

Christian, friends, but forgive me for this time; go, and whatever is your will I shall abide by it."

One by one, silent, incredulous, the chiefs left the hall, and Sigurd alone remained with the King. Then the boy, grasping Olaf's hand, cried with tears in his eyes:

"Olaf, we have been wrong, but how you must suffer! Will you really go back to Ireland if the chiefs refuse to accept the gospel?"

"Yes, my friend," and Olaf's tone was very low and soft. "The good Bishop yonder showed me more in that minute than I can tell you. I have been proud, Sigurd, and my pride is shattered; the Hammer of Thor is not like Christ's Cross. I thought to use the Cross like a weapon, like Thor uses his Hammer; but the Cross is a symbol, not of pride and might, but of gentleness, of pity, of humility. Yes, my—"

Suddenly the doors opened, and in came the chiefs, to the King's amazement. Their faces were very changed now; the fierceness, the resistance, seemed to have given way to some new emotion.

"King Olaf," said Orm, the spokesman, "we found it as you said; the palace is unguarded, the streets are clear. Oh, King, I have a hard thing to say, but mayhap you will understand! Listen.

"We bonders have in truth resisted your faith because, as you said just now, you preached one thing to us, and you acted another thing. We have resisted, not because we love the old gods, but because we could not see wherein the White Christ was better."

Orm paused, fixing his eyes on the King's. "But to-day, King Olaf, you have shown us a new thing. We have not known you long, yet we have found in you a strong man, a proud man, a man used to ruling the wills of others, and for this we have rejoiced in a worthy King. To-day, Olaf, we have found that there was one thing stronger than these, a thing able to

overcome all your strength, pride—even your will; and because this is so, we freely accept from your hand the Cross of Christ."

For a moment Olaf gazed at the men around him, unable to speak. Then, the tears flowing down his cheeks, he pressed their hands, one by one, and said:

"My friends, this is a victory where I had found a defeat. I cannot tell you what it means to me, but I think that none of us will forget this day. Jarl Sigurd and I have to-day learned a lesson from you and from ourselves; pray God we may never have to learn it over again!"

Then Sigurd summoned the Bishop, telling him what had happened on the way, and without delay the chiefs were baptized in Olaf's new church, together with their men. That night Olaf and Sigurd sat in Astrid's chamber, talking over the events of the day until late.

King Olaf had given Astrid part of Jarl Hakon's forfeited estates, to compensate her for those she possessed in Vendland, so that she might be able to live as became her dignity; further, he constituted himself her ward, although with the laughing declaration that he would run the risk of forcing her to marry against her will. He had also promised to give Sigurd an earldom, as soon as he had put the country into some kind of order.

"What are now your plans, my lord?" asked the girl, that same night. Olaf shook his head.

"Truly, Astrid, I know not. Practically all of the greater chiefs from the Thrandheim districts were baptized to-day, and I think that the bond established between us will never be broken. Ironbeard alone holds out; I am strongly minded to visit him at once, during the winter sacrifice, and try to win him over. To-morrow, Sigurd, we will go to Thrandheim and demolish the great temple there."

For a minute Sigurd looked at Olaf, then the latter smiled. "No, Sigurd, I have