

Olaf Tryggvason



Biography Workbook Series

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OLAF TRYGGVASON:
Olaf I of Norway
(963-1000)

Olaf Tryggvason makes a great figure in the *Faröer Saga*, and recounts there his early troubles, which were strange and many. He is still reckoned a grand hero of the North, though his vates for the modern world is only the historian Snorro Sturluson of Iceland. Tryggvason had indeed many adventures in the world.

1. Snorro Sturluson was an Icelandic historian.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Olaf's poor mother, Astrid, was obliged to fly with him, on murder of her husband by Gunnhild—to fly for life, three months before her little Olaf was born. Gunnhild (910-980), known as the Mother of Kings, was the wife of Eric Bloodaxe, king of Norway. Astrid lay concealed in reedy island, fled through trackless forests, reached her father's with the little baby in her arms, and lay deep-hidden there; tended only by her father himself. Gunnhild's pursuit was so incessant and keen, as with sleuth-hounds.

2. Who was Olaf Tryggvason's mother?
 - a. Astrid
 - b. Gunnhild

Poor Astrid had to flee again deviously to Sweden, then to Estonia, then sent to Russia (Novgorod). In Estonia she was sold as a slave, quite parted from her boy, who also was sold, and again sold. But Olaf did at last fall in with a kinsman high in the Russian service. From this kinsman did Olaf find redemption and help, and so rose, in a distinguished manner, to manhood, victorious self-help, and recovery of his kingdom at last. Olaf even met his mother again, he as King of Norway, she as one wonderfully lifted out of darkness into new life, and happiness still in store.

3. To where did Astrid **not** flee?
 - a. Estonia
 - b. Ireland
 - c. Russia
 - d. Sweden

Grown to manhood, Olaf Tryggvason, now become acquainted

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We mentioned his occasional partnerships with Svein of the Double-beard (a.k.a. Sweyn Forkbeard), now become King of Denmark in 986 C.E. But the greatest of these, and the alone interesting at this time, is their joint invasion of England, and Tryggvason's exploits and fortunes there some years after that adventure of baptism in the Scilly Isles. Sweyn and he "were above a year in England together," this time.

6. Who became King of Denmark in 986?

Olaf and Sweyn steered up the Thames with three hundred ships and many fighters. Siege, or at least furious assault, of London was their first or main enterprise, but it did not succeed. The *Saxon Chronicle* gives date to it, 994 C.E., and names expressly, as Sweyn's copartner, "Olaus, King of Norway,"—which Olaf was as yet far from being. But in regard to the Year of Grace the *Saxon Chronicle* is to be held indisputable, and, indeed, has the field to itself in this matter.

Finding London impregnable for the moment (no ship able to get athwart the bridge, and many Danes perishing in the attempt to do it by

swimming), Sweyn and Olaf turned to other enterprises. All England in a manner lay open to them, turn which way they liked. They burnt and plundered over Kent, over Hampshire, over Sussex. They stormed far and wide; the world lying all before them.

Wretched Ethelred the Unready (King of England, 978-1016), as the one invention he could fall upon, offered them Danegeld (£16,000 of silver this year, but it rose in other years as high as £48,000). The Danegeld was a tax raised in order to bribe Viking invaders to not ravage an area. The desperate Ethelred, a clear method of quenching fire by pouring oil on it! Sweyn and Olaf accepted, then withdrew to Southampton—Olaf at least did—till the money was got ready.

7. Imagine that you are Ethelred the Unready. Would you pay the Danegeld? Why or why not?



A Norse raid under Olaf.

Tryggvason, on this occasion, was a good while at Southampton. He roamed extensively about, easily victorious over everything, if resistance were attempted, but finding little or none. He was acting now in a peaceable or even friendly capacity. In the Southampton country he came in contact with the then Bishop of Winchester, afterward Archbishop of Canterbury, excellent Elfheah.

Olaf Tryggvason even made court visits to King Ethelred, one visit to him at Andover of a very serious nature. By Elfheah, as we can discover, Olaf was introduced into the real depths of the Christian faith. Elfheah, with due solemnity of apparatus, in presence of the king, at

Andover baptized Olaf anew, and to him Olaf engaged that he would never plunder in England any more (994).

