

If that is really the case, and you wish to release me from that oath of mine, I will be right glad to have you all baptized, and believe in the mighty, gentle and kind God whom I and my men serve."

At these words Sigurd blew his horn, and the doors in the side of the hall flew open. His men brought in the spoils of the Ladi temple and laid them at Olaf's feet, while other armed men filed silently into the room.

"Here," exclaimed Olaf, pointing to the temple utensils and trappings, "you see how powerless your gods are to save their belongings! Now think it over, while my men watch the doors; I will return in a few minutes."

With these words he left the hall, followed by Sigurd. Outside the door he gripped the boy's arm joyfully, and was about to speak when an indignant voice broke on their ears:

"What is this tale I hear, King Olaf?"

Looking up they saw before them the old English Bishop, Sigurd, clad in his vestments. His face was stern and cold as Olaf bowed to him.

"Is this tale true? That you hold the Thrandheim chiefs in the great hall, offering them their choice of baptism or death? Answer me!"

Astounded, the King gazed at the Bishop, then after a moment his eyes fell.

"Why, Bishop, it is true, certainly! What mean you?"

The old man's eyes flashed. "Think you that this is the way to spread the gospel of Christ? Is baptism a thing to be forced on men, or a thing which they must choose willingly? Better lose this kingdom of yours and flee back over the ocean again than to do this thing, Olaf Triggveson!"

At this the boy spoke out. "Bishop, it is my fault, for I suggested the plan; but why is it so bad? Did not the chiefs entrap Olaf a week or two ago?"

Bishop Sigurd turned on him. "What

of that? Do as you will with the bodies of these men, Olaf, but force not their souls! Let them come to Christ willingly." His voice softened. "I know that you both are only overzealous; but believe me, King and Jarl, this is not Christianity. Christ said, 'Come unto me'; think you he would have men driven to him with whips and swords, who died to save men?"

Olaf bent his head, and Sigurd dropped on his knees. "Pardon, Bishop! I had not thought of it that way; I see how wrong it was now!"

The Bishop put his hand on Sigurd's head. "And you, Olaf? Do you not see that I am right? Must you be led by this boy?"

Olaf, fixing his keen eyes on the old man, nodded slowly. "I see, Bishop, and I will obey your unspoken thought."

He turned slowly, and Sigurd followed him to the door of the great hall. As they entered there was a hush, and Olaf curtly bade his men leave the building, waiting in silence as they filed out.

Then, ascending the high-seat, he said bitterly:

"Chiefs, I came among you preaching the Word of God, the gospel of peace and salvation; but my own acts have been as those of a pagan and worse. Small wonder that you refused to accept my faith! Too late I see that I have done ill by you; now I stand ready to repair my faults, and to act as a true Christian. Go in peace; those of you who wish to accept Christianity will be welcomed. If it is your wish that a heathen King rule over you, I will return whence I came, and will bring no fire and sword into the land."

The chiefs gazed in amazement at the King, and Orn Lugg, one of the greatest spoke out:

"Is this truth, King? Are we free to go to our homes?"

"Yes," said Olaf, a flush mounting to his brow. "I have proved myself a poor