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ABOUT THIS BOOK

The history of the Vikings is not, as you might think, the story of a band of sea-pirates who roved the seas in search of plunder. It is rather the story of a race of brave and hardy Northmen who became sea-rovers because the rights and the freedom which their fathers had cherished were being taken from them.

Their fathers had lived on their own lands and had been freemen, but the sons were asked to become king's men and hold their land only at the king's pleasure. Rather than give up their ancient rights many of the Northmen became Vikings, and to them the sea-roving life was a noble one, full of high enterprise and ambition.

It was no easy matter to become a member of a Viking band. Even a great chief, before he could be admitted, must prove his strength and give an account of the deeds of prowess he had already done.

Thus it was an honour to belong to a band of Vikings, an honour which spurred the lads of the North to bold deeds, to mighty feats, that they might be counted worthy to become members of one or another of the famous bands.

It is of the customs and battles, of the lives and deaths of these wild Northmen that I have told you in this little book. As these men are, as you will hear, ancestors of our own, you will perhaps wish to know more about them than I have been able to tell you.

If that is so, when you grow older, you can read the Sagas or histories of these Northmen which were written by the Skalds, or, as we would call them, the poets of those olden days. In these Sagas you will meet with many strange adventures and see many great battlefields which you will not find in this little book.

Mary MacGregor.

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CHAPTER I

THE VIKINGS IN ENGLAND

On a summer day nearly twelve hundred years ago, three ships with bright red sails drew near to one of the little ports of the Dorset coast in the south of England.

The townsfolk saw the ships, and paying no heed to the bright sails, said carelessly one to another, "The merchantmen will be in port to-day." And the harbour-master gathered together a few of his men and hastened to the quay. For he, too, had seen the ships, and, as in duty bound, he went to meet them, to demand from the captains the port taxes which were lawfully due to the king.

But townsfolk and harbour-master alike had made a grievous mistake that summer day. For, as they soon discovered to their cost, and as the red sails might have forewarned them, the three ships were no peaceful merchantmen.

No sooner had the vessels drawn up along the quay than a wild, strange-looking crew sprang to the shore, drew their swords, and speedily slew the harbour-master and his few unarmed followers. They then entered the town, plundering and burning the houses of all, both rich and poor. Leaving the little town in ruins, the strange crew, dragging their booty with them, marched down again to the quay. There they embarked, and without delay sailed away out to sea. Perhaps you have already guessed that the strange crew was a Viking band, that the three ships were Viking ships. So, indeed, they were, and this summer day in the year seven hundred and eighty-nine was the first time that the wild Northmen had been seen in England, or in any part of Europe where the "White Christ" was worshipped.

But it was not long ere the bright-coloured Viking sails grew to be dreaded in England and also on the Continent. Their very appearance struck terror into the hearts of all men. Monks

and armed men alike learned to flee dismayed before the fierceness of the wrath, the violence of the blows, of these foes who had come upon them from the distant North.



THE BRIGHT COLOURED VIKING SAILS GREW TO BE DREADED.

As the months and years passed, Viking bands, not with three ships alone, but with large fleets, came to invade and harry the land. Leaving their vessels to be guarded by a third of their number, the others marched into the open country to

plunder the inhabitants. Should these venture to defend their goods, the Vikings did not hesitate to slay them or to carry them off as slaves.

Churches or monasteries in those days were the special spoil of the Northmen. For they knew that in these buildings they would find the richest store of gold and silver. Nor was there any reason why the warriors should spare the sacred buildings more than they spared the houses of the people. For the Vikings were pagans. That is to say, they were worshippers of their own gods Thor and Odin, the gods of storm and battle, and for priests and monks they had little respect and less fear.

Now it happened in those days that the holy men or women who founded monasteries, and reared churches dedicated to Christ and the saints, oftentimes chose as a site for these buildings some lone island, or some bold headland over which the storms would dash on wild and wintry nights. It was easy for the sea-rovers to reach such sanctuaries.

One of the most famous of these monasteries had been founded by St. Cuthbert on Lindisfarne or Holy Island, a sea-girt island off the coast of Northumberland. Here, four years after their attack on the little Dorset town, the red sails of the Vikings were once again to be seen. The monastery was no fortress built for defence, and the Vikings having landed at Lindisfarne, had not any difficulty in entering it. They slew the defenceless monks, took all the gold and silver that they could find, and burnt the monastery to the ground. Then, well satisfied with their adventure, they sailed away from Lindisfarne.

Other bands of sea-rovers now appeared here or there. One such band was seen on the south coast of Wales, and, after harrying there, sailed to Dublin bay. Here they found an island monastery which they treated as their fellows had treated the monastery of St. Cuthbert.

The success of these expeditions encouraged the Northmen to come in ever greater numbers to our western

shores, while some among them sailed to France, to Italy, and to Spain. Even on the shores of the Black Sea and in Greece the tall Northmen with fair skins, blue eyes, and golden hair were known and dreaded.

In our own land the Northmen were next seen by the inhabitants of Iona, on the west coast of Scotland.

Iona is hallowed to all boys and girls. They remember that on its lonely shore St. Columba landed when he was banished from the fair green isle of Erin. They remember, too, that he founded there his famous monastery, from which teachers went throughout Scotland and even to foreign lands to tell the story of the Cross. But the Vikings came to Iona, and they plundered the monastery there as ruthlessly as they had plundered any other sanctuary.

Then in many a church throughout the British Isles a new petition was added to the Litany, and the solemn and heartfelt cry arose, "From the fury of the Northmen, good Lord deliver us."

These forays all took place before the ninth century was many years old. They were but summer expeditions which the Vikings undertook for the sake of adventure, and for the love of plunder.

But before the end of the ninth century the Northmen had ceased to sail away to sea as soon as they had plundered a town or district. They had begun to think that it would be well to settle in the places which they could so easily make their own.

Accordingly they dwelt during the winter months in the castles or strongholds which they had pillaged. These strongholds might be in Scotland, where the power of the Pictish kings was growing too weak to strive with the bold adventurers; they might be in Ireland, where the chiefs were too busy warring with each other to pay much heed to the tall, fair strangers who were settling along their coast or in any other district which they had subdued.

Here, then, in different strongholds, the wild men of the North would dwell, sometimes helping against their foes the chiefs among whom they had settled, sometimes aiding the foes against the chiefs. But when summer came, the longing to rove would come upon them once more and they would sail away to plunder fresh towns, to capture other ships.

So eager, indeed, were the Vikings for adventure, so keen their thirst for battle, that if they could find no strange foe to fight they would challenge another band of Vikings to combat. Then swords would flash, arrows speed their flight, until the deck of one or other of the Viking ships was cleared, the crew killed or taken prisoners, and the ship with its treasures became the property of the conqueror.

Years passed away, and now the attacks of the Northmen on England and other countries were no longer mere summer cruises undertaken by some Viking chief as the mood might move him. But the forays changed into frequent and well-planned expeditions, until the story of the Vikings became wellnigh the history of the kings of the north countries.

Even from the slight glimpse I have given you of these men, you can see that the Vikings were a bold and fearless race, that the age in which they lived was rough and warlike.

Yet it is not alone for their life of wild adventure that you will wish to know more of these roving Northmen. You will be interested in their history even as you are interested in the tales you sometimes hear of your great-grandmother or even your great-great-grandmother. For these old Pagans of the North are indeed relations of your own, as I am going to show you before this chapter ends.

Long before the summer day on which the three Viking ships appeared on the Dorsetshire coast, other three boats had sailed towards our shores. They came from north of the river Elbe in Germany, and sailed on and on until they reached the Isle of Thanet, on the south coast of England. In these ships

were Saxons, who first conquered and then settled in the country. This was in the year four hundred and forty-nine.

The Anglo-Saxons, as these strangers were called after they had subdued England, were of the same race as the Northmen who about three hundred years later began to harry our coasts.

But during these three hundred years the Anglo-Saxons had lost the vigour and the independent spirit which had been theirs when first they left their own land. They had grown lazy, indolent, perhaps because having conquered the land there was no great need for them to use their strength. They had lost their free independent spirit through the tyranny of the priests who had been sent by the Catholic Church to teach and train the new settlers in England.

It was to these indolent priest-ridden people that the Northmen came in the eighth century, bringing with them a healthy vigorous life.

It is from these, Norsemen and Danes alike, that we may trace our descent, and it is from them that we learned at least one of our institutions, which we still cherish as one of our most priceless possessions.

In free assemblies of the people the Northmen took part by speech, and if need be by action, in the decisions of kings and chiefs, and in our parliament to-day we cling to the same rights.

It is of the customs and beliefs, of the battles and discoveries of these our northern ancestors, that you are now going to read.

CHAPTER II

THE VIKINGS AT HOME

In Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, in all the villages and towns around the shores of the Baltic, the Viking race was born.

It has been said that the name "Vikings" was first given to those Northmen who dwelt in a part of Denmark called Viken. However that may be, it was the name given to all the Northmen who took to a wild, sea-roving life, because they would often seek shelter with their boats in one or another of the numerous viks or bays which abounded along their coasts.

Thus the Vikings were not by any means all kings, as you might think from their name, nor, indeed, is the word pronounced "Vi-kings," but "Vik-ings" (or men of the Viks); yet among them were many chiefs of royal descent. These, although they had neither subjects nor kingdoms over which to rule, no sooner stepped on board a Viking's boat to take command of the crew, than they were given the title of king.

The Northmen did not, however, spend all their lives in harrying and burning other countries. When the seas were quiet in the long, summer days, they would go off, as I have told you, on their wild expeditions. But when summer was over, and the seas began to grow rough and stormy, the Viking bands would go home with their booty and stay there, to build their houses, reap their fields, and, when spring had come again, to sow their grain in the hope of a plenteous harvest.

There was thus much that the Viking lad had to learn beyond the art of wielding the battle-axe, poising the spear, and shooting an arrow straight to its mark. Even a freeborn yeoman's son had to work, work as hard as had the slaves or thralls who were under him.

The old history books, or Sagas, as the Norseman called them, have, among other songs, this one about the duties of a well-born lad:

"He now learnt
To tame oxen
And till the ground,
To timber houses
And build barns,
To make carts
And form ploughs."

Indeed, it would have surprised you to see the fierce warriors and mighty chiefs themselves laying aside their weapons and working in the fields side by side with their thralls, sowing, reaping, threshing. Yet this they did.

Even kings were often to be seen in the fields during the busy harvest season. They would help their men to cut the golden grain, and with their own royal hands help to fill the barn when the field was reaped. To king and yeoman alike, work, well done, was an honourable deed.

Barley was the grain most cultivated by the Northmen, but they also grew oats, rye, and wheat. If the crops failed, as would often happen, there was great distress in the land.

Corn was threshed with a flail and then ground in handmills. Women usually turned the handles of these mills.

Once a man named Helgi, disguised himself as one of these women thralls in order to escape from his enemies.

It was in vain that his enemies searched for him, Helgi was nowhere to be found. At length in their search his enemies came to a barn in which was a handmill for grinding corn. A tall, strongly-built woman was turning the handle, but so violently did she work, that the mill stones cracked and the barn was shattered to pieces as fragments of the stone flew hither and thither. Then Helgi's enemies pounced upon the vigorous corn-grinder, saying, "More suited to these hands is the sword-hilt than the handle of the mill."

Helgi indeed it was whom his enemies had discovered under his guise of a female thrall. But with the quick humour that at times stole over these fierce Northmen, Helgi's enemies forgot to punish him as they laughed together over his disguise, and over the strength which had made it useless.

The Northmen built their own houses, for they were carpenters as well as skilful at many another trade. Their buildings rose and their weapons were forged by the strength and cunning of their own right hands.

These houses had only one room, the side walls of which were long and low, with neither windows nor doors. The entrance was at the gable end, where a small door opened into a tiny ante-room. Through the ante-room the Northmen stepped into their large living-room or hall.

Glass was unknown in the North in those days, and the windows were merely open spaces between the beams which formed the roof of the house. They could be closed by wooden shutters.

The spaces which were not left open for light were covered with turf or thatch, but a hole was left above the centre of the room by which the smoke from the fire escaped. For the Northmen had no chimneys in their dwellings.

Sometimes the walls of the house were bare, sometimes they were adorned with weapons and shields, and these were dearer to the men of old than any pictures could have been. On feast-days, however, the women would deck the walls with beautifully woven silks or cloths, which had been brought home from some raiding expedition.

As for carpets, they would have been useless. For the floor was made of clay which had been beaten hard, while the hearth was formed quite simply by placing several large flat stones on the centre of the clay floor. Here the fire blazed right merrily, the smoke escaping through the hole made for the purpose in the centre of the roof.

There was but little furniture in the long, low room, and what there was, was of the plainest. Benches, which were often used as beds, were fixed to the walls.

At meal-times long tables were placed on trestles in front of the benches, and removed again by thralls as soon as the meal was over.

For the rest, wooden stools were occasionally to be found, and a few chests, in which were kept the treasures of the household, jewels and silks, silver and gold, and these were all that the Vikings needed to furnish their houses in those early times.

There were many of the Northmen, however, who were not content to trust their treasures to the chests, whose locks were anything but strong. These would place their jewels and their silver and gold in a copper box or in a large horn; then, digging a hole in the earth they would bury their treasure, marking the spot with a stone, or by some other sign known only to themselves.

Unfortunately the times were dangerous. A stray arrow, a sudden flash of passion, and the owner of a hidden treasure might be slain before he had the chance to tell any one where his goods were buried. Long after the Viking age had ended, farmers, as they ploughed their fields, would discover these hoards and marvel at the riches of the old Viking chiefs.

In winter evenings the room or hall was lighted by the fire which blazed in the centre of the floor, or by torches made of pieces of pine-trees, which were stuck roughly into the walls.

The plates and dishes used by the Vikings were usually plain wooden trenchers. They fed on bread and milk, and used honey instead of sugar. Wild game, too, they would often have after the men came home from the hunt. Horns were for the most part used instead of cups, and these the daughters of the house would hand to the men, brimming over with home-brewed ale or mead.

In the houses of the rich, however, the meals were not so simple or the dishes so plain. Here is a curious old song which will tell you the kind of fare which was provided for the chiefs of the Vikings.

