

The Story of the Confederates

The Story of the Confederates

1882 translation into English by John Coles from the original Icelandic 'Bandamanna saga'.

Chapter 1

Úfeigr hight a man, who lived west in Miðfjörðr on a farm called Reykir; he was the son of Skiði, but his mother hight Gunnlaug; her mother was Járngerðr, the daughter of Úfeigr, the son of Járngerðr, north from the Skörð. He was a married man, and his wife hight Thorgerðr, the daughter of Vali. She was of great kin, and a fine lady. Úfeigr was a very wise man, and the greatest of counsellors; in all he was a great man, but his pecuniary circumstances were not always easy. He owned a deal of land, but few chattels; he withheld from no man a meal, although what was wanted for the housekeeping had first to be provided. He was the liegeman of Styrmir, of Ásgeirsá, who then was thought the greatest of chiefs thereabouts. Úfeigr had a son by his wife, hight Oddr; he was a promising man, and soon became well accomplished. He did not have much love for his father, and was no handicraftsman. Vali hight a man who grew up in Úfeigr's home; he was a hopeful man, and much liked. Oddr grew up in his father's home until he was twelve years old. Úfeigr, as a rule, showed coldness towards Oddr, and loved him but little. The report was afloat that no one round about there was better accomplished than Oddr. One day Oddr spoke to his father, and asked him to provide him with money, saying, "and I will go away from here. It is this way," he continued, "that you show me very little honour, and I am not useful in things you want me for." Úfeigr answers: "I shall not stint your means beyond your deserts. This I shall do, observing all fairness, so that thou mayest know how far such an arrangement may avail thee." Oddr said that that would make but a poor support for him, and thereat they dropped the talk. The day after, Oddr takes a fishing-line off the wall, and all fishing tackle, and twelve ells of cloth. He now goes away and no one wishes him farewell. He goes out to Vatnsness, enters the company of some fishermen, and received at their hands, as a loan or on hire, things that he stood most in need of, and when they knew that his kin was good, and he himself much liked, they ran the risk to trust him. He now got everything on credit, and is with them for a few seasons at the fishing place; and it is said that they had the best share in whose company Oddr was. There he was for three winters and three summers, and it had come to this, that he had repaid every one what he owed, and yet he had gained himself considerable goods for trade. He never visited his father, and both made as if they in no way were related to one another. Oddr liked his companions much. Now we come to where he buys himself a ferry, and begins transporting goods north to the Strands, and earns his money in that way. He soon earned so much that he was the sole owner of the ferry, and thus he goes for some few summers between Miðfjörðr and the Strands; and now he begins to have a good deal of money. He, however, got tired of this occupation. He now bought a ship, and went abroad, and made some trading voyages for a time, which turned out well. He still went on gaining money and popularity. He was frequently in the company of chiefs and noble men abroad, and was always esteemed wherever he was. He now became so rich, that he kept two ships trading; and it is said that none at that time who made trading voyages were as wealthy as Oddr. He was also more liked than other men. He never brought his ship farther north than to Eyjafjörðr, and not farther west than to Hrutafjörðr.

Chapter 2

It is related that one summer Oddr brought his ship to Hrutafjörðr, by Borðeyri, intending to stay there for the winter. He had been asked by his friends to take up his abode here, and, acceding to their prayer, he did so. He bought property for himself in Miðfjörðr, the estate called Melr, where he set up a great household, and became a man of lordly home-habits; and people said that he was as much to be accounted of as householder, as he formerly was as traveller. Indeed, by this time there was not

another man in the north of the country an equal to Oddr in all manners of excellencies. He was better off than most other men, ready to avail those who required his help or lived in his neighbourhood, but to his father he never did a good turn. He beached his ship in Hrótafjörðr.

It is said that no man here in Iceland was Oddr's equal in wealth, nay, moreover; people would say that he had no less wealth than any three the wealthiest taken together. His wealth in all kinds was great, in gold and silver no less than in estates and livestock. Vali, his kinsman, was with him constantly, whether he were here in the land or abroad. And so Oddr abides at his house in all the honour which has now been stated.

There was a man named Glúmr, who lived at Skriðnisenni, a place situated between Bitra and Kollafjörðr. He had a wife hight Thórdís; she was the daughter of Ásmund Longhair, the father of Grettir Ásmundson; their son was hight Úspakr, a man great of growth and strong, ill to deal with, and a turbulent fellow. He soon busied himself with transport of goods between the Strands and the northern country sides; he was a shapely man, and a mighty one of his hand.

One summer he came to Miðfjörðr to sell his wares. And one day he got himself a horse, and rode up to Melr to meet Oddr. They exchanged greetings, and asked each other for common news.

Said Úspakr: "It is this way, Oddr," says he, "that a good rumour goes abroad as to your conditions. You are greatly praised by men, and they deem that their affairs have come to a good pass when they have taken service with thee. Now, my mind tells me that such will be the case with me too, and therefore I am desirous to settle here with thee."

Oddr answered: "Thou art not very favourably spoken of by folks, nor much liked by people generally; thou art misdoubted for wiles neath thy visage, and that therein thou takest after thy kin."

Answered Úspakr: "Trust thou in this to thy own trial, but not in the sayings of others, for few things are better spoken of than they deserve. I am not asking thee for gifts; I would have home under thy roof, but feed at my own cost, and see how thou likest it."

Answered Oddr: "Thou and thy kinsmen are mighty and masterful, and difficult to deal with, if thou makest up thy mind to it; but since thou demandest of me that I should take thee into my house, we will risk the matter for the space of a winter."

This Úspakr agreed to thankfully, and went in the autumn to Melr with his chattels. He soon got himself into Oddr's good graces, was heedful of household business, and worked as well as any two others. Oddr took a good liking for him, and so these seasons pass.

Now, when spring came on, Oddr requested him to remain, still saying that so he should be better pleased. To this Úspakr agreed, and taking upon him the oversight of the household, it went on well and prosperously; and people deem it a right fortunate affair how well this new man turns out. Moreover, all folk like him much, and thus the house stood and flourished, and no man's conditions were considered more highly than Oddr's; indeed, his affairs were held to stand in perfect honour, but for one drawback, namely, that he was a man without "goðorð" (priesthood in a heathen sense, which meant local sovereignty). At this time it was a prevalent custom to take up new priesthoods, or to purchase such. This also Oddr did; and soon he had a number of retainers, for every one was desirous of joining him. And so matters go on quietly for a while.

Chapter 3

Oddr liked Úspakr much, and let him almost have the sole control over the household; he was both hard-working and mighty-working, and useful. Now the winter passed, and Oddr got more liking for Úspakr, for now he began to do other things. In the autumns he fetched the sheep from the mountains, and then the gatherings were good, for not one was missing. Now the winter passed and the spring commenced. Oddr makes known that he intends going abroad that summer, and says that his kinsman, Vali, should take upon him the management of the estate.

Answers Vali: "The case is this, my kinsman, that I am not accustomed to this, so I prefer looking after our money and wares."

Oddr now turns to Úspakr, and bids him undertake the management of the house.

Úspakr answers: "That is too great a task for me, though it goes all right when thou art at hand." Oddr urged the matter, but Úspakr begged off, though, in truth, there was nothing he liked better; and at last it came to this, that he bade Oddr have his will, if he would promise him his trust and protection. Oddr answered; bade Úspakr manage his property in such a manner as might redound most to his credit and favour, and added, that he had tried already, that no one else had a better will nor knew better how to take ward of what was his.

Úspakr bade him have his way in all this, and thus the talk dropped.

Now Oddr trimmed his ship, and had wares borne on board, and when this was bruited about, it gave rise to much talk. Oddr required no long preparations for his journey, and Vali took berth with him, and, when he was ready, people saw him off to the ship. Úspakr kept to him, leading him about for a time somewhat lengthy, because they had many things to talk over.

