

remains but for the Council of State to add its legal sanction to the choice the Örething¹ made six years ago when it elected me king.

Voices from among Skule's and Sigurd's men. No, no—we deny that!

Skule. That was never the intention when it was decided that we should hold a Council here. The Ordeal of the Iron has not yet won you the crown; it has only established your title to come forward to-day with the others of us heirs to the throne and maintain the claim you profess to have—

Haakon (restraining himself). That is to say, in fact, that for six years I have had no right to the kingly title I have borne; that it has been without any legal right that you, my lord earl, have for the last six years ruled the land as regent on my behalf.

Skule. By no means. The kingly office had to be continued at my brother's death; and the Birchlegs—and chief among them Dagfinn—hotly espoused your cause, and procured your election before we others could come forward with our claims.

Bishop Nicholas (to HAAKON). Earl Skule means that that election gave you the usufruct of the kingly power, but no right of ownership in it.

Skule. You have retained all its privileges in your hands; but Sigurd the Ribbung and Guthorm Ingeßon and I each hold ourselves to be as fully entitled to the inheritance as you, and now the law must decide between us and say who shall hold the inheritance for all time.

Bishop Nicholas. It must be admitted that the Earl has good grounds for what he says.

Skule. For a year or two past, there has more than once been talk of the Ordeal of the Iron and of a Council of State, but something has always come in the way of it. And, my lord Haakon, if you believed that your original election as king established your right immovably, why did you give your consent to the proposal to make trial of the Ordeal of the Iron?

Dagfinn (exasperated). Draw your swords, King's men! Let *them* decide the question!

¹ The popular assembly.