"Then took the mother
The embroidered cloth
Of linen, white,
Then set she down
Thin loaves of bread
Wheaten white,
Upon the cloth.
Next brought she forth
Dishes brimful,
Silver mounted,
High-flavoured ham
And roasted fowl.
There was wine in cans
Beauteous cups.
They drank, they talked
Till break of day."

Thus you see that the chiefs who fought could also feast.

Skins, furs, woollen, linen and silken stuffs, all these were used for the dress of the people. Silk, however, was thought a great luxury, and was used only by the wealthiest. When a little Viking prince or noble was born he was wrapped in silk.

The Northmen delighted in bright clothing, scarlet being their favourite colour.

Their kirtle or coat, often of blue, was held together by a waist-belt. Over the kirtle was flung a scarlet cloak fastened at the shoulder with a buckle, which was often of gold or silver and studded with gems.

The Northmen wore boots of a tan colour, gold spurs and a golden helmet, or, if the helmet were laid aside, a grey hat.

Bright colours, too, were worn by the women. Their kirtle or gown had a train and usually long sleeves which reached to the wrist. It was fastened round the waist by a belt, often made, as were the men's, of gold or silver, and from the belt hung a bag in which the women kept their keys. These keys were the sign of the women's power in the household.

In their bag the women would also sometimes keep their rings and other jewels, for then they were sure that they would be well guarded. Over her kirtle a careful housewife would wear an apron.

Hats they did not use; instead they wore a linen cloth called a wimple. This came down over the ears and round the chin. On the top of the wimple they wore a high, twisted cap, which was sometimes bent at the top into the shape of a horn.

They were proud of their beautiful clothes, these women of olden days. Here is a picture the old Sagas draw for us of such housewives.

"The housewife
Looked at her sleeves;
She smoothed the linen
And plaited them.
She put up her headdress;
A brooch was on her breast;
The dress was trailing;
The shirt had a blue tint;
Her brow was brighter,
Her neck was whiter,
Than pure new-fallen snow."

The Northmen, as I have told you, would often go to the hunt to bring home game for the household, as well as for the pleasure of the chase. Hawking, too, was a sport followed with keenness by kings and nobles alike.

A king named Olaf was used to be very well pleased with himself if he had a good day's sport, just as kings and their subjects still are in our own times. Olaf rode out early one bright morning with hawk and hounds. In its first flight the king's hawk brought down two blackcock, and a short time later three more of the same birds. The hounds darted upon them as they fell to the ground, and Olaf rode homeward with his quarry in great glee.

The king's little daughter ran into the courtyard to meet her father as he came home from the chase.

"Hast thou ever heard of such sport in so short a time?" he asked her, showing her the birds.

"A fine morning's sport is this, my lord," she answered, laughing up into his face, "in that you have bagged five blackcock, but Harald, king of Norway, made a better bag when he took in one morning five kings and laid their kingdoms under his sway."

While the men hawked and hunted the women would do their household duties and spin threads into woven stuffs, using, even in those early days, distaff and loom.

Then, their duties over, they would wander down to the nut groves together to gather nuts, or in yet gayer mood they would play at ball, their merry laughter echoing through the glades.

When a Viking baby was born, if he were a prince or noble, he was, as I told you, wrapped in a garment of silk. But before this was done he, and every other little baby, was laid on the cold ground outside the house. And there the poor little thing had to stay until its father was brought to see it. He, the father, would listen to its cry, and the louder it was the better he was pleased, for at least his little son was sound of lung. Then he would lift the baby and feel each limb, and if these were strong enough to satisfy him, he would hand the child to the women who stood anxiously waiting, bidding them tend and care for it.

The child was then washed and clothed, and almost before it could speak or walk it was trained to be brave and to endure hardness, that, when it was older, it might be strong to fight for the gods.



THE KING'S LITTLE DAUGHTER RAN INTO THE COURTYARD TO MEET HER FATHER AS HE RETURNED FROM THE CHASE.

But some little Viking babies could not cry lustily, while their limbs were thin and feeble. Such weak and puny children the fathers would leave lying on the ground, nor without his leave did the women dare to lift them up from the cold earth. So they were left to perish from cold, or, more terrible still, left to be devoured by wild beasts which stole out of the woods in search of food.

At other times it happened that a neighbour would see the little babe by the wayside and be too kind to leave it there. He would stoop to lift it, and carrying it to his own home he would give it to his wife. She would then become the foster-mother of the little child, and he its foster-father.

The bond between the foster-parents and the child would grow stronger as each year passed away, until it seemed that those who had trained the boy and given him a home were indeed his own parents.

CHAPTER III

THE VIKINGS' BELIEFS

The history books of the Northmen were called Sagas. But long before the Sagas were written down, the stories of the heroes were sung in halls and on battlefields by the poets of the nation. These poets were named Skalds, and their rank among the Northmen was high.

Sometimes the Sagas were sung in prose, at other times in verse. Sometimes they were tales which had been handed down from father to son for so many years that it was hard to tell how much of them was history, how much fable. At other times the Sagas were true accounts of the deeds of the Norse kings. For the Skalds were oftentimes to be seen on the battlefields or battleships of the Vikings, and then their songs were of the brave deeds which they had themselves seen done, of the victories and defeats at which they themselves had been present.

In the oldest Sagas you can read of the strange things that these Norsemen believed. If I tell you some of these beliefs you will see that the Vikings, though they were strong warriors, were yet, at the same time, very much like big grown up children.

They believed even as do you, in giants, good giants and bad ones, in dark and gloomy gnomes, in light and merry little elves.

Each man, they thought, was watched over by a guardian spirit. They could not always see this spirit, but that mattered little to these men of old, for though unseen, the spirit was there, real as the comrade whose hand they could clasp in right good fellowship.

On the battlefield they often saw strange maidens near them, and then they knew, these sturdy Northmen, that the gods

had sent from Valhalla to guide the fate of the battle. The strange maidens were called Valkyries.

These Valkyries could ride through the air; of that the Northmen had no doubt. They could ride over the sea too, or on the shafts of lightning, which seemed as rays of sunshine from the face of the gods. The maidens rode their fiery steeds clad in glittering armour, and bearing with them spears sharpened for victory or death.

There were in the earliest days only six Valkyries, but as the years passed their number increased to nine. Once, indeed, Helgi saw as many as twenty-seven maidens on a battlefield.

"Three times nine maidens,
But one rode foremost,
A white maiden under helmet.
Their horses trembled;
From their manes fell
Dew into the deep dales,
Hail on the lofty woods."

At times these wondrous maidens came to dwell on earth. Listen, and I will tell you how they were discovered by three princes.

The princes were sons of one of the kings of Sweden, and used to spend much of their time running on snowshoes, for there was much snow in their country. They also hunted wild beasts.

One day the three princes came to a lake deep hidden in a forest, and there they tarried and built for themselves a house. Early one morning they were astir, and going down to the edge of a lake they beheld, to their great astonishment, three beautiful women who were spinning flax. Near to them lay the swanskins in which they usually disguised themselves before it was possible for any one to see that they were Valkyries. But this morning the three princes were so early that they caught the maidens unawares.

The three brothers spoke to them courteously, and took them to their home, where they dwelt for seven long winters. Then they grew restless, and one day they disappeared. They had heard again the cry of the battlefields and had gone thither. Nor did the three princes ever see them again, though they bound on their snowshoes and sought for them far and wide.

Valhalla, from which abode the Valkyries came, was the home of the gods. It was there that the warriors who had fought bravely and done great deeds were welcomed. It was also called "The Home of the Slain," and had five hundred and forty doors, while each door was so wide that eight hundred warriors could pass through it at the same moment.

Death had no terror for these stalwart warriors. Indeed, some there were who, when the battle was over, sorrowed that they were not among the slain. For it was good to be welcomed to the glad halls of Valhalla, and to sit down to feast at the festive board spread to welcome the brave in the halls of the gods.

Death they did not fear, shame they did, but that could befall them only should they flee before the foe. To win fame, fame that would live in the Sagas of their nation and be handed down from generation to generation, that was the great ambition of these sturdy Northmen.

Another strange belief which the Northmen held will make you think of the fairy tales you know so well.

They believed that some people were able to change their own shape, and become, as they pleased, a bear, a wolf, or any other animal. Those who could not change their own shape, had often this dread power over others.

One of the kings of Norway had a son named Björn who suffered from this evil power of witchcraft. Björn's own mother had died when he was a baby, and he had a stepmother who did not love her little stepson. She therefore struck him with a wolf-skin glove one day, saying, "Thou shalt become a fierce bear, and thou shalt eat no food save thy father's cattle. So much

cattle shalt thou kill that all men shall hear of it, and never shalt thou escape from this spell.”

Then, as she finished speaking, a great bear ran out of the courtyard, and Björn was never seen again.

His father, the king, sought for him throughout his realm, but in vain. But from the day that Björn vanished, it is told that a fierce, gray bear was often to be seen prowling among the king’s cattle, until their numbers speedily diminished.

Not only did the Northmen believe that they could change their own or another man’s form, they believed that they could change their own tempers or characters as well, and that seems almost a more difficult thing to do. The way in which they could change their temper was to eat the flesh or drink the blood of some wild beast. No sooner did they do this, than they became strong and fierce as the animal of whose flesh and blood they had partaken.

In the old Sagas there are many tales of men who became changed in this way. Here is one which you will like to hear.

It was the merry Yuletide, but in a certain part of Norway gloom hung heavy over the king’s court even at this the merriest season of the year. And it was scarce to be wondered at, for a terrible unknown animal with wings on its back had come for two winters to this land, doing much damage to man and beast.

The animal seemed weapon-proof, as the old Norsemen would say, for neither sword, spear, nor arrow seemed able to pierce its hide, so tough and strong it was. It was true that the king’s greatest champions were abroad on Viking expeditions, else surely the beast would have been slain long ago.

But Bödvar, a brave hero, was ashamed that none dared to fight the beast. He arose in the king’s court and said, “The hall is not so well manned as I thought, if one creature is to lay

waste the realm and property of the king.” Then as no one spoke, Bödvar himself resolved to fight the unknown animal.

He left the hall, taking with him his comrade Hött; but Hött was so afraid to face the fierce creature who had wrought such havoc in the land, that he could scarce walk. Then, without more ado, Bödvar lifted him up and carried him out of the courtyard and down toward the forest. At length they stood before the beast, and Hött shouted as loud as he could that the animal was going to swallow him. Bödvar then flung his comrade on to the soft, green moss at their feet and bade him be silent. And Hött lay where he fell, nor did he dare to move or to utter a word.

Then Bödvar drew his sword, and, by some mischance, it stuck in its scabbard. However, he got it free, and thrust at the beast under its shoulder so hard that it fell, pierced through to the heart.

Well pleased then was the hero with his deed, and turning to Hött he carried him to where the beast lay dead. But still his comrade trembled for fear.

“Now shalt thou drink the blood of the beast,” said Bjorn; and Hött, though he was unwilling to do so, did not dare to refuse. Two large mouthfuls did Bödvar force him to swallow, and also he made him eat part of the creature’s heart.

“Thou shalt wrestle with me now,” said Bödvar, and they struggled long together.

“Henceforth I do not think that thou wilt fear man or beast,” said Bödvar panting with his efforts; “for thou hast become strong.” And sturdily answered Hött, “I will not be afraid of thee or of any wild beast, for I feel strength has entered into my heart.”

“That is well, my companion,” said Bödvar: “let us go lift up the beast.” And this they did, and the realm rejoiced once more ere the Yuletide festivals were ended.

The greatest champions in the North were called Berserks. Neither fire nor weapons could harm these men, so it seemed to those against whom they fought. Yet they wore no coats of mail as a protection against their enemies, but fought in bare shirts. It was for this reason that they were called Berserks, for serk is just our word for shirt.

When they saw an enemy, the Berserks would be seized with a sudden, frenzy of rage. They would bite their shields, and then, flinging them aside, they would rush upon the foe with nothing but a club in their hands. But so great was their strength that a blow from one of these clubs was usually a deathblow.

There were times when this frenzy attacked the Berserks though no enemy was near. Then, should they happen to be at sea, they would row to the shore and wrestle with large stones or trees until their rage was spent. In these fierce fits of anger the Berserks were also believed to change their shapes and to take the form of the strongest beast that they knew.

Since the Berserks were never known to fight without gaining the victory, every king and chief tried to gather around him a band of these great champions. For they would stay with him in winter to guard his realms, and go with him in summer on Viking expeditions. If a king or chief were famed for his brave deeds and for the liberal rewards he gave to his followers, the Berserks would flock to his court from the most distant parts of the North.

I have told you that the Viking warriors did not fear death on the battlefields. Their belief in the joys of Valhalla, and the welcome that awaited them there, took away all such dread. But though they were without fear of death, they were careful to tell their sons or subjects where they wished to be buried.

The Northmen wished their bodies to rest near to their friends or near to the homes in which their families would still dwell. For they believed that then their spirits would talk one to

the other, and even that they would still be able to watch over their households.

A large mound of gravel and earth was raised above the spot where the Northmen were laid. The mounds of great chiefs were shunned at all times, but especially at night, when flames were often seen to burst forth from them, while the ghost of the chief would appear walking upon the earth.

In very early times the bodies of the slain were laid on a ship, which was then set on fire and pushed out to sea. But in later days the ships were sometimes used as immense coffins, and buried under earth and stones.

If you were in Norway and went to the Museum at Christiania, you would see there the ruins of an old Viking ship which had once been used in this way.

The warrior who was buried in the Gökstad ship, as it is named, had been a chief of great renown. For the skeletons of at least twelve horses were found in the mound and also the remains of several dogs, while the bones and feathers of a peacock were scattered here and there inside the ship. Believing that the dead warrior was going with all speed to the halls of Valhalla, his friends had buried the ship with its prow towards the sea, as though ready for a voyage.

But I have still to tell you of a strange duty which the Northman believed he must do for his dead kinsman. Whether he were going to the bright, warm halls of Valhalla or to the realm of Hades, where all was cold and dark, he must be well shod for his journey.

Therefore the Northman would take shoes—"hell-shoes" they were called—and bind them firmly on to the feet of his kinsman. Sometimes it was not needful to use the "hell-shoes" even when they were bound on, for horses and carriages were buried with the dead man, so that if he willed, he might enter Valhalla driving or riding on horseback.

