

# **The Story of Hen-Thorir**

# The Story of Hen-Thorir

1891 translation into English by William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon from the original Icelandic 'Hænsna-Þóris saga'.

## Chapter 1 - Of Men of Burgfirth

There was a man hight Odd, the son of Onund Broadbeard, the son of Wolf of Fitiar, the son of Thorir the Stamper; he dwelt at Broadlirstead in Reekdale of Burgfirth. His wife was Jorun, a wise woman and well spoken of. Four children had they, two sons of good conditions, and two daughters: one of their sons hight Thorod, and the other Thorwald; Thurid was one daughter of Odd, and Jofrid the other. Odd was by-named Odd-a-Tongue; he was not held for a man of fair dealings.

A man named Torn, the son of Valbrand, the son of Valthiof, the son of Orlyg of Esjuberg, had wedded Thurid, daughter of Odd-a-Tongue, and they dwelt at the other Broadlirstead.

There was a man hight Arngrim, the son of Helgi, the son of Hogni, who came out with Hromund; he dwelt at Northtongue; he was called Arngrim the priest, and his son was Helgi.

There was a man hight Blundketil, son of Geir the Wealthy, the son of Ketil Blund, after whom as Blundwater named: he dwelt at Ornlfsdale somewhat above where the house now standeth; there were many steads upward from it; and his son was Herstein. Blundketil was the wealthiest of all men, and the best conditioned of all men of the ancient faith; thirty tenants he had, and was the best-beloved man of the countryside.

There was a man called Thorkel Welt, the son of Red Biorn; he dwelt at Swigniskarth, west-away of Northwater. Helgi his brother dwelt at Hwamm in Northwaterdale.; another brother was Gunnwald, who had to wife Helga, daughter of Thorgeir of Withymere. Thorkel Welt was a wise man and well-befriended, very wealthy of goods.

There was a certain man hight Thorir, needy of money, not well-loved of the folk: his wont it was to go a-huokstering in summer-tide from one countryside to the other, selling in one place what he had bought in another; by which peddling his wealth waxed fast; and on a time when he went from the south over Holtbeacon Heath, he had hens with him in his journey to the north country, and sold them with his other wares, wherefore was he called Hen Thorir.

Now throve Thorir so much that he bought him land at a place called the Water, up from North-tongue, and but a few winters had he set up house before he became so very wealthy that he had moneys out with well-nigh every man. Yet though his fortune were amended, yet still prevailed his ill favour amongst men, for hardly was there any so well-hated as was Hen Thorir.

## Chapter 2 - Hen-Thorir fosters Helgi Arngrimson

On a day Thorir went his ways from home and rode to Northtongue to see Arngrim the priest, and craved to have the fostering of a child of his. "I would," said he, "take to me Helgi thy son, and heed him all I can, and have thy friendship in return, and furtherance herein, to wit, the getting of my rights from men."

Arngrim answered: "Little furtherance to me do I see in this fostering." Answered Thorir: "I will give the lad my money to the half-part rather than lose the fostering of him : but thou shalt right me and be bound thereto, with whomsoever I may have to do."

Arngrim answered: "Sooth to say, I will not put from me so good an offer."

So Helgi went home with Thorir, and the stead has been called thenceforward Heigiwater. And now Arngrim gave an eye to Thorir's business, and straightway men deemed him harder yet to deal with; he got his rights now of every man, and throve exceedingly in wealth, and became an exceeding rich man, but his ill favour stuck to him.

On a summer came a ship into Burgfirth, but lay not in the river-mouth, but in the roads without. Erne was the shipmaster's name, a man well-liked, and the best of chapman-lads. Now Odd heard of the ship's coming, and he was wont to come in good time to the opening of markets, and settle the prices of men's ladings, for he had the rule of

the countryside; neither durst any man fall to chaffer before they wotted what he would do. So now he went to the chapmen, and asked them what they had a mind to do about their voyage, and how soon they would have their market; and therewithal he told them of his wont of settling the prices of men's ladings. Erne answered : "We have a mind to be masters of our own for all thou mayst have to say; since not a penny's worth in the lading is thine; so this time thy words will be mightier than thy deeds."

Odd answered: "I misdoubt me that it will do worse for thee than for me: so be it then; for hereby I proclaim that I forbid all men to have any chaffer with you, or to land any goods; yea, I shall take money from all such as give you any help ; and I know that ye shall not away out of the haven before the spring-tide."

Erne answered: "Say what thou wilt; but none the more for that will we let ourselves be cowed."

Now Odd rides home, but the Eastmen lie in the haven wind-bound.

### **Chapter 3 - Blundketil takes the Eastmen to him**

The next day Herstein, Blundketil's son, rode west to Akraness, and he met the Eastmen as he came back, and found an old acquaintance in the master, and that was much to his mind.

Erne told Herstein what great wrong Odd had offered them. "And," quoth he, "we misdoubt us how we shall go about; our affair." So they talked together daylong and at eve rides Herstein home, and tells his father of the mariners to what pass their business has come. Blundketil answered: "I know the man now from thy story of him, for I was with his father when I was a child, nor ever fell I in with a fellow better at need than was he; so ill it is that his son is hard bestead, and his father would look to me to take some heed to his fortune if need were; so betimes tomorrow shalt thou ride down to the Haven, and bid him hither with as many men as he will; or he be liefer thereto, then will I flit him north or south, or where he will; and I will help him with all my heart as far as in me lies."

Herstein said it was good rede and manly: "Yet it is to be looked for that we shall have some folks' displeasure for it." Blundketil answered: "Whereas we have to carry about nought worse than Odd, we may lightly bear it." So wareth the night, and betimes on the morrow Blundketil let gather horses from the pastures, and when all was ready Herstein drave an hundred horses to meet the chapmen, nor need they crave any from any other stead. So he came thither to them, and told Erne what his father had taken on himself. Erne said he would take that with a good heart, but that he deemed the father and

son would have the enmity of others for it; but Herstein said they heeded it nought. Then said Erne : "Well, my crew shall be flitted into other countrysides, for the risk is enough, though we be not all in one and the same house." So Herstein had Erne and his lading home with him, and left not before all the chapmen were gone, and the ship laid up, and all brought into due order.

