

learned my lesson. There will be no bloodshed, either there or at the winter sacrifice, if I can help it. But the greatest chiefs have been baptized; now it is essential that Ironbeard be either forced to accept my rule or leave the country."

So, without the least opposition, Olaf and Sigurd burned the old temple of the war-god the very next day. Many of the chiefs so recently baptized showed their sincerity by joining Olaf or sending men to his aid; and the idols were taken out before all the people, and burned. Sigurd longed for Vagn to be there, as he remembered their adventure with Jarl Hakon; but his cousin was far away to the south.

The work was finished by midday, and the party returned to Nidaros. The sudden conversion of their greatest chiefs seemed to have demoralized the bonders, for no longer were threats heard against Olaf, but instead, many of them came to Nidaros and were baptized by the good Bishop.

The day after the destruction of the Thrandheim temple, Olaf prepared to go to Moeri, where the winter sacrifice was held. He took all his men, sailing up Thrandheim Firth with his largest ships, and came to Moeri the day of the sacrifice.

The King sent Sigurd ashore, demanding that the people first hold an Assembly. Fairhair found a great multitude assembled from all the countryside, with Ironbeard and his men all present. They at once agreed to Olaf's demand, so the King landed with his men, and the Assembly was constituted on the plain before the temple.

When the noise and talking of the opening had subsided, Olaf arose in his seat and told the bonders what had taken place in his hall at Nidaros, told them how he had found his mistake, and would no longer try to force a religion on them that they did not want.

Sigurd could see a change sweep over the faces of the bonders before him, and they glanced at each other and began

whispering. At this, however, Ironbeard leaped to his feet—an immense man, wearing the robes of a priest of Thor, and with an iron-gray beard that swept over his chest. He lifted his hand and began to speak, slowly and with great dignity.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OLAF'S ATONEMENT.

"**K**ING OLAF," rang out the priest's deep voice, "we are unwilling that you should violate our religion. The wish of us all is that you should offer sacrifice as other kings before you have done, and even as Jarl Hakon did. When King Hakon, foster son of King Athelstan of England, wished to proclaim the White Christ, he found the bonders too strong for him, and he yielded to the old faith. The only proper plan for you is to do likewise, for our minds have not changed since that Assembly wherein you promised to visit this temple at this time."

Ironbeard sat down, and his speech was loudly applauded by the bonders who sat around, and by the great crowd without. Olaf flushed at the chief's proud demands, but controlling his temper, he rose.

"My friends, I promised to visit your temple, and I shall do so now, before the sacrifices. The Assembly is closed."

With this he motioned to Sigurd, and, followed by his men, who had laid aside their arms, he walked to the door of the temple. Olaf held in his hand a gold-mounted staff of heavy wood, and as they entered he said to Sigurd:

"Jarl, do just as I do, and act quickly."

Inside they saw many images around the temple, and occupying the place of honor was a large idol, heavily adorned with gold and silver. The temple was now full of Olaf's men, while Ironbeard and the bonders stood in the doorway, watching him.