Now when they were but a short way from the ship, Oddr spoke: "There is one thing which has not been settled yet." "What is that?" said Úspakr.

"My priesthood has not been seen to yet," said Oddr, "and I desire that thou shouldst have care of it."

"That is quite out of the question," said Úspakr; "it is utterly beyond me, having taken upon myself more than it is likely that I be a man for, or ever turn properly out of hand. For this there is no man better fit than thy own father, being a great man in affairs of law, and of much wisdom beside.

Oddr said he was not minded to deliver it into the hands of his father, and "I insist on thy undertaking it" Úspakr remonstrated, being all the time most desirous to agree. Oddr declared, that it would cost his friendship if Úspakr persisted in refusing, so at last, at their parting, Úspakr undertook the charge of the priesthood.

Now Oddr sailed abroad with good speed as was his wont, but Úspakr returned home, and many were the rumours that went about concerning these affairs, people deeming that Oddr had delivered great powers indeed into the hands of this man.

Úspakr rode to the Alping next summer with a following of men with him, and got through his business there well and ably, knowing well how to turn out of hand all things required by law; and rode from the Þing with honour. He keeps his men abundantly, and in no way do they give in to others, and they are not much interfered with. He is good and prompt to all his neighbours, and in no way was the liberality or hospitality on the estate considered less now than before. There was no lack of occupation, and the business went on well. Now the summer wears on; he rides to the Leet and

formally opens it. And when the autumn was on, he goes up to the mountains, where men go for their sheep, and the gatherings were good ; not one sheep, neither of his own nor of Oddr's, was missing.

Chapter 4

It so happened in the autumn, that Úspakr came north to Viðidalr to Svölustaðir; there lived a woman named Svala. He was received with great hospitality. She was a fine woman and young. She spoke to Úspakr and asked him to see about her marriage; "I have heard," she said, "that thou art a great husbandman." He took well to this, and they talked many things; they liked each other, and looked sweetly towards one another; their talk went so far, that he asked her who was the one to decide as to her marriage. "No man stands me nearer," says she, "who is of any worth, than Thórarinn Longdalesgodi the Wise." Thereupon rode Úspakr to see Thórarinn and was received there courteously but nothing more; he reveals his errand and woos Svala.

Answers Thórarinn: "I want no alliance with you; for your behaviour is variously spoken about, and I can see that a safe hold with both hands cannot be had, when dealings are with such men. The business here is, either to take up her household or to let her flit hither, or you will both do as you like; I shall have nothing to do with it."

After this Úspakr went away, and arrived at Svölustaðir, and told what had passed. Now they make up their mind and she pledges herself in marriage with him, and she goes with him to Melr; they owned their estate at Svölustaftir, and got men to manage that for them. Now Úspakr dwelt at Melr, and kept up the hospitality in the house. He was thought very overbearing. Now the winter passed, and in the summer Oddr arrived at Hnútafjörðr, and once more had he succeeded in gaining more wealth and more favour. He came home to Melr, and looked over his possessions; he thought all had been kept well, and was quite satisfied; now the summer wears on. One day Oddr hinted to Úspakr that it would be as well that he took his "goðorð."

Said Úspakr: "Yes," he says, "that was a thing I was most unwilling to take upon me, and altogether unable to, and I am quite willing to give it up: but I think, as a rule, that that is done either at Leets or tings."

Answers Oddr: "That may be so."

Now the summer wears on and towards the Leet; and on the morning of the Leet, when Oddr woke, he looked about and saw there were but few men in the hall; he had slept both sound and long; he started up, and now ascertained that men were altogether out of the hall. He thought this strange, but said little. He equipped himself and some few with him. They thought this was curious and rode to the Leet. And when they got there, there were many people present and quite ready to go away, and the Leet had been hallowed (opened). Oddr was amazed and thought these strange proceedings. Now men went home and some few days elapsed.

It was one day, when Oddr sat at table and Úspakr against him, that he, without any warning, jumped up from the table towards Úspakr with an axe brandished in his hand, and bade him give up the "goðorð."

Úspakr answers: "There is no necessity for you to attack me with such energy; thou hast the 'goðorð' when thou likest, but I did not know that thou wert in earnest to take it" He then stretched forth his hand and gave up the "goðorð" to Oddr.

Now things were quiet for a while, but from this time coldness seemed to exist between Oddr and Úspakr. Úspakr is rather peevish in dealing with. People suspected that he intended having the "goðorð" for himself, and not to let Oddr have it, if it had not been forced from him. Now Úspakr's household business became small, and Oddr requested nothing of him ; they did not speak together.

It was one day that Úspakr prepares himself for a journey. Oddr pretended as if he knew nothing about it, and they parted without bidding one another farewell. Now Úspakr goes to Svölustaðir to his house. Oddr made as if nothing had happened, and things are quiet for a time.

It is mentioned that in the autumn men go to the mountains, and as regards the gatherings of Oddr they were totally different from what they had been before. At the autumn gatherings he missed eighty wethers, and all were the best ones out of his flock. They were searched for both in the mountains and heaths, but could not be found. This was considered wonderful, as Oddr was thought to be more lucky with his sheep than any other man, and so much eagerness was displayed in looking for them, that men were sent to search in other districts as well as at home, but without any result; and at last it was given up, and people constantly spoke as to the cause of this. Oddr was not merry during the winter. Vali, his kinsman, asked him why he was so dull: "Or do you think so much of the disappearance of the wethers? And thou art not very high-minded if you let such a trifle grieve you."

Answers Oddr: "I am not grieved at the vanishing of the sheep; but this methinks worse, that I do not know who has stolen them."

Says Vali: "Do you think for certain that some one has done so? or whom do you look upon as such?"

Answers Oddr: "I cannot conceal it, my opinion is that Úspakr has stolen them."

Answers Vali: "Your friendship diminished from the time when you gave him the management over all your goods."

Oddr said that it had been the greatest blunder, and that it had turned out even better than might have been expected.

Vali said: "Many men's talk is it, that it was strange. Now will I that you do not so quickly lay the blame on him in this matter, for you may run the risk of the word going abroad that an unhandsome thing had he done. Let us come to an agreement," said Vali, "that you shall let me have my own way as to how to act; but I shall find out the truth in the matter." They agreed upon this.

Now Vali makes himself ready for a journey and takes with him his wares; he rides out to Waterdale and Longdate, and sells his goods; he was much liked, and sincere of counsel. He now proceeds on his journey until he came to Svölustaðir, where he met with good reception. Úspakr was very merry. Vali went from there in the morning. Úspakr followed him out of the homefield and asked many things respecting Oddr. Vali said that his household business was good. Úspakr praised him much, and said that he was a most liberal man: "Or has he suffered some losses in the autumn?" Vali said that was true.

Says Úspakr: "What is the supposition as to the disappearance of the sheep? Hitherto Oddr has always been fortunate with his sheep."

Answers Vali: "That is not one way. Some think it has been done through human causes."

Says Úspakr: "Such thing might be supposed, but it is a trick that few only could accomplish."

Says Vali: "So it is."

Said Úspakr: "Has Oddr any conjecture?"

Said Vali: "He says very little, but other people talk much as to the cause of it."

Said Úspakr: "That is to be expected."

Said Vali: "It is this way, though we have spoken this, that some people seem to think it not unlikely that you are the cause of it; and they form their opinion from the fact that you parted so abruptly, and that the disappearance of the wethers happened shortly after."

Said Úspakr: "I had not anticipated that you would have spoken in this way, and if we were not such friends I should have avenged it sorely."

Answers Vali: "There is no necessity for your concealing it or becoming so furious; for you cannot deny it. I have looked over your household, and I notice that you have got more provisions than are likely to have been obtained in a fair manner."