As I told you, many people were afraid to venture near the mounds in which great chiefs were buried. Yet some there

were who cast away all fear, that they might break into these burial-places and seize for themselves the treasures hidden there. When, as often happened, the swords or other buried weapons were believed to have magic power, the flames and the ghosts of the dead chiefs were the more readily encountered.

“Once,” say the old Sagas, “a woman dressed in a man’s dress went to a band of Vikings and was with them for a while and was called Hervard. A little after, the chief of the Vikings died, and Hervard got command of them.

“She wished to land at a certain spot where there were mounds, but her men said it would not do to stay out at night.

“But said Hervard, ‘Much property is likely to be in the mounds,’ and at sunset she went alone on the island.

“There she met a herd-boy and asked him for tidings.

“He said, ‘Dost thou not know the island? Come home with me, for it will not do for any man to stay out here after sunset. I am going home at once.’

“Hervard replied, ‘Tell me where are the mounds?’

“The boy said, ‘Thou art unwise, as thou wantest to search for that at night which few dare search for at midday. Burning fire plays on the mounds after sunset.’

“But Hervard replied that she would certainly go to the mounds.

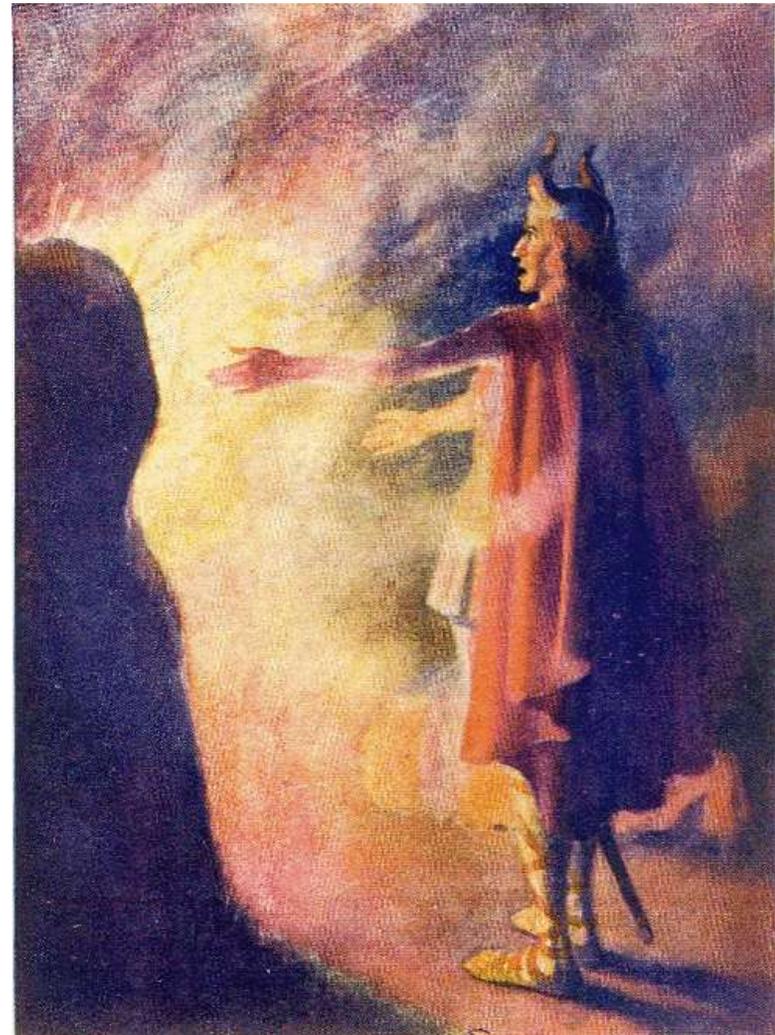
“Then said the shepherd, ‘I see that thou art a bold man though thou art unwise. I will give thee my necklace if thou wilt come home with me.’ ”

“Hervard answered, ‘Though thou wouldst give me all thou ownest thou couldst not hinder me from going!’ ”

So together the shepherd lad and the Viking set out towards the mounds, but when the sun set they heard hollow noises in the island and the mound fires appeared. The shepherd

got frightened and took to his feet and ran into the forest as quickly as he could and never looked back.

Now when Hervard reached the mounds she sang aloud that the buried chiefs might hear her, and bade them give her the magic sword which was buried with them.



SLOWLY THE MOUNDS OPENED AND FIRE AND SMOKE LEAPED OUT.

CHAPTER IV

THE VIKING SHIPS

As she sang, slowly the mounds opened, and fire and smoke leaped out of them and a voice bade Hervard hasten back to her ships. But the Viking was fearless and refused to go without the sword. After many warnings of the harm it might bring to her, the weapon was at length flung into her hands.

Then Hervard was well pleased, for she thought the sword a better gift than the whole of Norway.

But the voice spoke again, "Thou wilt not believe it, but this sword will destroy all thy kin."

"I will go down to the steeds of the sea," said Hervard, meaning her ships. "I fear little how my sons may hereafter quarrel."

"If thou wouldst but believe that the sword has poison in both edges and is worse than disease, I would give to thee the strength of twelve men," said the voice from the mound.

But Hervard paid no heed to these words and turned away toward the sea. The dawn broke as she reached the shore, and Hervard saw that the ships had sailed away, for the Vikings had been afraid of the thunder and fire in the island and had forsaken their commander.

Thus Hervard was left alone with the buried chiefs.

The battles which the Vikings fought were fought on the sea more frequently than on the land.

Their warships were called long-ships and were half-decked. The rowers sat in the centre of the boat, which was low, so that their oars could reach the water. Sails were used, either red or painted in different stripes, red, blue, yellow, green. These square, brightly coloured sails gave the boats a gay appearance, which was increased by the round shields which were hung outside the gunwale and which were also painted red, black, or white. At the prow there was usually a beautifully carved and gorgeously painted figurehead. The stem and stern of the ships were high. In the stern there was an upper deck, but in the forepart of the vessel there was nothing but loose planks on which the sailors could step. When a storm was raging or a battle was being fought, the loose planks did not, as you may imagine, offer a very firm foothold.

The boats were usually built long and pointed for the sake of speed, and had seats for thirty rowers. Besides the rowers, the long-boats could hold from sixty to one hundred and fifty sailors.

Merchant ships carried cargoes of meal and timber. They were built much as were the long-ships, but as they had no shields hung around the gunwale, it was easy to see whether a vessel were a warship or a merchantman.

On land or on sea the weapons which the Vikings used were the same—swords, spears, battle-axes, clubs, bows and arrows. When Viking fleets met an enemy, they would blow a ringing blast on their horns, hoist their standards, and then, tying the stems of their ships firmly together, they were ready to fall upon their prey.

As the ships drew closer together the Vikings would throw out grappling-hooks and drag the enemy's ships alongside their own. No sooner was this done than some of the bravest of the Viking crew, led by their chiefs, would leap on board the enemy's ships. Then using sword and spear, battle-axe and club unsparingly, they would rid themselves of their foes. The decks would soon be cleared, and the ship and its treasures become the prey of the victorious Northmen.

If a great battle were before them, the Viking chiefs picked their crew with the utmost care. No one younger than twenty or older than sixty years of age was chosen, and these were all noted for their valour and their strength.

The struggle was usually fiercest near the prow and the stern of the ship. Here the king and the chiefs would take their stand, while around them pressed their most valiant followers. Near them stood the standard-bearer waving on high his banner.

Sometimes the Vikings would stretch chains or cables across the entrance to a harbour, and these endangered the vessels of those who might seek to enter and attack them unawares.

Indeed, once a jarl named Hakon rowed his long-ship into the Sound between two vessels which he thought were merchantmen.

Perhaps it was not by any mistake that the war-shields had not been hung over the gunwale; perhaps the Vikings were hoping to catch Hakon jarl in a trap. Be that as it may, the ships which Hakon thought were harmless merchantmen were in reality Viking long-ships.

As the keel of Hakon's vessel was passing over the cable which had been stretched across the opening into the Sound, the Vikings began to haul it in with a windlass. Soon the cable touched the bottom of the vessel, and the stern began to rise while the prow was plunged forward so that the water rushed into the ship. Before Hakon and his men could do

anything to save themselves the ship was filled and upset. Hakon jarl had indeed been caught in a trap.

If you ever go to Christiania you will see the ruins of one of these old long-ships in the museum there, for the Gökstad vessel of which I have told you was built very much as any other warship of the Viking age.

CHAPTER V

HARALD FAIRHAIR

As I have told you, the history of the Vikings became the history of the kings of Norway. Harald Fairhair was one of the foremost of these. He was so brave a Northman that he became king over the whole of Norway. In eight hundred and sixty-one, when he began to reign, Norway was divided into thirty-one little kingdoms, over each of which ruled a little king. Harald Fairhair began his reign by being one of these little kings.

Harald was only a boy, ten years of age, when he succeeded his father; but as he grew up he became a very strong and handsome man, as well as a very wise and prudent one. Indeed he grew so strong that he fought with and vanquished five great kings in one battle.

After this victory, Harald sent, so the old chronicles of the kings of Norway say, some of his men to a princess named Gyda, bidding them tell her that he wished to make her his queen.

But Gyda wished to marry a king who ruled over a whole country, rather than one who owned but a small part of Norway, and this was the message she sent back to Harald.

“Tell Harald,” said the maiden, “that I will agree to be his wife if he will first, for my sake, subdue all Norway to himself, for only thus methinks can he be called the king of a people.”

The messengers thought Gyda’s words too bold, but when King Harald heard them, he said, “It is wonderful that I did not think of this before. And now I make a solemn vow and take God to witness, who made me and rules over all things, that never shall I clip or comb my hair until I have subdued the

whole of Norway with scat (land taxes), and duties, and domains, or if not, have died in the attempt.”

Then, without delay, Harald assembled a great force and prepared to conquer all the other little kings who were ruling over the different parts of Norway.

In many districts the kings had no warning of Harald’s approach, and before they could collect an army they were vanquished.

When their ruler was defeated, many of his subjects fled from the country, manned their ships and sailed away on Viking expeditions. Others made peace with King Harald and became his men.

Over each district, as he conquered it, Harald placed a jarl or earl, that he might judge and do justice, and also that he might collect the scat and fines which Harald had imposed upon the conquered people. As the earls were given a third part of the money they thus collected, they were well pleased to take service with King Harald. And indeed they grew richer, and more powerful too, than they had ever been before.

It took King Harald ten long years to do as he had vowed, and make all Norway his own. During these years a great many new bands of Vikings were formed, and led by their chief or king they left the country, not choosing to become King Harald’s men.

These Viking bands went west, over the sea, to Shetland and Orkney, to the Hebrides, and also to England, Scotland, and Ireland.

During the winter they made their home in these lands, but in summer they sailed to the coast of Norway and did much damage to the towns that lay along the coast. Then, growing bolder, they ventured inland, and because of their hatred against King Harald, they plundered and burned both towns and villages.

Meanwhile Harald, having fulfilled his vow, had his hair combed and cut. It had grown so rough and tangled during these ten years that his people had named him Harald Sufa, which meant “shock-headed Harald.” Now, however, after his long, yellow hair was combed and clipped, he was named Harald Fairhair, and by this name he was ever after known. Nor did the king forget Gyda, for whose sake he had made his vow. He sent for her, and she, as she had promised, came to marry the King of all Norway.

Now the raids of the Vikings along the coasts of Norway angered the king, and he determined that they should end. He therefore set out with a large fleet in search of his rebellious subjects.

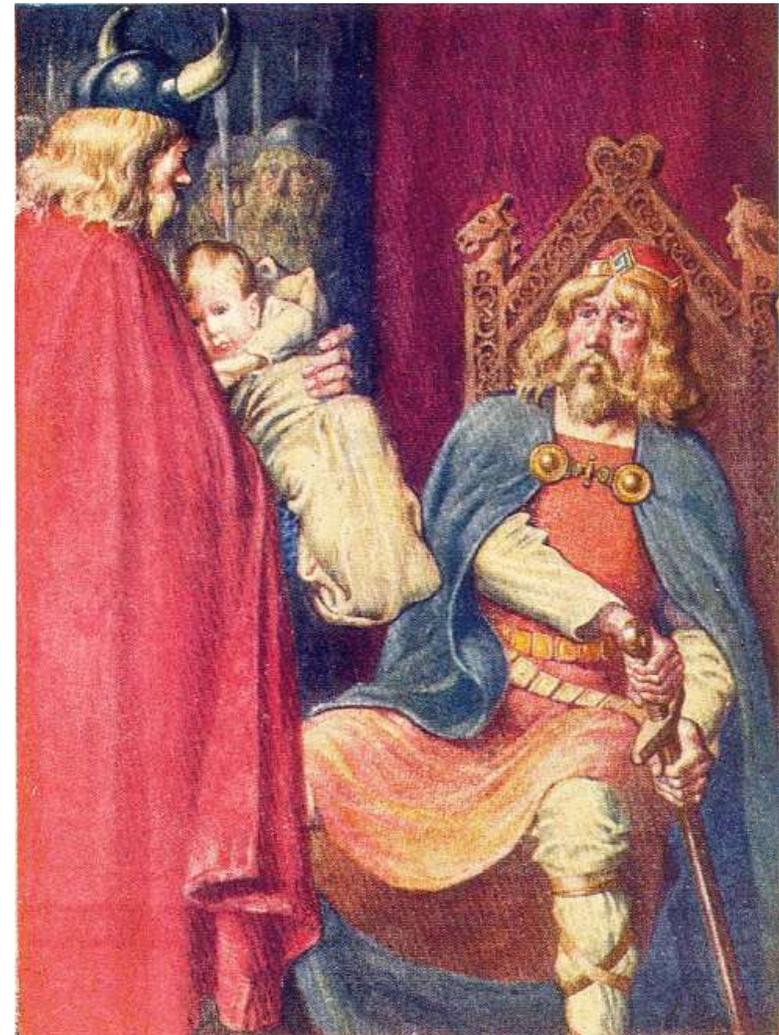
These, when they heard of his approach, fled to their long-ships and sailed out to sea. But Harald reached Shetland and slew those Vikings who had not fled, then, landing on the Orkney Isles, he burned and plundered, sparing no Northman who crossed his path. On the Hebrides King Harald met with worthy foes, for here were many who had once themselves been kings in Norway. In all the battles that he fought Harald was victorious and gained much booty.

