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# HISTORY OF THE NORWEGIAN PEOPLE



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TORONTO

HISTORY  
OF THE  
NORWEGIAN PEOPLE

BY

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AND HISTORY IN LUTHER COLLEGE  
DECORAH, IOWA

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WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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## PREFACE

THE growing interest in Norwegian language, literature, and culture in this country has created a special need for a history of the Norwegian people in the English language devoting sufficient attention to the more important phases of the people's life to show the development of their institutions and culture, their life at home, and their activity and influence abroad. It has been my aim in this work to meet this demand by having constantly in mind what questions an intelligent reader might be expected to ask, and by trying, as far as possible, to answer them. In the Middle Ages the Scandinavian peoples were potent factors in developing navigation, commerce, municipal life and government, literature and culture in northern Europe. But nothing has been taken for granted, nor has any theory been advanced beyond what is clearly established by the investigations of the best scholars. The way to the original sources has, therefore, always been pointed out, and these have been used in a conservative spirit. The views of the leading scholars have been followed, and sometimes preference has been purposely given to the more conservative views on points where there is or might be a difference of opinion. On the whole I have deemed it advisable to adhere to Snorre Sturlason's healthful principle: "It seems better to us that something should be added later than that anything should have to be stricken out."

The period of the union with Denmark has been treated with some fullness of detail. The preservation of the people's personal freedom amidst general national decay, the germs of a new development distinctly traceable in social life has been especially dwelt upon, not only because these features are characteristic of the life of the Norwegian people in that period, but because they constitute the basis of their political and social development in modern times.

Regarding Norway's long struggle for complete independence after 1814 an attempt has been made to state facts fearlessly and impartially, without any spirit of antagonism against the noble and heroic Swedish people, who are and will be Norway's truest friends.

In proper names the original spelling has been preserved, except in a few cases where a distinct English form has been developed; as, *Copenhagen*, *Gottenborg*, *Charles John*. The attempt to give Norwegian names an English form, or to translate appellatives, destroys their euphony and character as names, and leads to many difficulties. An aid to the pronunciation of Norwegian names will be found under a separate heading.

KNUT GJERSET.

LUTHER COLLEGE, DECORAH, IOWA,  
August 1, 1914.

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## AID TO CORRECT PRONUNCIATION OF NORWEGIAN PROPER NAMES

*A, a* pronounced *ah*, like English *ä* in *arm*.

*E, e* pronounced *ay*,<sup>1</sup> like English *ā* in *day*.

*I, i* pronounced *ee*, like English *ē* in *eve*.

*O, o* pronounced *oo*, like English *ō* in *only*.

*U, u* pronounced *ou*, like English *ou* in *you*.

*Æ, æ* is an open sound like English *ă* in *at*, but usually lengthened.

*Ø, ø* like German *ö* in *söhne*, or English *ē* in *fern*.

*AA, aa* pronounced *awe*, like English *aw* in *awful*; *Aasen* pronounced *Aw'sen*.

*Y, y* is a vowel like English *ÿ* in *ÿt'rium*: example, *Ygg'dräsil*, *Yng'vār*.

The consonants have their simple Latin sound, except *j*, which has the sound of English *y* in *year*: example, *Jæmtland* pronounced *Yämt'länd*. Final *e* is always sounded and forms a distinct unaccented syllable: examples, *Lerche* pronounced *Lërch'ë*, *Gim'lë*.

The digraph *ie* is pronounced like English *ie* in *field*: example, *Friele* pronounced *Free'lë*. The *ei* is pronounced like English *i* in *ice*; example, *Einar* pronounced *Ī'när*. The *au* is pronounced like English *ou* in *out*: example, *Aud* pronounced *Oud*.

*Skj* is pronounced like *sh*: example, *Jernskjegge* pronounced *Yern'sheggë*.

*Kj* is pronounced like *ch*: example, *Kjartan* pronounced *Chär'tän*.

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced without the vanishing sound.



# HISTORY OF THE NORWEGIAN PEOPLE

## 1. THE COUNTRY AND ITS RESOURCES

THE kingdom of Norway forms a part of the Scandinavian peninsula, embracing its mountainous western slope.<sup>1</sup> It consists of a rock-bound coast region 1700 miles in length when measured along the outer belt of rocks. In the southern part it is about 260 miles wide, in the northern about sixty miles, though the extreme northern province, Finmarken, is considerably wider. Measured in a straight line, the distance north and south from Vardø to Lindesnes is 1100 miles, so that if the country were swung around, its northern extremity would reach the Pyrenees. Norway is a little larger than the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, its total area being 124,495 sq. m., or about the same as that of our New England States together with New York and New Jersey. The country consists of a mountain plateau broken by two larger depressions: one in the southwestern part; another, and smaller one, around the Trondhjemsfjord. These two tracts—Østlandet and Trøndelagen—consisting of undulating mountain slopes, contain extensive and valuable forests of coniferous trees, and are especially well adapted to farming and cattle raising. The southern coast region—Vestlandet—as well as the northern part—Nordland and Finmarken—is inter-

<sup>1</sup> Norway, *Official Publication for the Paris Exhibition*, Christiania, 1900. Paul B. Du Chaillu, *The Land of the Midnight Sun*. Joh. Dyring, *Kongeriget Norge, dets Geografi, Samfundsindretninger og Næringsveje*, 1894. Jens Kraft, *Historisk-topografisk Haandbog over Kongeriget Norge*. Professor Dr. Sophus Ruge, *Norwegen*. Yngvar Nielsen, *Reise-haandbog over Norge*. *Norges officielle Statistik, utgit av det Statistiske Centralbyraa*, Christiania. Einer Haffner, *Bogen om Norge*. Amund Helland, *Norges Land og Folk topografisk-statistisk beskrevet*. M. Braun Tvethé, *Norges Statistik*, 1848. A. Schweigaard, *Norges Statistik*, Christiania, 1840.

sected by narrow fjords extending far into the country. These deep cuts in the rocky plateau continue inland as narrow, fertile valleys, abounding in streams and waterfalls, and are often of incomparable beauty and grandeur. Fringing these valleys are large mountain-tracts unfit for agriculture, bearing timber, grass, and wild berries. These tracts are valuable as pasture and timberlands, while an abundance of wild game lends them a special charm as excellent hunting grounds. The high inland plateau is uninhabitable, being for the most part covered by glaciers and perpetual snow. This is the undisputed domain of birds and wild deer, which exist here in such numbers as to render even these large areas of frozen desolation of considerable importance to domestic economy.

Norway lies north of the 58th parallel; its southern extremity, Lindesnes, being at 57° 59' N. L., while in the north it reaches a latitude of 71° 11'. If the country were applied to the North American continent in the same latitude, its southern part would be found to lie in the region of central Labrador, while its northern extremity would reach the magnetic pole. Considering its high latitude, the climatic conditions of the country are unique. The Gulf Stream, passing up through the Atlantic to the west of the Scandinavian peninsula, so affects conditions in this respect, that nowhere else in the world is the average temperature so high in the same latitude. The climate varies a great deal with the elevation above the sea, as well as with the latitude, but south of the arctic circle the average temperature is about the same as in our northern tier of states, being cooler in summer, and warmer in winter, than in our states; resembling more closely the climate of the state of Washington and British Columbia. Thunderstorms are rare, even in the southern part. The coast is often swept by strong winds or severe storms, especially in winter, but in the inland districts the air is almost always calm, owing to the uniform temperature. The winter is long and dark; in the northern part of the country an almost unbroken night. A deep covering of snow then spreads over mountains and woodlands, affording unequalled opportunity for sleighing and skiing, which form the most characteristic features of winter life in Norway.

The summer, with its almost continuous daylight, is very beautiful. From the last days of May till the end of July the sun never sets



on northern Norway, and even in Christiania day fades so gently into night that they can scarcely be told apart. The summer landscape of fjords and wooded mountain sides, dark headlands and green islands, which break the evening sunlight into various hues and tints, has the ethereal mystic beauty peculiar to high latitudes.

Fishing, farming, and cattle raising were the chief occupations from early times, and they still continue to be the people's principal means of subsistence, though many new pursuits, such as lumbering, commerce, and manufacturing, have become of great importance in later years. According to the sagas, splendidly painted ships with many-colored sails carried fish from Norway to England over 1000 years ago, and fish still continues to be one of the chief articles of export. Especially important are the herring and cod fisheries, though mackerel, halibut, salmon, seatrout, sardines, and lobster are also caught in large quantities. The most noted fishing grounds are the Lofoten Islands, where thirty-six fishing stations are located. In the early months of winter about 40,000 fishermen gather here to take part in the cod fisheries. The average value of the yearly catch of herring, cod, and other varieties of fish, when ready for the market, is estimated at \$12,000,000. Agriculture is one of the leading pursuits in Norway, and is carried on in all parts, except in the extreme northern region north of the 70th parallel, where no grain can be raised. Scarcely 3 per cent of the total area of the country is under cultivation, and of this area the greater portion is meadow; only  $\frac{7}{10}$  per cent of the total area being devoted to the cultivation of grain. But although the acreage is small, a remarkably large number of people devote themselves to farming. According to the census of 1900, 993,000 persons, or 44.7 per cent of the population, were connected directly or indirectly with this occupation. The average yearly value of agricultural products in the period from 1895 till 1900 was \$17,496,000.

Of the cereals wheat, barley, oats, and rye are raised. Wheat and barley were cultivated on the Scandinavian peninsula as early as in the Younger Stone Age, prior to 1500 B.C. Oats was introduced in the Bronze Age (1500-500 B.C.), and rye in the Iron Age (after 500 B.C.). Oats is the chief grain in most districts, being cultivated more extensively than any other cereal; the average annual yield is

9,500,000 bushels. Barley, which ripens as far north as 70° N. L., yields annually about four million bushels. The wheat-growing area is small, being restricted chiefly to the southern district. The yield is about 255,000 bushels annually. Rye is the chief food grain in Norway, and ripens up to 69° or 70° N. L. But it is not raised extensively, as spring rye gives a small yield, and the winter rye is not reliable. The annual yield is about 900,000 bushels. A considerable area is devoted to the raising of pease and potatoes. The pease crop is 220,000 bushels; the potato crop about 23,000,000 bushels annually.

Fruit raising is carried on in many parts of Norway, but not on a very extensive scale. Apples, pears, and cherries are raised, and berries, such as currants, gooseberries, and raspberries, are grown in great abundance. Of wild varieties the blueberry, cloudberry, and whortleberry are found in inexhaustible quantities in the mountain districts. The home market is often glutted with these delicacies at certain seasons of the year, and the export of berries is a growing source of income.

The raising of cattle and other domestic animals is of even greater importance than agriculture, because this branch of husbandry can be carried on with success in places where grain cannot be cultivated. During the last few years the income from this source has been about \$40,500,000 a year, or more than the income from fishing and agriculture combined. In connection with cattle raising, dairying has, especially of late years, become of great importance, and may almost be said to be a new branch of husbandry. It has been greatly stimulated through the organization of coöperative dairies with scientific methods of butter making, and by the building of cheese factories and milk-condensing stations. In the period from 1885 till 1900 the number of dairies increased from 249 to 650.

In olden times wild game was so plentiful in the mountain regions of Norway that hunting was an occupation of considerable importance. The Anglo-Norman historian Ordericus Vitalis,<sup>1</sup> who visited Norway in the first part of the twelfth century, writes: "Rural home-

<sup>1</sup> Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, edited by A. le Prevost, *Société de l'Histoire de France*, vol. V., Paris, 1838-1855.

A large part of this work, dealing with the history of the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans, is translated into Danish by P. Kierkegaard, Copenhagen, 1889.



A MODERN NORWEGIAN FARM, SEIERSTAD, TOTEN.



LUMBERING IN EASTERN NORWAY.





steads are found in large numbers around the lakes of the interior. The people have plenty of fish, fowl, and meat of wild animals. They keep strictly the Commandments and strict laws of the Christian faith, and punish severely any violation of these. From all quarters their ships bring treasures into the country." Hunting has lost its former significance, being now carried on mainly as a sport, but wild game is still very plentiful in all parts of the country, and a considerable income is derived from this source in many districts. The red deer, the elk, and the reindeer still inhabit the mountains and forests in large numbers. The total of 2033 head killed in 1897 may be regarded as a fair yearly average. Still greater are the number and varieties of birds and small game. The grouse is, no doubt, the most important wild game in the country. So plentiful is it that about two million birds are shot or snared every year. The coast of Norway is yearly visited by hosts of wild geese, swans, eider ducks, and other aquatic fowl, and great quantities of eggs and down are gathered.<sup>1</sup>

Commerce reached a high development in Norway in very early times. Through the Viking expeditions new trade routes were developed, and the Norsemen soon became clever merchants, as well as able seamen, and bold warriors. In "The King's Mirror" ("Kongespeilet," "Speculum Regale"), written in Norway about 1250, a father gives advice to his son, who wishes to become a merchant. "Both knowledge and experience is necessary," says the father, "as a merchant must travel in distant lands and among strange peoples. He should be courteous, pleasing in manners, generous, a good judge of goods, and honest and upright in all his dealings. He should avoid gambling and bad company, and whatever might create the impression that he is a mere barterer and an uncultured person. He should set a good table, dress well, and seek the company of the best people wherever he comes." "Study carefully all laws," says the father; "but if you want to be a merchant, there is no law which you should study more carefully than the *Bjarkeyjarréttr*,<sup>2</sup> or laws of trade."

<sup>1</sup> J. N. Gregersen, *Jagt i Norge*, Christiania, 1898. *Norges Fuglevildt, og Jagten paa samme*, Copenhagen, 1881. J. B. Barth, *Erfaringer fra Jagten paa det mindre Vildt i Norge*, 2d edition, Christiania, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> In the trade centers and chief market places there grew up in very early times rules and regulations governing business intercourse. These rules were known by the common name of *Bjarkeyjarréttr*, a word found in Old

"Though I have been more a king's man than a merchant," he says, "yet I find no fault because you choose this occupation, for it is now chosen by many of our best men."<sup>1</sup> Norway's shipping and commerce are, however, at present of far greater economic importance than at any earlier period. In 1913 her merchant marine consisted of 2133 steamships, 1040 sailing vessels, and 205 motor boats, representing altogether a capacity of 2,586,030 tons.<sup>2</sup> Only Great Britain, Germany, and the United States have a larger merchant marine than Norway. The greater number of this large fleet of vessels are engaged in the carrying trade in different parts of the globe. The earned profits of this trade for the year 1900 were \$38,853,000.

The forests of Norway are very extensive, covering about 24 per cent of the entire area of the country. About three-fourths of this area is covered with coniferous, and one-fourth with deciduous trees. The value of the annual export of timber and other forest products is estimated at about \$15,740,000.

Mining has not hitherto been engaged in on any extensive scale. The most important mines are the Kongsberg silver mines, which have been worked since 1624, the Røros copper mines, operated since 1646, and the Sulitjelma copper mines, which were opened in 1887. Iron ores occur in large quantities in many places, and the mining of this metal is rapidly increasing.

Manufacturing is of comparatively recent development in Norway. In olden times manufactured articles were either imported, or they were supplied through private industry carried on in the homes by members of the family or by skilled laborers. A high degree of skill

Swedish and Old Danish, as well as in Old Norse. The word seems to be derived from Bjarkø or Birka, in Mälaren, Sweden, presumably the oldest important commercial center in the North. The rules of trade here in vogue came into use also in other trading centers and market places, and when these, in course of time, developed into towns and cities, the *Bjarkeyjarréttr* became a code of municipal laws, distinct from the other laws of the country. Alexander Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel før Hanseaterne*, Christiania, 1899. The *Bjarkeyjarréttr* or *Bjarkø-Ret* is found in *Norges gamle Love*, published by R. Keyser and P. A. Munch, Christiania, vol. I., part III.

<sup>1</sup> *Kongespeilet*, the *King's Mirror*, Christiania, 1848.

<sup>2</sup> B. E. Bendixen, *Et Omrids af Norges Handelshistorie*, p. 58. *Decorah-Posten*, Decorah, Iowa, July 17, 1914.

and artistic taste had been developed in many handicrafts long before the times of recorded history. Weaving of homespun cloth, both of wool and linen, was common, and the farmers made their own tools and implements. It was the pride of the women then, as it is still in Norway, to embroider with taste, and there were artisans skilled in blacksmithing, wood carving, and in the making of ornaments of precious metals. Ship-building and the making of weapons were national arts which were held in high esteem, and were carried on with surprising skill in design and workmanship. With the development of towns and cities in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and through the influx of skilled foreign artisans in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth, a system of crafts and guilds originated which gained full control of the different lines of manufacture. This system of corporations produced a new industrial growth. Each guild had a monopoly on its specialty, to which the members were limited by strict laws, and which they did much to develop. The old native artisans, not able to compete with these new organizations, lost their importance, and also much of their former skill; but to some degree they have survived all industrial changes, so that even at the present time workers in wood, silver, and brass can be found here and there in the rural districts, whose art seems to have been inherited through successive generations from those early times.

The development of manufactures is limited chiefly to the nineteenth century, the growth having been especially rapid during the last sixty years. In 1850 only 12,700 persons were employed in the factories of Norway; in 1900 the number had risen to 70,000. With the cheap and almost unlimited waterpower available, and with a rich supply of minerals and other raw materials, manufacturing seems destined to become the great future occupation of the Norwegian people. But hitherto, during all the centuries of the past, the location, as well as the general character of the country, has been favorable to the development of the seafaring life along the extensive coasts, and the husbandry in the inland districts which have given Norwegian national life its distinctive features, both economically and socially.



## 2. SCANDINAVIA IN PREHISTORIC TIMES

How long Scandinavia has been inhabited cannot be determined. When history, about 800 A.D., first lifts the veil of darkness which envelops the remote past, we find a people far advanced in civilization, possessing a high social organization, art, laws, and even some degree of luxury and refinement. No detailed account can be given of the people's life and development prior to this period, but archæology has been able, through numerous finds of relics of antiquity, to establish some important data regarding prehistoric conditions which make it possible to trace in large outlines the greater phases of progress and the mode of life.<sup>1</sup> Iron has been in use in Scandinavia since about 500 B.C., and the period from 500 B.C. to 1050 A.D. is called by archæologists the *Iron Age*. Other metals were in use earlier. Articles of gold, copper, and bronze were brought to Scandinavia from southern Europe as early as 2000 B.C.

About 1500 B.C. bronze seems to have come into general use in the making of weapons and edged tools. The period from 2000 B.C. to 500 B.C., when iron makes its appearance, is, therefore, known as the *Bronze Age*. Prior to this era weapons and implements were made of stone, wood, bone, and horn, and this earliest period is called the *Stone Age*. In this period two different epochs are noticeable; the *Older Stone Age*, and the *Younger Stone Age*. In the Older Stone Age people seem to have lived almost exclusively by hunting and fishing. Their clothes were made of skin; their tools

<sup>1</sup> *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, Copenhagen. J. J. A. Worsaae, *Nordens Forhistorie*, Copenhagen, 1881. Oscar Montelius, *Om Livet i Sverige under Hednatiden*, Stockholm, 1905. Reinert Svendsen, *Fortidsmindermerker i Ringsaker paa Hedemarken*, Christiania, 1902. *Skrifter udgivet af Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania*, II historiske klasse, 1910; *Den antike Stenalder i Norge*, A. W. Brøgger. Paul Du Chaillu, *The Viking Age*, Scribner's, New York, 1889. Gabriel Gustafson, *Norges Oldtid*, Christiania, 1906. Sophus Müller, *Vor Oldtid*, Copenhagen, 1897. Alexander Bugge, *Norges Historie*, vol. I, 1. Sophus Müller, *De forhistoriske Tider i Europa, Verdenskulturen*, edited by Aage Friis, vol. II., p. 1 ff. Sven Nilsson, *Skandinaviska Nordens Ur-invånare*, 1838-1843. Sven Nilsson, *Udkast til Jagtens og Fiskeriets ældste Historie i Skandinavien*. J. J. A. Worsaae, *Danmarks Oldtid*, 1843. Ingvald Undset, *Jernalderens Begyndelse i Nord-Europa*, Christiania, 1881.



FIG. 1.—Flint ax from Skåne.



FIG. 2.—Flint ax from Skåne.



FIG. 3.—Flint ax from Bohuslen.

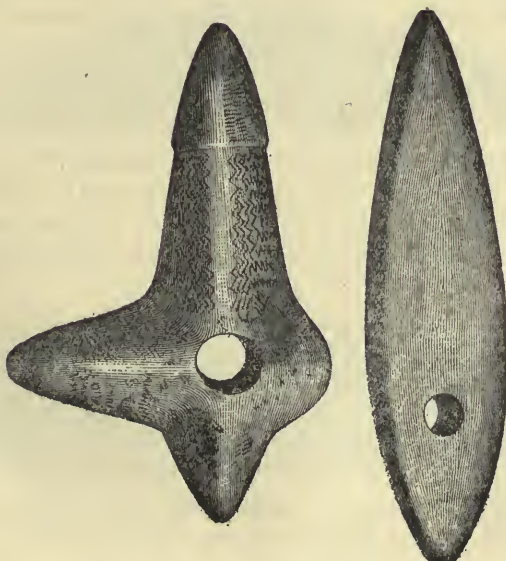


FIG. 4.—Stone axes from Bohuslen.

and weapons of horn and bone. They had only one domestic animal, the dog, probably a domesticated jackal.

No graves have been found from this period. The most important remains are the great shell-heaps (*avfaldsdynger, kjøkkenmøddinger*). These heaps consist of mussel and oyster shells, and of bones of fish, birds, and animals, such as the bear, urox, wild boar, deer, wolf, fox, etc.; embedded in which are found arrowheads, spear points, and other stone weapons and implements, together with fragments of earthenware, and articles made of bone and horn.

The *Younger Stone Age* gives evidence that great progress had been made in many ways. Stone weapons and tools were made, as a rule, of flint, which was the best-known material for edged tools. They are nicely polished and graceful in form, bearing evidence of the taste and skill of the makers. Agriculture may be said to have begun, since both wheat and barley are known to have been cultivated. Nearly all the domestic animals were introduced, which can be seen from bones found in the graves from this period. The importation of flint from Denmark to the Scandinavian peninsula, of which there is evidence, seems to show that navigation, too, was in the process of development. Of special importance to the study of the *Younger Stone Age* are the many graves preserved from this epoch, a great number being found especially in southern Sweden. In Norway they are found in the southeastern part. They may be divided into three groups: the dolmens, the passage or gallery graves, and the stone coffins. The dolmen consists of stone slabs reaching from the bottom of the grave to some distance above the ground, so placed as to form a circle, and a great stone slab is placed on top as a roof. The bottom of the grave is made of sand or gravel. These graves are made for a single body, which was usually buried in a sitting posture.

The gallery graves are constructed very much in the same way, but they are burial chambers of considerable size, supplied with an entrance passage. They are sometimes twenty feet long, twelve feet wide, and six feet high. The stone coffins consist of stone slabs placed on edge, with other slabs placed over them for a cover.

The custom of constructing such permanent abodes for the dead rests, no doubt, on the belief that the spirits of the departed con-





FIG. 5.—Stone ax from Bohuslen.



FIG. 6.—Stone ax from Skåne.



FIG. 7.—Flint saw from Bohuslen.

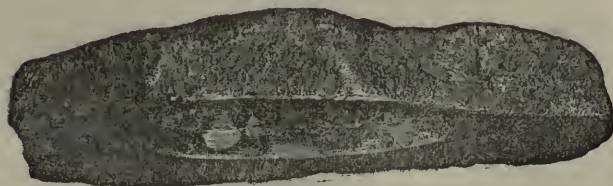


FIG. 8.—Grindstone from Skåne.

tinued to exist after death, much in the same way as in this present life. The grave was to be a suitable habitation, supplied with such



FIG. 9. — Dolmen in Bohuslen.

necessaries as they might need. Clothes, weapons, ornaments, even food and drink were placed in the grave with the dead body, and



FIG. 10. — Passage grave in Vestergötland.

offerings, probably connected with the worship of the spirit of ancestors so common among early peoples, were, no doubt, performed on the flat stone forming the roof of the grave.

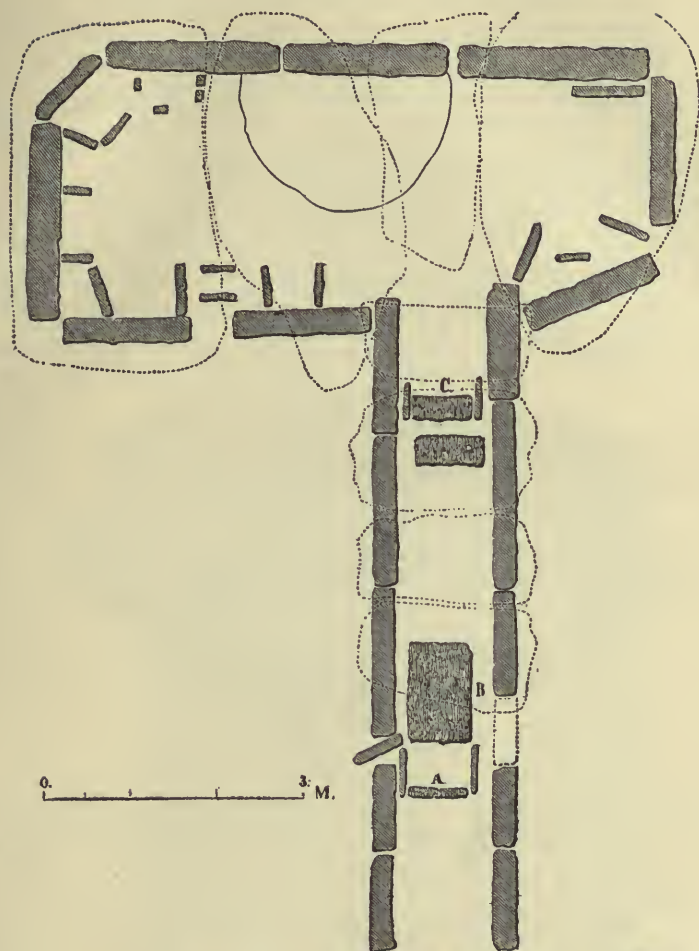


FIG. 11. — Plan of passage grave.



FIG. 12.



FIG. 13.



FIG. 14.

Vessels found in an old burial chamber in Denmark.



## 3. THE BRONZE AGE

The introduction of bronze, and the livelier intercourse with other countries, of which this is a proof, gave rise to a new culture in the Scandinavian North much higher than that which the Stone Age had produced. Weapons, ornaments, vessels, and utensils were now made with a taste in design and ornamentation sometimes worthy of the skilled artisans of Rome itself. Most of these articles were made at home, but the bronze had to be imported from the British Isles and the countries of central and southern Europe. This shows

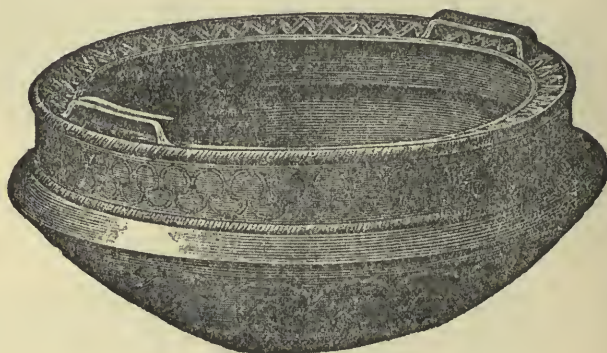


FIG. 15. — Bronze bowl.

that ships of considerable size must have been built, and that the peoples of the North were able to navigate the sea, though they had not yet learned to use sails, which were first introduced in the Iron Age. This can be seen also from the rock tracings of this period. These strange records of the past are pictures chiseled on the flat surface of rocks, sometimes, also, on stone slabs in the graves, illustrating many phases of life. Among the many things represented in these pictures are boats, carrying sometimes as many as thirty men, but there is no indication of mast or sail. Horses can be seen drawing two-wheeled carts, spans of oxen hitched to four-wheeled wagons, farmers engaged in ploughing, warriors on horseback, etc. The full meaning of this system of picture writing has not been deciphered, but the pictures themselves throw considerable light on the life of this early period, and they are especially interesting as the earliest written records of the past in the North.



ROCK TRACING IN BOHUSLEN.



Besides bronze, ornaments of gold and many other articles were imported. Many of these articles of foreign make show that the Scandinavian countries already at this time must have been in communication with southern Europe. The earliest routes of intercourse seem to have followed the large rivers of southern Russia from the Black Sea into Poland, and thence along the Vistula to the shores of the Baltic Sea.

The mode of burial was also changed. During the first centuries of this era the bodies of the dead, together with weapons and ornaments, were placed in coffins made of hollowed oak logs which were deposited in mounds. To this mode of burial we owe the fortunate circumstance that garments have been found in so remarkable a state of preservation that not only the material, but also the style, can be determined. The garments found are made of woolen cloth; in one instance of linen. The women wore cap, waist, and skirt, very much of the same style as they still wear them in our time. The men's dress, besides cap and footwear, consisted chiefly of a cloak-shaped garment fastened about the waist with a belt. No trousers were yet worn.



FIG. 17. — Bronze spear point.



FIG. 16. — Bronze ax.

It became customary quite early in the Bronze Age to burn the bodies of the dead, a custom which also marks a great change in the ideas regarding the life hereafter. It is believed that the body was burned in order that the soul might the more quickly be liberated from the fetters of the natural world, and begin



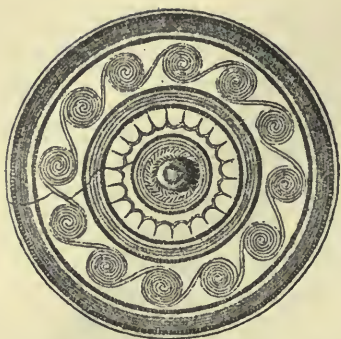


FIG. 18. — Ornamental bronze disk.



FIG. 21. — Rock tracing in Bohuslen.



FIG. 19. — Bronze buckle.



FIG. 20. — Rock tracing in Bohuslen.

its own separate existence; but the graves still contained weapons, ornaments, and other articles needed by the departed, which shows that, though the body was burned, the spirit was thought to continue its existence after death. Women were buried with the same elaborate care as the men, which indicates that already in this early



FIG. 22. — Oak coffin from the Bronze Age, found at Treenhøj in Denmark.

period they were held in high esteem in Scandinavia, and that their position in society was one of dignity and honor.

#### 4. THE IRON AGE

About the beginning of the fifth century B.C. iron replaced bronze as the most important metal. Throughout the Bronze Age the peoples of the North had been in communication with the countries of southern Europe, and through this intercourse they became acquainted with iron, as they had learned to know bronze in the same way at a still earlier period. The Iron Age may be divided into several quite distinct periods. During the *pre-Roman period*, embracing the earlier centuries of the era from about 500 B.C. to the birth of Christ, the influence of the Celtic peoples of Gaul and the Alpine region is especially noticeable, but this influence ceased when the Romans, by extending their sway over Gaul and Britain, came into direct contact with the Germanic world. From that time to the fall of the Roman Empire the superior Latin civilization exerted a preponderating influence on the development and culture in the North. This period has, therefore, been called the *Roman Iron Age*.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> It should be observed that the time limits fixed for these various ages are admitted by archæologists themselves to be purely tentative. No ulti-

culture which developed under the influence of Roman civilization unfolded itself of a sudden with a certain gaudy splendor produced by the influx of Roman customs and ideas. Richly ornamented



FIG. 23. — Ornamented drinking-horn.

swords, coats of ring mail, metal helmets, spurs, elegantly mounted bridles, and rich trappings for war horses give evidence of the splendor of war accouterments which now came into use. Silver, lead, zinc, and glass were introduced, and money of Roman coinage makes its appearance.<sup>1</sup> A variety of articles for domestic use, such as elegantly designed vases and drinking-horns of glass, metal mirrors, bronze statuettes, strainers,

silver goblets, bronze vases, razors, shears, tweezers, and costly ornaments of gold and silver, furnish an even stronger proof of the luxury which had been developed in the North long before the Viking Age.

mate criterion exists according to which these dates can be determined, and it is natural that there should be considerable divergence of opinion among the authorities. Montelius estimates:

Older Stone Age, prior to 5000 B.C.

Younger Stone Age, 5000–2000 B.C.

Bronze Age, 2000–500 B.C.

Older Iron Age, 500 B.C.–800 A.D.

Younger Iron Age, 800 A.D.–1050 A.D.

Sophus Müller estimates:

Older Stone Age, prior to 3000 B.C.–2500 B.C.

Bronze Age, prior to 1000 B.C.–after 500 B.C.

Older Iron Age, ca. 400 B.C.–800 A.D.

—*Vor Oldtid*, Copenhagen, 1897.

<sup>1</sup> About 6000 Roman coins from this period have been found on the islands in the Baltic, and in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The most noteworthy finds are the following: In 1842, 600 Roman silver coins from the first and second centuries A.D. were found at Kanes, in the island of Gothland. In 1871 a similar find of 550 Roman denarii was made at Hagestadborg, in southern Sweden. At Bagsværd, near Copenhagen, forty-five Roman





FIG. 24.—Bronze statuette.



FIG. 25.—Ring mail.



FIG. 26.—Shield boss.



FIG. 27.—Gold ring.

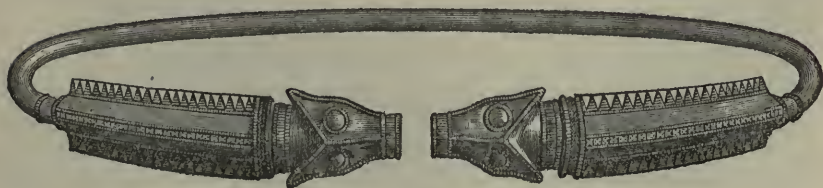


FIG. 28.—Gold ring.

The mode of burial remained much the same as it was in the later Bronze Age. The bodies of the dead, together with weapons and ornaments, were usually burned on a funeral pyre, and the ashes and other remains were deposited in bowl-shaped graves, over which sometimes a mound was thrown up, on which a rune-stone was placed, bearing the name of the dead. The swords and other articles found in these graves have been damaged by fire; often they have been purposely bent and twisted, so as to be rendered useless. Sometimes the body was not burned, but was buried with weapons and ornaments in grave-chambers made of stone slabs.



FIG. 29. — Spear point.

The contact of the North with the Roman world, though not a direct one, exerted a great influence. Trade was greatly stimulated; possibly also ship-building and navigation. The great number of Roman coins and other articles of Roman make brought to Scandinavia by traders show that a lively intercourse must have been maintained with the provinces of the Empire. Ship-building reached a high stage of development during this period. In 1863 two boats were unearthed in the Nydam bog, near Sundeved in Schleswig, together with 106 swords, 552 spear points, seventy shield bosses, coins, toilet articles, and other objects; among other things, also, a shirt, or blouse, and a pair of trousers made of woolen cloth were found, which show that trousers were worn at this time. The collection seems to have been deposited by the victors after a battle as a sacrifice

coins from the period 69–218 A.D. were found in 1850, and the same year thirty-six Roman gold coins were found in the island of Bornholm. *Antiquarisk Tidsskrift udgivet av det Kongelige nordiske Oldskriftselskab*, Copenhagen, vol. for 1849–1851. Oscar Montelius, *Livet i Norden under Hednatiden*.



FIG. 30. — Iron sword.

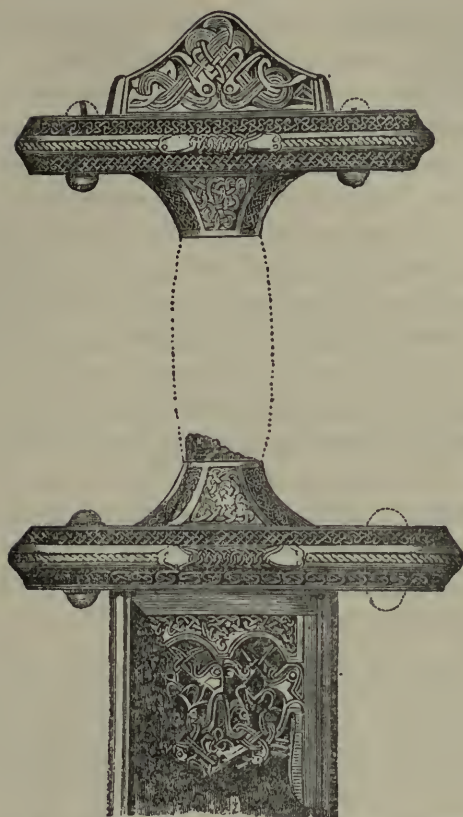


FIG. 31. — Part of a sword found in Upland, Sweden.



FIG. 32. — Boat found near Sundeved in Denmark.



to the gods, and is thought to date from about 400 A.D. One of the boats is of oak, the other of pine. The oak boat is about eighty feet long, and eleven feet wide at the middle. It is made for fourteen pairs of oars, and is riveted together with iron rivets. It has no mast. The prow and stern are both sharp and of equal height, so that it is difficult to tell which is the rear, and which is the front end of the vessel. It is of the same shape as the ships of the Suiones (Swedes) described by Tacitus. "The states of the Suiones (Swedes), situated in the ocean itself, are strong in fleets as well as in men and arms. Their ships differ from ours in this respect; that both ends present a front always ready for landing. They do not equip their ships with sails, nor do they join the oars in due order to the sides. The oarage is loose, as on certain river boats, and can be changed from one side to the other as circumstances demand."<sup>1</sup>

The most striking evidence of the development of culture during this period is the introduction of the runic alphabet and the art of writing. The older runic alphabet consists of twenty-four characters, divided into three equal groups, as follows:

f	u	t	h	a	r	c	g	w	:	h	n	i	j	e	p	-R	s	:	t	b	e	m	l	n	g	o	d
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24				
ƿ	ᚋ	ᚑ	ᚕ	᚛	ᚦ	ᚨ	ᚧ	ᚷ	:	ᚠ	ᚢ	ᚣ	ᚤ	ᚥ	ᚦ	ᚧ	ᚨ	ᚢ	ᚣ	ᚤ	ᚥ	ᚦ	ᚧ	ᚨ	ᚢ	ᚣ	

FIG. 33. — Early runic alphabet.

The first six characters form the word *futharc*, which is often used instead of the word *alphabet* to designate the system of runic letters. The resemblance between the runes and the letters of the Latin alphabet is, in several cases, quite apparent, and the Danish scholar L. F. A. Wimmer advanced the theory, which was for some time everywhere accepted, that the runes have been derived from the Latin alphabet, and that they first came into use in southern Germany. The change in the form of the Latin letters was occasioned by the fact that the runes were carved on wood, or cut in stone or metal, which made the use of the angle and straight line much more convenient than the curve or circle. Later the Norwegian scholar Sophus Bugge advanced the opinion that they originated among the Goths, in the region

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Germania*, ch. 44.



north of the Black Sea,<sup>1</sup> an idea which gained further support through the investigations of the Swedish archæologist Bernhard Salin. He showed that the runes must have been brought to the North along the old routes of intercourse between the Black Sea and the Baltic, known to have existed even in the Bronze Age, as they first made their appearance in those regions. Professor von Friesén, of Upsala University, has since shown that the runes have been derived from a system of Greek letters, the so-called cursive or running hand, which was much used in everyday life in the eastern part of the Empire. Of the twenty-four runes in the older runic alphabet, fifteen are surely derived from this Greek alphabet, and five more are, presumably, traceable to the same source. Only four are derived from the Latin alphabet, with which the Goths may have become acquainted in the Latin colony of Dacia, north of the Danube.<sup>2</sup>

Runic inscriptions have been found wherever Germanic peoples have dwelt, but they are especially numerous in the Scandinavian countries, and in Great Britain. The runic inscriptions on stone are by far the most important, and these are found principally in the Scandinavian countries. One hundred inscriptions in the older runic alphabet, from 300 to 700 A.D., are found in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, some of which are of great length. The language is everywhere the same, showing that, as yet, no difference in speech existed in the three countries. Besides Wulfilas Bible translation, and a few loan-words in the Finnish and Lappish languages, these earliest runic inscriptions are the oldest remains in the Germanic tongue that have been preserved to us.

As a result of the closer contact of the Empire with the Germanic peoples of the North, the Romans became better acquainted with this part of the world hitherto so unknown. The enterprising Greek explorer Pytheas from Massilia, in southern Gaul, made voyages to Britain and northern Europe about 330 B.C. On one of these expeditions he also visited Thule and the Amber Coast. His own accounts

<sup>1</sup> L. F. A. Wimmer, *Runeskriftens Oprindelse og Udvikling i Norden*, Copenhagen. Sophus Bugge, *Norges Indskrifter med de ældre Runer*, Christiania. G. Stephenson, *The Old Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England*, London, 1866-1884.

<sup>2</sup> Otto v. Friesén, *Om Runeskriftens Härkomst; Sprokvetenskapliga Sällskapets Förhandlingar*, 1904-1906.

of these voyages have been lost, but brief notices are given by the Greek geographer Strabo in his "Geographica,"<sup>1</sup> and by Plinius the Elder in his "Historia Naturalis."<sup>2</sup> According to Pytheas, Thule was situated six days' sailing from Britain, and one day's sailing from the frozen, or half-frozen, ocean called *mare cronium*. He regards Thule as the most northern country, and relates that summer is a continuous day, and winter a continuous night, there for six months. "The people live on hirse and garden vegetables, as well as on wild fruit and roots. Those who have grain and honey make also a drink from these. When they have cut the grain, they bring it into large houses and thrash it there, because they have no bright sunshine, and thrashing-floors in the open would be useless because of excessive rains." Strabo, lib. IV., ch. V. That Thule is identical with Norway can scarcely be doubted, but the description given of the people may apply to Britain and the North in general.

This was about the only knowledge which the world possessed of Scandinavia prior to the Christian era. In the year 40, or 44, A.D., Pomponius Mela, a Roman geographer, wrote a book, "De Chorographia," describing the countries of the then known world, in which he also mentions Scandinavia. This is the first time the name is employed by Roman writers.

"In that bay which we have called Codanus, Scandinavia is prominent. It is still occupied by the Teutons, and surpasses the other islands in fertility and size." — "Chorographia," III., 54.

Plinius the Elder (23-79 A.D.) also uses the name in his "Historia Naturalis." He had served as cavalry officer in the German campaigns, and had visited the shores of the North Sea. He manifests a real interest in Scandinavia, which he believes to be an island, or a group of islands, in the northern sea. "There the Mount Særo, itself of great height, and not lower than the Riphæic<sup>3</sup> Mountains,

<sup>1</sup> Strabo, *Geographica*, lib. I., ch. IV.; lib. III., ch. V.; lib. IV., ch. V. W. Bessell, *Ueber Pytheas von Massilien*, Göttingen, 1858. D. Gustav Moritz Redslob, *Thule, die phöniciſchen Handelswege nach dem Norden, die Reise des Pytheas von Massilien*, Leipzig, 1855. Strabo did not receive his information directly from Pytheas' own works, but from the writings of Eratosthenes, Polybios, and Hipparchos. <sup>2</sup> *Historia Naturalis*, II., 75, IV., 16.

<sup>3</sup> The Riphæic or Rhipæic Mountains were fabulous mountains supposed to represent the northern boundary of the then known world. To the north

forms a bay with the promontory of the Cimbri. This bay, which is called Codanus, is full of islands, the most noted of which is *Scatinavia*, of unknown size." — Lib. IV., 96.

"There are those who tell of other islands, Scandia, Dumnam, Bergi, Berice, or Nerigon,<sup>1</sup> the largest of all, whence one sails to Tyle. One day's sailing from Tyle lies the frozen ocean called Cronium by some." — Lib. IV., 104. The name *Scandia* is still preserved in Skåne, southern Sweden.

Tacitus, in his "Germania," written 98 A.D., distinguishes between the Suiones (Swedes) and their neighbors, the Sitones.

"Beyond the Suiones lies another ocean, sluggish, and almost without motion, which is thought to terminate and encompass the sphere of the earth, since the light of the setting sun continues so bright till it rises, that it makes the stars dim." — "Germania," 44, 45.

In the second century A.D. Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria mentions Scandia and Thule.

"North of the Orcades lies Thule, of which the western part is in the latitude 63°, o., longitude 29°." — "Geographia," lib. II., ch. III.

"East of the Cimbrian peninsula (the Danish peninsula) there are four islands called Scandiæ; three indeed are small; the middle one is in the latitude 58°, longitude 41° 30'. The one which is largest and farthest to the east, near the mouth of the river Vistula, is properly called Scandia. Its western part is inhabited by the Chaideinoi, the eastern part by the Phanonai and the Phiraisoi, the southern part is occupied by the Gautai and the Dauchiones, and the middle part by the Lenonoi." — "Geographia," lib. II., ch. XII.

These peoples are unknown, except the Gautai, or Götar, here mentioned for the first time as the inhabitants of Scandinavia, and the

of these, the ancients thought, lay the frozen ocean, and the icy regions towards the borders of the earth. According to later ideas, the Hyperboreans dwelt north of these mountains. The sky was clear, and the climate ideal there, as the region lay north of the north wind, which was supposed to come from the Rhipæic Mountains. The Hyperboreans were thought to live in groves, in a state of perfect innocence and uninterrupted happiness.

<sup>1</sup> The form *Nerigon*, found in one manuscript, might be the same as Norway. But the name *Noregr* or *Norvegr* (= the northern way) seems not to have been in use till about 800 A.D.



Chaideinoi or Heiner, the inhabitants of Hedemarken, in eastern Norway.

