

Burnt Njal & King Brian

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from the Icelandic of Njals Saga

George Webbe Dasent

1861.

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Of Kari and Bjorn and Thorgeir.

Now we must tell of Bjorn and Kari that they ride down on the Sand, and lead their horses under the banks where the wild oats grew, and cut the oats for them, that they might not die of hunger. Kari made such a near guess, that he rode away thence at the very time that they gave over seeking for him. He rode by night up through the Hundred, and after that he took to the fell ; and so on all the same way as they had followed when they rode east, and did not stop till they came to Midmark.

Then Bjorn said to Kari—

“ Now shalt thou be my great friend before my mistress, for she will never believe one word of what I say ; but everything lies on what you do, so now repay me for the good following which I have yielded to thee.”

“ So it shall be ; never fear,” says Kari.

After that they ride up to the homestead, and then the mistress asked them what tidings, and greeted them well.

“ Our troubles have rather grown greater, old lass !”

She answered little, and laughed ; and then the mistress went on to ask—

“ How did Bjorn behave to thee, Kari ?”

“ Bare is back,” he answers, “without brother behind it,” and Bjorn behaved well to me. He wounded three men, and, besides, he is wounded himself, and he stuck as close to me as he could in everything.”

They were three nights there, and after that they rode to Holt to Thorgeir, and told him alone these tidings, for those tidings had not yet been heard there.

Thorgeir thanked him, and it was quite plain that he was glad at what he heard. He asked Kari what now was undone which he meant to do.

“ I mean,” answers Kari, “ to kill Gunnar Lambi’s son and Kol Thorstein’s son, if I can get a chance. Then we have slain fifteen men, reckoning those five whom we two slew together. But one boon I will now ask of thee.”

Thorgeir said he would grant him whatever he asked.

“ I wish, then, that thou wilt take under thy safe-guard this man whose name is Bjorn, and who has been in these slayings with me, and that thou wilt change farms with him, and give him a farm ready stocked here close by thee, and so hold thy hand over him that no vengeance may befall him ; but all this will be an easy matter for thee who art such a chief.”

“ So it shall be,” says Thorgeir.

Then he gave Bjorn a ready-stocked farm at Asolfskal, but he took the farm in the Mark into his own hands. Thorgeir flitted all Bjorn’s household stuff and goods to Asolfskal, and all his live stock ; and Thorgeir settled all Bjorn’s quarrels for him, and he was reconciled to them with a full atonement. So Bjorn was thought to be much more of a man than he had been before.

Then Kari rode away, and did not draw rein till he came west to Tongue to Asgrim Ellidagrim’s son. He gave Kari a most hearty welcome, and Kari told him of all the tidings that had happened in these slayings.

Asgrim was well pleased at them, and asked what Kari meant to do next.

“ I mean,” said Kari, “ to fare abroad after them, and so dog their footsteps and slay them, if I can get at them.”

Asgrim said there was no man like him for bravery and hardihood.

He was there some nights, and after that he rode to Gizur the white, and he took him by both hands. Kari stayed there some while, and then he told Gizur that he wished to ride down to Eyrar.

Gizur gave Kari a good sword at parting.

Now he rode down to Eyrar, and took him a passage with Kolbein the black ; he was an Orkneyman and an old friend of Kari, and he was the most forward and brisk of men.

He took Kari by both hands, and said that one fate should befall both of them.

Flosi goes abroad.

Now Flosi rides east to Hornfirth, and most of the men in his Thing followed him, and bore his wares east, as well as all his stores and baggage which he had to take with him.

After that they busked them for their voyage, and fitted out their ship.

Now Flosi stayed by the ship until they were “ boun.” But as soon as ever they got a fair wind they put out to sea. They had a long passage and hard weather.

Then they quite lost their reckoning, and sailed on and on, and all at once three great waves broke over their ship, one after the other. Then Flosi said they must be near some land, and that this was a ground-swell. A great mist was on them, but the wind rose so that a great gale overtook them, and they scarce knew where they were before they were dashed on shore at dead of night, and the men were saved, but the ship was dashed all to pieces, and they could not save their goods.

Then they had to look for shelter and warmth for themselves, and the day after they went up on a height. The weather was then good.

Flosi asked if any man knew this land, and there were two men of their crew who had fared thither before, and said they were quite sure they knew it, and, say they—

“ We are come to Hrossey in the Orkneys.”

