

THE STORY OF RAUÐ AND HIS SONS.

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INTRODUCTION.

The tale of Rauð (or Rauðulf) tells of a visit made by King Olaf to a powerful chieftain living in the remote valleys of central Norway bordering on Sweden. This visit is made in course of an enquiry into large thefts of cattle and swine, which have occurred in the district under the stewardship of Bjørn, a thoroughly unpopular man, but a favourite of Queen Astrið. Bjørn calls a district assembly to investigate the thefts, and casts suspicion on the inhabitants of the wild border valleys in the north of this province. The matter is laid before the King, when he comes on circuit with his retinue to the house of Bjørn. The two sons of Rauð are summoned. The King refuses to believe in their guilt, and accepts an invitation to visit their father. When he arrives with all his retinue he finds a splendid and strongly-fortified homestead. After a magnificent banquet, the King has a long talk with Rauð. He discovers that his host has remarkable powers of divination, although he expressly disclaims the gift of prophecy and the use of sorcery. It appears that Rauð is especially skilled in the interpretation of dreams, an art very interesting to King Olaf, who desires some revelation of the future in dream.

The King asks whether the sons have learnt any of their father's skill. Sigurð claims knowledge of astrology, and

Dag professes to read character. The King then calls on his chief men to specify each man his particular accomplishment. This they do, each in character, and so the evening passes in good entertainment. The King is then led to sleep in the sumptuous new building which at first he had taken for a church. It is a special sleeping-chamber, constructed by Rauð and his sons. The form is circular, and inside there is an outer panelled corridor with beds for 40. The central part, supported by an inner ring of pillars, is vaulted, and contains the richest beds, enough for 80 in all. The chief bed, on a central platform, is assigned to the King. Here he lies down, and for some time gazes at the rich decorations of the vault. It is painted to depict God in glory, surrounded by all the orders of Creation. The ceiling of the outer corridor is also painted, with deeds of antiquity, and stories of famous men. Finally, the King feels the bed revolving under him, and he falls asleep and dreams a marvellous dream.

Next morning, the King first tests the arts of Sigurð and Dag, to his complete satisfaction. He then consults Rauð about his dreams. Rauð describes and interprets the dream, in which the King saw a mighty cross bearing a crucified figure, the whole enclosed in an aureole. Starting from the head of red gold, the figure was made of metals in descending order of value. The parts are identified with the reigns of succeeding Norwegian kings, beginning with Olaf's own reign of red gold. The qualities of the different metals are expounded with full use of allegory, to demonstrate the decline in the rulers of Norway down to 1155. After a short exchange of compliments with Rauð, the episode is somewhat abruptly completed by the unmasking of Bjørn. Dag, with his perceptions of character, declares that Bjørn himself is the thief, and has the stolen goods hidden in his own farm. Proceeding

there, the King finds all as Dag has said, and the matter is closed with the expulsion of the unjust steward.

Within its historical framework, this tale combines much material both curious and ornate, drawn from foreign literatures. It is an outstanding record of the taste for baroque extravagance which spread from the East, to reach as far as Iceland by the thirteenth century. Yet the native literary tradition was fully capable of assimilating such material. *Rauðs Þáttr* can stand on its own merits as a piece of narrative literature. Although some of its sources may be far-fetched, there is nothing fantastic in the finished work. It is fiction, which reflects genuine beliefs and presents solid characters. Much of the legendary material which grew up round both the Olafs is fiction of the same type. Particularly good examples are found in the stories about the encounters of the Christian King with heathenism and sorcery among Norwegian chiefs: such are the meeting of Olaf Tryggvason and the god Thor (*Fms.* II, 182-9) and the triumph of S. Olaf over Dala-Guðbrand and his idols (*ibid.*, IV. 240-9). In these tales, faithful details of native life and customs are blended with hagiographical common-places. So, in *Rauðs Þáttr*, the descriptions taken from romance are very prominent; but they do not obscure the grave dignity of the King's purpose and destiny, nor do they violate native tradition. Rather, the curiousness and splendour of these descriptions emphasize the status of divination as an honourable art, and the value of a princely style of living combined with high intellectual attainments.

This story appears in the composite *Saga of Olaf the Saint*,¹ a title which covers a group of recensions combining Snorri's *Life of S. Olaf* with copious legendary

¹ Printed in *Fornmanna Sögur* (Copenhagen, 1825-35), IV-V, 348. The material is more fully and accurately presented by O. A. Johnsen and J. Helgason, *Den Store Saga om Olav den Hellige*, 2 vols. (Oslo, 1941); the text of Snorri's *Life of S. Olaf* is printed from MS. Stockholm 2, 4to, together with the principal interpolations in an appendix.

material, taken from the lost work of Styrmir and from other sources.² The *Þáttir* appears in nine MSS.³; a version is available in *Fornmanna Sögur* V, 330-48; from the MS. *Tómasskinna* (Royal library of Copenhagen 1008. fol.), but the present translation is based on MS. Stockholm 4. 4to, printed by Johnsen and Helgason, II, 655-82. In these nine MSS. the *Þáttir* replaces Chap. 156 of Snorri's *Life O.H.*,⁴ which is a selective compression omitting the

² Fully discussed by S. Nordal, *Om Olaf den Helliges Saga* (Copenhagen 1914); see especially pp. 69-86. The relations between the various recensions are minutely examined by Johnsen and Helgason, *op. cit.*; on the work of Styrmir, see vol. II, pp. 1128-29.

³ The first eight are described in *Fms.* IV, 1-26, and are here quoted by the sigla there given.

- B. AM. 68. a. fol. [formerly 75.d.], second half fourteenth century.
- D. AM. 325. V. 4to., second half fourteenth century.
- E. A.M. 75. c. fol., first half fourteenth century. Only 40 leaves remain, out of an original 120 leaves. Much is missing from *R.Þ.*, but two long passages remain.
- F. Royal Library, Copenhagen 1005, fol. (*Flateyjarbók*), A.D. 1380-87 (first scribe).
- H. AM. 73. b. fol. (*Bæjarbók*), c. 1400. Only 4 leaves survive, but the text is reconstructed from seventeenth-century paper copies; the most important are AM. 71. fol., 73. a. fol., 76. a. fol.
- I. AM. 75. a. fol., c. 1300. The MS. was defective even in the seventeenth century, when it was three times its present size. Gaps are supplied from the seventeenth-century transcript AM. 321 4to. One leaf containing part of *R.Þ.* survives.
- K. Royal Library, Stockholm, 1. fol. (*Bergsbók*), c. 1400 (second scribe).
- L. Royal Library, Copenhagen 1008 fol. (*Tómasskinna*), c. 1400. The text of *Fms.* V. 330-48 is based on this MS.
- St. Royal Library, Stockholm, 4. 4to., first half fourteenth century.

Other MSS. of *Life of S. Olaf* are so defective that it is impossible to tell whether or no they originally contained *R.Þ.*; such are AM. 75. b. fol. and AM. 325, VI 4to. *R.Þ.* is found as a separate *Þáttir* among collections of extracts; the earliest of these is the Royal Library, Copenhagen 2845, 4to (fifteenth century), where *R.Þ.* is taken from *Flateyjarbók*. Others are copies of seventeenth and eighteenth cents., mostly taken from known MSS.

The present translation is based on MS. St., as printed by Johnsen and Helgason, II, 655-82; but quoted passages are referred to the text of *Fms.* V, 330-48, for convenience of reference.