Answers Úspakr: "That will not be found so; and I cannot conceive what my enemies say, when my friends talk thus."

Says Vali: "I do not mention this with any bad intention; you alone hear me say it. Now if you do as I will, and confess before me, it will be light for you, for I shall find way to make that right. I have sold my goods wide about the district, and I will report that you have received them, and bought yourself slaughtered meat and other things; no man will disbelieve that, and thus I will contrive that you shall bear no disgrace, if you follow my advice."

Úspakr said that he should not confess. "Then you will see it will fare thee worse," says Vali, "and you yourself are the cause of it." Then they parted, and Vali returned home. Oddr inquired what he had heard respecting the disappearance of the sheep. Vali did not say much about it. Oddr said: "Now it is needless to hide it any longer, that Úspakr is the guilty party; for you would have proved his innocence, had you been able to."

Now all was quiet during the winter, but when spring came and citation days approached, then Oddr goes with twenty men until he comes right up to the enclosure of Svölustaðir. Then said Vali to Oddr: "Now you had better let your horses graze a little, but I will ride up to the house and see Úspakr, and ascertain if he will come to terms, and then the case need go no further." They did so, and Vali rode home. No one was outside, but the doors were open, and he walked in. It was dark inside, and quite unexpectedly a man started from his seat, hewed at Vali between the shoulders, and he fell instantly. Vali said: "Save yourself, poor wretch, for Oddr is close at hand, and intends killing you. Send your wife to meet Oddr and to tell him that we are agreed and that you have confessed, but that I have gone to collect my debts out in the dales." Then said Úspakr, "This is the worst deed I have done; I meant it for Oddr, but not for thee." Svala saw Oddr, and says that Úspakr and Vali have come to agreement, and that Vali bade him return. Oddr did not believe this, but rides home. Vali perished, and his body was brought to Melr. Oddr thought these great tidings and bad, and through this affair he got into disgrace, and considered that the whole had turned out most fatally. Now Úspakr disappeared, and it was not known what became of him.

Chapter 5

Now there is to be told that Oddr prepares this case for the "Þing," and summons his neighbours as witnesses. Then it so happened, that one of the summoned expired, and Oddr took another in his stead. Then they went to the "Þing," and all was quiet until the sentences were to be pronounced. And when the courts open, Oddr proceeds with the trial of manslaughter, and speedily succeeds in bringing it to a close, and then the defendant is called upon to begin his pleading. Close by the courts sat the chiefs, Styrmir and Thórarinn, with their bands of men. Then said Styrmir to Thórarinn: "Now the defendant is called on to plead as to this manslaughter; or art thou going to make any protest in this case?"

Answers Thórarinn: "In no way shall I interfere, for it seems to me that Oddr has ample cause for prosecuting on behalf of such a man as Vali was, especially as I consider the accused one of the worst of men."

Said Styrmir: "True it is, that he is not a good man; but thou art under obligation to him."

Said Thórarinn: "I do not care about that."

Answered Styrmir: "Another thing has to be taken into consideration, that your trouble will be far greater and more difficult, should he be found guilty; and it seems to me this is a case that can be defended, and we both see it."

Says Thórarinn: "Long ago did I see that, but for all that, I do not deem it advisable to delay the case."

Answered Styrmir: "The case concerns you more than any one, and it will be said that you behaved unmanly, if the trial proceeds, and the defence is clear; and I certainly maintain, that it would be as well if Oddr knew that more men are worth something than he alone; he crushes us, "Þing"-men and all, under his feet, so that he alone is mentioned; it would do no harm if it were tried how skilled he is in law"

Thórarinn answered: "Thou shalt have thy own way, and thee I will help, but it promises no good, and it will have a bad end." "That cannot be helped," said Styrmir, started up and went to the courts, and asked, what cases there were on. He was told. Styrmir said: "The fact is this, Oddr, that a defence has been found in your case; and thou hast prepared it wrongly; thou hast summoned ten men from home (as witnesses), and that against the law; thou should'st have done that at the 'Þing,' and not in the district; now, do one of the two, either walk away from the courts and leave the matter as it stands, or we will take up the defence." Oddr became silent, and pondered over the matter; he found it was true, and walked away from the courts with his men home to his booth; and as he came into the passage between the booths, a man walked towards him; he was getting into years. He had on a black cape with sleeves, and it was nearly worn out; it only had one sleeve, which was turned over on the back; he had in his hand a staff with a spike in; he wore his hood low on his forehead, and looked about with a sort of restless glance, stamped his staff down, and walked rather bent. This man was old Úfeigr, Oddr's father. Then said Úfeigr: "And that certainly is not a matter in your favour, that in all things, your goings about, your dealings, are as dashing as they are rash; or is that fellow Úspakr guilty?" "No," answered Oddr, "guilty he is not." "It is not like a chieftain to fool me thus, an old man; for why should he not be guilty -- was the charge not brought home to him?" "Brought home to him, indeed." "What is it then?" said Úfeigr; "I thought the guilt being brought home, might have been enough, or was he not the slayer of Vali?" "No one gainsays that," says Oddr. Said Úfeigr: "Why is the man then not guilty?" Oddr answers: "He brought forth a defence, whereby the case broke down." Quoth Úfeigr, "Why should defence have been found to bring to nought the case of such a wealthy man as thou art?" "They found," said Oddr, "that it had been wrongly started from the beginning." "Impossible," said

Úfeigr, "when thou hadst in hand the preparation of it; but perhaps, after all, you are more deft at money-grubbing and voyaging than at arranging affairs in law, so as to avail; yet I cannot help thinking that now you are telling me the untruth." Answered Oddr: "I never mind, then, whether thou believest or not." "May be," said Úfeigr, "but I knew well enough from the beginning, even when thou wentest away from home, that there was a flaw in the starting of the suit, but thou deemedst thyself all sufficient, and wouldst not come down to ask any one's advice; and now I suppose you think that you are still alone sufficient to deal with the matter, in which the one thing to look to is to come out of it successfully, since that is the important thing for one who deems himself above all." Oddr answered: "However that may be, it is clear enough, that from thee there is no help to be looked for."

Said Úfeigr: "And yet the only way to save thy case is to trust in me; or how far wouldst thou grudge thy money now to one who should happen to right thy case?" Oddr answered: "I should never stint the money, if any one could be found to take up the suit." Said Úfeigr: "Then let drop into the hands of an old man a goodly purse, for many men's eyes are given to ogling the coin." Oddr delivered to him a large purse. Then asked Úfeigr: "Was that lawful defence brought into court or not?" "I went too soon from the court to know for sure," said Oddr. "Well then," said Úfeigr, "the only thing that holds, is the one you did unwittingly." At this they parted, and Oddr went home to his booth.