“ Then we might have made a better landing,” said Flosi, “ for Grim and Helgi, Njal’s sons, whom I slew, were both of them of Earl Sigurd Hlodver’s son’s bodyguard.”

Then they sought for a hiding-place, and spread moss over themselves, and so lay for a while, but not for long, ere Flosi spoke and said—

“ We will not lie here any longer until the landsmen are ware of us.”

Then they arose, and took counsel, and then Flosi said to his men—

“ We will go all of us and give ourselves up to the Earl ; for there is naught else to do, and the Earl has our lives at his pleasure if he chooses to seek for them.”

Then they all went away thence, and Flosi said that they must tell no man any tidings of their voyage, or what manner of men they were, before he told them to the Earl.

Then they walked on until they met men who shewed them to the town, and then they went in before the Earl, and Flosi and all the others hailed him.

The Earl asked what men they might be, and Flosi told his name, and said out of what part of Iceland he was.

The Earl had already heard of the Burning, and so he knew the men at once, and then the Earl asked Flosi—“ What hast thou to tell me about Helgi Njal’s son, my henchman.”

“ This,” said Flosi, “ that I hewed off his head.”

“ Take them all,” said the Earl.

Then that was done, and just then in came Thorstein, son of Hall of the Side. Flosi had to wife Steinvora, Thorstein’s sister. Thorstein was one of Earl Sigurd’s bodyguard, but when he saw Flosi seized and held, he went in before the Earl, and offered for Flosi all the goods he had.

The Earl was very wroth a long time, but at last the end of it was, by the prayer of good men and true, joined to those of Thorstein, for he was well backed by friends, and many threw in their word with his, that the Earl took an atonement from them, and gave Flosi and all the rest of them peace. The Earl held to that custom of mighty men that Flosi took that place in his service which Helgi Njal’s son had filled.

So Flosi was made Earl Sigurd’s henchman, and he soon won his way to great love with the Earl.

They got a fine fair wind, and were but a short time out. The first land they made was the Fair Isle, it lies between Shetland and the Orkneys. There that man whose name was David the white took Kari into his house, and he told him all that he had heard for certain about the doings of the Burners. He was one of Kari’s greatest friends, and Kari stayed with him for the winter.

Kari Goes Abroad.

Those messmates Kari and Kolbein the black put out to sea from Eyrar half a month later than Flosi and his companions from Hornfirth.

There they heard tidings from the west out of the Orkneys of all that was done there.

Earl Sigurd bade to his feast at Yule Earl Gilli, his brother-in-law, out of the Southern Isles ; he had to wife Swanlauga, Earl Sigurd's sister , and then too came to see Earl Sigurd that king from Ireland whose name was Sigtrygg. He was a son of Olaf rattle, but his mother's name was Kormlada ; she was the fairest of all women, and best gifted in every-thing that was not in her own power, but it was the talk of men that she did all things ill over which she had any power.

Brian was the name of the king who first had her to wife, but they were then parted. He was the best-natured of all kings. He had his seat in Connaught, in Ireland ; his brother's name was Wolf the quarrelsome, the greatest champion and warrior ; Brian's foster-child's name was Kerthialfad. He was the son of King Kylfi, who had many wars with King Brian, and fled away out of the land before him, and became a hermit ; but when King Brian went south on a pilgrimage, then he met King Kylfi, and then they were atoned, and King Brian took his son Kerthialfad to him, and loved him more than his own sons. He was then full grown when these things happened, and was the boldest of all men.

Duncan was the name of the first of King Brian's sons ; the second was Margad ; the third, Takt, whom we call Tann, he was the youngest of them ; but the elder sons of King Brian were full grown, and the briskest of men.

Kormlada was not the mother of King Brian's children, and so grim was she against King Brian after their parting, that she would gladly have him dead.

King Brian thrice forgave all his outlaws the same fault, but if they misbehaved themselves oftener, then he let them be judged by the law ; and from this one may mark what a king he must have been.

Kormlada egged on her son Sigtrygg very much to kill King Brian, and she now sent him to Earl Sigurd to beg for help.

King Sigtrygg came before Yule to the Orkneys, and there, too, came Earl Gilli, as was written before.