When he went back to Norway the king left one of his jarls to carry on war against the inhabitants of Scotland. Caithness and Sutherland were conquered by this jarl for Harald, and thereafter many chiefs, both Norsemen and Danes, settled there.

While Harald Fairhair was ruling in Norway, a grandson of Alfred the Great became king in England. His name was Athelstan the Victorious. Now Athelstan liked to think that he was a greater king than Harald Fairhair. It pleased him, too, to play what seemed to him a clever trick on his rival across the sea.

He sent a beautiful sword to Harald. Its hilt was covered with gold and silver, and set with precious gems. When Athelstan’s messenger stood before the King of Norway he

held out the hilt of the sword toward him, saying, “Here is a sword that King Athelstan doth send to thee.” Harald at once seized it by the hilt. Then the messenger smiled and said, “Now shalt thou be subject to the King of England, for thou hast taken the sword by the hilt as he desired thee.” To take a sword thus was in those olden days a sign of submission.



CARRYING PRINCE HAKON IN HIS ARMS, HAUK STEPPED BEFORE THE KING.

Then Harald was very angry, for he knew that Athelstan had sent his gift only that he might mock him. He wished to punish the messenger whom Athelstan had sent with the sword. "Nevertheless he remembered his habit whenever he got angry, to first keep quiet and let his anger subside, and then look at the matter calmly." By the time the prudent king had done this, his anger had cooled, and Athelstan's messenger departed unharmed.

But with Athelstan Harald still hoped to be equal.

The following summer he sent a ship to England. It was commanded by Hauk, and into his hands Harald intrusted his young son Hakon, whom he was sending to King Athelstan. For what purpose you shall hear.

Hauk reached England safely, and found the king in London at a feast. The captain boldly entered the hall where the feasters sat, followed by thirty of his men, each one of whom had his shield hidden under his cloak.

Carrying Prince Hakon, who was a child, in his arms, Hauk stepped before the king and saluted him. Then before Athelstan knew what he meant to do, Hauk had placed the little prince on the king's knee. "Why hast thou done this?" said Athelstan to the bold Northman.

"Harald of Norway asks thee to foster his child," answered Hauk. But well he knew that his words would make the King of England wroth. For one who became foster-father to a child was usually of lower rank than the real father. This, you see, was Harald's way of thanking Athelstan for his gift of the sword.

Well, as Hauk expected, the king was very angry when he heard why the little prince, had been placed on his knee. He drew his sword as though he would slay the child.

Hauk, however, was quite undisturbed, and said, "Thou hast borne the child on thy knee, and thou canst murder him if thou wilt, but thou canst not make an end of all King Harald's sons by so doing."

Then the Viking, with his men, left the hall and strode down to the river, where they embarked, and at once set sail for Norway.

When Hauk reached Norway and told the king all that he had done, Harald was well content, for the King of England had been forced to become the foster-father of his little son.

Athelstan's anger against his royal foster-child was soon forgotten, and ere long he loved him better than any of his own kin.

He ordered the priest to baptize the little prince, and to teach him the true faith.

Hakon grew up a tall, strong lad, and very fair. His father, Harald of Norway, he never saw again; but when he heard, in 934, that Harald was dead, he at once made up his mind to go to Norway.

CHAPTER VI

HAKON BECOMES KING OF NORWAY

Three years before his death Harald Fairhair, being eighty-three years of age, had given his whole realm to his son Eirik. Hakon left England, hoping to win some, if not all the kingdom of Norway for himself.

King Athelstan encouraged his foster son to go back to his own country, and gave him a good fleet, a hardy crew, and, indeed, all that he needed for his journey to Norway.

It was harvest-time when Hakon reached the land he had left as a little child, and he was welcomed right royally, for King Eirik, his brother, was no favourite with the people.

Hakon at once summoned an assembly of the people, which in Norway was not called a parliament, but a Thing. This Thing met at Thronhjelm.

Now Hakon knew that the people did not like his brother Eirik, so he asked them to give him the title of king. He promised at the same time to make every peasant the owner of the land on which he lived, and this pleased the people greatly, and they shouted aloud that they would take him for their lord.

Then with many bold warriors Hakon journeyed throughout Norway, and everywhere the people deserted King Eirik and flocked around the standard of the tall and handsome king who had come to them from across the sea and who yet was one of their own race.

Before springtime Hakon had a large fleet as well as a great army, and Eirik knew that it was not possible for him to meet his brother on the battlefield, for he had but a few followers. He therefore sailed with these to the Orkneys. Here he was joined by other Vikings, and together they sailed to

Scotland, plundering there and also in the northern counties of England.

But Athelstan had no wish to have Eirik plundering in his realms. He therefore resolved to have him there as an ally rather than as an enemy, and offered him the lordship of Northumberland on two conditions. These conditions were that he should defend the country for him against Danes or other Vikings, and also that he and his followers should become Christians.

The offer of the lordship of Northumberland pleased Eirik, and he was at once baptized with all his followers. He dwelt in York, and many Vikings who were already in England took service with him, as well as others who from time to time came over the sea from Norway.

In summer Eirik would lead his men on expeditions, harrying in Scotland, Ireland, and the Hebrides, and getting much booty for himself and his Viking band. He did this because he grew discontented with what King Athelstan had given him. Northumberland seemed very small to the king who for a little while had ruled over all Norway.

Now King Athelstan died in 941 after a reign of fourteen years, eight weeks, and three days. Edmund, his brother, then became King of England, and he had little liking for Northmen, and for King Eirik he did not care at all. No sooner therefore was Edmund seated on the throne than those who knew his dislike to the Northmen began to whisper that Eirik the Viking would not rule much longer over Northumberland.

Eirik, knowing that he need expect no kindness from King Edmund, and hearing these whispers, at once set out on one of his Viking cruises. He sailed to the Hebrides, where many chiefs with their men joined him. With this larger force he steered toward Ireland, where still more Northmen left their homes to follow him.

Thinking that now he was strong enough to pay no heed to Edmund, Eirik boldly sailed to Bretland, the county we now call Wales. Then marching with his army into the south of England, he plundered and burnt every town and village through which he passed, hunting down the wretched inhabitants as they fled before him.

King Edmund, when he heard of Eirik's doings, sent against him a great host. A fierce battle was fought in which Eirik and five kings fell, with many other brave Norsemen.

Those who escaped fled to Northumberland to tell Eirik's wife Gunnhild and her sons the fatal tidings. When Gunnhild heard that Eirik had fallen after plundering in England, she knew that she and her sons need look for no mercy at King Edmund's hands. She therefore left Northumberland with what ships her husband had left, manning them with those Northmen who were willing to follow her fortunes. She sailed to Orkney and settled there with her sons, who subdued both the Orkney and Shetland Islands, taking "scat" for themselves from the people. In summer they went as Vikings to the west, and plundered both in Scotland and Ireland.

Meanwhile in Norway King Hakon had been busy subduing the land. He did not feel secure on his throne while his brother Eirik was alive, for he thought that at any moment he might invade the land with an army and try to win his kingdom back again. When, however, he heard that Eirik had fallen on the battlefield and that his sons had fled from England, he felt that the crown of Norway was indeed his own.

One summer, soon after Eirik's death, Hakon hearing that the Danes were plundering and causing much havoc in a district named Viken, set out with his troops to destroy them. But the Danes heard that King Hakon was coming, and they hastened to their long-ships and sailed out to sea. Hakon sailed after them with two of his cutters, and overtook them in the Sound.

Without a moment's delay he attacked them, and so bravely and so fiercely did his men fight that the king gained the victory, and clearing the decks of eleven ships, he captured them as his booty. Not content with this, King Hakon then carried the war into Denmark itself.

Now the King of Denmark was very angry with Hakon of Norway, because he had made war in his dominions, and he determined that Hakon should suffer for his insolence. He welcomed Gunnhild and her sons to his kingdom, giving them lands in which they and their followers might dwell. And that was the beginning of his revenge on King Hakon.

Eirik's sons grew up very strong and handsome men, and soon they were known all over the land as Vikings of great renown. Before they had been long in Denmark they went off on one of their cruises to Viken. Now King Harald had left King Trygve Olafsen to defend Viken, but he was vanquished and driven away by the sons of Eirik.

Meanwhile Hakon was not idle. He was doing all that he could to make the peasants and merchants less quarrelsome, so that both their lives and their goods might be safe.

He tried also to make his subjects forsake their heathen gods, and be baptized. It is true that in this the king did not succeed very well, yet his effort was the first of many which were afterwards made by the kings of Norway. And when at length the power of the White Christ conquered the old Pagan gods, then little by little the fierce old Viking spirit grew less fierce, their wild expeditions less wild, until they ceased altogether and the Viking age was ended.

But at first when Hakon came to Norway and saw the people sacrificing to their heathen gods, he said nothing, though he himself kept Sundays and fasted in private on Fridays and the chief holy days.

It was after Eirik's death, when he knew that Norway was indeed his own, that he made up his mind to try and make his subjects Christians. He began with his own friends, and

some of them did as the king wished and were baptized. Then King Hakon sent to England for a bishop and other teachers, and when they came the wild Norsemen heard of the gospel of peace. Churches were built and priests put into them, and then Hakon grew bolder still and summoned his people to a great Thing at Thronhjem. When they had assembled the king spoke thus to the people: "It is my wish that all, both great and small, young and old, rich and poor, women as well as men should allow themselves to be baptized, and should believe in one God and in Christ the Son of Mary, and refrain from all sacrifices to heathen gods, and should keep holy the seventh day and do no work on it, and keep a fast on the seventh day."

When the king's speech was ended, loud murmurs arose from the crowd, for many were angry that the king wished to take their old faith from them.

The leader of the peasants rose and answered for the others in these words: "We peasants, king, thought we were happy when thou didst make us owners of the land on which we dwelt. But now we know not what to think of these strange words which thou hast spoken, asking us to forsake the ancient faith which our fathers and forefathers have held from the oldest times. We have held thee so dear that we have allowed thee to rule and give laws to all the country, but thou, king, must only ask from us such things that we can obey thee in. If, however, thou wilt take up in this matter a high hand, and wilt try thy power and strength against us, then we peasants have resolved among ourselves to part with thee and take to ourselves some other chief, one who will allow us freely and safely to enjoy our old faith."

Then Earl Sigurd, a friend of the king, arose, and said, "It is the king's will to give way to you, the peasants, and never to lose your friendship."

"We desire that the king should offer a sacrifice," said the people, "as his father was wont to do," and soon after these words the Thing came to an end.

It was Earl Sigurd who took the king's place at the festivals where sacrifices were to be offered. But when the next harvest was over and the people met together, they complained because the king was not himself on the throne at this one of their most joyous festivals.

Sigurd saw that the people would not be denied, so he persuaded the king to come to the feast.

Then the people went into their temple, taking with them all kinds of cattle as well as horses. These were slaughtered and their blood was sprinkled with a brush over altars and over the temple walls, both inside and out. The people also were besprinkled.

In the middle of the temple floor a fire burned brightly, while over it hung huge goblets filled with the flesh of the animals. The goblets were sacred to the gods of victory, of peace, and of harvest.

Now when King Hakon was seated on the throne, Earl Sigurd took a goblet, blessed it, and drank before he handed it to the king. Hakon took the goblet from the earl, but before he drank he made over it the sign of the Cross. This sign disturbed the people, yet the feast ended in peace.

The following winter the king himself gave a feast at Yuletide. On the first day the people demanded that he should offer sacrifices, and while he hesitated they uttered threats of violence.

One again Sigurd entreated the king to yield to the wishes of the people, and at length he consented to eat some pieces of horse flesh, and this none but a heathen would do. He also drank from the goblets which the peasants offered to him without making over them the sign of the Cross.

But though the king did these things he was much displeased at being forced to do so to escape the anger of his people. When the feast was over he left Thronhjem. "Next time I come," he said, "it will be with strength of men-at-arms, to punish these peasants for their violence."

Summer came, and Hakon assembled a large army. Men said he was going to attack his subjects in Thronthjem. Be that as it may, he had no sooner embarked with his army than tidings reached him that Trygve Olafsen had been defeated and banished from Viken.

King Hakon, when he heard this, at once sent to Earl Sigurd and other chiefs to come to his aid against the sons of Eirik. Sigurd came, bringing with him a large army. Among the men were many of those who had forced Hakon to take part in the service of their gods. But these now made peace with the king and went with him against his foes. They sailed the seas in search of the enemy, and ere long they found the Viking long-ships. The battle, however, was fought on land.

Guthorm, one of Eirik's sons, met King Hakon on the battlefield, and they fought together until Guthorm fell; his standard-bearer was also cut down and the banner lost. When the Vikings saw that their leader had fallen they fled to the coast, embarked in their long-ships, and rowed away with great speed. King Hakon and his men also hastened to their ships and pursued the fugitives, but they escaped into Denmark.

Then King Hakon, rejoicing in his victory, returned to Norway and again began to look after the welfare of his people. He ordered that beacons should be placed on the highest hills as war-signals. And it is said that when these were lighted, from the most northerly one to the most southerly, it took but seven days for the whole land to be roused.

CHAPTER VII

HAKON IS WOUNDED

King Hakon had little peace during his reign, for again and again Eirik's sons came on Viking expeditions to Norway, and harried the country. After Hakon had reigned for twenty years they came against him, not only with their own Viking band, but with a large army of Danes, which had been given to them by the King of Denmark. By some mischance the enemy had left their ships and marched into Norway before the beacon fires were lighted to give warning of their approach. A peasant, however, hastened to the king to tell him that a great force had entered the country.

Then Hakon called together his wisest men and asked them if he should flee northward to gather an army large enough to withstand the enemy.

Among these wise men was an old peasant named Egil Ulserk. In the days of Harald Fairhair, Egil had been a sturdy standard-bearer and a "hardy man-at-arms withal." Now, though he was old and frail, he answered the king's words thus: "I was in several battles with thy father, Harald the king, and he gave battle sometimes with many, sometimes with few people, but he always came off the victor. Never did I hear him ask counsel of his friends whether he should fly, and neither shalt thou get any such counsel from us, king. But as we know we have a brave leader, thou shalt get a trusty following from us."