Chapter 6

Now the story is to be taken up, where the old carl, Úfeigr, goes up to the fields and enters the courts. Coming to the Northlanders' Court, he asked what cases were in process there? He was told that some were already awarded, but some ready for summing-up. "How does it stand with the case of my son, Oddr; is that disposed of already?" "Disposed of as far as it will be proceeded with," said they. Quoth Úfeigr, "Is he adjudged guilty, the fellow Úspakr?" "No," said they, "that he is not." "What is the cause?" said Úfeigr. "There was a defence found in the case," said they, "a false start having been made at the outset." "All right," said Úfeigr, "perhaps you will permit me to enter the court." They said yea thereto, and he entered the doom-ring and sat down. Spake Úfeigr: "Is the case of my son, Oddr, awarded?" "Awarded as ever it will be," said they. "How is that?" said Úfeigr; "has a wrong charge been brought forward against Úspakr? Did he not slay Vali sackless? Or lay the flaw in the case not being urgent?" They answered: "There was a defence found in the case, so that it broke down." "What manner of defence may that be?" said Úfeigr. He was told what it was. "So that is it, indeed," said he; "do you see any propriety in giving heed to such things, which are of no worth, and let go unjudged the worst man, being guilty of theft and manslaughter? Is it not a matter of great responsibility to judge one not guilty, who is worthy of death, and thus to pass an utterly unlawful sentence?" They said they did not deem, indeed, that such things were right, but they had to judge the case as the law required. "That may be," said Úfeigr. "Did you take the oath?" said Úfeigr? "Certainly," said they. "I have no doubt you did," said he; "what were the words you used? Were they not somewhat of this import, that you should judge according as you knew the matter to be true, and good in law? Such surely must have been your words." They said that was so. Then spoke Úfeigr: "What is more conformable to truth, than to judge the worst of men guilty and worthy of death, and deprived of all salvation, who is truly found to have committed theft, and to have slain Vali, an innocent man? Now give heed yourselves to this, which is more worth, the words of the oath, which enjoin care as to truth, or that one word, which demands that sentence be good in law? Surely you will see the thing as it is, for you must be able to perceive that it is a great responsibility to judge him free who is worthy of death, having already taken an oath that you would judge according as you knew would be most right? Now you had better look upon this case, or heavy things may fall upon you in consequence, and you may hardly be able to escape the responsibility incurred." Úfeigr let the purse at whiles drop down from under the skirt of his cloak, at whiles he would pull it up again. He perceived that they turned their eyes towards the purse, and he then said to them: "It would be a wise thing to judge according to right and truth, even as you

have sworn, and take in return the gratitude and goodwill of reasonable and right-minded men." Thereupon he took forth the purse and poured out the silver, and counted it before them. "Now I will make manifest to you a mark of friendship," said he, "in doing which, I look more to your credit in this matter than to my own interest; the which I do because some of you are my friends, and some my kinsmen, and yet all in such a way now, that necessity demands that each one should look to himself. Now, I will give each man of you who is sitting in judgment an ounce of silver, and half a mark to him who sums up the case. In this manner you may both have the money, and be relieved from responsibility incurred, yet without trespassing upon your oath, which, after all, is the most important part."

Now they considered the case, and find that there is much truth in his discourse, though they perceived that already they had brought themselves into a bad strait as to their free dealing with the oath, and so agreed to accept the condition which was offered them by Úfeigr. Then they had Oddr sent for, and he arrived there just as the chieftains had gone home to their booths. Now the suit is brought up forthwith, and Úspakr is sentenced guilty, and witnesses are called to the sentence being passed. At things thus done, people went away home to their booths. During the night following, no rumours got abroad of what had been done. But at the Mount-of-Laws, in the morning, Oddr stood up and spoke out in a loud voice: "Last night a man, hight Úspakr, was declared guilty in the Court of the Northlanders for the manslaughter of Vali. Let it therefore be said, that the convict is to be known by these marks: he is a man great of growth, of brown hair, large-boned face, dark eyebrows, huge hands, big legs, and an altogether hulking stature, and is one of the most scoundrel-looking of men that eye could be set upon." At this announcement people were very much startled, as many of them had as yet had no news of the affair, and all men thought that Oddr had sternly followed up his suit and brought it to a successful close, considering to what pass the case had come already before.

Chapter 7

Now it is to be told, that Styrmir and Thórarinn had a talk together. Styrmir spake: "What shame and disgrace we have had in this case!" Thórarinn said that was like enough, "for surely wise men must have had their hand in this matter." "Yea," said Styrmir, "but dost thou see any way to setting things right?" Said Thórarinn: "I do not see how that may be, at least not soon." "Not soon; but what hast thou in thy mind's eye?" said Styrmir. Thórarinn answered: "It is to set up a counter-charge for bribe having been brought into court; that, I am minded to think, will hold good." "You are right," said Styrmir; and so they went home to their booths. Now they call together their friends and marriage relations for a council. Among these were Hermundr, the son of Illugi; Gellir, the son of Thórdr; Egill, the son of Skúli; Járnkeggi, the son of Einar; Skeggbroddi, the son of Bjarni; Thorgeirr, the son of Halldór; and Styrmir and Thórarinn. These eight men now go apart to discuss matters. Styrmir and Thórarinn set forth the bearings of the case as it stood, hinting, at the same time, what a catch there would be in the wealth of Oddr, being enough to bring them all riches and contentment. Now they make a firm compact amongst themselves jointly to take up the suit, and to follow it up until they had brought it either to a declaration of guilt against Oddr, or secured self-doom for themselves. After this they join hands and oaths, being sure that nothing may trip up this arrangement, and that no one may be found so confident in his knowledge as to dare rise against them. After this they separated, and people ride home from the "Þing;" and thus, for a beginning, the matter went on all in secret. Now Oddr looked with pleasure upon his journey to the "Þing," and love between father and son stood now better than it had done before. And thus, during these seasons, Oddr sits in quiet peace.

In the spring father and son met each other at a bath, and Úfeigr asked what news there was about. Oddr said he heard none, and asked his father again what he knew. Úfeigr said that Styrmir and Thórarinn with their confederates had gathered a force, and were minded to go to Melr to take out

summons. Oddr asked what the cause thereof might be. Úfeigr told him all their counsel. Answered Oddr: "That does not bode me any trouble." Rejoined Úfeigr: "Very likely, it will be no more than you will be able to cope with." Now time wore on until the days of the summons, and Styrmir and Thórarinn came to Melr with a large following of men. Oddr also had a number of men about him. They set forth their cause and summoned Oddr to the "Þing" for having had bribe brought into court in trespass of law. Nothing else came to pass at that time between them, and so they rode away with their band.

Now it so happened again that father and son met again, and had a talk together, and Úfeigr asked if he deemed yet that there was nothing in this; answered Oddr: "It is not a matter that seems to me to bode any heavy trouble." "Such is not my view," said Úfeigr; "or dost thou know clearly to what pass things have come?" Oddr said he knew what had transpired already. Úfeigr answered: "There is a longer train behind, I am minded to think, for they, have been joined by other six chieftains, who are of the foremost of their kind." Oddr answered: "They seem to think that no trifle will do it." Úfeigr spoke: "What proposest thou then to do?" Oddr answered: "Why, what should I do but to ride to the 'Þing' and secure assistance of men there." Úfeigr answered: "That does not seem to me to promise any good end as the matter stands, for such is the nature of most men, that it is not safe to have one's honour depending on their assistance." "What is the counsel then to be," said Oddr. Úfeigr spake: "It is my counsel that thou shouldst make thy ship ready for sea, while the 'Þing' is sitting, and have all thy chattels secured before people ride away from the 'Þing.' But, for the rest of them, which dost thou think is the most safely placed, that which they shall lay distress on, or that which I have secured in my keep. Of two evil things I think it a shade better placed which thou hast." And now Oddr hands over to his father a big purse full of silver, and thereat they parted. Now Oddr made his ship ready and hired him a crew. And so time wore away towards the "Þing," and this understanding was kept so secret, that few people were any the wiser for it.

Chapter 8

Now the chieftains ride to the "Þing," each with a numerous following. The old carl Úfeigr was in Styrmir's band. The confederates arranged between them to meet on Bláskógaheiði, these of them, namely, Egill and Styrmir, and Hermundr and Thórarinn; and from that meeting they all rode south to the "Þing"-wolds. From the east there came riding Skeggbroddi and Thorgeir Halldórson out of Langidalr, and from the north came Járn skeggi, and all these met together at Reyðarmúli. And now all these bands rode down unto the wolds, and thence unto the "Þing." Now the things most talked of are the law affairs of Oddr, and all men take for certain that here no one will come forward to defend, deeming that few men have a heart thereto, and no one would avail therein, seeing what great chieftains there were to cope with. The confederates, on their side, show great hopefulness about their case, and behave not a little braggingly thereanent. Not a man ventured to utter a word against them. No one comes forward with full powers from Oddr to see his case; but he fits his ship out in Hrutafjörðr, when people were gone to the "Þing."

