

THE BATTLE OF SVOLDER IN OLAF TRYGGVASON'S SAGA

Extract from: THE SAGAS OF OLAF TRYGGVASON. LONDON WILLIAMS AND NORGATE MCMXI
You can read the whole saga here: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22093/22093-h/22093-h.htm>

¶ Then took King Olaf his host southward following the coast, and many of his friends flocked to him, mighty men, who were bravely furnished for an expedition with the King. The first man of these was own brother-in-law to himself, Erling Skialgson with his large 'skeid' § wherein were thirty benches, and right well manned was she withal. There came also to him his brothers-in-law Hyrning and Thorgeir, each steering a large ship. Many other mighty men accompanied him, so that when he left the country had he thirty long-ships. King Olaf sailed south through Eyra-sund, off the coasts of Denmark, and in due course came he to Wendland. ¶ There appointed he a tryst with King Burizlaf, and the Kings met and spake together of the possessions claimed of King Olaf, and all the talk between them went in kindly wise and the claims whereof King Olaf deemed himself to have rights there were fully ordered. ¶ Abode he there a long while during the summer, and saw many of his friends.

¶ As hath been related ere this, King Svein Two-beard had wedded Sigrid the Haughty, & Sigrid was King Olaf's greatest foe, the reason therefor being how King Olaf had broken his troth with her, as has been afore set in fair script, and how he had smote her on the face. ¶ Sigrid incited King Svein to do battle with King Olaf Tryggvason, saying pretext enough was it that he had wedded the own sister to Svein, she Tyri, without his leave: 'And never would thy forefathers have suffered such a thing.' Such words as these had Queen Sigrid ever on her lips, and so far went she with her persuasions that King Svein was full willing to do battle with Olaf. So early in spring-tide sent King Svein men east to Sweden, to Olaf the Swedish King, he that was his step-son, & to Earl Eirik, to tell them that Olaf King of Norway had his fleet abroad, and thought of faring to Wendland come summer; another 109 message took they likewise, namely that the Swedish King and the Earl should call out their hosts and go to meet King Svein, and that then altogether they should get their battle over against King Olaf. Now the King of Sweden and Eirik the Earl were ready and eager for this venture, so mustered they a large fleet in Sweden, and with the ships thereof went south to Denmark and came thither at the time when King Olaf had already sailed east. Of this speaketh Halldor in the song he made about Earl Eirik:

'Crusher of Kings who battles loved,
From out of Sweden called,
To southern battle fared he forth,
Even with great hosts of men,
The wound-bird on the sea gat food while waiting,
Each and every warrior was fain to follow Eirik.'

¶ So the King of the Swedes and Earl Eirik shaped a course to meet the Danish King, and when all the fleets were come together was there a host greater than one man could number.

¶ When King Svein sent for that fleet, sent he moreover Earl Sigvaldi to Wendland to spy on the expedition of King Olaf, and to lay such a lure that King Svein and the others might assuredly fall in with King Olaf. ¶ So Earl Sigvaldi set forth and went to Wendland and Jomsborg, and met King Olaf Tryggvason. Now had they much friendly conversation one with the other, and the Earl came greatly to love the King, mainly on account of their former kinship, for Astrid, she that was wife unto the Earl, even the daughter of King Burizlaf, was very friendly with King Olaf, for the reason that the latter had had her sister Geira to wife. ¶

Now Sigvaldi was a wise man, & one ready at expedients, & when he and King Olaf took counsel together, found he many and divers pretexts for delaying the journey of the King to the westward; but the men of King Olaf murmured thereat and were loudly displeased, and longed much to get them hence home, for, said 110 they, ‘clear are we to sail & fair is the wind.’ Learned Sigvaldi now privily from Denmark that the King of the Danes and the King of the Swedes & Eirik the Earl were met together, and were even about to set sail to the eastward off the coast of Wendland; likewise that it had been convened betwixt them that they in wait for King Olaf should lie off that isle which is called Svold;§ & that moreover he, the Earl, was after some fashion to contrive that King Olaf be found of them.