Hakon the king was well pleased with this speech, and at once split up a war-arrow which he sent throughout the country as a token that his warriors should hasten to him with all speed.

Egil Ulserk smiled grimly as he said, "At one time the peace had lasted so long I was afraid I might come to die the death of old age, within-doors, upon a bed of straw, although I

would rather fall in battle following my chief. And now it may turn out in the end as I wished it to be.”

The battle was fought in a large, flat field at the foot of a long ridge. Egil begged the king to give him ten men with ten banners, for the old man had a plan in his mind.

The combat was sharp, for Eirik’s sons had a much larger force than King Hakon. But when the battle was raging most fiercely, the Danish troops caught sight of banner after banner waving over the summit of the ridge. It seemed to them that a large army must be following the banners, and in a sudden panic lest it should cut them off from their ships, the troops turned and fled.

Gamle, one of Eirik’s sons, saw that the banners were but a device to startle his men, and he ordered his war-horn to be blown and his standard waved aloft in order to stay their flight. But while the Vikings, who had long fought under Gamle, answered to the battle-cry, the army of Danes fled to their ships. Egil’s ten banners had done the work he meant them to do.

Then Gamle marched toward the old standard-bearer, and fought with him until the old warrior fell with his men around him. At that moment Hakon rushed up and used his battle-axe so fiercely that the enemy was forced to give way.

When Eirik’s sons saw that their men were vanquished, they turned and fled to their ships, followed by those who had escaped from Hakon and his men. But when they reached the shore they found to their dismay that the Danes had pushed many of their ships out to sea, while the others lay high and dry on the beach. There was nothing left for them to do save to plunge into the sea and try to swim to the ships in which the Danes had set sail. But Gamle was drowned. Those Vikings who reached the ships sailed away and reached Denmark in safety.

King Hakon ordered that all the ships left by Eirik’s sons should be drawn up to the field of battle. In them were laid

Egil Ulserk, the brave old standard-bearer, and all those who had fallen with him. The ships were then covered with earth and stones, and the hillock or mound thus formed was marked by large upright stones.

Six years later Eirik’s sons came yet again to fight against Hakon, and once again the king was unprepared for battle. For he was feasting with his friends when his watchmen saw ships come sailing towards the island on which the king and his court were then dwelling.

It was not pleasant to have to disturb King Hakon while he was seated at the supper-table, but at length one of the watchmen stole in, and standing quietly before the king, he said, “short is the hour for acting and long the hour for feasting.”

Hakon at once sprang to his feet, for he knew that danger must be near, and, ordering the tables to be removed, he went to the door and looked out over the sea. As he gazed, long-ship after long-ship came into sight and sailed steadily toward the shore.

Then the king girded his sword to his side, on his head he placed his burnished helmet, and in his hands he bore his shield and spear. His men also speedily armed themselves and stood up in battle array.

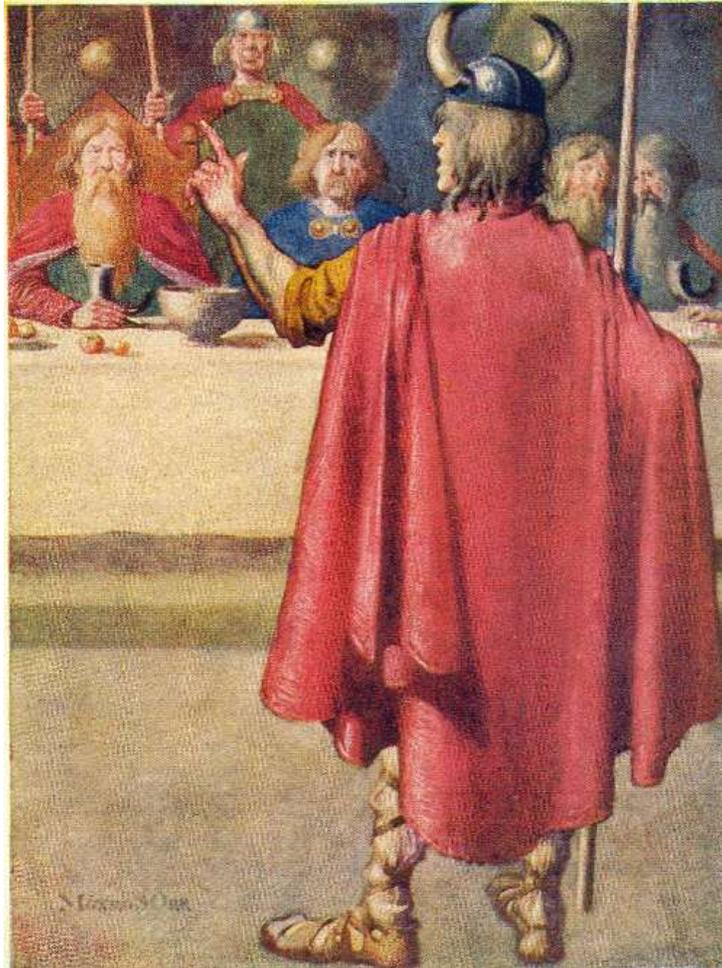
The enemy had landed, and led by King Harald, who was now the eldest of Eirik’s sons, approached Hakon’s small but determined force.

Hurling their spears, the two armies rushed upon each other with drawn swords. Hakon was always in the forefront of the fight, and the sun shone upon his helmet until it gleamed so bright that it became a target at which many weapons were aimed. But one of his men, seeing the king’s danger, covered the helmet, so that it shone no longer.

Then the enemy cried, “Does the King of the Norsemen hide himself, or has he fled?” Hakon heard the taunt and cried,

“Come on as ye are coming, and ye will find the King of the Norsemen.”

Swinging his battle-axe and rushing forward, one of the enemy smote at the spot from whence the king’s voice seemed to come, but the king’s guards thrust so hard at him that he fell back and Hakon was still unhurt.



SHORT IS THE HOUR FOR ACTING AND LONG THE HOUR FOR FEASTING.

But now a great rage came upon the king, and taking his sword in both hands, he cut down the enemy right and left. And

for fear of him, Harald, Eirik’s son, turned to flee, and still Hakon followed, slaughtering all whose path he crossed.

Then, so it is said, a little shoe-boy ran toward Hakon, crying, “Make room for the king-killer,” and as he cried, he drew his bow, and an arrow sped into the arm of the king. However that may be, amid all the weapons that were hurled at the king one did indeed wound him. Yet still both he and his men pursued the fugitives and killed many of them, while others escaped in their ships as quickly as was possible.

But now Hakon’s wound became very painful, and he went on board his ship to have it bound up. But the bleeding would not cease, and as the day drew to a close the king’s strength began to fail. He asked to be taken to his house, but when his men had sailed but a little way toward it, they were forced to turn and put in again to land, for the king was sinking fast.

Knowing that he must soon leave his land, Hakon called his friends around him and bade them send a message to Eirik’s sons, to tell them that they should now rule over Norway. For Hakon had no son to rule in his stead. “And if fate,” said the king, “should prolong my days, I will at any rate leave the country and go to a Christian land and do penance for what I have done against God; but should I die in heathen lands, give me any burial you think fit.”

Soon after these words King Hakon died, and many, both friends and enemies, sorrowed, for they said, “Never again shall we see such a king in Norway.”

His people buried him clad in armour. Though he had been baptized, they believed that their king would go to Valhalla, for he had been a brave warrior, nor had he ever destroyed the temples of the Gods.

CHAPTER VIII

EARL HAKON THE PAGAN

Now the sons of Eirik were glad when they heard that Hakon had made them rulers over Norway. King Harald, who was the eldest, sat on the throne and had more power than his brothers. Eirik's sons had been baptized in England, but they took little trouble to spread the Christian faith in Norway. Yet they pulled down the temples of the idols and forbade the people to offer sacrifices, and because of these things they were disliked by the people.

Moreover the sons of Eirik were greedy, and spent much money on their court, and wasted the goods of the subjects. Sometimes to increase their wealth King Harald and his brothers would go on Viking expeditions and gain much booty. For if they were greedy they certainly were not lazy, but fierce and active Vikings.

In the Thronhjelm district the brothers found that they had little power. For Earl Sigurd, who you remember was a great friend of King Hakon, had left a son named Hakon behind him when he fell in battle. This Earl Hakon refused to pay "scat" to Eirik's sons, and many of the people of Thronhjelm followed his example. For this reason, numerous battles were fought between Eirik's sons and the people of Thronhjelm.

The peasants and their crops suffered so greatly from this warfare that at length Eirik's sons and Earl Hakon agreed to live at peace with one another, and they took vows to do so before many witnesses. Thus for three years, from nine hundred and sixty-five until nine hundred and sixty-eight, there was peace in the district.

During these years trading vessels sailed from Iceland to Norway. Once an Icelander brought in his boat skins and furs which he hoped to sell, but no one in Norway seemed willing to

buy his merchandise. Then the merchant went to King Harald to tell him of his bad luck.

Now Harald was in a good-natured mood, and he promised himself to look at the furs. He took with him to the Icelander's boat a fully manned warship.

"Wilt thou give me one of these gray skins?" he said to the merchant when he had admired his goods.

"Willingly, king," answered the merchant. Then Harald wrapped himself up in the skin and went back to his ship.

Now in those days, as in these, the fashion was set by royalty. So every man, when he saw the king, was eager to have a gray skin too, and before Harald ordered the ship to be rowed homewards all on board had bought a skin from the merchant, who was now greatly pleased with his good fortune. From that day Harald was named Harald Grayskin.

King Harald was a great Viking, and not a summer passed without some great expedition being carried out in which he gained enormous booty. At length in nine hundred and sixty-eight he went, in spite of his vow, to fight against Earl Hakon in Thronhjelm.

Hakon, however, did not wait to meet him. Hearing of his approach, he plundered and wasted many districts in Norway and then sailed away to Denmark. Here, too, a king named Harald was ruling. He welcomed the earl and kept him in his realm all that winter.

In spring he sent a great army to Norway with Hakon, and in the battle that was fought Harald Grayskin was slain.

Norway was now subject to Harald of Denmark, and he gave part of the country to Earl Hakon that he might rule over it. Thus, though not a king in name, Hakon became a king in reality. The sons of Eirik who were still alive fled to the Orkney Islands, for since their brother Harald Grayskin's death Earl Hakon was stronger than they.

Like his father Sigurd, Hakon believed in the ancient gods. He journeyed through his dominions in Norway, commanding the people to restore the temples and offer sacrifices as of old. And the people rejoiced, and a time of good harvest followed. In the fiords that abounded round the coast the herring, too, were plentiful.

Five years later the Emperor Otto sent a message from Germany to the Danish King Harald, saying, "Thou, and the people thou dost rule, shalt take the true faith and be baptized, otherwise, I will march against thee with an army."

The King of Denmark was well content with his own faith, so instead of being baptized as the emperor commanded, he ordered the Danish wall to be fortified and the war-ships to be assembled. He also sent a message to Earl Hakon bidding him come to his help with all the men he could muster.

Hakon at once raised a great army, and he, with many other Viking chiefs, joined the Danish king.

Meanwhile the emperor prepared to carry out his threat; with a force gathered from Germany, France, and other countries, he marched into Denmark.

The defence of the Danish wall had been intrusted to Earl Hakon, and so well did he guard it that the emperor's hosts were forced to retreat without making a single breach in the rampart.

Then Earl Hakon went back to his ships, meaning to sail to Norway, but an unfavourable wind delayed him.

The emperor had in the meantime met the King of Denmark, and, after a fierce fight, had defeated him, and Harald was forced to flee.

A truce was, however, arranged, and the emperor and Harald met. The emperor brought with him a bishop, who after instructing Harald in the Christian faith, baptized both him and his whole army.

The king then sent for Earl Hakon and his men, and compelled them also to be baptized. This, as you know, would make Hakon, if not very sorry, at least very angry. When Hakon and his men had been baptized, Harald brought priests and other learned men to the earl, and bade him take them back to Norway, that they might teach the people the Christian faith.

Well, Earl Hakon concealed his wrath and marched away to his ships. The priests and learned men he took on board with him and his Viking crew. But when a fair wind arose and Hakon knew that he would be able to sail away to sea, he sent the priests and learned men back to land and sailed away without them.

He vented his wrath on Harald by plundering along the coast of Scania, which was part of Denmark. Then, still dissatisfied, he landed on a great rock, and there he offered a sacrifice to his gods. As he did so, two ravens flew past croaking loudly, and Hakon believed that they had been sent by Odin to tell him that his offering had been accepted. Thereupon he set fire to his ships, and with his army went all over Harald's realms, leaving behind him misery and ruin.

Otto, the emperor, and Harald of Denmark meanwhile became great allies. Nor did the king ever forsake the faith taught to him by the emperor.

After he had reigned eight years Harald was slain in battle against his own son. As for Earl Hakon, he grew more and more powerful, until at length he had sixteen earls under him. His fame was sung by many a skald, and here is one of their songs about this famous Viking.

"Who before has ever known
Sixteen earls subdued by one?
Who has seen all Norway's land
Conquered by one brave hero's hand?
It will be long in memory held
How Hakon ruled by sword and shield,
When tales at the Viking's mast go round,
His praise will in every mouth resound."

But though, during the first part of his reign, Hakon was a great favourite, in later years he grew cruel and harsh, so that his subjects refused to keep him as their king and drove him away from Thronthjem.

The old Sagas tell us that Hakon's misfortune was caused by his trust in the ancient gods, "for the time was come when heathen sacrifices and idol worship were doomed to fall, and holy faith and good customs to come in their place."

CHAPTER IX

THE SEA-FIGHT OF THE JOMSVIKINGS

While King Harald was reigning in Denmark, he built on the shores of the Baltic a fortress which he called Jomsborg. In this fortress dwelt a famous band of Vikings named the Jomsvikings. It is of one of their most famous sea-fights that I am going to tell you now.

The leader of the band was Earl Sigvald, and a bold and fearless leader he had proved himself. It was at a great feast that Sigvald made the rash vow which led to this mighty battle. After the horn of mead had been handed round not once or twice only, Sigvald arose and vowed that, before three winters had passed, he and his band would go to Norway and either kill or chase Earl Hakon out of the country.