Blundketil received Erne wondrous well, and there he abode in good entertainment.

But now were tidings brought to Odd of what Blundketil had done, and men talk over it, and say that he had set himself up against Odd thereby. Odd answereth: "So may folk say; but Blundketil is such a man as is both sturdy and well-beloved, so I will even let the matter alone."

And so all is quiet.

## **Chapter 4 - Hay-Need this Season**

That summer was the grass light and bad, and hay-harvest poor because of the wet, and men had exceeding small hay-stores. Blundketil went round to his tenants that autumn, and told them that he would have his rents paid in hay on all his lands: "For I have much cattle to fodder, and little hay enow; but I will settle how much is to be slaughtered this autumn in every house of my tenants, and then will matters go well." Now weareth summer away and cometh winter, and there soon began to be exceeding scarcity north about the Lithe, and but little store there was to meet it, and men were hard pressed. So weareth the time over Yule, and when Thorri-tide was come folk were sore pinched, and for many the game was up.

But on an evening came to Blundketil one of his tenants, and told him that hay had failed him, and prayed deliverance of him. Master Blundketil answered: "How cometh that? I deemed that I had so looked to it in the autumn that things would be like to go well."

The man answered that less had been slaughtered than he had commanded. . Then said Blundketil: "Well, let us make a bargain together: I will deliver thee from thy trouble this time, but thou shalt tell no man thereof; because I would not that folk should fall to coming on me: all the less since ye have not kept my commandment"

So that man fared home, and told his friend that Blundketil was peerless among men in all dealings, and that he had helped him at his need ; and that man in turn told his friend, and so the matter became known all over the countryside.

Time wore and Goi came, and therewith came two more of the tenants to Blundketil, and told him that they were out of hay. Blundketil answered ; "Ye have done ill in departing from my counsel; for so it is, that though I have hay good store, yet have I more beasts therewithal: now if I help you, then shall I have nought for my own stock; lo you! that is the choice herein. But they pressed the case, and bewailed their misery, till he thought it pity of their moans, and so let drive home an hundred and forty horses, and let slay forty of the worst of them, and gave his tenants the fodder these should have had: so they fare home glad at heart. But the winter worsened as it wore, and the hope of many a man was quenched.

## Chapter 5 - Blundketil would buy Hay of Hen Thorir

Now when One-month was come came two more of Blundketil's tenants to him; they were somewhat better to do, but their hay had failed them now, and they prayed him to deliver them. He answered and said that he had not wherewithal, and that he would slaughter no more beasts. Then they asked if he knew of any man who had hay to sell, and he said he knew not for certain; but they drive on the matter, saying that their beasts must die if they get no help of him; he said: "It is your own doing; but I am told that Hen Thorir will have hay to sell."

They said: "We shall get nought of him unless thou go along with us, but he will straightway sell to us if thou become our surety in the bargain."

He answers: "I may do as much as to go with you, for it is meet that they should sell who have."

So they fare betimes in the morning, and there was a drift of wind from the north, which was somewhat cold; master Thorir was standing without at the time, and when he saw folk coming toward the garth, in he walks again, shuts the door, draws the bolt, and goes to his day-meal. Now was the door smitten on, and the lad Helgi took up the word and said: "Go thou out, foster-father, for here be men come to see thee." Thorir said he would eat his meat first; but the lad ran from the table, and came to the door and greeted the new-comers well. Blundketil asked, if Thorir were within and the lad said that so it was. "Bid him come out to us then" said Blundketil. The lad did so, and said that Blundketil was without, and would see Thorir. He answered: "Wherefore must Blundketil be sniffing about here? It is wondrous if he come for any good. I have nought to do with him." Then goes the lad and says that Thorir will not come out. "Then shall we go in" said Blundketil.

So they go into the chamber and are greeted there; but Thorir held his peace. "Things are come to this, Thorir" said Blundketil "that we would buy hay of thee."

Thorir answered: "Thy money is no better to me than mine own."

"That is as it may be," said Blundketil. Thorir said: "How comest thou, rich man as thou art, to lack hay?". "Nay, I am not come to that," said Blundketil; "I am dealing for my tenants here, who verily need help, and I would fain get it for them if it were to be got." Said Thorir: "Thou art right welcome to give to others of thine own, but not of mine."

Blundketil answered: "We will not ask a gift: let Odd and Arngrim be thine umpires, and I will give thee gifts moreover."

Thorir said: "I have no hay to sell; and, moreover, I will not sell it." Then went Blundketil out, and those fellows and the lad with them; and then Blundketil took up the word and said: "Which is it, that thy foster-father has no hay, or that he will not sell it?"

"Hay enough he has to sell if he would," answers the lad. Blundketil said: "Bring us to where the haystacks are."

He did so, and then Blundketil made a reckoning of the fodder for Thorir's stock, and made out that if they were all stall-fed up to the time of the Althing, there would still be of the hay five stacks over; so herewith they go in again, and Blundketil says: "I reckon about thy stock of hay, Thorir, that if all thy beasts were fed at stall till the Althing, there would yet be a good deal left over; and that would I buy of thee." Thorir answered: "And what shall I do for hay next winter then, if it is like this or worse?" Says Blundketil: "I will give thee the choice to take just the same lot of hay and no worse in the summer, and I will bring it into thy garth for thee."

Thorir answered: "If thou hast no store of hay now, why shouldst thou have more in the summer? but I know there is such odds of might between us, that thou mayest take my hay in despite of me if thou wilt."

Blundketil answers: "That is not the way to take it: thou wottest that silver goeth in all the markets of the land here, and therein will I pay thee."

"I will not have thy silver," said Thorir.

"Then take thou such wares as Odd and Arn-grim shall award thee," said Blundketil.