¶ And now went about a rumour in Wendland that Svein, the King of the Danes, also had an host abroad, & soon tongues wagged to the tune that well would it like Svein, the King of the Danes, to meet with King Olaf; but said Earl Sigvaldi unto the King: ‘No plan is it of King Svein to attack thee with the Danish host alone, seeing how great an host of thine own thou hast; but if ye suspect that war may be at hand then will I and my men go with thee, and aforetime was it deemed good help when the Jomsborg vikings bore a chief company: I will go with thee even with eleven ships well-found.’ ☒ To this did the King answer yea, and because at that time was there blowing a gentle breeze but favourable, commanded he that the fleet should get under way, & that the horns be blown for their departing. Then the men hoisted sail; and the small ships were those that made the better way, & out to sea sailed they. Now kept the Earl close by the King’s ship, shouting to those on board, and bidding the King follow him: ‘Well wot I,’ he said, ‘which sounds are deepest betwixt the isles, & this be fraught with care seeing how big are thy ships.’ So sailed the Earl first with his ships, eleven ships had he, & sailed the King after him with his large ships, eleven likewise had he, but sailed all the rest of the fleet ahead and out to sea. Now it came to pass as Earl Sigvaldi was making Vold came rowing off a skiff, and those therein told unto the Earl how that the fleet of the King of the Danes lay in the haven even right over ahead of their way. ☒ So the Earl ordered sails to be lowered, 111 and rowed they in under that island. Thus saith Halldor the Unchristened:

‘With ships one more than seventy
Came the lord of Eynafylki from the south;
His sword he dyed in warfare
When the Earl the ships of Skani called out to battle.
Quickly then the peace was broken ‘twixt the men.’

¶ Now it will be marked that, according unto the bard, were the ships of King Olaf & Earl Sigvaldi seventy-one in number what time sailed they from the south.

¶ Now lying there were Svein, the King of the Danes, Olaf the King of the Swedes, and Earl Eirik, with all the might of their fleet, and fair weather was with them with bright sunshine. Went up to the islet all the chieftains with a large company of men, and spied they thence that a many ships were sailing together out at sea. ☒ And they beheld a large ship and brave sailing, and said both the Kings: ‘There goes a great ship, passing fair, none other can this be save only the “Long Serpent.”’ ☒ Then made Earl Eirik answer, saying: ‘That is not the “Long Serpent.”’ ☒ And it was as he opined, for this ship belonged to Eindrid of Gimsar. A while later saw they yet another ship sailing, much greater than the first, and then spake King Svein: ‘Afeard is Olaf Tryggvason, for he dareth not sail with the head upon his ship.’ Then said Earl Eirik: ‘That is not the King’s ship; that ship and the sail thereof know I, for the sail is a striped one; Erling Skialgson it is who hath command thereof. ☒ Let them sail on! Better is it for us that this ship should be lacking from Olaf’s fleet, so well appointed is it.’ A while later saw

they and recognized the ships of Sigvaldi the Earl, and one of them also was great. ☞ Then spake King Svein and bade them go to their ships; for, said he, there sails the 'Long Serpent'; but Earl Eirik called out, 'Many more ships and fine ones have they besides the 'Long Serpent,' let us bide a while.' ☞ Then many of the men fell to talking, & they said: 'Eirik the Earl will not fight to avenge his father. Shame, shame is it, & throughout all the land will it be heard, if we lie here with so great a fleet & let King Olaf sail out to sea on our very flank.' But after they had been talking thus a while saw they that four more ships came sailing by, and one of these was a dragon, large indeed, and bedecked with gold. Then rose up King Svein and said: 'High shall the "Serpent" carry me this eve; and I will steer her.' Many of the men called out that the 'Serpent' was a mighty great ship and beautiful to look upon, and a glorious work had it been to build such a craft. ☞ Then Earl Eirik said so loud that sundry heard him: 'E'en had King Olaf no larger ship than this, King Svein would with the Danish host alone never wrest it from him.' Then went the men to their ships and took the tilts from off them; whilst the chiefs were talking among themselves of that which is writ above saw they sailing along three very large ships, and a fourth ship last of all, and that was the 'Long Serpent.' Now of those large ships which had sailed past before, and had been deemed by the men to be the 'Long Serpent,' the first was the 'Crane' and the last the 'Short Serpent.' But when they beheld the 'Long Serpent,' and none gainsaid this, then wotted all that now indeed was Olaf Tryggvason sailing by. Then went they to their ships, and made ready to row to the onset. Now a compact had been struck between the chiefs, King Svein, King Olaf, and Earl Eirik, that to each one of them should be given a third part of Norway if it befell that King Olaf was slain; moreover he who first boarded the 'Long Serpent' was for his own to have all the booty taken therefrom, and each of them was to have what ships he himself cleared. ☞ Earl Eirik had a very large long-ship which he was wont to use on his viking cruises; a beard was there on the higher part of both prow and stern, and thick plates of iron going from thence all the breadth of the beard right down to the water-line.