The men were so placed that King Sigtrygg sat in a high seat in the middle, but on either side of the king sat one of the earls. The men of King Sigtrygg and Earl Gilli sate on the inner side away from him, but on the outer side away from Earl Sigurd, sate Flosi and Thorstein, son of Hall of the Side, and the whole hall was full.

Now King Sigtrygg and Earl Gilli wished to hear of these tidings which had happened at the Burning, and so, also, what had befallen since.

Then Gunnar Lambi's son was got to tell the tale, and a stool was set for him to sit upon.

Gunnar Lambi's son's slaying.

Just at that very time Kari and Kolbein and David the white came to Hrossey unawares to all men. They went straightway up on land, but a few men watched their ship.

Kari and his fellows went straight to the Earl's homestead, and came to the hall about drinking time.

It so happened that just then Gunnar was telling the story of the Burning, but they were listening to him meanwhile outside. This was on Yule-day itself.

Now King Sigtrygg asked —

“ How did Skarphedinn bear the Burning ?

“ Well at first for a long time,” said Gunnar, “ but still the end of it was that he wept.” And so he went on giving an unfair leaning in his story, but every now and then he laughed out loud.

Kari could not stand this, and then he ran in with his sword drawn, and sang this song—

“ Men of might, in battle eager,
Boast of burning Njal's abode,
Have the Princes heard how sturdy
Seahorse racers sought revenge ?

Hath not since, on foemen holding
High the shield's broad orb aloft,
All that wrong been fully wroken ?
Raw flesh raven ? got to tear.”

So he ran in up the hall, and smote Gunnar Lambi's son on the neck with such a sharp blow, that his head spun off on to the board before the king and the earls, and the board was all one gore of blood, and the Earl's clothing too.

Earl Sigurd knew the man that had done the deed, and called out—

“ Seize Kari and kill him.”

Kari had been one of Earl Sigurd's bodyguard, and he was of all men most beloved by his friends ; and no man stood up a whit more for the Earl's speech.

“ Many would say. Lord,” said Kari, “ that I have done this deed on your behalf, to avenge your henchman.”

Then Flosi said—“ Kari hath not done this without a cause ; he is in no atonement with us, and he only did what he had a right to do.”

So Kari walked away, and there was no hue and cry after him. Kari fared to his ship, and his fellows with him. The weather was then good, and they sailed off at once south to Caithness, and went on shore at Thraswick to the house of a worthy man whose name was Skeggi, and with him they stayed a very long while.

Those behind in the Orkneys cleansed the board, and bore out the dead man.

The Earl was told that they had set sail south for Scotland, and King Sigtrygg said—

“ This was a mighty bold fellow, who dealt his stroke so stoutly, and never thought twice about it !”

Then Earl Sigurd answered —

“ There is no man like Kari for dash and daring.”

Now Flosi undertook to tell the story of the Burning, and he was fair to all ; and therefore what he said was believed.

Then King Sigtrygg stirred in his business with Earl Sigurd, and bade him go to the war with him against King Brian.

The Earl was long steadfast, but the end of it was that he let the king have his way, but said he must have his mother's hand for his help, and be king in Ireland, if they slew Brian. But all his men besought Earl Sigurd not to go into the war, but it was all no good.

So they parted on the understanding that Earl Sigurd gave his word to go ; but King Sigtrygg promised him his mother and the kingdom.

It was so settled that Earl Sigurd was to come with all his host to Dublin by Palm Sunday.

Then King Sigtrygg fared south to Ireland, and told his mother Kormlada that the Earl had undertaken to come, and also what he had pledged himself to grant him.

She shewed herself well pleased at that, but said they must gather greater force still.

Sigtrygg asked whence this was to be looked for ?

She said there were two vikings lying off the west of Man ; and that they had thirty ships, and, she went on, “ they are men of such hardihood that nothing can withstand them. The one's name is Ospak, and the other's Brodir. Thou shalt fare to find them, and spare nothing to get them into thy quarrel, whatever price they ask.”

Now King Sigtrygg fares and seeks the vikings, and found them lying outside off Man ; King Sigtrygg brings forward his errand at once, but Brodir shrank from helping him until he, King Sigtrygg, promised him the kingdom and his mother, and they were to keep this such a secret that Earl Sigurd should know nothing about it ; Brodir too was to come to Dublin on Palm Sunday.

So King Sigtrygg fared home to his mother, and told her how things stood.