⁴ The shortened form of Chap. 156 is represented by MSS. AM. 61 and Stockholm 2. 4to. The former is printed in *Fms.* IV, 379-81. The latter was first edited by Munch and Unger, *Saga Olafs konungs ens Helga* (Christiania, 1853), and is the basis of the diplomatic text printed by Johnsen and Helgason. When Snorri's work is mentioned, reference will be made to this *Life O.H.*; although the material was afterwards embodied in *Heimskringla*, the separate work is the more closely connected with the textual history of *Rauðs Þáttir*.

striking elaborations of the story—the boasting, the description of the sleeping-chamber, and the lengthy prophetic dream. There can be little doubt that the *Þáttr* was composed before Snorri wrote,⁵ and that the shorter version embodied in his *Life O.H.*, and later in *Heimskringla*,⁶ is his own drastic abbreviation. Some MSS. confuse the *Þáttr* by alterations of order and wording in accordance with Snorri's shortened version.⁷ Such contamination still further complicates the intricate textual history of the *Þáttr*. Nevertheless, the story is clear enough in outline to warrant a version of the very interesting material it contains.⁸

⁵ In their discussion of this interpolation, Johnsen and Helgason (vol. II, 1129-31) show that the *Þáttr* existed in a separate form, used independently by various redactors who put together the *Life of S. Olaf*. The MSS. of this compilation do not follow their usual alignments in the text of *Rauðs Þáttr*, and thus they betray a separate textual tradition. In each of the three main groups of MSS. the *Þáttr* has been interpolated from a separate source, and the divergences within group C suggest further outside influences.

⁶ *Heimskringla* ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1911), pp. 354-55 (*Saga O.H.* ch. 164).

⁷ See note 9 below, and Notes to Translation 4, 6.

⁸ Arbitrary variations of nomenclature suggest possible contamination with some other story. Snorri and AM. 61 use the name *Rauðr* only. In the longer version, the hero is called *Rauðr*, *Rauðulfr* and *Ulfr*. Some MSS. have regularised their usage, but none is entirely consistent. Alternative names are expressly recognized, (i) in the opening sentence by one group of MSS., (ii) a little further on (*Fms. V.* 330/19) by another group:—

- (i) *Rauðr er maðr nefndr er odro nafne het Ulfr* St. *Ulfr het maðr er kalladr var Rauðulfr* F. *Maðr het ulfr inn spaki er sumir kalla rauð* D. (*Rauðr het maðr* K, B, H, I. *Rauðulfr* . . . L. E is deficient here).
- (ii) *Rauðr er odru nafni het Ulfr* (*Dorolfur* L) . . . *siþan sendi Rauðulfr* (*Rauðr* H) . . . B. H. L. I.

Thereafter, the usage of different MSS. varies considerably:—

1. St. B. and L. use all three names interchangeably. St. has *Rauðr* occasionally, mainly at the beginning, while *Ulfr* becomes more and more frequent. *Rauðulfr* is used sporadically throughout. B. agrees in the main with St., L. not quite so closely.
2. F. uses *Rauðulfr* consistently (once *Rauðssonum*), and so does E. in the portions extant (once *Ulfr*).
3. I. generally has *Rauðulfr*, occasionally *Ulfr*, rarely *Rauðr*. K. (which sometimes agrees closely with F.), has about equally *Rauðulfr*/*Ulfr*, less often *Rauðr*.
4. H. uses *Rauðr*, very seldom *Rauðulfr*; never *Ulfr*, except once in passage (ii) above.

An analysis of the main elements in the story will give some indications of the diverse sources used, the age of the *Þáttur*, and its relation to Snorri's shorter version. There are two main components. The first (A) can also be seen in the shorter version; but Snorri has condensed and adapted it to run within the plot of his narrative.

A. is basically a folk tale about a wise man able to interpret dreams, foretell the weather, read character, and so forth. These gifts are shared by Rauð and his sons, but in the longer version the part of Rauð is predominant; in the shorter version the sons exercise these functions. The theme of the main plot is the use of these special perceptions to rebut an accusation, and to unmask the real culprit. The accounts of Snorri and MS. AM. 61. are confined to this plot. Rauð is therefore subordinate; he is rich and wise, but the action depends on the gifts of his two sons. In Snorri's version, interpretation of dreams is added to Sigurð's gifts.⁹ Dag, the character-reader, is used by King Olaf as adviser in the following episode of *Þórir Ólvisson*.¹⁰

Decorative elaborations of A. are peculiar to *Rauðs Þáttur*:—

(a) A detailed description is given of the magnificent homestead of Rauð and his sons, and of the splendid entertainment provided for King Olaf and his retinue.

(b) The construction of the *svefnskemmma* is described in

5. D. has *Rauðulfr* twice at the beginning, thereafter it consistently uses *Ulfr*; never *Rauðr*, except in passage (i) above.

The translation preserves the usage of MS. St.

⁹ *Life O. H.* ch. 156 *Sigurðr segir at hann kunni drauma at skilja, ok at deila doegrarar þótt engi sæi himintungl*; so AM. 61 (*Fms.* IV, 381/4). The testing of the sons is clumsily handled in the *Þáttur*, and many MSS. show duplication, or rearrangement under the influence of Snorri's account: see Notes to Translation, 4, 6.

¹⁰ *Fms.* IV. 382-3, *Life O.H.* chs. 157-8. Again, some duplication is seen in the *Þáttur*; cf. the comment on Rauð's gift in *Fms.* V. 333, 5. *lagði konungr af því trúnað á væður hans*, with *Life O.H.* ch. 158 *reynðist konungi þat allt með sanmíndum er Dagr sagði honum, hvart sem þat var liðit eða ókomið fram. Festi þá konungr trúnað mikinn á væðum hans.*

detail. The prototype clearly is the revolving chamber of romance literature, a fanciful description based on the architecture and decoration of Byzantine palaces.¹¹ The closest analogue in Norse literature is the palace of Hugo in *Karlamagnus Saga* VII,¹² which is ultimately derived from a French romance, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*.¹³

(c) The *íþróttir* of Rauð and his sons are matched by a long series of boasts from King Olaf's retinue. The ultimate source of these would seem to be the *gabs* of the Charlemagne legend,¹⁴ but these are in native style, maintaining a sobriety and decency entirely different from the French series.

B. as a whole is peculiar to *Rauðs Þáttr*. It consists of a prophetic dream based on Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Dan. ii. 31-45), in which a figure made of different metals symbolizes succeeding reigns.¹⁵ The allegorical elaborations associated with this type of literature were already well developed by Jewish authors at the beginning of the Christian era; *Rauðs Þáttr* gives a fair specimen of the mediaeval handling of such material.¹⁶ In outline, the dream of *Rauðs Þáttr* is very close to the Biblical account.

¹¹ See M. Schlauch in *Speculum* VII, 500-14; and *Romance in Iceland* (Princeton, 1934), pp. 157-163.

¹² *Karlamagnus Saga* ed. C. R. Unger (Christiania, 1859), pp. 471-2.

¹³ See note 23 below.

¹⁴ *Karlamagnus Saga*, pp. 473-76.

¹⁵ See S. R. Driver *The Book of Daniel* (Cambridge Bible, 1900), pp. 94-7;

J. A. Montgomery *The Book of Daniel* (International Critical Commentary, 1927) pp. 166-68. On metal symbolism in Jewish apocalyptic literature, see Krauss in *Jewish Encyclopaedia* (New York, 1904), vol. VIII, p. 518.

¹⁶ The prophet Daniel was regarded as the father of mediaeval dream-lore. In an O.E. miscellany of the early eleventh-century (MS. Cotton Tiberius. A III), there is a Latin Dream-Book with interlinear O.E. gloss, headed *De somniorum diversitate secundum ordinem abcdarii danielis prophetae* (fol. 27^b-32^b) also an O.E. translation of a similar work, headed *Somnile Danielis* (fol. 38^a-39^b); see M. Förster in *Archiv* CXXI, 32. The apocalyptist Ezra/Esdra was also associated with folk-prophecy, in Latin MSS. as early as ninth century; see Förster in *Archiv* CX, 437-49. Such fusion of learning and folklore is characteristic of vernacular writing in the early Middle Ages. I know of no such material preserved in early Icelandic MSS.; but it must surely have been known to twelfth-century scholars, in a country where this subject has always been so eagerly studied.