113 ¶ Now when Earl Sigvaldi & his men headed in towards the islet, observed closely Thorkel Dydril of the 'Crane' and the captains of the other ships sailing with him, what he was doing, and they too lowered sail, and rowing after him, called out to him to know why thus he was faring. ☞ The Earl answered that he was going to bide the coming of King Olaf, for most like did it seem that war was at hand. ☞ So then they likewise let their ships lie-to until such time as Thorkel Leira with the 'Short Serpent' was come up and with him too the three other ships which were following him, and the same tidings were told unto them; then they also lowered sail, laid-to and bided the coming of King Olaf. ☞ But when the King sailed out towards the isle, then rowed out into the sound the whole of the hostile fleet even for to meet him; and his men witnessing this same prayed the King sail his way, and not engage in battle with so large an host. ☞ But King Olaf stood up on the poop, and shouted with a loud voice: 'Let no men of mine lower sail or think of fleeing; never have I fled in battle. May God look to my life, for never will I turn to flight.' And it was done even as the King said. Thus saith Hallfrod:

'Fain would I name those words,
Which Olaf's warriors tell us
The lord deed-mighty spake there,
To his men before the battle.
The warlike King forbade
His champions to think of flight,
And how they live, the words the loved one of the people spoke.'

¶ So were sounded the horns for the assembling of the ships; and the King's ship was in the midst of the fleet, with the 'Short Serpent' on one side and the 'Crane' on the other. Now when they were about to lash together the prow of the 'Long Serpent' and stern of the 'Short Serpent,' the King observed what was being done, and he cried out bidding them lay the 114 big ship more forward, & not let her be astern of all the ships in the fleet. Thereon answered Ulf the Red: 'If we are to lay the "Serpent" as much longer ahead as she is longer than other ships hard will the day's work be behind the gunwales.' Said the King: 'I knew not that I had a forecastle man who was both red and afraid,' Ulf made answer back, 'Turn not thou thy back there on the poop more than I turn mine when I guard the prow.' ☒ Now the King had a bow in his hand, and placing an arrow on the string thereof he turned him towards Ulf; then cried Ulf, 'Shoot another way, King, thither where it is needed more greatly; what I do, I do for thee.'

¶ King Olaf towered high on the poop of the 'Serpent,' and easy was it to know him from other men. ☒ A golden shield had he, and a gold-wrought helmet, & a short red kirtle over his shirt of mail. ☒ Now when King Olaf saw that the fleets were dividing and banners were being set up before the chiefs, asked he: 'Who is the captain of that host which is right over against us?' It was told him that it was King Svein Two-beard with the host of the Danes. Then answered he: 'Afraid are we not of those blenchers, no heart is there in the Danes. But what chief is behind those banners yonder on our right?' It was told him that there was King Olaf, with the Swedish host. 'Better were it for the Swedes to stay at home and lick the blood from their bowls than to board the "Serpent" under thy weapons.' 'But whose are the ships lying out yonder on the larboard of the Danes?' 'They pertain,' came the answer, 'to Eirik Hakonson.' Then answered King Olaf, 'Good reason, methinketh, hath he to meet us, and from that fleet may we await the fiercest of fights, seeing that they too are of Norway even as we ourselves.'

¶ Thereafter separated the Kings one from another for the onset. King Svein laid his ship against the 'Long Serpent'; and King Olaf the Swede lay-to farther out & grappled from the prow the outermost ship of King Olaf Tryggvason; and 115 over against the other side lay Earl Eirik. And even so there ensued a dire and strenuous conflict. Albeit did Sigvaldi, the Earl, let his ships fall astern and took he no part in the battle. Thus saith Skuli Thorsteinsson, he that himself was with Earl Eirik that day:

'The Frisian wolf I followed
(And in my youth gat honour)
With Sigvaldi, there where the spears whistled
(Now wax I old);
When bloody swords we bore
There off the mouth of the Svold
In the south, in the battle-storm,
And met the hero of wars.'

And Hallfrod too saith of these tidings:

'Methinks full much was missed
(Many to flight did turn them),
That chief who spurred the fight
Was among the men of Thronhjem.

The valiant King alone
'Gainst the two Kings did fight,
(Glorious to tell it now)
And for a third too the Earl.'