Denmark and southern Sweden had up to this time been the most densely populated portions of the North, but throughout the Iron Age the population was growing rapidly, and the remoter parts of Norway and Sweden were cleared and settled. Norway, which had hitherto had the smallest population, made gains during this period which placed her on a more equal footing with the other two northern countries.<sup>1</sup>

## 5. THE MIGRATIONS

From 400 A.D. Rome was fighting her last desperate battles with the conquering hosts of Germanic warriors, and, like a bleeding gladiator, was fast tottering to her fall. The legions were withdrawn from Gaul and Britain for the defense of the Italian peninsula, but this served only to give the untiring victors new vantage ground. The weakened defenses of the frontiers were forced, Gaul and Spain were overrun, Rome was sacked, the Empire was crumbling to pieces before the onset of this new race, destined to wrest the scepter of empire from the withering hands of Rome that they might teach the world new lessons. The peoples of Germany were no longer unskilled barbarians, unacquainted with culture. Since the days of the Emperor Augustus

<sup>1</sup> Amund Helland has given estimates of the population of Norway in the different periods of prehistoric times based on the number and distribution of archæological finds, and on calculations made by the historians P. A. Munch and Ernst Sars from the size and number of ships in the Norwegian navy in the Younger Iron Age. His investigations give the following general results:

At the end of the Stone Age, 1200 B.C. (Sophus Müller)	2,500
In the middle of the Bronze Age, 800 B.C.	4,700
At the beginning of the Iron Age, 400 B.C.	9,000
At the time of the birth of Christ	17,400
200 A.D.	24,200
400 A.D.	80,000
800 A.D. (the beginning of the Younger Iron Age)	146,000
925 A.D. (the middle of the Younger Iron Age)	212,000
1050 A.D. (at the end of the Younger Iron Age)	242,000

This seems to be a very small population, but it must be remembered that all countries in northern Europe had a very small population at that time, measured by modern standards. Amund Helland, *Oldfundene og Norges Folkemængde i forhistoriske Tider*, Christiania, 1908.

they had followed the Roman eagles as soldiers of the legions, from the prætorian guard in Rome to the remotest provinces of the Empire. They now possessed great skill in the art of war; they had great leaders, excellent arms, and an efficient military organization, as they had attained to a high degree of general culture, gained through long periods of development, and, finally, through direct contact with the Roman world. This accounts for their victory over Rome in this most notable contest for world power. That the warriors from Scandinavia also took part in the expeditions against the Roman Empire can be seen from the great treasures of gold brought to the North during this period. At Tureholm, near Trosa, in Sweden, were found, in 1774, articles of gold weighing all together 25 pounds; the actual metal value of which at the present time would be \$7214. So many similar treasures have been found, that it is regarded as certain that they are the spoils of warlike expeditions against Rome, or part of the tribute paid the Germanic peoples by the emperors of the East Roman Empire during the fifth century. The first Germanic peoples who crossed the borders of the Roman Empire were the Cimbri and the Teutones. They came from the peninsula of Jutland, and appeared in the Roman province of Noricum in 113 B.C. Their combined fighting force is said to have numbered 300,000 men, and they repeatedly defeated the Roman armies sent against them. The terror in Rome was so great that the expression *terror cimbricus* became proverbial. In 104 B.C. Gaius Marius, the hero of the war against Jugurtha, was made consul and general. He took the field with a large and well-disciplined army. In 102 he met the Teutones in southern Gaul, and destroyed them in the battle of Aquæ Sextiæ. The next year he annihilated the Cimbri, who had penetrated into the Po valley in upper Italy. The size of the fighting forces of these great migrating hosts indicates that other tribes must have joined them on their southward march.<sup>1</sup>

The Herules, a people who played a conspicuous part in the

<sup>1</sup> Ptolemy knows the Cimbri, who, according to him, inhabited the northern part of Jutland (*Cimbri Chersonesus*). Their name is thought to be preserved still in Himmerland, a region south of the Limfjord. Near them dwelt the Charudes, whose name is still preserved in *Hardesyssel*. *Geographia*, lib. II., ch. XI., tabula IV. See also Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, Christiania, 1904.



migrations, came from southern Scandinavia. Jordanes<sup>1</sup> says that they were driven from their homes by the Danes, and Procopius<sup>2</sup> states that when their king died they sent to their own royal race in Thule for a leader. Very early in the period they migrated southward into the region north of the Danube, where they founded a kingdom. A part of their force joined the army of Odovacer, and aided him in destroying the West Roman Empire. According to Procopius, their kingdom was destroyed by the Longobards, with whom they were waging war; some of them sought refuge in the East Roman Empire, and some returned to Scandinavia, taking up their abode near the Gautar, where they seem to have had their original home.<sup>3</sup>

The Gautar<sup>4</sup> and the Swedes (Swear, Sviones) are the first peoples in the Scandinavian North which passed out of mere tribal organization, and founded kingdoms of some strength and importance. The Gautar inhabited Götaland, a region around the great lakes Venern and Vettern in Sweden. The Swedes founded the kingdom of Svitiod, which embraced the tribes and territories farther north,

<sup>1</sup> An historian of the sixth century, of Gothic descent, known from his work, *De Origine Actibusque Getarum*. Jordanes had read Flavius Cassiodorus' history of the Goths, which is now lost. In his work he supplements what information he had thus gathered with what he himself knew, or believed to be true, about the Goths and their neighbors. The work contains many interesting things, but it is not reliable.

<sup>2</sup> Procopius, a Greek historian of the sixth century A.D., much more reliable than Jordanes, wrote *Historiae* (*History of his own Time*), in eight books.

Jordanes tries to show that the Goths originally came from Scandinavia. "Therefore, from this island of Scandza, as if from a workshop of peoples, or as if from the womb of nations, the Goths, led by their king Berig, are known at one time to have gone forth" (ch. IV.). He evidently considered the Goths to be identical with the Gautar, the inhabitants of Götaland, in southern Sweden, but this is, no doubt, erroneous. The Goths seem to have called themselves *gutans*. Tacitus writes *gothones*, Plinius *guthones*, Ptolemy *gotones*. *Gutans* corresponds to the Old English *gotan*, Old Norse *gotar*, Old High German *gozzen*, still preserved in *Gossensass* (= Gotensitz), name of a village in Tyrol. The inhabitants of Götaland in Sweden are called in Old Norse *gautar*, a form which in Gothic would be *gautōs*. Ptolemy writes *gautai*.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Bugge thinks that the Herules were not a single people, but that the name is used as a common designation for all the Scandinavian peoples who took part in the migrations into southern Europe.

<sup>4</sup> The Gautai (Gautar) are mentioned by Ptolemy. Procopius says that they are the most numerous of the thirteen tribes inhabiting Thule.

around Lake Mälaren. They gradually enlarged their dominions until all Sweden was united under the rule of their kings. The Swedes were closely related to the Goths, among whom kingship had reached a much higher development than in western Germany, where the kings were still mere tribal chieftains and leaders of the armed host. Among the Goths the king was the ruler of his people — a national sovereign, who traced his lineage to the gods themselves. This institution of national kingship also obtained among the Swedes, and it is probable that they had adopted it from their Gothic kinsmen. The royal seat and center of the kingdom was Upsala, the oldest and most famous sanctuary in Sweden. The king served also as priest in the great temple there, and this union of the priestly with the royal office must have tended to strengthen greatly the power and influence of the kings of Upsala. They were of the Scilfing family,<sup>1</sup> a royal race which had ruled in Svithiod long before historic times, and were supposed to be the descendants of the god Frey, who, according to tradition, had built the temple at Upsala.<sup>2</sup>

The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, who effected the conquest of England, came from the Cimbric peninsula. The Saxons were a German tribe dwelling north of the Elbe, in what is now Holstein. Ptolemy says that they lived "on the neck of the Cimbric Chersonesus."<sup>3</sup> From the third century they are frequently mentioned by Roman historians as marauders in the North Sea.

North of the Saxons, in what is now Schleswig, dwelt the Angles. Their name is still preserved in *Angeln*, a district in southern Schleswig. They are mentioned by Ptolemy, and Tacitus speaks of them in connection with several other tribes, as worshipers of the goddess Nerthus.<sup>4</sup> King Alfred says that northwest of the Saxons lies the land called Angle (Angeln), and Sillende (Seeland), and a part of the Danes.<sup>5</sup> Bede, in his account of the conquest, says: "From the Angles, that is, from the region which is now called 'Angulus,' and which is said to have remained from that day till now depopulated, lying between the boundaries of the Jutes and the Saxons, came the East Angles, the Mid Angles, the Mercians, and all the race of North-

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes also called Ynglings.

<sup>2</sup> Snorre Sturlason, *Kongesagaer* (*Heimskringla*).

<sup>3</sup> *Geographia*, lib. II., ch. XI.    <sup>4</sup> *Germania*, ch. 40.    <sup>5</sup> Alfred's *Orosius*.

umbrians who dwell north of the river Humber.”<sup>1</sup> They seem to have inhabited the greater part of Schleswig, possibly also some of the Danish islands. They must have migrated to Britain during the conquest, since Bede states that their country was depopulated from that day.

The Jutes are a more obscure people. They have given their name to Jutland, the northern part of the Cimbric peninsula, where they are thought to have dwelt as early as 100 A.D., though they are not mentioned by Ptolemy. They are believed to be the Eudoses mentioned by Tacitus. To them belonged Hengist and Horsa, the chiefs of the Anglo-Saxon host which invaded Britain. The Angles and Saxons were related Low-German tribes, but the Jutes seem to have been of Danish origin.

The Danes inhabited southern Sweden and the Danish isles. The first account of them is given by Jordanes, who says that they came from Scandinavia, and that they drove away the Herules. Procopius states that a part of the Herules returning northward to their old homes came to the ocean; no doubt, the Baltic Sea. From there they wandered through the Danish territories, whence they returned to Thule. From about 500, the Danes entered upon a period of remarkable development and greatness. Their kings, the Skjoldungs (Scyldings), dwelt at Leire in Seeland, where they built the royal hall *Heorot*, celebrated in the Old English poem “*Beówulf*.” In 515 their king Hygelâc (Hugleik) made an expedition against the Hetware near the mouth of the Rhine, where he fell in battle. He is, no doubt, the *Chochilaicus* mentioned by Gregory of Tours and the “*Gesta Regum Francorum*,” who, on an invasion of the lower Rhineland, lost his life in a battle against the Frankish prince Theodebert in 515.<sup>2</sup> In 565 the Danes made another similar expedition westward. They fought many hard battles, especially with the Heathobeards dwelling south of the Baltic Sea. These landed on Seeland at one time, and advanced almost to *Heorot*, but they were defeated by King Hrôthgâr (Roar) and his nephew Hrôthulf (Rolf Krake). Rolf Krake became

<sup>1</sup> Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I., 16.

<sup>2</sup> In *Beówulf* he is called the king of the Geátas, or Gautar, who dwelt in Götaland in Sweden. See Hermann Paul's *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, 2d ed., vol. III., p. 817.



the ideal king and semi-mythical hero of tradition, who is said to have been slain in his royal hall, together with his twelve champions, in a treacherous night attack.<sup>1</sup> The Danes were at this time the most renowned people in the North, though the Swedes rivaled them in warlike achievements, as well as in wealth and power. The Swedish kings<sup>2</sup> waged war with the Danes, and made expeditions into Esthonia, and other regions east of the Baltic. Their royal family was the oldest in the North, and their kingdom, Svithod, had risen into prominence before that of the Danes. No such united national kingdom had yet been founded in Norway as in Sweden and Denmark, but kings ruled here also, and the tribes had formed larger unions in different parts. Jordanes speaks of the Norwegian king Rodulf, who, fleeing from his own country, went to Theoderic the Great in Italy and became his man. Rodulf seems to have ruled over a confederation of tribes in southern Norway.

The Old English poem "Widsith," and more especially "Beowulf," preserves many traces of historic events, and of social life in Denmark and southern Scandinavia in the sixth century. The detailed descriptions of arms and customs given in "Beowulf," no doubt, reflect quite accurately many features of the life of the chieftains and their followers during the sixth and seventh centuries. Heorogâr, Hrôthgâr, and Hâlg are the sons of Healfdene, of the dynasty of the Scyldings (Skjoldungs).

Hrôthulf, son of Hâlg, is the Rolf Krake so famous in Danish tradition. Hrôthgâr builds the hall Heorot at Leire in Seeland, a feature of the tradition which preserves the memory of the power of the Danish kings at that time. Beowulf, a nephew of King Hygelâc, comes with a band of followers to help Hrôthgâr against the monster

<sup>1</sup> See *Hrólfs saga* and Saxo Grammaticus.

<sup>2</sup> A number of remarkable graves have been found at Vendel, a little to the north of Upsala, which are believed to be the graves of ancient Swedish kings. The mode of burial shows that the persons interred here must have been princes of wealth and power. This can be seen, also, from the richly ornamented helmets which have been found in three of the graves. At this time (about 600 A.D.) such helmets were worn only by persons of royal blood. From 1881 till 1893 fourteen of the graves were examined. In all cases the body of the dead person was buried in a boat, together with his helmet, shield, sword, war horse with saddle, dogs and hawks for the chase, food and drink, and all necessary utensils.

Grendel. After the military guards of the coast have permitted him to land, he proceeds to Heorot with his companions. They have shields, helmets, and brynies of ring-mail, and are in every way well armed and trained warriors. They are courteously received, and are entertained in the most hospitable manner.

"Then Wealhtheów, the queen, entered, the lady mindful of good manners. Adorned with golden ornaments she came to greet the guests. She first gave the drinking cup to the king of the Danes, and asked him to partake of their banquet. He gladly took the cup, and accepted the entertainment. She went all about, this highminded lady from the country of the Helmings, and gave gifts to young and old, till the opportunity came when the ring-adorned queen handed the meadcup to the prince of the Geátas, and she thanked God that her wish had been fulfilled, that at last she could expect from an earl help out of their difficulties." — "Beówulf," 608-629.

When Beówulf had succeeded in killing Grendel, there was great joy at Heorot, and many came from far and near to see what had happened. When the festivities at the hall were at their height, a *scop*, or *scald*, arose. Every one became silent, and listened to what he might have to say. He sang of Beówulf's journey, and

"Every old song which he had heard of Sigemund, and of many an unknown heroic deed; about Wølsung's combats and distant journeys, about battles and malice, of which none of the children of men yet knew, save he and Fitela alone." — "Beówulf," 872-880.

Sigemund the Wølsung is the father of Siegfried, or Sigurd, the slayer of Fafnir, so well known from the "Elder Edda," the "Vølsungasaga," and the "Nibelungenlied," and Fitela is Sinfjotle, Sigurd's half-brother.

"Then the king himself, the giver of rings, stepped from his queen's apartment, rich in glory, with an excellent band of followers, and the queen walked with him into the festive hall with her train of maids." — "Beówulf," 920-925.

The cultural life of this period must not be judged by twentieth century standards, still there was among these early ancestors of ours, not only a very considerable civilization in the externals of life,



but intellectual culture and a spirit of refinement were not wanting. They appreciated art and fine manners. They had lofty sentiments and noble virtues, less polished, but, probably, no less vigorous and constant than those which have graced society in later ages.

The Migrations checked the peaceful intercourse which the Germanic peoples had hitherto maintained with the Roman Empire, and the necessity of supplying their wants through their own skill and industry, created by this change, made itself more strongly felt. The ideas and cultural elements which had been borrowed from the Romans could now be better assimilated, and the native mind began



FIG. 34. — Gold bracteate found in Bohuslen.

to put its own impress even on articles of luxury, which were now, to a great extent, produced at home. The gold bracteates of this period bear evidence of this transition from Roman to native industry and art. These are ornaments and amulets of gold made in imitation of Roman coins. Besides the original image of the Roman Emperor they are often ornamented with runes, and sometimes with quite original designs representing Thor driving his goats, or Odin with his horse and ravens. The beautifully decorated helmets, swords, shields, buckles, necklaces, and other articles made by native metal workers show these to have been veritable masters in their art. These articles are made with artistic skill and taste. Some are of pure gold, others of gold-plated bronze, or silver, with ornaments of filigree and inlaid jewels. Pictures on helmets show the style of dress worn both by men and women in this period. The men wore a coat reaching to the knees, and fastened about the waist with a belt. It was edged

with fur, it had sleeves, and was ornamented in various ways. Trousers were also worn. The lady wore a dress, sometimes ornamented in front with embroidered bands. She wore shawl and necklace, while her hair seems to have hung loose over the shoulders.

Different modes of burial prevailed during this period. The bodies of the dead were sometimes burned, and a mound was, as a rule, thrown up over the charred remains, and a rune-stone was erected



FIG. 35. — Rune-stone from Tune, Norway.

on the mound. Sometimes the body, together with weapons and ornaments, was buried in a carefully constructed grave. Over the grave a mound might be constructed, or stones might be set up around it. The dead, both men and women, were often buried in boats. In 1880 a ship was found in a burial mound at Gokstad, near Sandefjord, in Norway, the blue clay of the mound having preserved it from decay. The vessel, which is made of oak planks, is eighty feet long, and sixteen feet wide. It has a mast, and sixteen pairs of oars. Around the ship was hung a row of shields colored black and yellow alternately. A chieftain, no doubt the owner of the vessel, had been buried in it. A burial chamber is constructed in the stern, where the body was placed on a bed furnished with a feather mattress. The grave had been robbed of all

ornaments of precious metals, but a complete supply of articles belonging to the outfit of a ship at that time was found. Among these articles were: several bedsteads, a sleigh, a bronze kettle, and many kitchen utensils; also the bones of twelve horses, six dogs, and some birds, which, evidently, had been sacrificed at the burial. The ship is supposed to date from about 900.<sup>1</sup>

In 1904 another ship was unearthen in a large mound at Oseberg, near Tunsberg, in southern Norway. Two women were buried in it; one of high birth — possibly a queen — the other evidently a maid servant. The ship was packed with goods, both fore and aft. Sev-

<sup>1</sup> N. Nicolaysen, *Langskibet fra Gokstad ved Sandefjord*, Christiania, 1882.



THE OSEBERG SHIP, AND WAGON FOUND IN IT.





eral bedsteads, a sleigh, a four-wheeled wagon, the queen's shoes, and her trunk containing toilet articles were among the objects found. Most of the articles, as, for example, the sleigh and the wagon, are decorated with wood carvings so exquisitely done that they are real treasures of beauty. The ship, which is now fully restored, is sixty-eight feet long, and had been beautifully ornamented. It is more tastefully made than the Gokstad ship, and it is regarded as certain that it is the queen's own pleasure yacht. The find dates from about 800 A.D. Together, the articles present a picture of civilization most interesting and impressive.<sup>1</sup> It is quite evident that the districts around the Baltic Sea, and, more particularly, the Scandinavian countries, possessed a culture superior in many ways to that of any other region of the Continent north of the Alps. The population seems to have been denser here than elsewhere. Nowhere else are the graves from early periods so numerous as in this region, and nowhere are the relics of stone, bronze, and other metal work so tastefully designed, or so skillfully made. When Tacitus says of the Es-thonians that they raise more grain than is otherwise customary among the Germans, it is only another bit of evidence of the superior culture then existing on the shores of the Baltic Sea.

## 6. THE PEOPLE

In 1677-1698 the Swedish scholar Olof Rudbeck published a large work, "*Atlantica s. Manheim vera Japheti Sedes et Patria*," in which he sought to prove that the Atlantis described by Plato was Sweden, the original home of the descendants of Japhet, *i.e.* the Europeans. The work was held in high esteem until more scientific methods were introduced in archæological research. Since then it has been regarded merely as a literary curiosity. The theory that Scandinavia was the original home of the Indo-European race was again revived by K. Penka, who treated the question in a scientific way in his work "*Die Herkunft der Arier*," 1886. The theory that the Indo-Europeans migrated from India into Europe has of late years been discarded by many scholars, who hold that the original home of this family of peoples must be sought in northern Europe. Of recent years some

<sup>1</sup> *Saga-Book of the Viking Club*, London, 1908.



scholars have come to regard the region of the Baltic Sea as the original home of this race. Noteworthy is the theory advanced by Mathæus Much that Europe is the original home of the Indo-Europeans, since, in Denmark and the region of the western Baltic, relics have been found showing every stage of development from the earliest to the latest Stone Age, without break or interruption.<sup>1</sup> This continuous development is not found in southern Europe, or in western Asia. The Indo-Europeans raised cattle, and tilled the soil in their original home, says Much, and the domestic animals which have been thought to come from Asia are, no doubt, native to Europe.

The attempted solutions of this difficult problem will, probably, never be much more than more or less plausible conjectures.<sup>2</sup> A similar difficulty confronts us when we ask how long the Scandinavians have lived in the countries which they now inhabit. Archaeology shows a gradual and unbroken development from the Stone Age to later eras, with no interruption to indicate any invasion or sudden immigration of any new people. This would tend to prove that the Scandinavians have dwelt in their present home since the Younger Stone Age.<sup>3</sup> Philology holds, on the other hand, that the

<sup>1</sup> "Fragt man sich nun, wo sich uns innerhalb des Steinalters die ältesten, die schönsten und am meisten entwickelten, endlich die zahlreichsten Belege für die Thätigkeit und Befähigung in der Herstellung von Werkzeugen bieten, so besteht kein Zweifel, dass dies die Küsten sind, welche Festland und Insel des westlichen Ostseebeckens umsäumen. Hier treten uns die ältesten und einfachsten Zeugnisse entgegen, welche wir nach Abschluss des paläolithischen Steinalters kennen." *Die Heimat der Indogermanen*, p. 18 f. J. Schmidt, *Urheimat der Indogermanen und das europäische Zahlssystem*, Berlin, 1890. Hermann Paul, *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, 2d ed., vol. III., p. 756.

<sup>2</sup> See Eduard Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, 1909. Vilhelm Thomsen thinks that the original home of the Indo-Europeans was somewhere in the great belt between the Hindu-Kush Mountains and the Indus, to the south-east, and the Baltic Sea, including southern Scandinavia, to the northwest; probably in the region of the lower Danube rather than close to the Baltic. India, as well as the south-European peninsulas, Greece, Italy, and Spain, are excluded, as the immigration of the Indo-Europeans to these regions is clearly traceable. Vilhelm Thomsen, *Oldarisk Kultur, Verdenskulturen*, edited by Aage Friis, vol. I., p. 178 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Montelius says: "As shown by finds of later periods, no new people has immigrated into our country after the close of the Younger Stone Age. This proves that the ancestors of the people now living in Sweden dwelt in this country already at that time." *Om Livet i Sverige i Hednatiden*.

peoples now living in the Scandinavian North have migrated into these regions at a much later period.<sup>1</sup> The Norwegians are not a wholly unmixed people, any more than are other European nations of to-day. A considerable foreign element has immigrated into Norway from various countries, at different periods in historic times, and far back of all history there may have been migrations and a consequent mixing of races about which we know little or nothing. The theory that there have been in Scandinavia since prehistoric times two ethnically distinct elements is as old as the "Rígsþula" of the "Elder Edda," which tells of the *thrall*, with his yellow skin and black hair, of the fair-faced and light-haired *karl*, or freeman, and of the *jarl*, with light hair, bright cheeks, and eyes like a serpent. This idea of two distinct racial elements in the Norwegian people has been advanced by many leading scholars and anthropologists, notably by O. Rygh, Montelius, Wibling, A. M. Hansen, and O. Almgren.

The theory of a migration from the east into Scandinavia was held even earlier by Schøning,<sup>2</sup> Keyser,<sup>3</sup> and P. A. Munch.<sup>4</sup> A. W. Brøgger remarks that the older and more commonly accepted form of this theory is not verified by his investigations.<sup>5</sup> What can be shown from

<sup>1</sup> But A. W. Brøgger says: "Neither in Norway nor in Sweden can philology show any immigration of foreign elements in early periods. We only know from the runic inscriptions that a Germanic people lived in Scandinavia in the Older Iron Age. Neither does there exist any probability that any proof of any considerable immigration after the Older Stone Age can be adduced from the archæological material. The conclusion seems, therefore, justified, that an Indo-Germanic people lived in southern Scandinavia also in the Stone Age. But some scholars are still inclined to hold the opinion that an immigration has taken place in the Younger Stone Age." *Skrifter utgivet af Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania*, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> Gerhard Schøning, *Norges Riges Historie; Afhandling om de Norskes og nordiske Folks Oprindelse*.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Keyser, *Om Nordmændenes Herkomst og Folkeslegtsskab, Samlinger til det norske Folks Sprog og Historie*, vol. VI., p. 258 ff.

<sup>4</sup> P. A. Munch, *Samlede Afhandlinger*, vol. I., p. 173 ff., and *Om den saakaldte nyere historiske Skole i Norge*.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. A. M. Hansen advances the hypothesis that in the Older Stone Age a pre-Aryan people lived in Scandinavia, ethnically different from the Indo-Europeans who came later. About 4000 years ago our Aryan forefathers came to Scandinavia. In the period 1000-500 u.c. they settled in Norway. The pre-Aryan inhabitants were not destroyed, but were reduced to subjection and slavery, hence they continued to form a part of the Norwegian people. This pre-Aryan race is the same, he thinks, as the Jonisei-Ostiakian people

archæological finds, thinks Brøgger, is that away back in the Stone Age there were two groups in Scandinavia, ethnically somewhat different. The south Scandinavian group, who at one time must have come from the south, had fixed homes, and were engaged in agriculture. The northern or arctic group inhabited the northern part of the peninsula, and must have come from the east, or north-east. They lived by hunting and fishing. From Sweden they penetrated farther to Trøndelagen, and spread along the coast of Norway from Jæderen to Finmarken. The south Scandinavian group advanced northward, and the northern group were either absorbed or driven out, and ceased to exist as a distinct element. How great the difference was between the two groups, and how far down in time distinct traces of the northern group existed, we do not know. Scientific research has not yet been able to throw full light on these problems, but in so far as it is possible to determine distinct racial traits in modern nations, we are justified in saying that the Scandinavians belong to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European race. Anthropological investigation shows that they have preserved more fully the characteristic Germanic traits than have any other people. Skeletons found in the graves from early periods show them to have been at all times a tall race, and all early accounts describe them as blue-eyed, with light hair and fair complexion. The song "Rígs-pula," of the "Elder Edda," says of the lady whom the god Heimdall visits :

Her eyebrows were light,  
her bosom lighter,  
her neck whiter  
than the white snow.

Of her son it says :

Light was his hair,  
bright were his cheeks,  
and sharp his eyes  
like the serpent's.

still to be found in Siberia. The language of this people is, he thinks, essentially that of the pre-Aryan inhabitants of Norway, and he claims to have discovered a marked resemblance between this language and the Norwegian. See *Aftenposten*, May 22 and 23, 1908. A. M. Hansen, *Oldtidens Nordmænd, Ophav og Bosætning*, Christiania, 1907. Professor A. Thorp shows in



These characteristics have been well preserved to the present time. The first extensive anthropological investigation of the Norwegians was made during the American Civil War. They were then found to be the tallest of all Europeans, the Americans and Indians alone surpassing them in height. In chest measurement they were surpassed by none.<sup>1</sup> For the last thirty-five years the Norwegian recruiting statistics give complete data. A great improvement in the physical condition of the recruits is noticeable during this period. The increase in height has been so marked that the Norwegians are now the tallest of all peoples, surpassing even the Americans in this respect. Military statistics show that the emigration of the last thirty or forty years, which has been thought to be so detrimental to articles in *Aftenposten*, May 27 and June 3, 1908, that Hansen's linguistic theory remains unproven. His theory, in general, has not been accepted by archæologists.

<sup>1</sup> The following figures show the result of these investigations in the Union armies :

	NUMBERS	HEIGHT	CHEST MEASUREMENT
Americans . . . . .	365,670	171.9 cm.	84.9 cm.
Norwegians . . . . .	2,290	171.4 cm.	87.2 cm.
Swedes . . . . .	1,190	169.9 cm.	87.2 cm.
Scotch . . . . .	3,476	170.3 cm.	85.9 cm.
Irish . . . . .	50,537	169.5 cm.	85.8 cm.
English . . . . .	16,186	169.1 cm.	84.8 cm.
German . . . . .	34,996	169.0 cm.	86.1 cm.
French . . . . .	3,243	168.3 cm.	85.9 cm.

	COMPLEXION	
	NUMBERS	DARK-LIGHT RATIO
Scandinavians . . . . .	6,782	2 : 10
Germans . . . . .	89,021	4 : 10
Scotch . . . . .	7,313	4 : 10
English . . . . .	30,037	4 : 10
Irish . . . . .	83,128	5 : 10
Americans . . . . .	544,000	5 : 10
French . . . . .	6,809	10 : 10
South Europeans . . . . .	897	27 : 10



the physical efficiency of the nation, has had the opposite effect. In districts where emigration has been especially heavy, the number of narrow-chested and weak-bodied persons has rapidly decreased, and fewer are now unfit for military service than formerly.<sup>1</sup>

The extreme northern part of Norway is inhabited to a large extent by two peoples of Mongolian race, the Finns<sup>2</sup> and the Kvæns. The Finns are small, the men averaging about five feet in height. Their face is broad, with prominent cheek bones. Their complexion is dark, their hair generally chestnut brown, the growth of beard scant. In the inland districts they live as nomads on their flocks of reindeer, with which they move about from the mountains to the seacoast and back again, as the seasons require. The greater number, however, live in permanent homes near the coast, where they are engaged in fishing. In 1891 the Finnish population in Norway numbered 20,780. Of these 2912 spoke the Norwegian language, the rest still use their own Finnish tongue. The Bible has been translated into their language, and the government has, especially of late years, done much to Christianize and educate them.

The theory that the Finns once occupied the whole of Scandinavia, and that they were gradually forced northward when the Scandinavians entered the peninsula, can no longer be maintained.<sup>3</sup> They seem to have immigrated from Asia at a time when the Scandinavians already dwelt in the peninsula, and they have never occupied a territory much larger than at the present time.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the Norwegian government's official publication, *Norway*, published for the Paris exposition, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> They are also called Lapps.

<sup>3</sup> Sven Nilsson and P. A. Munch held this view.

<sup>4</sup> See W. A. Brøgger's article in *Skrifter udgivet av Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania*, 1909. Also, *Lappernes Fremrykning mod syd i Throndhjems Stift og Hedemarkens Amt*, Yngvar Nielsen, *Det norske geografiske Selskabs Aarboeg*, 1889-1890. When the Finns first entered Scandinavia is a question which is still unsettled. The Danish philologist V. L. P. Thomsen thinks that they are the *Scridefinni* described by Procopius and Jordanes. An account of these *Scridefinni* is also given by Paulus Warnefridus, a Lombard historian, 750-800. See also A. M. Hansen, *Oldtidens Nordmænd*, Christiania, 1907.

The first reliable account of the northern part of Scandinavia and of its non-Aryan inhabitants is given by the Norwegian explorer Æthère (Ottar) to King Alfred the Great of England, of his expedition around the North

The Kvæns are a large and well-built people. Like the Finns, they are found mostly in the two northern provinces, Tromsø and Finmarken. Norway has at different times received immigrants from this Finno-Ugrian race. In the thirteenth century some Per-  
mians came from northern Russia into the Tromsø province, but no trace of them can be found at the present time. More important was the emigration from Finland about 1600 to the forest regions along the eastern borders of Norway. Most of the immigrants settled in Sweden, but some located on the Norwegian side of the border, and the tract has since been known as the Finn-forest. They have now been so far assimilated that only a few individuals speak the Finnish language.

The most important emigration from Finland to the northern provinces of Norway took place in the eighteenth century. It began during the great Northern War, 1700-1720, when the Finns who lived in what was then Swedish territory were so sorely harassed by the Russian soldiery that many fled from their homes. The movement increased about the middle of the nineteenth century, but of late years it has ceased.

## 7. THE DAWN OF HISTORIC NORWAY

Many invaluable finds of relics of antiquity have helped to throw light on the life and customs of the Scandinavian peoples in pre-historic ages, but, valuable as this evidence is, it is circumstantial and indirect. No account was left by the people themselves of their life and institutions, or of the vicissitudes and struggles through which they passed. But about 800 A.D. the silence of the past is broken by the *scalds*, who in their songs celebrate the exploits and great qualities of chieftains and rulers, and recount many important historic events. As an historical source the scaldic songs are of the highest value. The scalds were, as a rule, members of the king's *hird*, or court, and followed him on his military expeditions. They were not only contemporary with the events which they describe, but were often eye-witnesses of, or even partakers in them.

Cape, and his exploration of these northern regions. King Alfred included the report in his translation of *Orosius*. Other valuable early accounts are given by Adam von Bremen, and by the *Egilssaga*.

Another important and, generally, quite reliable source for the early history of Scandinavia are the accounts given of the Norsemen by early writers in other European countries. In many lands old chroniclers have recorded, often with glowing colors, but usually with solemn brevity, the unwelcome visits of the bold warriors of the North. Fragmentary and often one-sided as such accounts necessarily are, they furnish many valuable data regarding the life and doings of the Vikings in foreign lands.

It was left, however, for the saga writers to give comprehensive and detailed accounts of the persons and events during the Viking Age. The *sagas* are narratives written in excellent prose style, and in many instances they are based on the songs of the scalds as a source. Though very similar in form and style, they differ widely in contents and character. Some resemble more closely the historical novel, others are still more imaginative productions, dealing with mythological and heroic elements, while some are history in a strict sense, where the author pursues his narrative with critical method, and with strict regard for truth and accuracy. With consummate skill the writer pictures the character and psychological traits of the persons in the narrative. Life and customs, thoughts, sentiments, social and political institutions, are described with never erring insight, and with nicely measured regard for detail and coloring. The events are narrated with simple straightforwardness, but the circumstances and motives giving rise to them, and the long train of results following them, often lend the story dramatic features cast in a calm and somber epic mold. The sagas which deal with fabulous, or mythological, heroes and traditions are held by many to be a later growth in saga literature. Such are: the "Vølsungasaga," the "Hrólfs saga," the "Ragnar Lodbrokssaga," the "Friðþjófs saga," and others. The earlier sagas were written about distinguished men and their families, for the purpose of recounting their great achievements, and especially for the sake of perpetuating the knowledge of the family relationship so important in all early Germanic society. Many of these sagas furnish important historical material. Among these may be mentioned the "Egilssaga," the "Laxdølasaga," the "Njálssaga," and the "Gunlaugssaga." Sagas were also written about the Norwegian kings, and about discoveries, and colonies founded in the western



islands. "Olafssaga Tryggvasonar," "Olafssaga ins Helga," "Sverrissaga"; "Orkneyingasaga," narrating the history of the Orkney Islands; "Landnámabók," dealing with the colonization of Iceland; "Sigmund Brestissonssaga," containing the early history of the Faroe Islands; and the "Saga of Eirik the Red," or "Thorfinn Karlsevnes-saga" (found in the "Hauksbók"), which tells about the discovery of America by the Norsemen, are among these.

Some authors undertook more ambitious works, and wrote in connected narrative the whole history of Norway from about 850 to their own time. Of such works may be mentioned: "Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium," written in Latin by the monk Thjodrek (Theodricus Monachus), and "Historia Norwegiae," also in Latin, by an unknown author; "Ágrip af Noregs Konungasögum," "Morkinskinna," "Fagrskinna," and, above all, Snorre Sturlason's masterly work, "Heimskringla." Snorre was an historian of high rank. He is a writer of rare ability, and a scholar with historical and critical method. Most of the sagas were written in Iceland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Some were written in Norway, partly by Icelanders, and partly, also, by native sagamen. As the sagas do not always describe contemporary events, but often deal with periods long past, it need cause no wonder that in these narratives the real historic occurrences are often hidden by a growth of fiction which only the most careful critical analysis can pare away. Where the saga writers describe the institutions, life, and customs of their own time, they generally give a most vivid and realistic picture, but in the finer details of historic events it is often difficult to separate fact from fiction, a weakness common to all early historians.

The new period of development which began in the eighth century is heralded by many important changes which show that cultural life in the North had begun a new and more independent growth. The language, which hitherto had been but slightly differentiated from the Germanic tongue, now became a distinct Scandinavian dialect. The runic alphabet of twenty-four characters, common to all Germanic peoples, was replaced in the North by the younger runic alphabet of sixteen characters about 850.

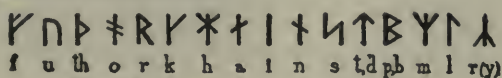


FIG. 36. — Later runic alphabet.



This system is developed from the older runic alphabet, and has been used exclusively in the Scandinavian countries.

At this time, also, began the Viking expeditions, which became of such far-reaching importance to the development of the North. The word *viking* means warrior, not, as hitherto generally held, a dweller by a *vik*, or bay.<sup>1</sup> The word was applied earlier, also, to other Germanic peoples. It is found in the Old English poem "Widsith,"<sup>2</sup> and in South Germany it occurs as a man's given name. From now on it was used to designate the bold Scandinavian sea rovers. Their journeys across the sea into foreign lands, which hitherto had occurred rather sporadically, now took more definite shape. The Scandinavian peoples began a great forward movement eastward, southward, and westward, which can only be regarded as a continuation of the great Migrations. Just when the movement started cannot be definitely stated, neither is it possible to determine with accuracy when it terminated, but it is certain that it began prior to 800, and that about 1050 it had spent its force. This period, called by archæologists the *Younger Iron Age*, is known in history as the *Viking Age*.

Ship-building had reached a high stage of development in the North even prior to this era. The Norsemen had well-constructed sea-going vessels, fitted out with mast and sail. Their home environment pointed to the sea as the surest and quickest road to wealth and conquest. Hitherto it had been regarded as a barrier behind which the peoples could dwell secure, and hamlets and monasteries nestled in profound quiet along the unprotected shores. The Norsemen made it a highway from island to island, and from coast to coast. When their well-equipped fleets, tired of coasting along their own shores, turned their sharp prows westward in search of conquest and adventure, it marked, not only the beginning of the Viking Age, but the dawn of ocean navigation, and the development of naval warfare, which was gradually to produce the formidable navies and the interoceanic commerce of modern times.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Norges Historie*, vol. I., 2d part, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> About 800. "Mid Wenlum ic wæs and mid Wærnum and mid Wicingum."

## 8. THE EARLY VIKING EXPEDITIONS

The Viking expeditions began about 790. The "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" mentions the Vikings even earlier. For the year 787 it records the following:

"In this year King Breohtric married King Offa's daughter Eadburge. And in his days came the first three ships of the Northmen from 'Hereðalande.'<sup>1</sup> . . . These were the first Danish ships which visited the land of the Anglian people." King Breohtric ruled from 787 till 800. The chronicle does not say that the ships came in 787, but in his day.

In 793 the Vikings plundered the monastery of Lindisfarne. They came from the North, that is, from Norway, or the islands north of Scotland. The next year they appeared in Northumbria, where they attacked the monastery of Jarrow, near the mouth of the Tyne, but this time they were driven away. We are also told that in 795 a fleet numbering more than a hundred ships came to South Wales, but they were driven off by King Maredudd. The spirited resistance which they met with may have been the reason why no further attempts were made against England for many years. Instead, they turned their attention to Ireland, and to the islands along the coast, which proved to be an easier prey. In 795 the Norwegian Vikings appeared on the coast of Leinster, where they seized the island of Rachru, which they called Lambay, a name which it still bears. Two years later they took the island Inis-Padraig, which they gave the Norwegian name Holm-Patrick. The home of these Vikings is called "Hirotha" by the Irish annalists, which is, no doubt, a corrupted form of Hereðaland (Hordaland), on the southwest

<sup>1</sup> Hereðaland = Hordaland, on the west coast of Norway. Steenstrup has conjectured that *Hereðaland* is an orthographical mistake for *oferherian þæt land*, but Sophus Bugge has shown that this has nothing to support it. Dr. Todd, in the introduction to the Irish saga *Cogadh Gædhel re Gallaibh* (The War of the Gædhill with the Gaill), points out that the name *Hirotha* or *Irruth* is used in the Irish writings, and he identifies it with Hereðaland. Dr. Zimmer has further shown in "Keltische Beiträge," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*, XXXII., 196-334, that the expression *King Lugir of Hirotha* or *Hereðaland* is found in the Legend of St. Patrick from 807, as well as in the Irish sagas from 800. See Taranger, *Den angelsaksiske Kirkes Indflydelse paa den norske*, p. 17 ff.

coast of Norway. From year to year the ravages were renewed. The shrine of St. Columba in the island of Iona was plundered in 802, and again in 806. The treasures were carried away, and many of the monks were slain. The survivors fled to Ireland, bringing with them the bones of the saint. Lindisfarne and Iona were still regarded as the greatest sanctuaries in the western Christian Church, and the wanton destruction of these holy places filled the minds of the Christian nations of western Europe with an almost superstitious fear of this hitherto unknown enemy.<sup>1</sup>

These early expeditions to the British Isles, which, evidently, came from the west coast of Norway, were undertaken for the sole purpose of plunder. The Shetland and Orkney Islands served as vantage points from which the marauders would sweep down on the unprotected coasts, plunder some town or monastery, and depart with their booty as suddenly as they came. Seldom did the terror-stricken inhabitants offer any effective resistance.

## 9. THE VIKINGS IN IRELAND AND IN THE ISLANDS

The success which the Vikings met with encouraged them to renewed attempts. Year by year their fleets grew larger, and their attacks soon changed from mere piratic forays to well-organized expeditions aiming at conquest and colonization. The year after the

<sup>1</sup> Of especial importance to the student of the Viking period is Johannes Steenstrup's *Normannerne*, Copenhagen, 1876. This is a very scholarly work, the result of a careful examination of all the sources dealing with the expeditions, culture, and institutions of the Vikings, though it cannot be said to be wholly free from a tendency to credit the Danes with achievements which later investigations have shown may with more justice be claimed for the Norwegians.

Of equally high excellence are Professor Alexander Bugge's works: *Vikingerne*, Christiania, 1904; and *Vesterlandenes Indflydelse paa Nordboernes, særlig Nordmændenes ydre Levesæt og Samfundsforholde i Vikingetiden*, Christiania, 1905. These works deal especially with the cultural side of Viking life and history. Among other scholarly works of the highest value must also be mentioned: Gustav Storm's *Kritiske Bidrag til Vikingetidens Historie*, Christiania, 1878. J. J. A. Worsaae, *Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene i England, Skotland og Irland*, London, 1852; *Den danske Erobring af England og Normandiet*, 1863. A. Fabricius, *Danske Minder i Normandiet*, Copenhagen, 1897. Konrad Maurer, *Die Bekehrung des norwegischen Stammes zum Christenthume*, München, 1855. Charles Oman,



sack of Iona they landed on the west coast of Ireland, and destroyed the monastery of Innismurray. From 812 till 814 they appeared far inland in Munster, Ulster, and Connaught, defeating the bands of the Irish kings, and plundering churches and monasteries. Their fleets soon swarmed around all the coasts of Ireland. In 826 they made the first permanent settlement in the county of Meath, and during the next decade they extended their marauding expeditions almost to the heart of the country. In 836 two fleets, numbering in all about sixty ships, sailed up the rivers Liffy and Boyne. Torgils or Turgeis, the great sea-king, was the leader. He became king of all the Norsemen in Ireland, and began a systematic conquest of the country. He built fortified strongholds, both inland and along the coasts, and founded the city of Dublin,<sup>1</sup> which soon became the center and seat of government of the Norwegian colonies in the island. Limerick, a second Norwegian city, was founded on the Shannon River, in the north of Ireland, where Viking colonies were springing up.

Turgeis evidently aimed at destroying Christianity in Ireland; monasteries were destroyed, and churches were plundered and turned into heathen temples. For a while it looked as if the Asa faith would triumph over the Cross, but in 845 the Viking king fell by chance into the hands of Maelsechlainn, high-king of Erin, who put him to death. He was long remembered as the founder of the Viking dominion in Ireland. On these westward expeditions the Vikings had discovered the Faroe Islands, the Orkneys, and the Shetland Islands prior to the year 800.<sup>2</sup> These barren and inhospitable island

*History of England*, vol. I., *England before the Norman Conquest*, 1910. Hermann Paul, *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, 2d edition, vol. III., section XII. Valtýr Guðmundsson and Kristian Kålund, *Skandinaviske Verhältnisse*.

<sup>1</sup> *On the Fomorians and the Norsemen* by Duaid MacFirbis, the original Irish text edited with translation and notes by Alexander Bugge. The obscure village of Ath Cliath had existed there before, but Dublin first came into prominence as a Norwegian city. L. J. Vogt, *Dublin som norsk By*, Christiania, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Jakob Jakobsen, who has made a special study of the nomenclature, and of other remnants of Norse language on the Shetland Islands, claims that the Norsemen must have come to the islands as early as 700. Many place names show word formations which were out of use at the time Iceland was colonized. *Shetlandøernes Stedsnavne, Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1901. See also Alexander Bugge, *Vesterlandenes Indflydelse*, 307 ff.



groups had at the time a few Celtic inhabitants, but the Norsemen took full possession of them, and planted settlements there, and the population soon became wholly Norwegian. The Hebrides, too, were settled. From 820 to 830 the Vikings came in such numbers that the islands were called by Irish annalists "Innse Gall" (*i.e.* the islands of the strangers). The new settlers accepted the Christian faith and culture of the native Celtic population in the Hebrides, but Norwegian customs and mode of life prevailed. The original inhabitants gradually adopted the ways of the conquerors, and Norwegian social organization became general throughout the islands.

#### 10. THE VIKINGS IN FRANCE AND SPAIN

In 810-820 the Vikings began to visit the island of Noirmoutier, near the mouth of the Loire, on the west coast of France. That they came from Ireland, where the Norwegian Vikings were gathering in great numbers, seems the more certain, because the northern coasts of France were not disturbed at this time. In 843 a fleet of sixty-seven ships came to the Loire directly from Norway, and a permanent colony was established on Noirmoutier.<sup>1</sup> They called themselves Westfoldingi, *i.e.* men from Vestfold, in southern Norway. From this base of operations they ascended the Loire, and captured and sacked the city of Nantes. Returning to Noirmoutier with their booty, they made another expedition up the Garonne River in 844, under their leader Asgeir, attacking the cities of Toulouse (844), Bordeaux (848), Nantes and Tours (853). They also ascended the Adour, in Gascogne, as far as to Tarbes, but lost many men in battles with the mountaineers. Leaving southern France for a time, they made an attack on the coast of Spain. After an unsuccessful siege of Lisbon, they followed the coast to Cadiz,

<sup>1</sup> Professor Alexander Bugge has brought quite conclusive proofs that these Vikings on the Loire were Norwegians, and not Danes. See *Morgenbladet*, April 4, 1911. Many of the chieftains of the Loire Vikings are known to have been in Dublin, at that time a Norwegian settlement, such as Baard, who plundered Orleans in 865, Baard and Eirik, who sacked Tours in 903, and Ragnvald, 923-925. Baard Jarl is spoken of as the leader of the Norwegians in their fights with the Danes in northern Ireland in 878. Keary, *The Vikings in Western Christendom*, London, 1891. Du Chaillu, *The Viking Age*, New York, 1890.

plundered the city, and ascended the Guadalquivir to Sevilla, in Andalusia. They besieged the city, and captured the suburbs, but they were unable to take the city itself. In Spain they fought many battles with the Saracens, whose prowess they soon learned to respect. From their settlements on the Loire the Norsemen made repeated expeditions into southern France. In 877 they took permanent possession of a region along the coast, and founded a colony which long maintained its independent existence. The colonies on the Loire acknowledged the supremacy of the Norwegian kings of Dublin, who were regarded as overlords of all the Norwegian colonies in the West.