"Here are but few workmen," said Thorir, "and I like going about but little, nor will I be dragged hither and thither in such dealings."

Blundketil answereth: " Then shall I let bear the goods home for thee." Thorir said: "I have no house-room for them, and they shall certainly be spoilt.

Answereth Blundketil: "I shall get thee hides, then, to do over them, so that they shall be safe."

Thorir answers: "I will not have other men scratching about in my storehouses."

Says Blundketil: "Then shall they be at my house through the winter, and I will take care of them for thee."

"I know all thy babble now," said Thorir, "and

I will in no wise deal with thee;"

Blundketil said: "Then must things go a worsen road; for the hay will we have all the same, though thou forbid it, and lay the price thereof in its stead, making the most of it that we are many."

Then Thorir held his peace, but his mind was nothing good. Blundketil let take ropes and bind up the hay, and then they hove it up in loads on to the horses and bore it away; but made up the price in full

## **Chapter 6 - Thorir would make a Case against Blundketil**

Now shall we tell what Thorir fell to : he gat him gone from home with Helgi his Foster-son, and they ride to Northtongue, and are greeted there wondrous well, and Arngrim asks for tidings. Thorir answered: "I have heard of nought newer than the robbery." "Nay, now, what robbery?" said Arngrim.

Thorir answered: "Blundketil has robbed me of all my hay so that there is hardly a wisp left to throw to the neat in the cold weather."

"Is it so, Helgi?" asked Arngrim.

"Not one whit," said Helgi; "Blundketil did right well in the matter." And therewith he told how the thing had gone between them.

Then said Arngrim ; "Yea, that is more like; and the hay that he hath gotten is better bestowed than that which shall rot on thine hands."

Thorir answered: "In an evil hour I offered; fostering to thy child ; forsooth, whatsoever ill deed is done to me in mine own house none the more, shall I be righted here, or holpen at thine hands; a mighty shame is that to thee."

Arngrim answers: "Forsooth, that, was a rash deed from the first, for I wot that in thee I have to do with an evil man."

"Nay, words will not slay me," said Thorir; "but I am ill content that thou rewardest my good deeds in such wise ; but so it is that: what men rob from me is taken from thee no less." They parted with things in such a plight. Thorir rides away, and comes to Broadlairstead, where Odd greeted him well, and asked for tidings.

"Nought have I heard newer than the robbery," said Thorir. "Nay, now, what robbery?" said Odd.

Thorir. answered : "Blundketil took all my hay, so that my store is clean gone; and I would fain have thy furtherance; moreover, the matter toucheth thee, whereas thou art a ruler in the countryside, to right what is wrong; and thou mayest call to mind withal that he hath made himself thy foe."

Odd asked: "Is it so, Helgi?" He answered that Thorir had wrested the matter clean away from the truth, and he set forth how the whole thing had gone. Odd answered "I will have nought to do with it; I should have done likewise if need had been." Said Thorir: "'True is the saw that saith, 'Best but to hear of woeful thanes;' and this also: 'A man's foes are those of his own house.'"

Therewithal rides Thorir away, and Helgi with him, and home he fareth ill-content.

## **Chapter 7 - Of Thorwald, Odd-a-Tongue's Son**

Thorwald, the son of Odd-a-Tongue, had come ashore that summer in the north country, and had guested there through the winter; but as it drew toward summer, he fared from the north to go see his father and abode a night at Northtongue in good cheer. Now there was a man guesting there already, called Vidfari, a gangrel man who went from one corner of the land to the other; he was nigh akin to Thorir, and like to him in mind and mood. So that same evening he gathered up his clothes and took to his heels, and ran away and stayed not till he came to Thorir, who welcomed him with open arms, saying "Surely something good will come to me of thy homing." He answered: "That may well be, for now is Thorwald Oddson come to Northtongue, and is a-guesting there now."

Said Thorir: "I thought I saw somegood coming to me from thine hands, so well was all with me!"

So weareth the night, and the first thing on the morrow rideth Thorir with his foster-son to North-tongue : thereto was come much folk, but the lad had a seat given to him; while Thorir wandered about the floor.

Now Thorwald, a-sitting on the dais, sets eyes on him as he talks privily to Arngrim, of whom he asketh: "What man is he wandering about the floor yonder?"

Arngrim answereth: "That is my son's fosterer" "Yea," says Thorwald; " why shall he not have a seat then?"

Arngrim says: "That is no matter of thine."

"Well, it shall not be so," says Thorwald and he lets call Thorir to him therewith, and gives him a seat beside himself, and asks for the tidings most spoken about. Thorir answered : "Sore was I tried whereas Blundketil robbed me."

"Are ye at one on it?" said Thorwald.

"Far from it," said Thorir.

"How cometh it, Arngrim," said Thorwald, "that ye great men let such shameful doings go on?"

Arngrim answered: "It is mostly lies, and there is but little in the bottom of the matter."

"Yet it was true that he had the hay?" said Thorwald,

"Yea," said Arngrim, "he had it sure enough."

"Every man has a right to rule his own," says Thorwald; "and withal your friendship for him goes for little if thou let him be trodden under foot."

"Thou art dear to my heart, Thorwald," said Hen Thorir, "and my heart tells me'that thou wilt right my case somewhat."

Said Thorwald: "I am but feeble to lean on."

Thorir said: "I will give thee half my wealth for the righting of my case, that I may have either outlawry or self-doom, so that my foes may not sit over mine own."

Arngrim said: "Do it not, Thorwald, for in him ye have no trusty fellow to backup; and 'in Blundketil thou wilt have to do with a man both wise and mighty, and well befriended on all sides."

"I see," said Thorwald, "that envy hath got hold of thee for my taking of his money, and that thou grudgest it me."

Said Thorir: "'Consider, Thorwald, that my wealth will be found to be in good kind and other men wot that far and wide money for mine own goods is withheld from me."