9. Who promised to no longer plunder England?
- Elfheah
 - Ethelred
 - Olaf
 - Sweyn

This promise, too, Olaf kept. In fact, not long after, Sweyn's conquest of England being in an evidently forward state, Tryggvason (having made, withal, a great marriage in 988 to Queen Gyda, sister of Olaf Cuaran, King of Dublin) mainly resided in England for two or three years, or else

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in Dublin, in the precincts of the Danish Court in Hibernia (Ireland). It was from Dublin's River Liffey that Olaf's squadron sailed, through the Hebrides, through the Orkneys, plundering and baptizing in their strange way, toward such success as we have seen.

10. In 988, Olaf Tryggvason married _____.

Tryggvason made a stout, and, in effect, victorious and glorious

struggle for himself as king of Norway. Based on reports he heard while in Dublin, Olaf believed that Haakon Sigurdsson (also known as Haakon Jarl, the *de facto* ruler of Norway from 975 until 995), was growing unpopular. Daily and hourly vigilant to do so, often enough by soft and even merry methods,—for he was a witty, jocund man, and had a fine ringing laugh in him, and clear pregnant words ever ready,—or if soft methods would not serve, then by hard, and even hardest, he put down a great deal of miscellaneous anarchy in Norway.

Matching: Match each person with his or her description.

11. _____ a Nordic governmental assembly
12. _____ also known as Eric Haraldsson; King of Norway, 931-933; husband of Gunnhild
13. _____ Bishop of Winchester and later Archbishop of Canterbury
14. _____ *de facto* ruler of Norway, 975-995
15. _____ Icelandic historian
16. _____ King of Denmark, reigned 986-1014
17. _____ King of Denmark, reigned 1018-1035; King of England, 1016-1035; King of Norway, 1028-1035
18. _____ King of England, 978-1016
19. _____ King of Norway, 995-1000
20. _____ Mother of Olaf Tryggvason

Names

- A. Astrid
- B. Canute the Great
- C. Elfheah
- D. Eric Bloodaxe
- E. Ethelred the Unready
- F. Haakon Sigurdsson
- G. Olaf Tryggvason
- H. Snorro Sturluson
- I. Sweyn Forkbeard
- J. Thing

Vocabulary Terms: Match each term (found in the text above) with its meaning.

21. _____ bard or poet
22. _____ besides
23. _____ blithe and cheerful
24. _____ conversation or talk
25. _____ crosswise
26. _____ deliverance or rescue
27. _____ earnestness or impressiveness
28. _____ healthful
29. _____ informed
30. _____ state of no government or law
31. _____ tax raised in order to bribe Viking raiders to not ravage an area
32. _____ there
33. _____ unconquerable
34. _____ wary
35. _____ worthy of reverence

Terms

- A. acquainted
- B. anarchy
- C. athwart
- D. Danegeld
- E. discourse
- F. impregnable
- G. jocund
- H. redemption
- I. salutary
- J. solemnity
- K. thither
- L. vates
- M. venerable
- N. vigilant
- O. withal

Olaf was especially busy against Norse paganism. This, indeed, may be called the focus and heart of all his royal endeavor in Norway, and of all the troubles he now had with his people there. This was a serious, vital, all-comprehending matter to Olaf, and he was known to often use brutally violent methods to force people to convert to Christianity. Olaf's success was intermittent, of varying complexion. But his effort, swift or slow, was strong and continual. On the whole, he did succeed.

36. Olaf always used peaceful methods to convert his subjects to Christianity.

- a. True
- b. False

Take a sample or two of that conversion process:

At one of his first Things he found the Bonders all assembled in arms; resolute to the death seemingly, against his proposal and him. Tryggvason said little. He waited, impassive, and asked, "What your reasons are, good men?" One zealous Bonder started up in passionate parliamentary eloquence, but after a sentence or two, broke down. One, and then another, and still another, and remained all three staring in open-mouthed silence there! The peasant-proprietors accepted the

phenomenon as ludicrous, perhaps partly as miraculous withal, and consented to baptism this time.

On another occasion of a Thing (a governmental assembly), Tryggvason was clamorously invited by the Bonders to step in there, enlighten his eyes, and partake of the sacred rites. Instead, Olaf rushed into the temple with his armed men. Olaf smashed down, with his own battle-axe, the image of the pagan god Thor, prostrate on the floor at one stroke, to set an example. In a few minutes, Olaf had the whole of Haakon's Pantheon wrecked; packing up, meanwhile, all the gold and precious things accumulated there (not forgetting Thor's illustrious gold collar, of which we shall hear again), and victoriously took the plunder home with him for his own royal uses and behoof of the state.