After that those brothers, Ospak and Brodir, talked together, and then Brodir told Ospak all that he and Sigtrygg had spoken of, and bade him fare to battle with him against King Brian, and said he set much store on his going.

But Ospak said he would not fight against so good a king.

Then they were both wroth, and sundered their band at once. Ospak had ten ships and Brodir twenty,

Ospak was a heathen, and the wisest of all men. He laid his ships inside in a Sound, but Brodir lay outside him.

Brodir had been a Christian man and a mass-deacon by consecration, but he had thrown off his faith and become God's dastard, and now worshipped heathen fiends, and he was of all men most skilled in sorcery. He had that coat of mail on which no steel would bite. He was both tall and strong, and had such long locks that he tucked them under his belt. His hair was black.

Of signs and wonders.

It so happened one night that a great din passed over Brodir and his men, so that they all woke, and sprang up and put on their clothes.

Along with that came a shower of boiling blood.

Then they covered themselves with their shields, but for all that many were scalded.

This wonder lasted all till day, and a man had died on board every ship.

Then they slept during the day, but the second night there was again a din, and again they all sprang up. Then swords leapt out of their sheaths, and axes and spears flew about in the air and fought.

The weapons pressed them so hard that they had to shield themselves, but still many were wounded, and again a man died out of every ship.

This wonder lasted all till day.

Then they slept again the day after.

But the third night there was a din of the same kind, and then ravens flew at them, and it seemed to them as though their beaks and claws were of iron.

The ravens pressed them so hard that they had to keep them off with their swords, and covered themselves with their shields, and so this went on again till day, and then another man had died in every ship.

Then they went to sleep first of all, but when Brodir woke up, he drew his breath painfully, and bade them put off the boat. "For," he said, "I will go to see Ospak."

Then he got into the boat and some men with him, but when he found Ospak he told him of the wonders which had befallen them, and bade him say what he thought they boded. Ospak would not tell him before he pledged him peace, and Brodir promised him peace, but Ospak still shrank from telling him till night fell.

Then Ospak spoke and said—"When blood rained on you, therefore shall ye shed many men's blood, both of your own and others. But when ye heard a great din, then ye must have been shewn the crack of doom, and ye shall all die speedily. But when weapons fought against you, that must forbode a battle; but when ravens pressed you, that marks the devils which ye put faith in, and who will drag you all down to the pains of hell."

Then Brodir was so wroth that he could answer never a word, but he went at once to his men, and made them lay his ships in a line across the Sound, and moor them by bearing their cables on shore at either end of the line, and meant to slay them all next morning.

Ospak saw all their plan, and then he vowed to take the true faith, and to go to King Brian, and follow him till his death-day.

Then he took that counsel to lay his ships in a line, and punt them along the shore with poles, and cut the cables of Brodir's ships. Then the ships of Brodir's men began to fall aboard of one another when they were all fast asleep ; and so Ospak and his men got out of the firth, and so west to Ireland, and came to Connaught.

Then Ospak told King Brian all that he had learnt, and took baptism, and gave himself over into the king's hand.

After that King Brian made them gather force over all his realm, and the whole host was to come to Dublin in the week before Palm Sunday.

Brian's Battle.

Earl Sigurd Hlodver's son busked him from the Orkneys, and Flosi offered to go with him.

The Earl would not have that, since he had his pilgrimage to fulfil.

Flosi offered fifteen men of his band to go on the voyage, and the Earl accepted them, but Flosi fared with Earl Gilli to the Southern Isles.

Thorstein, the son of Hall of the Side, went along with Earl Sigurd, and Hrafn the red, and Erling of Straumey.

He would not that Hareck should go, but said he would be sure to be the first to tell him the tidings of his voyage.

The Earl came with all his host on Palm Sunday to Dublin, and there too was come Brodir with all his host.

Brodir tried by sorcery how the fight would go, but the answer ran thus, that if the fight were on Good-Friday King Brian would fall but win the day ; but if they fought before, they would all fall who were against him.

Then Brodir said that they must not fight before the Friday.

On the fifth day of the week a man rode up to Kormlada and her company on an apple-grey horse, and in his hand he held a halberd ; he talked long with them.

King Brian came with all his host to the Burg, and on the Friday the host fared out of the Burg, and both armies were drawn up in array.

Brodir was on one wing of the battle, but King Sigtrygg on the other.