Arngrim said: "I would fain hinder thee still; Thorwald, from taking up this case, but thou must even do as it seemeth good to thee ; I misdoubt me though, that things great and evil will come of this."

Thorwald answers: "Well, I will not refuse wealth offered."

Now hansels Thorir half his wealth to him, and therewith the case against Blundketil.

Then spake Arngrim again: "How art thou minded to set about the case?" Thorwald answered: "I shall first go see my father, and take counsel with him."

"Nay," said Thorir, "that is not to my mind: I will not hang back now I have staked so much hereon; I will have you go summon Blundketil forthwith tomorrow." Thorwald answereth : "It will be seen of thee that thou art no lucky man, and ill will be born of thee; yet now thou must needs have thy way."

So he and Thorir bind themselves to meet on the morrow at a place appointed.

## Chapter 8 - The Summoning of Master Blundketil

Betimes on the morrow, therefore, rides Thorwald, and Arngrim with him, thirty men in company, and meet Thorir, who had but two with him, Helgi Arngrimson, to wit, and Vidfari, Thorir's kinsman. "Why are ye so few, Thorir" said Thorwald. Thorir answered: "I knew well that ye would not lack men." So they ride up along the Lithe, and their going was seen from the steads, and every man ran from out his house, and he thought himself happiest who got first to Blundketil's, so that a many men awaited them there.

Thorwald and his folk ride up to the garth, and leap off their horses, and walk up to the house. Blundketil sees it and goes to meet them and bids them take due entertainment. Said Thorwald: "Other errand have we here than the eating of meat; I will wot how thou wilt answer for that matter of the taking of Thorir's hay in his despite." "Even as to him," said Blundketil, "award it at what price soever ye will; and to thee will I give gifts over and above; the better and the more to thee as thou art the more worthy than Thorir; and I shall make thine honour so great that all men shall be a-talking of it how thou art well honoured." "Thorwald was silent, for he deemed this well offered, but Thorir answered, and said: "We will not 'take it; there is no need to think of it; this choice I had erewhile, and little do I deem me holpen if so it be; and it avails me little that I have given thee my wealth."

Then said Thorwald: "What wilt thou do, Blundketil, as to the law herein?" "Nothing but this; that thou award and shape it thyself alone, even as thou wilt." Then answered Thorwald: "Well, meseemeth, there is nothing for it but to take the case into court." And therewith he summoned Blundketil for robbery, naming witnesses thereto, and his words and the summoning were of the hardest that are.

Now turneth Blundketil back toward the house, and meeteth Erne the Eastman a-going about his wares. Erne asked: "Art thou wounded, master, that thou art red as blood?"

"Nay, I am not wounded," said he, "but I had as lief be, for I have had words said to me that never have been uttered before; I am called thief and robber."

Ernie takes his bow and sets an arrow on the string, and he comes out just as the others were a-leaping a-horseback; he shot, and a man met the arrow, and sank down from his horse -- who but Helgi, son of Arngrim the priest -- they ran to him, but Thorir pushed forward between them, and thrust the men from, him, bidding them give place: "For this concerneth me most." He bent down over Helgi, who was verily dead by now; but Thorir said; "Is there yet a little might in thee, foster-son?" Then he arose from the corpse and said: "The lad spake twice to me in the same wise, even thus: "Burn! Burn Blundketil In!"

Then answered Arngrim and said: "Now it fares as I misdoubted; for, Oft cometh ill from an ill man; and verily I feared that great ill would come from thee, Thorir, and now, in spite of thy babble, I wot not if the lad really spoke it, though it is not unlike that it will come to that; for evilly the thing began, and in likewise shall end mayhap." "Meseemeth" said Thorir, "that something lieth nearer to thine hand than scolding at me."

So Arngrim and his folk ride away to the edge of a wood and leap off their horses, and abide there till nightfall.

Blundketil thanked his men well for their helping, and so bade every man ride his ways home as he best might.

## Chapter 9 - The Burning of Blundketil

So it is said that at nightfall Thorwald and his company ride to the house at Ormolfe-dale, where all folk were now asleep; there they drag a stack of brushwood to the house, and set fire thereto; and Blundketil and his folk awoke not before the house was ablaze over them.

Blundketil asked who had lighted that hot fire, and Thorir told who they were. Blundketil asked

if aught might get him peace; but Thorir said "There is nought for it but to burn." And they departed not before every man's child therein was burnt up.

Now Herstein, Blundketil's son, had gone that evening to his foster-father Thorbiorn, who was by-named the Strider, and of whom it was said that he was not always all utterly there where he was seen. So Herstein awoke the next morning; and asked his foster-father if he were awake. "Yea," said he, "what wilt thou?" "Medreamed that my father came in hither with his raiment all ablaze, and even as one flame, he seemed to me." Then they arise and go out, and see the fire presently: so they take their weapons, and go thither in haste; but all men were gone away by then they came thither. Said Herstein:

"Woeful tidings have befallen here; what rede now?"

Thorbiorn answers; "Now will I make the most of the offer which Odd-a-Tongue hath often made me, to come to him if I were in any need." "Nought hopeful I deem that," saith Herstein. But they go nevertheless, and come to Broadlair-stead, and call out Odd; who cometh out and greeteth them, and asketh for tidings; so they told him what had come to pass, and he spake as deeming it ill. Then Thorbiorn taketh up the word: "So it is, master Odd," saith he, "that thou hast promised me thy furtherance; now therefore will I take; it of thee if thou wilt give us some good rede, and bring it to pass." Odd said that he would do even so; and so they ride to Ormolfsdale, and come there before day; by then were the houses fallen in, and the fire was growing pale.

So Odd rideth to a certain house that, was not utterly burned; there he laid hold of a birch rafter, and pulled it down from the house, and then rode with the burning brand withershins round about the house, and spake: "Here take I land to my self, for here I see no house inhabited; hearken; ye to this all witnesses hereby;" And therewithal he smote his horse, and rode away. Then said Herstein: "What rede now? This one has turned out ill." Said Thorbiorn: "Hold thou thy peace if thou mayest, whatsoever befall."