It was one day that old carl Úfeigr went from his booth deeply rapt in care; not a helper to be seen, but heavy troubles to cope with ahead; he sees hardly how he may have might alone to withstand such chieftains, the case in itself affording no ground of defence. He went about bent and drooping, from one booth to another, reeling on his feet, and in this manner he strolled about for a long time. At last he came to the booth of Egill at a time when people had come to him to confer on sundry affairs with him. Úfeigr turned aside from the door of the booth, and waited there until the men went away. Egill saw them out, but when he was about to turn back into the booth, Úfeigr, turning about, posted himself in his way and greeted him. Egill glanced at him and asked him who he was. "I am hight Úfeigr," said he. Egill said: "Art thou the father of Oddr?" He said he was. Then thou shalt be minded to talk his

affairs over, but it is no good to come to me on that matter, for this case is gone much too far to the wrong for me to have any availing word to say thereto; besides there are other men who have more to say in this matter than I have, namely, Styrmir and Thórarinn, for they take to themselves the lead while we others follow." Then Úfeigr answered: "Well then, rather than talk over Oddr's affairs, which have at times looked better than they do now, I shall hit on something else to divert my mind; and I take it that thou art not the man to refuse to talk to me; for it is now the chief amusement of an old carl to have talk with men like you and thus while away the hours." Egill answered: "Speech, at any rate, shall not be forbidden thee." And so the two walk away together and sit down. Then Úfeigr took up the word: "Art thou a bonder, Egill?" He said he was. "Art thou keeping house at Borg?" "True," said Egill. Spake Úfeigr: "Good things only and favourable are told to me about thee; I am told that you stint meat to no man, and are a lordly man of thy house, and that I and you have not a few things in common, both being of a great family, open-handed, but uneasily circumstanced as to means; and, moreover, that thou art fond of bestowing gifts on thy friends." Egill answered: "I should like it well to be spoken of by people as thou art, for I know that thou art a man of good family and a wise one withal." Úfeigr said: "We are unlike, however, for thou art a great chieftain, who fearest nothing that may stand in thy way, and givest never in with whomsoever thou mayest have to deal, but I am a mannikin, but as to temper and mind, there, I think we are somewhat alike; and it is a great pity that men of such lordliness and large-heartedness should be the worse off for means." Egill answered: "May be that soon things may take a turn, so as to make my circumstances easy." "How may that come about?" said Úfeigr. "It seems to me," said Egill, "that if Oddr's wealth should drift into our hands we shall not be in lack for money; for great things, indeed, are told to us of all his riches." Said Úfeigr: "It is no exaggeration if he is reported to be the richest man in Iceland; yet may be it is matter of curiosity to thee what thy share in the wealth may amount to, seeing that thou art so much in want of money." "That is true," said Egill, "and a good old carl and wise thou art, and knowest, no doubt, the whole truth about Oddr's riches." He said: "I am minded to think that that matter is better known to no one than myself, and I can tell you this, that no one, who brings the greatest reports of it, states its greatness to its full extent; and yet I have considered in my mind already how much of it would come into thy share. And I will not withhold from thee to what amount thou wouldst be made the happier man, for thy share would be one-sixteenth part of the land of Melr." "The devil take it," said Egill, "then the wealth is not so great as I expected; but how can that be?" Answered Úfeigr: "No, no; the riches are great enough, but still I am minded to think that this will be all that thou gettest; have ye not arranged that you yourselves should have one-half of Oddr's wealth, and the Quartermen the other half; then my counting comes to this, if there are eight confederates of you together, that the half of the land of Melr must fall to your share. This is according to your own arrangement, and according to what you have declared yourself in an affair taken up in such an unheard-of manner as no example may be found to match -- but, whatever the character of your suit, these are your terms. Now did you really expect that my son, Oddr, would sit quietly to let you come upon him rushing from the south? No, Oddr is not the man to sit unready in your way, and abundant as is his wealth, he is no less abundantly gifted with wits, and ready of counsel, when he deems that such is wanted; and it misdoubts me that his good ship will glide none the slower under him through the Iceland main that ye declare him a guilty man here. But a guilt it should never be called, which is so wrongly taken up, and surely it shall fall on those who have undertaken it, and by this time I expect him to be out on the main with all that is his, with the exception of the land at Melr, that he intends to leave to you. Rumour, too, had told him that there was no long distance from the sea up to your house at Borg, in case that he should bring his ship into Borgarfjörðr. Now these things will come down, even according as they were set up, that ye will reap thereof only shame and disgrace, as you richly deserve, besides every man's blame." Then said Egill: "This looks true as day; I now perceive that there are tricks at play in the case; for was it ever to be expected that Oddr should remain quiet and unready? Nay, nor shall I have a word to say to this any more, for there are some men in this case who most eagerly urge it on, and to whom I should not grudge the shame of its coming to grief, such as Styrmir, or Thórarinn, or

Hermundr." Úfeigr spoke: "It will turn out, even as is right and due, that they will get many a man's blame for all this; but I should be very sorry to know your lot to be any the worse for it, as, out of all ye confederates, I have the greatest liking for thee." At this word he let sink from under his cloak a mighty purse. Egill turned a swift side glance towards it, seeing which, Úfeigr pulled up the purse in haste, and said: "It is this way, Egill," said he, "that all, what I have told to you, will come pretty nearly true, as I imagine; but I would fain do you some honour, if I might;" and out he pulls the purse, and pours the silver into the skirt of Egill's cloak, full two hundred in silver of the finest alloy. "This thou shalt have from me if thou refrainest from going against Oddr in the case, yet I mean to honour thee thereby." Egill answered: "Indeed, I think you are no mean rogue, old carl as thou art; never expect me to break an oath which once I have taken." Úfeigr answered: "Indeed, you are not the men that you deem yourselves to be, ye chieftains, who have no eye to any comfort for yourselves, if ye happen to drift into some difficulty. Now thou hadst better not act on thy declaration, for I think I can hit on a counsel whereby thou mayest hold to thy own oath." "What is that?" said Egill. Úfeigr said: "Have ye not determined to carry the case unto guilt, or otherwise to secure for yourselves self-doom in it?" Egill said that was so.

Then said Úfeigr: "May be, that we, Oddr's kinsmen, may be allowed to choose which of the two it shall be. Now it might come to pass that the umpiredom should drift into thy hands, in which case I should like thee to have the settlement" Egill answered: "Thou speakest the truth, and sly old carl and wise art thou; yet I am not prepared for this, for I have neither might nor following strong enough to stand alone against all these chieftains, for enmity is sure to come in exchange for any hitch arising." Said Úfeigr: "How would it do if another confederate could be got to join you?" "Ah! that is more like," said Egill. Úfeigr said: "Whom of the confederates would you like best to choose? never mind me, imagine that I have a free choice of them all." "Well, there are two I will mention," said Egill: "Hermundr is my neighbour, but between him and me dealings are ill; another is Gellir, and him I will choose." "It costs a great self-sacrifice," said Úfeigr, "for I should like to see every confederate, excepting thee alone, come out of this matter in a worse case. But belike, he has wits enough to see which is the best of two things to choose, to take wealth and honour, or to forego the money and have disgrace alone. Now, art thou ready to take upon thee the matter, if it come to thee with a view to lowering the fine." "Yes, surely," said Egill. "Then that is a matter agreed on between us," said Úfeigr; "in a short while I shall be with you again."