By unwearied industry of this and better kinds, Tryggvason had trampled down paganism in Norway, so far as form went,—how far in substance may be greatly doubted. But it is to be remembered withal, that always on the back of these compulsory adventures there followed English bishops, priests, and preachers. To the open-minded, conviction, to all degrees of it, was attainable, while silence and passivity became the duty or necessity of the unconvinced party.

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37. Do you believe that it was right for Olaf to use violence to convert his people to Christianity? Why or why not?

In about two years, Norway was all gone over with a rough harrow of conversion. Paganism at least constrained to be silent and outwardly conformable. Perhaps Olaf's most famous baptism was of Leif Ericson, the Viking adventurer who was the first European known to have reached America. Leif returned to Greenland with a priest, who converted people there to Christianity.

Tryggvason next turned his attention to Iceland. He sent one Thangbrand, a priest from Saxony, of wonderful qualities, military, as well as theological, to try and convert Iceland. Thangbrand made a few converts, for Olaf had already many estimable Iceland friends, whom he

liked much, and was much liked by. Conversion was the ready road to his favor.

Thangbrand lodged with Hall of Sida (familiar acquaintance of *Burnt Njal*, whose Saga has its admirers among us even now). Thangbrand converted Hall and one or two other leading men. But in general, he was reckoned quarrelsome and blustering rather than eloquent and piously convincing. Two skalds of repute made biting lampoons upon Thangbrand, whom Thangbrand, by two opportunities that offered, cut down and did to death because of their skaldic quality. Another he killed with his own hand, history knows not for what reason.

In brief, after about a year, Thangbrand returned to Norway and King Olaf. Thangbrand declared the Icelanders to be a perverse, satirical, and inconvertible people, having himself, the record says, been "the death of three men there." King Olaf was in high rage at this result. But Olaf was persuaded by the Icelanders about him to try farther, and by a milder instrument.

38. Was Thangbrand successful in converting the people of Iceland to Christianity?

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Olaf accordingly chose one Thormod, a pious, patient, and kindly man. Within the next year or so, Thormod did actually accomplish the matter; namely, get Christianity, by open vote, declared at Thingvalla by the general Thing of Iceland there. The timely roar of a volcanic eruption at the right moment rather helped the conclusion. Olaf's joy was no doubt great.

One general result of these successful operations was the discontent, to all manner of degrees, on the part of many Norse individuals, against this pious and victorious, but peremptory and terrible king of theirs. Tryggvason did not much regard all this. Another trivial misfortune that befell in these conversion operations, and became important to him, he did not even know of, and would have much despised if he had. It was this: Sigrid, queen-dowager of Sweden, thought to be among the most shining women of the world, was also known for one of the most imperious, revengeful, and relentless, and had got for herself the name of Sigrid the Proud. In her high widowhood she had naturally many wooers; but treated them in a manner unexampled.

In spite of which, however, there went from Tryggvason, who was now a widower, some incipient marriage proposals to this proud widow, by whom they were favorably received.

These proposals came as from the brightest man in all the world. In one of the anti-paganism onslaughts of King Olaf on the idol temples of Haakon, a huge gold ring had come into Olaf's hands. And this Olaf thought might be a pretty present to Queen Sigrid, the now favorable, though the proud.

39. To whom did Olaf propose marriage?

Sigrid received the ring with joy, and fancied what a collar it would make for her own fair neck. But she noticed that her two goldsmiths, weighing it on their fingers, exchanged a glance.

"What is that?" exclaimed Queen Sigrid.

"Nothing," answered they, or endeavored to answer, dreading mischief.

But Sigrid compelled them to break open the ring. There was found, all along the inside of it, an occult ring of copper, not a heart of gold at all! "Ha," said the proud queen, flinging it away. "He that could deceive in this matter can deceive in many others!" Sigrid was in hot wrath with Olaf, though, by degrees, again she took milder thoughts.

40. What was found in the center of the ring?

Sigrid consented to a meeting next autumn at some half-way station, where their great business might be brought to a happy settlement and betrothal (engagement). Both Olaf Tryggvason and the high dowager appear to have been tolerably of willing mind at this meeting. But Olaf interposed, what was always one condition with him, "Thou must consent to baptism, and give up thy idol-gods."

"They are the gods of all my forefathers," answered the lady. "Choose thou what gods thou pleasest, but leave me mine."

Tryggveson, as was his wont, towered up into shining wrath, and exclaimed at last, "Why should I care about thee then, old faded heathen creature?" And impatiently wagging his glove, hit her, or slightly switched her, on the face with it, and contemptuously turning away, walked out of the adventure. Such an act against a monarch was seen as a provocation for war.