Herstein answered and said that all he had spoken hitherto was not overmuch forsooth. Now the outbower wherein was the lading of the East-men was unburned and much other goods was therein moreover. Herewith old Thorbiorn vanished away, and as Herstein looked on the house, he saw this outbower opened, and the goods borne out, but yet beheld no man: Then are the goods bound up into loads; and then he hears a great clatter in the home-mead, and lo! his father's horses are being driven home, and the sheep, and the neat from the byre, and all the live-stock: then were the loads heaved up, and the whole drove went their ways, and every penny's-worth brought off. Then Herstein turned about, and saw that master Thorbiorn was driving the cattle.

So they wend their ways down along the country side to Staff holts-tongue, and so west over North water.

## Chapter 10 - Of Thorkel Welt and Gunnar Hlifarson

The shepherd of Thorkel Welt of Swigni-skarth went to his sheep that morning, and he saw them a-faring on and driving all kind of cattle; so he told Thorkel thereof, who answers: "I wot how it will be; these will be the men of Thwartlithe, my friends, who have been sore pinched by the winter, and will be driving their beasts hither: they shall be welcome, for I have hay enough, and here are enough winter pastures open for grazing beasts." So he went out when they came into the home-mead, and gave them good welcome, and bade them to all good things that they would have; yea, scarce might they get off their horses, he was so eager-kind with them. But Thorbiorn said: "Thy good welcome is a great matter, and much lies on thy holding to all thou hast promised us."

Said Thorkel: "I wot of thine errand, that ye would leave the beasts behind here, where forsooth there lacketh not open pastures and good." Thorbiorn said : "That will we take,"

Then he taketh Thorkel aside by the houses, and said: "Great tidings and evil are abroad."

Thorkel asked what they were.

"Master Blundketil was burned in his house last night," said Thorbiorn.

"Who wrought that deed of shame?" said Thorkel.

So Thorbiorn told the whole story of it, saying moreover: "Herstein here hath need of thine wholesome redes."

Thorkel says: "It is not so sure that I should have been so busy with my offers had I known hereof before; but my redes shall even go down the road they set out on ; and first come ye in to meat."

They said yea thereto. Thorkel Welt was of few words, and somewhat thoughtful; but when they had eaten, he bade them to horse; and they take their weapons, and get a-horseback, but Thorkel rode first that day, and gave command that the beasts in the pasture should be well heeded, and those at stall fed plenteously. So ride they now to Woodstrand, to Gunnarstead, which lieth on the inner side of the Strand. There dwelt a man named Gunnar, the son of Hlifar, a big man and a strong, and the greatest of champions; he was wedded to a sister of Thord Gellir called Helga, and had two daughters, Jofrid and Thurid.

Thither they come late in the day, and get off their horses up above the house; the wind was in the north, and it was somewhat cold. So Thorkel goes to the door and knocks, and a house-carle comes thereto, and greets the new-comer well, asking who he might be. Thorkel says he would be none the wiser though he tell him, and bids him bid Gunnar come out. He said that Gunnar was gotten to bed; but Thorkel bids him say that a man would see him. The house-carle does so, goes in, and tells Gunnar that here is a man will see him. Gunnar asks who it might be; the house-carle said he wotted not, but that he was great of growth.

Gunnar said : "Go and tell him to abide here to-night."

The house-carle went and did as Gunnar bade; but Thorkel said he would not take that bidding from a thrall, but from the master himself. The house-carle said that, be that as true as it might be, Gunnar was not wont to arise benights. "Do one of two things," said he; "either go away, or come in and abide here to-night."

"Do thou one of two things," said Thorkel, "either go bear my errand doughtily to Gunnar, or have my sword-hilt on the nose of thee." The house-carle ran in, and shut to the door, and Gunnar asked why he went on so wildly; but he said that he would talk no more with the newcomer, for that he was exceeding rough of speech. Then Gunnar arose, and went out into the home-mead; and he was clad in shirt and linen breeches, with a cloak cast over him, black shoes on his feet, and his sword in his hand; he greeted Thorkel well, and bade him come in, but he said there were more of them in company. So Gunnar goeth out into the home-mead; but Thorkel catcheth hold of the door-ring, and shutteth to the door, and then they go round to the back of the house. There Gunnar welcomes them, but Thorkel said: "Sit we down, because we have many things to say to thee, Gunnar."

They did so, sitting on either hand of him, and so close that they sat on the very skirts of the cloak that Gunnar had over him. Then spake Thorkel: "So it falleth out, master Gunnar, that here is a man in my company called Herstein, son of Blundketil, nor need we hide our errand from thee, that he comes a-wooing Thurid thy daughter of thee; and for this cause have I come hither with him, that I would not thou turn the man away, for meseemeth it is a most meet match; withal we shall deem it no little matter if he be deemed unworthy, he and my furtherance, yea, or if he be answered coldly."

Gunnar said: "I may not answer to this matter alone; I will take counsel with her mother, and with my daughter herself, and especially with Thord Gellir, her kinsman; yet have we heard nought but good of the man, or his father either, and it is a matter to be looked to."

Then answered Welt: "Thou must know that we will not be dangling about the woman, and we think the match no less for thine honour than for ours; wondrous I deem it that a wise man like thee should ponder matters in such a good match as is this; moreover, we will not have come from home for nothing; wherefore, Herstein, I will give thee whatso help thou wilt to bring this about if he know not his own honour."

Gunnar answered: "I cannot make out why ye are so hasty in this, or why ye go nigh even to threaten me; for the match is an even one; but I may look for any mischief from you; so I must even take the rede of stretching forth my hand."

So did he, and Herstein named witnesses for himself, and betrothed himself to the woman. Then they stand up, and go in, and are well served.

Now Gunnar asks for tidings; and Thorkel says that there is none newer than the burning of Blundketil.