One point will illustrate the relationship: Nebuchadnezzar requires his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans to tell the dream before interpreting it (Dan. ii. 5); their discomfiture is the occasion of Daniel's triumph. In the *Dáttir*, Rauð also narrates the whole dream before interpreting it, although no motive is given. This native version of a wise man with no sorcery about him is a typical example of the adaptation of alien material. The visionary figure is interpreted in terms of Norwegian kings after Olaf, down to 1155. Episodes from ancient story are depicted, including the deeds of Sigurd Fafnisbane and Harold Finehair; these are not allegorical, but purely decorative.

B. is further decorated with enrichments from other sources:—(a) The figure ("a great image." Dan. ii. 31) is described as Christ crucified, in the style of Byzantine iconography. The figure has long locks,¹⁷ a girdle reaching up to the armpits, and crossed feet pierced by a single nail. This last feature was apparently introduced into the West about 1200 A.D.¹⁸

(b) The whole figure is enclosed in an oval aureole or gloria, within which are depicted the orders of Creation. This complex description is of course ideal. It cannot be visualised as a whole, although the detail is in some parts precise. Lavish application of allegory causes confusion, and once at least direct contradiction. The aureole is described as a ring, being without beginning or end (*Fms.*, V, 343/19 f.). Yet, in the next sentence, it is described as pointed above and below, broadening in the middle.

(c) One of the metals described appears to be electrum, the alloy of gold and silver.¹⁹ This metal is twice

¹⁷ See O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Architecture* (Oxford, 1911), p. 671.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 661-2.

¹⁹ *Fms.* V, 346/4. The readings of the MSS. vary; see notes 10, 11 to translation. The distinction made between *rautt gull* and *bleikt gull* in the following sentence seems to indicate that the alloy of gold and silver is meant. Some illustration of this terminology and its meaning can be gathered from the

mentioned in the visions of Ezekiel (Ezek. i, 4, viii, 2), as representing a brilliance almost incandescent.²⁰ It seems likely enough that the author of *Rauðs Þáttr* drew on other prophetic visions of the Old Testament besides the Book of Daniel: he may well have been using some allegorical work based upon such vision literature.

The dating of *Rauðs Þáttr* is a many-sided problem. The prophetic list of Norwegian kings shows that it was written after 1155. Elements derived from foreign literatures give no precise indications of date. The circular vaulted hall belongs to a tradition going back as far as Ovid,²¹ and it is not clear how early this description

fragment *Náttúrusteinarnar* (*Alfræði* I. 77-83), which seems to go back to a twelfth-century translation of the *Liber Lapidum* of Bishop Marbod (late eleventh century). The Latin text reads: (from *Hildeberti Opera* ed. Beaugendre, Paris, 1708, col. 1677).

Ethiopum tellus lapidem Crisopacion edit
 Quem tenebrae produnt, occultant tempora lucis,
 Noctibus igne micans, vanescit luce diurna,
 Absque nitore iacens auri pallore sepultus . . .

The Icelandic translation runs as follows: (*Alfræði* I. 81) Crisopacius kemr af Ethiopia, hann hefir lios i myrkri enn i liosi myrkt. Hann glóar sem elldr um nott, enn um dag er hann sem bleikt gull.

Pallor is defined by Du Cange as "pallida lux, lumen tenue." The French translation of the twelfth century (see L. Pannier, *Les Lapidaires français du Moyen Age*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, fasc. 52 (1882) reads: *en jahnur sevelist*. With these descriptions, compare the definition of the Criselectrus (omitted in the Icelandic version):—

Esse Criselectrus similis describitur auro
 Cujus ad electrum color inclinare videtur . . .

(Beaugendre, op. cit. col. 1675).

Both descriptions are expansions of passages in Isidore's *Etymologiae*: XVI, XIV, 8. Chrysoprasus aethiopicus est; quem lapidem lux celat, prodit obscuritas. Nocte enim igneus est, die aureus . . . XV, 3. Chryselectrus similis auro, sed in colorem electri vergens.

Both *similis auro* and *aureus* might be rendered 'near-gold' a rough equivalent of *nástagull*: i.e. modified gold, as seen in the pale glitter of the gold alloy, electrum.

²⁰ Hebrew *Hashmal*, LXX. ἡλεκτρον, Vulgate *electrum* (Ezech. i. 4. *quasi species electri*, VIII. 2. *ut visio electri*). The A. V. has 'amber,' which is linguistically possible, but contextually inappropriate; see G. A. Cooke *The Book of Ezekiel* (Internat. Crit. Comm., 1936), p. 10, Krauss in *Jewish Encyclopaedia* VIII, 515. }

²¹ See. M. Schlauch in *Speculum* VII, 510, and in *Romance in Iceland*, p. 157f.

attracted another widespread motive, that of the revolving bed.²² The association of the wondrous hall with the boasts of the king and his retinue is a feature of the legendary travels of Charlemagne in the Orient, as seen in the Old French romance *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*. This poem, surviving in an Anglo-Norman MS. of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries (London, B.M., lost since 1789) was assigned by its editor, E. Koschwitz,²³ to the late eleventh century. In a later study E. Coulet²⁴ argued that it could not have been composed before 1125-1160. Coulet shows that the germ of these fabulous travels is found in a chronicle written by an Italian monk in the late tenth century. This simple account lacking the decorative motives here in question was the basis of the earliest of the narratives collected in *Karlamagnus Saga*. About the second decade of the twelfth century, the same material was used in *Descriptio qualiter Karolus M. clavum et coronam Domini a Constantinopoli Aquisgrani detulerit, qualiterque K. Calvus hec ad S. Dyonisium retulerit*,²⁵ a work written round the relics of the Abbey of S. Denis.²⁶ The legend was richly developed during the twelfth century, and became widely known. A Welsh

²² See Schlauch, *Romance in Iceland*, p. 161.

²³ *Karls des Grossen Reise nach Jerusalem und Constantinopel*; sechster Auflage, besorgt von G. Thureau. (Leipzig, 1913). The passage containing the descriptions of the palace, the feast, and the sleeping-chamber is conveniently accessible in the *Historical French Reader* of Studer and Waters (Oxford, 1924), XV. 11. 84-176 (= *Pèlerinage*, ll. 342-432). These editors accept the dating of Bédier (*Les Légendes Épiques* IV. 142-156) and Coulet to mid-twelfth century, arguing that the poem must have been composed some time after the First Crusade. Koschwitz bases his earlier date chiefly on linguistic arguments. F. Schürr, *Das altfranzösische Epos* (München 1926) assigns the poem in its present form to the mid-twelfth century, discerning some influence from the Eastern marvels described in the Alexander cycle.

²⁴ *Études sur l'ancien Poème Français du Voyage de Charlemagne en Orient* (Montpellier, 1907), p. 271.

²⁵ M. Rauschen *Die Legende Karls des Grossen im XI und XII. Jahrhundert* (Gesellsch. für rhein. Geschichtskunde VII; Leipzig, 1890).