Earl Sigurd was in the mid battle.

Now it must be told of King Brian that he would not fight on the fast-day, and so a shieldburg [1] was thrown round him, and his host was drawn up in array in front of it.

Wolf the quarrelsome was on that wing of the battle against which Brodir stood ; but on the other wing, where Sigtrygg stood against them, were Ospak and his sons.

But in mid battle was Kerthialfad, and before him the banners were borne.

Now the wings fall on one another, and there was a very hard fight. Brodir went through the host of the foe, and felled all the foremost that stood there, but no steel would bite on his mail.

Wolf the quarrelsome turned then to meet him, and thrust at him thrice so hard that Brodir fell before him at each thrust, and was well-nigh not getting on his feet again ; but as soon as ever he found his feet, he fled away into the wood at once.

Earl Sigurd had a hard battle against Kerthialfad, and Kerthialfad came on so fast that he laid low all who were in the front rank, and he broke the array of Earl Sigurd right up to his banner, and slew the banner-bearer.

Then he got another man to bear the banner, and there was again a hard fight.

Kerthialfad smote this man too his death blow at once, and so on one after the other all who stood near him.

Then Earl Sigurd called on Thorstein the son of Hall of the Side, to bear the banner, and Thorstein was just about to lift the banner, but then Asmund the white said—

“ Don’t bear the banner ! for all they who bear it get their death.”

“ Hrafn the red !” called out Earl Sigurd, “ Bear thou the banner.”

“ Bear thine own devil thyself,” answered Hrafn.

Then the Earl said —

“ ’Tis fittest that the beggar should bear the bag ;” and with that he took the banner from the staff and put it under his cloak.

A little after Asmund the white was slain, and then the Earl was pierced through with a spear.

Ospak had gone through all the battle on his wing, he had been sore wounded, and lost both his sons ere King Sigtrygg fled before him.

Then flight broke out throughout all the host.

Thorstein Hall of the Side’s son stood still while all the others fled, and tied his shoe-string. Then Kerthialfad asked why he ran not as the others.

“ Because,” said Thorstein, “ I can’t get home to-night, since I am at home out in Iceland.”

Kerthialfad gave him peace.

Hrafn the red was chased out into a certain river ; he thought he saw there the pains of hell down below him, and he thought the devils wanted to drag him to them.

Then Hrafn said —

“ Thy dog, [2] Apostle Peter ! hath run twice to Rome, and lie would run the third time if thou gavest him leave.”

Then the devils let him loose, and Hrafn got across the river.

Now Brodir saw that King Brian’s men were chasing the fleers, and that there were few men by the shieldburg.

Then he rushed out of the wood, and broke through the shieldburg, and hewed at the king.

The lad Takt threw his arm in the way, and the stroke took it off and the king’s head too, but the king’s blood came on the lad’s stump, and the stump was healed by it on the spot.

Then Brodir called out with a loud voice—

“ Now let man tell man that Brodir felled Brian.”

Then men ran after those who were chasing the fleers, and they were told that King Brian had fallen, and then they turned back straightway, both Wolf the quarrelsome and Kerthialfad.

Then they threw a ring round Brodir and his men, and threw branches of trees upon them, and so Brodir was taken alive.

Wolf the quarrelsome cut open his belly, and led him round and round the trunk of a tree, and so wound all his entrails out of him, and he did not die before they were all drawn out of him

Brodir’s men were slain to a man.

After that they took King Brian’s body and laid it out. The king’s head had grown fast to the trunk.

Fifteen men of the Burners fell in Brian’s battle, and there, too, fell Halldor the son of Gudmund the powerful, and Erling of Straumey.

On Good Friday that event happened in Caithness that a man whose name was Daurrud went out. He saw folk riding twelve together to a bower, and there they were all lost to his sight. He went to that bower and looked in through a window slit that was in it, and saw that there were women inside, and they had set up a loom. Men’s heads were the weights, but men’s entrails were the warp and weft, a sword was the shuttle, and the reels were arrows.

They sang these songs, and he learnt them by heart—

The woof of war.

“ See ! warp is stretched
For warriors’ fall,
Lo ! weft in loom

'Tis wet with blood ;
Now fight foreboding,
'Neath friends' swift fingers,
Our gray woof waxeth
With war's alarms,
Our warp bloodred,
Our weft corseblue.