In 859 a new Viking expedition was fitted out in western France for a voyage to Spain and the Mediterranean Sea, possibly, also, for the purpose of attacking Rome itself. The wealth and glory of the Eternal City must have presented special attractions to these bands of professional warriors, who sought in hazardous adventure both honor and pastime. Danish Vikings seem to have joined with the Norwegians from the Loire colonies in the enterprise, as the renowned Hasting, or Haastein, the son of Atle Jarl in Fjalafylke (Søndfjord), in western Norway, and Ivar Boneless, son of the famous Danish chieftain Ragnar Lodbrok, were the leaders of the expedition. Hasting is well known in the annals of western Europe, which describe him as the incarnation of all that was fierce and terrible in Viking character.<sup>1</sup> Ivar, who later became the leader of the great Viking army which invaded England in 866, was one of the most renowned of Ragnar Lodbrok's sons.

The fleet sailed around Spain to the mouth of the Rhone River, in southern France, where they seized and fortified the island of

<sup>1</sup> The French writer Dudo mentions only Hasting as the leader of the expedition, but Irish annals make it clear that the Danes also took part under the leadership of Ivar, the son of Ragnar Lodbrok.

Ragnar Lodbrok seems to have lived in the early part of the ninth century. He figures as a semi-mythical hero in numerous exploits described in *Ragnar Lodbrokssaga*. Most of these seem to be historical, but many of them have, no doubt, been performed by his sons. According to the saga he was shipwrecked on an expedition to England, and was captured by the usurper Ælla, of Northumbria, who threw him into a pit full of serpents, where he perished. This seems to be an ingenious invention by the saga writer to explain later historic events in England.

Camargue. From here they made an attack on the coast of Italy, where they captured the city of Luna, mistaking it for Rome.

Through these expeditions the Norsemen came into contact with the Saracens in Spain, and communications were established between Dublin and southern Europe. In 844 the Norwegian king in Dublin sent an embassy to Emir Abderrhaman II. of Spain, who, in return, sent the poet Alghazâl as special envoy to the "King of the Pagans" in Ireland. Alghazâl has left an account of his mission, in which he speaks of the many conversations he had with the queen, whom he praises highly for her beauty and courtly manners. When he expressed anxiety lest their conversations should arouse the king's jealousy, the queen replied: "It is not customary with us to be jealous. Our women stay with their husbands only as long as they please, and leave them whenever they choose." "The Vikings brought a large number of Moors as prisoners to Erin," says the chronicle; "these are the blue men in Erin . . . long indeed did these blue men remain in Erin." Commercial relations were also established between Spain and the Norwegian colonies in Ireland, and merchants sailed from Dublin to Spain to buy silk, leather, and costly cloth from the Arabs.

The geographical location of the Scandinavian countries determined, very largely, the routes taken by the Viking bands from each, as well as the localities to which their operations were chiefly confined. Those coming from Norway followed, as a rule, a northerly route, leading to Ireland, Scotland, and the islands in the northern ocean. From Ireland this route led farther to the west coast of France, to Spain, and the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, and there can be little doubt that the hosts who directed their warlike activities to these regions were, in the main, Norwegians, led by Norwegian chieftains.

The Danish Vikings usually followed a more southerly route, leading to Friesland, Flanders, England, and the north coast of France. That Danish Vikings in early centuries took part in the great Migrations is possible. The expedition of Chochilaicus (Hygelâc) into the Rhine country in 515 has already been mentioned, but their powerful kinsmen, the Saxons, dwelling to the south of them, seem to have been an effective barrier against extensive operations in



that direction, and no general movement is noticed before the beginning of the Viking Age. During the reign of Charlemagne, Viking fleets were seen to hover around the northern shores of the Empire, but the energetic Emperor, who discerned the danger, established military posts to guard the coasts. He even ordered fleets to be built, but the order was not carried out. His aggressive policy on the southern borders of Denmark aroused, however, the hostility of the Danes, and King Sigfred gave aid and shelter to those who had rebelled against Charles. In 810 a Danish fleet of 200 ships ravaged Friesland. Later the powerful King Godfred began war against the Emperor, but he was killed by one of his own men in the midst of the campaign (811).<sup>1</sup> While Charles lived, no other general advance against the Empire was attempted, but when he died, the opportunity came. The strength of the Empire was soon lost through weak rulers and internal dissensions; maladministration and disorder prevailed, and the Vikings were quick to seize the opportunity. The attack began in 834, when a Danish fleet sailed to the Rhine, and ascended the river to the rich city of Dorstadt, which was seized and plundered. In rapid succession new attacks were made during the years following. In 837 the Vikings also captured the island of Walcheren. These events led the emperors Lewis the Pious and Lothair to grant Dorstadt, Walcheren, and neighboring districts to a Danish prince, Harald Klak, with the understanding that he should defend the coast of Friesland against the Vikings, but this only served to give them a new foothold. The Danes were soon masters of Friesland, whence they could fit out new expeditions into the wrecked Empire. The Frankish kings, who were unable to meet them on the field of battle, were forced to buy peace by paying a yearly tribute, which was often made oppressively high by the victorious Viking chieftains. In 845 an expedition led by Ragnar Lodbrok captured Rouen, advanced up the Seine, and fortified themselves on some islands in the river. King Charles the Bald hastened to Paris to defend the city, but he failed to bring with him a sufficient military force, and was obliged to seek refuge in the fortified monastery of St. Denis. Most of the inhabitants fled from the city, and the Vikings plundered the suburbs

<sup>1</sup> Jacobus Langebek, *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum*, II., p. 25 ff.



and penetrated far into the neighboring districts, practically unmo-  
lested. Again the old method of buying peace had to be resorted  
to. King Charles agreed to pay Ragnar 7000 pounds of silver on  
condition that he should leave France, and that he should not again  
attack the country. Ragnar returned to Denmark, it seems, but  
new hosts soon appeared under new leaders. Following the large  
rivers, they penetrated far inland, and plundered large districts.  
Paris was again attacked in 857, and once more heavy taxes had to  
be levied to buy off the enemy. The leader of the Viking host now  
operating on the Seine was Bjørn Ironside, a son of Ragnar Lodbrok,  
whom King Charles the Bald sought in vain to drive from his forti-  
fied camp on the island of Oissel, above Rouen. Piratic expeditions  
were constantly undertaken into the neighboring country, and in  
861 Paris was again sacked. King Charles now offered the Norse-  
men on the Somme River 3000 pounds of silver to attack the Viking  
camp on Oissel, and the attack was also made, but the two Viking  
hosts soon came to an understanding, we are told, and left France  
in the spring of 862. The Viking inroads in France continued.  
In 885 a large army assembled on the Seine and laid siege to Paris,  
but they were, finally, persuaded to withdraw upon receiving a  
tribute of 700 pounds of silver. They were, however, allowed to  
advance, and plunder the rich districts of Burgundy. The great  
Viking army met with no real check till it was finally defeated by  
the German Emperor, Arnulf, near Louvain, in 891.

## 11. THE VIKINGS IN ENGLAND

After their first visits to the coasts of England an interval of some  
forty years passed, during which the Vikings made no further at-  
tempt to gain a foothold there. They pressed with vigor their  
conquests in Ireland and France, and England was given a respite,  
during which ample preparation might have been made to meet the  
coming storm. But internal strife between petty kingdoms, and  
ceaseless feuds among princes and other men of quality gradually  
wore down the strength of the Anglo-Saxons, and left them weak  
and disorganized. One thing had been achieved, however, in these  
forty years, which became of far-reaching importance in the coming

struggle. King Egbert of Wessex succeeded in uniting all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in 827, and could now rule as "King of the English." But of more immediate importance than this weak union, and Egbert's precarious supremacy, was the fact that the kingdom of Wessex now became the center of English national life and development, and that a dynasty of kings of superior ability ascended the throne, and made this small kingdom a tower of strength which ultimately broke the force of the coming invasion.

In 834<sup>1</sup> the Vikings began their attack on England in earnest by ravaging the island of Sheppey,<sup>2</sup> at the mouth of the Thames. In 836 they returned to the coast of Wessex with thirty-five ships, and near Charmouth, in Dorsetshire, where King Egbert resided, a bloody battle was fought in which the Vikings were victorious. It is noteworthy that this attack occurred almost simultaneously with the plundering of Dorstadt, and the expeditions against the Frankish kingdom. It can scarcely be doubted that it was the same armed host which operated on both sides of the English Channel, and that the Vikings who now appeared in England were Danes.

In 838 a great fleet came to the land of the West Welsh, made an alliance with them, and attacked Wessex. King Egbert marched against the allies, and defeated them with great slaughter at Hengestdune, near Plymouth, but this was his last exploit. He died the following year, and was succeeded by his son Æthelwulf, a pious and conscientious, but weak man, who was unable to cope successfully with the invaders. After Egbert's death the Vikings began more extensive operations in England. In 840 they made two successful raids on the coast of Wessex, and in the year following they entered the Wash, defeated and slew the ealdorman of Lindesey and plundered his land. They then turned south to ravage the coasts of East Anglia and Kent. London and Rochester were attacked in 842 by a large fleet, and the following summer King Æthelwulf was defeated in the second battle of Charmouth, in Wessex. Northumbria, too, was attacked in 844, and King Redwulf was slain by the invaders.

<sup>1</sup> "Wrongly called 832 by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," says Charles Oman, *A History of England*, 1910, vol. I., p. 399.

<sup>2</sup> Sheppey, *Sceapige* (sheep island).

Norwegian Vikings, too, seem to have taken part in these raids on the English coasts; but, as a rule, no distinction between Norwegians and Danes is made in the early English annals, and it is left for us to draw what conclusions we may from the general direction of the attacks. In 846 a Viking band attempted to land on the coast of Somersetshire, but they were defeated by Bishop Ealhstan and two ealdormen at the mouth of the Parret. The locality of the fight makes it probable that this band, at least, were Norsemen from the coast of Ireland. The "Three Fragments of Irish Annals" states that in the year 851 the Norsemen attacked Devonshire, while the Danes harried Kent and Surrey. This agrees in the main with the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," which records for the same year the fact that the ealdorman Ceorl fought with heathen men in Devonshire, near Wicgeanbeorge, killed many of them, and gained the victory. These raids on the coast seem to have been mere skirmishes preliminary to the more general advance which began in 851, when a fleet of 350 ships entered the Thames River.<sup>1</sup> A force was landed, which captured Canterbury, while the fleet proceeded to London, which was stormed and plundered. The invading host began to spread over the inland districts, but King Æthelwulf and his son Æthelbald arrived with the whole military force of Wessex, and defeated the Vikings in the bloody battle of Aclea. This produced a brief lull in the invasion, but a new host appeared in 854, and, taking up quarters on Sheppey Island, in the Thames, they were now able for the first time to spend the winter in England. Every summer the attacks were renewed, until, in 866, the great Viking army led by Ivar Boneless and Ubbe or Hubba, the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok, arrived and began a conquest which placed the greater part of England under Viking dominion before another decade had passed. This time the attack was directed against Northumbria, which was more torn by internal troubles than any other part of England. Wars between rival candidates for the throne had been waged there constantly for many years, and were still in progress when the Vikings arrived. They mixed merrily in the fight, and made themselves masters of the important city of York, a calamity so great that it even brought the two fighting rivals, Osbeorht and Ælla, to their

<sup>1</sup> *Two of the Saxon Chronicles*, edited by Charles Plummer, p. 64.



senses. They patched up their differences, united their forces, and made an assault upon York in an attempt to recapture the city. But they were both killed, their army was cut to pieces, and Northumbria submitted to the conquerors, 867. In 868 the Viking chieftains advanced with their army to Nottingham, and wintered in Mercia. In 870 they entered East Anglia. King Edmund met them in the battle of Hoxne, but lost both his army and his life. The story is told that he was captured, and, being unwilling to pay tribute, and to submit to Ivar Boneless, he was tied to a tree and shot to death with arrows. This may be true, since he was worshipped as a saint not long after his death. The Danes at York invited the Norwegian kings Ivar and Olav of Dublin to join in the conquest of England. They accepted the invitation, harried northern England, and captured Dumbarton on the Clyde; but they soon had to return to Dublin to defend their own dominions against the Irish. In 870 a large army came from Denmark to join in the conquest. It was led by Halvdan (Halfdene), Hubba (Ubbe), Guthrum (Guttorm or Gorm), and many other kings and jarls. The next year they advanced through Mercia to attack Wessex, and pitched their camp at Reading, which they took care to fortify. A fierce campaign was now fought. The men of Wessex, led by King Æthelred and his younger brother, Alfred,<sup>1</sup> advanced to attack them, and a series of sharp engagements were fought which forced the Danes to retire to their fortified camp at Reading. An attempt to take the camp by assault proved unsuccessful, and the English were driven back with great slaughter. The Danes now emerged from their camp, but were again met by Æthelred and Alfred on the hills of Æscesdun (Ashdown), where they were defeated, after a desperate battle in which the young Alfred especially distinguished himself. The Danes lost one of their kings, Bægsceg, five jarls, and many thousand men. The remaining king, Halvdan, shut himself up in the camp at Reading with the remnant of his army to await reën-

<sup>1</sup> Æthelwulf died in 858, and was succeeded by his four sons :

Æthelbald, 860 ;

Æthelbert, 866 ;

Æthelred, 871 ;

Alfred the Great, 871-900.



forcements. In two weeks he was again able to take the field, fighting a successful engagement at Basing, and the battle of Bedwyn soon followed, in which the Danes were again victorious. King Æthelred died shortly after from wounds received in the battle, as it seems, and Alfred the Great succeeded to the throne of Wessex. As he had but a small army, and no navy, he was forced to buy peace from the victorious Vikings. They received a tribute, and withdrew from Wessex, and the kingdom was left unmolested for about four years. During this time Alfred began to organize a navy, which in future contests was to develop strength and efficiency in the hard school of sharp naval warfare with the powerful Viking admirals, who regarded the sea as their own undisputed domain.

The Viking army, after leaving London and subjugating Mercia, was divided into two parts, one under King Halvdan, and the other under Guthrum, Aasketil, and Aamund. Halvdan raided Bernicia, Strathclyde, and parts of Scotland, and settled permanently at York, in 875. The other part of the army camped in Mercia. All England was now in the hands of the invaders, save the kingdom of Wessex, south of the Thames.

During the eighty or ninety years which had passed since the first Viking bands visited the shores of England, great changes had taken place both in the extent and character of their operations in foreign countries. The early piratic attacks changed in time into well-planned expeditions undertaken by large fleets and armies bent on permanent conquest. Wars were waged which were often attended by wanton destruction of life and property, but the Vikings now fought for the purpose of gaining full dominion over territory in which they wished to live and rule. They were no longer a mere destructive force. The conquest once accomplished, they settled down to till the soil, to build cities, and to develop the country. In the various pursuits of peace they often showed an energy, a practical insight, and a talent for organization not exhibited by the native inhabitants. In many fields they exerted a stimulating influence which made future progress possible. During the winter which King Halvdan spent in London after retiring from Wessex, he minted coins bearing sometimes his own name, sometimes that of the city. The designs were later used on English coins struck by Alfred the

Great, and by Ceolwulf, king of Mercia. In 875 Halvdan took up his permanent abode in York. The "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" states that he portioned out the lands of Northumbria, and that his followers henceforth continued to plow and to till them. Every Dane received his allotment of land, while the original inhabitants continued to exist as a dependent class. According to Viking custom York was strongly fortified, and became again the great city which it had been in the days of Roman dominion in Britain. This custom of walling in the cities, and of building fortified strongholds, which was so important, both in warfare and for the development of cities, was first introduced into England by the Vikings. The coining of money was also carried on here, and the crude copper coins heretofore used were soon replaced by coins of silver. Deira, the southern part of Northumbria, was organized into the Danish kingdom of York, while Bernicia, the northern part, was tributary to the kings of York, but formed no integral part of their kingdom.

## 12. ALFRED THE GREAT AND THE VIKINGS

After Alfred had entered into an agreement with the Vikings, Wessex enjoyed peace for some years, but in 875 the Viking host was again collected for a new attack on the kingdom. The invaders marched across Wessex to Wareham, on the south coast, where they constructed a fortified camp. Alfred met them here with a large force, and the two armies lay watching each other for some time. The Danes finally agreed to depart if they received a tribute, and a treaty was concluded, but a part of their force escaped from Wareham and marched to Exeter, which they seized and fortified. Alfred followed close on their heels, and besieged the town. The remainder of the force at Wareham soon evacuated their camp and put to sea to join their besieged companions, but their fleet was destroyed in a storm, and the detachment at Exeter, being hard pressed by Alfred, promised to leave Wessex. Alfred allowed them to depart, and they advanced into Mercia, where they forced King Ceolwulf to give them a large part of his kingdom. This land was divided among many jarls; the five most important divisions being: Stamford, Lincoln, Derby, Nottingham, and Leicester, which were later known

as the "Five Boroughs." All the divisions formed together a loose confederacy embracing the eastern half of Mercia.

The great Viking army was still kept united under the command of King Guthrum (Guttorm). Aided by other forces operating in the Irish Sea, they again advanced to attack Wessex. An auxiliary squadron was led by Hubba (Ubbe), a brother of Halvdan and Ivar Boneless, and Guthrum began his campaign in the middle of January, 878. The unexpected attack at this season of the year caused the greatest panic. Many fled the country without thinking of resistance, and King Alfred with his military household was forced to take refuge on the island of Athelney,<sup>1</sup> in the Parret River in Somerset. During the remaining months of the winter of 878 the Vikings were masters of all Wessex, but when spring came, the tide began to turn. Hubba fell in Devonshire in an attack on the English stronghold Cynuit, and his force was cut to pieces. Shortly after Easter, Alfred left Athelney, gathered all forces possible, and attacked the Danish army at Ethandun, gaining a complete victory. Guthrum submitted, and received baptism with twenty-nine other leaders. The treaty concluded received its name from the royal manor of Wedmore, where the baptismal feast was celebrated. According to its stipulations, a region including Northumbria, East Anglia, and all central England east of a line stretching from the mouth of the Thames River along the River Lea to Bedford, along the Ouse to Watling Street, and along Watling Street to Chester, was ceded to the Vikings. This region was henceforth known as the "Danelag" (Danelaw). Guthrum seems to have carried out quite faithfully the agreement entered into. He left Wessex, and took possession of East Anglia and Essex, where he founded a kingdom similar to that established in York by King Halvdan. He took part in Viking expeditions to France, and even aided Danish Vikings operating on the coast of England, but he never again attacked Wessex. He died in 890. After the treaty of Wedmore, in 878, Alfred's kingdom enjoyed comparative peace until 892, when the "Great Army" undertook a

<sup>1</sup> The well-known story that Alfred, in the darkest hour of his misfortunes, was alone; that he found shelter in a cowherd's hut, where the episode with the burned cakes occurred, is found in late chroniclers. It is surely nothing but fiction, like many similar stories often invented to adorn the lives of great men.



new invasion of England. This permanently organized host of Danish Vikings had been operating in Brabant and Flanders, where it had been defeated by Emperor Arnulf, in 891. The names of the leaders of the "Great Army" are not mentioned, but it was joined by a smaller detachment of eighty ships, evidently coming from the Norwegian colonies on the west coast of France led by the famous Viking chieftain Hasting. The war lasted for three years, but the Vikings could gain no permanent advantage over Alfred's well-organized armies. Alfred captured their fleet, and besieged them closely in their camps. Finally, worn out by fruitless fighting, the "Great Army" broke up, and joined their countrymen in East Anglia and Northumbria, but a detachment sailed across the sea to the Seine. These must have been the Norsemen under Hasting, with whom Alfred seems to have concluded a treaty of peace. Alfred had broken up the great organized host of invasion, and had created an efficient fleet which was able to cope successfully with Viking detachments along the coast. Hasting left England in 897, and the peace was not again disturbed during the remaining four years of Alfred's reign.

King Halvdan of York had ruled his kingdom only one year (876-877), when he was expelled by his own people. His successor, Gudrød, died in 894, and Knut, who was then placed on the throne, had to share his authority with the Norwegian jarl, Sigurd, who had gained great power in northern Scotland. This shows that there were Norsemen, as well as Danes, in the Viking kingdom at York, an assumption which is borne out by the many names of Norwegian origin found in Northumbria.<sup>1</sup> Snorre Sturlason says in the "Heimskringla" that Northumbria was mostly settled by Norsemen after the sons of Lodbrok had conquered the land. Norwegians and Danes must often have fought side by side, and, the conquest once completed, a period of immigration followed in which men and women from both countries flocked across the sea to settle in the new and inviting land which they had won. During the first stages of the struggle the invading armies were almost exclusively Danish, but the Nor-

<sup>1</sup> Of Norwegian origin are names ending in *-fell* (fjeld = mountain), *-haugh* (haug = hill), *-tarn* (= lake), *-force* (foss = waterfall), *-nes* (= peninsula), etc.



wegian element must have grown rapidly in importance, especially in the North, and their leaders soon gained the ascendancy in Northumbria.

### 13. NAMES APPLIED TO THE VIKINGS

Long before the beginning of the Viking Age the Gautar (Götar), Swedes, and Danes seem to have been quite well known as distinct peoples, occupying clearly defined regions of the Scandinavian North. The names are used frequently both by early Old English authors and by Latin writers of the early centuries of the Christian era.<sup>1</sup> But *Norway*, as a term applied to the western half of the Scandinavian peninsula, and *Norsemen*, or *Norwegians*, as a name used to designate all the inhabitants of this region, are terms which do not occur till in the Viking period. The notice in the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" for the year 787, already mentioned elsewhere, uses the name *Norðmanna*: "On his dagum comon III scipu Norðmanna of Hereðalande." King Alfred uses the name *Norðmenn* in his writings (880-900), and Ôhthère (Ottar), the Norwegian explorer, who stayed at his court, uses the names *Norðmannaland* and *Norðweg* for the whole of Norway.<sup>2</sup> The Irish monk Decuil, who wrote in 825, states that the Irish monks on the Faroe Islands had to flee because of the *Latronum Normannorum*. It seems, then, that these names must have been quite commonly used about 800. Norway (Noregr, Norvegr, Norge) means the northern way, and Norsemen, men from the North. These names seem first to have been applied to the Norwegians and their country by their neighbors in southern

<sup>1</sup> The author of *Beowulf* must have been singularly well informed regarding the early history of Denmark and southern Scandinavia. He gives a detailed account of the royal houses, of family relationship, and of political and military affairs, such as we can only find in the sagas several centuries later. The author of the poem *Widsith* shows a similar knowledge of the peoples and countries of the North:

"Ic wæs mid Húnum and mid Hrēðgotum,  
mid Sweóm and mid Geátum and mid Suðdenum.  
Mid Wenlum ic wæs and mid Wærnum and mid Wfeingum."

<sup>2</sup> Hē sæde ðæt Norðmanna land wære swýðe lang and swýðe smæl. . . . Þonne is þis land oð hē cymð tó Sciringesheále, and ealneweg on þæt bæcbord Norðweg." Alfred, *Orosius*. See also Gustav Storm, *Kritiske Bidrag til Vikingetidens Historie*, Christiania, 1878.

Sweden and Denmark. On the Continent the Vikings, both Danes and Norwegians, were, as a rule, called Northmen, or Norsemen, while in England and Scotland they were called Danes.<sup>1</sup>

In Ireland they were called Gall (strangers) or Normanni (Norsemen). Later, when the Danes also began to harry the country, the Irish called the Norsemen Fiinn-Gall (fair strangers), and the Danes Dubh-Gall (dark strangers). The country whence the Norsemen came is called Lochlann (the land of the fjords) by the Irish annalists already in the ninth century. From this word a new name was in time formed for the Norwegian Vikings, namely Lochlannac or the people from Lochlann.<sup>2</sup>

#### 14. STRUGGLE BETWEEN NORSEMEN AND DANES IN IRELAND

The Norwegian Vikings overran Ireland with astonishing rapidity. Shortly after the close of the eighth century they were found in nearly every part of the island. Dr. Zimmer says:<sup>3</sup> "If we read the annals of the period 795-950, we are compelled to ask if there were a cloister, a lake, a mountain, a valley, a brook on the island where the Vikings had not been, or where they had not dwelt in great numbers for a longer or shorter period." Year by year colonists arrived with their families from Norway to take possession of districts where the army of conquest had gained more or less firm control. The Irish

<sup>1</sup> The reason why the Vikings were called Northmen in France, and Danes in England, seems to have been the fact that the first Viking hosts which invaded western France were Norwegians, while the first invasion of England was made by the Danes. The names have then come into use as a general designation for all strangers of the same type. In a similar way the name of the Alemanni, a tribe in southern Germany, has become in French *Allemands* (Germans), *Franks* has become French, and *Angles*, English. This is the view of the Norwegian historian Gustav Storm. The Danish historian Steenstrup holds that the people on the Continent called them Northmen because they came from the North. He also cites parallels: The Norwegians were called Eastmen (*Austmenn*) by the Icelanders, and the Norwegians called the Irish Westmen (*Vestmenn*), and the Germans Southmen (*Suðrmenn*).

Concerning the names applied to the Vikings, see also *Afhandler om hvilke Benævnelser Landet, Folket og dets Sprog findes tillagte, Samlinger til det norske Folks Sprog og Historie*, vol. II, p. 379 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See L. J. Vogt, *Dublin som norsk By*, Christiania, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum und Literatur*, vol. 35.

were warlike, and could often meet the invaders in overwhelming numbers, but they were unable to carry on a successful campaign of defense for want of systematic organization. It would have required the united strength of the whole country to withstand so formidable an invasion, but the obsolete Irish clan system stood in the way of centralization of power, and of effective coöperation in the common cause. The high-king (Ard Righ) was indeed regarded as over-king of all Erin, but his exalted station was at the time an empty title which carried with it no real authority. Civil strife between hostile clans and petty princes was the normal condition throughout all Ireland. Many of the natives even abandoned Christianity, and joined the Vikings, aiding them in the attacks upon their own country. They were called "Gall-Gædhel" or "Irish strangers." The Irish people often fought with reckless bravery, and gained many a victory over the enemy, but their planless efforts could not stay the progress of the invaders. Not till complete subjugation or ultimate extermination stared them in the face did they think of seeking refuge where alone it can be found under such circumstances, in unselfish and systematic coöperation; and even then the lesson was but indifferently learned.

The Norsemen operated, on the whole, with skill and caution, employing tactics which we have observed in Viking expeditions elsewhere. With their fleets they entered the fjords and estuaries, where they constructed fortified camps, or founded cities, and built strong castles, as at Dublin. Sometimes they would establish their camps and naval stations on islands near the coast, where they could not be attacked by the Irish, who possessed no war vessels of any kind. From such a fortified base of operations they would ascend the rivers to the lakes of the interior, where they would build other strongholds at well-selected strategic points, from which they were able to control the neighboring districts with a comparatively small force. Turgeis sent a part of his fleet up the Bann River into Loch Neagh, in the northeastern part of Ireland, and with another part he ascended the Shannon River to Loch Ree, in the very heart of the island, where, according to the annals, he built a number of strongholds. Their firmest hold was on the coast region, where colonists and reinforcements could be received at any time. In the shelter of their camps



at Strangford, Carlingford, Dublin, Wicklow, Limerick, and other places, permanent Norwegian colonies sprang up which, in course of time, extended themselves along the coast from the Boyne River to Cork, while more isolated areas were settled at Dundalk and Limerick. The numerous Norwegian names of islands, bays, headlands, cities, and localities along the Irish coast, which in anglicized form have been preserved to the present time, attest to the thorough and permanent occupation of these parts by the Norsemen.<sup>1</sup>

#### 15. THE VIKING EXPEDITIONS EASTWARD. FOUNDING OF THE RUSSIAN KINGDOM. THE VARANGIANS IN CONSTANTINOPLE

When the Scandinavians entered into communication with the peoples dwelling east of the Baltic Sea cannot be determined, but it is quite certain that such an intercourse existed from very early times, since even the oldest historic traditions mention expeditions made by Swedish kings to the countries across the Baltic. The first account of the old Yngling dynasty is given by the Norwegian scald Thjodolv af Hvin<sup>2</sup> in his song "Ynglingatal."<sup>3</sup> Among the old kings of Svitið here mentioned is Vanlande, a great warrior who visited many foreign lands, and at one time spent the winter in Finland.

<sup>1</sup> Present Form: Dublin	Norse Form: Dyflinn
Present Form: Dalkey	Norse Form: Dalkey
Present Form: Glandore	Norse Form: Grandeyrr
Present Form: Waterford	Norse Form: Veðrafjörðr
Present Form: Ireland	Norse Form: Írland
Present Form: Limerick	Norse Form: Hlymrek
Present Form: Howth	Norse Form: Høfuð
Present Form: Carlingford	Norse Form: Kerlingarfjörðr
Present Form: Strangford	Norse Form: Strangifjörðr
Present Form: Smerwick	Norse Form: Smjörvik
Present Form: Wexford	Norse Form: Veisufjörðr
etc.	etc.

<sup>2</sup> Thjodolv af Hvin was born in southern Norway about the middle of the ninth century, and lived at the court of the Norwegian king Harald Haarfagre.

<sup>3</sup> The elaborate account of the Yngling dynasty given by Snorre Sturlason in his *Heimskringla* is based on Thjodolv's poem, which, however, is quite brief. Where Snorre got the more detailed information is not known. The old Swedish dynasty is usually called Seifings.



Agne, another king of the same dynasty, subjugated Finland, and brought with him home the daughter of the Finnish prince. Ingvar and his son Anund, two other kings of the Yngling family, made expeditions to Esthonia, and brought great booty home. These traditions point to a connection between Scandinavia and the regions east of the Baltic in very early ages. This is further verified through the more reliable evidence of archæological finds, which prove that the Scandinavians must have paid frequent visits to the eastern shores of the Baltic, that their civilization was transplanted to those regions, and that they must have founded settlements there in many places. These finds are especially numerous in Tavastland and Satakunda, in southern Finland, but they have also been made in many other places.

Of special interest is the account given by the Russian chronicler Nestor of the founding of the kingdom of Russia by the Swedes. Nestor was a monk in Kief in the latter part of the eleventh century. He tells the story as follows: "In the year 6367 after the creation of the world (859 A.D.),<sup>1</sup> the Varangians<sup>2</sup> came across the sea and exacted tribute from the Tchouds and the Slavs, from the Merians, Vesses, and Krivitches. In the year 6370 (862 A.D.) they (*i.e.* the Slavs) drove away the Varangians across the sea, paid them no tribute, and began to rule themselves; but disorder prevailed. One tribe rose against the other, there was enmity between them, and they began to wage war on each other. Then they said to each other: 'Let us get a prince who can rule over us, and who can judge rightly.' And they went across the sea to the Varangians, to the Russians, for so the Varangians are called, while some are called Swedes, others Norsemen, others Angles, and Goths. And the Tchouds, the Slavs, the Krivitches, and the Vesses said to the Russians: 'Our land is

<sup>1</sup> The Byzantine and Russian annalists used the Constantinopolitan era, counted from the creation of the world. The year began Sept. 1st. The birth of Christ was supposed to have occurred in the year 5509 of that era. This number subtracted from the given number of years gives the year of the Christian era.

<sup>2</sup> Russian *Varjag*, Byzantine *Varangoi*, Arabic *Varank*, Scandinavian *Væring*, O. N. plu. *Væringjar*, O. N. *vár* = a pledge or oath, A. S. *wær*. Varangians or Værings signify those who have pledged themselves, evidently to a chief or leader.

large and fertile, but there is no order there; come, therefore, and rule over us.' Three brothers were chosen, and they took with them all the Rus, and they came. And the oldest, Rurik, settled in Novgorod, and the second, Sineus, at Biélœ-Ozéro, and the third at Izborsk; his name was Trouvor. From these Varangians the Russian kingdom received its name; that is the Novgorodians; these are the Novgorodian peoples of Varangian descent; before the Novgorodians were Slavs. After two years had passed, Sineus died, and also his brother Trouvor. Rurik then became ruler in their stead, and gave cities to his men; to one he gave Polotsk, to another Rostof, to a third Biélœ-Ozéro. Into these places the Varangians had immigrated; the former inhabitants in Novgorod being Slavs, in Polotsk Krivitches, in Rostof Merians, in Biélœ-Ozéro Vesses."

The Frankish annals tell of an embassy sent by the Byzantine Emperor, Theophilos, to the Frankish Emperor, Louis the Pious. Along with this embassy came some men who said that they were from a people by the name of Ros,<sup>1</sup> that they had been sent as messengers by their king to the Emperor at Byzantium, and wished now, with Louis' aid, to return to their own country, because the route which they had followed to Constantinople led through the lands of strange and barbarous peoples, where it was very dangerous to travel. Upon closer investigation Louis found that they were Swedes.<sup>2</sup>

That Rurik and his followers, the Varangians, or Russians, came from Scandinavia is seen also from the great number of names of unmistakable Scandinavian origin in early Russian history. The names of Rurik's successors, Oleg and Igor, are but slightly altered forms of the Scandinavian names Helge and Ivar, or Ingvar. The representatives sent by these rulers to conclude peace with the Byzan-

<sup>1</sup> The Varangians or Ros (Russians) probably came from Roslagen in Sweden. *Ros* or *Rus* is thought to mean rowers. The seacoast districts of Uppland and Östergötland in Sweden were in olden times called *Röfer* (*Robin*), and had to furnish rowers for the *leding*, or military expeditions at sea. From these words the form *Rus* (Russian) seems to have been evolved. Alexander Bugge, *Vesterlandenes Indflydelse*, p. 132. V. L. P. Thomsen, *The Relations between Ancient Russia and Scandinavia, and the Origin of the Russian State*. P. A. Muneh, *Samlede Afhandlinger*, vol. II., p. 184 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*. See R. Keyser, *Om Nordmændenes Herkomst og Folkeslægtskab, Samlinger til det norske Folks Sprog og Historie*, VI., 259 ff. Also P. A. Muneh, *Samlede Afhandlinger*, II., 184 ff.

tine Emperor in 912 and 945 had Scandinavian names. As examples may be mentioned: Karl, Inegeld, Ivar, Vuefast, Uleb, Bern, Schigbern, Turbern, Grim, Kol, Sven, Gunnar, etc.<sup>1</sup> As late as in the eleventh century the name Oleg was still used in the Russian dynasty.

In the beginning Novgorod or Holmgard was the chief city in the new Russian kingdom, but soon Kief grew into great importance, and became the real capital.

Great trade routes were opened along the Volga to Astrakhan, and along the Dnieper to the shores of the Black Sea. Here the Varangians met the Arab tradesmen, and a lively commercial intercourse sprang up, through which a great number of coins and other articles of value were brought to Scandinavia.<sup>2</sup> Kief, which was situated on this main trade route, reached its highest splendor in the time of King Jaroslaf. He wished his capital to rival Constantinople, and Kief became famous as the "city of four hundred churches."

The Varangian prince Ivar of Novgorod concluded a treaty of commerce with the Emperor of the Byzantine Empire, and traders and slave dealers carried on a steadily growing traffic along the Volga and the Dnieper to Novgorod and the shores of the Baltic Sea.<sup>3</sup> Many names of towns and waterfalls along these routes still preserve the memory of the Scandinavian traders and travelers who sojourned in those regions in ages past.<sup>4</sup> As an illustration may be mentioned

<sup>1</sup> The Scandinavian forms are: *Karl, Ingjald, Ivar, Vigfast, Ulf, Björn, Sigbjörn, Torbjörn, Grim, Kol, Sveinn, and Gunnar.*

<sup>2</sup> Especially interesting are the Kufic coins, brought to the North in great numbers. These are generally counterfeit coins minted in Central Asia in the tenth century. They are made of copper, and are coated with silver.

A grave opened at Tchernigof contained the remains and weapons of an unknown prince of the tenth century. He was, no doubt, a Varangian. His helmet and coat of mail resemble quite exactly the armor of the Vikings.

<sup>3</sup> An interesting illustration of the slave trade of this period is the pathetic story in the *Laxdølasaga* of Melkorka, an Irish princess sold as a slave to Hoskuld Dalakollsson of Iceland.

<sup>4</sup> One of the most interesting early accounts of the Russians is given by Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus in his work *De Administrando Imperio*, written in the middle of the tenth century. He tells how they descended the river Dnieper in boats, and that they carried their boats past the waterfalls. The names of these waterfalls are given both in Slavic and Russian, with Greek translation, and the Russian forms are clearly of Scandinavian origin. The names of the second and third, for example, are written Οὐλβόρη and Γελαυρη = O. N. *Ulforsi* and *Gjallandi* (the noisy waterfall).



Bjarkowitz, a Russian form of the Scandinavian Bjarkø, an island near the coast of Ingermanland, where a trading station was located. The kings of Sweden and Norway were related to the Russian princes through marriage, and often sent them troops when needed, or they sought refuge with them in times of trouble at home. A lively intercourse between Scandinavia and Russia, or Gardaríke, as it was usually called in the North, continued till the death of Jaroslaw in 1045. The Slavs then gained the ascendancy, and Scandinavian influence in Russia came to an end. Through the Varangians these dark and far-off regions were brought into the daylight of history; colonies were founded, cities were built, commerce and government were established, and this hitherto unknown domain was opened to the forces of civilization and progress. Russia became under Varangian rule a European kingdom, aspiring to rival in culture the nations most advanced in those times, something that cannot be said of Russia through many centuries after the Scandinavians had ceased to rule.

After having penetrated the wilds of Russia, and established permanent communication with the Black Sea, it was comparatively easy for the enterprising Vikings to push across that sea to Constantinople, or Myklegard (the great city), as they called it. Nestor says that a number of Varangians in the service of Vladimir the Great of Russia became dissatisfied and went to Constantinople. This is said to have happened about 980, but these were not the first Varangians in the Byzantine Empire. The Emperor had already at that time an army of Scandinavian warriors who served, not only as his bodyguard, but were also used in active warfare in different parts of the Empire. Most famous of all the Scandinavians in Constantinople was Harald Sigurdsson, son of the Norwegian king, Sigurd Syr, and a half-brother of King Olav Haraldsson (St. Olav). He became chief of the Varangians in Constantinople, and took part in many campaigns in Syria, Armenia, Palestine, Sicily, and Africa. He captured many fortified cities, and gathered immense treasures. Snorre says that there was a law, that when the Greek Emperor died, the Varangians should have *polata-svaro*.<sup>1</sup> They were then allowed to go through all the royal palaces where the treasures were

<sup>1</sup> *polata* = *palatium*. *polata-svaro* = robbery of the palace.



stored, and take what they could seize with their hands. Harald Sigurdsson had three times taken part in such a *polata-svaro* in Constantinople. He returned to Novgorod with great treasures,

married King Jaroslav's daughter, and became later king of Norway. As such he is known as Harald Haardraade.

An object which preserves in an interesting way the memory of the Vikings in the Byzantine Empire is the great marble lion from Piræus, now standing at the entrance to the arsenal in Venice, where it was brought by the Venetians in 1687, after they had captured Athens. On this monument is found a delicately carved runic inscription in the snake-loop design so familiar from Scan-



FIG. 37. — The marble lion of Piræus with runic inscription.

dinavian rune-stones. The characters are so nearly effaced that the inscription cannot be read, but it silently points to the days when Harald Sigurdsson and the Varangians served the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople and Jerusalem, and measured swords with the Saracens in Asia and Africa.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Harald Haardraade og Væringerne i de græske Keiseres Tjeneste*, Gustav Storm, *Norsk Historisk Tidsskrift*, anden række, 4, 1884. *Nordboernes Forbindelse med Østen i det niende og nærmest følgende Aarhundreder*. Carl C. Rafn, *Antiquarisk Tidsskrift*, 1852-1854, Copenhagen. P. A. Munch, *Samlede Afhandlinger*, vol. I., p. 505 ff.

## 16. LIFE AND CULTURE OF THE VIKING AGE

Intellectual culture is a complex and delicate fabric into which the fibers of experience and the finer filaments of secret and mysterious influence are deftly woven. Social environment and native talent fashion the texture, but the threads have been brought from many climes, and every age has been laid under tribute. Wherever higher culture has been produced, a process of absorption of new elements, an accumulation of new experience, a borrowing and importation, have freely taken place. The stimulus produced by the new, with the attendant reaction of the native mind upon it, primarily determines all new cultural growth. The Greeks borrowed from the Orient, the Romans from the Greeks; from both came culture and Christianity to the rest of Europe. Even the far North had felt the thrill of this influence long before the Viking Age began, but the process of absorption of new elements had been slow, and the development uneventful. No sudden changes are noticeable till the Migrations sweep over Europe, and roll high the billows of general tumult and upheaval. The quickening effect of this great movement tore the peoples of the North from their ancient moorings, and as Vikings they burst forth, adding new terror to this dark and bloody period. In this first outburst of pent-up energy and unrestrained passions we see the worst instincts of a primitive race let loose in savage warfare which often throws the deepest shadow on the pages of Viking history. But justice even here constrains us to admit that it is but a shade deeper than a similar shadow which falls over the history of all human warfare. To consider minutely all the acts of vandalism and cruelty perpetrated by the Vikings would not even give us the satisfaction of having shown that their system of plunder and bloodshed differed essentially from that of the Roman generals, of the pious crusaders, the defenders of the faith, and most Christian princes of later, and more enlightened, ages. It must also be borne in mind that on these expeditions we meet the Vikings as warriors, and that the outrages often committed can furnish no adequate criterion for judging their life and culture in general.

The nature of the Viking campaigns furnishes an easy explanation of the panic which seems to have seized the inhabitants of the coun-

tries exposed to their attacks. A cruel fate usually befell the towns and cities they seized. Not only did they kill and plunder, and carry women off into slavery, but they spared no sanctuary, and nothing holy could stay their rapacious and destructive hands. When the battle was over, and the victory won, they would celebrate the event in drunken carousals in which the skulls of their fallen enemies often served as wine bowls, and other acts equally gruesome were committed, which might well strike Christian hearts with horror. Even human beings are known to have been sacrificed to the gods, and when a city was taken, children would be transfixed with spears, and "given to Odin" amid wild outbursts of triumphant rejoicing. If we add that by means of their fleets they could depart at will, only to reappear at the most unexpected moments, that the inhabitants often felt powerless over against this dreaded enemy, we can understand the people's superstitious fear, the sad laments and exaggerated stories of the old writers, and the prayers offered up in the Christian churches: "From the fury of the Northmen, Lord God, deliver us!" Intellectually and culturally the whole period was one of general contraction and retrogression, in which ancient arts and civilization were forgotten, and ignorance and rude manners prevailed. Viewing the period thus, we may justly term it the Dark Ages. A tone of retrospection and sadness was prevalent among those who possessed learning and culture. They looked backward to the days of Greece and Rome as to a golden age that would never return. The sun had set, they thought; the world would never again become what it had been in ancient times; their only consolation was that after death there awaited the Christian a blissful life in heaven. But these dark centuries represent not only the downfall of the old, but also the birth of the new. Viewed from this side, we find the period to be an era of expansion and development in which old barriers were broken, and new opportunities were given to the peoples which had hitherto been regarded as dwelling outside the pale of civilization.

On their expeditions the Vikings had come into direct communication with nearly every part of the then known world. Their sphere of activity was thus immensely widened, and their ideas of the world were altered correspondingly. New ideas from the Christian faith, from Græco-Roman civilization, and from Irish poetry



and learning poured into the North, and became the leaven which brought the half-slumbering energies of the Scandinavian peoples into full activity. A new culture was produced which soon placed the peoples of the North in the front rank of enlightened and progressive nations. Norway and her colony Iceland became the center of literary activity in northern Europe during the Middle Ages, and Norse mythology was elaborated into a system which, though inferior to that of Greece in beauty, surpasses it in depth and grandeur. The Scandinavians became leaders in navigation, commerce, and discovery, and developed a system of laws and government which has left deep and lasting traces wherever permanent Viking settlements were founded.

The maritime enterprise and naval warfare attending the Viking expeditions gave a great stimulus to ship-building and navigation in the North. We have seen that even before this period the Scandinavians possessed great skill in ship-building, and could construct vessels of considerable size. In the Viking Age a great demand made itself felt for vessels suited for long voyages, and able to carry as large a number of warriors as possible. In the Mediterranean Sea they became acquainted with Greek and Roman ships, and every effort was now made to construct ships of large size, and of improved type.

The larger sea-going ships were of two kinds: merchant ships and war vessels. An early type of merchant ship was the *kjóll* (A. S. *ceól*), but during the greater part of the Viking Age the *knarre* (O. N. *knørr*) and the *byrding* were common types. Later a larger-sized vessel, the *busse*<sup>1</sup> (O. N. *búza*), came into use, and still later the *kogge* (O. N. *kuggr*), which soon developed into a war vessel. The merchant ships were quite broad and high in proportion to their length, with half-decks in the prow and stern. The goods were placed in the undecked middle part of the vessel. The ship had one mast and a four-cornered sail. The mast could be folded down, and would then rest on supports high enough so that a person could conveniently pass under it.<sup>2</sup> The oar-shaped rudder was fixed

<sup>1</sup> Cf. medieval Latin *bussa*.

<sup>2</sup> Valtýr Guðmundsson, *Nordboernes Skibe i Viking- og Sagatiden*, Copenhagen, 1900. Hermann Paul, *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, 2d edition,



to the right side of the vessel, near the stern. This side was, therefore, called the *steerboard* (O. N. *stjórnbordi*), while the left side, which was at the back of the helmsman, was called the *backboard* (O. N. *bakbordi*). Oars were used only in the front and rear ends of the vessel.

Of the warships the *askr*<sup>1</sup> and the *elliði* were older types, which seem to have differed little from the ordinary merchant vessel. A later type was the *long ship*,<sup>2</sup> so called, because it was long and narrow, with high prow and stern. This type seems to have come into use in the tenth century. These ships were beautifully painted in various colors, and were ornamented with wood carvings. Oars were used along the whole ship, and on both sides hung a row of shields painted black and yellow alternately. The prow was gilt and shaped like the head of a bird or animal; usually like that of a dragon. The sails were usually striped, red, blue, and green, and were often made of costly material. The warships were divided into various classes according to their shape and size, and the service for which they were intended. The *skeið*<sup>3</sup> was a narrow, swift sailing vessel. The *snekkja* was supplied with a sort of snout. The *drage* (O. N. *dreki*)<sup>4</sup> or dragon ship was larger than ordinary, with a prow like a dragon's head, and a stern often shaped like a dragon's tail. The *barði* was also a large ship, built for the special purpose of ramming and sinking the ships of the enemy. It had iron rams, both on prow and stern. The warships had a full deck, and second half decks in bow and stern. The forward half deck was called the *forstavnsdæk*, and the rear half-deck *løftingen*. Another classification was made according to size by counting the number of row-benches on one side of the ship. In this classification the ships were known as thirteen-bench, fifteen-bench, twenty-bench, thirty-bench; etc., with twenty-six, thirty, forty, and sixty oars. The most common size was the twenty-bench, with forty oars, and a crew of

*Skandinavische Verhältnisse*, von Valtýr Guðmundsson und Kristian Kålund (§§ 49–60 Schiffe, von V. G.) N. E. Tuxen, *De nordiske Langskibe*, *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1886. Alexander Bugge, *Vesterlandenes Indflydelse paa Nordboerne i Vikingetiden*, p. 199 ff.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Latin *askus*. *Askmenn* (sailors) was a term often applied to the Vikings in foreign lands.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Latin *navis longa*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Greek *σχεδια*.