²⁶ See Coulet, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

version exists in the *Red Book of Hergest*.²⁷ So too, it was included in the heterogeneous material collected for King Hákon of Norway in the early thirteenth century, under the title of *Karlamagnus Saga ok kappá hans*. Part VII of this work is in effect translated from an earlier prototype of the *Pélerinage*, transmitted through versions closely allied to the Welsh translations.²⁸ In a detailed textual comparison of the Swedish prose version, the Danish chronicle, and *Karlamagnus Saga*, Koschwitz²⁹ demonstrates that the two independent recensions of the latter must descend from an original of the early thirteenth century, on which the other Scandinavian versions are also based. It is therefore quite possible that one of these intermediary versions was known to the author of *Rauðs Þáttr*. The iconography of the vision, in particular the crossed feet, is appropriate to a work composed round about 1200.

Both the main elements in *Rauðs Þáttr*—the decorative extravagances of A, and the detailed symbolism of B—fit well into the context of twelfth-century literature in Iceland. To this period belongs the compilations of legendary history known as *Veraldar Saga* [G.P. V-VII],³⁰ (earliest MS. a fragment of c. 1200). *Leiðarvísir*, a pilgrim itinerary of Europe and the Near East drawn up by Abbot Nikolás of Þverá about 1150, survives in a later recension of the fourteenth century (*Alfræði* I. 3-31); the source is largely the *Origines* of Isidore of Seville. Many scraps of curious learning—often with allegorical meanings attached—are found in the miscellany A.M. 194, 8vo. printed in *Alfræði Islenskk* I; thus the paragraphs *Náttúrusteinarnar* (p. 77) and *Merking steina* (pp.

²⁷ Printed, with translation, by J. Rhys, in E. Koschwitz, *Sechs Bearbeitungen des altfranzös.-Gedichts von Karls des Grossen Reise nach Jerusalem u. Constantinopel* (Heilbronn, 1879).

²⁸ See the *Stammbaum* in Koschwitz's edition, p. xii.

²⁹ Boehners *Romanische Studien* II (Strassburg, 1875), pp. 7-21.

³⁰ G.P.=Gíslasons *Prøver af Oldnordisk Sprog og Literatur* (Copenhagen, 1860).

40-33) are derived from the *Liber Lapidum* of Bishop Marbod (eleventh century), early versified in Anglo-Norman. The *Physiologus* fragments are also very old, being preserved in a MS. of c. 1200.³¹ Such works were widely read and translated on the Continent at this time. Their contents were freely used to embellish the elaborate metrical romances compiled in France during the twelfth century: among the chief sources of these early romances, Faral enumerates: "les recits orientaux et les écrits didactiques les plus divers, bestiaries et volucraires, lapidaires et 'mappemondes', herbiers et encyclopédies."³² It seems that an intensive revival of antiquity, and a renewed taste for classical studies, were important stimuli of literary production in the French schools and centres likely to be frequented by Icelanders at this time.³³ The works of Ovid and Statius were the richest sources for descriptions of elaborate and curious decoration. In the *Roman de Thèbes* (first half of the twelfth century), a richly-decorated tent is described (ll. 2921, 3979-4068), in which are depicted the five zones of the earth, the twelve months, the animal kingdom, astronomical bodies, as well as the nine spheres, the War of the Titans, and allegorical figures representing the Seven Arts. Simpler cosmographic ornament is seen in the *mostier* of Jerusalem, described in *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* (ll. 123-8). The taste for marvels, ingenious decorative devices often wrought by magic, was highly developed in the Alexander cycle, first presented in the vernacular in a fragmentary poem by one Alberic (early twelfth century). Faral characterizes such descriptions as "tout empreints des couleurs féériques de l'Orient, et où gisaient les admirables trouvailles de l'imagination gréco-byzantine,"³⁴

³¹ See the recent edition by Halldór Hermannson (*Islandica* vol. XXVII, 1938), a facsimile reproduction with valuable historical introduction.

³² E. Faral, *Recherches sur les Sources latines des Contes et Romans courtois de Moyen Age.* (Paris, 1913), p. 406.

³³ Cf. G. Turville-Petre, "The Intellectual History of the Icelanders," *History*, XXVII, p. 112.

³⁴ *op. cit.*, p. 406.

There can be no doubt (on the evidence of early MSS) that material of this kind was freely presented in the vernacular in twelfth-century Iceland. Such works, however, are not mentioned in the sober survey of vernacular literature given in the First Grammatical Treatise of the mid or later twelfth century. The author mentions original compositions and compilations: laws, genealogies, and the learned historical works of Ari. The only translation-literature he considers are the *pyðingar helgar*; here he probably alludes to early lives of the Saints, also perhaps to the *Dialogues* of Pope Gregory, extant in a MS. of c. 1200.³⁵ A legendary successor of pious content might be the *Fabella Alexii* of the thirteenth century [G.P. xxi].³⁶ Here again, oriental wonders take a prominent place. But works of a more pronounced theological and ecclesiastical cast were already translated, introducing the characteristic symbolism and the didactic allegory of the age. Moral allegory was already developing in works mainly decorative and curious: in the *Physiologus*, for instance, and in other kinds of encyclopaedic literature.³⁷ The tendency towards metaphysical interpretation was naturally much stronger in works primarily religious. The eleventh century was a period of great opportunity for the Church, in France and elsewhere, and it is at this time that secular themes and descriptions were attracted into the orbit of religious literature, and remoulded in the new upsurge of devout enthusiasm.³⁸ The Benedictine nunnery of Herford in Saxony, where the first Icelandic bishops received their education, was well known both for religious zeal and for classical studies during the eleventh century.³⁹ The predominant influence of the Cluniac reform of the

³⁵ *Leifar* (Copenhagen, 1878) pp. 87-150. Selections in G.P., XXIII-XXV.

³⁶ Ed. by F. Jónsson, *Helgensagaer* (S.T.U.A.G.N.L., 1927), pp. 47-53.

³⁷ Cf. F. Schür, *Das altfranzösische Epos* (Munich, 1926), pp. 1718.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-5.

³⁹ See F. Paasche, *Kristendom og Kvad* (Christiania, 1914), pp. 58-60.

Benedictine rule counted greatly in France; it should be remembered that the two important centres of learning in Northern Iceland, *Pingeyrar* and *Þverá*, were both Benedictine foundations, of 1133 and 1155 respectively, and that much of the literary production of that age can be directly associated with one or other of these centres.⁴⁰ In this period, the apocalyptic and visionary literature of the Bible was being exploited.⁴¹ Early in this century, the *Elucidarius* was compiled, as a manual of moral allegory, by the elusive Honorius; the Icelandic translation belongs to the end of the century.⁴²

More important and original handling of allegory is seen in the Icelandic homilies composed in the course of the twelfth century. Most of these are to be found in the *Homiliu-bók* of c. 1200.⁴³ Although the fragments now extant in contemporary MSS. or in later recensions are meagre enough, we can glean sufficient material to understand something of the vigorous and many-sided literary activity in twelfth-century Iceland. *Rauðs Þáttr* is a product of this period, when Icelandic scholars were pillaging the newly-discovered riches of European literature, from the Bible to oriental romances. It is indeed a time of discovery and rapid assimilation, not as yet regulated by the more exacting critical and aesthetic standards of the succeeding century. A good instance of the changes imposed by these standards can be discerned in the composition of *Fóstbræðra Saga*, assigned to c. 1200 in its earliest form. One MS. of this saga includes some curious *klausur*, each a small excursus of historical, encyclopaedic or merely rhetorical matter serving as decorative additions to the narrative. Nordal has shown⁴⁴ that these decorative pendants should be

⁴⁰ Cf. G. Turville-Petre *loc. cit.*, p. 116.

⁴¹ For this element in the Lapidaires, cf. Faral, *op. cit.*, pp. 353-56.

⁴² Ed. by K. Gíslason in *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1858.

⁴³ MS. Stockholm 15 4^{to}, ed. by T. Wisén (Lund, 1872).

