

Skule. What you are doing is a fine thing, Haakon. I know well what it must cost you—

Haakon. Every one must go who is too dear to the King. Tie up the letter. (*Gives it to IVAR BODDE.*)

Bishop Nicholas (*leaning over the King's chair*). My lord King, you have made a great stride towards friendship with the Earl.

Haakon (*stretching out his hand to him*). Thanks, Bishop. You advised me for the best. Ask any boon of me, and I shall grant it.

Bishop Nicholas. Will you?

Haakon. I give you my kingly promise.

Bishop Nicholas. Then give Vegard Væradal a governorship in Haalogaland.

Haakon. Vegard? He is well-nigh the truest friend I have; I should be loth to send him so far from me.

Bishop Nicholas. A king's friends should be royally rewarded. Tie Earl Skule's hands in the way I have advised you, and you are secure for all time.

Haakon (*taking a sheet of parchment*). Vegard shall have his governorship. (*Writes.*) This is my royal mandate to him. (*BISHOP NICHOLAS moves away.*)

Skule (*approaching the table*). What are you writing?

Haakon (*handing him the parchment*). Read.

Skule (*reads, then looks fixedly at the King*). Vegard Væradal? To Haalogaland?

Haakon. In the northern part, where there is a post vacant.

Skule. Surely you have forgotten that Andres Skjaldarband has a post in the north there? The two men are bitter enemies. Andres Skjaldarband is one of my men—

Haakon (*getting up, with a smile*). And Vegard Væradal one of mine. Therefore they must see that they be reconciled, and the sooner the better. From to-day there must be no strife between the King's men and the Earl's men.

Bishop Nicholas. Hm! This may turn out differently to what I intended. (*Comes nearer to the King, looking uneasy.*)

Skule. Your thoughts are wise and deep, Haakon.