Chapter 9

Now Úfeigr parted from Egill and went away. Again he wanders about on a dragging foot between the booths, yet not so drooping within himself as he looked decrepit of foot, nor so loosely knit of tongue as he looked lame of walk. At last he came to the booth of Gellir Thórðarson, and bids him be called out. He came out, and was the first to greet Úfeigr, for he was a man of humble manners, and asks him what his errand was. Úfeigr answered: "I came here wandering by chance." Gellir said: "Thou art minded, belike, to talk Oddr's case over." Úfeigr answered: "I am not going to talk about that, it is a matter with which I will have nothing to do, and I came here to divert my mind otherwise." Gellir said: "What hast thou got to say then?" Úfeigr said: "I am told that thou art a wise man, and with wise men it is my greatest delight to talk." Then they sat down and fell a-talking together. Then asked Úfeigr: "Who among the young men of the western country sides are in thy eye likely to make great chieftains?" Gellir answered, that there were a good many to choose among, naming as such the sons of Snorri "Goði," and the men of Eyri. "I have been told much the same thing before," said Úfeigr, "and now I am glad, speaking with a man who is both truthful and just, to have heard the same report. But who among the women there in the west are considered the best matches?" Gellir named the daughters of Snorri "Goði," and those of Steindór of Eyri. "Just what people have told me," said Úfeigr; "but how is it, have you not got any daughters?" Gellir said, he had, indeed. "Why dost thou

not count them?" said Úfeigr; "surely, to judge from the father, there can be no fairer women than thy daughters; or are they not married?" "No," said he. "How is that?" said Úfeigr. Gellir said: "Because wooers have not come forward who were at the same time thoroughly wealthy and well settled, highly connected, and well mannered. Not that I am a wealthy man myself, but I am difficult to please on account of my kin and honours. But why should we not now ask about all things? Who are the men in the northern country sides who are likely to make chieftains?" "Good and many men to choose among," said Úfeigr. "The first I mention Einarr, the son of Járnskeggi, and Hallr, the son of Styrmir; and some people will say that my son, Oddr, be not an unlikely man; and talking of him, brings to my mind the words he committed to me, namely, that he would fain ally himself with thee, and would ask for the one of thy daughters who is hight Ragnheiðr." "Yes," said Gellir, "time was when to this a favourable answer would have been given; but, as matters now stand, I fear this will have to be delayed." "What might the reason be?" said Úfeigr. Gellir said: "People think that darkness is drawing round thy son Oddr's conditions, as affairs now stand." Úfeigr answered: "I tell thee truthfully, that thou wilt never give her better away than now thou hast the chance, for all folk agree that he is as well mannered as any other man; nor is he in want of money, nor any other bliss. But thou art in strait circumstances yourself, and it might come to pass that in him thou shouldst find a great support when need be; for a large-minded man he is towards his friends." Gellir said: "This would be looked at if these cases should not happen to be hanging over him." "Don't mention that tomfoolery, in which there is nothing but shame and folly enough to those who have it on hand." "Yet it looks more likely to come to a bad than a good end," said Gellir, "and I will not say yea to this." Úfeigr answered: "May be, Gellir, that ye all of you come by bliss enow in this affair: yet I may be allowed to tell thee what thy share will amount to; for that I know well, and at best, I can tell you, it will come to this, that ye confederates, eight of you together, will get the half of the land of Melr; in which case thy own share will not be a desirable one, with the little amount of money thou gettest at the forfeiture of manliness and chieftainly honour, thou being called the most high-minded man in the country." Gellir asked how this might be. Úfeigr answered: "I am minded to think that even now Oddr is out on the main with all his belongings, except the land of Melr. How could you expect him to sit quiet and unready, leaving you to choose of his what you liked, and divide it up between you? No," said Úfeigr; "but he let fall the word, that if he should happen to come into Breiðifjörðr, then he would pay a visit to your homestead, and would then choose brides from thy home as it seemed good to him, adding also that he had got with him tinder-boxes enough to set fire to thy home if he chose. He also hinted that, should he come into Borgarfjörðr, he had heard that there was no long distance from the sea up to Borg. Likewise he let fall a hint that, if he came into Eyjafjörðr, he would not miss the home of Járnskeggi; so also, if he came into Eastfirths, he would try to make out where the abode of Skeggbroddi might be. Now he is in no hurry himself ever to come back to Iceland. But your lot will be a deserved one -- that of shame and disgrace. Now it pains me to think that such a good chieftain, as thou hast been hitherto, shouldst come to such a sore grief, from which I fain would spare thee." Gellir said: "This is likely to be true, and I shall never mind, if ships be resorted to, to lessen the restraint. I allowed myself to be led into this, more through friends, than because it was a matter on which I had set my mind." Úfeigr said: "When thou gettest the better of the rashness which is in your mind, I guess thou wilt deem it a more honourable thing to marry thy daughter to Oddr, my son, even as I proposed at the outset. Look at the money he sends thee, with the words that he would himself see to her proper dowry, for he knew how badly thou wert off, and here are two hundred in silver of the finest alloy. Now look to this, who it is who offers thee the choice of giving thy daughter away to such a man, who not only will settle on her the dowry, but is most likely to deal with thee as if he never could be of service enough to thee, thy daughter coming into a state of perfect earthly bliss." Gellir answered: "The offer is so great that it is hard to grasp it, but for nothing will I do it to betray those who trust me; but I clearly see that out of the suit there will never come anything but blame and disgrace." Answered Úfeigr: "What clever men you are, ye chieftains; whoever urged thee to betray those that trust in thee, or to trespass on thy oath? But it may come to pass that the umpiredom drift into your hands, and that so you may be able to cut

down the fines, and yet to hold to your sworn oath to all." Gellir said: "This is true, and a wondrous sly old carl thou art; yet it is too much for me to have alone to front all these chieftains." Úfeigr said: "How will it do if I get another to join you? Wilt thou then see to the righting of the case?" "That I will," said Gellir, "if thou bringest it about, that I shall have to frame the award." Úfeigr answered: "Whom dost thou choose?" Gellir answered: "I shall choose Egill, for he is my nearest neighbour." Úfeigr answered: "The devil you do, thou choosest the very worst man of your company, and I am sorely loath to allow him any share of honour at all; and I am not at all sure that I shall go to the extent of such a sacrifice." "Have thy will," said Gellir. Úfeigr said: "Art thou, then, ready to enter the matter on my terms, if I bring him into it with thee, for I guess he will be able to see which of two things is the best, to have some honour or none." "Considering the great bargain offered me," said Gellir, "I shall venture to run the risk." Then spake Úfeigr: "I and Egill have talked the matter over already, and it does not seem to him a difficult one, and he has already entered it. Now shall I offer you a counsel as to how the thing is to be done? The bands that you confederates have brought up, walk mostly in company together. Now, no man will suspect anything, though thou and Egill should talk together whatever you like on going both together to vespers."

Now Gellir accepted the money, and the matter was settled between them. After that Úfeigr went away, and straight to the booth of Egill, at this time neither reeling on foot nor bent of body; for now he was well pleased. In the evening people went to even-song, and Egill and Gellir talked the matter over, and settled what to do, no man misdoubting what they were at.