In the morning Sigvald and his Jomsvikings perhaps felt that they had vowed more than they were able to perform, yet it was not possible to withdraw from the enterprise unless they were willing to be called cowards. They therefore thought it would be well to start without delay, that they might, if possible, take Earl Hakon unawares.

In a short time therefore the Jomsviking fleet was ready, and sixty warships sailed away toward Norway. No sooner did they reach Earl Hakon's realms than they began to plunder and burn along the coast. But while they gained booty, they lost time. For Hakon, hearing of their doings, at once split a war-arrow and sent it all over his realm.

It was in this way that Hakon heard that the Jomsvikings were in his land. In one village the Vikings had, as they thought, killed all the inhabitants. But unknown to them a man had escaped with the loss of his hand, and hastening to the shore he sailed away in a light boat in search of the earl.

Hakon was at dinner when the fugitive stood before him. "Art thou sure that thou didst see the Jomsvikings?" asked Hakon, when he had listened to the man's tidings.

For answer, the peasant stretched out the arm from which the hand had been sundered, saying, "Here is the token that the Jomsvikings are in the land."

It was then that Hakon sent the war-arrow throughout the land and speedily gathered together a great force. Eirik, one of his sons, also collected troops, but though the preparations for war went on apace, the Jomsvikings heard nothing of them, and still thought that they would take Earl Hakon by surprise.

At length the Vikings sailed into a harbour about twenty miles north of a town called Stad. As they were in want of food some of the band landed, and marched to the nearest village. Here they slaughtered the men who could bear arms, burned the houses, and gathering together all the cattle they could find, drove it before them toward the shore.

On the way to their ships, however, they met a peasant who said to them, "Ye are not doing like true warriors, to be driving cows and calves down to the strand, while ye should be giving chase to the bear, since ye are come near to the bear's den." By the bear the peasant meant Earl Hakon, as the Vikings well knew.

"What says the man?" they all cried together; "can he tell us about Earl Hakon?"

"Yesternight he lay inside the island that you can see yonder," said the peasant; "and you can slay him when you like, for he is waiting for his men."

"Thou shalt have all this cattle," cried one of the Vikings, "if thou wilt show us the way to the jarl."

Then the peasant went on board the Vikings' boat, and they hastened to Sigvald to tell him that the earl lay in a bay but a little way off.

The Jomsvikings armed themselves as if they were going to meet a large army, which the peasant said was unnecessary, as the earl had but few ships and men.

But no sooner had the Jomsvikings come within sight of the bay than they knew that the peasant had deceived them. Before them lay more than three hundred war-ships.

When the peasant saw that his trick was discovered he jumped overboard, hoping to swim to shore. But one of the Vikings flung a spear after him, and the peasant sank and was seen no more.

Now though the Vikings had fewer ships than Earl Hakon, they were larger and higher, and Sigvald hoped that this would help them to gain the victory.

Slowly the fleets drew together and a fierce battle began. At first Hakon's men fell in great numbers, for the Jomsvikings fought with all their wonted strength. So many spears also were aimed at Hakon himself that his armour was split asunder and he threw it aside.

When the earl saw that the battle was going against him, he called his sons together and said, "I dislike to fight against these men, for I believe that none are their equals, and I see that it will fare ill with us unless we hit upon some plan. Stay here with the host and I will go ashore and see what can be done."

Then the jarl went into the depths of a forest, and, sinking on his knees, he prayed to the goddess Thorgerd. But when no answer came to his cry, Hakon thought she was angry, and to appease her wrath he sacrificed many precious things to her. Yet still the goddess hid her face.

In his despair Hakon then promised to offer human sacrifices, but no sign was given to him that his offering would be accepted.

"Thou shalt have my son, my youngest son Erling!" cried the king, and then at length, so it seemed to Hakon, Thorgerd was satisfied. He therefore gave his son, who was but

seven years old, to his thrall, and bade him offer the child as a sacrifice to the goddess.

Then Hakon went back to his ships, and lo! as the battle raged, the sky began to grow dark though it was but noon, and a storm arose and a heavy shower of hail fell. The hail was driven by the wind in the faces of the Vikings, and flashes of lightning blinded them and loud peals of thunder made them afraid. But a short time before the warriors had flung aside their garments because of the heat; now the cold was so intense that they could scarce hold their weapons.

While the storm raged, Hakon praised the gods and encouraged his men to fight more fiercely. Then, as the battle went against them, the Jomsvikings saw in the clouds a Troll or fiend. In each finger the Troll held an arrow, which, as it seemed to them, always hit and killed a man.

Sigvald saw that his men were growing fearful, and he, too, felt that the gods were against them. "It seems to me," he said, "that it is not men whom we have to fight to-day but fiends, and it requires some manliness to go boldly against them."

But now the storm abated, and once more the Vikings began to conquer. Then the earl cried again to Thorgerd, saying that now he deserved victory, for he had sacrificed to her his youngest son.

Then once more the storm-cloud crept over the sky and a terrific storm of hail beat upon the Vikings, and now they saw, not in the clouds, but in Hakon's ship, two Trolls, and they were speeding arrows among the enemies of Hakon.

Even Sigvald, the renowned leader of the Jomsvikings, could not stand before these unknown powers. He called to his men to flee, for, said he, "we did not vow to fight against fiends, but against men."

But though Sigvald sailed away with thirty-five ships, there were some of his men who scorned to flee even from fiends. Twenty-five ships stayed behind to continue the fight.

The Viking Bui was commander of one of these. His ship was boarded by Hakon's men, whereupon he took one of his treasure-chests in either hand and jumped into the sea. As he jumped he cried, "Overboard, all Bui's men," and neither he nor those who followed him were ever seen again.

Before the day was ended, Sigvald's brother had also sailed away with twenty-four boats, so that there was left but one boat out of all the Jomsvikings' fleet. It was commanded by the Viking Vagn.

Earl Hakon sent his son Erik to board this boat, and after a brave fight it was captured, for Vagn's men were stiff and weary with their wounds, and could scarce wield their battle-axes or spears.

With thirty-six of his men Vagn was taken prisoner and brought to land, and thus Earl Hakon had defeated the famous Vikings of Jomsborg. The victory was due, as Hakon at least believed, to the aid of the goddess Thorgerd.

When the weapons and other booty which they had taken had been divided among the men, Earl Hakon and his chiefs sat down in their warbooths and appointed a man named Thorkel to behead the prisoners.

Eighteen were beheaded ere the headsman came to Vagn. Now, as he had a dislike to this brave Viking, Thorkel rushed at him, holding his sword in both hands. But Vagn threw himself suddenly at Thorkel's feet, whereupon the headsman tripped over him. In a moment Vagn was on his feet, Thorkel's sword in his hand, and before any one could stop him he had slain his enemy.

Then Earl Eirik, Hakon's son, who loved brave men, said, "Vagn, wilt thou accept life?"

"That I will," said the bold Viking, "if thou give it to all of us who are still alive."

“Loose the prisoners!” cried the young earl, and it was done. Thus of the famous band of Jomsvikings twelve yet lived to do many a valiant deed in days to come.

CHAPTER X

KING OLAF TRYGVESON

When the people of Norway drove Earl Hakon from his dominions they chose Olaf, son of Trygve, to rule over them. Trygve, you remember, was the king who had been driven from Viken by Eirik’s sons. King Olaf was a brave warrior, and on his Viking expeditions he allied himself with many Norsemen who had settled in the British Isles.

When he began to rule over Norway in 995 Olaf was a heathen, and he plundered many monasteries and churches. But on one of his expeditions the king met a hermit, and was persuaded by him to give up his heathen ways and to be baptized.

The hermit, so King Olaf was told, could foretell what would come to pass, and had indeed a wonderful knowledge of many things. Olaf made up his mind to test the hermit’s power. He dressed the most handsome and strongest of his men in his own royal clothes, and sent him to the hermit, bidding him pretend to be King Olaf. And as King Olaf was a very handsome and strong man the disguise was complete.

Yet the holy man was not deceived. “Thou art not the king,” he said to the warrior who came to him clothed in the royal robes; “thou art not the king, but I advise thee to remain faithful to him.”

When Olaf heard what the hermit had said, he went himself to see him. And it was then that the king was baptized and gave up his heathen customs.

Olaf returned to Norway determined to make it Christian or to die in the attempt. He called together a Thing, and as King Hakon had done many years before, he begged the people to give up sacrificing to the gods and to be baptized.

But at his words the murmurs of the people arose even as they had done in the olden days.

A peasant, named Skegge, speaking in the name of all the peasants, said, “We do not wish, king, to give up our ancient faith. We want thee to offer sacrifices to the gods as other kings before thee have done.”

Then Olaf said that he would go with them into the temple of their gods to see them offer sacrifices, and this pleased the peasants well. With a few of his men-at-arms and a small number of the people the king therefore entered the temple. There, before him, he saw the image of Thor, the god of battle, adorned with both gold and silver.

Olaf was carrying a heavy axe inlaid with gold. Suddenly he raised it, and, to the dismay of the peasants, struck their god Thor down from his seat, so that he rolled along the ground. For one awful moment there was silence, but Thor lay in the dust, powerless to avenge himself. Then the king’s men threw all the other gods from their places, and while this was being done within the temple, without its walls Skegge, the leader of the peasants, was slain.

Then Olaf left the temple, and again he spoke to the people, bidding them either be baptized or prepare to fight against him.

But their leader had been slain, and the people were too weak to band themselves together against a king who was so fearless as to throw the ancient gods down from their seats. They were therefore baptized; and gave the king hostages that they would be true to the new faith. And now, on all his Viking expeditions, Olaf forced the people he subdued to be baptized. He also left behind him teachers of the new faith, and thus, little by little, the teaching of the White Christ spread over the land.



OLAF STRUCK THEIR GOD THOR DOWN FROM HIS SEAT.

Iceland had been discovered long before now, and as many Norsemen dwelt there, Olaf sent a priest thither. But the inhabitants and the settlers in Iceland both refused to listen to the priest or to give up their old faith and be baptized. Thereupon the priest sailed back again to Norway and told the king that the people would not listen to his teaching.

Then King Olaf was very angry, and summoned all the Icelanders who dwelt in Norway to his presence. They should be killed, for they were as foolish as their friends, and had never been baptized.

But some of the bravest of the Icelanders spoke these words, “King, thou must not fall from thy words, that however much a man may anger thee, if he turn from his heathenism thou wilt forgive him. All the Icelanders here are willing to be baptized, and through them we may find means to bring Christianity into Iceland.”

When King Olaf heard these wise words, he forgot his anger, while the Icelanders were at once baptized.

As the people of Norway slowly changed their old faith for the new, other changes also crept into their land.

The Vikings had always been merchants as well as warriors, and sometimes in the old burial-mounds weights and scales were found, as well as swords and spears. But now their trade with foreign countries grew greater, and Olaf founded a merchants’ town which was at first called Hauptstad, but which afterwards became the town we know as Thronhjelm.

Olaf also encouraged his people to build warships, which were stronger and more seaworthy than their old long-boats. The Serpent, built by King Olaf himself, was the finest warship in the land, until he built the Long Serpent, which was even stronger and larger.

For five years Olaf reigned and laboured for the good of his country. Then in the year 1000, as he fought at sea, the battle went against him, and Olaf threw aside his armour and dived under the ships. Many people believed he reached land safely, but be that as it may, he was never again seen in Norway.

After he was drowned, as is most probable, Earl Eirik of Denmark, with his brother, ruled over Norway for fourteen years.

While Eirik ruled, the people of Norway followed either the old faith or the new, as pleased them best, while all the laws and customs of the land were kept as in the age of their forefathers.

CHAPTER XI

KING OLAF THE SAINT

The next King of Norway reigned for fifteen years. He also was called Olaf, and was of royal birth. Olaf Haraldson, or Saint Olaf, the name by which he is better known, was brought up by his foster-father, Hrane The Far-travelled.

He was a beautiful boy, with light brown hair, piercing eyes, and cheeks that were always pink and white. Before he was very old he had learned to handle a sword, throw a spear, and string a bow. He was very skilful at the forge, and could shape and temper weapons as well as any smith.

When the lad was twelve years old Hrane took him on a Viking expedition. No sooner had he stepped on board the long-ship than the boy was chosen captain of the band, and given the title of king. This was because he was of royal birth, though at that time he had neither land nor subjects over which to rule.

The first battle the lad fought was with another band of Vikings off the coast of Sweden.

Olaf's ships were larger than those of his enemy in this his first battle, but there were fewer of them. The lad, however, ordered his ships to be laid between two rocks, so that it would be difficult for the enemy to reach his fleet. As they approached slowly in single file, Olaf's men threw out grappling irons, and drawing one ship at a time close to their own vessels, they jumped on board and speedily cleared the decks. The enemy soon saw that they were worsted, and those who could took to flight.

Between the year 1009 and 1012 Olaf was in England helping King Ethelred against the Danes. To his care was intrusted the defence of the coast, and he sailed up and down

with many warships proving a terrible foe to other Vikings who came to England in search of booty.

But it was not only in England that this brave warrior fought. In the Baltic, in Friesland, in France, and in many other far-off countries his name was known and dreaded. Fifteen of his expeditions are described in the old Sagas, but of these I must not stop to tell you.

It was not surprising that the people of Norway, as they heard of Olaf's prowess, thought that here was a fitting king to rule over them. Moreover, they wished to have a ruler of their own, and to throw off their allegiance to Denmark. Thus in 1015 Olaf was chosen at a great Thing to be King of Norway.

Now Svein of Denmark had come to England and wrested the kingdom from Ethelred the Unready, as he was called. He had even been proclaimed king, but before he had sat on the English throne he died, leaving the kingdom to his son Knut, who now became King of Denmark. Knut was Olaf's great rival.

When his father died, Knut came to England to find Ethelred the Unready had gathered together an army, and with his son Edmund Ironside, was prepared to fight to regain the English crown.

But soon after this Ethelred died, and then Knut and Edmund Ironside agreed to divide the land between them. Edmund ruled in the south, while Knut reigned over the north of England. Knut married Ethelred's Queen, Emma, and had two sons, named Harald and Hardaknut.