¶ The battle to them all waxed very fierce & bloody; the forecastle men of the 'Long Serpent' & the 'Short Serpent' and the 'Crane' threw anchors and grapples on to the ships of King Svein, and thus could they attack them from above so that they cleared every ship unto which they could cling and thereto hold fast. King Svein and those of his company who could escape made what way they could to other of his ships and thereon drew thence out of bow-shot, and so it came to pass that it fared with this fleet even as King Olaf Tryggvason had foretold. ☞ Then Olaf, he that was King of the Swedes, brought his ships up into the self-same places left by those of Svein, but nathless hardly was he come nigh to the big 116 ships than it went with him the same as with the others; even so that lost he many men and some of his ships, and thereafter he too drew back. But Earl Eirik laid his bearded ship alongside the outermost ship of King Olaf & with fierceness cleared it, and straightway cut it adrift from its lashings; then went he alongside the one that was next, and with it fought until that too was cleared. Then fell the crews to escaping from the lesser ships on to those that were larger; but cut the Earl every ship from its lashings even as soon as it was cleared, & thereon came up once more from all sides Danes and Swedes into the battle over against the ships of King Olaf. Eirik the Earl lay ever alongside one or other ship fighting thus in hand to hand fight, and as the men fell on his ship, Danes and Swedes, other true men took their place. Thus saith Halldor:

'Of sharp swords the brunt
O'er the "Long Serpent" went;
There golden spears did clash
And the men fought long,
In battle of foemen
Went forth to the south
Men of Sweden against him,
And Danish swordsmen doughty.'

¶ Then waxed the battle very fierce, and men fell thick and fast, and so at the end befell it that all the ships that pertained unto King Olaf were cleared save and except the 'Long Serpent,' & by that time all those of his folk who were still able to bear arms were come aboard of her. ☞ Then did Earl Eirik bring his bearded ship alongside the 'Serpent' and thereon ensued a fight with man at sword's length from man. ☞ Thus saith Halldor:

'Into so hard a trap fell now the "Long Serpent"
(The shields were cut asunder, together clashed the swords),
And when the axe-bearer laid his bearded ship high bulwarked beside the "Serpent,"
The Earl did victory win at Holm.'

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¶ Earl Eirik took his stand in the forehold of his ship encompassed by a wall of shields, & his men fought both with trenchant arms, and by the thrusting of spears, and by the throwing of everything that could be used as a weapon, though some shot with the bow or threw javelins with the hand. From all sides had the war-ships been brought up around the 'Serpent,' and so

great was the shower of weapons which fell on her, and so thickly flew the arrows and javelins from all sides, that men could but hardly ward off the missiles with their shields. The men that were with King Olaf had ere now waxed so furious that they had climbed up on to the bulwarks to the end that they might reach their foemen with their swords and slay them; but many of their foes would not come so nigh alongside the ‘Serpent’ that they could be beguiled into close combat, whereas a many of the folk of Olaf being unmindful that they were not fighting on a level field themselves fell overboard and so sank down together with their weapons. Thus saith Hallfrod:

‘From the “Serpent” sank they down, wounded in the fight;

Give way or flee they would not, resisting to the last.

Though glorious the King may be who steers the “Serpent”

Such men as these will long be lacking where’er she strideth.’

¶ It happened that in the narrow-hold of the “Serpent,” shooting with his bow and arrow more fiercely than any other man that was on the ship, stood Einar Tambarskelfir. Now it was against Earl Eirik that Einar had his direct venture, and struck he the top of the tiller-head, over above the head of the Earl, sending in his arrow with such force that it penetrated to the very binding of the shaft. ∞ The Earl looked at it, and asked if it was known who was shooting thus; then on the instant Einar shot another arrow which went so nigh unto the Earl that it passed betwixt his side and his arm, and so far through the staying-board that the barb stood out on the other side thereof. ∞ Then spake the Earl to that man whose name 118 some say was Fin, but as others have it was of Finnish§ kith and kin. ∞ Exceeding apt was he as an archer, so spake Eirik unto him saying: ‘Shoot thou yonder big man in the narrow-hold,’ & even as he said the words did the arrow of Fin strike the bow of Einar just as he was drawing it for the third time. Then was the bow broken in twain, & Olaf said, ‘What brake there so loudly?’ & Einar made answer: ‘Norway from thy hand, O King.’ ‘So great a breaking asunder hath not happened yet, I trow,’ quoth the King; ‘take my bow and shoot therewith,’ and saying so threw he him his own bow, and Einar taking it strained it even beyond the arrow-head. ‘Too weak,’ said he, ‘too weak is the prince’s bow,’ and throwing it back again to the King took he his shield and sword, and fell to hand-fighting.