Gunnar asked who brought it to pass, and Thorkel says that Thorwald Oddson and Arngrim the priest were the leaders therein. Gunnar answered in few words; blamed but little, and praised nought at all.

## **Chapter 11 - Thord betrotheth Herstein and Thurid**

Next morning forthwith is Gunnar afoot, and coming to Thorkel bids him clothe himself: so do they, and go to their meat, and then are the horses got ready, and they leap a-horseback; and Gunnar rides ahead in along the firth, and it is much under ice. So they stay not till they come to Thord Gellir's at Hwamm, who greeted them well, and asked for tidings; but they told him what seemed good to them. Then Gunnar calls Thord apart to talk with him, and says that here in his company are Herstein, Blund-ketil's son, and Thorkel Welt: "And their errand is that Herstein speaketh of tying himself to me by wedding Thurid my daughter; what thinkest thou of the match? the man is goodly and doughty, and lacketh not wealth, for his father hath said that he would give up the house, and that Herstein is to take the same?"

Thord answereth: "I like Blundketil well; for on a time I strove with Odd-a-Tongue at the Althing for weregild for a thrall which had been awarded me against him. I went to fetch it in exceeding foul weather with two men in my company ; and so we came benight to Blundketil, and had very fair welcome, and we abode there a week; and he shifted horses with us, giving me certain good stallions; such treatment I had from him; and yet meseemeth it were no ill rede not to strike the bargain."

"Well," said Gunnar, "thou must know that she will not be betrothed to any other wooer; for the man is both doughty and a good man in my eyes; and there is danger in what may befall if he be turned away."

Then Gunnar goes and finds his daughter, for she was a-fostering with Thord there, and asked her what her mind was about the wooing; she answereth that she was not so desirous of men but that she would deem it just as well to abide at home : "For I am well looked after with Thord my kinsman; yet will I do thy pleasure and his, in this, as in other things"

Now comes Gunnar to talk with Thord again, saying that the match looks very seemly to him.

Says Thord : "Why shouldst thou not give thy daughter to him if thou wilt?" Gunnar answers:

"I will give her only if thy will be as mine herein."

So Thord says it shall be done by the rede of them both.

"I will, Thord," said Gunnar, "that thou betroth the woman unto Herstein." Thord answers: "Nay, it is for thee thyself to betroth thine own daughter."

Says Gunnar: "I should deem myself the more honoured if thou betroth her, for it were seemlier so."

So Thord let it be so; and the betrothal went on: then spake Gunnar: "I pray thee, moreover, to let the wedding be holden here at Hwamm, for then it will be done with all honour."

Thord bade him have his way if he thought it better so.

Gunnar says : "We should be minded to have it in a week's space." Then they get a-horseback, and go their ways, but Thord brought them on their road, and asked at last if there were anything new to tell.

Gunnar answereth: "We have heard nought newer than the burning of master Blundketil."

Thord asked how that had come about, and Gunnar told him all the tale of how the burning had betid, and who was he that stirred it, and who were they who did it.

Said Thord: "I would not have counselled this match so hastily had I known this ; ye will deem that ye have got round me altogether in wit, and have overcome me with wiles. I see how it is, however ; ye are not so sure that ye are enough for this case by yourselves."

Gunnar said: "We deem ourselves safe in leaning on thy help, for thou art bound to help thy son-in-law even as we are bound to help thee ; for many heard thee betroth the woman, and all was done with thy goodwill. Well, good it were to try once for all which of you great men may hold out longest; for ye have long been eating each the other with the wolfs mouth."

## Chapter 12 - A Wedding at Hwamm

So parted they, and Thord is as wroth as wroth may be, deeming himself bemocked of them; but they ride to Gunnarstead first, thinking how they have played their game well to have brought Thord into the case, and right joyous are they. They rode not south as yet, but bade men to the feast, and made for Hwamm at the time appointed. There had Thord a many guests, and marshalled men to their seats in the evening: he himself sat on one bench with Gunnar his brother-in-law and his men, but Thorkel Welt sat beside the bridegroom on the other bench with their guests; the women filled the dais-bench.

So when the boards were set, Herstein the bridegroom leapt up and over the board to where was a certain stone; then he set one foot upon the stone, and spake: "This oath I swear hereby, that before the Althing is over this summer I shall have had Arngrim the priest made fully guilty, or gained self-doom else." Then back he strode to his seat.

Then sprang forth Gunnar and spake: "This oath swear I, that before the Althing is over this summer I shall have Thorwald Oddson to outlawry, or else self-doom to our side."

Then he stepped back and sat himself down at the board, and saith to Thord: "Why sittest thou there, Thord, and vowest nought of thine own about it? we wot thou hast e'en such things in thy heart as we have."

Thord answers: "It shall lie quiet, though, for this time."

Answers Gunnar: "If thou wilt that we speak for thee, then are we ready thereto, and we wot thou art minded to take Odd-a-Tongue."

Thord said: "Ye may rule your own speech, but I will be master over my words; bring that ye have . spoken to a good end."

Nought more to tell of befell at the feast, but it went on in noble fashion, and when it came to an end, each went about his own business, and winter wore away.

But in springtide they gathered men, and fared south to Burgfirth, and, coming to Northtongue, summoned Arngrim and Hen Thorir to the Thing of Thingness: but Herstein parted company from them with thirty men to go thither whereas he said he had heard tell of Thorwald Oddson's last night-harbour; for Thorwald was gone from his winter guest-quarters. So the countryside is astir, and there is much talk, and mustering of men on either side.

## Chapter 13 - Battle on Whitewater

Now it fell out that Hen Thorir vanished away from the countryside, with twelve men, when he knew who had come into the case, and nought was to be heard of him.

Odd gathers force now from the Dales, either Reekdale and Skorradales, and all the country south of Whitewater, and had moreover many from other countries. Arngrim the priest gathered men from all Thwartwaterlithe, and some part of Northwater-dale. Thorkel Welt gathered men from the Nether Mires, and from Staffholtstongue; and some of the men of Northwaterdale also he had with him, because Helgi his brother dwelt at Hwamm, and he followed him.