Though he was now king of two countries, Knut's ambition was not yet satisfied. He wished to be king of a third country, of Norway, where Olaf was reigning. So in 1026 he fitted out a fleet, with larger and more formidable vessels than had ever before been seen, and sailed away to his realm of Denmark. Here he collected more men and more vessels, and set out to fight against Olaf, and if it might be, to take from him his crown.

Olaf heard of the great army that was coming against him and he also assembled an army, but in the great battle that was fought Olaf was defeated. Then finding himself forsaken by his subjects, Olaf wished to sail away to the Holy Land. As he lay in a harbour waiting for a fair wind, he had a dream, and he, like other Norsemen, believed that dreams were sent to him by the gods.

As he slept, Olaf saw a man with a very noble countenance, who asked him not to forsake his country. "Go back, for thou wilt be king over Norway for ever," said the man.

When Olaf awoke and remembered his dream, he made up his mind to do as the man had said, and instead of sailing to the Holy Land he returned to Norway. He did not, however, wrest the kingdom again from Knut, but was slain on the battlefield in 1030.

After his death wonderful tales were told of Olaf. Around the sandhill where he was buried many miracles were wrought. For a beautiful well of water sprang up, and those who were infirm or sick came to drink of the healing stream and were cured. Even in his lifetime the touch of the king had been said to banish disease.

When the tidings of the miracles wrought at the well spread, the king's body was lifted and carried to Saint Clement's, a church which he himself had built in Thronthjem, and henceforth King Olaf was called Olaf the Saint.

He left behind him a son named Magnus.

CHAPTER XII

KING MAGNUS

Knut was now, as you know, King of England, Denmark, and Norway. As he was much in England his Danish subjects grew discontented, and in his absence they made his son Hardaknut king. In Norway also the people grew rebellious, and five years after Saint Olaf's death, his son, Magnus the Good, sat on the throne and was proclaimed king by the voice of the people.

One year later, in 1036, Knut died, and his eldest son Harald was crowned king.

Meanwhile Magnus the Good set out on an expedition against Hardaknut, King of Denmark. But no battle was fought, for when the two kings met they made peace with one another, on the strange condition that, whichever king should live longest, should become ruler over both Denmark and Norway.

Now when in 1040 King Harald, Knut's eldest son, died, Hardaknut became King of England as well as of Denmark. He did not, however, live long to enjoy his power, for he died two years later, leaving no children. After his death, Edward, called the Good, one of Ethelred's sons who had been banished from England by Knut, was chosen as king.

By the strange agreement made between Magnus and Hardaknut, Magnus now claimed Denmark as his own, and the people willingly took oaths of fealty to this good king. One strongly-built fortress, however, refused to acknowledge him. This was the famous Jomsborg citadel inhabited by the famous Jomsvikings.

Magnus with a large army set out to destroy this stronghold, and bravely as it was defended, he succeeded in rasing it to the ground.

Now that Jomsborg was destroyed, Magnus had peace in both Denmark and Norway, and his thoughts turned to England. It seemed to him that as Hardaknut had ruled over that country, it, as well as Denmark, should belong to him.

He therefore sent messengers to England with a letter for King Edward. This is what Magnus the Good had written:—

“It is likely that you have heard of the treaty made between me and Hardaknut, that the one who lived after the other was dead should possess the land and subjects of the other. Now it has happened, as I know you have heard, that I have inherited the Danish realm after Hardaknut. He owned, when he died, England no less than Denmark. Now I claim England to be mine by lawful agreement. I want thee to give up thy realm to me, or else I will take it with the help of a host both from Denmark and Norway. He who gets the victory will then rule both lands.”

When Edward had read this letter he sent back a gentle answer to Magnus, telling him that it was by the will of the people that he had been made King of England. “While I had no king’s name,” he said, “I served my chiefs, not prouder than those who were born to rule. Now I have been consecrated as king, and that name will I not give up while I live. If Magnus comes hither with his host, I will not gather a host against him. He can then take England, and put me first to death. Tell him these words of mine.”

What the Norsemen thought of this answer we do not know, but they went back to Norway and told King Magnus all that Edward had said.

As you listen to the words which King Magnus spoke after he had heard Edward’s message, you will feel that the fierce Viking spirit was indeed growing less fierce, and that the rough Viking age was indeed drawing towards its close.

“I think,” said Magnus slowly, “I think it is most just and best to let Edward have his realm in peace for me and keep this which God has given me.”

Yet Magnus the Good was not always thus gentle and forbearing. Often the fierce Viking spirit would blaze up in his heart, and he would give battle to the foe fiercely as any of his forefathers had done.

For a short time after his messenger had returned from England, a great pagan army from the shores of the Baltic marched into Denmark. King Magnus had with him but a small force, yet he determined to risk a battle. The war-trumpets were sounded, and his men drawn up in battle array. But night fell, and the enemy not being yet in sight, Magnus bade his men rest on the ground under their shields.

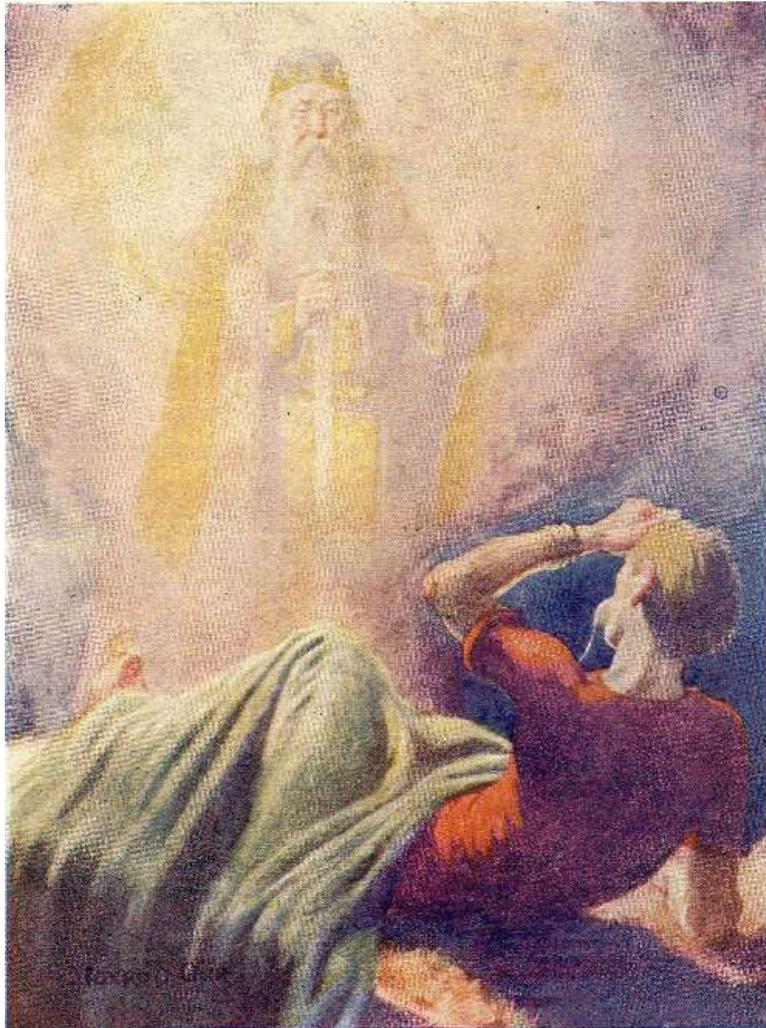
He himself could not rest, but walked up and down all night chanting his prayers, fearing lest he should be forced to flee before the enemy. Toward dawn, worn out by anxiety, the king went to his tent and fell asleep. As he slept, he dreamed that his father, Saint Olaf, stood before him, and said, “Art thou so melancholy and sad because a heathen army come against thee? Be not afraid of them though they be many, for I shall be with thee in the battle. Prepare therefore to fight when thou hearest my trumpet.”

In the morning the king awoke greatly refreshed, and calling his men together, he told them of his dream. At that moment a peal of bells rang clearly on the air, and those who heard it said, “It is the bell called ‘Glod,’ which Saint Olaf gave to the church of Saint Clement in Thronhjelm.”

Sure now of victory, Magnus ordered the trumpets to sound, and, even as the blast re-echoed on the air, the army of the heathen came into sight, a mighty host.

Then King Magnus flung aside his coat of mail, and clad only in a red silk shirt he led his men toward the foe. In his hand he held the battle-axe called “Death,” which had belonged to his father, King Olaf.

So great was the king’s zeal, that he far outstripped his men, and was in the midst of the enemy before them, hewing down with his battle-axe all who came against him.



HE DREAMED THAT HIS FATHER SAINT OLAF STOOD BEFORE HIM.

But the men, spurred on by the king's courage, were soon in the thick of the fight, and so fierce were they, that ere long the heathen lay strewn upon the beach. Those who could, turned to flee, but Magnus pursued them across the heath. Terrible was the slaughter that day, and the old Sagas say that never since the old faith had been overturned had there been so great a battle in Northern land.

Few of Magnus's men were killed, but great numbers were wounded, nor were there enough doctors to care for the sufferers. Magnus himself, therefore, went among those who were whole, feeling the palms of their hands. He chose twelve of these, whose hands were soft, and bade them bind up the wounds of their comrades.

Magnus the Good reigned for twelve years, and was much beloved by his people. When he died in 1047 there was great sorrow throughout his realms.

CHAPTER XIII

HARALD HARDRADA

After the death of Magnus the Good, Saint Olaf's brother, Harald Hardrada, became king over all Norway.

When he was but fifteen years of age he fought in a battle by his brother Olaf's side. But as the war-trumpet sounded, Olaf had looked at the lad and said, "I do not think it is right for my brother Harald to be in the battle, for he is a child."

But Harald had even then the spirit for which he became famous as a man. He heard his brother's words and cried aloud, "I shall certainly be in the battle, but if I am so weak that I cannot wield the sword, I know what to do. My hand shall be tied to the hilt, and no man shall have a better will to do harm to the enemy."

After he had spoken there had been none to gainsay the lad, and he had fought, and won for himself great renown.

Here is what the old Chronicles say about Harald Hardrada when he grew to be a man:

"He surpassed other men in wisdom and sagacity whether a thing was to be done quick or in a long time, for himself or for others. He was more weapon-bold than any man. He was handsome and majestic-looking, with auburn hair, an auburn beard, and long moustaches. One eyebrow was a little higher up than the other, and he had large arms and legs well-shaped. His measure was more than six foot. He was cruel toward his foes, and punished all offences severely. He gave his friends great gifts when he liked them well. He lived fifty years, and, from the age of fifteen, uproar and war were his pastime. His expeditions were perhaps more frequent than those of any other Viking in earlier times. He swept over the shores of the Mediterranean to the land of the Turks, to Africa, Sicily, Italy,

Greece, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Bulgaria. He took part in more than eighty battles, and his life ended at the famous battle of Stamford Bridge."

Harald's wisdom was shown in a strange way at Sicily, where he was laying siege to a strongly fortified town. Growing impatient because he could not make a breach in the wall, he thought of a plan by which he could speedily reduce the town to ashes. He had noticed, with those sharp eyes of his which nothing seemed to escape, that sparrows flew out of the besieged town every day to feed in the fields, and at night flew back again to their nests in the thatched roofs of the houses.

The king ordered that a great number of these sparrows should be caught, and lighted sticks tied to their tails. No sooner did the sparrows feel the flames than they flew in terror home to their nests, and the thatched roofs of the houses were soon in a blaze. As the fire spread rapidly, the whole town was soon destroyed, and the inhabitants were at the mercy of Harald Hardrada.

The last great battle in which Harald took part was fought in England at Stamford Bridge.

When Edward the Good died in 1066 his foster-child Harold was proclaimed king. Harold was the son of Godwin, the most powerful earl in England.

As Edward lay in bed, Harold had bent over him to hear his last words. Then, drawing himself up, he had turned to those who stood in the royal chambers, saying, "I take you all to witness that the king has now given me the kingdom and all the realms of England."

It was for this reason, and because they knew Harold Godwin to be both brave and wise, that the people of England placed the crown upon his head, and shouted, "God save King Harold!"

But among the courtiers was one who scowled and muttered bitterly to himself as he heard the shouts of the people. Earl Tostig, Harold's eldest brother, thought that he had

as much right to reign as Harold, and in his wrath he stirred up others to speak against the new king.

Harold, hearing of his brother's discontent, and knowing that he could not be trusted, took from him the command of the army, which post he had held while Edward was alive.

Then Earl Tostig left England with his followers and went over the seas to the King of Denmark, and invited him to come to England and take the crown from Harold. But the Viking spirit was not alive in the King of Denmark, and he feared to undertake so great an expedition.

Earl Tostig then went to Harald Hardrada, and had little trouble in persuading him to come to England. For Harald Hardrada was a Viking at heart and loved adventure, and also he was ambitious and loved to rule.

Harald of Norway then at once gathered together a fleet, and when a fair wind arose, he sailed with a great army to the coasts of Northumberland. But as they sailed, Harald was haunted by dreams and evil omens. One night his men could not sleep, for the air around them was full of songs. At first the sailors could see no one; then, as they looked aloft, they saw a witch riding on a wolf in the air. She had a chest on her knees, and it was filled with bones. Three staves did she sing, and this was one of the staves the sailors heard:

"Westward ho, with noise and rattle,
Rushes on the King to battle;
Helter-skelter, hurry-scurry,
"Tis for me they waste and worry.
Soon my raven's darling brood
Will fatten on their dainty food,
Tit-bits torn from sailors stricken.
Where I am disasters thicken,
Where I am disasters thicken."

Harald also saw the witch and heard her terrible song. "I have been in many battles," said the bold Viking, "and never

have I seen such tokens before." But Earl Tostig laughed at his fears.

When his soldiers had landed in England, the king, however, flung aside his fears and led them bravely on. Not far from York they were met by the Earl of Morcar with a large force. So severe was the Norsemen's assault, that the English gave way before them. Those who escaped the sword fled to the castle in York.

King Harald then advanced to take York. But the townsfolk had heard of the victory which Harald Hardrada had won without their walls, and they sent heralds to the Norse king offering to surrender themselves and their town.

It was therefore agreed that the next Sunday Harald Hardrada should assemble a Thing and speak to the people. Sunday dawned, and the king held a meeting outside the walls of York. The townspeople were quiet, and promised to serve him; they even gave the Norse Harald, as hostages, the sons of their chief men.