<sup>4</sup> Latin *draco*.



VIKING WARSHIP.



THE GOKSTAD SHIP RESTORED.



ninety men. On the thirty-bench there were two men to each oar, or 120 rowers, the crew consisting all together of about 260 men. King Olav Tryggvason's famous ship, the *Long Serpent*, is said to have had a crew of 300 men.

The scattered Viking bands, which operated in a more desultory way at the beginning of the period, were gradually united under able leaders into fleets and armies of great size. "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" shows how the Viking fleets in England were growing:

- Year 787. In his (King Breohtric's) days came three ships of Northmen from Hereðaland.
- Year 833. In this year King Ecgbyrht fought with the crews of thirty-five ships at Carrum.
- Year 840. In this year King Æthelwulf fought at Carrum against the men of thirty-five ships.
- Year 851. In this year 350 ships came to the mouth of the Thames, and the men landed and took Canterbury and London by storm.
- Year 877. 120 ships were wrecked at Swanawic.
- Year 893. In this year the great army . . . returned, . . . and came to land at Limenemouth with 250 ships.

At this time the ships must have been of the older and smaller types; but if we assume that each ship had a crew of only 40 men, 350 vessels would bring an army of 14,000 warriors. Similar numbers of ships are mentioned by many other sources. The chroniclers describe in glowing colors the vast numbers of the invaders. They are compared to swarms of grasshoppers that cover the earth. The Viking ships, says an Arabian writer, fill the ocean like a flock of red birds. An Irish annalist says that the ocean rolls billows of strangers over all Erin. Fleet upon fleet is spewed out by the sea, so that there is not a spot in the island where their ships are not found.<sup>1</sup>

Excepting the ships of the Saracens in Spain, and the small beginning made by King Alfred in England, the peoples of western Europe had as yet no fleets. These great naval armaments, therefore, gave

<sup>1</sup> See Steenstrup, *Normannerne*, vol. I., p. 209 ff.



the Vikings an advantage which largely explains the success which they achieved in their campaigns.

The size of the army was no less imposing than that of the fleet. At the siege of Paris in 885 the Vikings had 40,000 men, of which 30,000 probably constituted the actual fighting force, if we may believe the old sources. In the battle of Saucourt 9000 Vikings are said to have fallen. But the success of the Vikings was due to their superior training and equipment rather than to the size of their



FIG. 38. — A Viking warrior.

armies, which in many cases seems to be exaggerated. Professor Oman says: "But no less important than the command of the sea was the superiority of the individual Viking in battle to the average member of the host that came out against him. The war bands of the invaders were the pick of the North, all volunteers, all trained warriors. In a Frankish or an English host the only troops that could safely be opposed to them, man to man, were the personal following of the kings and ealdormen of England — or the dukes and counts of the Continent. And these were but a small fraction of the hasty levy that assembled, when news came that the Danes were ashore at Bremen or Boulogne, at Sandwich or Weymouth. The majority of the *hereban* of a Frankish county, or the *fyrð* of an English shire, was composed of farmers fresh from the plow, not

of trained fighting men. Enormous superiority of numbers could alone compensate for the differences in military efficiency. If that superiority existed, the raider quietly retired to his ships, or to his fortified island base. If it did not, he fell upon the landsfolk and made a dreadful slaughter of them. How could it be expected that the *ceorl*, who came out to war with spear and target alone, should contend on equal terms with the Northmen equipped with steel cap and mail shirt, and well trained to form the shield wall for defense and the war wedge for attack? Working against the hastily ar-

rayed masses of the landsfolk, the Viking host was like a good military machine beating upon an ill-compacted earthwork."<sup>1</sup>

The Viking army was a strong and permanent organization, with able commanders and officers. It had infantry and cavalry, spies, sappers, and a well-organized commissariat. It had catapults and battering rams, and other machinery for the carrying on of sieges. Military tactics were well developed; there was strict discipline, and perfect obedience to authority.

### 17. CAUSES OF THE VIKING EXPEDITIONS

The Viking expeditions may have been due to a number of causes. In the Scandinavian countries, with their limited area of tillable soil, and their extensive seacoast, a seafaring life was necessitated from the start, which produced a hardy and energetic race, and fostered the spirit of daring and adventure which expresses itself in the whole movement. The size of the Viking armies indicates clearly that the population in the North was increasing at a very rapid rate during this period, owing, no doubt, to polygamy, which, in one form or another, was extensively practiced. The number of those who found it necessary to follow war as a permanent occupation was growing. According to the old laws ("Frostathingslov" and "Gulathingslov") all sons shared equally in the inheritance, but as both political power and social standing depended on wealth, and especially on the ownership of land, the aristocracy would not sell their estates, nor would they destroy them by dividing them into small parcels. The young men were partly encouraged, partly driven by necessity to seek their fortune on expeditions to foreign countries. Led by love of adventure, and encouraged by the prospects of wealth and fame, they flocked to the standards of the Viking chieftains in such numbers that the movement soon became a migration, and extensive campaigns were waged for conquest and colonization. The women and children usually accompanied the men, and were left in fortified camps while the army advanced to the attack.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Oman, *England before the Norman Conquest*, p. 415.

<sup>2</sup> The "Great Army," led by Hasting, was ravaging King Alfred's kingdom in England in 893. While Hasting and the army were absent, the

away the treasures and most valuable possessions of the Vikings; their fine foreign saddles, their gold and silver, their beautifully woven cloth of all kinds and colors, their silk and satin, both scarlet and green, and all kinds of cloth in the same way."<sup>1</sup> These were all articles which the Norsemen had imported. The foreign saddles and the fine Cordovan leather (leather from Cordova), which was in great demand, show that they carried on trade with Spain, where they would get from the Arabs the products of the Orient.

Before the arrival of the Norsemen, the Irish had no ships, only boats made of skin, frail craft in which, however, they had been able to reach the distant islands. They had no cities or commerce, and they coined no money. To facilitate trade, the Norsemen introduced in Ireland a system of weights and measures, and here, as in Britain, they began to coin money. The words *mark* (O. N. *mqrk*) and *penning* (O. N. *peningr*) have been incorporated into the Irish language as *marc* and *pingind*.<sup>2</sup> The growth of towns as centers of trade followed as a direct result of Viking settlement and the development of commerce. Waterford, Cork, Limerick, and other cities founded by the Vikings became important trading places, while Dublin developed into one of the leading emporiums of commerce in northern Europe. Silks, and costly cloth of all kinds, leather, wines, and other products from the South were imported to Dublin, whence they were again brought by merchants to Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Iceland. How rich and flourishing the Viking cities in Ireland were can be seen also from accounts of contemporary writers. In 941-942 King Muirchertach made a journey through all Ireland; he also visited Dublin, and nowhere did he receive such presents as there. In a song written by a contemporary poet his reception is described as follows:<sup>3</sup>

"A supply of his full store was given  
to Muirchertach, son of Niall,

<sup>1</sup> *War of the Gadhel*, p. 78. See also Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, I.

<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that silver was the metal most used in the Viking period, while earlier, gold was the chief precious metal. The silver was usually weighed and used in bulk. Gold was used for ornaments, especially for spiral arm rings. The kings, who often made presents of these to show their munificence, were called by the scalds "dispensers of rings."

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Vesterlandenes Indflydelse*, p. 184.



NORSE SETTLEMENTS AND TOWNS IN WALES AND ON THE BRISTOL CHANNEL.





of bacon, of good and perfect wheat;  
also was got a blood-debt of red gold.

Joints (of meat), and fine cheese (were given)  
by the very good and very pure queen,  
and then was given, (a thing) to hear,  
a colored mantle for each chieftain."

After the battle of Glenmama, in the year 1000, King Brian captured Dublin. "In this one place," says the old writer, "there were found the greatest treasures of gold, silver, and findrun (a sort of white bronze), of precious stones, carbuncles, drinking horns, and beautiful goblets." <sup>1</sup>

"The Norsemen brought with them to Ireland the ideas of cities, commerce, and municipal life hitherto unknown," says Aug. J. Thebaud.<sup>2</sup> "The introduction of these supposed a total change necessary in the customs of the natives, and stringent regulations to which the people could not but be radically opposed. . . . No more stringent rules could be devised, whether for municipal, rural or social regulations; and, as the Northmen are known to have been of a systematic mind, no stronger proof of this fact could be given."

Also in the Scandinavian countries at home, and elsewhere along all the routes of trade, cities sprang into existence under the stimulating influence of Viking commerce. Rouen, in Normandy, became the most important trading center in France, and merchant vessels from Norway and Iceland anchored in the Seine. In Norway the new commercial town of Tunsberg, on the Christianiafjord, soon outdistanced the older Skiringssal; and Kongsfjella, a new trading town, was founded in the southeastern part. Hålgre, probably located on the coast of Skåne, in Sweden, and Brännårene, near the mouth of the Göta River, became important commercial centers.

A lively intercourse was also maintained between Ireland and the English seacoast towns across the Irish Sea, which had either been founded or developed by the Vikings. Several of these towns grew into prominence, such as Swansea,<sup>3</sup> Tenby, Chester, and especially Bristol, which had become a great trading center, and in course of

<sup>1</sup> *Cogadh Gádhel*, p. 114 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ireland, Past and Present*, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> Swansea = Sweins-ea (*i.e.* Swein's river).

time superseded Dublin and Waterford as the greatest commercial city on the shores of the Irish Sea.<sup>1</sup> In the Midlands the towns of the "Five Boroughs," Lincoln, Leicester, Nottingham, Stamford, and Derby (O. N. Dýrabýr) became cities of importance, and on the east coast of England, Grimsby and York grew into prominence. At the time of the "Domesday Book," York was, next to London and Winchester, the largest city in England.

In speaking of the influence of the Vikings on the development of English commerce, Mr. W. Cunningham says: "The English were satisfied with rural life; they were little attracted by the towns which the Romans had built, and they did not devote themselves to commercial pursuits or to manufacturing articles for sale. The Danes,<sup>2</sup> though so closely allied in race, appear to have been men of a different type. They were great as traders and also as seamen. We may learn how great their prowess was from the records of their voyages to Iceland, Greenland, and America, from accounts of their expeditions to the White Sea and the Baltic, and from their commerce with such distant places as the Crimea and Arabia. Their settlements in this country were among the earliest of the English towns to exhibit signs of activity. Not only were the Danes traders; they were also skilled in metal work and other industrial pursuits. England has attained a character for her shipping and has won the supremacy of the world in manufacturing; it almost seems as if she were indebted, on those sides of life on which she is most successful, to the fresh energy and enterprise ingrafted by Danish settlers and conquerors. By the efforts of Roman missionaries she had been brought into contact with the remains of Roman civilization, but by the infusion of the Danish element she was drawn into close connection with the most energetic of the Northern races."<sup>3</sup> Aug. J. Thebaud says: "Endowed with all the characteristics of the Scandinavian race, deeply infused with the blood of the Danes and the

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Contributions to the History of the Norsemen in Ireland*, III., *Skrifter udgivet af Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania*, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> *Danes* is used by many English writers as a common designation for all Vikings, Danes and Norwegians.

<sup>3</sup> W. Cunningham, D.D., Fellow and Lecturer of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Tooke Professor of Economic Science in King's College, London, *Outlines of English Industrial History*, 1905.

Northmen, she (England) has all the indomitable energy, all the systematic grasp of mind and sternness of purpose joined to the wise spirit of compromise and conservatism of the men of the far North. She, of all nations, has inherited their great power of expansion at sea, possessing all the roving propensities of the old Vikings, and the spirit of trade, enterprise, and colonization of those old Phœnicians of the arctic circle.”<sup>1</sup>

A similar influence was exerted by the Norsemen on the naval development of France. “It is the great achievement of the Normans,” says Depping, “that they gave France a navy. There was no longer any navy in France, and she had ceased to be numbered among maritime nations. The Normans reestablished the marine, and William the Conqueror succeeded in forming a fleet, the like of which France had not seen. The conquests made by the Normans in Sicily were due in part to their superiority in navigation.”<sup>2</sup> It may be due to the same influence that Normandy furnishes more sailors and pilots than any other part of France, and that many of the leading French admirals have been Normans.

We have seen that the Vikings had early learned to build fortifications and stone towers of great strength, that, besides the fortified camps, and strongholds built for military purposes, they also surrounded their towns and cities, especially in the colonies, with walls and moats which virtually made them fortresses of great military importance. The building of castles was first developed in Normandy, and the *donjon* or square tower, so typical in medieval castles, is thought to be of Viking origin. In Ireland the Norsemen began to build fortified strongholds as early as 840. Cork was fortified in 866, and in a saga of the eleventh century Limerick is called “the city with riveted stones.”<sup>3</sup> Dublin, where stood the royal

<sup>1</sup> *Ireland Past and Present*, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> George Bernhard Depping, *Histoire des Expéditions Maritimes des Normands, et leur Établissement en France au X<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, liv. IV., ch. III.

<sup>3</sup> *Caitheirim Cellachain Caisil*. The original Irish text edited with translation and notes by Alexander Bugge, Christiania, 1905.

“Come to Limerick of the ships,  
O Clan Eogan of the noble deeds!  
Around the gentle Cellachan,  
To Limerick of the riveted stones.”



hall or castle, with its massive stone tower, was surrounded by walls and moats, and was called "the strong fortress." Waterford, too, had walls and moats, and a royal castle where the king used to dwell. An old stone tower is still found there called Reginald's Tower (Ragnvalds taarn) supposed to be the *donjon* of the old royal castle. It is known to have stood there in 1170, when the English captured Waterford.<sup>1</sup> York and the cities of the "Five Boroughs" in England were also well fortified.

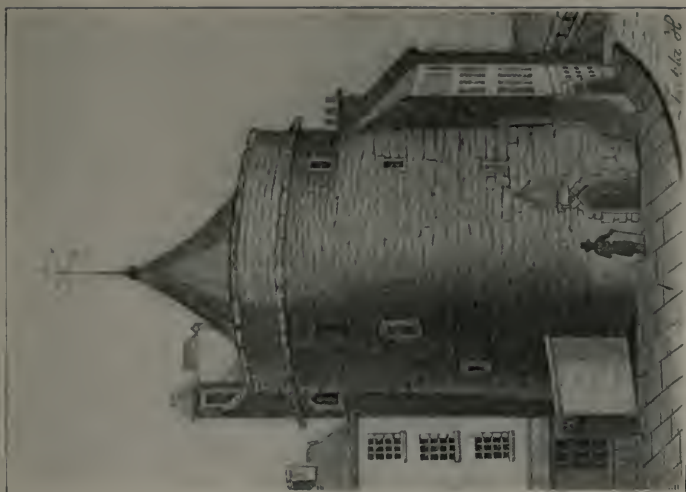
The Roman towns in early Britain were destroyed by the Anglo-Saxons when they conquered the country. "Of the fifty-six cities of Roman Britain," says W. Cunningham,<sup>2</sup> "there is not one in regard to which it is perfectly clear that it held its ground as an organized center of social life through the period of English conquest and English settlement." Many of these old ruined cities were rebuilt by the Vikings, and many new ones were founded. These Viking cities were the first to show the signs of municipal and urban life, both in Great Britain and Ireland. They became centers, not only of trade, but also of industry, as the Danes and Norsemen also devoted themselves to industrial pursuits, and produced wares of their own make for the general market. The Vikings had a keen sense for legal justice, and maintained strict order in their towns. They developed a system of city laws of which traces are still found in English city government.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Alexander Bugge, *Vesterlandenes Indflydelse*, and L. J. Vogt, *Dublin som norsk By*, Christiania, 1896, p. 193.

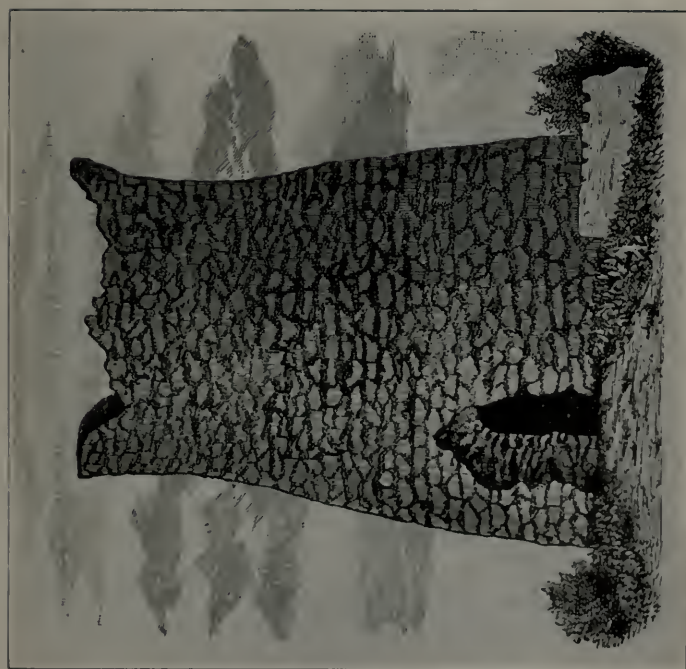
<sup>2</sup> *Outlines of the English Industrial History*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> The legal term *by-law* (a law governing local and private affairs) is the same as the Danish *by-lov* = city law. The *husting* (O. N. *húsþing*) also reveals its Scandinavian origin. Originally it was a council held by a king or earl, and attended by his immediate followers. Later the *husting* was a council held at the Guild-hall in London of the Lord Mayor, Recorder, and sheriffs; long the supreme court of the city. It was also a court of common pleas. It is now convoked only for the purpose of considering and registering gifts to the city. A court of local jurisdiction in Virginia, U. S. A., was also called the Court of Hustings. *The Oxford Dictionary*.

In the cities of the "Five Boroughs"; in Cambridge, Chester, and other towns, there were twelve sworn lawmen (O. N. *løgmenn*), who, acting as judges, conducted all trials at the *thing* or court, and prepared all decisions. "Many scholars have of recent years come to regard this institution of twelve sworn men who conducted the legal proceedings in the general assembly of the



REGINALD'S TOWER (RAGNVALDS TAARN)  
WATERFORD.



BROCH OF MOUSA.



## 19. DRESS, HOUSES, FOOD AND DRINK

The many new wares brought to the North by enterprising Viking merchants increased the comforts of daily life, and created among the higher classes a taste for fine clothes, ornaments, and luxury in various forms which exerted a marked influence on cultural life in this period.<sup>1</sup> From early ages the Norsemen had woven their own woolen cloth, but it was a coarse and common fabric which they had not learned to dye in striking or delicate colors; linen (*lérept*) was also in common use. The new commerce brought rich supplies of costly fabrics from abroad: silk, satin, and fustian, a cotton cloth; scarlet (Lat. *scarlatum*), pell, and purple were brought from Spain, France, Flanders, and England. Men of higher rank took great pride in wearing scarlet mantles embroidered with gold, and trimmed with costly furs. The scald Gunlaug Ormstunge, received such a mantle from King Sigtrygg, in Dublin,<sup>2</sup> and Egil Skallagrimsson received "a costly mantle" from King Æthelstan for composing a song in his honor.<sup>3</sup> When Kjartan Olavsson from Iceland came to King Olav Tryggvason in Norway, he wore a scarlet mantle, and, when he left, the king gave him a complete dress of scarlet cloth.<sup>4</sup> From Arinbjørn Herse,<sup>5</sup> Egil Skallagrimsson received a silk cloak ornamented with gold buttons. The women exhibited the traditional feminine predilection for ornaments and fine dresses.

people as very strong evidence that the jury originated in England, and has not been introduced by the Normans. If this view is correct . . . it is of Scandinavian, not of Anglo-Saxon origin." Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, II., p. 331.

<sup>1</sup> Paul, *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, vol. II., p. 235 ff., 2d ed., vol. III., p. 407 ff., *Skandinaviske Verhältnisse*, Guðmundsson and Kålund. Alexander Bugge, *Vesterlandenes Indflydelse*, p. 142 ff. Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, II., 156 ff. R. Keyser, *Nordmændenes private Liv i Oldtiden*. Valtýr Guðmundsson, *Privatboligen paa Island i Sagatiden, samt delvis i det øvrige Norden*, Copenhagen. N. Nicolaysen, *Noget om Skaalebygningen*, *Norsk Historisk Tidsskrift*, vol. I., 1871. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. I. M. Mallet, *Northern Antiquities*, ch. X. R. Keyser, *Nordmændenes Boliger og daglige Sysler i ældre Tid*, *Lange's Norsk Tidsskrift*, vol. I.

<sup>2</sup> *Gunlaugssaga*, ch. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Lazdølasaga*, ch. 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Egilssaga*, ch. 55.

<sup>5</sup> *Herse*, pronounced *hår'sa*.



The song "Rígsþula," in the "Elder Edda," describes the lady visited by Rig<sup>1</sup> (the god Heimdall) as follows :

The wife sat  
mindful of her arms,  
smoothed the veil,  
stretched straight the sleeves,  
made stiff the mantle.  
A brooch was on her bosom ;  
long was the train  
on her silk-blue dress.

The wife bore a son,  
and swaddled him in silk,  
sprinkled him with water,<sup>2</sup>  
and called him jarl.

When the Irish sacked Limerick in 868, they carried away the "beautiful Viking women dressed in silk."

The saga writers often dwell with pride on the elegant attire of the persons prominent in their narrative. "Gunnar of Lidarende rode to the *thing* with all his men. When they came there, they were so well attired that there was nobody there so well dressed, and the people came out of the booths to look at them. . . . One day when Gunnar came from the *thing*, he saw a well-dressed woman approaching. When they met, she greeted Gunnar. He returned her greeting, and asked what her name was. She said that her name was Hallgerd, and that she was the daughter of Hoskuld Dalakollsson. She was rather forward in her speech, and asked him to tell her about his travels. This request he did not refuse, and they sat down and talked together. She was dressed in the following manner: She had a red skirt well ornamented, and over it she wore a scarlet cloak embroidered with gold. Her hair hung over her bosom, and it was both long and beautiful. Gunnar wore the scarlet clothes which King Harald Gormsson had given him, and on his arm he had the

<sup>1</sup> *Rig* is an Irish word meaning king. In the introduction to the poem he is said to be identical with Heimdall. E. Mogk thinks that Rig is Odin himself.

<sup>2</sup> A heathen ceremony probably introduced in imitation of Christian baptism. The jarls were of noble birth. The word is here used as an eponym.

gold ring which he had received from Haakon Jarl."<sup>1</sup> The Norsemen were quick at imitation, and soon learned to dye their own home-made cloth in various colors. New fashions, too, were introduced from abroad, which becomes apparent from many foreign names of articles of dress which came into use at this time; such as, *sokkr* (A. S. *socce*), *kyrtill* (A. S. *cyrtill*) = coat, *kápa* (Med. Lat. *capa*), cloak, *móttul* (Med. Lat. *mantellum*), mantle, etc. The tailor makes the gentleman, says the proverb, and true as this seems to be, the Norsemen had fully learned to appreciate this side of culture. Neither did they forget to lay stress on fine manners and courtly bearing. Tall, blond, stately, and self-conscious, they were manly and striking figures, and when in foreign lands they stepped before the kings and rulers in their finest attire, with gilt helmets and richly ornamented swords, they were not easily mistaken for barbarians.

In "Ravnsmaal," a song by King Harald Haarfagre's hirdscald, Thorbjørn Hornklove, composed after the battle in Hafrsfjord (872), a raven and a valkyrie describe in a dialogue King Harald and his men.

Says the valkyrie :

About the scalds I wish to ask,  
those who follow King Harald,  
since you seem to know  
so much about brave men.

The raven :

From their dress you may know,  
and from their rings of gold,  
that they are the king's friends;  
red mantles they wear,  
they have fine striped shields,  
silver-decorated swords,  
brynies of ring mail,  
gold embroidered shoulder-straps,<sup>2</sup>  
and ornamented helmets  
which Harald selected for them.

<sup>1</sup> *Njálssaga*, ch. 33. See also the *Saga of Olav the Saint* in the *Heimskringla*, the description of Olav's visit to his stepfather King Sigurd Syr. This description, however, pictures the customs of the saga writer's time, rather than of King Olav's own days.

<sup>2</sup> Two leather straps worn over the shoulders, and crossed in the front and in the back. In one was carried the sword, in the other the shield.

The description of the famous Norman warrior Robert Guiscard, given by Anna Comnena, the gifted daughter of Emperor Alexius, would fit just as well his Viking ancestors of a couple of generations earlier. She finds fault with his fierceness and his greed, but his manly qualities won her highest admiration, though he was her father's enemy :

"The Robert here mentioned was a Norman of quite humble extraction. He coveted power; in character he was cunning, in action quick and energetic. He eagerly desired to get possession of the wealth of the rich, and he carried out his wishes with irresistible energy, for in the pursuit of his aims he was resolute and inflexible. He was so tall that he carried his head above the largest men. He had ruddy cheeks, blond hair, broad shoulders, and clear blue eyes, which seemed to flash fire. He was slender where he should be slender, and broad where he should be broad — in short, he was from top to toe as if molded and turned, a perfectly beautiful man, as I have heard many declare. Homer says of Achilles that when he spoke it was as if a multitude of people were making noise, but they say that Robert could shout so fearfully that he could drive away thousands. It is natural that a man with such physical and intellectual qualities would not bend under the yoke, nor submit to any one."<sup>1</sup>

The higher classes in Norway did not live in castles like the feudal aristocracy in France or Germany, but dwelt on their country estates, where they engaged in farming and cattle raising when they were not absent on Viking expeditions, or occupied in commercial pursuits. The farm labor was done by slaves, but even men of high station would put shield and sword aside and join in the work. We read in the sagas that Gunnar fra Lidarende was in the field sowing grain; that Thorbjørn Øxnarmegin was in the meadow making hay, and that King Sigurd Syr was superintending the harvest when his stepson, King Olav Haraldsson, visited him. The life in the home was still one of patriarchal simplicity. The wife managed the household, looked after the work, and waited on her guests at the table. As a token of her dignity as head of the household she carried in her belt a bunch of keys. In the "*Rígsþula*" she is called the *hangin*-

<sup>1</sup> Anna Comnena, *Alexiadis libri XIX*, translated into Danish by O. A. Hovgård, Copenhagen, 1879-1882, p. 59.



*lukla*, or "the lady with the dangling keys." Besides the regular household duties, the women, even of the highest standing, spent much time in weaving fine linen, and in embroidering tapestries of beautiful design. The men spent much of their spare time at metal work, wood carving, and the making of weapons, in which arts they possessed great skill. The houses were simple but well built log

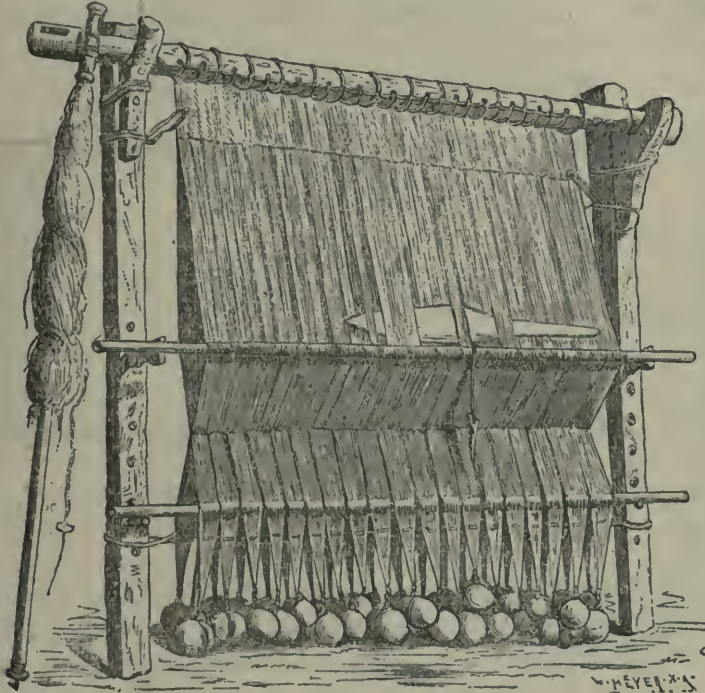


FIG. 39. — Loom from the Faroe Islands.

structures. The principal house was the *skaale* (O. N. *skáli*), a long rectangular hall, often of great size. The gable over the main entrance was ornamented with carved dragonheads or deer horns. In the front end, in or near which the main entrance was located, were two smaller rooms, the *forstua* and the *kleve*, over which there was a loft. In the gables there were usually windows made of a thin membrane, as glass was not yet used for that purpose.<sup>1</sup> On

<sup>1</sup> The O. N. word *vindauga* (window) has been incorporated in the Irish language as *fuindeog*, which proves that also with regard to the construction of dwelling houses the Irish learned much from the Norsemen.



the side walls of the hall there were no doors or windows. If the hall was large, the roof rested on two rows of pillars. Along the middle of the hall was a fireplace, *arinn*, and above it in the roof was an opening, the *ljori*, through which the smoke escaped. Benches were placed along the side walls, and at the middle of one of these walls was placed the high-seat for the head of the family (*hásæti*, *qndvegi*), with high carved pillars on each side, the *qndvegissúlur*. Across from this seat, by the opposite wall, was a second and simpler high-seat for distinguished guests. Across the rear of the hall was

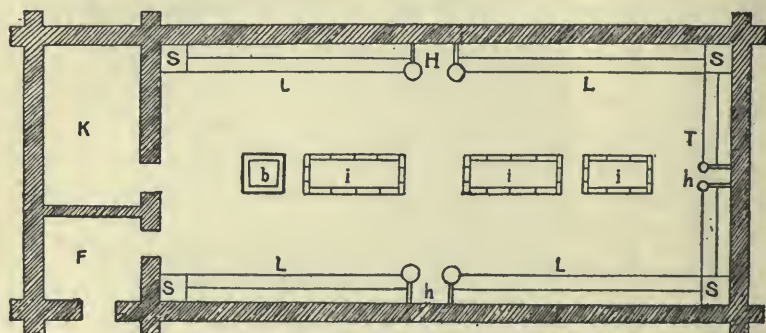


FIG. 40. — Skaale.

*F*, forstua; *K*, kleve; *H*, principal high-seat; *h*, second high-seat; *i*, *i*, *i*, fireplace; *T*, tverpall; *L*, *L*, *L*, *L*, benches; *S*, *S*, *S*, *S*, beds built in the wall; *b*, table to place food on.

placed a bench for the women, the *tverpall*, behind which were inclosed sleeping chambers. The benches along the walls were also used as beds at night by the men. At mealtime tables were placed in front of the benches on both sides along the hall, and when the meal was over, they were removed.

The walls were hung with shields, weapons, and woven tapestries. Sometimes they were ornamented with elaborate woodcarvings, like Olav Paa's hall at Hjarðarholt in Iceland, described in the "*Laxdølasaga*." Of other houses the most important were the *dyngja*, or *skemma*, where the women spent most of their time, and where they did their weaving and needlework, and the *svefnbúr*, where the lord of the household slept with his family. Usually there was also a *búr*, *jungfrúbúr*, where the young women stayed. The slaves had their own houses.

Great delight was taken in feasting and social entertainments,

and the most generous hospitality was shown every wayfarer. It was regarded, not only as a sacred duty, but as a pleasure and a privilege to entertain strangers. Instances are mentioned in the "Landnámabók" where the *skaale* was built across the road, so that no stranger could pass without entering the house. The husband and wife would then stand ready to invite the travelers, and to offer them food and drink. Says the "Hávamál," in the "Elder Edda":

"Fire needs he  
who enters the house  
and is cold about the knees;  
food and clothes  
the man is in need of  
who has journeyed over the mountains."

Festivals were held in connection with religious exercises, weddings, funerals, and other home events, and also in the winter, especially at Christmas time. The "Saga of Olav the Saint," in the "Heimskringla," relates how Asbjørn Selsbane continued the old practice of his father of having three festivals every winter. To such festivals a number of guests were invited. Before they assembled, the tables were set up in the hall, and covered with beautifully embroidered linen tablecloths. Thin wafer-like bread served as plates. Ordinarily the men and women took their meals apart, but at festivals the women sat with the men at the table, occupying the inner end of the hall, to the left of the main high seat, while the men were seated at the outer end, toward the main entrance. Bowls of water and towels were passed around, so that the guests could wash their hands both before and after the meal. Wine and ale were served with the food, which was both abundant and well prepared. Again we must quote the "Rígsþula," which describes how Ríg (Heimdall) was entertained at the home of a man of higher social standing:

Then took Móðir <sup>1</sup>  
an embroidered tablecloth  
of white linen,  
and covered the table;

<sup>1</sup> The lady of the house.



FIG. 41. — Drinking-horn.

took she then  
thin leaves  
of white wheat-bread  
and put on it.

And she set  
filled dishes  
and silver-plated vessels  
on the table,  
and fine ham  
and roasted fowls ;  
wine was in the can,  
they drank and talked  
till the day ended.

The women took pride in filling their chests with fine table linen, sheets, bed curtains, and fine clothes, but they also devoted themselves to more intellectual pursuits. As the designs with which they adorned linen and tapestry generally represented events from history or tradition, they had to become acquainted with mythology and the lives and deeds of the heroes and great men of their people. The practice of medicine and surgery was left to them ; they banded the wounded, and healed and nursed the sick. At times the woman would also be priestess, superintending the sacrifices and religious ceremonies, and, especially in early times, she might be *völva* or *seiðkona*, a woman who was believed to possess the power of witchcraft and prophecy, and a knowledge of the supernatural.<sup>1</sup> Woman's position in society was, on the whole, one of great freedom and independence. Among the higher classes, at least, she was looked upon as man's equal. She might be his companion in battle and in the banquet hall ; when she married, she received a dowry from her father, and a nuptial gift (*mundr*) from her bridegroom, which remained her own property throughout her married life. In the management of the household she had full authority. So great an influence did women exercise on the ebullient passions of the Norsemen that they appear as the easily discerned cause of bloody domestic feuds and dramatic historic events, like the fates themselves, breed-

<sup>1</sup> See the *Völuspá* in the *Elder Edda* (*Völuspá* = the *völva*'s prophecy).



ing discord and bloodshed, or fostering peace and blessing by petty intrigues, by a nod or a smile. The sagas have pictured most vividly a gallery of interesting women; some beautiful, jealous, plotting, and revengeful, causing endless feuds, like Hallgerd, Gudrun Usvivsdotter, Freydis, and Queen Gunhild; some proud and ambitious, like Bergthora, Queen Aasta, and Sigrid Storraade; some affectionate, mild, and devoted, like Helga the Fair and Thorgerd Egilsdotter. We hear of domineering wives and hen-pecked husbands, like Aake and Grima, but also of women truly great, like Aud the Deepminded (Unnr), a lady of rare talents, who, as widow, became the acknowledged head of the family, and managed both her own affairs and those of her daughters and relatives so well under all difficulties that no one did anything of importance without seeking her advice and assistance.<sup>1</sup> These heroic and self-assertive women of the Viking Age have a certain romantic charm, still woman had not yet been accorded her proper privilege in society or in the home. The most sacred relations were yet marred by harsh and corrupt primitive customs. Marriage was not based on mutual love and affection, but on wealth and social standing. It was a business affair, a contract concluded between the bridegroom and the bride's father and relatives. The bride's consent was necessary, it is true, but it was often a matter of form, rather than the result of natural inclination. Many a touching love affair is recorded in the sagas and elsewhere in Old Norse literature, but they usually represent the revolt of the human heart against harsh and selfish social laws.<sup>2</sup> Love was re-

<sup>1</sup> Hallgerd . . . . .	<i>Njálssaga</i>	Thorgerd . . . . .	<i>Egilssaga</i>
Bergthora . . . . .	<i>Njálssaga</i>	Aasta . . . . .	<i>Heimskringla</i>
Gudrun . . . . .	<i>Laxdølasaga</i>	Gunhild . . . . .	<i>Heimskringla</i>
Aud . . . . .	<i>Laxdølasaga</i>	Sigrid . . . . .	<i>Heimskringla</i>
Freydis . . . . .	<i>Saga of Eirik the Red</i>	Aake and Grima . . . .	<i>Vølsungasaga</i>
Helga . . . . .	<i>Gunlaugssaga</i>		

<sup>2</sup> The *Gunlaugssaga* is a typical love romance. So is, also, the *Friðþjófs-saga*, and the story of Kjartan Olavsson and Gudrun Usvivsdotter in the *Laxdølasaga*. Other instances are numerous. The seald Kormak, famous for his love lyrics, could not forget his beautiful Steingerd even after she had become the wife of another. Harald Haarfagre's hirdseald, Ølve Hnuva, ceased to be a Viking and turned poet, because he had been thwarted in a love affair. The seald Thormod wrote a song to the lady of his heart, Thorbjörg Kolbrúna, and as a result he was nicknamed Kolbrúnarskald.



garded as a weakness, and a young woman was considered as being disgraced if a young man mentioned her name in a love song. The husband often had concubines besides his legally wedded wife. It also happened that men traded wives, or that a man gave his wife away to a friend if he did not like her. Divorce was common and easily obtained. There was nothing sacred in this most intimate and important relation into which human beings can enter. In Viking culture we find the shadows and blemishes characteristic of pagan civilization at all times. The Norseman had a keen and well developed mind, but his heart was as hard as the steel of his sword. He loved the battle and the stormy sea; he admired the strong, the brave, the cunning, the intellectual; for the old and feeble he had no interest, for the suffering no sympathy; the weak he despised. He sang of valor and of heroic deeds; not of love and beauty. The sagas of the rich and powerful have been written, the poor and unfortunate classes are passed over in silence. But in the Viking Age the lifegiving spirit of Christianity was breathed gently also upon the pagan North. Unconsciously at first the hard heartstrings were loosened, and the soul was stirred by a new life. Notes of love and sadness steal into their songs, words of affection and sorrow are chiseled on their tombstones, woman gradually rises to new dignity, and the rights of the heart gain recognition. Even religious life is deeply affected by this gentle influence. The Light of the World had cast its first faint glimmer upon the intellectual and moral life of the North, — the Viking expeditions had begun to bear their greatest fruit.

## 20. RELIGION AND LITERATURE

Wherever the Vikings settled they established a well-developed social organization, infused new vigor into the peoples with whom they came in contact, and imparted to them ideas which germinated into new cultural growth. Along practical lines they were often much farther advanced than the nations which were subjected to their attacks. This was especially manifest in Ireland, where the people at the time of the Viking inroads yet lived under a tribal organization, amid most primitive economic and social conditions.

Not only did they lack a well-organized army, ships, commerce, cities, roads, and bridges, but they paid little attention to agriculture, living for the most part on their herds and flocks, with which they moved from place to place. They were, as a rule, cruel and sensual; their warfare was savage, the position of woman was low and degrading, their houses were usually miserable huts. Yet this people possessed a remarkable intellectual culture, and became in this field the teachers and benefactors of their enemies, the Norsemen.



FIG. 42. — Irish monastery on the west coast of Ireland.

They had been Christians for many centuries before the Vikings began their conquests. Their missionaries were laboring, not only in Scotland and England, but had penetrated to the remote forest regions of Germany and France, to Switzerland and northern Italy.<sup>1</sup> Even in the solitudes of the Faroe Islands and Iceland pious Irish monks had erected their hermitages. They had great scholars who diligently studied Greek and Latin authors, and profound philosophers like John Scotus Erigena. During the seventh, eighth, and

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Kelternes Kulturbetydning, Verdenskulturen*, edited by Aage Friis, vol. III., p. 211 ff.

St. Columba, the apostle of the Scots, died in 597 as head of the Caledonian church. He was born in Ireland in 521.

St. Columbanus, born in Ireland in 545, was the first Christian missionary among the Germans. He founded the monastery of Bobbio in Lombardy, where he died in 615.

St. Gallus of Hibernia, a disciple of Columbanus, labored as missionary in Switzerland. He is thought to have founded the monastery of St. Gallen on the Bodensee.

ninth centuries the Irish schools became celebrated all over Europe. Not only Greek and Latin, but philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and geography were studied. The Irish cloister schools became the refuge of those who loved intellectual culture in the Dark Ages, and scholars from many countries flocked to them. Alcuin, the great scholar at the court of Charles the Great, corresponded with one of the professors of the Irish school at Clonmacnois, whom he calls his dear master and teacher. Also in their own native tongue they produced a rich literature, both in prose and poetry. Heroic tradition flourished, sagas were written to commemorate the deeds of great chieftains, or to preserve the knowledge of the clan and of family relationship, and songs were composed by scalds in honor of their kings. They sang, too, of love and of the beauty of nature with a sweet tenderness strange in those days when such poetry was almost unknown. But both their poetry and their prose suffered from an overflow of fancy and feeling, uncontrolled by artistic taste. The wildest exaggerations abound, the characters are grotesque, superhuman, and indistinctly drawn. There is an obscurity and lack of form which stand in the sharpest contrast to the brief, lucid style, and psychological character painting in the Norse sagas.

That the religious and literary life so highly developed among the Irish, their love of nature, their lyric sentimentality, and sympathetic and emotional character made a deep impression on the stern Norsemen is certain. They, who came to conquer, were in turn conquered by this new and gentle influence. Long before they were converted to Christianity, their lives and views were deeply affected by ideas acquired in the Christian countries which they visited, and especially through their sojourn in Ireland.<sup>1</sup> It was largely due to this new stimulus that Norse scaldic poetry and the saga literature began to flourish in the Viking period, and that Norse mythology assumes at this time a distinctly new form in which we find embedded in the strata of pagan thought many unmistakable fragments of Christian ideas; as, the conceptions of creation, of righteousness, of good

<sup>1</sup> King Harald Haarfagre would bring no offering to any god save the one who had created the sun and fashioned the heavens. *Fagrskinna*, 17. When Ingmund the Old was mortally wounded by Rolleiv, he advised him to flee lest his sons should do him harm. *Vatsdølasinga*, 23.



and evil, as well as views of the life hereafter, which can have their origin only in the realm of Christian faith and morality.

The scaldic poetry falls into two general groups: the scaldic songs, so called because they are written by scalds whose names and careers are known, and a body of old songs by unknown authors, called the "Elder Edda" or "Norræn Fornkvæði." The scalds were usually connected with a king's *hird* or court, and produced songs to extol the person and achievements of their patrons, on whose munificence they lived.

These songs, which contain much valuable information regarding persons and events of early Norwegian history, are usually composed in a most intricate verse form, the *drottkvætt*, which abounds in word transpositions, allusions, and metaphoric expressions (*kenningar*), which offer many difficulties to the modern reader. This verse seems to have been invented by Brage Boddason (Brage the Old), who lived in the first part of the ninth century and is the first Norwegian scald of whom we have any record. There were also scalds who did not stay at the courts, and who composed songs on more varied subjects. Egil Skallagrímsson, one of the great masters in scaldic song, and Ulv Uggason, the author of the "Húsdrápa," may be mentioned. Egil is well known from his songs "Höfuðlausn" and "Arinbjørnsdrápa," but especially for his great poem "Sonatorrek," in which he laments the loss of his sons. Noteworthy are also Kormak's "Mansöngsvisur," love songs to the beautiful Steingerd. Many of the saga writers were also scalds, notably Snorre Sturlason and Sturla Thordsson. Snorre, the author of the "Heimskringla," has also written the "Younger Edda,"<sup>1</sup> a most important work intended as a book of instruction for young scalds. The work has preserved the names of a great number of scalds, together with fragments of their songs, and furnishes a key to the many difficulties

<sup>1</sup> *The Prose or Younger Edda*, translated by G. W. Dassent, Stockholm, 1842. Rasmus Flo, *Gamle Skaldar og Kvad*, 1902. *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, edited by G. Vigfússon and Y. Powell, Oxford, 1883. *Carmina Norræna*, edited by Th. Wisén, Lund, 1886. Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og old-islandske Litteraturs Historie*, Copenhagen, 1894-1902. Eugen Mogk, *Geschichte der norwegisch-isländischen Literatur*, Strassburg, 1904. Hermann Paul, *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*. Sophus Bugge, *Norræn Fornkvæði eller Sæmundar Edda*. Sophus Bugge, *Helgedigtene i den ældre Edda*, Copenhagen, 1896.



in scaldic poesy. It gives a review of mythology (Gylfaginning) which a scald must necessarily know, it explains the poetical and metaphorical expressions (*heiti*, *kenningar*) used in scaldic poetry, and a poem written to King Haakon Haakonsson and Skule Jarl illustrates all the verse forms used by the scalds.

The "Elder Edda" consists of two series of songs, the mythological and the heroic, written by scalds whose names are not known. Besides the poems about Helge Hundingsbane and Helge Higr-varðsson, the heroic songs deal with the great Nibelungen tradition, and constitute the first literary embodiment known of this great Germanic epic. The Eddic poems have preserved a much older form of this tradition than that found in the "Nibelungenlied."<sup>1</sup> In the mythological poems we find clearly set forth in verse of classic simplicity and beauty the Norsemen's ideas of creation, the lives and character of their gods, the destruction of the world, and of man's destiny after death. In the "Hávamál" we find outlined also their moral conceptions, and their view of life in general. The grandest of all these old songs is the "Völuspá" (the prophecy of the völvu).<sup>2</sup>

This völvu can be none other than Urd (O. N. Urðr), one of the three *norns*, or goddesses of fate (Urðr, Verðandi, and Skuld). The gods are assembled in council at the Well of Urd. Odin calls the völvu from the grave, and the great sibyl comes forth to reveal to the god of wisdom what even he does not know — the mysteries of

<sup>1</sup> The Ms. Codex Regius, which contains the Eddic poems, is no longer complete, some songs dealing with the Nibelungen tradition having been lost. The *Völsungasaga*, whose author has known the Codex Regius in complete form, gives in prose the contents of all the songs in the *Elder Edda*, dealing with the Nibelungen tradition. The title *Edda* is a misnomer. *Edda* means poetics, or the art and doctrine of poetry. The word is properly used as the title of Snorre's book, the *Younger Edda*, but it is in no way applicable to these old songs. It has also been called *Sæmundar Edda*, owing to an old erroneous belief that Sæmund Froði was the author.