Now gathers Thord Gellir men from the west, but had not many men : so all they who are in the case meet, and are two hundred men in all: they ride down to the west of Northwater, and over it at Eyiaford above Staff holt, with the mind to cross Whitewater by the ford of Thrall stream; then they see a many men going south of the river, and there is Odd-a-Tongue with hard on four hundred men : so they speed on their way, being wishful to come first to the ford ; they meet by the river, and Odd's folk leap off their horses, and guard the ford, so that Thord's company may not pass forth, how fain soever they were to come to the Thing. Then they fell to fight, and men were presently hurt, and four of Thord's men fell, amongst whom was Thorolf Fox, brother of Alf-a-dales, and a man of account; therewith they turn away, but one man fell of Odd's and three were sorely hurt.

So now Thord laid the case to the Althing; they ride home west, and men deem the honour of the west-country folk to be falling. But Odd rides to the Thing, and sends his thralls home with the horses ; of whom when they came home Jorun his wife asked for tidings; they said they had no other to tell save that he was come from Broadfirth out of the west country who alone was able to answer Odd-a-Tongue, and whose voice and speech were as the roaring of a bull.

She said it was no tidings though he were answered as other men, and that nought had befallen save what was likeliest to befall. "Ah, there was a battle though," said they, " and five men fell in all, and many were hurt." For they had told no whit of this before.

The Thing wears with nought to tell of; but when those kinsmen-in-law came home they changed dwellings; Gunnar goes into Ormolfsdale, and Herstein takes Gunnarstead. Then let Gunnar flit to him from the west all that timber which Eastman Erne had owned, and so gat him home to Ormolfsdale; then he falls to and builds up again the houses at the stead there; for he was the handiest of men, and in all things well skilled, the best of men at arms, and the briskest in all wise.

## **Chapter 14 - Of Matters at the Althing**

So weareth the time on till men ride to the Thing, and there is much arraying of men in the countryside, and either company rides wondrous many.

But when Thord Gellir and his men come to Gunnarstead, then is Herstein sick, and may not fare to the Thing; so he hands his cases over to others: thirty men abode behind with him; but Thord rides to the Thing. He gathereth to him kinsfolk and friends, and cometh to the Thing betimes, which in those days was held under Armans-fell, and as the companies come in Thord has a great gathering.

Now is Odd-a-Tongue seen coming. Thord rideth to meet him, and would not that he should get him the peace of the hallowed Thing. Odd is riding with three hundred men. So Thord and his folk guard the Thingstead, and men fall to fight straightway, and very many are hurt.

There fell six of Odd's men, for Thord had many more than he. Now worthy men see that great troubles will come of it if the whole Thing gets to fighting, and late will it be amended; so they go betwixt them and part them, and turn the case to a peaceful awarding; for Odd was overborne by numbers and had to give way; yea, both because he was deemed to have the heavier case to back, and because he had the weaker force.

So it was proclaimed that Odd was to pitch his tents away from the peace of the Thing, and to go to the courts, and about his errands, and to fare with meek demeanour, showing no stiff-neckedness, neither he nor his men.

Then men sit over the cases, and seek how they may appease them, and it went heavily with Odd, mostly, indeed, because there was over-mastery against him.

## Chapter 15 - Of Hen Thorir's Ending

But now shall we tell somewhat of Herstein; for his sickness presently left him after men were gone to the Thing, and he fared to Ornelfsdale : there early one morning he was in the stithy, for he was the handiest of men with iron; so there came to him thither a goodman called Ornof, and said: "My cow is sick, and I pray thee, Herstein, to come and see her; we are rejoiced that thou art come back, for thus we have some of thy father's heart left us, who was of the greatest avail to us."

Herstein answered: "I take no keep of thy cow, nor may I know what aileth her."

Said the goodman : "Ah, well I great is the difference betwixt thee and thy father, for he gave me the cow, and thou wilt not so much as come and look at her."

Herstein said: "I will give thee another cow if this one dies."

The goodman said: "Yea, but first of all I would have thee come and see this." Then Herstein sprang up, and was, wroth, and went with the goodman, and they turned into a way that led into the wood; for a byway went there with the wood on either hand: but as Herstein went on the cliff-road he stood still, and he was the keenest-eyed of men. He said: "A shield peeped out in the wood yonder."

The goodman held his peace, and Herstein said: "Hast thou betrayed me, hound? now if thou art bound to silence by any oaths, lie down in the path here, and speak no word; but if thou do not so, I will slay thee."

So the goodman lay down, but Herstein turned back and called on his men, who take their weapons and go to the wood, and find Ornof yet in the path, and bid him go take them to the place where the meeting was appointed. So they go till they come to a clearing, and then Herstein said to Ornof: "I will not compel thee to speak, but do thou now even as thou hast been ordered to do."

So Ornof ran up a certain knoll and whistled shrilly, and forth sprang twelve men, and who but Hen Thorir was the leader of that band.

So Herstein and his company take them and slay them, and Herstein himself smites the head from Thorir, and has it along with him. Then they ride south to the Thing and tell these tidings, and Herstein is much honoured for the deed, and his good renown furthered, as was like to be.

Now is peace made in these cases, and the end of it was that Arngrim the priest was fully outlawed, and all those that were at the burning except Thorwald Oddson, who was to be away for three winters, and then be free to come back; money was given for the faring over the sea of other men. Thorwald went abroad that summer, and was taken captive in Scotland and enthralled there.

After this the Thing was ended, and men deem that Thord has carried out the case well and mightily. Arngrim the priest also went abroad that summer, but as to what money was paid is nothing certain. Such was the end of this case.

So then folk ride home from the Thing, and those of the outlawed fare who were appointed to.

## **Chapter 16 - Thorod Oddson wooeth Gunnar's daughter Jofrid**

Gunnar Hlifarson sitteth now at Ornlfsdale, and has housed himself well there; he had much of mountain pastures, and ever had but few men at home; Jofrid, Gunnar's daughter, had a tent without doors, for she deemed it less dreary so.