⁴⁴ *Vestfirðinga Sogur (Islensk Fornrit II)*, Reykjavik, 1928, pp. LXX-LXXI.

associated with an early, uncritical version of the saga, and that they were omitted by writers of maturer taste who made later recensions. Once Snorri had composed his masterly interpretations of past history and literary forms, a new stamp was set upon Icelandic literature. The period of tutelage was abruptly brought to an end. Men's eyes were opened to the relative values of the foreign works they read, and of the works they wrote in their own language.

The relations between *Rauðs Þáttr* and Snorri's account of Rauð and his sons illustrate very well the conditions of Icelandic literary products in the late twelfth century to the early thirteenth century. The first scholars to study the problem seriously took the longer version to be the older; from this, Snorri selected a few points for his very brief version. This view is confirmed by the monumental work of Johnsen and Helgason. It is supported by general indications about the age of the material, and by what we know of Snorri's sources and methods of composition. It would be very like him to extract the main events of this tale, and shape them to his purpose, neglecting the decorative and allegorical elaborations. Such elaborations are not at all foreign to the literature of the age, but they have no place in Snorri's personal and critical reconstruction of the past. The visionary extravagances of *Rauðs Þáttr* are cloudy and even lurid, compared with the ordered brilliance of such a work as *Heimskringla*.

THE STORY OF RAUÐ AND HIS SONS.

There was a man called Rauð, known also as Ulf,¹ who lived up in Eystridalir.² His wife's name was Ragnhild, and their sons were Dag and Sigurd. These were gifted and resourceful men. They were attending this district assembly, defending the case on behalf of the valley-dwellers, and upholding them against this accusation.³ Their behaviour seemed to Björn very arrogant, and he considered them excessive and over-reaching in display of dress and weapons; so he turned the charge upon the two brothers, declaring that it was not at all unlike them to have done such a deed. They denied the charge and this brought the sitting of the assembly to an end.

Shortly afterwards, King Olaf with his retinue arrived, and received official entertainment at the house of Björn the steward. The dispute which had already been publicly heard was then laid before the King. Björn said that he considered the sons of Rauð the most likely to be responsible for the outrage. They were summoned; but when they came before the King, he declared that these men had nothing of the robber about them. He absolved them of the charge brought by Björn, and gave it as his opinion that they had no part in this affair. They invited the King to visit their father, and to receive entertainment there for three nights. The King promised to do so, and a day was fixed for his arrival.

Björn counselled against this expedition, but the King went none the less. It was rather late in the day when the King arrived at Rauðulf's homestead, with a retinue of two hundred men. He saw high walls forming a strong enclosure. But when he and his retinue came to the entrance, they found it open, and it was excellently

constructed; there was a gate turning on iron hinges, and once it was locked, it would be no easy matter to get in. When the King and his retinue rode in at the gate, Rauðulf the householder with his sons and a great host of followers were mustered within the courtyard. Rauð and all those present gave a great welcome to the King and his men, who dismounted from their horses. Rauð and his sons had set up a magnificent homestead. The King next asked the master of the house: "Is that a church, the fine building I see here in the courtyard?" He replied: "That, my lord, is my sleeping-chamber, built this last summer, and only just now finished." The roofs of all the buildings were shingle-thatched, being at that time newly thatched and tarred. Next they went to the living-apartment; the King saw that it was a very large building, freshly thatched and well-tarred. In the courtyard the King saw many large buildings and some small, all of them finely constructed. The King asked whether there was any church in the courtyard; "There is none" replied the master of the house, "for no bishop has come here as yet, except the one now with you." Then the Bishop had his travelling-tent pitched on the space in front of the living-apartment. There he sang evensong, which went on until nightfall. After that, the King entered the living apartment, with candles borne before him. When he came into the room, the seating had been carefully arranged. So the King took his place in the high-seat which had been made ready, with the Bishop on his right hand, and the Queen to his left with the chief ladies beyond her. Bjørn the marshal sat facing the King on the lower bench, and on either side of him sat the chieftains of the court. On the far side of the bishop sat Finn Arnason, then his brother Kalf, Þorberg Arnason beyond him, then Arnbjörn, Kolbjörn and Arni Arnason; all the brothers were landowners holding their estates from King Olaf. When seats on the dais had been

assigned to all the followers of the King, the seats along the walls of the upper end of the room were fully occupied. Members of the household and guests from the neighbourhood occupied the stools and inner benches. Rauðulf the householder sat out in front, on the stool facing the landowners. That was a most splendid banquet, with many kinds of drink, all good. The sons of Rauð went round serving, and directed the whole thing in the manner most fitting. The King became gracious and very genial; he was much impressed by the ease and good breeding shown throughout, the entertainment being so magnificent and so excellently arranged. The King fell into conversation then with Rauð the householder, and he readily perceived that the man was both eloquent and wise. The whole room was soon in lively humour, as the drink went round. The King questioned Ulf about many obscure matters, and Ulf had an answer ready in every case. Sometimes the King knew in advance how matters stood, but sometimes he did not, and had no previous information; but everything he could check tallied with Ulf's account, and therefore the King believed all he said. Ulf never went beyond what the King had asked. King Olaf then questioned him on the course of events which had not yet taken place. Ulf gave some information about most of them. The King then exclaimed: "Are you a prophet, Ulf?" "Certainly not, my lord," he replied. "Then how have you foreknowledge of such matters," said the King, "when they have not yet happened?" "Do not believe seriously in my romancing, Sire," said Ulf; "I run on before you because I do not venture to keep silence when you question me, although I have no certain knowledge of such matters." The King replied: "I have followed closely, and it is my considered opinion that you make no statement beyond your own conviction. Tell me, how comes it that you know in advance things that have not yet happened, if you are not a prophet? I know that you

are a good Christian, and therefore you cannot be using sorcery for the purpose." Ulf replied: "Some of my conclusions I draw from the direction of the winds, some from the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon or stars, and some from dreams." The King then enquired into each of these various methods, and to every question which he asked Ulf gave an explanation which satisfied him entirely. For the most part, they discussed the nature of dreams. "Can you suggest to me," said the King, "any means whereby I can have a prophetic dream on a subject which I particularly desire to know about?" "I cannot instruct you, Sire" said Ulf, "for you know everything in advance, and are much better informed than I. But this is what I do from time to time, when I desire foreknowledge in dream of the issue of important matters: I put on fresh clothes, and lie down on a new bed or couch, standing in a new position, in such a way that no-one has slept just there before, in those clothes, nor in that bed, nor in that building. I pay special attention to what I dream then, and the course of events will in the main fall out according to my interpretation of that dream."

The King then asked: "What is your principal accomplishment, Ulf? I can see that you are well versed in many things." Ulf replied that he was not a man of great accomplishments: "But all the same," said he, "If I must assert some claim, I reckon that my chief ability lies in explaining dreams in the sense of things to come." Said the King: "Have you taught all your accomplishments to your sons?" Ulf replied: "Ask them yourself, Sire." So the King had them brought before him, and spoke thus: "Your father Ulf has shown himself a wise man. Now, have you learnt all his accomplishments?" Sigurð, the elder of the brothers, replied: "I am far from knowing them all, for he has taught me but one, and I recognise that I have not learnt to practise it as well as he; and this is only one of his many accomplishments."