<sup>2</sup> Völvu (plu. *völur*) = a sorceress.

Julius Hoffory says: "The Völuspá is not only, as Müllenhoff said, the greatest poem in the North to the present time; it is a work which has never been equaled, not to say surpassed, by any production of its kind. The world has not yet seen another poem like it."

Of the many works dealing with Norse mythology may especially be mentioned: Jac. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 4te Ausg., 1878. N. M. Petersen, *Nordisk Mythologi*, Copenhagen, 1842. R. Keyser, *Normændenes Religionsforfatning i Hedendommen*, Christiania, 1847. P. A. Munch,

creation, the destruction of the gods, the end of the world, and the happy existence in the life to come. She commands silent attention, and tells the assembled gods that in the beginning there was neither sand, nor sea, nor cool billows; the earth did not exist, nor the heavens above; there was a yawning abyss,<sup>1</sup> but nowhere grass, before the sons of Bur<sup>2</sup> lifted up the dry land, they who created the beautiful earth. The sun shone from the south on the stones of the hall,<sup>3</sup> and the earth was covered with green herbs. The sun, the moon, and the stars did not know their proper courses, but the mighty gods held council, and gave them their right orbits, dividing time into night, morning, midday, and evening. The "Gylfaginning" presents a more complete account of creation, giving in fuller detail a myth which is outlined also in the "Vafþrúdnismál." Here we learn that in the beginning there were two regions, one of fire and heat, called "Muspelheim," ruled over by Surt, who watches the borders of his realm with a glowing sword. When the end of the world comes, he will conquer the gods, and destroy the earth with fire. The other was a cold region, "Niflheim" (O. N. Niflheimr), from which twelve rivers issue, called "Élivágar." Between these two regions is the great abyss "Ginnungagap." The masses of ice which had accumulated on the northern side of this abyss finally caught the spark of life from the heat issuing from Muspelheim, and a great man-shaped being, Yme (O. N. Ymir), was produced,

*Nordmændenes Gudelære i Hedenold*, 1847. Henry Petersen, *Om Nordboernes Gudsdyrkelse og Gudetro i Hedenold*, Copenhagen, 1876.

These are all works of high excellence, but the views of these earlier scholars must be regarded as antiquated since Sophus Bugge published his epoch-making work: *Studier over de nordiske Gude- og Heltesagns Oprindelse*, Christiania, 1881-1889. Translated to German by O. Brenner.

Hermann Paul, *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, vol. III., 2d ed., section XI., Eugen Mogk, *Mythologie*. Konrad Maurer, *Bekehrung des norwegischen Stammes zum Christenthume*, vol. II., München, 1855-1856. N. F. S. Grundtvig's *Nordens Mythologi*, 1808, is an interesting and inspiring work, written with patriotic enthusiasm, but it has no scientific value. R. B. Anderson's *Norse Mythology*, Chicago, 1876, is a very useful book. Ivar Mortenson, *Edda-Kvæde paa Nynorsk*. M. Mallet, *Northern Antiquities*, translated by Bishop Percy, London, 1909. Axel Olrik, *De nordiske Folk i Vikingetid og tidlig Middelalder, Verdenskulturen*, edited by Aage Friis, vol. III., p. 253 ff.

<sup>1</sup> Ginnungagap.

<sup>2</sup> Odin, Hœnir, and Lodur; or Odin, Vili, and Vé. <sup>3</sup> The mountains.

from whom the Jötuns descended. The gods killed Yme, and from his body they created the earth, from his blood the ocean, from his bones the mountains, and from his skull the heavens. From sparks from Muspelheim they made the sun, moon, and the stars, and placed them on the heavens. Again the gods assembled in council, says the *völva*, and created the dwarfs in the earth. From two trees, ash and elm, they created man and woman. Odin gave them the spirit, Hømr gave them reason, and Lodur color and warmth of life. The gods were amusing themselves at the gaming tables, and there was no lack of gold until the three powerful maidens came from Jötunheim.<sup>1</sup> These maidens are the three *norns* or goddesses of fate, already mentioned. Strife had not yet begun; the gods were happy in this golden age, which lasted until the fates appeared to determine the destiny of gods and men. But the elements of discord had entered the world: gold, woman, and witchcraft. The goddess Gullveig, who seems to be a personification of all three, was killed in Odin's hall, and this caused the first war, that between Æsir and Vanir, the two tribes of gods, who now contended for supremacy. "Odin threw his spear into the throng, this was the first combat in the world." A peace was finally concluded, according to which the two tribes were united on equal terms. The personification of evil itself is Loke and his children with the giantess Angerboda (O. N. Angrboða), the three monsters Hel, goddess of the underworld, the wolf Fenre (O. N. Fenrir), who at the end of the world will kill Odin, and the Miðgarðsormr, or Jörmungand, the world serpent, a personification of the ocean encircling the earth. The world, in which there is now continual strife, is represented under the symbol of a giant ash tree, the Yggdrasil, whose top reaches into the heavens, whose branches fill the world, and whose three roots extend into the three important spheres of existence outside the world of man. One root is where the Æsir dwell. Under this root is the Well of Urd, where the gods assemble in council. Another root

<sup>1</sup> Jötunheim (O. N. Jötunheimr), the home of the Jötuns or giants. Midgaard (O. N. Miðgarðr), the dwelling place of man, was thought to be surrounded by high mountains, beyond which was Jötunheim. In the heavens is Aasgaard (O. N. Ásgarðr), the home of the Æsir (*Æsir*, plu. of *ás* = god). In the lower world is Nifheim (O. N. Niflheimr), the home of the dead, ruled over by the goddess Hel.



reaches to the home of the Jötuns, or Rimthuser (O. N. Hrímpursar), under which is the Well of Mímer, the fountain of wisdom. The third root is in Niflheim, and under it is the terrible well Hvergelme, by which is found the snake Niðhoggr, which, together with many others, continually gnaws at the roots of the world tree, and seeks to destroy it. Niðhoggr is the symbol of the destructive forces operating in the world.

An ash tree I know,  
Yggdrasil <sup>1</sup> called,  
a tall tree  
sprinkled with water;  
from it comes the dew  
that falls in the valleys,  
ever green it stands  
by the fountain of Urd.

Much do they know  
the three maidens  
who come from the hall  
which stands by the tree;  
one is Urd,  
the other Verdande,  
Skuld is the third;  
laws they make,  
they determine life  
and the fate of men.

The *norns* are not only in the world, but they are the real rulers of it; even the gods must submit to their decrees. They rule over life and death, and man's destiny; no one can escape the calamities which they have preordained. But they have not the absolute power attributed to the fates in Greek and Roman mythology. They are also subject to an ultimate fate. They disappear at Ragnarok (O. N. Ragnarøkkr) together with this present world.

Again the gods assembled, says the *völva*, to consider how evil had come into the world. Odin, who is interrogating her, tries to

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the name *Yggdrasil* see *The Origin and Meaning of the Name Yggdrasil*, by S. N. Hagen, *Modern Philology*, vol. I., 1903.



conceal his identity, but she recognizes him, and tells him the great secrets of his life. In Norse mythology Odin is the chief divinity and the father of many of the other gods, but it is evident that in earlier periods other gods have held the highest position. Ty<sup>1</sup> (O. N. Týr), the god of war (A. S. Tius, O. H. G. Ziu), seems to be the same divinity as the Greek Zeus, and has, no doubt, at one time been the principal god. Thor,<sup>2</sup> the god of thunder and lightning, must also have ranked higher than Odin, but in Norse mythology he has become Odin's son. He is constantly fighting the wicked Jötuns, at whom he hurls his hammer Mjølner (the thunderbolt). He is the farmer's special protector and benefactor. He shields them against the hostile forces of nature, and furthers husbandry and all peaceful pursuits. In Norway he was worshiped more extensively than any other god. Odin (A. S. Wôdan, O. H. G. Wuotan, Germ. wüthen) seems originally to have been a storm god, but in later periods he becomes so prominent that he pushes the older divinities from their throne. Odin is an embodiment of the spirit of the Viking Age. Even in appearance he is a chieftain; tall, one-eyed, graybearded, attired in a blue mantle, carrying a shield and the spear Gungne (O. N. Gungnir), which never misses its mark. His life is rich in all sorts of adventures. He loves war, and is generally found in the midst of the battle. He is also the god of wisdom, and his desire for knowledge is almost a passion. His two ravens, Hugin and Munin, bring him daily notice of everything that happens in the world. No sacrifice is too great if thereby he can gain more knowledge. How did he lose his eye? It is a great secret, but the *völva* reveals it. He drank once from the Well of Mimir, the fountain of wisdom, and had to give one of his eyes as a forfeit. Odin is the personification of the heavens; his one eye is the sun, the other, which Mimir took, is the sun's reflection in the water. He also discovered the runes, but only by making

<sup>1</sup> Sk. Dyâus, Gk. Zeus, Lat. Ju-piter, O. E. Tius, O. N. Týr.

<sup>2</sup> "Now we will speak about the superstition of the Swedes. This people has a very famous temple called Ubsala, not very far from the city of Sietona, in which they worship the images of three gods. Thor, who is the greatest of these, has his throne in the middle of the hall, and on his right and left sit Wodan and Frisco." Adam v. Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, IV., 26, 27.

another great sacrifice. The "Hávamál" gives the following account of it:

"I know that I hung on the windy tree nine nights together, wounded by a spear, sacrificed to Odin, myself to myself, on the tree which no one knows from what roots it springs. Neither with food nor with drink was I refreshed. I looked carefully down and raised up the runes; crying I raised them up, and fell then down."

Even this great pain Odin is willing to undergo to discover the runes, for through them he gains occult knowledge, and becomes the god of sorcery, the wisest and most powerful of all the gods. From his throne Lidskjalv (O. N. Hliðskjálf) he overlooks the whole world. He is always thoughtful, and meditates on great problems. Evil and good are equally interesting to him, for both reveal some secret of life. He contemplates the mystery of existence and the approaching end of things; he is never glad, because he knows too much.

In Aasgaard (O. N. Ásgarðr) the gods built a beautiful hall, Gladsheim, for the gods, and another, Vingolv (O. N. Vingólf), for the goddesses, but greater than any of these was Odin's own hall, Valhal (O. N. Valhøll). To this hall the valkyries<sup>1</sup> bring the dead warriors who fall on the field of battle, and they are feasted and entertained by Odin himself. All who die a natural death are excluded. The heroes find their pastime in fighting, and many fall every day, but they rise again unharmed, and return to feast in Valhal as the best of friends.

Another divinity who in the Viking period must have undergone a great change, and who seems to reflect the new spirit of that age, is Balder. The opinions of scholars with regard to the Balder myth are hopelessly at variance. A. Olrik thinks that Balder is an old sungod, that his death signifies the victory of darkness over light, while H. Schück thinks that he was not a real god till shortly before the advent of Christianity. According to Saxo Grammaticus, he was a young and impetuous warrior who waged many combats with

<sup>1</sup> Valkyries < *val* = dead bodies on the field of battle, and *kyria* < *kjósa* = to choose, i.e. "the choosers of the dead." They are virgin goddesses on horseback, armed with helmets, shields, and spears. They are sent by Odin, and ride through the air to be present in the battle, where they choose those who are to fall, and bring them to Odin in Valhal. The fallen heroes are to help Odin in his last great battle at Ragnarok.

his rival Hother, by whom he is finally slain. He is a son of Odin, but lives on the earth. Sophus Bugge considers this to be the older form of the myth. In the "Völuspá" and the "Gylfaginning" he is pictured as the gentle god of innocence and righteousness, so bright that a light of glory surrounds him. He dwells in the hall Breidablik (the far shining hall), where nothing impure is found. He is wise, kind, and eloquent, and so just that his decrees cannot be altered. His wife is Odin's granddaughter, the faithful Nanna; his son is Forsete, the god of justice and reconciliation. While Balder lives, evil can gain no real control in the world, but bad dreams begin to trouble him, and as this portends some great misfortune to the Æsir, Odin saddles his eight-legged horse, Sleipne (O. N. Sleipnir), and rides to Niflheim to learn what evil is thus foreboded. He calls the vólva from her grave, and asks her for whose reception they are making preparations in Hel's kingdom, and she answers that it is for Balder, who will soon die. This news causes great consternation among the Æsir, and they assemble in council to discuss the matter. Frigg, Balder's mother, requires everything in the world to take an oath not to harm her son. The gods now feel secure, and in their joy that the danger is averted, they amuse themselves by throwing all sorts of things at Balder to show that nothing will hurt him. But Loke comes disguised to the assembly, and learns from Frigg that there is a tiny plant, the *mistilteinn*, which she has not required to take the oath, because it seemed too small. He pulls up the plant, brings it to the assembly, and asks the blind god Hød (Hǫðr) to throw it at Balder. Hød does so; the plant pierces him through, and he falls dead. The greatest misfortune has happened; Nanna's heart breaks of sorrow, and she is buried together with her husband, who is received by Hel in her kingdom. But there is a hope even in this great calamity. While Balder lies on the bier, Odin whispers something in his ear. This episode is mentioned in the "Vafþrúðnismál,"<sup>1</sup> where Odin asks the wise Vafþrúðne:

What did Odin  
whisper in his son's ear  
before he was laid on the funeral pyre?

<sup>1</sup> In this song, which is thought to be one of the oldest in the *Elder Edda*, Odin examines Vafþrúðne to test his knowledge in mythology. The song,



This is a riddle which even Vafþrudne cannot solve. He answers :

No one knows  
What, in the beginning of time,  
thou didst whisper  
in thy son's ear.

No one knows ; but it was, no doubt, a promise that he should not remain forever in Hel's realm, but that he should return when the world of strife had passed away, and the new life of peace and righteousness had begun.<sup>1</sup>

In Norse mythology, as elsewhere in old religious systems, the ideas of the life hereafter are often vague, even contradictory. Mythology is a growth, a product of long periods of a people's intellectual development, in which old ideas have constantly been mixed with new conceptions. It represents a march of the human mind forward to new light, rather than a once for all perfected system. The Hel myth is an illustration. Hel, the name both of the goddess and of the realm over which she rules, is sometimes thought of as the home of all the departed, where even Balder goes after death. Hence the Norwegian expression *at slaa ihjel*, i.e. to kill, to deprive one of life so that he goes to Hel. But Hel is also thought of as the place for the wicked.<sup>2</sup> Hel, the goddess, is white on one side and black on the other, and her hall is described as a frightful place. We have seen that from the earliest times the Norsemen believed in a life after death, which is shown by many burial customs. In course of time they began to construct large burial chambers where all the members of the family could be interred together. Professor H. Schück thinks that these graves first engendered the idea of the lower world. He says : "A primitive people does not think of which consists of questions and answers, resembles a catechism, and must have been written for the purpose of instructing people in the essentials of mythology.

In the *Hervararsaga*, Odin, who is disguised as the blind Gest, asks King Heidrek the same question.

<sup>1</sup> The Balder myth is found especially in the song *Baldrsdraumar* in the *Elder Edda*.

<sup>2</sup> "The wicked go to Hel, and thence to Niflhel, which is below, in the ninth world." *Gylfaginning*. Niflhel, or Niflheim, in Hel's kingdom, the underworld.



death as annihilation, but rather as an entrance into new life. Only by premising such a belief can a number of antique burial customs be explained. . . . At first the dead person lived this new life in the grave itself, and these large family graves gave origin to the idea of the realm of the dead." According to the oldest belief, then, all the dead came to this realm where Hel ruled.<sup>1</sup> But it was a shadowy, joyless existence, and the feeling that heroes and good people deserved something better gave rise to new creations; to Valhal, Odin's hall; Folkvang and Sessrymne (Sessrymnir), where Freyja entertains one half of all the fallen heroes; Vingolv (Vingólf), where all heroes are entertained by the goddesses, and to the idea that all women who die unmarried go to the goddess Gefjon. Hel and her kingdom fell into disfavor, and were painted in ever darker colors.

Loke did not escape punishment. He was tied by the Æsir in a rocky cavern where poisonous adders drop venom into his face, and there he will have to lie till Ragnarok, or the end of the world. But his faithful wife, Sigyn, stands always by him, and gathers the dripping venom in a cup. Only when she empties the cup does it drop into Loke's face, and then he writhes in pain so that the earth quakes. Hød, the slayer of Balder, is also punished. With the goddess Rind, Odin has the son Vaale, who kills Hød. But revenge cannot remedy the mischief done. Balder the Good has perished, and evil triumphs. In her hall Fensale Frigg weeps for her son; the end is approaching, Ragnarok,<sup>2</sup> when gods and men must perish, and the present world will be destroyed.

Another divinity which, especially in Sweden, was worshiped more extensively than Odin himself, was Frey, the son of Njörd the god of the sea. He was the god of weather and of harvests, and was regarded as the giver of riches. He became so enamoured with the beautiful Jötun maiden Gerd that he could neither eat nor sleep. One day he sat on Lidskjalv in Aasgaard and saw her far to the north, and so beautiful was she that she made sky and ocean resplendent with light. He sent his servant, Skirne (Skírnir), to woo her, but

<sup>1</sup> The word *helvede*, O. N. *helviti* < *hel* and *viti* (punishment), has been brought to the North by German missionaries, says Alexander Bugge.

<sup>2</sup> *Ragnarökkr*, the darkness of the gods. *Ragna*, gen. plu. of *regin* (gods), *rökkr* (darkness). Cf. Goth. *riquis*.

in order to win her he had to surrender his greatest treasure, his sword, and when Ragnarok comes, he will be slain by Surt, because he has no weapon with which to defend himself.

Heimdall, one of the oldest deifications of the heavens, is the sentinel of the gods, and lives at Bifrost,<sup>1</sup> the celestial bridge over which gods and men ride to Valhal. Vidar, the silent one, is, next to Thor, the strongest of the gods. Æge (Ægir) is the ocean god, and Brage the god of poesy and eloquence.

In Norse mythology there are twelve or thirteen principal gods, and an equal number of goddesses (ásynjur). Frigg is Odin's wife and the queen of heaven, and dwells in Fensale, far to the west where the sun sets in the sea. Freyja, the beautiful goddess of love, lives in Folkvang, where the great hall Sessrymne is found. To her belongs one half of the warriors who fall on the battlefield, and she is accorded the right of first choice. Idun, Brage's wife, called the good goddess, keeps the apples from which the gods eat to preserve their youth. Thor's wife is the beautiful Siv (Sif), with hair of gold. Skade, Njörd's wife, was, like Gerd, of Jötun race, and Snotra was the goddess of good sense and womanly graces.

Before Ragnarok evil passes all bounds. For three years there is perpetual strife. Brothers fight and kill each other, the ties of blood relationship are broken, morals are corrupted, and one person has no compassion for the other. Then follow three years of constant winter, the Fimbulwinter (the great winter). Finally Yggdrasil trembles, Fenre breaks his fetters, and the Midgardsorm comes out of the ocean. Surt, the fire demon, comes; Loke is free again and leads the sons of Muspell<sup>2</sup> and other forces of destruction to the final battle with the gods on the plain Vigrid. Fenre kills Odin, but is in turn slain by the powerful Vidar. Thor and the Midgardsorm kill each other; Frey is slain by Surt; Ty fights against Hel's hound Garm, and both fall. Surt finally hurls fire over the earth;

<sup>1</sup> *Bifrost*, the rainbow.

<sup>2</sup> Sophus Bugge thinks that *Muspell* is the fire region from which Surt also comes. The word is used in the *Heliand*, and also in the O. H. G. fragment *Muspilli* from about 900. The word as here used means the destruction of the world. See W. Braune's *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch*. The word probably means the great world-destroying fire, but its origin is by no means clearly understood.

the sun grows dark, the earth sinks into the ocean, fire consumes all — the world of strife and bloodshed has disappeared.

Out of the ocean, says the *völva*, rises a new green earth, where grain fields grow without being sown, and where no evil exists. Here, on the Fields of Ida, the gods who have survived Ragnarok reassemble. Balder, who has returned from Hel, is there; also Vidar, Hød, Høinir, and Thor's sons, Mode and Magne. A new race of men are also born.

Pursuing her story, the *völva* says:

A hall I see  
on the heights of Gimle,<sup>1</sup>  
brighter than the sun,  
and covered with gold;  
righteous men  
shall dwell there  
in endless happiness.

This hall is a perfect contrast to Valhal, where the heroes even after death amuse themselves by fighting and slaying each other; in Gimle the righteous live in peace and happiness. Gimle is the safe and secure home ornamented with precious stones. Sophus Bugge thinks that the Fields of Ida are in reality the Christian Garden of Eden, and that Gimle is the heavenly Jerusalem described in Revelation, xxi., 10-21.

“10. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

“11. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

“21. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city<sup>1</sup> was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”

And, says the *völva*, bringing her narrative to a closing climax:

From above comes  
to the great judgment  
the powerful one,  
the ruler of all.

<sup>1</sup> *Gimle* is the name of the hall and of the mountain on which it stands.



This is the ruler of the new world whose name not even the *völva* knows. In Norse mythology the world is pictured as a scene of perpetual struggle between good and evil, a never-ending combat between the powers of life and the forces of destruction, and it is especially noteworthy that this struggle is a great tragedy in which the gods suffer complete overthrow. Balder was killed, Loke and Fenre broke their fetters; the struggle against evil has been unsuccessful on every point. Most of the leading gods themselves are destroyed by the forces of evil in the great final battle at Ragnarok. But evil, too, passes away with the world of strife in which it has existed. This thought of the overthrow and destruction of the greatest gods seems to be a new feature which could not very well have been developed until the faith in the old divinities was beginning to waver, and people began to feel that there was a heaven higher than Valhal and Vingolv, that true happiness was not to be found in strife, but in peace and righteousness, and that there was a god whom they did not yet know, who was more powerful than the *Æsir*, and who, in the new world, would establish a reign of justice, peace, and happiness.

The "Hyndluljóð" says:

Then comes another god  
still mightier,  
but his name  
I dare not mention;  
few can now  
see farther  
than to Odin's  
meeting with the wolf.<sup>1</sup>

The worship might be carried on privately in the home, where the head of the family would sacrifice to the gods, and bring offerings to their images, but it was usually conducted in temples, *hov* (O. N. *hof*), or in simpler sanctuaries, *horg* (O. N. *hōgrgr*), of which no description is given in the old writings.<sup>2</sup> They seem to have

<sup>1</sup> Odin's meeting with the wolf is Ragnarok. Few can see farther than to the end of the present world. The new ideas about a world of peace and righteousness they had not yet become acquainted with.

<sup>2</sup> R. Keyser, *Samlede Afhandlinger*, p. 324. R. Keyser, *Nordmændenes Religionsforfatning i Hedendommen*, p. 89. Reinert Svendsen, *Fortidsmindesmerker I Ringsaker*, Christiania, 1902.



been simple structures, stone altars, or the like, erected in the open, and dedicated especially to the worship of goddesses. In the "Hyndluljóð" Freyja says:

Horg he built me,  
made of stone,  
now the stones have turned to glass;  
with fresh blood  
of oxen he sprinkled them.  
Ottar always believed in goddesses.

R. Keyser and P. A. Munch are of the opinion that many of the stone circles found in Norway are remnants of this kind of sanctuaries.<sup>1</sup> These circles, which are formed by placing great stones in an upright position, are often very large, and may have had an altar in the center.

The temple consisted of two parts; the large assembly hall, or nave, and the shrine, a smaller room in the rear end of the building, corresponding to the choir of the Christian churches. The images of the gods were placed in a half-circle in the shrine. At the center stood the altar (*stallr*), upon which lay a large gold ring (*baugr*), upon which all solemn oaths were sworn. The bowl containing the blood of the sacrificed animals (*hlautbolli*) was placed on the altar by the priest (*goði*), who, with a stick (*hlautteinn*), sprinkled it on the images of the gods, and on the persons present. The meat of the animals was boiled, and served to the assembled people in the large hall of the temple, where toasts were drunk to the gods for victory and good harvests. The sanctuary and the grounds belonging to it was called *vé*, a holy or sacred place, and any one who violated its sanctity was called *varg i véum* (wolf in the sanctuary), and was outlawed. Three religious festivals were held each year: one at the beginning of winter (October 14), the *vinternatsblót*, or *haustblót*, to bid winter welcome; another at midwinter (January 14), *midvintersblót*,<sup>2</sup> for peace and good harvest; and a third, *som-*

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. I. Munch calls attention to the fact that in Vestergötland in Sweden such a stone circle is still called *Hargene* (i.e. the horgs). Harry Fett, *Norges Kirker i Middelalderen*, Christiania, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> The sacrifice was called *blót* = Goth. *blōtan*, A. S. *blōtan*, to worship. It is not related to the word *blood*.

*merblót*, held on the first day of summer (April 14), for victory on military expeditions.

The temples seem to have been quite numerous, but especially well known were the ones at Sigtuna and Upsala in Sweden, at Leire (Hleidra) in Denmark, and at Skiringssal in Norway. There was in the North no distinct class of priests.<sup>1</sup> The priestly functions were exercised by the *herser* and the *jarls*, and even by the king himself. Women, too, might serve as priestesses (*gyðja*). In Iceland the *gode* (O. N. *goði*) held about the same position as the *herse* in Norway. He was a chieftain, and the temple in which he served as priest was built on his estates.

## 21. EARLY SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN NORWAY

The first account of early Norwegian society is given by the "*Rígsþula*," which describes the various social classes, and pictures conditions which resemble those of early Germanic society elsewhere. Ríg (the god Heimdall) comes to a hut where he finds Aae and Edda,<sup>2</sup> an old couple, gray-haired from work and hardship, sitting by the fire. Edda, who wore an old headgear, set before the visitor coarse bread and other simple food. Their son Thrall was stoop-shouldered and coarse-featured, with dark complexion and wrinkled skin. They evidently belonged to some foreign race, brought to Norway either as prisoners of war, or as slaves bought in the numerous slave markets. Thrall married without much ceremony the flat-nosed and sunburnt Thir.<sup>3</sup> Their children were called Fiosnir (stable boy), Drumbr (the clumsy one), Ambátt (slave), Tøtrughypja (the ragged one), etc. When they grow up, they do all sorts of menial labor; they manure the fields, build fences, and herd goats and swine. This is the slave class, which must have been quite numerous.

<sup>1</sup> German antiquarians have shown that neither among the Germans was there a distinct priesthood in early pagan times. Müllenhoff, *Deutsche Alterthumskunde*, IV., p. 230 f., 237 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The *Rígsþula* is thought to have been written in the period 890-920. It describes social conditions in Norway at that time, giving most valuable information with regard to this side of national life. Aae and Edda = great-grandfather and great-grandmother. <sup>3</sup> Thir = servant girl, slave.

Rig proceeded on his way, and came to the home of Ave and Amma.<sup>1</sup> The man was busy making parts for a wooden loom; he wore a tight-fitting shirt, his beard was in order, his locks hung over his forehead. The wife sat spinning, and was well dressed. Their son was called Karl.<sup>2</sup> He was married to Snor<sup>3</sup> with due ceremony, according to custom. He tamed oxen, made wagons, built houses and barns, and drove the plow. Their children were Hal,<sup>4</sup> Bonde, Hauld, Tegn, Bodde, etc. This is the farmer class, those who own land, and devote themselves to agriculture. The *karls* were the lowest class of landowning freemen, peasants. Below them were the freedmen and renters. The *haulds* (*stórbóndi*) were an aristocratic class of landowners, a gentry who held their land by inherited right and title, *odel*, and were said to be *odel born*.<sup>5</sup> At the head of the *haulds* stood in each *herred*, or district, an hereditary chieftain, the *herse*, who was their leader in war, and commanded the local subdivision of the army. He exercised also priestly functions, and presided at the *thing* (O. N. *þing*), or the assembly of the people.

Rig then came to a hall where Faðir and Moðir lived. The man was engaged in making bows and arrows. He belonged to the aristocracy. The wife decked the table with a fine linen tablecloth, placed silver vessels on it, and served wine, wheat bread, ham, and roasted fowl. She was blonde, and was elegantly dressed.

Her brows were light,  
her bosom lighter,  
her neck whiter  
than the white snow.

Their son was the golden-haired Jarl, who married the blonde and beautiful Erna, daughter of Herse. From them the king descends.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ave and Amma = grandfather and grandmother.

<sup>2</sup> Freeman who owns land.

<sup>3</sup> Snor = the son's wife.

<sup>4</sup> Hal = man. Bonde = farmer. Hauld = landed proprietor. Tegn = one who follows a chieftain. Bodde, same as Bonde.

<sup>5</sup> The *Hyndluljóð* classifies the *haulds* with the *hersir* and kings as the choicest men on the earth. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. I. J. E. Sars, *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, vol. I., 144 ff. Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, vol. II., 316. Ebbe Hertzberg, *En Fremstilling af det norske Aristokratis Historie indtil Kong Sverres Tid*.

<sup>6</sup> Finnur Jónsson thinks that the *Rigspula* is written to glorify the institution of national kingship as the best form of government, and to represent



Over against their neighbors, the Swedes and Danes, the Norsemen felt themselves to be a distinct people from times which far antedate the beginning of authentic history, but they did not at first constitute a united nation. They consisted of a number of independent tribes, occupying quite well-defined districts. The names of many of these tribes are given by Jordanes, and Procopius says that thirteen tribes live in Scandinavia, the Gautar being the most numerous. The names of Egder, Ryger, Horder, Raumer, Heiner, etc., are still preserved in names of provinces and districts in Norway, like Agder, Rogaland, Hordaland, Romerike, and Hedemarken. The tribe consisted of families to whom belonged the greater part of the land, and who, by virtue of wealth, influence, and tradition, possessed all religious and political power. The title to the land was held by the head of the family, but the real ownership was vested in all the members jointly. It was called *odel*, and the principle seems to have prevailed that it could not pass out of the possession of the family. All the sons shared equally in the inheritance, but the old homestead was not divided, but was usually inherited by the oldest son. The younger sons received other portions of the estate, or they sold their interest and sought their fortune elsewhere. The village system did not obtain in Norway, as among the Anglo-Saxons and Germans. Each family dwelt on its own separate estate. In Anglo-Saxon the word *tūn* means town. In Norse it means the place on which the dwelling is located. The people were divided into *fylker* (O. N. fylki < folk = people), and each *fylke* placed in the field an organized military force under its own commander. The *fylker* constituted the larger units of the army. A parallel to this system is found in the Anglo-Saxon tribal organization, and, especially, in the division of the tribes into smaller groups: East Saxons, South Saxons, West Saxons, North-folk, and South-folk. The *fylke* had its own temple, and its own *thing*, or assembly of the people, where suits at law were tried and decided. The *fylke* was divided into *hereder* (O. N. herað < her — ráð, a military command), which corresponds to the *hundreds* among the Anglo-Saxons,

the king as the chief personage in the whole kingdom, holding a position above all social classes. This national king must, he thinks, be Harald Haarfagre, who united all Norway under his rule.



and the *centena* among the Franks. This seems to have been a district large enough to furnish a hundred<sup>1</sup> warriors, which formed the unit of military organization. The *herse* was the hereditary tribal chieftain, while the jarls had about the same powers as petty kings, and ruled over larger districts. Before Harald Haarfagre's time most districts were governed by kings (*fylkeskonger*) who ruled over larger tribes, such as Ryger, Horder, Egder, Raumer, etc., but not till after the union of Norway did the king become distinctly superior to the jarls.

The movement towards a union of independent, but closely related tribes into a *þjóð* (A. S. *þeod*, Goth. *þiuda*), or people, seems to have been well under way, both in Sweden and Denmark, already in the early centuries of the Christian era. Svitiod, the kingdom of the Swedes dwelling around Mälaren, has already been mentioned, also Gautiod, the Gautar or Gøtar, inhabiting the districts farther south, about the great lakes Venern and Vettern. Denmark was united into one kingdom under the Skjoldung dynasty prior to 500 A.D. In Norway, where deep fjords and snow-covered mountains made inland travel in early times difficult, and laid great obstacles in the way of closer intercourse between the different districts, national unity was effected later and with more difficulty. But from very early times the trend of social development towards ultimate union is clearly seen in the growing tendency to merge the isolated tribes into larger confederacies, and to adopt for these a uniform system of laws which were gradually made operative in larger districts.

The oldest confederacy was, probably, that of the Heiner<sup>2</sup> (O. N. *Heiðnir*) dwelling in Hedemarken by the great lake Mjøsen, in the eastern part of Norway. They are mentioned in the O. E. poem "Widsíth," and the runic inscription on the Rökstone in Östergötland, Sweden, states that, together with Horder and Ryger, they made a warlike expedition to Seeland in Denmark, under a common king. Their confederacy must have existed as early as at the time

<sup>1</sup> It should be noticed that hundred in Old Norse means  $10 \times 12 = 120$ , the so-called large hundred. Alexander Bugge, *Vesterlandenes Indflydelse*, p. 15. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. I., p. 93 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ptolemy mentions the Finns in the northern part of Scandinavia, the Gautar, or Gøtar, in the southern part, and the Chaideinoi, or Heiner, in the western part. See also Alexander Bugge, *Norges Historie*, vol. I. 2, 49 ff.

of the birth of Christ, and seems to have embraced, besides the Heiner, also Raumer,<sup>1</sup> Ringer, and Hader in Romerike, Ringerike, Hadeland, and other districts. Together they constituted the Eidsivalag, *i.e.* the people united under a common law called the "Eidsivathingslov."<sup>2</sup> The place of the common assembly, or *thing* (Eidsivathing) was Eidsvold, at the lower end of Lake Mjøsen. The name of the place of assembly brought about a change of the name "Heiðsævisløg" to Eidsivalag.

More powerful was the confederacy Trøndelagen, formed by eight *fylker* dwelling in old Þrøndheimr, the district around the Trondhjemsfjord. This region, which has been inhabited as long as records can trace the existence of Norsemen, is one of the best agricultural districts in Norway. The large areas of fertile soil, which form an undulating plain around this great fjord, explain sufficiently the fact that in very early times Trøndelagen was one of the wealthiest and most densely populated districts, and was regarded as the heart and center of the country. Snorre calls it the "center of the country's strength." The Trønders took little active part in the Viking expeditions. They regarded their own districts as the most desirable place to live in, and were too strongly attached to their own homes to be fond of adventure or emigration.<sup>3</sup> Trøndelagen consisted of two parts: Indtrøndelagen, or the four inner *fylker*: Sparbuen, Værdalen, Eynafylke, and Skogn; and Uttrøndelagen, the four *fylker* situated towards the mouth of the fjord, Stjørdalen, Strinden, Guldalen, and Orkedalen. Trøndelagen had two *things*: Ørething, on Bratøren, in the present city of Trondhjem, and Frostathing, on the peninsula Frosta, in Indtrøndelagen. Every farmer who had a manservant had to attend the Ørething, which assembled once a year. At the Frostathing 400 representatives met from the eight *fylker*, forty from each *fylke* in Indtrøndelagen, and sixty from each *fylke* in Uttrøndelagen.<sup>4</sup> The Frostathing grew in impor-

<sup>1</sup> Jordanes mentions them as *Raumaricii*.

<sup>2</sup> The older form is *Heiðsævisløg* < *Heiðsær*, the sea of the Heiner.

<sup>3</sup> Henr. Mathiesen, *Det gamle Trondhjem. Festskrift udgivet i Anledning af Trondhjems 900 Aars Jubilæum*, 1897. H. G. Heggteit, *Trondhjem i Fortid og Nutid*, 1897. A. Helland, *S. Trondhjems Amt, Norges Land og Folk*.

<sup>4</sup> *Frostathingslov*, 1, 2, *Norges gamle Love*, edited by R. Keyser and P. A. Munch. J. E. Sars, *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, I., p. 224. P. A.

tance, and gave its name to the body of laws called "Frostathingslov," which was adopted by the whole northern part of Norway. Each *fylke* had its own temple and *fylkesthing*, and governed itself in all local matters. The *thing* (O. N. þing) was the assembly of the people in which the freemen met to decide matters of common interest. It was also a court of law. The *lagthings* or larger assemblies, like Ørething and Frostathing, tried all cases of greater importance; they were also appellate courts to which cases were brought from the lower courts. The president of the *lagthing* appointed a body of judges, the *lagrette*,<sup>1</sup> usually thirty-six in number, chosen for one session, who served under oath, and had to interpret and apply the law in the cases that came up for trial. The decision prepared by the *lagrette* was submitted to the whole assembly for approval. The institution of *lagmand* (plu. *lagmænd*) was also found in Norway, though it was not so important as it became later in Iceland. At first the laws were not written, and the *lagmand* was one learned in the law, who could recite it to the assembly. It seems that in Norway several *lagmænd* acted together in declaring the law. The place of assembly was one of peace and sanctity. "Every man must go fasting into court, and no drink shall be brought to the *thing*, either for sale or otherwise," says the "Frostathingslov."<sup>2</sup> The place where the *lagrette* sat was regarded as a sanctuary, and was surrounded by ropes, *vebønd*, the sacred cords.

Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, part I., vol. II., p. 147. Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog*. William Forsyth, *History of Trial by Jury*.

<sup>1</sup> *Lagrette*, O. N. *lögretta* < *rétta lög*, to properly interpret and apply the law in given cases, and to propose changes in the law. *Glossar til Norges gamle Love*, vol. V. See Falk and Torp, *Etymologisk Ordbog*, *lov*.

"The men who are chosen for the *lagrette* shall judge according to law in the cases brought before this tribunal, according to what the lawbook says. In all matters which the lawbook does not decide, that is to be followed in each case which all the *lagrette* men agree on." *Frostathingslov*, I., 2.

The *lagrette* resembled the jury in that it was a popularly constituted tribunal of 3 × 12 men selected for one session only. But as the *lagrette* men interpreted and applied the law, they were judges, and not jurors. They also had legislative functions, in that they could amend the laws when it was found necessary.

Ebbe Hertzberg, *Glossar til Norges gamle Love*, vol. V., *dómr* and *tólf*.

<sup>2</sup> *Frostathingslov*, I., 3.



Dueling with swords was not infrequently resorted to in settling disputes. It was called *holmgang*, because the duels were generally fought on a holm, or small island. When blood was drawn, the affair was regarded as settled, and the losing party had to pay a sum previously stipulated. A duel between the scald Gunlaug and his rival Ravn led to its abolition in Iceland by the *Althing*, in 1006.<sup>1</sup> In Norway it was abolished about 1012. After Christianity was introduced, the ordeal became a mode of trial occasionally resorted to. Its best known form in Norway was the *jernbyrd*, which consisted in carrying a redhot iron, or in walking barefooted over hot plowshares. This mode of trial was abolished in 1247. In Trøndelagen, with its two *lagthings*, and dual arrangement in general, there were, besides the *fylkes-hov*, two great sanctuaries; one at Mæren in Sparbuen, one of the most renowned heathen temples in Norway, and one at Lade in Uttrøndelagen, near the present city of Trondhjem. Before King Harald Haarfagre's time there were no kings in Trøndelagen. At the head of each *fylke* stood a chieftain, who was also priest and leader of the people at the *thing*. His office was hereditary, but whether he bore the title of *herse*, which was customary in Norway, or was called *gode*, like the chieftains in Iceland, is not known. The two *fylker* Nordmør and Romsdal, petty kingdoms from very ancient times, also belonged in a general way to the Frostathingslag. The people of Romsdal had their temple on the little island of Véey (the island of the sanctuary) in the Romsdalsfjord.

South of Romsdal lies Søndmør, a *fylke* which had its own king, and was the home of some of the most powerful families in the early history of Norway. Especially noteworthy is the great Arnmødling family, the descendants of King Arnvid who fell in the battle of Solskjel fighting against Harald Haarfagre. They resided on the island of Giske, near the present city of Aalesund, where a number of interesting archæological finds have been made. The Søndmørings were great seamen, and took active part in the Viking expeditions.

North of Trøndelagen a large seacoast region fringed with thousands of islands stretches for many hundred miles towards the borders of Finmarken. This is Nordland, or, as it was called in earlier times,

<sup>1</sup> *Gunlaugssaga*, ch. 11.



Haalogaland. The great cod and herring fisheries for which this region is still noted, made it in early days one of the most populous districts in Norway. Whale and walrus were caught here in large numbers, and the district was for centuries the center of the rich fur trade of the North, until it was finally surpassed by Novgorod, in Russia, in the eleventh century. The powerful chieftains in Haalogaland carried on a lucrative fur trade with the Finns in Finmarken, on whom they also levied a tribute which brought them a large income. Ôthêre<sup>1</sup> says that the most precious thing for the chieftains in Haalogaland is the tribute paid them by the Finns. This consists of furs, feathers, whalebone, robes, and ship ropes made from walrus hide. The people of Haalogaland were enterprising merchants and sailors. They went on trading expeditions to southern Norway, Denmark, and the British Isles, and followed routes across the mountains to the Gulf of Bothnia. Many trading centers sprang up, like Vágar (Kabelvaag), and Tjotta, noted later as the seat of the great chieftain Haarek af Tjotta, still one of the largest country seats in northern Norway; also Sandness, and Bjarkey, later the home of the powerful Tore Hund. Wealth was accumulated, and literature and culture flourished. Three of the Edda songs, "Vølundarkviða," "Hýmiskviða," and "Grímnismál," are known to have been written in Haalogaland, and here lived also the great scald Eyvind Skaldaspiller. The jarls of this district were among the most powerful chieftains in Norway at that time; they had large fleets, and ruled over the whole region from Finmarken to the Trondhjemsfjord, including, also, the district at the mouth of the fjord.

In the southwestern part of Norway the three *fylker*, Firðafylke (Nordfjord and Søndfjord), Sygnafylke, or Sogn, and Hordaland (including Nordhordland, Søndhordland, Hardanger, and Voss) were united in the Gulathingslag, a much looser confederacy than the Trøndelag. Firðafylke and Sogn are named after the fjords, while Hordaland bears the name of the Horder, one of the oldest known peoples in Norway. They are mentioned by Cæsar,<sup>2</sup> in the

<sup>1</sup> Alfred's *Orosius*.

<sup>2</sup> *Gallic War*, I., 31. Ptolemy mentions them as Charudes, *Geographia*, lib. II., 50.

year 58 B.C., when, according to his account, 24,000 Harudes arrived, and joined Ariovistus. Hordaland was a very mountainous region, with numerous fjords, and but a small area of tillable soil, and the Horder became great seamen and Vikings from very early times. It has already been noted that the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" mentions them as the first Vikings in England, and from that time on, this region remained the center of Viking activity in Norway.<sup>1</sup> They extended their power over neighboring tribes and districts, and Firðafylke and Sogn seem to have been new settlements founded by them. The Gulathing was held every spring. Twelve men were chosen from each of the three *fylker* as a *lagrette* by the chieftains who presided over the *thing*. In the mountain valleys farther inland the old organization, with petty kings and full tribal autonomy, still existed unmodified by any tendency towards union.

In southern Norway the Christianiafjord, known in earlier times as the Foldenfjord, extends for a distance of about sixty miles into a fertile and beautiful region called Viken. This district, which lies in close proximity to Sweden and Denmark, and faces the Skagerak and the Baltic Sea, was most favorably located for intercourse with other states. Rich soil, a fine climate, fisheries, and trade made it an attractive and populous region. In early ages it became a harbor for foreign influence and new ideas, a center of progress and development, in which was found all that was highest of art and culture in the North at that time. To the west of the fjord lay two *fylker*, Grenland (the land of the Grannii) and Vestfold; to the east Vingulmark, and southward from Svinesund to the Göta River stretched Ranrike, the land of the Ragnaricii,<sup>2</sup> also called Alfheimr in the sagas, which in later times became a Swedish province. In the southern part of Vestfold, near the coast, lay the famous sanctuary Skiringssal,<sup>3</sup> around which a town had grown up. Ôhthère says in his report to King Alfred the Great that he lived in Haalogaland,

<sup>1</sup> The Horder were found both in Norway and in Denmark. Their original home seems to have been on the Cimbric peninsula, where their name is still preserved in *Hardeyssel*, south of Limfjord. Their name was also given to King Knut the Great's son Hardeknut. See Alexander Bugge, *Norges Historie*, I., 238 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Jordanes, III., p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Historisk Tidsskrift udgivet af den norske historiske Forening, Christiania*. Gustav Storm, *Skiringssal og Sandefjord*, fjerde række, vol. I., p. 214.

and that there is in southern Norway a town called Skiringssal (Sciringes heál), to which one can sail in a month by resting in the night, if the wind is favorable. As a commercial town it was soon outstripped by Tunsberg, not far away, on the west side of the Christianiafjord. In the neighborhood of Tunsberg lay a number of sanctuaries, dedicated to various divinities, whose names are still traceable in Basberg (Baldersberg), Hassum (Haðsheimr), Horgen, and Oseberg (the land of the Æsir), where the Oseberg ship was found. The art and wealth exhibited in the grave chamber of the queen, or princess, buried in this ship furnish singular evidence of the culture and power of the princes of Vestfold in early ages. The kings of Denmark had won supremacy over this province. When this happened is not known, but in 813 the ruling native princes acknowledged the Danish king's overlordship, and Vestfold became a Danish province. But the powerful King Godfred of Denmark, who ventured to begin war even against Charlemagne, was killed by one of his own men in 810, and a period of confusion and strife between rival claimants to the throne was the result. During this period the Ynglings came into power in Vestfold, a family which was destined in time to rule over all Norway, and to unite it into one kingdom. They quickly seized the opportunity, and made Vestfold independent, but the Danish kings continued to claim it, even as late as in the reign of Valdemar the Victorious.

## 22. THE ORIGIN OF THE YNGLING DYNASTY

According to Thjodolv af Hvin's "Ynglingatal," and the "Ynglingasaga" in Snorre's "Heimskringla," the Yngling family were descendants of the Swedish kings at Upsala. But the Swedish dynasty were, usually, called Scilfings, and the Norwegian kings of the Yngling family may not, therefore, be descended from them. In the "Hyndluljóð" in the "Elder Edda" the Scilfings and Ynglings are mentioned as different families.<sup>1</sup> Ynglings means de-

<sup>1</sup> padan eru Skioldungar  
 padan eru Skilfingar  
 padan Audlingar  
 padan Ynglingar.