Chapter 10

Now it is to be told that on the second day after this, people went to the Mount of Laws, and in crowds they went. Now Egill and Gellir gathered their men together. But Úfeigr helped Styrmir and Thórarinn to gather theirs. And when all those who were expected had come to the place, then Úfeigr demanded silence and held forth: -- "Hitherto I have not been meddling with the affair of my son Oddr, but knowing now that here have come together the men who have chiefly busied themselves with this suit, I will first direct my speech, as concerning the suit, to Hermundr, that this being a matter which has been started in a manner unheard of and unexampled, has been proceeded with in the same manner, and therefore is not unlikely in a similar way to come to an end. I now will ask, whether the case may be allowed to be settled peacefully." Hermundr answered: "We will take nothing but self-doom." Úfeigr answered: "I doubt that any example may be found of one man having ever allowed self-doom to eight men in one and the same case, while there are examples enough of one man having done so to another. But since it seems that everything in this suit has gone and must go on in a way unprecedented in other suits, I make this proposal, that two of your confederation act as umpires in the matter." Hermundr answered: "That we are quite willing to agree to, and care not which two of us it shall be." Then Úfeigr said: "You will then allow me the slight vantage of choosing out of the confederates the two I like." "Yea, yea," said Hermundr. Then spake Thórarinn: "Say yea to those things only today which thou mayest not have to regret tomorrow." "What has been said," answered Hermundr, "shall not be unsaid again." Now Úfeigr cast about for bail, which was an easy matter, as with him the money was considered safe. Now people join hands and handsel, that the fines shall stand, which they agree on, whom Úfeigr settles upon as umpires. But the confederates handsel that all criminal proceedings shall be dropped. Now it is so arranged that the confederates shall proceed with their bands up to the wolds. The followers of Gellir and Egill kept together and sat down in a certain place, forming a circle. But Úfeigr went within the circle, and looking round, he lifts the hood of his cloak, stroking his arms, and standing more erect than erst, he blinked his eyes about, and then spoke: "There sittest thou, Styrmir, and most men will think it wondrous that I should not call thee in a case which concerns me, since I owe allegiance to you, and have to look to thee for my support, and especially as thou hast received many good gifts from me, though thou hast requited them all with evil."

My mind tells me that thou wert the first of men to set going this matter of enmity against my son Oddr, and hast done most in having the case opened up again, -- therefore I except thee."

"There sittest thou, Thórarinn," said Úfeigr, "and it is a certain thing that thou lackest no wit to pass judgment in this case; yet thou hast been an unserviceable man to Oddr in these matters, and wert the first of men to join Styrmir therein, -- therefore I except thee."

"There sittest thou, Hermundr, a great chieftain, and I am minded to think that it would be well if the decision of the case came to thee, yet no man has been so madly eager since this matter began as thou hast been; for thou hast shown that thou wouldst only show forth dishonour; nor has thy reason been any other than dishonour and avarice, for thou art in no lack of money, -- therefore I except thee."

"There sittest thou, Járnскеggi, and it is not that thou art not accounted of highly enough, why thou shouldst not be umpire in the case; nor wouldst thou deem it a bad thing if it should come to thee to judge, for such is thy ambition, that at Vöðlaping thou hadst a standard borne before thee, as if thou wert a king, yet thou shalt be no king in this case, -- for I except thee."

Now Úfeigr looked about and spake: "There thou sittest, Skeggbroddi! Is it true that King Harold Sigurðssen said, when thou wert his henchman, that he deemed thee the best fitted man for a king among all who were with him then?" Broddi answered: "The king often spoke well to me; but it does not follow that he always spoke as he thought." Then said Úfeigr: "Thou shalt be king over something else than this case, -- for I except thee."

"There sittest thou, Gellir," says Úfeigr, "and nothing but avarice alone has drawn thee into this case: but thou art in some way to be pitied, being a man of small means, but having many irons in the fire. Now I know not, although I consider all of you worthy of evil only in this case, but that some one had better come out of it with some honour, for there are few of you left, but I cannot bring my mind to choose those whom I have already excepted, and therefore I choose thee, because hitherto thou hast not been charged with wrong-doing."

"There sittest thou, Thorgeirr Hálldorsson," says Úfeigr, "and it is a well-known thing that to thy decision never came a case on which aught depended, for thou knowest not how to sift a case, having no more wits therefor than an ox or an ass, -- therefore I except thee."

Then Úfeigr looked about and spake this ditty:

"Ill is man's fate
In old age to tumble;
Which all men depriveth
Of sight and wisdom.
I had the choice
Of able umpires;
Now's a wolf's tail
Left alone on the hook;

"And with me it has fared after the fashion of wolves, who eat each other up until they come to the tail, not knowing till then what they are about. I have had to choose between many chieftains, but now he alone is left from whom no one looks for aught but evil; and who has proved himself to be a man of unfair dealings beyond all others, and recks nothing what he does to gain money, if he only gets it; and it may be said in his excuse, for not having been particularly nice as to his share in this matter, that many a one has been netted in it, who was called a righteous man before, and has cast away from him his worth and manliness in exchange for iniquity and avarice. Now no one would expect me to choose

him, from whom every man may look for evil, for there shall not be found another equally sly fellow in your company. Yet I must be content to choose him, every one else having been excepted." Egill spake, and smiled at the same time: "It befalls, as it has often befallen before, that honour comes to me, yet not because others intended it. Now, Gellir, we have to take our business in hand, let us stand up and go away and talk the matter over between us." They did so, and walked away thence and sat down. Then said Gellir: "What have we got to say about this?" Egill said: "It is my counsel to award a small fine, as I do not see what else we can do, since in any case we shall reap a little favour for this." "Shall it not be enough if we make the fine of the value of thirteen ounces of any current goods," said Gellir, "for this case was started very wrongly, and therefore it is all the better the less they shall be pleased with the award; but I am not eager to undertake the declaration of it, for I am afraid it will be received badly." "Do whichever thou chooseth," said Egill, "to declare the award or to undertake the defence of it." "Then I choose," said Gellir, "rather to declare it." Now they went to meet the confederates. Then said Hermundr: "Stand we up, and listen to the shame that shall befall." Then said Gellir: "We shall not be wiser by waiting; it will all come to one thing, and my and Egill's award is, that a fine of thirteen ounces of silver be paid to us confederates." Then said Hermundr: "Did I understand it right, didst thou say thirteen tens of ounces of silver?" Egill answered: "Surely, Hermundr, thou wert not sitting upon thy ear for thou wert standing! thirteen ounces, certainly! and in such wares as are offerable only to paupers, for it shall be paid in rags of shields, and bits of broken rings, and in whatever trifles can be collected for it; and you may like the worst." Then said Hermundr: "Now, Egill, thou hast betrayed us!" "Is it so," said Egill; "dost thou find that thou art betrayed?" "Betrayed, indeed, I deem myself, and thou art the man I have to thank for it" Egill answered: "I deem it well to have betrayed a man who trusts in no one, not even in himself, the which I can prove, for thou didst hide thy money away, that thou intendedst that even though it should come into thy mind to look for it, you should never find it." Hermundr answered: "This is like thy other lies, Egill. Thou didst say the other winter, when thou earnest home after having been invited by me from your abode of poverty during Christmas, the which thou acceptedst gladly as might be expected; but when Yule was over, sadness settled upon thee, and no wonder, having to look forward to a return to starvation; but I, finding it out, offered thee to remain still with another man with thee, which offer thou tookst and wast very glad of it. But in the spring after Easter, when thou returnedst to Borg, thou spreadest the news, that thirty horses, turned out into ice and snow, and had all been eaten." Egill answered: "I think it would be difficult to say too much about the flaws of your household; but of these horses I think that few or even none were eaten. But that all men know, that neither I nor my people are ever of lack of food, though my circumstances as to money being not always equally easy. But of the state of thy own house, the less you say the better." "I should like," said Hermundr, "that we two should not have to meet next summer at the 'Þing' again." Answered Egill: "Now I will say that which I thought would never come over my lips, namely, to thank you for what thou hast said; for as to me, it has been foretold, that I shall die of old age, but the sooner the trolls take you, the better." Then spake Styrmir: "He, who tells the worst of thee, Egill, tells the truest tale, even he who calls thee a rogue." "That is all right," said Egill; "the more thou blamest me, and the more proofs thou bringest in support of it, the better, because I was told that at a banquet you amused yourself by choosing your equals, and that thou chooseth for thy equal none but myself. Now it is certain," said he further, "that thou hast about thee some mighty garments to clothe thyself in, about which other people know nothing; and thou must have the best knowledge of thyself as of thy other matters. But in this we are unlike to each other, that we both engage in lending other people assistance, and I give all I can, sparing myself in nought, but thou takest to thy heels, as soon as a few blacklegs are aloft. It is also true that my household always lies heavily on me, and I spare food to no man, but thou art stingy of meat, as may be seen from this, that thou hast a bowl, which is called 'Meatsome,' the contents of which no one knows about, no matter how many may be the visitors to your house except thou alone. Now it is no dishonour to me that my servants endure hardships when want is at the door, but it is a greater dishonour to starve one's household when there is nothing lacking. Now look about and try to see who that man is." Then

