

sore feet. But Sámr and his men had nothing to say for themselves ; but in the same moment Thorkell sprang into the booth and said to Thorgeirr his brother : “ Be not so hasty and furious, kinsman, about this ; it will do thee no harm, and people often do by chance things worse than they would ; and to many a man it has happened to be unable to have his eye on all things, when his mind is overloaded with great things. No wonder, kinsman, that thou shouldst be so hurt in thy foot which has so long been painful, and, indeed, that pain pinches thyself sharpest. But even so it may be, that no less painful to an old man is the death of his son, for whom he can get no redress, being moreover a man pinched by every kind of want. No doubt he knows best his own pain, and it is not to be wondered at that he should not be very heedful of all things, in whose mind mighty things are abiding.” Thorgeirr answered : “ I did not know that he was to hold me responsible for this, for I did not kill his son, and he cannot therefore revenge this on me.” “ He nowise minded to be avenged on thee,” says Thorkell, “ but he came to thee at a faster pace than he could help, and paid for his dimness of sight in his eager hope of finding some support in thee. And a noble deed it would be to lend one’s help to an old and needy man. This is to him a matter of necessity, not of choice, seeing that it is his son, after whom he has to take up the suit. But now all the chieftains back out of all help to these men, and show therein a great want of great-mindedness.” Thorgeirr answered : “ Against whom have these men the plaint to bring ?” Thorkell answered : “ Hrafnkell the priest has slain the son of Thorbjörn, sackless. One deed after another he works, never allowing redress to any one therefor.” Thorgeirr answered : “ I shall, belike, fare the way of others, in not finding that I have any such good deed to requite to these men, as that I should go willingly into law struggles with Hrafnkell. For it seems that every summer he deals with those who have got cases to contest with him, so that most of them get little or no honour thereof in the end. In this way I have seen them fare every one. This, I guess, must be the cause why most men are so unwilling, whom necessity does not urge along.” Thorkell answered : “ It may be, if I were a chieftain, that I should fare in the same way, and that I should deem it ill to have to strive with Hrafnkell, but as I am, I look on that matter otherwise, for I should above all things choose to deal with such a man before whom all men had come to grief already ; and greatly should I deem that my honour had advanced, or the honour of any chieftain, by Hrafnkell being brought into some straits ; whereas, I should deem it undiminished if I fared no worse than others, as the proverbs say, ‘ Tis not my curse what’s common fate,’ and ‘ nothing venture, nothing gain.’” “ Now I see,” says Thorgeirr, “ how thy mind stands in the matter ; thou wilt lend these men thy assistance. Now I shall hand over to thee my priesthood and my rule of men, and have thou that which I have had before, but after that we go even shares, and now thou back up whomsoever thou chooseth.” Answered Thorkell : “ It