"This is a feat that may cost thee dear one day," said Sigrid. And in the end it came to do so, little as the

magnificent Olaf deigned to think of it at the moment.

41. Why did Olaf and Sigrid not get married?

Olaf Tryggvason, though his kingdom was the smallest of the Norse Three (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden), had risen to renown over all the Norse world which neither he of Denmark nor he of Sweden could pretend to rival. A magnificent, far-shining man—more expert in all "bodily exercises," as the Norse called them, than any man had ever been before him, or after was. Olaf could keep five daggers in the air, always catching the proper fifth by its handle, and sending it aloft again. He could shoot supremely, and throw a javelin with either hand. In fact, in battle, he usually threw two together. These feats, along with swimming, climbing, and leaping, were the then admirable Fine Arts of the North.

42. The Norse Three was comprised of what three countries?

Essentially definable, too, if we look well into Olaf, was a wild bit of real heroism, in such rude guise and environment; a high, true, and great human soul. There was additionally a jovial burst of laughter in him. He had a bright, airy, wise way of speech. He dressed beautifully and with care. Olaf was a man admired and loved exceedingly by those he liked, and likewise dreaded as death by those he did not like. "Hardly any king," says Snorro, "was ever so well obeyed, by one class out of zeal and love, by the rest out of dread." Olaf's glorious course, however, was not to last long.

King Sweyn Forkbeard had not yet completed his conquest of England,—by no means yet, some thirteen horrid years of that still before him!—when, over in Denmark, he found that complaints against him and intricacies had arisen. These problems rose principally from one Burislav, King of the Wends (far up the Baltic), and in a less degree with the King of Sweden and other minor individuals. Sweyn earnestly applied himself to settle these, and have his hands free. Burislav, an aged pagan gentleman, proved reasonable and conciliatory. So too did the King of Sweden, and Dowager Queen Sigrid, his managing mother. Bargain in both these cases got sealed and crowned by marriage. Sweyn, who had

become a widower lately, now wedded Sigrid.

Burislav also insisted on marriage with Princess Thyri, the Sweyn's sister, Thyri. Thyri, inexpressibly disinclined to wed an aged pagan of that stamp, pleaded hard with her brother. But the Sweyn was inexorable. Thyri's wailings and entreaties went for nothing. With some guardian foster-brother, and a serving-maid or two, Thyri had to go on this hated journey. Old Burislav, at sight of her, blazed out into marriage feast of supreme magnificence, and was charmed to see her. But Thyri would not join the marriage party, and refused to eat with it or sit with it at all.

43. Sweyn arranged for his sister, Thyri, to marry whom?

Day after day, for six days, Thyri flatly refused. After nightfall of the sixth day, Thyri glided out with her foster-brother into the woods, into by-paths and inconceivable wanderings. In effect, she got home to Denmark. Brother Sweyn was not for the moment there; he probably was gone to England again. But Thyri knew too well he would not allow her to stay in Denmark, or anywhere that

he could help, except with the old man she had just fled from.

Thyri, looking round the world, saw no likely road for her, but to Olaf Tryggvason in Norway. She decided that her only option was to beg protection from the most heroic man she knew of in the world. Olaf, except by renown, was not known to her; but by renown he well was. Olaf, at sight of Thyri, promised protection and asylum against all mortals. Nay, in discoursing with Thyri, Olaf perceived more and more clearly what a fine handsome being, soul and body, Thyri was. In a short space of time, Olaf ended up by proposing to Thyri, who consented to say yes, and become Queen of Norway.

In the due months, Olaf and Thyri had a little son, Harald. It is credibly recorded that Harald was the joy of both his parents. But, to their inexpressible sorrow, in about a year Harald died, and vanished from them. This, and one other fact now to be mentioned, is all the wedded history we have of Thyri.

The other fact is, that Thyri had, by inheritance or covenant, not depending on her marriage with old Burislav, considerable properties in Wendland, which she often reflected might be not a little useful to her here in Norway, where her civil-list was probably but straitened. She spoke of this to her husband; but her husband

would take no hold, merely made her gifts, and said, "Pooh, pooh, can't we live without old Burislav and his Wendland properties?" The lady sank into ever deeper anxiety and eagerness about this Wendland object. She took to weeping, and sat weeping whole days.

44. Why do you imagine that Olaf was disinclined to pursue Thyri's claim to properties in Wendland?

Olaf would ask, "What ails thee, then?"