See *Norræn Fornkvæði*, by Sophus Bugge.



scendants of the god Yngve, who was worshiped in Jutland and northern Germany. He was later considered identical with the god Frey, from whom the Scilfings were supposed to descend, a circumstance which probably gave rise to the idea that the Scilfings and the Ynglings were the same family. Alexander Bugge thinks that the Ynglings originally came from Vestergötland. They came to Norway through marriage, and Vestfold became their real home. Gudrød Veidekonge was the first ruler of Vestfold who called himself king, a title which he assumed after he had succeeded in freeing himself from Danish overlordship. His son Olav Geirstad-Alv, who succeeded him as king of Vestfold and Grenland, became the father of the great sea-king Ragnvald Heidumhære, in honor of whom Thjodolv wrote his "Ynglingatal," and from whom the Norwegian kings of Dublin descended. But better known than Olav Geirstad-Alv is his younger brother Halvdan Svarte, the father of King Harald Haarfagre, who seems to have been a gifted and energetic man with some of the lofty ambition and talent for organization which distinguished his great son. Halvdan was only one year old at his father's death, but when he became of age he forced his brother to share the kingdom with him. Through successful wars he made himself master of one district after another, until he ruled over nearly the whole of Østlandet (southeastern Norway). Tradition says that King Halvdan organized the Eidsivathingslag, but this is much older, though Halvdan, no doubt, increased its significance by adding to it the districts of his kingdom in order to strengthen its organization. Through the marriage of a daughter of King Harald Guldskegg of Sögn, he was also able to add that district to his kingdom, and at the time of his death in 860 his kingdom was the largest and best organized in all Norway. He had introduced a system of general taxation which the people considered very oppressive, because they were not used to paying taxes, but he seems, nevertheless, to have been held in high esteem. According to the sagas he was drowned while crossing the Randsfjord on the ice in the winter of 860.



## 23. HARALD HAARFAGRE. — UNIFICATION OF NORWAY

When Halvdan Svarte died, his ten-year-old son, Harald Haarfagre, ascended the throne of the kingdom which he had founded. Harald's reign marks the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Norway, in which the union of the whole country under the rule of the Yngling dynasty was effected. The petty kingdoms, jarldoms, and aristocratic confederacies were welded by Harald into a national monarchy with a system of government and administration which placed great power in the hands of the ruling sovereign. What Charlemagne had done on the Continent, and Egbert and Alfred in England, King Harald Haarfagre did for Norway. It can scarcely be doubted that the example of these great rulers, as well as that of the neighboring states of Sweden and Denmark, which for long periods had been united and strong kingdoms, fired Harald's ambition, and that many important features in his system of government were due to foreign influence.

About Harald's early life comparatively little is known, but all sources agree that at the death of his father he was ten years of age. The "*Fagrskinna*"<sup>1</sup> says that at that time he was young in years, but fully developed in the manly bearing which befits a king. He had a luxuriant growth of light hair which looked like silk. He was tall, strong, and beautiful; wise, prudent, and energetic. Old men admired him, and young and vigorous men sought him because of his renown and generosity, and the splendor of his court. According to the sagas, his mother's brother Guttorm was his adviser and the leader of the army, and Ragnvald Mørejarl must also have been his counselor and assistant. When Halvdan Svarte died, the kings and other petty princes in eastern Norway, who had been forced to acknowledge his overlordship, rose in rebellion against his youthful successor. King Gandalf of Ranrike made an expedition against Harald, but he was defeated and slain, and his kingdom was seized. Somewhat later the Swedish king occupied the territory between

<sup>1</sup> *Fagrskinna*, or *Noregskonungatal*, narrates the history of the kings of Norway from Halvdan Svarte until 1177. It was written in Norway in the period 1220-1230. It is older than the *Heimskringla*, but the author, though he is a careful and reliable writer, lacks Snorre's ability as historian.

the Glommen and the Göta River, but Harald made a successful campaign against him, and recovered the territory, over which he now placed Guttorm as a sort of *markgraf* to protect the borders. The kings of Ringerike and Hedemarken, aided by Toten and Hadeland, also rebelled. It is said that they made an agreement with Gudbrand, the *herse* of Gudbrandsdal, that they should combine to resist Harald. They assembled to form an alliance against him, but Guttorm fell upon them and destroyed them by setting fire to the house in which they were assembled, and Harald also added Gudbrandsdal to his kingdom.<sup>1</sup> By such vigorous measures he soon overcame all opposition, and not only preserved intact his father's kingdom, but even enlarged its borders. Snorre, in the "Heimskringla," tells how through a fortuitous circumstance he hit upon the idea of making himself king of all Norway. He sent messengers to woo a young maiden by the name of Gyda, the daughter of King Eirik of Hordaland. But she answered proudly that she would not marry a king who ruled over only a few *fylker*. She was surprised, she said, that no king was found who wished to rule over Norway, as King Gorm did over Denmark, and King Eirik in Upsala. She told the messengers that she would marry Harald when he had made himself the ruler of all Norway. This message they brought back to Harald, who thought that she had spoken wisely. "She has reminded me of those things," he said, "which I am surprised have not occurred to me before," and he made a vow that he would not cut or comb his hair before he had conquered the whole country. When this was accomplished, he again sent messengers to Gyda, who now gave her consent, and the two were married. This little romance is ingenious invention, like so many other poetic stories connected with the name of the great king. In the "Fagrskinna" a similar story is told about Ragna, the daughter of Adils the Rich. The ultimate union of Norway was already clearly foreshadowed by the trend of political development which formed a part of a general European movement toward a form of monarchy in which the king possessed as near as

<sup>1</sup> Harald's hirdseald, Thorbjörn Hornklove, describes these early campaigns in his poem *Glymdrápa*, of which, however, only a fragment has been preserved. Five of the seven or eight existing stanzas are found in Snorre's *Heimskringla*.

possible the totality of governmental powers. Halvdan Svarte had manifested a similar ambition, and might have come much closer to its realization but for his untimely death. Harald's kingdom was the largest in Norway; he was young and ambitious; he was surrounded by energetic men and wise counselors. Nothing could seem more natural to him under the circumstances, than to continue the work which his father Halvdan had begun.

Harald permitted the districts in Oplandene<sup>1</sup> to retain their own local kings, who now, in a sense, became his vassals. The *herse* of Gudbrandsdal was also allowed to retain his old dignity upon paying taxes, and acknowledging the king's overlordship. Harald now crossed the Dovre Mountains to Trøndelagen, which submitted to him without difficulty, as did also Haalogaland and Namdalen, where the powerful jarl Haakon Grjotgardsson ruled. Jarl Haakon was the king's friend, and aided him in establishing his authority over this part of Norway. Harald spent the winter in Trøndelagen, which he now considered as his real home.<sup>2</sup> He built a residence at Lade, near the present city of Trondhjem, which later became the seat of the powerful Ladejarls, and spent his time in building a fleet, and in systematizing the administration. In the spring he set sail with his fleet for Nordmør and Romsdal. One decisive battle was fought at Solskjel, where King Hundtjov of Nordmør fell; his son, Solve Klove, saved himself by flight, and the two provinces submitted to Harald. Out of these districts he created a jarldom, to which he added a little later also the district of Søndmør, and placed his friend Ragnvald Mørejarl in charge of the administration. From him descended the Orkney jarls, and the dukes of Normandy.

In Vestlandet, where by this time the Viking activity held full sway, the love of local autonomy and of unrestricted personal independence was most intense. The aristocracy feared nothing so much as a possible restriction of their old rights, and the overlordship of a national king. As Harald's success greatly alarmed them, they united their entire strength, and sought assistance even in

<sup>1</sup> Oplandene (the Uplands) is a name applied to the districts Hadeland, Land, Gudbrandsdal, Valdres, Hedemarken, Østerdalen, Toten, Vinger, Odalen, and Solør, constituting at present the two *amts* Kristian and Hedemarken.

<sup>2</sup> *Heimskringla, Harald Haarfagre's Saga*, ch. 9.



the Viking colonies in the West for a decisive combat with the ambitious king. No single district could assemble a larger fleet, nor raise a stronger force of well-trained warriors with able leaders than Vestlandet, and when the hostile forces finally met in Hafrsfjord, on the coast of Rogaland, in southwestern Norway, in 872, King Harald well knew that he faced the most critical struggle of his life. The battle is described in a poem by the scald Thorbjørn Hornklove, who tells how King Luva fought against Kjøtve (the stout one) and Haklang (the one with the long chin), whose men were armed with white shields,<sup>1</sup> Gaelic swords, and spears made in the West. Luva (O. N. *lúfa* = thick hair) was a nickname applied to Harald Haarfagre in his younger days, because of his heavy growth of hair. Kjøtve seems to be a nickname by which the scald designates King Gudrød of Agder, while Haklang, from whom he received aid, seems to have been his son Olav the White of Dublin. King Olav, who had driven out the Danes, and had reestablished the power of the Norsemen, ruled in Dublin for many years, together with Ivar, probably Ivar Boneless, the son of Ragnar Lodbrok, with whom he seems to have formed an alliance. In 871 he left Ireland and never returned, which indicates that he must have died on his expedition. The "Three Fragments of Irish Annals," found in 1860, states that in 871 King Amlaib (Olav) went from Erin to Lochlann (Norway) to wage war with the Lochlannaig (Norsemen), and help his father, Gotfried, because the Lochlannaig had begun war against him, and he had come to ask his son for aid. Haklang (Olav) fell in the battle, says Hornklove. This explains why Olav never returned to Ireland. It is clear that the kings of Vestlandet, with their combined forces under the leadership of Gudrød, and assisted by a Viking army from Ireland under King Olav, met Harald in the Hafrsfjord, but they were defeated after a fierce battle in which King Olav fell. The overthrow of the opposition was complete, and Harald was acknowledged king of united Norway.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When Irish annalists call the Norsemen *Finn-Galls* or white strangers, to distinguish them from the Danes, who are called *Dubh-Galls* or dark strangers, it is probably due to their custom of carrying white shields.

<sup>2</sup> Gustav Storm, *Slaget i Hafrsfjord*. *Historisk Tidsskrift* anden række, vol. II., 313.

Many kings and chieftains mentioned by Snorre as partakers in the battle



During these wars Harald had created both an army and a navy, and it became necessary to maintain these military organizations to protect the kingdom from foreign and domestic enemies. Piratic expeditions within the borders of Norway were now forbidden, and all inhabitants had to swear fealty to the king or leave the country. Many of the chieftains in the districts which had offered the stoutest resistance chose to emigrate rather than submit to Harald. Their estates were confiscated, and became royal demesne lands, the property of the king. Of these estates he retained a number, which he placed in charge of royal overseers, *aarmænd*, and these lands became one of his chief sources of income. The greater part of the confiscated lands he gave to his followers as a payment for services rendered or to be rendered. They received the lands, not in full ownership, but in *veitsle*, which means that they were entitled to the income from them, in return for which they should collect taxes, furnish fully equipped men for the army, and be of aid and service to the king. King Harald derived income also from various other sources. The trade with the Finns, and the tribute paid by them, was made a royal monopoly. All derelict property belonged to the king. He also levied a personal tax on his subjects; probably, also, a tax on certain special privileges and incomes. The *aarmænd* were the local collectors of these taxes. This royal office, or *syssel*, together with that of overseer, was later given to officers called *sysselmænd*.<sup>1</sup>

Snorre says that Harald placed a jarl in each *fylke*, who should maintain law and order and collect taxes, of which he should retain one-third for his expenses and for the maintenance of his household. Under each jarl there should be four *herser*, who should have an income of twenty marks a year. Each jarl should furnish sixty men for the king's army, and each *herse* should furnish twenty.<sup>2</sup> This arrangement seems to have been made, however, only in the districts which had offered the most determined resistance, in consequence of which the old institution of fylkes-king was abolished, and are unhistoric characters; like Roald Rygg, Hadd den Haarde, King Sulke, and his brother Sote Jarl.

<sup>1</sup> R. Keyser, *Efterladte Skrifter*, vol. II., *Norges Stats- og Retsforfatning i Middelalderen*. T. E. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, p. 12 f.

<sup>2</sup> Snorre, *Heimskringla*, *Harald Haarfagre's Saga*, ch. 6.

royal officers were placed in charge of the local administration. We have seen that in Oplandene and in Gudbrandsdal the old system was retained, and the same was, no doubt, the case in Trøndelagen, and, in fact, in all districts which had submitted voluntarily to the king. The name and office of *herse* was retained, but later the *herse* became *lendermænd* (O. N. *lendr maðr*), an office which corresponded in general to their old dignity. But while the *herse* was an hereditary chieftain and a leader of the people, the *lendermand* was a royal official who held his position by appointment, and, as a rule, this new dignity never became fully hereditary.<sup>1</sup> The jarls were no longer independent rulers, as of old, but became the highest officials under the king. They were the leaders of the army in war, conducted the deliberations at the *thing*, collected the taxes, and had charge of the local administration in larger districts. Especially powerful were the king's old friends and assistants; Guttorm, Haakon Grjotgardsson, and Ragnvald Mørejarl, who ruled over many *fylker*.

The sagas, especially the "Egilssaga," which is very hostile to Harald, pictures his government as a usurpation of power, a veritable tyranny. Snorre says that wherever Harald acquired any territory, he took the *odel* away from the people, and forced them to pay a land tax.<sup>2</sup> The *odel* was a right to full ownership of land, vested permanently in the family, the members of which had a right to redeem the property, if it should be sold to any one outside of the family.

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Harald Haarfagre's Saga*, ch. 6. J. E. Sars, *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, I., 161. R. Keyser, *Norges Retsforfatning*, p. 112-113. P. A. Munch, *Samlede Afhandlinger*, vol. I., p. 77 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Older scholars have accepted, in the main, the statement of the sagas that King Harald deprived the people of their right of *odel*. "Harald appropriated to himself as king the right of *odel*, i.e. the supreme right of ownership of all the land, with a corresponding right to levy taxes." R. Keyser, *Efterladte Skrifter*, vol. II. *Norges Stats- og Retsforfatning i Middelalderen*, p. 30.

"With the right of the conqueror Harald took with armed hand all the lands in the districts which he seized. He did not drive away the former owners, but he deprived them of their *odel*, and made them pay a land tax." T. H. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, p. 12. Later investigations have led to the conclusion that Harald did not deprive the people of their right of *odel*.

"The freeholders (*bønder*) thought that if they should pay taxes they were no longer free *odelsbønder*, but the king's tenants. This is the real meaning

This was a very important right, which secured the power and independence of the large class of freeholders. To judge from the statement in the "Egilssaga" that in every *fylke* Harald took all the *odel*, and all land, inhabited and uninhabited, even the sea and the waters, and that all freeholders (*bønder*) should henceforth be his tenants, one might be led to think that the king was the owner of all the land, and had introduced the feudal system in Norway. But this is a manifest exaggeration. The feudal system was not at that time developed anywhere in Europe, and it was never introduced in Norway. With the exception of the confiscations already mentioned, the people, no doubt, retained their *odel* now as heretofore, and there is no evidence that they even had to pay a land tax, such as the sagas complain of. Harald left undisturbed the *things* and the old legal system, and the "Egilssaga" states that shortly after the king's death Egil Skallagrimsson brought a suit on behalf of his wife against Bergamund at the Gulathing, maintaining that she was entitled to inherit one-half of the estate left by her father, Bjørn Herse, both of real and personal property. This shows that the right of *odel* existed at that time. What Harald did was to levy a personal tax on the freeholders, possibly, also, a tax on certain incomes. This had been done before by his father Halvdan, but it was otherwise an innovation. As people had never been accustomed to paying taxes, they regarded this as a sign of dependence, and as so great an encroachment on their liberty that it was tantamount to depriving them of their *odel* and their rights as freemen, and of reducing them to tenants under the king.

From very early times the kings and chieftains had a band of personal followers called *drott*, or *verðung*, corresponding to the *comitatus* of the early German chieftains.<sup>1</sup> In Harald's time the name "*hird*"<sup>2</sup> came into use, and many foreign manners and customs of the complaint that Harald took the *odel* away from them. That King Harald levied a tax which the *bønder* could call a land tax, there is nothing to show." Alexander Bugge, *Norges Historie*, vol. I., second part, p. 125. Yngvar Nielsen, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, fjerde række, vol. IV., p. 1 ff. Absalon Taranger, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, fjerde række, vol. IV., p. 98 ff.

<sup>1</sup> "It was their honor and power always to be surrounded by a large body of select young men, their pride in peace, and their protection in war." Tacitus, *Germania*, 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Hird*, O. N. *hird* < A. S. *hired*, or *hird*, = family.



toms were introduced. Ambitious young men flocked to Harald, and the *hird*, which originally had been a very simple institution, became a real court, famous for its splendor and fine manners. "King Harald Haarfagre was the strictest of all kings with regard to conduct and courtly etiquette," says the saga.<sup>1</sup> Liberal gifts, some high office or other good fortune, awaited those who gained the king's favor. The "Egilssaga" tells that King Harald sent word to Kveldulv fra Fjordene that he wished that one of his sons might become a *hirdmand*. Kveldulv, who had been an opponent of the king, told his son Thoralf that he thought they would reap nothing but misfortune from it. But Thoralf answered: "Things must then take another turn than I expect. I think that the king will give me great advancement, and I have determined to go to him and become his man. I have heard that his *hird* consists of the very best men, and it seems to me a great advantage to be among them, if they will receive me. They are also better provided for than any other men in the land. The king is said to be very generous, and always willing to promote those who deserve it. But I have heard that those who resist him, and do not seek his friendship, accomplish nothing. Some leave the country, and some become tenants."<sup>2</sup>

Like Charlemagne and Alfred the Great, King Harald was also a patron of literature. Many scalds came to his court, and the *hird* became the center of intellectual life and literary activity. We hear of scalds before this time, but the *hirdscald* poetry, which consisted mainly of laudatory songs composed to commemorate great events and the lives and deeds of kings and princes, seems to have been developed at Harald's court, where new themes and opportunities were offered the poets. The union of Norway, and Harald's great achievements created a new national pride, which is freely voiced in the songs of the *hirdscalds*. Hitherto the poets had sung about mythology and heroic traditions; their songs were composed in

<sup>1</sup> *Nornagestssaga*, ch. 9. Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, II., 208 ff. *Kongespeilet* (the *King's Mirror*), Christiania, 1848, 59-60. R. Keyser, *Norges Stats- og Retsforfatning*, Christiania, 1867, 77 ff. T. H. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, Christiania, 1866.

<sup>2</sup> See Thorbjørn Hornklove's song about Harald, also called the *Ravnsmaal*, *Fagrskinna*, 5.



the clear and classic alliterative verse; their names they gave to oblivion with a certain proud disdain which does not covet honor, as did the authors of the songs of the "Elder Edda." The *hirdscalds* sang of the great events of the day, and praised the achievements, and extolled the renown of the kings and princes who were their patrons, and who rewarded them liberally for their songs. They sought honor as well as reward, and their names have been handed down to posterity. They composed their songs in a new and intricate verse form, the *drottkvætt*, abounding in word transpositions and metaphoric expressions (*kenningar*), in which Irish influence can be recognized, Ireland being the only country where a like verse form and a similar poetic literature was found. The most noted scalds at Harald's court were: Thjodolv af Hvin and Thorbjørn Hornklove, who have already been mentioned. Less known are Ølve Hnuva, Ulv Sebbason, Guttorm Sindre, and Audun Illskelda, the oldest of them all, who had been scald at the court of Harald's father, Halvdan Svarte. Court jesters were introduced to create diversion and entertainment for the *hird*, and games, resembling dice and chess (*terning* and *brætspil*), were much indulged in. Music, especially the playing of the trumpet and the harp, declamation of poems by the scalds, rich ornaments, fine clothes, and courtly manners added charm to this circle of gifted and prominent men who constituted the *hird* of King Harald Haarfagre.

Many features of Harald's great work are, as already indicated, clearly traceable to the influence of Charlemagne and Alfred the Great, from whose constructive statesmanship he gathered both inspiration and ideas. His plan of making Norway a united kingdom, and of dividing the country into jarldoms, or larger administrative districts, are ascribable, in the main, to this influence. The revival of learning produced by Charlemagne after the darkness and confusion of the Migrations must have inspired him, also, with the noble ambition to become a patron of literature, and a teacher of good manners, to make his court an intellectual center, and to foster in his people a true appreciation of the ennobling influence of higher culture. The stirring events at home, together with the stimulus given by the Viking expeditions, and the influence of the art and culture of the nations with whom the Norsemen now came into more

immediate contact, produced in Norway a great intellectual awakening, the fruit of which was the scaldic poetry, the Eddas, the sagas, valuable historical works, and collections of old laws. In the field of literature, as in the domain of seamanship and maritime enterprise, the Norsemen manifested the most original and versatile genius of the age. King Harald learned, indeed, from others, but he was not a mere imitator. All accounts of him, whether friendly or hostile, agree in describing him as a gifted and truly great man. He was tall and strong, and a rich growth of flaxen hair crowned his majestic brow. He was a kingly and imposing figure, who inspired confidence and respect. In peace, as in war, he exhibited the same talent for organization which made him able to shape a well-ordered system in every field to which he devoted his attention. He pursued his aim with great energy and perseverance, and his hand fell heavy on those who resisted. In many cases he might have been arbitrary, even cruel and despotic, but he possessed, on the whole, a mixture of sternness and moderation which made it possible for him, not only to accomplish his first great aim, but to overcome all opposition, and to rule in peace during a long reign.

#### 24. EVENTS OUTSIDE OF NORWAY. THE NORSE COLONIAL EMPIRE. THE ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ISLANDS

Many men of influence and power left Norway after the battle of Hafrsfjord in 872. They emigrated to the Faroe Islands, the Orkney<sup>1</sup> and Shetland (Hjaltland) groups, the Hebrides (Sudreyjar), to Iceland, and to the Viking colonies in the West. Olav the White's son, Eystein, and Ivar Boneless ruled in Dublin, and possessed large districts in Scotland, while Ketil Flatnev, father of Aud the Deep-minded, the wife of Olav the White, had established a sort of independent sovereignty in the Hebrides.<sup>2</sup> These opponents of Harald harbored and aided the fugitives, who used their new homes as a base of operations from which they would send out piratic expeditions to harry the coasts of Norway. Irritated by these constant

<sup>1</sup> The Orkneys (O. N. *Orkneyjar*) were called by the Romans *Orcades*. The Norsemen retained the first part of the name *Orc*, or *Ork*, and added *eyjar* (i.e. islands).

<sup>2</sup> The *Laxdølasaga*.

ravages, Harald at length fitted out a large fleet, and sailed westward to punish the Vikings. He attacked the Norse settlements in Scotland, chased away the Viking bands from Shetland, the Orkneys, and the Hebrides, and seems to have visited even the Isle of Man. Shetland and the Orkneys were annexed to Norway, and Ragnvald Mørejarl's brother Sigurd was made ruler of the new provinces. This expedition against the Vikings made Harald a friend of the English king, Æthelstan, with whom he concluded a treaty. The two kings sent each other valuable presents, and each sought to rival the other. Harald also sent his son Haakon to England to be reared at the court of King Æthelstan, not, as the sagas would explain it, in order to insult the king, but because he wished the boy to become acquainted with English manners and culture. Jarl Sigurd and Thorstein the Red, a son of Olav the White of Dublin, soon gained possession of Caithness (Katanes), Sutherland (Suðr-land), and other districts of northern Scotland, as far as to the river Oikel, says the "Orkneyingasaga."<sup>1</sup> Sigurd died in Scotland, and was succeeded by his son Guttorm, but he lived only a year, and Torv-Einar, a son of Ragnvald Mørejarl, became jarl of the Orkneys.<sup>2</sup> From him descended the powerful Orkney jarls, prominent both in Scot<sup>ish</sup> and Norwegian history.<sup>3</sup> He was a half-brother of Gange-Rolv, who founded the Norse dukedom of Normandy.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge shows that there is a manifest error in the saga, as the son of Olav the White of Dublin was called Eystein, and not Thorstein.

<sup>2</sup> He was nicknamed Torv-Einar (Peat-Einar), because he taught the people to use peat for fuel. He was a practical man and a powerful warrior. He soon drove out the Viking freebooters, and established peace and order in the islands. *Orkneyingasaga*, translated by Jon A. Hjalalin and Gilbert Goudie, edited with notes and introduction by Joseph Anderson, Edinburgh, 1873.

<sup>3</sup> L. Dietrichson, *Monumenta Orcadica, the Norsemen in the Orkneys and the Monuments They Have Left*, Christiania, 1906. J. Wallace, *Description of the Isles of the Orkneys*, 1673, new edition, London, 1884. Fea, *Present State of the Orkney-Islands*, London, 1885. J. J. A. Worsaae, *Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene i England, Skotland og Irland*, p. 177 ff., Copenhagen, 1851. Torfæus, *Orcades*, 1700. Peder Claussøn Friis, *Norriges og omliggende Øers sandfærdige Beskrivelse*, 1632. Joseph Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, vol. I. *Islandske Annaler*, edited by Gustav Storm. P. A. Munch, *Erindringer fra Orknøerne*. *Samlede Afhandlinger*, III., 52-59. P. A. Munch, *Geografiske Oplysninger om de i Sagaerne forekommende skotske og irske Stedsnavne*, III., 79-181.







RUINS OF THE BISHOP'S PALACE AT KIRKWALL.



THE ST. MAGNUS CATHEDRAL AT KIRKWALL.



NOTLAND CASTLE IN WESTRAY.

Harald Haarfagre's son Halvdan Hálegg, who had killed Ragnvald Mørejarl in Norway, came to the Orkneys to drive away Torv-Einar. Einar fled to Caithness, but returned to the islands with a large force, and defeated and killed Halvdan. As a punishment King Harald demanded of the people of the Orkneys a tax of sixty marks of gold. This tax Einar undertook to pay on condition that the people should surrender to him their right of *odel*, i.e. the right of private ownership of the land which they tilled. When Torv-Einar died, about 910, his three sons, Arnkell, Erlend, and Thorfinn Hausakljúv, succeeded him. During their time King Eirik Blood-Ax, son of Harald Haarfagre and his queen Ragnhild, sought refuge in the Orkneys, having been banished from Norway. Arnkell and Erlend helped King Eirik in his battles in England, and fell there, but Thorfinn Hausakljúv remained jarl of the Orkneys till 963. He married Grelaug, daughter of the Scotch maormor Dungad, or Duncan, and received with her Caithness, which from now on was united with the Orkneys. He was mound-buried on the northwest coast of South Ronaldsay, at Hoxa. Thorfinn's five sons succeeded one another as jarls of the Orkneys. King Eirik Blood-Ax's daughter Ragnhild married in course of time three of the brothers, but caused the death of all her husbands. Her evil influence brought about a period of feuds and bloodshed in which many of the leading men of the islands met their death. At length Lodve, the fifth and only remaining son of Thorfinn Hausakljúv, became jarl. He died about 980, and was succeeded by his son Sigurd Lodvesson, the famous Orkney jarl who fell in the battle of Clontarf. King Olav Trygvason forced Sigurd to acknowledge his overlordship, and to accept Christianity, 995. The island jarldom had been a Norse dependency since Harald Haarfagre's time, but the suzerainty of the Norwegian kings was not always firmly maintained till in the reign of Olav Haraldsson (1015-1030). Jarl Sigurd ruled, not only over the Orkneys and Caithness, but also over Sutherland, Ross, Moray, and Argyle in Scotland, as well as over the Hebrides and Man. He was often hard pressed in his wars with the Scotch earls or maormors, and in order to get more active support from his people, he gave them back their right of *odel* which Torv-Einar had taken from them. He defeated Findlay, the father of Macbeth, at Skida Myre, and in the

battle of Duncansby Head he defeated the two Scotch maormors Hunde and Maelsnechtan, but being unable to defend his Scotch possessions, he made peace with Scotland, and married the daughter of King Malcolm II. She was his second wife, and bore him the son Thorfinn. When Sigurd fell at Clontarf, in 1014, three sons of a former marriage, Sumarlide, Bruse, and Einar Vrangmund, divided the Orkneys among themselves, but none of them lived long, and Thorfinn soon became the ruler of his father's possessions. But he soon had to surrender two-thirds of the Orkneys to Ragnvald, the son of Bruse, who returned to the island in 1035. For some time Thorfinn and Ragnvald were friends, and made Viking expeditions together, but when Thorfinn suddenly demanded that Ragnvald should give up one-third of his possessions to Kalv Arnesson of Norway, hostilities began in which Ragnvald was defeated and slain.

After Thorfinn's death about 1064, his two sons, Paul and Erlend, ruled jointly till 1098, a period during which the islands enjoyed peace and prosperity. They were succeeded by their sons, Haakon Paulsson and Magnus Erlendsson, or St. Magnus, but in 1115 the selfish and violent Haakon slew Magnus, who was afterward venerated as a saint. The direct line of Norse jarls in the Orkneys became extinct in 1231 upon the death of John Jarl, but the islands remained a Norwegian dependency till 1471.<sup>1</sup> In 1468 the Orkney Islands were mortgaged by Christian I., king of Denmark and Norway, to King James III. of Scotland as security for 50,000 Rhenish gulden; this sum being part of the dowry of 60,000 Rhenish gulden which his daughter Margaret was to receive upon her marriage to King James. In 1471 the last Orkney jarl, William Sinclair, ceded the islands to the Scotch king, and received in return extensive possessions on the mainland of Scotland.

Numerous remains from the Norse period are still found in the islands. Burial mounds, ship burials, stone monuments, and ruins of churches and other old buildings attract the attention of scientists and travelers. The town of Kirkwall (Kirkjuvágr) was

<sup>1</sup> *The Orkneyingasaga*, which is the chief source for the early history of the Orkneys, was written not before 1250. The *Íslandske Annaler* contain some notices of events in the Orkneys after the period dealt with in the *Orkneyingasaga*. See also *Njálssaga*, and *Olav Tryggvasonssaga* in the *Flateyjarbók*.



founded by Jarl Ragnvald, the son of Bruse. It is built on the same plan as the early Norwegian cities of Tunsberg, Nidaros, Oslo, Bjørgvin, and Stavanger. The St. Olaf cathedral in Kirkwall was erected by Jarl Ragnvald, who was a friend of St. Olav Haraldsson, king of Norway.

In 1050 Jarl Thorfinn went on a pilgrimage to Rome, where he received Pope Leo IX.'s permission to establish a separate bishopric for the Orkneys. The Christ church at Byrgisaa, the first bishop's church in the islands, is thought to have been erected by Thorfinn. The bishop's residence was later removed to Kirkwall. The church at Orfjara was built by Jarl Haakon Paulsson, 1118-1122, in expiation of the murder of St. Magnus. Among other conspicuous ruins are those of the Magnus church on Egilsey, the bishop's palace in Kirkwall, and Notland castle on Westray. The grandest building in the Orkneys is the Magnus cathedral in Kirkwall, a truly magnificent structure erected by Ragnvald Jarl, the second Orkney jarl of that name, 1137-1156. "It is the mightiest monument left by the Norsemen in the West, indeed, next to Trondhjem cathedral, the oldest monument of the whole ancient Norway." "Here, too," says L. Dietrichson, "is a confirmation of what may generally be said of the Viking expeditions; namely, that although in themselves wild and barbaric, they always contained the germ of a new, rich cultural development, that stirred as soon as the warlike spirit sank to rest, and left room for the play of the intellectual strength and civilizing power that also dwelt in the Vikings. St. Magnus' cathedral is the living expression of this thought."<sup>1</sup>

The people of the Orkneys have retained to the present time their Norse character. They are proud of their Norse descent, and refuse to be called Scotch. They live on their country homesteads, as of old, and the freeholders are still called "udallers" (*i.e.* *odelsmænd*). They are great sailors and fishermen, and show a preference for a seafaring life. In the course of the eighteenth century the Norse language disappeared, and English is now spoken exclusively, but many Norse words and idioms have been preserved. The Orkney peasants still say, "luk the grind!" for "shut the gate," and their accent strongly resembles that of the western districts of Norway.

<sup>1</sup> Dietrichson, *Monumenta Orcadica*.



Professor P. A. Munch, who traveled in the Orkneys in 1849, writes :<sup>1</sup> "The Norse era, isolated by a new linguistic period, stands surrounded by a mystic glory in the memory of the people of the Orkneys. They exalt it to the skies at the expense of the English-Scotch period. Everything belonging to that time, and, in general, everything which is called "Norn" (from *Norrøn*, or Norse) they regard as better and nobler than the English or Scotch. I experienced many very touching examples of the devotion with which the people still cling to Norway and to the memories of this their motherland."

When the Orkneys came under Scotland, a number of Scotchmen came over to the islands, and through the aid and connivance of the rulers they secured large estates, and became in time a landed aristocracy. The original Norse settlers became more and more dependent on the great landowners, and were oppressed by heavy taxes. This engendered a spirit of ill feeling between the Scotch and the Norse elements, which increased when the Scotch law was substituted for the old Norse law of St. Olav. Tenaciously the people clung to their old rights. Even in 1903 an Orkney farmer so stoutly defended his rights according to St. Olav's Norse law in regard to some fisheries in dispute, that the English authorities made inquiries of a Norwegian professor of jurisprudence at the University of Christiania to secure information regarding this old law.<sup>2</sup> The Orkney group consists of about eighty islands, all of which have Norse names, with the exception of two or three. The islands have a population of about 30,000. The two cities are Kirkwall with 4000 inhabitants, and Stromness with 2000. The Orkneys are divided into eighteen parishes, and together with the Shetland Islands they have one representative in the English Parliament.

The Shetland archipelago (O. N. *Hjaltland*) was settled by the Norsemen on their early expeditions to the British Isles. The islands were inhabited at that time by the Picts (called *Petar* by the Norsemen), who had been converted to Christianity by Irish monks prior to the arrival of the Vikings. Many ruins and stone

<sup>1</sup> *Samlede Afhandlinger*, III., p. 52 ff. Jakob Jakobsen, *Nordiske Minder paa Orknøerne*, in *Maal og Minne, Festskrift til H. Feilberg*, 1911, p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> A. Taranger, *Aftenposten*, September 13, 1903, quoted by L. Dietrichson, *Monumenta Orcadica*, p. 13.



INTERIOR OF ST. MAGNUS CATHEDRAL AT KIRKWALL.



monuments still preserve the remembrance of these early inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Cairns (burial mounds of stone) and stone circles from this period are found both in the Shetland Islands and the Orkneys, but the most noteworthy Pictish monuments in the Shetland Islands are the round stone towers, "Pictish towers," built of undressed stone, without the use of mortar. Several ruins of such towers are still found, and one, the Broch of Mousa, is still preserved entire. In the "Egilssaga" it is called "Moseyjarborg." The old tower has derived its name from the Isle of Mousa (O. N. Mosey), on which it is situated. The story is told that while Harald Haarfagre ruled in Norway, a prominent Viking merchant, Bjørn Brynjulvsson, eloped with the beautiful Thora Roaldsdatter fra Fjordene. The two fled to Shetland to escape the wrath of the angry parents. The wedding was celebrated in the Broch of Mousa, and the young couple spent the winter there. In the spring Bjørn learned that he had been outlawed by the king, and that the jarls in the Orkneys and the Hebrides had received orders to seize him. He accordingly continued his flight to Iceland, where he arrived safely with his bride. A couple of centuries later the chieftain Erlend Ungi fled from the Orkneys with Margaret, the mother of Jarl Harald Madadsson, famous alike for her beauty and her frivolity. They were pursued by the angry jarl, and sought refuge in the Broch of Mousa. Jarl Harald was unable to take the tower by force, and an agreement was made, according to which Erlend was allowed to marry Margaret on condition that he should swear fealty to Harald.

In course of time the original Celtic inhabitants disappeared. The Norsemen gradually took full possession of the islands, and gave them the Norse names which they still bear. Most of the names of mountains, islands, rocks, and skerries in the Shetland archipelago are Norse, which is seen from the usual Norse terminations *firth* (fjord), *wick* (vik), *ness* (nes), *daill* (dalr), *voc* (vágr), etc., found in

<sup>1</sup> J. J. A. Worsaae, *Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene i England, Skotland og Irland*, p. 277, § 5, and p. 286, § 6. Cowie, *Shetland*, Edinburgh, 1880. J. Jakobsen, *Det norrøne Sprog paa Shetland*, Copenhagen, 1897, Salmonsens *Konversations-Leksikon*, "Shetland." Arthur Laurenson, *Om Sproget paa Shetlandsøerne*, *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1860. K. J. Lungby, *Om Sproget paa Hjaltdlandsøerne*, *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1860.



names like Hillswick (Hildisvík), Thorness (Þorsnes), Lax-Voe (Laxa-vágr), Hamna-Voc (Hafna-vágr). In the southern part of the island of Mainland lies the estate Howff (O. N. Hof). The name indicates that a heathen temple was once located there. In the reign of King Olav Tryggvason the Shetland Islands were united with the kingdom of Norway; Christianity was introduced, and the Norse system of law and government was established here as elsewhere in the Norse colonies. The *Althing* of the islands was held in the present parish of Thingvall (Þingvöllum), where the place of meeting is still seen on a little island in a lake near the church. The island is connected with the mainland by a row of stones called the "stepping stones." The island of Mainland was divided into seven judicial districts, or *things*. The names of five of these have been preserved, namely Sandstthing (Sandsþing), Aithstthing (Eiðsþing), Delthing (Dalþing), Lunzeistthing (Lundeisþing), and Nestthing (Nesþing). The two others, Rauðarþing and Þveitþing, are known only from the sagas.

The Norse language died out in the islands in the eighteenth century, but the English, which is now spoken, is still mixed with many Norse words and idioms. According to Jakob Jakobsen about 10,000 Norse words are still used in the Shetland Islands. In the Orkneys not quite as many. Words like *quern* (N. kvern), a hand-mill; *haaf-fishing* (N. hav-fiske), ocean fishing; *tows* (N. toug), rope; *hogan* (N. hagi), a pasture; *hoy-sæde* (N. høisæte), high-seat, the seat of the lady of the house; *bysmer* (N. bismær), a steelyard, are interesting examples. In dress and mode of life many Norse customs still prevail.

The Shetland Islands continued to be a Norse colony till 1468, when they were mortgaged to Scotland by King Christian I. by the same documents in which he also included the Orkneys. Here, as in the Orkneys, a feudal system was introduced whereby English and Scotch lords took possession of the soil. The independent freeholding Norse farmer class disappeared, and the Norse population became tenants under the great landlords.

Of the 117 islands which form the Shetland archipelago only twenty-nine are inhabited. The large island of Mainland embraces the greater portion of the inhabitable area. In 1890 the Shetland

(HJALTLAND)  
SHETLAND  
ISLANDS





Islands had a population of 28,711. The cities are Lerwick and Scalloway, with 4000 and 600 inhabitants respectively.

## 25. ICELAND AND THE FAROE ISLANDS

Decuil, an Irish monk living in France, wrote in 825 a work on geography, "*Liber de Mensura Orbis Terræ*," in which he describes the islands in the northern ocean which, he says, he has not found mentioned by any other writer. After having described what appears to be Iceland and the Shetland Islands, he says: "There are also some other small islands, almost all divided from each other by narrow sounds, inhabited for about a century by hermits proceeding from our Scotia (Ireland); but as they had been deserted since the beginning of the world, so are they now abandoned by these anchorites on account of the northern robbers, but they are full of countless sheep, and swarm with seafowl of various kinds." The sheep must have been left there by the Irish hermits, and the Norsemen, appropriately enough, called the islands "*Fær-eyjar*" (Sheep-isles), the Faroe Islands. The Irish monks seem to have come to the islands about 700, and about a century later they had to leave because of the Vikings.<sup>1</sup> The "*Færeyingasaga*" tells us that Grim Kamban was the first Norseman to settle in the islands. This was, probably, in the early part of the ninth century. When Aud, the widow of Olav the White, went to Iceland, she stopped on the Faroe Islands to celebrate the wedding of her son's daughter Aalov. From her descended the Gateskjegger, the greatest chieftains in the islands. After the battle of Hafrsfjord many emigrants from Norway settled in the Faroe Islands. It is not stated that Harald, on his expedition against the Vikings, annexed the islands to Norway, but a little later they are spoken of as a Norwegian dependency.

According to Decuil, Iceland was also discovered by Irish monks prior to 795. Are Frode, the earliest Icelandic historian, who has written a very reliable work on the early history of Iceland, the "*Íslendingabók*," says that at the time when the Norsemen first began to visit the island "they found Christian men there whom

<sup>1</sup> C. Rafn, *Færeyingasaga*, contains all the accounts of the Faroe Islands found in the Icelandic sagas. Fridtjof Nansen, *Nord i Taakeheimen* (*In Northern Mists*), p. 124 ff.



they called *papa*, but they soon left because they did not wish to dwell among the heathens. They left Irish books, bells, and crosiers, from which one must judge that they were Irish.”<sup>1</sup> The “*Landnámabók*” also mentions these Irish monks, and the name of the island of Papey, off the east coast, still brings to memory their stay in Iceland.<sup>2</sup>

Iceland was discovered by the Norsemen in the period 860–870. Are Frode says that Iceland was first settled in the days of Harald Haarfagre, 870 years after the birth of Christ, by people from Norway.<sup>3</sup> According to Sturla’s “*Landnámabók*,” the Norseman Naddod first reached the island, having lost his way while on a voyage from Norway to the Faroe Islands. According to the “*Historia Norwegiae*” and Hauk’s “*Landnámabók*” the Swede Gardar first discovered Iceland. But neither the story of Naddod, nor that of Gardar, can be regarded as anything but tradition. A little later than Naddod’s and Gardar’s reputed voyages a Norseman, Floke Vilgerdsson, sailed to Iceland from the Hebrides where Norse colonies already existed. He spent two winters in the island, and gave it the name of Iceland.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Íslendingabók*, ch. 1. Jacobus Langebek, *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum*, II., p. 31 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Landnámabók*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Íslendingabók*, ch. I.

The *Landnámabók* exists in two slightly different versions, one by Sturla Thordsson, from about 1250, and another by Hauk Erlendsson, from about 1400. An older edition by Styrmer Frode is lost, as is, also, the original version. It is a unique work of great importance, containing a detailed account of the early Norse settlements in Iceland, as well as the names of the settlers.

Of special interest and importance is Fridtjof Nansen’s new work, *Nord i Taakeheimen*, or *In Northern Mists*. An interesting account of Iceland and the Faroe Islands is also found in Daniel Bruun’s work, *Det høie Nord*, Copenhagen, 1902. Among other helpful works may be mentioned: N. Winther, *Færøernes Oldtidshistorie*, Copenhagen, 1875. J. R. Rønne, *Færøerne*, Copenhagen, 1900. Salmonsens’s *Konversations-Leksikon*, articles on Iceland, and the Faroe Islands. Hans Reynolds, *Hos gammelt norsk Folk, Reiseskildringer fra Færøerne*, Christiania, 1905.

<sup>4</sup> Besides the *Íslendingabók* and the *Landnámabók*, which relate the early history of Iceland, valuable contributions to the history and geography of the island are found in Th. Thoroddsen’s *Oversigt over de geografiske Kundskaber om Island før Reformationen*, *Geografisk Tidsskrift*, 10. aarg., 1888–1889. Th. Thoroddsen, *Islands Beskrivelse*, Christiania, 1883. *Lýsing*

The first permanent settlement was made by Ingolv Arnarsson and his friend Leiv Hrodmarsson, who came to Iceland in 874. The "Landnámabók" says that Ingolv brought with him the pillars of the high seat (þingvegissúlur), and when he came near the coast he threw them into the sea, and resolved to build his home where they should drift ashore, as he regarded this as a divine omen. He settled temporarily on the south coast, but the next year the pillars were found in Fakse Bay, on the west coast. Here he built a permanent home, calling the place Reykjavik (Smoky Bay), from some hot springs in the neighborhood. This became the site of the present city of Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland. The period of colonization, which began in 874, is considered to have lasted till 930, when about 20,000 people were dwelling in Iceland. The emigration from some districts in western Norway was so great that King Harald feared that the country would be depopulated, and collected a tax of five øre<sup>1</sup> from every one who sailed for Iceland, in order to check the movement. The loss to the country must be measured not only by the number, but also by the quality of the emigrants. They were generally the best families, both intellectually and economically the leaders in their communities. Vestlandet, which hitherto had been a center of strength, was so weakened that it never again recovered its former importance.

When Harald made his expedition against the Vikings in the western islands, a great number of those who had sought refuge there had to flee. They went to Iceland, and with them came a number of Irish and Scotch<sup>Irish</sup> emigrants. Aud, the widow of Olav

*Islands, Ágrip, efter Th. Thoroddsen, Copenhagen, 1900. C. Rosenberg, Træk af Livet paa Island i Fristadstiden. N. M. Petersen, Fortællinger om Islændernes Færd hjemme og ude. Fr. Winkel-Horn, Billeder af Livet paa Island. Valtýr Guðmundsson, Islands Kultur ved Aarhundredskiftet, Copenhagen, 1902. Jón Thorlaksson, Om Digtingen paa Island i det 15de og 16de Aarhundrede, Copenhagen, 1888. G. Storm, En Sommerreise paa Island, Christiania, 1883. P. E. Kristian Kålund, Bidrag til en historisk-topografisk Beskrivelse af Island, Copenhagen, 1877. Konrad Maurer, Island von seiner ersten Entdeckung bis zum Untergang des Freistaats, München, 1874. Konrad Maurer, Zur politischen Geschichte Islands, Leipzig, 1880.*

<sup>1</sup> Øre (O. N. eyrir, plu. aurar) =  $\frac{1}{8}$  mark = 3 þrutugar.