“ This woof is y-woven
With entrails of men,
This warp is hardweighted
With heads of the slain,
Spears blood-besprinkled
For spindles we use,
Our loom ironbound,
And arrows our reels ;
With swords for our shuttles
This war-woof we work ;
So weave we, weird sisters.
Our warwinning woof.

“ Now War-winner walketh
To weave in her turn,
Now Swordswinger steppeth,
Now Swiftstroke, now Storm ;
When they speed the shuttle
How spear-heads shall flash !
Shields crash, and helmgnaver [3]
On harness bite hard !

“ Wind we, wind swiftly
Our warwinning woof,
Woof erst for king youthful
Foredoomed as his own,
Forth now we will ride.
Then through the ranks rushing
Be busy where friends
Blows blithe give and take.

“ Wind we, wind swiftly
Our warwinning woof,
After that let us steadfastly
Stand by the brave king ;
Then men shall mark mournful
Their shields red with gore,
How Swordstroke and Spearthrust
Stood stout by the prince.

“ Wind we, wind swiftly
Our warwinning woof ;
When sword-bearing rovers
To banners rush on.

Mind, maidens, we spare not
One life in the fray !
We corse-choosing sisters
Have charge of the slain.

“ Now new-coming nations
That island shall rule.
Who on outlying headlands
Abode ere the fight ;
I say that King mighty
To death now is done.
Now low before spearpoint
That Earl bows his head.

“ Soon over all Ersemen
Sharp sorrow shall fall,
That woe to those warriors
Shall wane nevermore ;
Our woof now is woven,
Now battle-field waste,
Oër land and oër water
War tidings shall leap.

“ Now surely 'tis gruesome
To gaze all around,
When bloodred through heaven
Drives cloudrack oër head ;
Air soon shall be deep hued
With dying men's blood
When this our spaedom
Comes speedy to pass.

“ So cheerily chant we
Charms for the young king,
Come maidens lift loudly
His warwinning lay ;
Let him who now listens
Learn well with his ears,
And gladden brave swordsmen
With bursts of war's song.”

“ Now mount we our horses.
Now bare we our brands.
Now haste we hard, maidens.
Hence far, far, away.”

Then they plucked down the woof and tore it asunder, and each kept what she had hold of.
Now Daurrud goes away from the slit, and home ; but they got on their steeds and rode six
to the south, and the other six to the north.

A like event befell Brand Gneisti's son in the Faroe Isles.

At Swinefell, in Iceland, blood came on the priest's stole on Good Friday, so that he had to put it off.

At Thvattwater the priest thought he saw on Good Friday a long deep of the sea hard by the altar, and there he saw many awful sights, and it was long ere he could sing the prayers.

This event happened in the Orkneys, that Hareck thought he saw Earl Sigurd, and some men with him. Then Hareck took his horse and rode to meet the Earl. Men saw that they met and rode under a brae, but they were never seen again, and not a scrap was ever found of Hareck.

Earl Gilli in the Southern Isles dreamed that a man came to him and said his name was Hostfinn, and told him he was come from Ireland.

The Earl thought he asked him for tidings thence, and then he sang this song.

“ I have been where warriors wrestled,
High in Erin sang the sword,
Boss to boss met many bucklers,
Steel rung sharp on rattling helm ;

I can tell of all their struggle ;
Sigurd fell in flight of spears ;
Brian fell, but kept his kingdom
Ere he lost one drop of blood.”

Those two, Flosi and the Earl, talked much of this dream. A week after, Hrafn the red came thither, and told them all the tidings of Brian's battle, the fall of the king, and of Earl Sigurd, and Brodir, and all the Vikings.

“ What,” said Flosi, “ hast thou to tell me of my men ?”

“ They all fell there,” says Hrafn, “ but thy brother-in-law Thorstein took peace from Kerthialfad, and is now with him.”

Flosi told the Earl that he would now go away, “ for we have our pilgrimage south to fulfil.”

The Earl bade him go as he wished, and gave him a ship and all else that he needed, and much silver.

Then they sailed to Wales, and stayed there a while.

[1] “ Shieldburg,” that is, a ring of men holding their shields locked together.

[2] “ Thy dog,” etc. Meaning that he would go a third time on a pilgrimage to Rome if St. Peter helped him out of this strait.

[3] “ Helmgnaver,” the sword that bites helmets.

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