She would answer, or did answer once, "What a different man my father Harald Gormson was," (vulgarly called Blue-tooth), "compared with some that are now kings! For no King Sweyn in the world would Harald Gormson have given up his own or his wife's just rights!"

Whereupon Tryggvason started up, exclaiming, in some heat, "Of thy brother Sweyn I never was afraid. If Sweyn and I meet in contest, it will

not be Sweyn, I believe, that conquers." And Olaf went off in a towering fume. He consented, however, at last, to get his fine fleet equipped and armed, and decided to sail with it to Wendland to have speech and settlement with King Burislav.

Tryggvason had already ships and navies that were the wonder of the North. Especially in building warships—the Crane, the Serpent, last of all the Long Serpent—he had, for size, for outward beauty, and inward perfection of equipment, transcended all example.

This new sea expedition became an object of attention to all of Olaf's neighbors. Especially were Queen Sigrid the Proud and Sweyn Forkbeard, her new king, attentive to it.

"This insolent Tryggvason," Queen Sigrid would often say, and had long been saying, to her Sweyn. "To marry thy sister without leave had or asked of thee. And now flaunting forth his war navies, as if he, king only of paltry Norway, were the big hero of the North! Why do you suffer it?"

By such persuasions, and reiterations, King Sweyn of Denmark, King Olaf of Sweden, and Jarl Eric, now a great man there, grown rich by prosperous sea-robbery and other good management, were brought to take the matter up, and combine

strenuously for destruction of King Olaf Tryggvason on this grand Wendland expedition of his. Fleets and forces were with best diligence got ready. Withal, a certain Jarl Sigwald of Jomsburg, chieftain of the Jomsvikings, a powerful, plausible, and cunning man, was appointed to find means of joining himself to Tryggvason's grand voyage. Jarl Sigwald was charged with getting into Tryggvason's confidence, and keeping Sweyn Forkbeard, Eric, and the Swedish king aware of all his movements.

45. Who was charged with functioning as a spy for Olaf's enemies?

King Olaf Tryggvason, unacquainted with all this, sailed away in summer with his splendid fleet. He went through the Belts with prosperous winds, under bright skies, to the admiration of both shores. Such a fleet, with its shining Serpents, long and short, and perfection of equipment and appearance, the Baltic never saw before. Jarl Sigwald joined with new ships by the way, and studiously and skillfully ingratiated himself with King Olaf.

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Old Burislav, when they arrived, proved altogether courteous, handsome, and amenable. He agreed at once to Olaf's claims for his now queen, and did the rites of hospitality with a generous plenitude to Olaf. For his part, Olaf cheerily renewed acquaintance with that country, known to him in early days (the cradle of his fortunes in the viking line), and found old friends there still surviving, joyful to meet him again. Jarl Sigwald encouraged these delays, King Sweyn & Co. not being yet quite ready.

"Get ready!" Sigwald directed them, and they diligently did.

Olaf's men, their business now done, were impatient to be home, and grudged every day of loitering there. But still Sigwald pleased, flattered, and cajoled Tryggvason, and they could not get away.

46. Why was Olaf's visit to Burislav so long?

At length, Sigwald's secret messengers reporting all ready on the part of Sweyn & Co., Olaf took farewell of Burislav and Wendland, and all gladly sailed away. Sweyn, Eric, and the Swedish king, with their combined fleets, lay in wait behind some cape in a safe little bay of some

island, then called Svolde, but not in our time to be found. (The Baltic tumults in the fourteenth century having swallowed it, as some think, and leaving us uncertain whether it was in the neighborhood of Rugen Island or in the Sound of Elsinore.)

There lay Sweyn, Eric & Co. waiting till Tryggvason and his fleet came up, Sigwald's spy messengers daily reporting what progress he and it had made. At length, one bright summer morning, the fleet made its appearance, sailing in loose order. Sigwald, as one acquainted with the shoal places, was steering ahead, and showing them the way.

Tryggvason's winged Coursers of the Deep, in long series, for perhaps an hour or more, came on. The three potentates, from their knoll of vantage, saw each as it hove in sight. Sweyn thrice over guessed this and the other noble vessel to be the Long Serpent. Eric each time corrected him: "No, that is not the Long Serpent yet" (and aside always), "Nor shall you be lord of it, King, when it does come."