Styrmir was silent. Next Thórarinn stood up, and Egill spoke and said: "Hold thy peace, Thórarinn, and sit down, and put no word in in this matter, for I shall have such reproaches to lay on thee, as that thou wouldst wish that thou hadst better been silent." Thórarinn answered: "Let wholesome rede be taken whencesoever it come;" and he sat down and was silent Then said Thorgeirr: "All men see, that this is a vain award and a foolish to make only thirteen ounces of silver and no more for such a great case as this is." "But I thought," said Egill, "that thou wouldst find this award a right significant one, as indeed thou shalt find out, if thou lookest about, and thinkest for thyself, for thou wilt surely not have forgotten, that at the Leet of Rangá, the son of a cot carl left thee with marks of thirteen bumps upon thy pate, for which thou didst award to thyself thirteen ewes with lambs, which reminder I should have thought thou wouldst not deem a bad one." Thorgeirr was silent, but Skeggbroddi and Járnkeggi would have no exchange with Egill. Then Úfeigr sang a song in order that this "Þing" and the end of this affair should be borne in mind by many. And Egill answered: "Thou mayest well boast, that never did one man set his course against so many chieftains combined against him."

Now after this people went home to their booths. Then spake Gellir to Egill: "I would that we both should keep together with our men." And so they did. Now during the remainder of the "Þing," there was much secret enmity about, and the confederates were most highly indignant at the turn their affair had taken. But the awarded money nobody would have. And thus people rode away from the "Þing."

Chapter 11

Now Úfeigr and his son Oddr met, the latter fully ready to put to sea, and Úfeigr said that he had allowed self-doom to the confederates. Oddr answered: "Shame on thee for such a settlement, wretch that thou art!" Answered Úfeigr: "But all is not lost, kinsman;" and then tells him the whole matter as it had gone, and therewith all, that a wife had been promised to him. Then Oddr thanks him for his avail, confessing, that he had prosecuted the suit far beyond whatever he had thought could be possible, and promises that henceforth he shall never be in lack of money. "Now shalt thou go," says Úfeigr, "even as thou hast intended, but thy bridals shall be at Melr within six weeks." After that father and son parted in much love, and Oddr puts to sea, sailing with a wind at will north to Thorgilsfjörðr, where there were some traders riding at anchor. Now the wind fell, and they lay there for some nights. Oddr thought that a fair wind was slow in coming about, so he went upon a high mountain, and saw that wind blew another way out in the main. So he returned to his ship of burden, and bade them move out of the firth. The Eastmen mocked them, saying it would be a slow process for them to row all the way to Norway. Oddr answered: "What do you know but that you may have to wait for me all the time here?" And as soon as they came outside the firth, the wind stood fast and fair; nor had they to shift a sail until they came to Orkney, where Oddr bought both malt and corn, and having dwelt there for a while, made the ship ready for sea again.

Now when he was ready, easterly winds blew up, and they sailed away. They had a fair wind all the way, and coming back found the traders lying there still. Thereafter Oddr sailed west by the land, and came to Miðfjörðr, having then been away for seven weeks. Now people prepared for the bridals, whereat there was no lack of good provisions and plentiful. Crowds of people gathered thither, amongst others Gellir and Egill and a host of other great folk. The bridals went on in a right fair and lordly fashion, and people thought that not a better bridal feast had they ever given in Iceland. And when the feast came to an end, people were sent off with lordly gifts, the most bountifully bestowed being those which fell to Gellir's share. Then said Gellir to Oddr: "I should much wish that Egill were dealt well with, for he is worthy of it." "Me-seems," said Oddr, "that my father has done well to him already." "Do thou it better still," said Gellir; and so he rode away, and his people. Next Egill rides away, and Oddr, seeing him off, thanks him for his assistance, saying: "It is not in my power to do as well to thee, as thou art worthy of; but yesterday I ordered sixty wethers and two oxen to be driven

south to Borg, where they will be awaiting thee when thou comest home, and never shall I think that I have done enough for thee as long as we both live." Now they part, Egill mightily pleased; and they join friendship, and so Egill goes home to Borg.

Chapter 12

This same autumn Hermundr gathered a band together, and went out to the Leet of Hvammr, being minded to go to Borg at the same time, and to burn Egill in his house. And when they came out along Valafell, they heard something, as if a string of a stringed instrument had snapped up in the mountain. Thereat Hermundr felt ill with a sting under the armpit, so that they had to turn about in their journeying, and by degrees the sickness grew heavier on him. But when they came up by Thor-gantstaðir, they had to lift him off his horse and to send for a priest to Síðumúli. And when the priest came, Hermundr had already lost his speech, but the priest remained with him. And once, when the priest bent down over him, he heard his lips muttering: "Two hundred in the gorge, two hundred in the gorge;" then he died, and the end of him was even such as we have now set forth.

Now Oddr sat at home in much lordliness and love of his wife. But all this time nothing had been heard of Úspakr. Svala was married to a man, who hight Már, and was the son of Hildir, and set up a house at Svalastead. Bjálfi was hight a brother of his, a half crazy fellow, but right mighty of his hand. Bergthór was called one, who dwelt at Böð-varshólar; he had summed up the case, when Úspakr was made guilty. Now at Böðvarshólar, one evening, it so happened, when people sat round the fires, that a man arrived there, and, rapping at the door, bade the good man come outside. The bonder soon was aware that the arrival was none but Úspakr, and said that he was not minded to go outside. Úspakr challenged him hard to come outside, but nowhither did he move, but forbade all his men to go out, and thus they parted. But in the morning, when the women went to the byre, they found there nine cows wounded to death. This was bruited about far and wide. But again, as time wore on, it so happened, that a man walked into the house at Svalastead, and into the chamber in which Már was sleeping; this at an early hour in the morning. The man stepped up to the bed, and stabbed Már with a glave, so that it pierced the hollow of his body. The man was Úspakr himself.

Just as he was turning about for the door, Bjálfi sprang up, driving into him a whittling knife. Úspakr went along to a stead called Borgar-hóll, and there gave out his manslaughter, whereupon he went away, and nothing more was heard of him for a while. The slaughter of Már was spoken of far and wide, and ill in all places. Then there happened a startling thing, that five of the best stud horses belonging to Oddr were found all dead, and the deed was saddled on Úspakr. Yet for a long while still nothing was heard of him. But in the autumn, when people went about mountains to gather up wethers, they came upon a cavern within certain rocks, wherein they found a man dead, and beside him standing a bowl full of blood, that was as black as pitch to look on. This was Úspakr, and people thought that the wound dealt him by Bjálfi had become his bane, but that he had come by his end from starvation as well; and that was the close of his life. It is not on record that any blood suit followed the slaughter of Már, nor the killing of Úspakr.

Oddr dwelt at Melr to old age, and was accounted of the worthiest of men; and from him are descended the men of Miðfjörðr, Snorri Kálfson among them, and many other great men. From the aforestated time, there was the best love and most desirable kinship between Oddr and his father. And thereby this story comes to an end.