

counsels of prudence; but if my counsel had been heeded in the matter, it would not have been with the hot iron but with cold steel that justice would have been done between Haakon and his enemies.

*Haakon.* Control yourself, Dagfinn. The man who is to rule a kingdom must learn to rule himself.

*Skule (with a slight smile).* It is easy to call every man the king's enemy whose mind does not jump with the king's. I would rather say that the king's worst foe is the man who would dissuade him from making good his right to the kingly title.

*Haakon.* Who knows? If it were only my *right* to the kingship that were in question, maybe I had not bought it so dear. But there are higher things to be thought of—my vocation, and my duty. I feel within me the certainty—nor do I blush to say it—that I alone am the man who, in these troublous times, can steer the ship of state into safe waters. Kingly birth carries with it kingly duties—

*Skule.* There is more than one here who will say the same high-sounding words of himself.

*Sigurd the Ribbung.* That do I, and with full as good a right! My father's father was King Magnus, the son of Erling—

*Haakon.* Yes, if your father Erling Stejnvæg was King Magnus' son; but most men deny it, and as yet none has undergone the Ordeal of the Iron to prove it true.

*Sigurd.* The Ribbungs chose me as king, and did it of their own free will. Dagfinn and others of the Birch-legs won you your kingly title by threats.

*Haakon.* Yes, to such a pass had you brought Norway that one of Sverre's line must needs make use of threats to gain his rights.

*Guthorm Ingesson.* I am of Sverre's line, as much as you—

*Dagfinn.* But not on your father's side.

*Bishop Nicholas.* There are women between you and the direct line, Guthorm.

*Guthorm.* Anyway I know this, that my father Inge was lawfully chosen King of Norway.