketh from nothing.' The bishop answered, 'I must fare as I have intended, and if this man does nothing to me, may be that I need make no more difference.' After that the bishop went out, and as Thorstein looked at him he did not hesitate to brandish an axe, but it was not

granted him to aim it: he could not hew before him, thinking that GOD'S power had hindered him. Meanwhile the bishop looked at him, and spoke not, and went to the church as he had meant. Thorstein went to find his father, and told how his errand had been, John said, 'That did not go far other than I thought.' He was then asked why he did not hew with the axe. He said his arm had stiffened, from the time the bishop looked at him, and till he came to the church, so that he might not wield the axe before him."

John made some more attempts to intercept the bishop, but they were always frustrated. At the end matters appear to have been adjusted to the bishop's satisfaction. "John let the bishop obtain possession of the church, and rode away. And after a few months John consented to put away Ragneid, and they took absolution and penance from the bishop: and somewhat later Ragneid was given in marriage to an Eastman who hight Arnthor; and many men came from them."

Towards the end of his life John Loft's son built a church and cloister at Keld, and dedicated it to S. John the Baptist. There is a touch of pathos about his end. "When John came to Keld, he took a severe sickness; and as it increased upon him he let himself be carried out at the door, and as he looked at the church, he said, 'There standest thou, my church! Thou bewailest me, and I bewail thee!'"

APPENDIX III.

The following story is found in a fragmentary edition of the "elder" saga of Bishop Thorlak and joins on immediately after his ordination to the bishopric.

"Bishop Thorlak travelled to the ship with his companions, and as they were nearly boun the shipmen laded the ship to disabling with loose wood, and those two ships which they towed out of the bay. Then went the bishop to land up off the ship, and said to the sailors that he thought it was over-much laden: then answered one of them who hight Makan; 'Thou hast no weight in the ship,' said he, 'and thou shalt not order how it shall be laden.' The bishop answered, 'I forbid you in GOD'S Name,' said he, 'to lade it to disabling, and I lay upon you the responsibility of all men that fare with you.' Then the bishop descended into the ship, and therewith they put to sea . . " The story breaks off abruptly, with a gap in the incidents.

On one of the vestments preserved at Reykjavik is embroidered a ship with a man seated therein, and a bishop fully vested, standing up in an admonitory attitude. It is conjecturable that the design may commemorate this story.

APPENDIX IV.

The following narrative from the second book of miracles of Bishop Thorlak, is so quaint, besides its local interest, that I give it as it stands.—TRANSLATOR.

In Kynn[1] in England, a certain man who was called Audun let an image be made to the glory of the blessed Bishop Thorlak; and when the image was made and set in the church there went an English

[1] I am unable to discover the locality of Kynn.—TRANSLATOR.

cleric and asked whose likeness that was; he was told that it was the image of Thorlak, Bishop of Iceland; then he ran with mickle laughter and mocking into a kitchen, and took a suet sausage, and came thereafter before the image, and held forth the sausage in his right hand, and spake thus with mockery to the image: "Wilt thou, man of suet? thou art a suet-bishop!"[1] After that he wished to go away, and might not move out of the spot whereon he stood; and his hand was cramped to the sausage, and he could not move it. There came together a crowd of men to see this wonder, and they asked him how this came about; and he confessed his sin there before all them who stood by and saw it; and he showed with his confession true repentance, and bade those that were there that they should support him with their prayers; and he promised also that he would never do this kind of sin thereafter. They prayed with all their hearts for his healing; and Almighty God heard their prayer, and the blessed Bishop Thorlak; and the hand became straightened, and he fared thence whither he would; and all praised God and the blessed Bishop Thorlak.

[1] "Suet-man" was a nickname "which the Norsemen used to give to the Icelanders in consequence of their supporting themselves chiefly by their flocks and herds." See Cleasby-Vigfusson's Icelandic-Eng. Dictionary, p. 414 sub "MÖRR."

CHRISTMAS AT SKALHOLT.

A.D. 1193.

CHRISTMAS-TIDE! o'er the moorland wide the snow is spread as a stainless vest.
Ways be foul, but from far to Skálholt[1] rides full many an honoured guest;
Fain of greeting though friends be meeting, grief sits heavy on each man's breast.

Eyes are dim, though the Christmas hymn must sound in praise of a SAVIOUR'S Birth.
Borne along to the house of song, what presence chastens the sacred mirth?
He who led them so long and fed them, lies full lowly as earth to earth.

Star of Iceland, her gem of price, her sun-ray quenched in a darksome night,
Shepherd tender, a guide and friend, a fair example in all men's sight,
Years fifteen hath his headship been their stay and guidance, their life and light.

Years fifteen; and his eyes have seen the sixtieth winter increase and wane;
Snows shall dwindle, and suns enkindle yet the summer on field and plain:
Grass shall grow and the freed streams flow—but none shall look on his like again.

[1] The á in Skálholt is pronounced as *ow* in *fowl*.

Never more shall the land that bore him bear a truer, a nobler son!
Fair and bright though she spread to sight the muster-roll of her champions, none
Shines in story with priestly glory passing Thorlak, her sainted one.

Three nights long in the house of song his people bend 'neath the chastening rod:
Now they lift on the bier of driftwood, bear him forth to the hallowed sod.
Filled with dule are the days of Yule; but he sleeps softly who sleeps in GOD.

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