The mark was about \$8.65, but money at that time had a much greater purchasing power than in our time. Gold was from sixteen to twenty-two times as valuable as at present.

the White, and her son Olav Feilan came from Scotland with a large company of Norse, Irish, and Scotch emigrants.<sup>1</sup> These *landnámsmænd*, or first settlers, who, as a rule, were men of wealth and power, came to Iceland with one or more ships, bringing with them their families, relatives, servants, slaves, cattle, household goods, and supplies of various sorts. After having selected a place of settlement, they took formal possession of a large tract of land extending from the mountains to the shore, passing fire around it to show that they had established ownership of it. Inside of this tract each freeman in the company received his allotment. The system of *odel* was not introduced in Iceland. The first settlers took such large tracts that those who came later complained that they had taken too much. King Harald Haarfagre was made arbitrator, and he decided that no one should take more land than he and his ship's crew could carry fire around in one day. The chieftains, who claimed large tracts of land by right of settlement and occupation, were an aristocracy who took possession of the soil, while the freemen, who, with their consent, settled in their *landnám* (the territory which they had taken), held only a secondary title. The chieftains generally built a temple (*hov*) near their home, and the people in the surrounding district became in religious matters a sort of congregation, with the *hov* as a center. The chieftain was priest, and managed, also, the administration of laws and public affairs. He was called *gode* (*goði*), and his office (*godord*) was hereditary. It corresponded to that of *herse* in Norway, and it is probable that the title of *gode* had also been used there. There were thirty-nine *godord*, or chieftains with rank of *gode*, in Iceland, and as no general government yet existed, the country was a collection of independent settlements. Each locality had its own laws, borrowed, no doubt, from the settlers' home district in Norway. But the necessity soon made itself felt of having a *thing*, or general government, where disputes might be settled. Thorstein Ingolvsson established the *thing* at Kjalarnes, which became a general court for many districts, but it was of little avail, as there existed no uniform system of laws. In 927 a man by the name of Ulvljot was sent to Norway to study the Norwegian laws. Aided by his uncle Thorleiv Spake, he pre-

<sup>1</sup> *Landnámabók*, part V., ch. 1.



pared a code based on the "Gulathingslov," and returned to Iceland in 930. A general *thing* for all Iceland, the *Althing* (O. N. Allsher-jarþing), was now established, and Ulvlfjot's laws were adopted. This *thing* should meet every year at midsummer at Þingvellir, near the mouth of the river Öxará, in southern Iceland, for a period of two weeks. The *thing* consisted, in the beginning, of the *goder*, each of whom was accompanied by two men, making in all 108 members. The *Althing* was the highest court of justice, and it dealt also with the more important questions touching lawmaking and general administration. The power was placed in the hands of the *lagrette*, which was chosen by the *goder*. They also elected a *lovsigemand* (O. N. *lögsögumaðr*), who was the head of the *lagrette*, and whose duty it was to recite the laws to the assembled *thing*. This was of great importance at a time when the laws were not yet written, or read by the people in general.<sup>1</sup> The *lovsigemand* was elected for life, and his office was the highest in the country. He presided over the *thing*, but had no administrative functions. The country was divided into four districts, or quarters, each with its own *thing*, *fjórðungsping*, and twelve minor *thing* districts were established, each having three *goder*. The northern district, or *fjórðung*, had four *thing* districts, making in all thirty-nine *godord*. The island had now become an organized state—a sort of federal republic with a central government created through election, but exercising very limited power, the greatest possible autonomy being retained by the local communities.

The fact that the early settlers in Iceland made King Harald Haarfagre the arbitrator in so important a question as the proper distribution of land shows that, although they had left Norway because of his tyranny, they still had confidence in his good judgment and sense of justice. They soon felt their dependence on the mother country, and sought to maintain close relations with it. They seem to have come to a friendly understanding with Harald, who was, evidently, planning to extend his authority over Iceland. It appears

<sup>1</sup> Konrad Maurer, *Inland von seiner ersten Entdeckung bis zum Untergang des Freistaats*.

The old Icelandic laws have been preserved in a codex called *Grágás*, published by the Nordiske Literatur-Samfund in the series *Nordiske Oldskrifter*, Copenhagen, 1855.



that they agreed to pay him the five øre tax (*landøre*) once for all for the privilege of coming and going between Iceland and Norway, and they probably acknowledged him as their overlord. In return for this, Harald granted them the right of self-government, and, also, the right of citizenship in Norway. When they came back to the mother country, they had the haulds-right (the right of a *storbonde*, or landed proprietor). They could join the king's *hird*; they could own and inherit property in Norway, and could bring suits in the Norwegian courts. Norway had become not only a united kingdom, but, in fact, an empire with extensive colonial possessions, including, besides the island groups mentioned, also Finmarken and Iceland; and later the Hebrides, Greenland, and Jæmtland were also added. The people in the colonies felt themselves united with the mother country, not only by the strong ties of kinship, language, laws, and customs, but also through commercial and economic interests, and by the privileges which were still theirs in the old home. They were still citizens of Norway, and took pride in recognizing the king and his court as the center of national life. The king came to be regarded by the colonists as the preserver of the strength and continuity of the whole Norwegian people. They felt how closely their life and history were bound up with that of the mother country, and the most complete history of the kings of Norway has been written by the Icelanders. The thriving colonies in Ireland, Scotland, and France must also be regarded as belonging to this "Greater Norway." The story of the Norwegian colonial empire forms, indeed, an instructive as well as an interesting chapter in colonial history.

## 26. FINMARKEN

The Norsemen had, from early times, occasionally visited Finmarken to trade with the Finns, and to fish and hunt along the coast, but little was known about the region till Ôthêre explored it in King Harald Haarfagre's time. In 880 Ôthêre went to England, where he joined King Alfred's court. He gave the English king, who was much interested in history and geography, an account of his voyage around the North Cape, and his exploration of Finland and Bjarmeland (the land of the Permians). When Alfred trans-

lated Orosius' history of the world,<sup>1</sup> he added a fuller description of the countries of northern Europe to this old author's scant and vague notices, and included also Ôhthêre's account of his explorations in the far North, as well as the account given by the Danish or English seafarer Wulfstan (Ulvsten) of his voyages in the Baltic Sea. The countries around the Baltic were quite well known already at that time, but Ôhthêre's voyage is of extraordinary interest and importance, being the first voyage of exploration into the arctic regions. King Alfred says in part:

"Ôhthêre said to his lord King Alfred that he dwelt farthest north of all Norsemen. He said that he dwelt on the northward side of the land by the western ocean. He said that the land stretched thence far to the northward, but it was all desolate, except in a few places where the Finns dwell in scattered groups, hunting in the summer and fishing in the winter in the ocean. He said that at one time he wished to find out how far the land extended northward, or if any people dwelt north of this desolate region. He sailed then northward along the land, so that he had the waste on the starboard, and the open sea on the larboard for three days. He was then as far north as the whalers ever go. He continued on his northward course as far as he could sail in three more days. There the land turned to the east,<sup>2</sup> or a bay projected into the land, he did not know which, but he knew that he there awaited wind from the west, or a little to the north, and he followed the land eastward as far as he could sail in four days. There he had to await winds from the north, because the shore turned southward, or a bay projected into the

<sup>1</sup> Paulus Orosius, a Christian presbyter, born in Spain in 390, wrote a work *Historiarum Adversus Paganos, Libri VII.*, in which he narrates the history of mankind from the creation of the world till 417 A.D., giving what brief notices he can of the countries which the Romans knew. He shows little knowledge, and emphasizes strongly the misery of the world in pagan times.

<sup>2</sup> P. A. Munch has discussed Finmarken's political and commercial relations with Norway from the earliest times in *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1860, p. 336. Ôhthêre's account is found in Jacobus Langebek's *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum*, vol. II., p. 106 ff. A. Halvorsen, *Billeder av Livet i Finmarken i Fortid og Nutid*, 1911. Axel Magnus, *Samlinger til Finmarkens Historie*, 1889. Knud Leem, *Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper*.

land, he did not know which.<sup>1</sup> He then sailed straight southward as far as he could sail for five days, and came to a big river;<sup>2</sup> and they sailed up the river, because they did not dare to sail past the river along the coast for fear of enemies, because the land was all inhabited on the other side of the river. He had not before found inhabited country since he left his own land. But all the time he had had on the starboard a waste, except some fishermen, fowlers, and hunters, and these were all Finns. The Permians (N. Bjarmer) had built their land well, but thither they did not dare to go. But the land of the Terfinns was a waste, except where hunters, fishermen, and fowlers were staying. The Permians told him much, both about their own and neighboring lands, but he did not know what was true, for he had not himself seen these lands. His chief object in making the voyage, besides exploring the country, was to find walrus, because these animals have very precious teeth (of which he brought the king a few), and their skin is very good for ship ropes. This whale is much smaller than other whales, for it is not above seven ells<sup>3</sup> long. But in his own country is the best whale fishery; there are whales which are forty-eight ells, and the largest are fifty ells. Of these he said he could kill sixty in two days with a crew of five men.

“He was very rich in the kind of property which constitutes their wealth, that is, in reindeer. When he came to the king, he owned six hundred tame animals; six of these were decoy animals. These are very dear among the Finns, for with them they catch the wild reindeer. He was among the foremost men in his country, still he had no more than twenty cows, twenty sheep, and twenty swine, and what little he plowed he plowed with horses. But their most precious possession was the tax paid them by the Finns. This tribute consisted of robes, feathers, whalebone, and ship ropes made of walrus hide or of sealskin. Each pays according to his rank. The person of the highest rank must pay fifteen marten skins, five reindeer robes, one bear skin, and ten ambra of feathers, and a mantle of bear skin or of otter skin, and two ship ropes, each sixty ells long, either of walrus hide or of sealskin.”

<sup>1</sup> He had now rounded the North Cape and had reached the White Sea.

<sup>2</sup> The Dvina. The people dwelling on the other side of the river were the Permians (Bjarmer).

<sup>3</sup> O. N. *qln*, plu. *alnir*.



This account shows that the Norsemen carried on a lucrative trade in these northern regions, and that Finland had in part become a Norwegian dependency, since the Finns had to pay a yearly tribute. From Harald Haarfagre's time this trade became a royal monopoly which the king granted to his *sysselmænd* in Haalogaland. Ôthêre's voyage opened a new trade route to the land of the Permians (called Bjarmeland by the Norsemen), which was one of the centers of the fur trade of the North. About 965, King Harald Graafeld made an expedition to the land of the Permians, and fought a battle with them on the banks of the Dvina, and from that time the whole of Finland and the Kola peninsula were under Norwegian rule. The fur trade with Finland and the Permians continued till in the thirteenth century.

## 27. NORMANDY AND THE NORMANS

The great Viking army, consisting chiefly of Danes, which had harried the Netherlands and the region about the Seine in northern France, suffered a great defeat in 891, and left France for England. In 896 it was again defeated by Alfred the Great, and a large part of the army disbanded and settled in East Anglia and Northumbria. A small band returned to the mouth of the Seine; this was constantly joined by other Viking forces, and a new army of invasion was soon formed, of which the Viking chieftain Rollo, or Rolv (Gange-Rolv), became the leader some time before 911. He was defeated in a campaign against Chartres, but the army was held ready for a new attack at any favorable moment. The king of France, Charles III., also called Charles the Simple, was too sorely troubled by rebellious nobles to bring an efficient force into the field against the Vikings. He probably pursued the best plan possible under the circumstances when he offered Rolv a large tract in northern France, and the hand of his daughter Gisela in marriage, on condition that he should swear fealty to the king of France and embrace Christianity. Rolv accepted the offer, and in 911 a treaty was concluded at Claire-sur-Epte by which he received the territory between the river Epte and the sea, a grant which the Norsemen interpreted to mean the lands between the Somme and the borders of Brittany. In the fol-



lowing year Rolv was baptized. The tract embraced in this new duchy of Normandy had been devastated by repeated Viking incursions, and many districts were almost depopulated, but Rolv, with the energy and talent for organization characteristic of the Vikings, soon established peace and order in his dominions. The land was parceled out among his followers, serfdom disappeared here a couple of centuries earlier than in the rest of France, agriculture began to flourish, and the population increased rapidly.<sup>1</sup> The cities were rebuilt, and trade and commerce developed as never before, so that Rouen, the capital of the province, soon became one of the great commercial centers of northern Europe. Rolv established the laws used in the Viking settlements elsewhere, and these were felt to be so wise and equitable that he was called the great lawgiver. He was harsh, but just, and his reign was long remembered as a period of prosperity and peace. He seems to have possessed the resolute will, the energy, and talent for government which characterized his descendants, the illustrious race of Norman dukes, kings, and crusaders. The story is told that the bishop requested Rolv to kiss the king's foot in token of his gratitude for having received so great a gift. But he answered: "Never will I bend the knee before the knees of any, and I will kiss the foot of none." He ordered one of his followers to kiss the king's foot, but the man did it so awkwardly that the king fell backward, and great merriment resulted.

The question as to Rolv's (O. N. Hrólfr), or Rollo's identity, whether he was a Dane or a Norseman, has been much discussed by historians and scholars in the North, ever since the sixteenth century. The earliest account of Rolv and the dukes of Normandy is a work written by Dudo of St. Quentin,<sup>2</sup> completed about 1015. Dudo says that Rollo's father was a great chieftain in Dacia who had

<sup>1</sup> See Leopold Delisle, *Étude sur la Condition de la Classe Agricole et l'État de l'Agriculture en Normandie*.

<sup>2</sup> Dudonis S. Quintini Decani, *De Moribus et Actis Normannorum*, found in Duchesnius' *Historiae Normannorum Scriptores Antiqui*. Wace's rhymed chronicle, *Le Roman de Rou*, and Benoit de Sainte More's *La Chronique des Ducs de Normandie*, follow Dudo's account.

In the sagas, the Norman dukes are called Rudejarls (from Ruda = Rouen). *Chronicon de Gestis Normannorum in Francia*, Jacobus Langebek, *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum*, tom. II.

never bent his knee before a king, therefore, the king hated him, and at his death attacked his dominions and his two sons Rollo and Gorm. Rollo had to flee, and went first to the island of Scandza (Scandinavia). Later he came to England and Friesland, and, finally, to France. Later Danish historians, as Worsaae,<sup>1</sup> Fabricius,<sup>2</sup> and, especially, Steenstrup,<sup>3</sup> have sought to prove that Dacia is the same as Denmark, that Rollo was a Dane, and that he is not the same person as Rolv, or Gange-Rolv.<sup>4</sup> The Norse sagas have preserved another tradition, according to which Rolv, or Rollo, was a Norwegian, the son of Ragnvald Mørejarl, the friend of King Harald Haarfagre. The "Fagrskinna"<sup>5</sup> says: "Gange-Rolv Jarl was the son of Ragnvald Mørejarl, and a brother of Jarl Thore Tegjande, and of Torv-Einar in the Orkneys." "Harald Haarfagre's Saga" in the "Heimskringla"<sup>6</sup> says that Ragnvald Mørejarl had the sons Rolv and Thore with his wife Hild. But he had also some bastard sons, among them Torv-Einar. Rolv was a great Viking, and was so big that no horse could carry him, and he was, therefore, called Gange-Rolv (Rolv the Walker). One summer, coming from a Viking expedition in the East, he ravaged a district in Viken (the district around the Christianiafjord). This aroused King Harald's wrath, and he banished him. Rolv then went to the Hebrides (Sudreyjar), and thence to northern France (Valland), where he won for himself a great jarldom, since called Normandy. From him descended the dukes of Normandy.

The Norwegian historians P. A. Munch, E. Sars, and, especially, G. Storm and Alexander Bugge, uphold the account of Rolv given in the sagas, and maintain that it must be accepted as true in its main features.<sup>7</sup> They have shown that Dudo is very unreliable, that he considers Dacia to be the Dacia of the ancients, and that he uses Daci as a name to designate both Danes and Norsemen. It is

<sup>1</sup> *Den danske Erobring af England og Normandi.*

<sup>2</sup> *Danske Minder i Normandiet.*

<sup>3</sup> *Normannerne.*

<sup>4</sup> This view has also been taken by Walter Vogel in his work *Die Normannen und das fränkische Reich*, 1906.

<sup>5</sup> *Fagrskinna*, 142-143.

<sup>6</sup> *Heimskringla, Harald Haarfagre's Saga*, ch. 24. Also *Laxdølasaga*, ch. 32.

<sup>7</sup> The same view is held by Sophus Bugge, Konrad Maurer, and Finnur Jónsson.

also noteworthy that Rolv, or Rollo, is not mentioned by Saxo Grammaticus, or any other old Danish writer. Alexander Bugge, who has lately published the results of his thorough researches touching this question, makes the significant remark that the trouble has been that in the discussion of the question the two accounts have been placed over against each other, and the question has been, "which one is true?" whereas the effort must be made to explain both in the light of Viking history. This he has done with a lucidity and thoroughness which leaves little doubt that Rolv and Rollo are the same person, and that the first duke of Normandy was the Rolv, or Gange-Rolv, the son of Ragnvald Mørejarl, spoken of in the sagas. That Rolv and Rollo are the same name cannot be doubted, says Bugge. William the Conqueror's standard-bearer in the battle of Hastings was called Turstinus (Torstein), son of Rollo, and he is also called Turstinus, son of Rolv (filius Rolv). Rollo is also called Rolus. Bugge shows that the Norsemen founded colonies in the island of Noirmoutier, and in the region by the mouth of the Loire in western France. This is also admitted by Steenstrup.<sup>1</sup> Hasting, son of Atle Jarl of Fjalafylke, in southern Norway, has already been mentioned as the great chief of the Loire Vikings and the leader of the expedition against Rome. Dudo devotes the first book of his chronicle to Hasting, and describes him as the one who began the conquest of Normandy. The chronicler

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Gange-Rolv og Erobringen av Normandie*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, femte række, vol. I., p. 160 ff.

*Morgenbladet*, March 25, 1911, *Gange-Rolv og Erobringen av Normandie*, Alexander Bugge; also *Morgenbladet*, April 4, 1911, Bugge. Lecture by Professor Ebbe Hertzberg of the Library of Public Documents, before the Historical Society, Christiania, March 30, 1911.

Bugge cites an interview in *Berlingske Tidende*, in which Steenstrup says: "We Danes also know that when Normandy fell under Danish rule it was because the Norsemen had attacked the Frankish kingdom, especially from the Loire region, so that finally the Frankish king was compelled to cede the Seine province to the Danes 'as a protection for the kingdom,' as it was termed."

That the Vikings on Noirmoutier and the Loire were Norsemen is seen also from a Viking grave recently found on the island of Groix, near the south coast of Brittany. Among other relics found were the remains of a boat in which the person had been buried. The archæologist G. Gustafson has shown that this mode of burial was practised by the Norsemen, but that it was unknown in Denmark.



Adamar of Chabannais (988-1030) also makes it appear that the conquest of Normandy was begun by the Loire Vikings, first under Baard, and later under Hasting. William of Malmesbury,<sup>1</sup> who wrote about 1120, mentions Hasting, and after him Rollo, as the leaders of the Vikings who conquered Normandy. He says that the leaders of the Normans were "first Hasting, and, soon after, Rollo, who descended from a noble family among the Norsemen; but its name had in course of time been forgotten; he was outlawed at the king's command, and left his native country with many who were outlawed and in debt, and who had joined him in the hope of better times. This account, written before Snorre's "Heimskringla," or the "Fagrskinna," agrees with the saga narrative. After the defeat in 891, the "Great Army" left France for England, as has already been stated. That Hasting and the Norse Vikings also joined it on this expedition seems certain, for shortly afterwards Hasting is found fighting in England against Alfred the Great, who finally defeated the whole Viking army in 896. The greater part of the army then disbanded, but a part returned to France. This part consisted of the Norsemen under Hasting. The Old English St. Neots' chronicle, written in the twelfth century, but based on still older Frankish annals which have been lost, states that Hasting sailed across the sea "without gain and without honor," and, after having lost many of his followers, he reached the mouth of the Seine. After Hasting one by the name of Hundeus, or Huncdeus, became leader of these Vikings at the mouth of the Seine. Sophus Bugge has shown that Hundeus is the very rare name Huntjov (O. N. Hunþjófr), found in Norway, but not in Denmark. He seems to have been a relative of the King Huntjov of Nordmør, who fought the battle of Solस्कjel against King Harald Haarfagre. The Frankish king, Charles the Simple, negotiated with Hundeus and his Vikings, and in 897 an armistice was concluded, and the Vikings went into winter quarters at the mouth of the Loire. This shows that they came from the Loire colonies, and that they were Norsemen. In 910 Rollo appeared as the leader of the Vikings at the mouth of the Seine, and the following year King Charles the Simple ceded to him the district which

<sup>1</sup> An early English historian. His principal work is *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, a history of the kings of England from the Saxon invasion till 1127.



was later called Normandy.<sup>1</sup> Professor Bugge shows that it is a Norman as well as a Norse tradition that Rollo was a Norseman. The Old English laws, known as the laws of Edward the Confessor, state that "King William the Conqueror said that the ancestors of nearly all the Norman barons came from Norway." These laws were written in 1130, and the words quoted show that the Norman kings regarded themselves as descendants of the Norsemen. All scholars agree that the Danes settled in Normandy in great numbers, but they seem to have arrived after the conquest was completed.<sup>2</sup> Gustav Storm has shown that the old Danish writers have not preserved a single tradition about the colonization of Normandy by the Danes, but that the Roskilde Chronicle states that *Nordmanni* plundered Gaul, and that for fear of them King Charles of Francia granted them lands to inhabit which they still possess. And Ebbe Hertzberg states that if the colonists in Normandy had been Danes, they would not have called themselves Normans, or Northmen, but Danes.<sup>3</sup>

When Rolv died in 931, he was succeeded by his son William Longsword, who had been reared in the Christian faith by his French mother. Paganism was disappearing in Normandy, though many of the settlers still clung to the faith and customs of their ancestors. The Bayeux district, which had been settled almost exclusively by the followers of Rolv, and by later emigrants from Scandinavia, was, especially, a Norse center. The people of this district retained their Norse speech and culture for many generations. They used old pagan devices on their shields, and in going into battle they would raise the old wacry, "Thor aide!" William Longsword's son and successor was Richard the Fearless, whose daughter Emma married King Knut the Great of Denmark and England in 1017. His son,

<sup>1</sup> The name *Normandy* came into use about the year 1000. It is found in an old document from 1025.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Fridtjof Nansen has shown quite conclusively in a spirited discussion with Professor Steenstrup that whale fishery was carried on by the Normans on the coasts of Normandy in the same manner as along the coast of Norway, and that the methods and technical expressions used by the Normans were distinctly Norwegian. See *Nationaltidende*, April 24 and 29, 1911. *Tidens Tegn*, April 29, 1911.

<sup>3</sup> Ebbe Hertzberg, *Traditionen om Gange-Rolf, Historisk Tidsskrift*, femte række, vol. I., p. 197 ff.

Duke Richard III., also called Richard the Good, was William the Conqueror's grandfather. Sometime before the conquest of Normandy the Vikings had settled in the Channel Islands; Jersey, Guernsey, Chansey, and Alderney, the only islands on the French coast which still have the Norse termination *ey* (island). Jules Lair<sup>1</sup> has shown that Rolv received from the king of France the whole of present Normandy, and that Brittany became a dependency under the overlordship of the Norman dukes. Before many generations had passed, the Viking settlers accepted Christianity, and with it the French language and Christian culture; but their names, both personal and geographical, still showed their Northern origin, and many of these are still in use.<sup>2</sup> Their laws and social institutions were long preserved. They introduced into Normandy their own system of private ownership of land, and feudalism was not established there till in the eleventh century. Here, as in the North, the laws were unwritten. Decisions were made according to common practice, which was proclaimed at the *thing* by a *crieur* (*lovsigemand*). These old laws were collected in *le Vieux* or *le Grand Coutumier*, in 1270-1280. They were in use till in the sixteenth century, when they were, in great part, replaced by the Roman law. Both in spirit and in appearance the Normans retained their Northern traits, which even at the present time characterize the people of Normandy.<sup>3</sup> They were tall and well built, with blonde hair and blue eyes. Frequently over-jealous of their own personal independence and honor, they were often quarrelsome, revengeful, and hard to govern; but they were honest and hospitable, loved adventure, and excelled in

<sup>1</sup> Lair, *Étude sur Dudon*, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> As examples may be mentioned the names of the cities: *Quetteville*, *Teurteville*, *Toqueville*, *Tourgeville*, *Toutainville*, *Tremauville*, *Trouville*, and *Turqueville*. According to old documents the older forms were: *Ketilsvilla*, *Torquetevilla*, *Tokevilla*, *Turgisvilla*, *Turstenivilla*, *Tormotvilla*, *Turulfvilla*, and *Torclevilla*, from the personal names Ketil, Torketil, Toke, Torgils, Torstein, Tormod, Torolf, and Torkil. Worsaae, *Den danske Erobring af England og Normandiet*, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> "If one, on leaving Paris, suddenly finds himself, after a few hours' ride on the train, in the middle of Normandy, he will be surprised to see the remarkable change in the racial type, and to see the Northern traits so prominent in these strong, well-built, blonde, and blue-eyed people." Fabricius, *Danske Minder i Normandiet*, p. 156. See also Amélie Bosquet, *Normandie illustrée*, and Worsaae, *Den danske Erobring af England og Normandiet*.

ship-building.<sup>1</sup> Neither Christianity nor their own homes in pleasant and fertile Normandy could eradicate their bent for war and travel. Trading expeditions and pilgrimages to the Holy Land offered opportunities for some diversion of this kind, till the crusades, knight-errantry, and a new series of conquests made the old spirit blaze forth in new martial achievements. In 1016 forty tall and handsome Norman pilgrims returning from Palestine landed in southern Italy, where the Greeks and Lombards were fighting, and where the Arabs, who had conquered Sicily, were plundering. The Viking pilgrims helped Gaimar of Salerno to drive the Arabs away from his dominions. When he learned that these brave men were from Normandy, he sent messengers to induce more Norman warriors to come to Italy. Soon well-equipped fleets were headed for southern Italy, where new fields were found for warlike enterprise. The Normans gained permanent foothold by taking a castle in the swamps of Campania, and, also, the castle Aversa la Normanna. Soon the whole of Apulia and Calabria was in their hands, and Sicily was also taken. They also extended their conquests to the shores across the Adriatic. In 1082 Robert Guiscard took a large part of Albania, and his son, Bohemund, continued the conquest.<sup>2</sup> Many of the chieftains fighting in southern Italy had Norse names; as, Asmund Drengot, Anqvetil, Rolf, Thorstein, and Stig. William Iron Arm, one of Tancred of Hauteville's twelve sons, became Count of Venossa and Apulia, in 1042, and Roger, another son, became ruler of Sicily. William's successors were his three brothers: Drogo (1046), Humphrey (1051), and Robert Guiscard (1057). These warrior knights, and others of their kind, like William the Conqueror, and the great crusaders, Robert of Normandy, Bohemund of Tarent, and his nephew Tancred, were types of Norman knights of the eleventh century. Also in Norman literature the old Viking spirit continued

<sup>1</sup> Many Norse loan-words in French naval terminology bear witness to the influence exerted by the Norsemen on the naval development of France: *bateau* (bátr), *esturman* (stýrimaðr), *esneque* (snekkja), *matelot* (mötunautr) = a comrade), etc.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel H. Angell writes in *Aftenposten* of Nov. 26, 1912, in a correspondence from Albania: "In the public library at Podgoritzia I found in an Italian book much about the history of the city under the Normans. The city, like the whole Albanian coast, was at one time in their hands."



to live and express itself, especially in the historic, epic romances of the *trouvers*, the somber and ponderous *chansons de gestes*, in which, as in the sagas and the scaldic songs, great events and heroic deeds form the great theme.

## 28. THE NORSE COLONIES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The defeat and death of Olav the White, and the unification of Norway after the battle in the Hafrsfjord in 872, weakened the Viking power in the West. If recruited only in the colonies, their armies could not long maintain their old efficiency. Hitherto they had depended on the mother country for the supply of new forces, but these could not easily be obtained after the whole country was once united under King Harald's rule. The peoples in whose countries the Norsemen were such unwelcome visitors had also learned many valuable lessons in ship-building and military tactics during a hundred years of almost incessant warfare. They were now able to put well-equipped and organized armies in the field against the Vikings, who were the more vulnerable because they had occupied large districts where they now dwelt in permanently established homes. Henceforth their campaigns would require defensive, as well as offensive, tactics.

Olav the White, son of the king of Vestfold in Norway, came to Ireland in 853, where he became king of the Vikings. The struggle between the Norsemen and the Danes in the colonies, which had begun in 848, was still going on, but when Ivar Boneless, the son of the Danish Viking chieftain Ragnar Lodbrok, soon after arrived in Ireland, he and Olav became friends and allies, and peace was made between the Danes and the Norsemen in 856. The two kings coöperated both in Ireland and in Scotland, and we are told that in 870-871 they returned together from a campaign in England, Scotland, and Wales with a fleet of 200 vessels, and with many prisoners of war. When Olav died on his expedition to Norway in 872, Ivar continued to rule as king of Ireland, together with Olav's son Eysteinn.<sup>1</sup> Ivar died in 873, and Eysteinn, who was yet young, became

<sup>1</sup> It has been held that Ivar was a brother of Olav, but Alexander Bugge holds that he was Ivar Boneless, the son of Ragnar Lodbrok. Alexander Bugge, *Norges Historie*, vol. I., 2, p. 292.



king under the guardianship of the Norse Viking chieftain Baard Jarl. Dublin was now attacked by Halvdan, another son of Ragnar Lodbrok, who has already been mentioned as the founder of the kingdom of York, in 876. After having ruled in York about a year, he was expelled by his own subjects, and he sought to mend his fortunes by gaining possession of his brother's throne at Dublin. The young King Eystein was treacherously murdered, and the fight between Norsemen and Danes was renewed, in which also Halvdan lost his life in 877. Ten years later the sons of Ivar Boneless had gained control of Dublin, but ceaseless strife had so far weakened both factions that in 902 King Cerbalh of Leinster attacked and captured the city. The Viking power in Ireland was for a time overthrown, and many Norsemen emigrated to Cumberland and Northumbria.

In 914 the Vikings began a new conquest of Ireland; both Norsemen and Danes now united under new leaders, Ragnvald and Sigtrygg, of the family of Ivar Boneless, and the Norse jarls Baard and Ottar. A great fleet under Ragnvald and Ottar came to Waterford (O. N. *Veðrafjörðr*), and, in the battle of Cennfuait, which took place soon after, the united forces of the kings of Munster and Leinster, and King Niall, high-king of Ireland, were completely defeated; even the archbishop of Armagh was among the slain. Another army was led by King Sigtrygg against Dublin. In 919 a decisive battle was fought at Cilmashogue. The Irish army was defeated, the high-king, Niall, fell, and the Vikings again seized Dublin, and reëstablished their control over the districts which they had before held. In Limerick another Viking kingdom arose, with Baard Jarl and his sons as rulers.

The Dublin dynasty became rulers also over the kingdom of York. While Sigtrygg became king of Dublin, Ragnvald succeeded to the Yorkish throne. In 912 he conquered Bernecia and the northern part of Northumbria. In 920 Sigtrygg left Dublin on a Viking expedition to southern England. On the death of Ragnvald, which probably occurred in 921, he was made king of York. Sigtrygg's two sons were Gudrød<sup>1</sup> and Olav Kvaaran (the sandal). Gudrød ruled as king of Dublin till 934, and was succeeded, first by his son Olav Gudrødsson, and later by a second son, Blakar. But more

<sup>1</sup> This name is written also Godred, Godfred, Gothfraid.

famous than all of them was Olav Kvaaran, one of the most conspicuous and romantic figures in Viking history.

## 29. THE FALL OF THE KINGDOM OF YORK

The last four years of King Alfred the Great's reign (887-900) seem to have been peaceful. The "Great Army" had disbanded, Hasting had retired into France, and the Vikings showed no disposition to renew their attacks on Wessex. When King Alfred died, his son Edward was chosen king by the Witan, but Æthelwald, a son of Alfred's elder brother Æthelred, attempted to make good his claim to the throne. He was unable to cope with Edward, but fled to York, where he was hailed as king. This meant a renewal of war between the Danelag and the king of Wessex. King Æthelwald came southward to Essex with a large Northumbrian fleet, and was joined by the Danes of East Anglia under their king, Eirik. Mercia was ravaged, and the combined forces crossed the Thames into Wiltshire, in Wessex. In the meantime Edward had marched northward, and attacked the Danish settlements. This compelled Æthelwald to return to defend his own dominions. A battle was soon fought, in which Æthelwald and Eirik both fell, and a treaty of peace terminated the war in 903. In 910 hostilities were renewed, and Edward and his sister Æthelflæd undertook to conquer the whole Danelag. The building of fortified strongholds, or burghs, which had been introduced by the Vikings, became a great feature in this war. Æthelflæd built a number of burghs along the borders, and the conquest was pushed steadily forward. By 919, the chronicle tells us, King Edward was acknowledged as overlord by King Ragnvald of York, by Donald, king of the Welsh in Strathclyde, by Ealdred of Bamborough, and even by Constantine, king of the Scots. Whether these kings really submitted to Edward may well be doubted, but Mercia was joined permanently to Edward's possessions. Edward died in 924, and was succeeded by his son Æthelstan, then over thirty years of age. King Sigtrygg of York acknowledged himself the vassal of the new king, and received his sister in marriage, but he died the following year, and Æthelstan formally annexed Northumbria. The kings of Strathclyde and Scotland

and many princes of Wales submitted to Æthelstan, who now called himself *Rex totius Britanniae*. Olav Kvaaran, the son of King Sigtrygg, who had been living in Scotland, planned to recapture his father's kingdom. He gathered a large armament from all parts of the Viking dominions for an attack on Northumbria. His father-in-law, King Constantine III. of Scotland, joined him, Olav Gudrødsson of Dublin came with a large fleet; from the Orkneys, the Hebrides, and even from Brittany forces were gathered. In 937 he sailed up the Humber with a large fleet, and captured York. But King Æthelstan and his half-brother Edmund also gathered their forces, and many Norse Vikings joined the standards of the English king; among others, the great scald Egil Skallagrimsson from Iceland, and his brother Thoralf.<sup>1</sup> The latter fell in the great combat which Egil has described in his songs. The armies met at Brunanburh, or Vinheid, as Egil calls it, and here was fought one of the most renowned battles in Viking times. From morning till evening the bloody struggle lasted. Five kings and seven Viking jarls are said to have fallen. King Æthelstan was finally victorious. Olav Gudrødsson of Dublin fled back to Ireland with the remnant of his army, and King Constantine returned to Scotland. An old English poet has described the battle in a well-known old song.

### 30. "THE BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH"

"Here King Æthelstan, lord of earls,  
warriors' ring-giver, and also his brother,  
Edward the ætheling, life-long glory  
gained in battle with the edge of the sword  
by Brunanburh. They split the shield wall,  
they hewed the war shields with hammered swords,  
the sons of Edward; such was their noble nature  
from their ancestors, that they in battle oft  
'gainst every foe the land defended,  
hoards and homes. The foe they crushed,

<sup>1</sup> The *Egilssaga*, ch. 40-45 and 54-56, tells how Egil and Thoralf, with 300 men, joined King Æthelstan, and rendered him important service in the battle. Æthelstan, who was a friend of King Harald Haarfagre, seems to have maintained cordial relations with the Norsemen, probably for the purpose of obtaining their aid in these wars.



the Scots fell and the army of seamen,  
 marked for death. The field grew slippery  
 with warriors' blood, from the time that the sun rose  
 at morning tide, that the glorious star  
 glided over the world, God's bright candle,  
 the eternal Lord's, and until the noble luminary  
 sank to its setting. There lay many a man  
 hurt with the sword, Northern warriors,  
 shot over the shields, and also Scotchmen,  
 weary of warfare. The West-Saxons  
 throughout the day, in chosen bands,  
 pursued eagerly the hated enemy,  
 hewed from behind the fugitives from battle,  
 with sharpened swords. The Mercians refused not  
 the hard hand play with any hero  
 who with Anlaf (Olav) over the billowy ocean,  
 on the ships' bosom sought this land,  
 to meet their death. Five kings  
 lay dead upon the battlefield,  
 put to sleep with swords, and, also, seven  
 of Anlaf's earls, and countless numbers  
 of Scotch and seamen.<sup>1</sup> Put to flight  
 was the chief of the Northmen, forced by necessity  
 to seek the ship's prow with a small band.  
 The ship drove afloat: the king departed,  
 on the dark sea he saved his life.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Northmen departed on their nailed barks,  
 bloody leavings of the spears, Dublin to seek,  
 and afterward Ireland, much ashamed."

In the battle of Brunanburh the power of the kingdom of York was broken. Æthelstan died in 940, and was succeeded by his half-brother Edmund, who had taken a prominent part in the great battle. The Vikings rose again in rebellion, and chose Olav Gudrødsson of Dublin king of York. Edmund consented to recognize him as king, but he had to receive baptism, and do homage to Edmund. His reign was short, as he attacked Bernicia, where he met his death

<sup>1</sup> Seamen, or sailors, means Norsemen.

in 942. The same year Edmund subdued the "Five Boroughs," and annexed them to the English kingdom. During the period 890-920 the Norse Vikings had settled Cumberland, which appears to have been a sort of vassal state under the kings of Dublin and York. It seems that Edmund attacked Cumberland in 944, drove away Olav Kvaaran, who ruled there, and turned this state over to King Malcolm III. of Scotland. The growing weakness of the Viking colonies, which led to the fall of the kingdom of York, manifested itself also in Ireland. King Blakar had succeeded his brother Olav Gudrøds-son on the throne, but he was driven from Dublin by the Irish king Congelach. The houses of the Norsemen were plundered, their property destroyed, and many women and children were carried into slavery. When Blakar attempted to recapture the city, he fell, together with a number of his men.

After his defeat at Brunanburh Olav Kvaaran led a roving life, spending some time in Scotland and Cumberland, but he seems to have returned to Northumbria, and to have ruled there as king of York from 949 till 952. This can be seen from a number of coins bearing the inscription, *Anlaf Cununc M.*, ✠ *Anlaf Cununc*, ✠ *Onlaf Rex*, etc. His successor as king of Northumbria was Eirik, no doubt Eirik Blood-Ax, son of King Harald Haarfagre.<sup>1</sup> Olav Kvaaran must have been driven away again from Northumbria. In 952 he seized Dublin, where he married an Irish princess, and joined the Irish Church. He extended his sway over a great part of Ireland, and ruled till 980, when he was defeated in the battle of Tara by King Malsechnaill of Tara, in Meath. Old and gray-haired, he departed from Ireland on a pilgrimage to Iona, where he died as monk in 981.

Olav Kvaaran is, in many ways, a typical representative of the Viking character of that period. These Viking kings did not persecute the Christians, but sought to gain the influence and good will of the church. In religious matters they were generally indifferent, as they had long since ceased to believe in the old gods, without having acquired the Christian faith and spirit. Christianity had, however, exercised a great influence upon them. It had softened their hearts and tempered their fierce spirit. The preparation for

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Vesterlandenes Indflydelse*, p. 283 ff.

their final conversion to the Christian faith had been made, and during the last half of the tenth century most of the colonists seem to have joined the Christian Church.

### 31. THE LAST YEARS OF KING HARALD HAARFAGRE'S REIGN

Polygamy, which was quite common among the Vikings, was practiced, also, by King Harald. During his long life he was married many times, and, especially in his younger years, he had a number of wives, and raised a large family of sons and daughters. The sagas say that he had twenty sons; the "Historia Norwegiae" says sixteen. When he became king of all Norway, he wooed Ragnhild, daughter of King Eirik of Denmark, but she would not marry him unless he put away his other wives. This he consented to do, and she became his queen. She bore him the son Eirik, later known as Eirik Blood-Ax, but died within three years after her marriage. The story is told that in his old age Harald fell in love with a Finnish maiden, Snefrid, whom he married. He loved her to such a degree that he neglected his kingdom, and when she died, he sat by her bier day and night for three years, because her face retained its natural color and beauty. This story undoubtedly came to Norway from the British Isles, but Harald must have had a queen by that name, since Snefrid's sons are historic persons.<sup>1</sup>

In 912 Harald assembled a *thing* at Eidsvold, where he gave his sons the royal title, and divided the whole realm among them. A couple of years before his death he made his son Eirik Blood-Ax over-king, not because he was the oldest, but because he was of royal blood also on the mother's side. By introducing such a system of an over-king and several subordinate kings, an arrangement hitherto wholly unknown in Norway, and clearly an imitation of Charlemagne's and Louis the Pious' plan of succession, King Harald destroyed his own great work. The unity of the kingdom of Norway was sacrificed, and the new principle of equal inheritance produced here, as in the Frankish empire, endless bloodshed and confusion.

<sup>1</sup> Halvdan Koht, *Harald Haarfagre's Sønner*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, fjerde række, vol. II., part 2, p. 242. Sophus Bugge, *Mythiske Sagn om Halvdan Svarte og Harald Haarfagre*, *Arkiv for nordisk Filologi*, 1900, p. 1 ff.



At the time of his death, the great king was over eighty years old. Are Frode, in the "Íslendingabók," says that he died in 933, but the year cannot be fixed with certainty. He was buried at Haugar, near the present city of Haugesund, in southwestern Norway, and a great mound was raised over his grave. On this mound a stately monument was erected in 1872.

### 32. EIRIK BLOOD-AX

To rule successfully as over-king over a number of jealous and ambitious kings of inferior rank, who had an equally good claim to the throne, would, probably, have been beyond the power of the wisest and most moderate of sovereigns; for Eirik Blood-Ax even a less difficult task might have been impossible. The "*Fagrskinna*" describes him as follows: "King Eirik was tall and well-built, courageous and good looking. He was surly and taciturn, covetous and reckless, but a great and very successful warrior." These are traits which would be more commendable in a Viking chieftain than in a king of Norway. He married Gunhild, daughter of King Gorm of Denmark. The sagas say that she was beautiful and dignified, though not very tall; she was cunning, talkative, and evil-minded.<sup>1</sup> Tradition has made her a veritable Lady Macbeth in Norwegian history; a crafty and ambitious woman, a daughter of Assur Tote of Haalogaland, reared among the Finns, who were masters of witchcraft.<sup>2</sup> History places her in a different light. She appears as the faithful wife and good mother, a gifted and heroic woman, who clung to her husband in evil days, as in good. She governed her sons; she was their constant adviser, and kept them united under all difficulties. So great an influence did she exercise over them that they were always known as the sons of Gunhild. But it is more than likely that a woman so gifted and energetic, a princess of an old royal family, might be haughty and overbearing as queen of Norway, and that, when trouble came, she would fight for her throne, her husband, and her sons with all the intrigues and secret weapons which she, as woman, could command. Eirik tried to continue the system of government established by Harald, but his brothers re-

<sup>1</sup> *Fagrskinna*, p. 14.    <sup>2</sup> *Heimskringla*, *Harald Haarfagre's Saga*, ch. 33.

fused to submit to him. Halvdan, king in Trøndelagen, severed all connections with him, and Olav became independent king in Viken. Halvdan died soon, and people claimed that Queen Gunhild had hired a sorceress to poison him. He was succeeded by Sigfrød, another son of Harald, who formed an alliance with King Olav against Eirik, but they were defeated and slain. Sigurd, the son of Jarl Haakon Grjotgardsson, was now jarl in Trøndelagen, residing at Lade. He did not wish to submit to King Eirik, but sent for Haakon, a younger son of Harald, to come to Norway. Haakon, who was reared at the court of King Æthelstan of England, is known as Haakon Adelstensfostre, and, also, as Haakon the Good. He promised to restore to the people their right of *odel*, *i.e.* to do away with that feature of Harald's system of government which was regarded as especially oppressive. This aroused the greatest enthusiasm, and he was hailed as king at the Ørething in Trøndelagen. Oplandene and Viken joined him, and the following spring he advanced southward with a large fleet. Few remained faithful to the unpopular Eirik, and he left Norway without even attempting to resist his successful rival. Haakon was made king over all Norway, and became the real successor of King Harald.

After Eirik left Norway, he spent several years on Viking expeditions. The scald Guttorm Sindre says that he was a great sea-king, who won gold with the sword in Scotland and elsewhere. In 948 he came to Northumbria,<sup>1</sup> where he was made king, but the people, who feared the wrath of King Eadred, the successor of Edmund, forced him to leave, and chose Olav Kvaaran king. He ruled till 952, when he was driven away, and Eirik again became king of York. Coins have been found bearing on the front side the inscription *Erius Rex*, and on the back side the name of the city of York. These had, evidently, been coined by Eirik while he was king of York. He extended his sway over a great part of Northumbria, and it appears that he was baptized, and that he acknowledged King Eadred as his overlord.

An incident occurred while Eirik ruled at York which gives some

<sup>1</sup> The sagas state that he left Norway in 935, two years after King Harald's death, but this reckoning must be erroneous. See *Caitheirim Cellachain Caisil*, edited with translation and notes by Alexander Bugge, p. 148.

ground for the opinion that he was, probably, better than his reputation. The "Egilssaga" tells us that the great scald Egil Skallagrímsson and King Eirík were bitter enemies. Once when Egil came sailing from Iceland, he was shipwrecked on the coast of Northumbria, and was taken prisoner by King Eirík, who, according to custom, would have had him executed. But during the night, Egil composed a song in praise of the king. The next morning Egil was allowed to recite his song before Eirík, who was so moved that he granted the scald his life, and permitted him to depart unharmed. The poem is called "Höfuðlausn" (the ransom of the head).

In 954 King Eirík was driven from Northumbria. He again turned Viking, gathered an army in Ireland, in the Orkneys, and the Hebrides, and attempted to regain his throne. But in Westmoreland he met an army under Oswulf of Bamborough and Maccus Olavsson. A fierce battle was fought, in which Eirík fell, and York ceased to be a distinct Viking kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Jarls continued, however, to rule in York and Northumbria, and they often owed but slight submission to the kings of England.

In the tenth century a stream of Norse emigrants from Ireland and the Hebrides poured into England. These new settlers were especially numerous in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Northumbria. Anglesey, on the coast of Wales, was settled by Norsemen, and bears still its Norse name. Chester, which had long been in ruins, was seized and rebuilt, and became an important commercial town. The Danes and Norsemen, at first two distinct peoples, rapidly merged on English soil into one foreign element. In the twelfth century they still spoke their own Northern tongue, the Norse laws were still in use in the districts where they had settled, and the people maintained a democratic government. All freeborn men able to bear arms met at the *thing*, where they elected the king or ruler, and adopted the laws which were proposed. The *alls herjar mót*, or meeting of the armed host, was the general *thing*, but there were also local *things* in each shire, triding, wapentake, and

<sup>1</sup> The ever faithful Gunhild caused a scald to compose a song in memory of her husband. It is called the *Eiríksmál*, and describes the preparations made in Valhál for the reception of the great warrior. It is one of the finest songs in scaldic poetry, but only a fragment of it has been preserved. See *Fagrskinna*.



hundred. In the division of the country into smaller administrative districts, northern England still shows traces of Viking influence. Yorkshire and York are still divided into ridings, a later corruption of the Old Danish, or Old Norse, *thrithing* or *triding*, as each *thinglag* in Iceland, and elsewhere in the North, was divided into three *tridings* or districts, each with its own *gode*.