“ And what is that ? ” asked the King. Sigurð replied: “ To define the course of the heavenly bodies visible to me, and to distinguish the stars which indicate periods of time, so that I can reckon duration of time by day and night. Even without seeing the heavenly bodies, I can determine all the hours, by day and by night.” “ That is a great accomplishment,” said the King: “ And now Dag, what is your accomplishment ? ” “ It will seem a trivial thing to you, Sire ” said he. “ No matter,” said the King “ What is it ? ” “ I have learnt from my father one accomplishment which seems worth mentioning, and even so my father is much better at it than I.” The King asked what this might be. Dag replied: “ If I look a man intently in the eyes, and survey all his appearance and behaviour, I can penetrate his nature and perceive what kind of man he is, what his vices and virtues are.” Said the King: “ That is a powerful glance, if what you say is true. I can soon put it to the test.”⁴ Then the King turned to the Bishop and said: “ It seems that we are guests of a farmer who has no equal in all our train, I should think, for lore and skill—and the same applies to his sons. We reckon to have a picked company, and in all Norway no more talented men can be found than those here with us, and yet I think we fall short of this man and his sons in most respects. What accomplishment, my lord Bishop, will you profess, as being your special province ? ” The Bishop replied: “ My chief speciality, if I must instance something, is to be able to sing without book all the services prescribed for the whole twelve months.” “ That is a great accomplishment,” said the King, “ in its own way, and fitting for you, my lord.” Then said the Bishop: “ Now we should like to hear, Sire king, what accomplishment you profess.” The King replied: “ Certainly. This is my contribution: if I once see a man and choose to consider him attentively, I am sure to recognise him later, wherever I see him.” The

Bishop rejoined: "This accomplishment is based on remarkable intelligence and perception." Then King Olaf declared: "This amusement that we have set afoot must spread further round the room. Speak up, Kalf Arnason, and say what accomplishment you profess." He replied: "I never swallow my wrath, however long I have to nurse it." The King continued "Finn, you must now declare your accomplishments." Finn replied: "Where there is none, Sire, it cannot be declared." Said the King: "Think of something." "Then I would instance as my accomplishment that I will never desert my liege lord in any peril, for as long as he survives and means to stand his ground." The King said: "To be sure, it is likely enough that you will carry this out." He went on: "Now, Porberg, let us hear what you have to say." Porberg replied: "As my contribution, I say that I mean never to break vow nor bond with my liege lord." The King said: "Brave words, and like enough to prove true of such a man as you; yet there are many who break faith with me at this time, whom I could not have thought capable of it but a short while ago." Then the King turned to Arnbjørn, and said: "In what accomplishment do you excel?" Arnbjørn, a sturdy fellow, spoke thus: "It may be that I am wrong, but I consider myself a passably good shot, and I think there will be no bow found here in Norway that I cannot handle." The King agreed that it might well be so. The King next asked Kolbjørn what accomplishments he would claim for himself. He replied: "I have three accomplishments, which I reckon all on a level, but none better than good of its kind; accurate shooting, ski-running, and swimming." The King remarked that his claim was not at all in excess of his ability—"For," said he, "in these accomplishments you are as ready as the best of your equals in strength." Then the King asked Arni what he wished to contribute. Arni replied: "If I sail my racing

ship along the coast, managing the sail myself, there is no twenty-oared ship of the same size will overtake me, nor shall I be the first to reef sail." The King said that no-one was in a position to question his ability; for, he said, no-one had a nicer sense of how near the wind to sail. The King then asked Bjørn the marshal what accomplishment he considered to be his best. "This is the point I would soonest put forward", said Bjørn, "when at a Thing-meeting I report a decree or message from my liege lord, there is none among the audience so powerful that I need lower my voice nor speak haltingly, whether he approves or not." "I can well believe it," said the King, "since the time at Uppsala Thing, when you spoke out and angered King Olaf of Sweden. There are few who would not have lost heart." Then they all talked together among themselves, asserting their own accomplishments. It was good and merry entertainment.

Then the King retired to bed. Rauðulf the master of the house led him to the new building that the King had noticed earlier in the evening, and had taken for a church. The weather was fair and clear, not a cloud to be seen. The King asked Sigurð: "What will the weather be like tomorrow?" "A fall of snow" he replied. "I hardly think so," said the King. He went next to his sleeping quarters, which had been splendidly prepared. As the King entered the sleeping-chamber, a lighted candle was borne before him. He looked about while he was in the outer corridor, and examined the form of the building, which he saw at once to be constructed on a circular plan. Going further in, he found panelling all the way round on the inner side of the corridor. There were four main doors to the building, equidistantly placed. Round the outer walls, finely-furnished beds had been prepared, all hung with curtains where it pleased the eye. Twenty high, stout posts had been erected inside the building; they stood in a

circle upholding the vaulted roof, which was all decorated with designs in colour. The spaces between the posts were screened, and within were set beds for the nobility. There was ample room for 20 men in each quarter, and beds for 40 more in the surrounding corridor, where members of the King's household were accommodated. In the centre of the building was a broad, circular platform of wood, with steps to mount it running round. On the platform stood a large bed, fashioned with surpassing skill. Most of the woodwork was finished with the turner's chisel; it was painted all over and plated with gold here and there. The corner-posts were surmounted by huge knobs of gilded brass. Running out from the corner-posts were iron bars bearing candlesticks, and upon them were fixed three-branched processional candles. Ulf told the King that he should lie down on the bed there made ready if he wished to dream a prophetic dream. The Queen was to sleep in a separate bed that night. The King agreed. So he undressed, mounted the bed, and laid himself down to sleep. He saw that the Bishop and his priests were accommodated to his right in the central screened partition, while to his left lay the Queen with her ladies-in-waiting. The quarter behind the bed's head was occupied by Kalf, Arnbjörn and Kolbjörn, sons of Arni, and their followers. In the quarter opposite the foot of the bed lay Finn, Þorberg and Arni, sons of Arni.

King Olaf lay awake far into the night, as was his custom. First he recited his prayers, then gave himself up to long meditation. He gazed up at the ceiling, and there he saw depicted God himself within his orb of might. Higher and beyond were shown the angelic hosts, lower down the firmament which encloses in its circuit all the regions of air, and there also were depicted the heavenly bodies. Below came the clouds and the winds, then many kinds of winged creatures; lowest

of all the earth, with its plants and trees and diverse animals, the seas and lakes too, with many kinds of sea-beasts. On the lower ceiling running round outside the central pillars, deeds of antiquity were portrayed, and stories of famous kings. The King looked long upon all this. As he reflected upon it, a thing happened which seemed stranger to him than all else: he felt as if the bed were revolving beneath him, or it might have been the whole building. Then drowsiness overcame him, and he slept for a while. When he woke, he thought over his dreams. Dawn soon came, and the Bishop rose up to sing matins. The King dressed, and went to the service and followed the prayers. Afterwards he went to the living-apartment and summoned Rauð the master of the house, to whom he related his dream. In the dream, he said, he had seen a cross of most remarkable form, and then he described in what fashion it was. When he had done, the King said: "Today, after High Mass, you shall tell me the meaning of this dream." "I think your dream truly remarkable," said Rauð, "and I can make something of it. But you, Sire, must correct me if you judge its meaning to be different from that I put upon it."

The weather was overcast, and snow was falling, as Sigurð had predicted. The King then summoned Sigurð and Dag into his presence. He sent a man out to observe the weather, and there was not a patch of clear sky to be seen. The King then asked Sigurð to determine how far the sun had travelled. He gave a precise answer. So the King had the sun-stone⁵ held aloft, and observed where it cast out a beam; the altitude it showed was exactly as Sigurð had said. Then the King asked Dag: "What flaw do you perceive in my character?" "My lord," he answered, "that is more than I can see. I may make rash statements about the general run of men, but this is a very different matter, beyond my

reason and judgment. I hardly think there can be any blemish on your character." "Speak on," said the King, "there is no chance to back out now." Dag replied: "Then here it is, Sire: a trait common to many, delight in women." "You speak true," said the King: "and you three, father and sons, are far ahead of most people I know in wisdom and penetrating intelligence."⁶ Then the King went to Mass.