Harald of Norway had forgotten all about his evil omens now. York had been won right easily, and so, he began to believe, would all England. In a merry mood he went down to his ships and feasted with his men.

Meanwhile tidings had reached Harold, King of England, that a great host of Norsemen had entered the land, and that with them was his brother Tostig.

The king at once gathered together a large army and marched to York. When he reached the city, the people, heedless of their vows to Harald Hardrada, flung their gates wide, and King Harold of England entered in with his army amid the shouts of the citizens. Then the gates were closed, the roads guarded, so that the Norsemen might not hear that the King of England had reached York.

Early next day Harald Hardrada divided his men into two companies. One company should stay to guard the ships, the other should march into York in triumph with their king.

The sun shone so hotly that the Norsemen marched without armour, but they carried with them their shields and arms.

As they drew near to the town, the Norsemen saw great clouds of dust in the distance, and soon the sun glinted on the shields and armour of a great host.

An armed force was before them, but was it as friend or foe that it came?

Harald Hardrada called a halt, and asked Earl Tostig what the host might be.

Tostig saw that the army was led by his brother Harold. He therefore begged Harald to hasten back to his ships that the men might put on their armour, and also that those who had been left to guard the ships might join in the approaching battle.

But the king refused to do this. "I will follow another plan," he said; "I will put three brave men on the swiftest horses and let them ride to our men as fast as they can, and tell them what has happened. Their aid will soon come, for the English will have a hard fight before we are defeated."

Then Harald drew up his men in battle array, and as he rode before them on a large black horse, the animal suddenly stumbled, and the king was thrown forward over its head. Getting up in haste, he cried, "A fall bodes a lucky journey!" and this, he said, lest his men should count it an evil omen.

But as he fell the English king caught sight of the tall figure of Harald Hardrada, and he said to his men, "Do you know the tall man with the blue kirtle and the fine helmet who fell from his horse?"

"It is the King of Norway himself," they answered.

Then said the English Harold, "He is a tall and noble-looking man, but nevertheless it is likely that his fall forebodes misfortune."

A few moments later three men rode up to the Norseman and asked to speak to Earl Tostig. One of the men wore a gilded helmet and carried a red shield on which was engraved a gold hawk. It was he who spoke to the earl. "Harold, thy brother," he said, "sends thee greeting, and the message that thou shalt have peace and all Northumberland, and rather than that thou shouldst not join him, he will give thee one-third of all his kingdom."

"If I accept these terms, what will my brother Harold offer to the King of Norway?" asked Tostig.

"To Harald Hardrada," said the stranger, "will he grant a space of seven feet of earth, and it is so long because he is taller than other men."

It was but ground enough in which to bury him that Harold of England would give to the king who had invaded his realm and brought war upon his people.

But Tostig would not forsake the man he had persuaded to come to England, and he said, "Go, tell my brother Harold to prepare for battle. It shall not be said by Northmen that Earl Tostig forsook the King of Norway for his foes."

Now Harald of Norway had listened to the stranger's words. "Who is he who spoke so well?" he asked.

"It was the King of England himself," answered the earl, for indeed he had known all the while that it was his own brother who was speaking. But he had given no sign, lest Harold's life should be in danger from the fierce Norsemen.

Soon after this the battle began. The English rode down upon the Norsemen only to find themselves met by the spears of the enemy. Then they rode round in a circle, but the Vikings had their bows ready, and shot at them from all sides until the English were forced to ride back.

Thinking that the English were fleeing, the Norsemen broke their ranks and pursued them. This was what the English

had hoped for, and at once they turned and charged again up to the foe, brandishing their battle-axes.

When Harald Hardrada saw his men falling on all sides, he rushed forward and fought where the fray was fiercest—with the strength of ten men he fought. The Englishmen were on the point of retreating when an arrow hit Harald Hardrada in the throat.

It was his death-wound, and the brave Viking fell, surrounded by his men, who fought but the more fiercely when they saw their leader fall.

When Earl Tostig saw that Harald had fallen, he seized the standard and led the Norsemen on to a desperate struggle, until the trumpets were blown that both armies might rest.

Harold of England now once again offered peace to Tostig, his brother, and quarter to all those Norsemen who were still alive. But they, hearing his offer, spurned it, and cried out that they would rather die than accept life from an enemy.

Then once again the battle raged, and Tostig fell wounded to death. At that moment, when the Norsemen were left without a leader, their comrades who had been left to guard the ships reached them. They had, however, come in such haste, that they were already exhausted before they began to fight, and soon they were at the mercy of the English. Harold, King of England, had gained the victory, but at the cost of many lives.

With the death of Harald Hardrada the Viking age ended—the age of daring and of wild adventure. It is true that from time to time there were still flashes of the old spirit, but as the years rolled on the wars of the Norsemen became less formidable, their adventures less perilous.

A year after the battle of Stamford Bridge, the body of Harald Hardrada was taken to Norway and buried in Thronhjelm, in a church which he himself had built.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DISCOVERIES OF THE VIKINGS

The love of adventure drove many Vikings across the sea in search, not only of treasures of gold and silver, but in search of new lands.

Iceland was thus discovered by a Viking named Naddod in 861. He called the island Snowland, because the mountains were covered with snow. When he went back to Norway and told people of the land he had discovered, a Viking named Gardar thought he, too, would go in search of Snowland. When he found it, he was much pleased with the great forests which stretched from the mountains to the shore. For one winter Gardar dwelt in Snowland, then he went back to Norway, and as the people listened to his tales of the new country, they began to call it Gardar's island.

Six years later Floki, another Viking, reached the island. Floki climbed the peak of a mountain, and whichever way he looked he saw large blocks of drifting ice, and it was then that he called Gardar's isle Iceland, by which name it has ever since been known.

None of these men, Naddod, Gardar, or Floki, settled in this new country. It was three years later, in 870, that Ingolf and Leif, two foster-brothers, fled from Norway, where Harald Fairhair was then ruling, and settled in Iceland. The brothers were soon followed by other Vikings who had taken refuge from Harald's tyranny in the British Isles, but had been hunted out of their refuges there by the Norse king.

About one hundred years later the descendants of these Iceland settlers set out in search of yet other countries.

Thorvald and his son Eirik the Red were the first Norsemen to discover Greenland. Being banished from Iceland, Thorvald sailed westward until he found a new land, where he

settled with his men. For two years he stayed there, journeying across the island and giving names to many mountains and fiords. The country itself Thorvald called Greenland, for he thought that if it had so pleasant a name, many men would wish to visit it.

At the end of two years Thorvald went back to Iceland and told Red Eirik, his son, about the country he had discovered. The following summer Eirik got ready his ship, and when it was well manned he set sail for Greenland, and dwelt there ever after.

Others, when they heard that Red Eirik had settled in Greenland, also prepared to follow him to this new country. But though thirty-five ships set out at different times on the perilous voyage between Iceland and Greenland, only fourteen ever reached the new country. Some of the ships were driven back by storm and wind to Iceland, others foundered in the heavy seas and were seen no more.

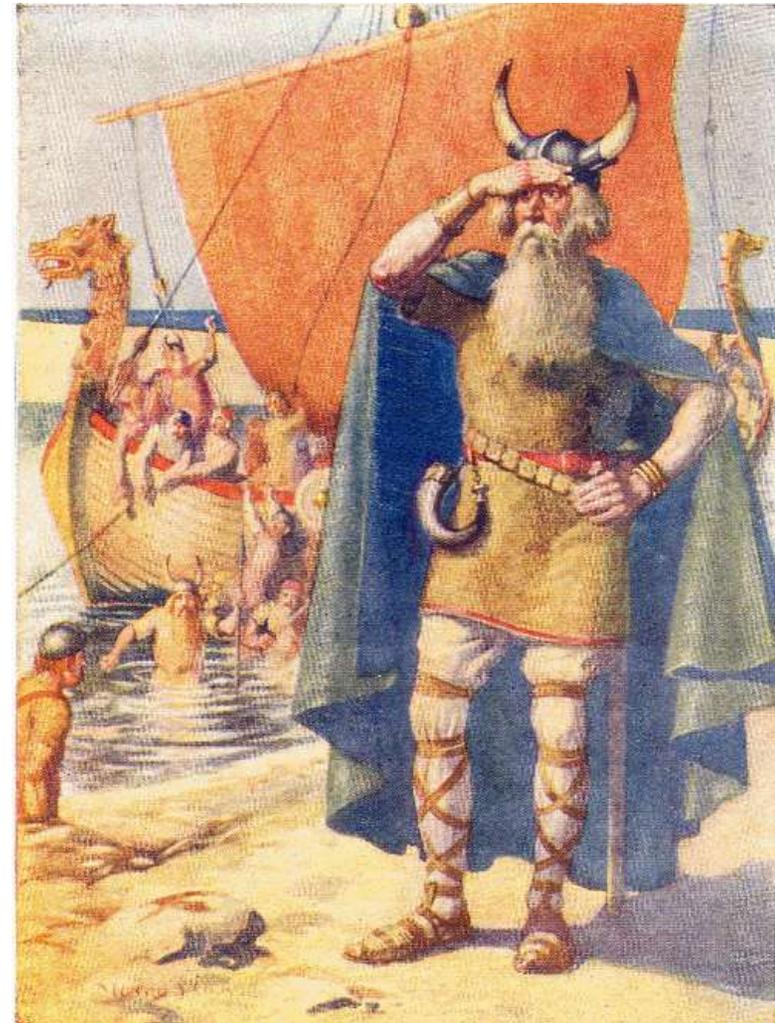
And now listen to the greatest discovery of these bold sea-roving Vikings. You have been told that Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492, but long years before, in 986, the Vikings had found this great continent.

A band of sea-roving Vikings, on their way to Greenland, were driven out of their way by a great storm, and sighted strange lands. They did not stay to explore these countries, but when, some years later, they were in Norway, they told the people that they had seen them.

Then Leif, a son of Red Eirik, manned a vessel and said that he would sail to these strange lands. Among his crew was a man named Tyrker, who had come from the south.

One morning, when the sea was calm, Leif and his men came to an island lying north of a large tract of land. As they sailed up a channel toward the mainland their vessel ran aground, for it was ebb-tide. Leif and his crew were too eager to go ashore to wait till the tide had turned and floated their ship, so they leaped out on to the beach. Here a river flowed out

of a lake into the sea. When their ship was once more floating with the tide, the men towed it up the river into this lake. There, by the side of the lake, the Vikings built booths in which they might dwell until they had built larger houses. There was no need to build barns, for the climate was so warm, and the land so fruitful, that the cattle were able to live and also to find food in the forests and plains.



LEIF AND HIS CREW LEAPED OUT ON TO THE BEACH.

To the Icelanders it seemed strange that during the winter months there was no frost to nip the grass or trees, which were almost as green then as in summer. Day and night, too, were divided more equally in this country than in Greenland or Iceland.

In the lake and the river Leif found salmon larger than any he had seen before, and these they caught and used for food.

When at length their houses were built, Leif divided his men into two parties, one to explore the country, the other to guard the houses.

One evening when the explorers came home, Tyrker, the man from the south, was missing. Leif at once set out with twelve men to seek for his lost comrade. They had gone but a short way, however, when they saw him coming toward them. "I have news for you!" he cried. "I have found a vine and grapes. I know them well, for I was born where grapes were never lacking."

From that day Leif and his men began to load their ship with grapes and timber, and when this was done, they sailed back to Greenland. Leif named the country Vinland, because of the vines which grew there. Now Vinland was really North America.

When Leif reached Greenland with his shipload of grapes and timber, his brother Thorvald thought he, too, would like to see so fruitful a land as Vinland. He therefore got ready a ship and a crew of thirty men, and sailed away on his perilous voyage. He reached Vinland in safety, and for a time dwelt in the booths which Leif had built.

As he journeyed here and there throughout the land, he came one day to a sandy beach on which he saw footprints. As he gazed at these in astonishment, three canoes came into the bay. In the canoes were nine Indians, and eight of these Thorvald killed. One, however, escaped, and roused his

comrades, who speedily came back with him to avenge the death of their companions.

In the fight that followed Thorvald was wounded, and shortly afterwards died.

His men buried him, putting crosses at his head and feet as he had desired. Then having lost their leader, they filled their ship with vines and timber and sailed away to Greenland.

The next voyage to Vinland was undertaken by a Viking named Karlsefni. He manned his ship with sixty men, and hoping to settle in the land because of its great fruitfulness, he took with him cattle, among which was a large bull. This bull, as you shall hear, was of great service to the Viking band.

When the company landed at Vinland there was no need to search for food, for a large whale had been driven ashore by a storm, and Karlsefni and his men cut it into pieces and cooked it. This was their first meal in the new land.

The settlers were soon at work, cutting down trees, spreading the timber on the rocks to dry, and building houses. While they laboured they fed on the produce of the land, especially on grapes. Fish, too, they had in abundance.

Before many months had passed, the Indians heard of the new settlers in the land, and they came out of the forest to sell their gray furs, sables, and other skins. But the bull of which I told you began to bellow so loudly that the Indians were frightened, and fled with their packs of skins on their backs.

However, they soon ventured back again, and though neither the settlers nor the Indians could understand the language in which the other spoke, they began to make signs to one another, and in this way each soon knew what the other wished to say.

The Indians had furs which they wished to exchange for weapons, but these the Vikings refused to give them. Instead of weapons they bade the women offer them milk, eggs, butter,

and these things pleased the Indians well, as they had never seen them before.

After they had gone, Karlsefni and his men put strong wooden palings round their houses. For they felt sure that the Indians would return and perhaps demand the weapons which they had before been refused. And indeed before long they came in greater numbers, and in their war-dress.

Then Karlsefni, knowing that the bull had already frightened the Indians, put it in the front of his little force as he drew it up in battle array.

No sooner did the bull bellow than, as Karlsefni expected, many of the Indians fled, but many more remained to fight. Karlsefni gained the victory, but he knew that he would no longer be able to live in peace or in safety in Vinland, for the Indians would return again and again in ever increasing numbers.

The Viking therefore ordered his men to load the ship with grapes and skins, and when this was done he sailed away to Greenland.

Except for one other short Viking expedition to Vinland, we do not hear of this land again until it was rediscovered by Christopher Columbus on Friday the 3rd of August 1492.