47. What was the name of Olaf's ship?

The Long Serpent itself did make appearance. Eric, Sweyn, and

the Swedish king hurried on board, and pushed out of their hiding-place into the open sea. Treacherous Sigwald, at the beginning of all this, had suddenly doubled that cape of theirs, and struck into the bay out of sight. Sigwald's sudden disappearance left the foremost Tryggvason ships astonished, and uncertain what to do, if it were not simply to strike sail and wait till Olaf himself with the Long Serpent arrived.

Olaf's chief captains, seeing the enemy's huge fleet come out, and how the matter lay, strongly advised King Olaf to elude this stroke of treachery, and, with all sail, hold on his course, fight being now on so unequal terms. The king, high on the quarter-deck where he stood, replied, "Strike the sails! never shall men of mine think of flight. I never fled from battle. Let God dispose of my life; but flight I will never take." And so the battle arrangements immediately began, and the battle with all fury went loose, and lasted hour after hour, till almost sunset.

48. Do you agree with Olaf's decision to stand and fight? Why or why not?

"Olaf stood on the Serpent's quarter-deck, high over the others," writes Snorro. "He had a gilt shield and a helmet inlaid with gold; over his armor he had a short red coat, and was easily distinguished from other men."

Snorro's account of the battle is altogether animated, graphic, and so minute that antiquaries gather from it, if so disposed (which we but little are), what the methods of Norse sea-fighting were; their shooting of arrows, casting of javelins, pitching of big stones, ultimately boarding, and mutual clashing and smashing, which it would not avail us to speak of here. Olaf stood conspicuous all day, throwing javelins, of deadly aim, with both hands at once; encouraging, fighting, and commanding like a high sea-king.

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The Danish fleet and the Swedish fleet were, both of them, quickly dealt with, and successively withdrew out of shot-range. And then Jarl Eric came up, and fiercely grappled with the Long Serpent, or, rather, with its surrounding comrades. Gradually, as they were beaten empty of men, Jarl Eric grappled with the Long Serpent herself.

The fight grew ever fiercer and more furious. Eric was supplied with new men from the Swedes and Danes. Olaf had no such resource, except from the crews of his own beaten ships, and at length this also failed him. All of Olaf's ships, except the Long Serpent, had been beaten and emptied. Yet Olaf fought on unyielding. Eric twice boarded him, and was twice repulsed. Olaf kept his quarter-deck; unconquerable, though left now more and more hopeless, fatally short of help.

A tall young man, called Einar Tamberskelver, very celebrated and important afterward in Norway, and already the best archer known, kept busy with his bow. Twice he nearly shot Jarl Eric in his ship.

"Shoot me that man," said Jarl Eric to a bowman near him. And, just as Tamberskelver was drawing his bow the third time, an arrow hit it in the middle and broke it in two.

"What is this that has broken?" asked King Olaf.

"Norway from thy hand, King," answered Tamberskelver.

49. What did Tamberskelver mean by the phrase "Norway from thy hand, King"?

Tryggvason's men, he observed with surprise, were striking violently on Eric's, but to no purpose. Nobody fell. "How is this?" asked Tryggvason.

"Our swords are notched and blunted, King. They do not cut."

Olaf stepped down to his arms chest and delivered out new swords. It was observed as he did it that there was blood trickling from his wrist, but no one knew where the wound was. Eric boarded a third time. Olaf, left with hardly more than one man, sprang overboard and sank in the deep waters to his long rest.

Rumor ran among his people that he still was not dead. Grounding on some movement by the ships of that traitorous Sigwald, they fancied Olaf had dived beneath the keels of his enemies, and got away with Sigwald, as Sigwald himself evidently did.

"Much was hoped, supposed, spoken," says one old mourning Skald.

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"But the truth was, Olaf Tryggvason was never seen in Norseland more."

Strangely, Olaf Tryggvason, otherwise known as Olaf I of Norway, remains still a shining figure to us.

Many historians consider him to be the wildly most beautiful man, in body and in soul, that one has ever heard of in the North.

50. Olaf is a contradictory and controversial historical figure. He pillaged and murdered ruthlessly as a Viking, and killed many in his efforts to convert his people to Christianity. Yet his own people revered their king, and for centuries, many Christian writers praised Olaf’s defeat over Norse paganism. As a modern person, what do you think of Olaf I of Norway—is he a historical hero or villain? Explain your answer.

Word Search Puzzle



Terms

- bishop
- Christianity
- conversion
- Denmark
- England
- fleet
- Norse
- Norway
- Olaf
- pagans
- raider
- Russia
- ship
- Sweden
- Thing
- Vikings

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