It befell on a day that Thorod, son of Odd-a-Tongue, rode to Thwartwaterlithe; he came to Ornlfsdale by the beaten way, and went into Jo-frid's tent, and she greeted him well; he sat down beside her, and they fell to talk together; but therewith in comes a lad from the mountain-pasture, and bids Jofrid help take off the loads. Thorod goes and takes off the loads, and then the lad goes his way, and comes to the mountain-stead; there Gunnar asked him why he was so speedily back, but he answered nought. Gunnar said : "Sawest thou ought to tell of?"

"Nought at all," said the lad. "Nay," said Gunnar, "there is something in the look of thee as if a thing had passed before thine eyes which thou deemest worth talking of; so tell me what it is, or if any man has come to the house?" "I saw no one new-come," said the lad. "Nay, but thou shalt tell me," said Gunnar; and took up a stout switch to beat the boy withal, but got no more out of him than before; so then he mounts and rides swiftly down along the Lithe by the winter-fold. Jofrid caught sight of her father as he went, and told Thorod, and bade him ride away: "For I were loth for any ill to come to thee by me." Thorod said he would ride presently; but Gunnar came on apace, and leaping from his horse went into the tent.

Thorod greeted him well, and Gunnar took his greeting, and then asked him why he was come thither. Thorod told him why he was come: "But this I do, not out of enmity to thee, but rather I would wot how thou wouldst answer me, were I to woo Jofrid thy daughter of thee."

Gunnar answered : "I will not give her to thee amidst these goings-on; for matters have long stood on a ticklish point betwixt us."

So therewithal rides Thorod home.

## **Chapter 17 - Thorod weddeth Jofrid**

On a day Odd says that it were not ill to have a little avail of the lands of Ornlfs-dale: "whereas other men have wrongfully sat upon my possessions."

The women said that it were good so to do, for that the beasts were very scant of milk, and that they would milk much the better for such change. "Well, thither shall they," said Odd, "for there is much good pasture there."

Then said Thorod: "I would go with the cattle, for then will they deem it a harder matter to set on us."

Odd said he was right fain thereof; so they go with the cattle, and when they are come a long way, Thorod bids them drive the beasts where the pasture is worst and stoniest. So wears the night away, and they drive the beasts home in the morning, and when the women have milked them, they say they have never been so dry before; wherefore the thing is not tried again.

Weareth a while away now, till on a morning early Odd falleth to talk with Thorod his son: "Go thou down along the countryside, and gather folk; for now will I drive those men from our possessions; but Torfi shall fare north aver the Neck, and make this muster known, and we will meet at Stoneford."

So do they, and gather folk. Thorod and his folk muster, ninety men in all, and so ride for the ford; thereto come first Thorod and his company, and he biddeth them ride on: "I will await my father."

Now as they come to the garth at Ornofsdale, Gunnar was making up a wain-load; then saith a lad who was with Gunnar: "Men are faring to the stead, no little company." "Yea," said Gunnar, "so it is;" and he went home to his house, and took his bow, for he was the best shooter among men, and came nighest therein to matching Gunnar of Lithend. He had built a fair house at the stead, and there was a window in the outer door wherethrough a man might thrust out his head; by this door he stood, bow in hand. Now comes Thorod to the house, and, going up to the house with but few men, asks if Gunnar will offer any atonement.

He answers: "I wot not of aught to be atoned for, and I look for it that before ye have your will of me, my handmaidens here will have set the Sleepthorn into some of yon fellows, or ever I bow adown in the grass."

Said Thorod: "True it is that thou art wellnigh peerless among the men that now are, yet may such a company come against thee as thou mayest not withstand, for my father is riding to the garth now with a great company, and is minded to slay thee."

Gunnar answered: "It is well, but I would have wished to have had a man before me ere I fall to field. But I wonder at it nowise, though thy father keep but little to the peace."

Said Thorod: "Nay, 'tis all the other way; we wish indeed that thou and I should make a good and true peace, and that thou stretch forth thine hand, and give me Jofrid thy daughter."

Gunnar answers: "Thou cowest me not to give thee my daughter; yet would the match be not far from equal as to thee, for thou art a brave man and a truer"

Thorod saith: "It will not be so accounted of amongst men of worth; and I must needs give thee many thanks for thy taking this choice on such condition as befitteth."

So what with the talking over of his friends, what with thinking that Thorod had ever fared well of his ways, Gunnar stretched forth his hand, and so the matter ended.

But even therewith came Odd into the home-mead, and Thorod straightway turned to meet his father, and asked him of his intent. Odd said he was minded to burn up the house and the men therein; but Thorod answered: "Another road have matters gone, for Gunnar and I have made peace together." And he told how the thing had betid. "Hearken to the fool!" saith Odd; "would it be any the worse for thee to have the woman if Gunnar our greatest foe were first slain? And an ill deed have I done in ever having furthered thee."

Thorod answered and said: "Thou shalt have Hen Thorir to do with me first, if it may no otherwise be done."

Then men go between them, and the father and son are appeased, and the end of the matter was that Thorod was wedded to Jofrid, and Odd was very ill content.

So folk go home with matters thus done, and later on men sit at the wedding, and Thorod deems his lot happy. But at the end of the winter Thorod fared abroad because he had heard that Thorwald his brother was in bondage, and he would ransom him with money; he came to Norway, but never back to Iceland again, neither he nor his brother.

Now waxed Odd very old, and when he knew that neither of his sons would come back to him, a great sickness took him, and when it grew heavy on him, he spake to his friends, bidding them bear him up to Skaney-fell when he was dead, and saying that thence would he look down on all the Tongue ; and even so was it done.

As for Jofrid, Gunnar's daughter, she was wedded afterwards to Thorstein Egilson of Burg, and was the greatest-hearted of women. Thus endeth the story of Hen Thorir.