When the service was done, the King passed to sit in council. The Bishop, the Queen, and the great landowners accompanied him. Rauð and his sons were also present. "Ulf," said the King, "can it be, that the bed I slept on last night revolved beneath me, as I thought—or was it the building itself?" He replied: "Things were so arranged, Sire, that you should always be facing the sun, and your dream should follow the course of the sun, together with every turn of your thoughts and all your questioning." Then said the King: "I require of you, Ulf, to recite my dream, and explain the meaning of it." Ulf replied: "First of all, I will relate something that you have not asked me: what thoughts you had before you fell asleep. You prayed God to reveal to you in some sort the outcome of the disturbance—warfare, almost—which is now breaking out, and the fortunes of the kingdom from this time forward. And then, before you slept, you signed yourself with the sign of the holy Cross." "All this you have said is quite true," replied the King, "but what account can you give of the dream?" Ulf then said: "In your dream there appeared a great cross, green as grass, standing upon the earth, and there was a figure upon it. The head of the crucifix that you looked on was made of red gold. But when you gazed on the countenance, you seemed to see a circle round about it, in hue as the rainbow, but enlarged like God's aureole of might; within it the angels and the splendours of the

heavenly kingdom were depicted. This cross and the crucified figure portend warfare. The head of the figure in the dream relates to you, as head of a kingdom. Just as the head appeared to be made of red gold, and its radiance like shining gold of yore,⁷ so will your dignity shine forth above that of all men in this land, even as red gold is more precious than any other metal. With the face are associated speech, sight, and also hearing; and it was in this place that the kingdom of heaven was shown you, in all its glory. Herein was shown your due reward for converting many a people to the true faith, by your decrees and your authority. Since the face of man is rounder than it is long, I judge that short life and brief temporal dominion have been foretold for you." The King asked: "What is the meaning of the aureole of glory that appeared to me?" Ulf replied: "that aureole betokens the course of your life and the majesty of your reign. The ring was without end, and thus will be your renown. That aureole appeared to you sharply pointed above and below; even so is the course of your life, for the beginnings were harsh, when you lost both your father and many other powerful kinsmen, and cruel will be the last days of your reign. The aureole broadened towards the middle, and contracted again towards the close; this is the form your reign has taken, and your earthly dominion. The neck of the figure seemed to you to be made of copper, the hardest of metals, which is therefore used for making the bells of loudest tone. The reign after yours⁸ will be glorious, and proclaim itself in the ears of all men, like the sound of great bells. Greek fire was playing round about the neck; that is the most deadly means of warfare, terrifying and spasmodic. Copper is hard and brittle; likewise, that reign will be harsh. Inasmuch as there was a decisive change of metals above and below, that reign will not last long, and no lines of descent will survive it in this

land. You seemed to see golden locks springing from the head and reaching right down to the shoulders; this betokens that your renown will be greatly celebrated in this land and far abroad." Continuing, Ulf said: "When you cast your eyes upon the breast of the figure, with its embracing arms outstretched upon the cross, it appeared to be made of refined silver. There was depicted the planetary circuits, the sun and stars, the moon in its brilliance and beauty. The reign to follow will be very gracious, even as the heavenly bodies irradiate the earth and sky, and all men rejoice in the brightness of the sun, which benefits all creation. The sun gives light to this world, it warms the earth and makes it fruitful; even so will that reign be beloved, bringing prosperity and fortune for the benefit of all its subjects. Inasmuch as you saw the crucified figure extending its embrace, so likewise will he who succeeds to the kingdom enfold much more in his grasp than former princes of this country, and will extend a wider sway over kingdoms and peoples in other lands. Inasmuch as those golden locks, fast-rooted in the flesh,⁹ fell down over the breast, even so this worshipful ruler will carry on your work to some extent and rejoice in the glory of your name. Although the scope of the embrace was wide, its length was short; and thus his rule will not be long." Still Ulf continued: "You saw next, below the breast, a broad girdle encircling the crucifix almost up to the armpits. The girdle was made of iron, polished like the blade of a sword: a girdle of might indeed. The reign next following will be supported by powerful rulers. It was shown to you as highly-polished iron; even so many a flashing sword will be raised aloft both early and late. This girdle was adorned with devices, and wondrous craftsmanship. You seemed to see it engraved with events of ancient story—you discerned upon it the glories of Sigurð Fafnisbane and Harald Hilditǫnn, and some of

the deeds of Harald Finehair. So the king to come will achieve many a mighty enterprise in his victorious might, such as will be princely, wise and skilful in the eyes of men. You were shown the great deeds of mighty and famous rulers, kings and other men of great wisdom; this king will show all these qualities in his own person, and will mould himself on their examples. Now, iron is a hard metal, applied to the destruction of many people: so many a man will count that reign harsh and destructive from beginning to end, all the time it continues." Ulf went on: "Below the iron girdle, you saw the belly showing the glitter of electrum, that is, gold alloy;¹⁰ it had an exquisite gloss and polish, and upon it were engraved flowers and trees and every kind of plant that grows on earth, and diverse beasts that move upon the earth. All this was fashioned with the utmost skill. Here was represented that reign which is to follow, having a gloss like the gold of the head above;¹¹ but red gold and gold alloy have nothing in common but the mere name. Hence I would suppose that this king is to bear your name, and will be an illustrious ruler, but nothing in comparison with you. As the designs showed the luxuriant fruits of the earth and the excellent beauty of this world, so this king will adorn the kingdom with wise rule; his age will bring wise government and abundant prosperity. Even as manifold craftsmanship was displayed to you, so will he be in many ways a benefactor to his people." Ulf continued: "And when you looked, attentively and reflectively, further down that same figure, it appeared that from the navel downwards and over the genitals was the gloss of silver, unrefined silver, but of splendid hue nevertheless. Such silver is current in this country, and will buy all manner of wares here, but abroad it does not pass current. The prince to come will be a mighty ruler, a glory to everyone in this country, but abroad his reign will not

be as renowned as that of the prince betokened by the refined silver.¹² Inasmuch as that silver was highly-polished and beautiful, so will he be well-pleasing to all his subjects, and his reign will be maintained in fame and splendour. He shall also fulfil his destiny and the fortunes of his kin, to the very end of his life. From him the kingship will branch out and be dispersed in many directions. Now the whole of the figure has been surveyed down to the legs; and as the trunk is part of the whole, by this same token, this king will be in the main equal to his predecessors." Ulf continued: "Looking at the thighs, you saw that they bore the bright colour of flesh. So, in the reign next following, the country will be cleft in two, and two brothers will share it; and as both thighs appeared to you to bear the hue of flesh, so will they transact their affairs duly and equably. The legs support the whole body: these men, too, will maintain the rightful observances and good example of their predecessors, and that reign will keep an even course of order and human decency." Ulf went on: "Below the knees, two legs appeared to you, made of wood. Now it is an old saying, that a man's affairs move on crutches, when many things go awry. The reign to come will be harsh and oppressive to endure, when kinsmen divide it between them. I forecast that their dealings will come to an evil end, although they will be of the same lineage. Clashes between kinsmen will arise, and fatal quarrels. You looked next at the ankles, which were all of wood. It seemed as if the feet were awkwardly placed on the cross, with an iron spike driven through both ankles, the toes of one foot covering those of the other. In this way, you have been shown the crooked dealings and unnatural practices of those rulers, when brother will raise spear against brother. You saw one iron spike piercing both ankles, and the toes of one foot placed over those of

the other, as when children make rams with their fingers:¹³ so the descendants of those rulers will strive for the downfall and ruin of one another. Now Sire," said Ulf, "this is the end of the dream; I have interpreted it according to the meaning which seemed to me most probable."