¶ King Olaf being himself on the poop of the ‘Serpent,’ full oft that day shot with his bow, but upon occasion made he use of javelins, and ever threw two at once. Then as time wore on saw he, as his glance sped along the ship, that albeit his men swung ever their swords and smote full fast, yet nevertheless their swords were cutting but ill, and he cried out loudly to them: ‘Are ye wielding your swords carelessly since, as I see, they do not cut?’ One of the men made answer: ‘Our swords are blunt and very much notched.’ Then went the King down into the fore-hold, and setting up the lid of the high-seat took from out of the chest beneath many sharp swords and gave them out to his men, and when he thrust down his right arm into the chest it was seen that blood was running from under his mail-shirt, and no man at that hour wot in what part he had been wounded.

¶ Even the stoutest defence on the ‘Long Serpent,’ and that the most deadly, was put up by those stout men that were in the fore-hold and in the prow and stern, for truly were they picked men, and the bulwarks in those places were higher than in other parts of the ship. Even so soon as ever the men 119 amidships began to fall, and only a few of those about the mast were left standing on their feet, made Eirik an attempt to board the ‘Serpent,’ and up came he on to her, himself the fifteenth man. ∞ Then was it that Hyrning, he that was own brother-in-law of Olaf, set over against Eirik with a band of followers and the mightiest fight of all waged they then, and the end thereof was of such a fashion that had the Earl himself to draw

back even unto his own ship; and of the men that adventured with him on to the ‘Serpent’ were some wounded and most others slain.

¶ And thereafter was there yet again a hard struggle, & many men fell on board the ‘Serpent’; & as the crew who held the defence of her began to thin tried Earl Eirik to board her for the second time, but again met he with valiant opposition. When the fore-castle men on the ‘Serpent’ saw this went they aft and safeguarded the ship over against the Earl, & made a stubborn defence. But so many were the men who were fallen on the ‘Serpent’ that were the bulwarks perforce in many places empty, and the men of the Earl now came aboard her on every side; then were those men who were still standing to arms and having the guardianship of the ship forced to fall back aft, even unto the place where the King was standing. Thus saith Halldor the Unchristened, telling how Earl Eirik cheered on his men:

‘Astern across the thwarts shrank the men of Olaf
Valiant the lord cheers on his hot-headed followers,
When the warriors had closed all issue to the doughty King
The clash of weapons turned towards the Wend-slayer.’

¶ Now it came to pass that Kolbiorn the Marshal went up on to the poop even to the King, and greatly did they resemble one another in apparel and weapons; and Kolbiorn was also a right big and comely man. ☞ Yet once again ensued there a fight full fierce in the fore-hold, but because that there were now come up on to the ‘Serpent’ even as many men of the 120 Earl as the ship would hold, and seeing that his ships were lying on all sides around the ‘Serpent,’ & moreover few folk left on her for defence against so strong a host, fell the main of the men of Olaf very shortly thereafter, albeit were they men both strong and stout of heart. Then did King Olaf himself, and Kolbiorn, leap over-board each on his own side. Now the men of the Earl had put out small boats & were busy slaying those that took to the sea, and when the King leapt overboard would they have taken him captive and brought him before Earl Eirik, had not King Olaf held up his shield above him and dived headlong into the deep. Kolbiorn, on the other part, thrust his shield under him and thus protected himself against the javelins which were being thrown up from the boats beneath, but he fell into the sea in such wise that his shield was beneath him & therefore could he in no wise dive so swiftly, & so was he taken & haled up into a boat. Then the foe deeming him to be the King brought him before the Earl, but when the Earl discovered that it was not King Olaf but Kolbiorn, gave he the latter quarter. At this moment did all they of the King’s folk who were still alive leap overboard from the ‘Serpent’; and Hallfrod saith that Thorkel Nefia, he that was brother to the King, leapt last of all overboard:

‘Stroke-doughty Thorkel saw the “Crane,”
Yea, and the “Serpents” twain floating deserted;
Boldly had he fought e’er the wearer of the arm-rings,
Stout-hearted in combat, into the sea plunged,
And by swimming saved his life.’

¶ Now hath it been afore fair written that Earl Sigvaldi joined forces with King Olaf in Wendland; ten ships had the Earl and withal an eleventh whereon Astrid, she that was daughter to the King and wife to Sigvaldi, had her men. ☞ When King Olaf leapt overboard all the hosts shouted cries of victory, and then did the Earl and his men unship their oars & row to the fight. Of this speaketh Halldor the Unchristened:

‘From far and near the Wendmen’s craft
To battle hastened;
The lean sword-clashers
Clanged with iron mouths;
Din of swords at sea was there
(Wolves’ fare the eagle tore),
The lads’ dear leader strove
Ere many from him fled.’

¶ Now rowed away the Wendland cutter, whereon were Astrid’s men, back to Wendland, and straightway did many men say that King Olaf must have drawn off his shirt of mail in the water, dived down away from the long-ship, and thereafter swum even to the Wendland cutter and so been brought to shore by the folk of Astrid. ✕ And many are the tales which have been told by certain men of the journeyings of King Olaf; nevertheless in this wise speaketh Hallfrod:

‘I wot not whether he who stilled the raven’s hunger
Should of me be praised as of the living or the dead,
Since of a truth his men tell either tale
(Bootless of himself to question) though wounded was he surely.’

But howsoever this may have been, never more returned King Olaf Tryggvason to his realm of Norway; yet in this wise speaketh Hallfrod the Troublous-skald:

‘He who the tidings told that the lord was living
Had long for Tryggvi’s trusted son a fighter been.
’Tis said the King from out the steel-storm came;
Alas, ‘tis worse than this, methinks, for of truth all facts are lacking.’

And this again:

‘When the land-host with men in numbers towards the Holder’s
War-wont King did fare, it scarce could be (so heard I)
122 That the King beloved could with life escape
(Folk seemed not truth to tell) from out the battle.
Some men e’en tell this skald that wounded is the King,
Though from the spear-storm saved and eastwards gone.
But tidings from the south now tell the slaying of the King
In the great fight (endure no more can I the wavering talk of men).’

¶ With the victory that he encompassed did Earl Eirik Hakonson gain even the ‘Long Serpent’ and much booty, and steered he the ‘Serpent’ far out of the battle. Thus said Halldor:

‘Thither the “Serpent” had borne him,
The helmeted chieftain, to the great sword-play,

(Then were the ships dight).

But south, in the din of the battle, gladly the Earl took the “Serpent”

(Heming’s high-born brother in blood did dye the swords).’

¶ Now Svein the son of Earl Hakon even at this time was betrothed to Holmfrid the daughter of Olaf King of Sweden. When Olaf the Swedish King, Svein the Danish King and Earl Eirik divided the realm of Norway between them, then had Olaf the Swedish King four counties, to wit, Throndhjem, the two Mores & Raumsdal; and eastward to him pertained Raumariki from the Gaut (Göta) river to Svinasund. ✎ This dominion did King Olaf make over to Earl Svein on the self-same conditions as the tribute paying kings or earls had held their lands aforetime from superior kings. Earl Eirik gat five counties in Throndhjem, also Halogaland and Naumdalen, the Fjords & Fialir, Sogn and Hardaland & Rogaland, and Agdir from the north right to Lidandesnes (the Naze). ✎ Thus saith Thord Kolbeinson:

‘I wist that save for Erling (bounteous chief whom I praise)

Erewhile the “hersirs” mostly were friends unto the earls;

The battle ended the land all southward from Agdir

123 To Veiga, or farther north, was subject made to Eirik.

Under the lord the land prospered; & this ’twas good should be.

His duty he thought it to hold o’er the northmen his hand.

Now hath died Svein the king south of us, so the tale goes

(The strength of most doth fail, and waste are his manors for grief).’

¶ Svein the King of the Danes was now once more the possessor of Vik, which had been his aforetime; to Earl Eirik he gave Raumariki and Hedemark, to be held as a fief. Svein Hakonson, he that was the finest man that men have ever looked on, received earldom from Olaf the Swede. Eirik and Earl Svein were alike baptized into and made profession of the true Faith, but even so long as they ruled over Norway gave they licence to every man that he should please himself about what creed he would cleave to, & moreover maintained they the old laws honourably and likewise all the customs of the land; therefore were they justly men who were well-beloved and good rulers. Now in all matters having concern in the ruling of the realm of the twain brothers was Earl Eirik ever the more prominent.