The King thanked Rauð, and expressed the opinion that his equal in wisdom would scarcely be found, unless his sons were to follow in his footsteps. Then the King left the council-chamber, and went to meat. Next day, the King questioned Ulf about his lineage, and that of his wife. Rauðulf said that he came of a Swedish family, and that he had been wealthy and supported by powerful kinsmen. "But I made off from that country," said he, "with this woman, whom I afterwards married. She is the sister of King Hring, the son of Dag." From this, the King was able to trace the descent of both parties. He had perceived that the father and his sons were very wise men. So the King asked Dag what flaw of character he saw in Bjørn the steward. Dag replied that Bjørn was a thief; and he went on to describe how Bjørn had hidden away at his farm, horns, bones and hides, the product of the cattle he had stolen during the autumn, fastening the guilt upon others. "He is responsible," said Dag, "for all the losses by theft that people in this district suffered last autumn; and these he has laid to the charge of others." And he went on to give the King detailed instructions as to where a search should be made.

When the King left Rauð's house, he was sped on his way with rich gifts. The sons of Rauð accompanied him, for he thought that now he could not do without them. The King straightway visited Bjørn the steward, and everything fell out just as Dag had said. Then the King banished Bjørn from the country. It was thanks to the Queen that he escaped with life and limb.

NOTES.

¹ On the variations of nomenclature, see Introduction note (8).

² The valleys grouped as Eystridalur form one of the easternmost districts of central Norway, running between the R. Glommen and the present Swedish border.

³ Large thefts of cattle and swine had occurred within the province of Björn, the unpopular steward. He had therefore summoned a þing, or district assembly, to investigate the matter.

⁴ MS. E. here inserts Snorri's shortened account of the two separate occasions on which Dag's gift is tested: i.e., the statement of King Olaf's *skaplost* is combined with the final unmasking of Björn. In St., the first is placed on the next morning, side by side with the fulfilment of Sigurð's weather-forecast, while the second concludes the *Þáttr*. This clearly is the proper sequence of the fuller version, which some other scribes have spoilt by drawing uncritically on Snorri (see note (6) below).

⁵ A *sólarsteinn* is mentioned in *Hrafns Saga (Biskupa Sögur I, 674)*, and in parallel passages in *Guðmundar Saga Góða* (*ibid.*, I, 506, 565). In these passages it is a precious gift from Bishop Guðmund. When thieves took it, they abandoned it, because, through a miracle, it looked no better than a pebble (*fjörusteinn*) or flint (? *hégeitill*). In Abbot Arngrím's Life of Guðmund it is interpreted *náttúraður kristallus* ("a crystal with specific properties," *Bisk.* II, 55-56). These passages suggest that the author of *Rauðs Þáttr* thought of the *sólarsteinn* as an optical instrument of crystal, such as felspar, by means of which the position of the sun could be determined, even if its rays were not visible (cf. Fritznér s.v. *sólarsteinn*). "Sunstone" (the *solis gemma* of Pliny) is a term applied to aventurine felspar.

Sólarsteinar several times appear among the inventories of church property in the later Middle Ages (*Dipt. Isl.* II, 451, 668, 775), but these entries do not show what they are.

Vigfússon (s.v.) equates it with lodestone, which is hardly supported by the passages quoted.

⁶ Here MSS: B.D.I.H. insert Snorri's shortened version, in which the testing of both sons is immediately followed by Dag's revelation that Björn is the thief (see note (4) above). In this way, these MSS. displace the proper dénouement of the tale; at the end, they substitute a tame reckoning of the time spent by King Olaf at Rauð's house. Further influence from Snorri is seen in the way B. and F. treat the conclusion: B. adds the tests according to the shortened version although they have already appeared in the appropriate places of the longer version, while F. adds the same passage still further compressed.

⁷ *Aflyse gulle*: so all MSS., except L. which reads *liosu gulle*. According to Fritznér (*Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog*, Christiania 1886), vol. II., *lysigull* is sometimes equivalent to *bleikt gull*; cf. quotation from *Sagan af Þjalar-Jóni*; *í sumum hlutum lýsigull en í sumum rautt gull*. But it is also used in a general descriptive sense as 'gold of incandescent brilliance,' or even 'brilliance of the carbuncle.'

⁸ The metal symbolism is adapted to succeeding rulers of Norway, as follows:—

Copper: the Dane Sveinn Alffuson (1030-35).

Refined silver: Magnús Oláfsson (1035-47).

Iron: Harald Harðráði (1047-66).

Electrum: Oláf Kyrri (1066-93).

Unrefined silver: Magnús Berfætt (1093-1103).

Thighs (like flesh) : the sons of Magnús, Sigurð Jórslafari (d. 1130) and Eysteinn (d. 1123).

Legs and feet of wood: the time of strife beginning with the appearance of Harald Gilli, who claimed to be a son of Magnús. He was opposed by Sigurð Slembidjárn, who claimed the same paternity, and by Magnús, son of Sigurð Jórslafari. The two young sons of Harald, Sigurð Munn and Ingi, were established as joint rulers, until Ingi and his party attacked and killed Sigurð in 1155.

⁹ *Ok voro hollágronir* appears only in MS. E; but this is one of the earliest MSS., and is described as a reliable text, written by an intelligent scribe from a good exemplar (Johnsen and Helgason, II. 914).

¹⁰ This represents the reading of St. and E.: *litir sem næsta gull eða bleikt gull (næsta sem E.)*. Readings of other MSS. fall into two groups:—

- (i) *bleikur asyndar sem næstagull* B.I.L. (*bleikr asynis B.*), (*vestagull L.*).
blæikr sagði Raudr sva aasyndar næstagull H.
- (ii) *litir miok sem bleikt gull K.*
litt miogh sem bleikt gull F.

D. awkwardly combines both readings: *litir sem bleikt hesta gull*. The unparalleled compound *næstagull* has evidently puzzled some of the scribes; L. has *vesta-*, D. *hesta-* (or *nesta?*), while E. gives an ingenious evasion, *næsta sem gull*. The same compound recurs below in MSS. B.I.H.L. (see note 11). It seems to indicate the alloy of gold and silver (as it were, 'near-gold'?), electrum, which was familiar to ecclesiastical writers as a type of dazzling brilliance (see Introd. notes 19, 20). *Bleikt gull*, 'pale gold' as contrasted with the pure and precious *rautt gull*, I have translated 'gold alloy.'

¹¹ Translating the reading of St. E.F.K.: *þat var gullict sem uppe (um F.K.) hafuðit*. Another group, B.I.H.L., gives a different version: *gulligt til at sia sem næsta (næsta I.L.) gull, en þer syndiz sem (om I.H.) rautt gull uppi (um added by H.) haufuþit ropunar (en uppi haufud rodunnar var ath sia sem rautt gull L.)*. D. has a clumsy contraction: *sem uppi gulligt haufuðit*.

¹² St. alone has *man time hans verða ecke sva mikill sem þess hins uskira silfrs*. I have preferred the readings of the other MSS. *mun time (om. L) hans eigi verða (vera ecki L) sva mikill sem þess (hins L.) er hit skira (biartaxta L) silfr (syflrit H) birtiz (merckir L) fyrir*. B.I.H.L.

F and K have a slightly different version: *mun hans time (K. om. h.t.) æigi verða sem hit skira silfr birti*.

MS. E. is defective at this point, and D. skips over the whole passage.

¹³ This interesting allusion is omitted by St., but is present in the other MSS. The game is described by Ólafur Davíðsson in *Íslenzkar Skemtanir*, p. 163 (*Íslenzkar Gátur etc.* by J. Árnason and O. Davíðsson, vol. II. Copenhagen, 1888-92).