Personal liberty was highly prized by the Vikings, and, although they kept slaves, and were great slave traders in early days, slavery died out earlier in the Danelag than elsewhere in England. In the "Domesday Book" only 2524 slaves are recorded for the Danelag, while southern England had 25,156 male and 467 female slaves, or ten times as many. In Lincolnshire and Yorkshire there was not a single slave at the time of the Domesday survey. A. Bugge says: "As soon as the Vikings settled in England they began to give their freed slaves land to till. In the treaty of peace between Guttorm and King Alfred, the Viking freedmen (*leisinger*) were considered equal to the Anglo-Saxon ceorls, or peasants, who were renters. That the two classes, the freedmen and the ceorls, were considered equal, shows the contrast between Viking and Anglo-Saxon society. The freedman had been a slave, but he rose to personal freedom and a better social condition. The ceorl was a freeborn man whose ancestors had wielded the sword in the conquest of Britain. But gradually his condition grew worse; he had ceased to own lands, and he was about to lose his personal freedom. Then came the Viking period, and arrested the development of large estates, and planted in the conquered districts a large class of freemen. What difference is there not in the 'Domesday Book' between Cornwall with its 1160 slaves, its more or less dependent 2355 *bordari*, and its 1730 *villani*, who, in the records, are placed even below the slaves; or Devonshire, where there were 4847 *bordari*, 3294 slaves (*servi*), and 8070 *villani*, named after the slaves, and no freemen, save the citizens of the towns, the vassals, and the subvassals; and Lincolnshire with 11,503 freeborn *sochemanni* (freeholders), as against 4024 *bordarii* and 7723 *villani*; or Norfolk with its 4277 freemen (*libri homines*), and 4571 *sochemanni*, as against 9537 *bordarii*, 4656 *villani*, and not more than 995 slaves; and Suffolk, where one-half of the rural population were freeholders.

“When the condition of the rural population in England, even in the darkest days of the Middle Ages, was better than in France and Germany, it was due to the Danes and Norsemen, who brought with them to England their love of personal rights and liberty, and to their kinsmen, the Christian and French-speaking Normans.”<sup>1</sup>

### 33. HAAKON THE GOOD

By raising Haakon to the throne, and by hailing him as successor of King Harald, the people of Norway had expressed in a formal way their approval of the work done by Harald Haarfagre. In their consciousness Norway was now a united country, but the system of succession adopted could not safeguard the future stability of the kingdom. It had already led to fratricidal strife, and gave promise of weakness and disintegration. The first revolution had been accomplished without violence and bloodshed; the people gave their united support to the popular Haakon, and the struggle was over, but at any future moment, similar revolutions might occur for no weightier reason than personal rivalry among the claimants to the throne.

King Haakon was a man of many excellent qualities. The sagas describe him as tall, strong, and flaxen-haired. He was of a milder temper than his father, but resembled him strikingly in physical appearance. He was well skilled in the use of arms, but the people knew him as gentle, wise, and peace loving. At the court of King Æthelstan he had been reared in the Christian faith, and had acquired a culture which, no doubt, tended to soften the martial Viking spirit, and to incline his heart and mind to the pursuits of peace. His promise to the people to restore to them their right of *odel*, in other words, to redress their grievances, and grant what they considered to be their just demands, was an acknowledgment on his part that henceforth the king was not to rule as a conqueror, but according to the will of the people and the laws of the land. It appears that the king was no longer to tax the people arbitrarily, according to his own pleasure, but that taxation should be regulated by the *things*. He exercised his kingly power with great moderation.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, II., 321 ff.

In the beginning of his reign Jarl Sigurd of Lade ruled in Trøndelagen with almost sovereign power, and the fylkes-kings in Oplandene enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. Over the Norwegian dependencies in the West he exercised little control. His personal rule was largely limited to the southwestern districts of Norway — Vestlandet. The most abiding result of his reign was his work as law-giver, and his effort to organize the military forces of the country into a strong national army. He surrounded himself with a body of advisers, a sort of council of wise men, to which Sigurd Jarl and Thorleiv Spake belonged.<sup>1</sup> Such changes were made in the *lagthings* (Frostathing, Gulathing, and Eidsivathing) that they became, in a measure, representative bodies. Each *fylke* was henceforth to send a certain number of men to the *thing* (*nefndarmenn*), who were to receive a fixed salary.

The danger which always threatened the kingdom from the sons of Eirik Blood-Ax, who had taken refuge with their grandfather, King Gorm, in Denmark, and who now watched for an opportunity to attack Norway to regain their father's throne, made it necessary for Haakon to pay special attention to the development of both army and navy. He divided the *fylker* along the coast into *skibreder*, or naval districts, and made regulations in regard to the size and number of the warships to be built and equipped by each district. The *nefgildi*, a personal tax levied by Harald Haarfagre, was made a shipmoney tax by Haakon for this purpose. The whole armament, consisting of ships, warriors, weapons, and provisions, was called *leding* (O. N. *leiðangr*). The full number of ships and warriors in each district was called *almenning*. In time of war it was the duty of the people in these districts to meet in full *almenning*, while for military service in time of peace they were required to furnish half *almenning*, together with the necessary equipment and provisions. Every freeman capable of doing military service should own shield, spear, and battle-ax. The military burdens of the coast districts took the place of the *nefgildi*, or shipmoney tax, in this part of the country, but in the inland districts, where there was less military service, this tax was maintained. It is quite evident that the *leding*

<sup>1</sup> Whether Torleiv Spake can be regarded as an historical character has been doubted by some, but he seems to have been a *herse* in Hordaland.



system had existed before King Haakon's time, but he gave it a better organization, and extended it to all districts along the coast. He also organized a system of war signals. Fires, called *varder*, should be lighted on the mountain tops when an enemy was approaching the coast. In seven days the warning could, in this way, be given to all parts of the country, and the *almenning* could be held ready everywhere.

The people of Jæmtland had also heard of King Haakon's benign rule. This large district, lying on the border between Norway and Sweden, had first been settled by people from Trøndelagen. In Harald Haarfagre's time many had sought refuge there, and the population was rapidly increasing. King Haakon sought to gain the good will of the leading men in Jæmtland. "They came to visit him," says Snorre,<sup>1</sup> "promised him obedience, brought him presents, and became his men. They had heard good reports about him, and would rather be subject to him than to the king of Sweden, because they were Norsemen. But he established law and justice among them." The foundation was thus laid for the final absorption of the district, but it did not become an integral part of the kingdom of Norway till the time of Eystein Magnusson and Sigurd the Crusader.

King Haakon made an unsuccessful attempt to introduce Christianity in Norway. Centuries of intercourse with the Christian nations in Great Britain and elsewhere had wrought a change in the religious views of many people, even at home. Many had ceased to worship the old gods, and had substituted a sort of new faith in a higher god, the *Alfader*, or creator of all things. Some were indifferent, and believed in nothing but their own strength and prowess, while the majority, especially of the common people, still clung to the old worship. But the old religion was not only a matter of faith. It was closely bound up with the political and social life. The *herser*, or local chieftains, were priests in the *fylkes-hov*, and much of their influence and power depended on their priestly office. A change of religion would bring with it far-reaching alterations in the whole social structure, and it is not surprising that a suggestion of this kind should meet with the most determined resistance. It is said that Haakon brought priests from England, and built churches

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Haakon den godes Saga*, ch. 12.

in Romsdal and Nordingør, but when he finally proposed at the Frostathing that the people should accept Christianity, it caused a storm of indignation. Sigurd Jarl gave him no support, and Asbjørn of Medalhus, who made himself the spokesman of the people, threatened that they would all rise against him, if he urged the point. He had to join in the sacrifice to the gods, and felt compelled to give up the plan. To carry it through by force was impossible, for he soon needed the support of his people to repel the attacks of the sons of Eirik Blood-Ax. In 955 the brothers Gamle, Harald, Ragnfrød, Gudrød, and Sigurd Sleva led an expedition against Norway, but Haakon defeated them in a battle near the island of Frei, in Nordmør. Gamle fell, and the other brothers returned to Denmark, but they continued to harry the southern coasts. In 961 they renewed the attack. With a large fleet they landed at Fitje, on the island of Stord, where King Haakon was staying. A bloody battle was fought, in which the sons of Eirik were again defeated, but King Haakon, who fought valiantly in the midst of the fray, was wounded in the arm by an arrow, and died shortly after the battle. He had no sons to whom he could leave the throne, and the story is told that, when he felt death approaching, he sent messengers to his fleeing nephews, and invited them to return and take the kingdom. He regretted much, says the saga,<sup>1</sup> that he had been compelled to depart from the Christian faith. His men offered to bring his body to England, and give it Christian burial, but he answered: "I am not worthy of it. As a heathen I have lived, and as a heathen you must bury me." The wounded king was brought to his birthplace, Haakons-helle, where he died at the age of forty-six, after a reign of twenty-six years. His friend and comrade in arms, the great scald Eyvind Skaldaspillr, composed a great song to his memory, the "Haakon-armaal," in which he says:

Freed from his fetters,  
against the world  
the wolf Fenrir shall come,<sup>2</sup>  
before such another king  
shall follow in his footsteps.

<sup>1</sup> *Fagrskinna*, p. 26. *Heimskringla*, *Haakon den godes Saga*, ch. 32.

<sup>2</sup> This will happen at Ragnarok, or the end of the world. Then Fenrir will break loose from the fetters with which the gods have bound him.

Friends die,  
cattle perish,  
desolated is the land;  
since Haakon went  
to heathen gods  
people live in serfdom and bondage.

34. THE SONS OF EIRIK BLOOD-AX. HAAKON JARL THE LEADER OF  
THE ARISTOCRACY. LOSS OF NATIONAL UNITY AND  
INDEPENDENCE

After Haakon's death the sons of Eirik Blood-Ax became kings of Norway. They all bore the royal title, and each maintained his own *hird*, but Harald Graafeld, the oldest living brother, was regarded as over-king. After their father was driven from the throne, they had been in foreign lands, and they were known in Norway mainly as Viking chieftains and as enemies of the country. This, together with the general odium in which Eirik and Gunhild were held, made them very unpopular, and they showed no ability to win the people's good will by their own conduct as kings. They were disposed to be rash and violent; they showed little wisdom, or self-control, and would resort to mean plots and bloody assaults, in true Viking fashion. The best one was Harald Graafeld, who seems to have been generous, good-natured, and well-intentioned. The aristocracy, who still held firmly to their own inherited rights and privileges, who were opposed to a strong central government exercised by a national king, and watched with more jealousy their own interests than the welfare of the nation, tolerated the new kings, and, probably, found their unpopularity convenient. As Harald Graafeld and his brothers could find little popular support, their kingship could be little more than an empty title. The aristocracy, who had been compelled to bow under the mailed fist of Harald Haarfagre, but who had driven Eirik from the throne, and had elected Haakon the Good, could now find new opportunity to fully regain their old prestige and power. Even in Haakon's time, Sigurd Jarl had exercised almost sovereign power in Trøndelagen. Now he did not even swear allegiance to the new kings, but ruled his large domain as an independent sovereign. Tryggve Olavsson, a grandson of Harald Haar-



fagre, ruled as independent king in Romerike, and in the districts east of the Foldenfjord (Christianiafjord). The districts west of the fjord were ruled by Gudrød Bjørnsson, another grandson of Harald, and in Oplandene the fylkes-kings exercised their old unrestricted authority. The sons of Eirik were, in fact, kings only in the districts of southwestern Norway. But they aspired to maintain the unity of the kingdom, and to rule, as King Harald had ruled, over all Norway. First of all they would curb the pride and arrogance of the powerful Jarl Sigurd. They enticed to their side his younger brother, Grjotgard, and with his aid King Harald Graafeld suddenly fell upon the unsuspecting Sigurd, and burned him and his men in the house where they were assembled for a feast. Sigurd's son, Haakon Jarl, gathered a large following, and after a struggle lasting for three years he made himself master of Trøndelagen. But he was unable to successfully continue the conflict, and fled to Denmark. The kings had also defeated and slain the kings Tryggve and Gudrød in southern Norway, and together with their mother Gunhild, they now established their residence in Viken.

In 964 King Harald Graafeld made an expedition to the Permians (Bjarmeland), and defeated them on the banks of the Dvina, thus pushing the boundaries of Norway to the White Sea (Gandvik). The expedition was much talked of, and was mentioned with praise in the songs of the scalds.<sup>1</sup> Harald seems to have made an earnest effort to rule well, but the popular ill-will was, nevertheless, growing. The brothers had been baptized in England, but they were unable to introduce Christianity in Norway, and undertook, instead, to destroy the heathen temples, and to heap other indignities upon the old religion. This, together with many acts of violence, committed especially by the younger brothers, tended to further alienate the people, who complained that the kings did not respect the laws of King Haakon the Good. King Sigurd Sleva was killed by his irate subjects in southwestern Norway. There were crop failures and hard times, and the people blamed the kings, who were thought to have aroused the anger of the gods by their wickedness and misrule.

Haakon watched closely the developments in Norway. This

<sup>1</sup> The Trollbotn, in popular belief the abode of the trolls, where no sun shines, was henceforth thought to be located in these far-off northern regions.

able but crafty and unscrupulous jarl was a more formidable opponent than the kings imagined. He was, in all respects, a representative of the old order of things, a strict adherent of the Asa-faith, and a champion of the rights of the aristocracy. He despised, no doubt, the new religious tendencies, as thoroughly as he hated the idea of submission to a national king.

Harald Blaatand (Bluetooth) had succeeded his father Gorm on the Danish throne. Gorm had ruled both long and well, and at the end of his reign Denmark was the most populous and powerful of the Northern kingdoms, a circumstance which, probably, gave rise to the not uncommon misconception that he had brought about the union of the Danish kingdom. His queen was the able and popular Thyra Danebod, who rebuilt Danevirke, a castellated wall, stretching across the narrowest part of the peninsula, from the city of Schleswig to the mouth of the River Eider; forming the old boundary between Denmark and Germany. Harald Blaatand seems to have emulated his great contemporary Otto the Great of Germany. He was dreaming of empire, and sought to enlarge his possessions, especially in northern Germany, which at this time was inhabited by the Wends, a Slavonic people. In 960 he made an expedition to the mouth of the Oder, where he is said to have won a great jarldom. On the island of Wollin, over against the river mouth, lay the important commercial town Julin. Close to this town Harald built a strong castle called "Jómsborg," which later became famous<sup>1</sup> as the seat of a remarkable body of Viking warriors, the Jómsvikings. Jómsborg was, doubtless, built to protect Julin and the neighboring districts

<sup>1</sup> An account of Jómsborg and the Jómsvikings is found in the *Jómsvikingasaga*, which is, however, a romance rather than a history, and is, consequently, of little value as an historical source. The laws and social organization of the Jómsvikings here described must, however, be true. Similar laws were used by other Viking organizations, and in the Viking army similar rules were also followed. Bravery, not rank or birth, was the qualification required for membership. No one would be accepted who was under eighteen or over fifty years of age. No woman was allowed to enter the castle, and no warrior could be absent more than three days at a time. Friendship and good understanding should prevail among the warriors, and no one should offend the other. They should all avenge the death of their comrades, and no one was allowed to speak a word of fear. All news should first be brought to the chieftain, and all booty should be divided among the warriors. *Jómsvikingasaga*, sec. IV., ch. III.

against the Wends. It had a fine harbor, where 300 Viking vessels could ride at anchor, and was surrounded by great walls.<sup>1</sup>

Harald Blaataud, who had received baptism, labored earnestly, and with great success, to introduce Christianity in Denmark. During his reign the greater part of the people seem to have accepted the Christian faith. It was natural that in his efforts to enlarge his kingdom he should also think of Norway as a legitimate field for conquest. The district of Vestfold had been a Danish province since very early times, and circumstances in Norway seemed to offer an opportunity to regain at least this province. A son of his elder brother returned to Denmark from his many Viking expeditions, and claimed a share in the kingdom. He was known as Gold Harald, because of his wealth. Haakon Jarl saw his opportunity. He persuaded King Harald to rid himself of this inconvenient rival by seizing Norway, which he then might make a tributary kingdom under the rule of his nephew. The plan was accepted, and Harald Graafeld was enticed to Denmark, where he was killed by Gold Harald. Now the plotting Haakon Jarl came forward with his real plan. He showed the king that his ambitious nephew would, as king of Norway, be a dangerous rival rather than a faithful vassal; why not make Haakon Jarl ruler of Norway? He could not aspire to kingship in either country, and all danger of a rival would be averted. After he had come to some sort of understanding with the king, Haakon attacked Gold Harald, who was defeated and slain. The king now set sail for Norway with a fleet of 700 ships. The two remaining sons of Eirik Blood-Ax could offer no resistance, but fled to the Orkneys with their mother Gunhild, and Harald Gormsson Blaataud was hailed as over-king of Norway. Haakon Jarl was to rule a large part of the country as King Harald's vassal. According to agreement he should pay the king a tax amounting to half of the income from the lands which he received, but Haakon reduced it to the nominal sum of twenty falcons a year. King Harald himself ruled Viken through his own jarls, and Oplandene maintained their own autonomy. Trøndelagen and Haalogaland were Haakon's own patrimony, where he exercised full authority.

<sup>1</sup> Many coins and other articles of interest have been unearthed on the site of the old castle, and remnants of the old walls have also been laid bare.



From the king he received seven *fylker*: Rygafylke, Hordafylke, Sogn, Firdafylke, Søndmør, Romsdal, and Nordmør. Norway had ceased to be a united kingdom even under Danish overlordship. Harald Haarfagre's great work was destroyed.

The new rule was welcomed by the aristocracy, who had now regained their former power. Haakon Jarl was one of their own number, and the Danish king's overlordship was a mere name, as he was too far away to exercise any control. Haakon was now very popular. He rebuilt the temples which the sons of Eirik Blood-Ax had destroyed, and tried, as far as possible, to establish the old conditions. But nothing is more difficult than the attempt to arrest a development caused by the forces of life and growth. Haakon might rebuild the temples, but he could not revive the old faith. It was dying; in many people's minds it was already dead; the outer forms alone remained. The aristocracy might feel elated over their success, but new thoughts of a national kingdom were germinating and striking roots. Such ideas are in league with destiny. Haakon tried to buttress the old social structure, only to be finally buried under its ruins.

For a time he was loyal to his overlord, the king of Denmark. When the German emperor, Otto the Great, died, war broke out between his successor, Otto II., and King Harald Gormsson.<sup>1</sup> As a vassal Haakon was called to Denmark, where he fought valiantly in defense of Danevirke. After the campaign was over, King Harald demanded of Haakon that he should be baptized, and exacted from him a promise that he would introduce Christianity in Norway. Haakon seems to have consented with all desirable alacrity, and, on his return, priests went along to do missionary work in Norway. But, as soon as he touched the home shore, Haakon drove away the priests, and declared himself and Norway independent of Denmark. King Harald made efforts to reconquer the country, and to introduce Christianity in Viken; the work of the missionaries which he sent to this district bore some fruit, but he failed in the attempt to regain the lost territory. Harald Blaataand died about 986 from a wound received while he was fighting against his rebellious son, Svein Tjugeskjeg (Forkbeard). As soon as Svein became king, he

<sup>1</sup> *Danmarks Riges Historie*, vol. I., p. 339 ff.

renewed the attempt to subdue Norway. The Jómsvikings, who seem to have promised to aid him in this undertaking, moved swiftly to the attack with a fleet of sixty ships and an army of professional warriors led by their chief, Sigvalde Jarl.<sup>1</sup> They found Haakon in Hjörungavaag, near the present city of Aalesund, where he had collected 180 ships. But this armament had been gathered in a hurry, and most of the vessels were merchant ships. Haakon was assisted by his sons, Eirik, Svein, and Arnljot. A fierce battle ensued, in which Eirik Jarl especially distinguished himself both by bravery and generalship. The outcome of the battle was long doubtful. Tradition says that Haakon Jarl even sacrificed his son to the gods to gain victory, but this is, no doubt, an invention. The Jómsvikings finally suffered a crushing defeat. Twenty-five of their ships were taken, and Sigvalde Jarl made good his escape with the remaining thirty-five. This battle became very famous. Eyvind Skaldaspiller composed the song "Háleygjatal" about Haakon Jarl and his victory, after the pattern of the "Ynglingatal,"<sup>2</sup> to show that Haakon's family, the Háleygings, also descended from the gods. Through this memorable victory Norway had successfully maintained her independence.

After the battle of Hjörungavaag, Haakon Jarl exercised full sovereign power, but he did not assume the title of king. As he was now relieved of the pressure of foreign enemies, he paid little heed to the aristocracy, and attempted to rule with all the authority of Harald Haarfagre himself. This kind of rule, which the aristocracy had regarded as tyranny when exercised by a national king,

<sup>1</sup> According to tradition the Jómsviking chieftain, while at a feast, where he had been drinking too much to carefully weigh his words, had promised to attack Haakon, and drive him from Norway. *Heimskringla*, *Olav Trygvasonssaga*, ch. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Haakon Jarl was fond of scaldic poetry, and, like Harald Haarfagre, he kept a number of scalds at his court. Of these, Einar Skaalaglam was the most noted. He was with Haakon at Hjörungavaag, and has described the battle in a long poem, the *Vellekla*, twenty stanzas of which are found in the *Heimskringla*. Tin Halkelsson, Thorleiv Raudfeldarsson, and Vigfus Viglumsson also wrote songs about the fight with the Jómsvikings, but only fragments of these songs have been preserved. Bishop Bjarne in the Orkneys was a great scald. He has written *Jómsvikingadrápa*, and it is thought that he is also the author of the *Jómsvikingasaga*. The description of the battle of Hjörungavaag in the saga seems to be reliable.

they considered as unbearable arrogance in a mere jarl, who was of no higher lineage than many others of their number. Haakon Jarl's popularity soon waned, and his greed, cruelty, and licentiousness further aggravated the growing discontent. The hearts of the people again turned to the Ynglings, who, since King Harald's time, had stood as the representatives of a national kingdom and other progressive ideas.

### 35. OLAV TRYGGVASON. THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY IN NORWAY

Tryggve Olavsson, a grandson of Harald Haarfagre, who ruled over the districts east of the Christianiafjord, was slain by the sons of Eirik Blood-Ax, as already stated. His wife Astrid fled, says the saga,<sup>1</sup> and sought refuge on a lonely island where her son Olav Tryggvason was born.<sup>2</sup> His birth occurred, probably, in 963 or 964. With her child she came to her father, Eirik Bjodaskalle at Oprudstader, in the district of Jæderen, in southwestern Norway, but as the wicked Queen Gunhild sent spies to learn her whereabouts, she continued her flight to her father's friend, Haakon Gamle, in Sweden. But even here she felt unsafe, because of Gunhild's machinations, and she determined to seek refuge at the court of Grand Duke Vladimir of Gardariki (Russia), where her brother Sigurd was staying. On the voyage across the Baltic Sea they were attacked by Vikings, and Queen Astrid and her boy Olav were taken prisoners. Mother and child were separated, and both were sold as slaves in Esthonia. Not very long afterward, a merchant by the name of Loden, a wealthy man of good family from the district of Viken, found Astrid at a slave market in Esthonia, and brought her back to Norway, where they were married. Olav remained in slavery about six years, until his uncle Sigurd finally found him and brought him to Holmgard (Novgorod), where he was reared at the court of Grand Duke Vladimir. That Olav was reared at the court of the grand duke seems to be true. It is mentioned also by Hallfrød Vandrædaskald in his "Olavsdraapa," which deals with Olav's life prior to his arrival in Norway. But the numerous legendary tales which cluster about

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Olav Tryggvasonssaga*. Odd Munk, *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ágrip* states that Olav was three years old when his father died.



the magic figure of Olav Tryggvason throw about his early youth a deep twilight of romance, which renders obscure even what little is known about this period of his career.<sup>1</sup> From this obscure background he enters the historical arena as a young man, "tall, beautiful, strong, and athletic beyond all Norsemen ever mentioned," says Snorre.<sup>2</sup> At the age of twelve he began his career as Viking chieftain in the Baltic Sea. The saga states that sometime afterward he came to Vendland to King Burislav, and married his daughter Geira.<sup>3</sup> He aided his father-in-law in his wars, but Geira died, and he left Vendland to seek new fields for enterprise in the British Isles. He must have gained great renown as a warrior during these years, for we find him now at the head of a great armament, the nucleus of another "Great Army," which was to begin a new conquest of England.

The vicious and incompetent Æthelred the Unready was now king of England. He made no attempt to maintain the efficiency either of army or of navy, though he had been warned of impending danger by repeated Viking attacks which began anew in 978. Iona was sacked, a bloody battle was fought off the Isle of Man in 986, and in 989 a Viking fleet ascended the Severn, and the king was forced to pay tribute to the intruders. These Viking squadrons operating in British waters were led by Jostein, a brother of Olav's mother Astrid, and Gudmund, a Danish chieftain. When Olav arrived, they were united into a great fleet under his command. In 991 they came to Staines on the Thames, with ninety-three ships, and plundered Kent and Suffolk. Following the coast the fleet again came to anchor at the mouth of the Blackwater, where Ealdorman Brihtnoth met them with the levies of Essex. A bloody battle was fought at Maldon, in which Brihtnoth lost his life, and his forces suffered a disastrous defeat. The details of the battle are vividly described in the Old English poem "The Battle of Maldon."<sup>4</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge observes that the adventurous flight of Astrid, and Gunhild's relentless pursuit, remind us strongly of the fairy-tale about the wicked step-mother. *Norges Historie*, vol. II., p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> *Heimskringla, Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Burislav, no doubt King Boleslav of Poland, 992-1025, has been substituted for Miesko, 964-992, through a mistake by the saga writer.

<sup>4</sup> *Two of the Saxon Chronicles*, ed. Plummer, Oxford, 1892, p. 126.

poet tells how Brihtnoth with his hirdmen came riding at the head of his host. Near the Blackwater he dismounted, and addressed words of encouragement and advice to his warriors. The Vikings, who were stationed on the opposite side of the river, sent a herald who addressed Brihtnoth and his army as follows :

“The bold seamen send me to you  
and bid me say that you must at once  
send rings in return for peace ; better it is for you  
to buy off this combat with tribute  
than that we fight so hard a battle.”

Brihtnoth raised his shield and answered :  
“Hearest thou, seafarer, what this people say ?  
Spears will we give you for tribute,  
poisonous arrows and tried swords.  
Tell thy people the unwelcome news,  
that here stands the earl and his brave army,  
who will defend this land.  
Rather shall sword and spear unite us  
in grim war-play than we will pay tribute.”

The Vikings waited for low tide and crossed the river.

Then was the time come when doomed men should fall.  
A cry went up which brought thither the ravens  
and the eagles hungry for carrion ; great was the alarm.  
The hard spears were hurled, the sharp arrows flew,  
the bows were busy, the shields received the spear points,  
bitter was the battle tumult, heroes fell,  
on every hand lay fallen warriors.

Brihtnoth fell, but the young Ælfwine rallied the hirdmen, who rushed to the attack to avenge their fallen lord, till all of them were cut down. Old Brihtnoth's heroic fight stands in sharp contrast to Æthelred's weakness and planless inactivity. After the battle of Maldon he bought peace from the invaders by paying them 10,000 pounds of silver,<sup>1</sup> an enormous sum at that time, when the taxes of

<sup>1</sup> The text of the treaty has been preserved. The heading reads as follows :  
“This is the peace which King Æthelred and his whole Witan made with  
the army which Olav, Jostein, and Gudmund, Stegita's son, led.” Lieber-

the whole kingdom were only half that amount. The following year "the king and the Witan decreed that all ships which were worth anything should be gathered together at London, in order that they might try if they could anywhere entrap the Army from without," says the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle." But the attempt failed. About this time Olav Tryggvason must have accepted the Christian faith. It is said that on a little island he met a hermit who foretold him his career, and that he and his men were baptized.<sup>1</sup>

At this time King Svein Tjugeskjeg of Denmark also came to England. Olav and Svein united their forces, but Olav still remained the real leader. In 993 Bamborough was taken by storm, and Lindsey was harried. The following year a large Viking army was organized, and Friesland and the northern coasts of Germany were harried. Who the leaders of this host were is not stated, but scaldic verses point to Olav Tryggvason and Svein Tjugeskjeg. In the fall of 994 Olav and Svein again appeared in the Thames with a fleet of ninety-four ships, and tried to take London. In this attempt they failed, but they harried the neighboring districts, and Æthelred bought peace by granting them Southampton for winter quarters, and by paying them 16,000 pounds of silver. The king now sought to win Olav Tryggvason, and sent a bishop to negotiate with him. Olav visited the king at Andover, where he was confirmed by Bishop Ælfeah of Winchester,<sup>2</sup> and a treaty of peace was made, in which he solemnly promised never again to wage war on England, a pledge which he loyally kept. A great ambition now fired his zeal for worthier undertakings. He would no longer be a Viking chieftain, but a crusader. To regain the throne of his fathers, and to convert his people to Christianity became his great aim. He separated from Svein Tjugeskjeg, and took no further part in the conquest of England.

Olav Tryggvason was the most chivalric and heroic of all the early

mann, *Gesetze der Anglo-sachsen*, I., 220-223. *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, *Oldbreve*, edited by Alexander Bugge, Christiania, 1910, nittende samling, part first, p. 1.

<sup>1</sup> *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, by Theodrieus Monachus, says that Olav was baptized in the Scilly Islands. See *Monumenta Historica Norvegiae*, published by Gustav Storm, Christiania, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> *Two of the Saxon Chronicles*, Plummer, Oxford, 1892, p. 126.



kings of Norway. Saga and tradition extol him as a leader of men, a beau ideal of a hero. The "Olav Tryggvason's Saga" says: "King Olav was in all respects the most capable man in Norway of whom there is any record; he was stronger and more dexterous than any other person, and many stories are told about him; one being that he scaled the Smalsarhorn<sup>1</sup> and fastened his shield near the top of the mountain; another, that he helped one of his *hirdmænd*, who had climbed up the mountain so far that he could neither ascend nor descend. The king climbed up, and carried him down under his arm. The king could walk on the oars on the outside of his ship, the 'Long Serpent,' while his men were rowing; he could play with three swords at a time in such a way that one would always be in the air. He could wield the sword equally well with both hands, and could throw two spears at the same time. He was the most cheerful and jovial of men, kind and condescending, impetuous in everything, generous and distinguished among his men. He was the bravest of all in battle, but very cruel when he became angry."<sup>2</sup> Both at home and in the British Isles he became a hero in tale and tradition. In England his name was changed to Havelock. It has been thought that Havelock was Olav Kvaaran,<sup>3</sup> but Alexander Bugge holds that the life of Kvaaran could furnish no basis for the Havelock poem, but that the incidents narrated in the poem correspond point for point with the stories told of Olav Tryggvason's early life.<sup>4</sup>

Early in the summer of 995 Olav Tryggvason set sail for Norway with a small fleet.<sup>5</sup> The "Heimskringla" tells us that Haakon Jarl sent his agents to lure him to Norway, where he had laid plans to kill him; but as Olav, the scion of the royal house of the Ynglings, probably would be the last person whom Haakon would wish to see in Norway at that juncture, the story must be an invention of the enemies of Haakon, who wished to paint him as black as possible. It was, no doubt, the people of Trøndelagen who sent agents to Olav

<sup>1</sup> A mountain peak on the coast of Nordfjord, in Norway.

<sup>2</sup> *Heimskringla*, *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, 85.

<sup>3</sup> Gustav Storm, *Havelock the Dane, and the Norse King Olav Kvaaran*.

<sup>4</sup> See Odd Snorreson Munk, *Saga Olafskonungs Tryggvasonar*, published by P. A. Munch, Christiania, 1853.

<sup>5</sup> *Heimskringla* says five ships; Odd Munk says nine ships.

to invite him to come to Norway and rid them of the hated jarl. Olav took several missionaries along: Bishop Sigurd, Teodbrand (Thangbrand), and Thormod,<sup>1</sup> who were to aid him in Christianizing Norway. He went by way of the Orkneys, where he forced the powerful Jarl Sigurd Lodvesson to acknowledge his overlordship, and to accept Christianity. When he finally landed in Trøndelagen, the people hailed him with enthusiasm. Haakon Jarl was soon deserted, and fled, accompanied by his slave, Kark. The "Heimskringla" tells how Haakon and Kark hid in an underground pigsty on the estate Rimol, where Kark assassinated the sleeping Haakon to get the prize which Olav had placed on the jarl's head. The story is too dramatic to be taken literally, but all sources, including the songs of contemporary scalds, agree that Haakon Jarl was ignominiously done to death by treacherous hands. Olav was now proclaimed king of Norway at the *Ørething*, in Trøndelagen. No one could be better qualified to become the representative of the new progressive ideas than he. He had spent all his life in foreign lands, and was not bound up in the old traditions of his fatherland, nor was he, like Haakon the Good, indebted to a party for his position as king. He was a convert to Christianity, and was well acquainted with the Christian culture of the British Isles. Famous for his great achievements as a military leader he came like a man of destiny at a moment when the people hailed him as a deliverer, and rejoiced that a prince of the royal race of the Ynglings had come to rule over them. To the popular mind he was the hero especially protected by fortune. "Olav had favorable wind wherever he sailed," says his old biographer.<sup>2</sup> He possessed the indomitable energy of a crusading warrior, he was the brilliant man of action, who dazzled his followers with ever new exploits. His charming and inspiring personality won the hearts and fascinated the minds of his countrymen, and he became popular as no other king of Norway. "He was one of those fortunate individuals," says E. Sars, "before whom destiny places great problems, and who possesses the ability to solve them."

There was no one in Norway at this moment who could openly resist so able and popular a king. Haakon Jarl's sons, Eirik and

<sup>1</sup> Theodricus Monachus, *Historia de Antiquitate*, 15. *Ágrip*, 36.

<sup>2</sup> Odd Munk, *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*.

Svein, had left the country, the Danish officials in the southern districts were driven away, and the whole kingdom of Norway was once more united, under Olav Tryggvason's rule.

King Olav entered upon his great task of Christianizing Norway with true crusading zeal. To what extent political motives strengthened his resolve to bring about this great change it is impossible to say, though statesmanlike foresight must have made it clear to him that the new national kingdom could find but little support in the old system of worship and social ideas, while the Christian Church, if once established, would give the king new dignity, and increase the stability of the kingdom. Christianity was no longer wholly unknown to the Norwegian people at this time. We have seen how communication with the Christian countries during the Viking period had produced an ever increasing influx of new ideas, which had already effected great changes both in the social and religious life of the people. Belief in the old gods was waning, and rationalism and religious indifference were rapidly spreading among the higher classes; the myths themselves were in a stage of transformation and decay. Christian captives of war had told the story of Christ and the saints to many an interested listener; missionaries had preached the Christian faith in the days of Haakon the Good, and King Harald Blaatand's efforts to introduce Christianity in Viken had borne fruit. Still the common people, who, perhaps, never had grasped the intricate and lofty myths of the Asa-faith, whose religious life consisted, chiefly, of fetish worship and of various forms of sorcery practiced by means of incantations, amulets, and the like, were probably wholly untouched by these new ideas.<sup>1</sup> Among the upper classes

<sup>1</sup> The sun, fire, running water, cattle, and even strong men were worshipped. A dish of butter was placed on the roof of the house to make the sun shine warmer; salt, flour, milk, or beer was thrown into the fire to prevent conflagrations, and articles of value were brought as offerings to springs and brooks. See Bishop A. Chr. Bang, *Udsigt over den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, p. 26, Kristiania, 1890. Runic characters were used as amulets. They were carved on swords and spear points to make the weapons more effective, on rings and drinking goblets as a charm against evil influences of all kinds. *Gald*, or magic songs, were used as a wonder-working remedy in the art of healing, and *seid*, or sorcery, was supposed to loosen all the diabolic powers of the spirit world. Many features of this side of pagan religious belief have perpetuated themselves in folklore and popular super-



the old worship still retained its political importance as a state institution closely bound up with the old social order. The time had, indeed, come when the new religion would be received by many without resistance, but the conversion of the whole people could not be accomplished rapidly without the use of coercion and force. It seems that King Olav never thought that it could be brought about by teaching and persuasion alone. The true inwardness of the Christian faith and spirit was still foreign to him; he was yet to such an extent a Viking that he had no hesitation in bringing his subjects to the baptismal font by bribes or by force, where gentler means had failed, and baptism and conversion he regarded as identical. His missionaries labored zealously, but the people often cared little for their preaching, and understood it still less. The king is the central figure, always busy directing the work of conversion, intimidating some, gaining the friendship and good will of others, coming to the rescue with his influence and power, and often dealing hard blows when preaching and persuasion proved unavailing.<sup>1</sup> Sigurd, or John, as he was called in Latin, held the rank of bishop, and was the leader of the missionaries. He was a gentle and Christian-spirited man, who represented the best features of the Anglian Church. It appears that he was of Norse descent. He probably came from the Viking settlements of Northumbria, and he could, no doubt, address the people in their own vernacular, which was an advantage, though the language at this time offered no great difficulty. "There was one language in England and Norway until William the Bastard stitions to the present time. See Dr. A. Chr. Bang, *Norske Hæxeformularer og magiske Opskrifter*.

<sup>1</sup> In judging the harsh measures often employed by Olav Tryggvason, and also by his great successor, Olav the Saint, it is necessary to bear in mind that the medieval Christian spirit was of the militant and martial kind, foreign to the modern world. Charlemagne's conversion of the Saxons, and the crusades of the Teutonic Knights and the Knights of the Sword in Livonia, Curland, and Prussia bear the same general character as Olav Tryggvason's missionary work. Chr. Bruun has shown that the theory that the heathens should be compelled to accept the Christian faith was a well established tenet of the church in the Middle Ages, based on the passage in Holy Scripturo (Luke xiv., 23), "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." This view of missionary work was established by the great church father Augustine. Chr. Bruun, *Olav den hellige, For Kirke og Kultur*, vol. IV., p. 321 ff.

conquered England," says the saga.<sup>1</sup> This must not be taken too literally, but the Norse and Anglo-Saxon tongues were yet so nearly alike that the two peoples seem to have been able to converse freely together. The priest Thangbrand, supposed to have been the renegade son of a Saxon count, was a harsh and violent man, to whom the true Christian spirit seems to have been wholly unknown.

It is deserving of special mention that the first missionaries to Norway came from England, where the gospel was preached, not in the Latin church language commonly used at that time, but in the people's own tongue, and where the church still retained its popular and apostolic character to a degree unknown on the continent. Bishop A. Chr. Bang says: <sup>2</sup> "Of all the nations which in the first half of the Middle Ages accepted the Christian faith, probably no other people developed so genuine, warm, and deep a Christianity as the Anglo-Saxons. Christian life flourished among them, the word of God was translated into their own tongue, and they had many gifted poets who sang their praise to the Lord in their own vernacular. What especially gave Anglo-Saxon Christianity its distinguishing features was the delightful blending of Christian with popular elements, which we still admire. We need not study long their religious literature to be deeply touched by observing how the Northern heroic spirit had become transfigured by the holy Christian spirit. The daughter church of Norway could, therefore, receive a valuable inheritance from the mother church of England. I need not mention the practical features of church organization which were transplanted from English to Norwegian soil. It was more important that the Old Norse church language found in Anglo-Saxon a natural starting point, and a closely related pattern. And still more significant, perhaps, was the circumstance that later Norwegian ecclesiastics learned from their Anglo-Saxon predecessors to honor and esteem their mother tongue, and to be as eager as they were able to preach to the people in their own language. That the kings themselves introduced Christianity was of no small importance to the future development. Most significant in this connection was the fact

<sup>1</sup> *Gunlaugssaga Ormstungu*, ch. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Udsigt over den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, p. 37 ff.

that Christianity thereby from the beginning was closely linked to the state as a popular church, a state church."<sup>1</sup>

In the early Anglo-Saxon Church the Christian doctrines are often found expressed in a heroic strain which echoes the dying martial notes of primitive Germanic poetry. Christ is often represented as a young hero who vanquishes evil, and conquers his enemies, rather than as the suffering Savior atoning for the sins of mankind. The runic inscription on the old Ruthwell cross represents the cross as saying: "Stripped himself, God Almighty, when he wanted to mount the cross, courageously in the sight of all men. (I) bent," etc.

A very similar inscription is found in the old poem "Dream of the Rood," by some attributed to Cynewulf:

Stripped himself then the young hero,  
that was God Almighty,  
strong and brave:  
he mounted the high cross  
courageously in the sight of many,  
when he wanted to set mankind free.  
I trembled when the hero embraced me.  
I dared not bend to the earth.

Such a view of Christ would, naturally, appeal to the warlike Norsemen. This was a Christianity which they could understand. Their quick imagination seized upon these popular features by means of which they could span the gulf between the old and new spheres of thought. Christ, the heroic new god of the Christians, more powerful than Thor, superior in every way to the old divinities, would ultimately gain the victory, they thought. The "Njáls saga"<sup>2</sup> tells how, in Iceland, a woman by the name of Steinvor disputed with the missionary Thangbrand, saying: "Have you not heard

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. II. Absalon Taranger, *Den angelsaksiske Kirkes Indflydelse paa den norske*, Kristiania, 1890. A. D. Jørgensen, *Den nordiske Kirkes Grundlæggelse og første Udvikling*, Copenhagen, 1874-1887. Dr. Konrad Maurer, *Die Bekehrung des norwegischen Stammes zum Christenthume*, München, 1855. R. Keyser, *Den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, Christiania, 1856. Henry Goddard Leach, *The Relations of the Norwegian with the English Church, 1066-1399, and their Importance to Comparative Literature*, in *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, vol. XLIV., May, 1909. <sup>2</sup> *Njáls saga*, ch. 100.



that Christ was challenged to a duel by Thor, and that he dared not fight with him?" "I have heard," said Thangbrand, "that Thor would be but dust and ashes unless God would let him live." A man by the name of Finn, who had heard of the power of Christ, disputed with the bishop, but, as he was convinced by his arguments, he exclaimed: "This is something different from what I have heard before, that no god was equal in power to Thor and Odin. Now I understand from what you say of Christ, about whom you preach, that while he was in this world any one could treat him almost as he pleased, but after death he became so powerful that he raided hell, and bound Thor, the chieftain of the gods, and since that time nothing can resist him."<sup>1</sup> Christ can bind Thor. He is that powerful god foreshadowed even in the Edda songs as the one "coming from above to rule over all." "Christianity," says Keyser, "no longer appeared at this time in its original purity. A covering of human inventions, superstitions, and errors had been wrapped about its divine kernel. But the covering was brilliant, inviting to the senses, impressive to the feelings. This form of Christianity was, probably, better suited to appeal to a people in the stage of intellectual development of the old Norsemen than if it had been preached in a purer form."<sup>2</sup>

King Olav began his missionary work in Viken, where his father Tryggve had been king, and where Christianity, because of early missionary efforts, was best known. Here he could count on greater good-will and more general support than elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> After winning his own relatives for the new faith, he secured the coöperation of the powerful chieftains, the brothers Hyrning and Thorgeir, by giving them his half-sisters Ingerid and Ingegerd in marriage, and by bestowing on them great honors and rich estates. When the leaders

<sup>1</sup> See R. Keyser, *Den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, vol. I. B. Kahle, *Das Christenthum in der altnorwegischen Dichtung*, *Arkiv for nordisk Filologi*, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> *Den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, vol. I., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> The statement made by Odd Munk in *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, ch. 17, that Olav landed at Moster, and began missionary work there, must be erroneous, and is probably due to a misunderstanding arising from the fact that Olav built the first Christian church there. Compare A. Chr. Bang, *Udsigt over den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, p. 46, and Alexander Bugge, *Norges Historie*, vol. I., 2, p. 257 ff.

had been won by the granting of such favors, the people could more easily be persuaded to follow their example, and receive baptism. The church service was made as showy as possible. The rich vestments worn by the priests, the burning incense, the impressive ceremonies, appealed strongly to the listeners.<sup>1</sup> The hell torments were pictured in vivid colors, and the missionaries showed how God and the saints were aiding King Olav. The people were rapidly won for the Christian faith, but not a few resisted obstinately. Odd Munk tells how Olav dealt hard blows to those who offered resistance. "Those who opposed Christianity," says Snorre,<sup>2</sup> "he punished severely; some he killed, some he caused to be maimed, and some he drove out of the country." The people were summoned to the *thing*, where the king bade them receive the Christian faith, and after they were baptized, he destroyed the temples, and everything that reminded them of the old worship. Before long the whole district of Viken was Christianized. The "*Heimskringla*" states that he also visited the district of Ringerike, where King Sigurd Syr reigned, and King Sigurd was baptized, together with his wife, Aasta, and her little boy of a former marriage, Olav Haraldsson, who later became King Olav the Saint.

From Viken King Olav proceeded to the districts of Gulathingslag, on the southwest coast. Here, as in Viken, he seems to have won the chieftains through private negotiations. The powerful Erling Skjalgsson of Sole married the king's half-sister Astrid, became the king's ardent supporter, and received great preferments and honors. In the little island of Moster, on the coast of Hordaland, where a

<sup>1</sup> Odd Munk, *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, ch. 11. The younger *Olav Tryggvasonssaga* relates that when the priest Thangbrand preached in Iceland, Sidu-Hall, the man at whose house he was staying, arose one morning with all his people, and stood before the tent where the priests were saying mass. When they heard the chiming bells and the sweet voices of the singers, the like of which they had never heard before, they were much impressed. Still greater was their wonder when the mass began, and they saw the priests in beautiful garments, with burning candles, and perceived the sweet scent of the burning incense. When they returned, Hall asked his people how they liked the customs of the Christians, and they all said that everything that they had seen and heard seemed to them pure and beautiful.

<sup>2</sup> Snorro, *Heimskringla*, *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, ch. 53. *Historia Norwegiæ*, ed. G. Storm, p. 116.

famous heathen temple was found, the king assembled a great *thing*, probably in 996, to confer with the people regarding Christianity. The saga <sup>1</sup> tells that three men were chosen to speak in opposition to the proposal made by the king that they should accept the Christian faith. But when the first one tried to speak, he was seized with a violent cough, the second speaker began to stammer, and the third became so hoarse that he could say nothing. This caused great merriment, and the people agreed to accept the king's proposal. King Olav built a church at Moster, the first Christian church build-

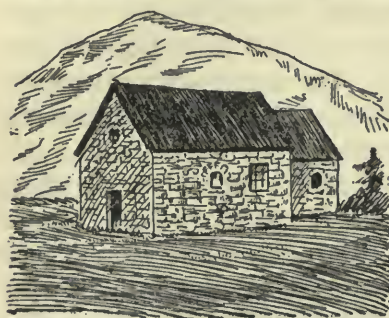


FIG. 43. — Old church at Moster thought to have been erected by Olav Tryggvason.

ing in this part of Norway.<sup>2</sup> A little later the king summoned another *thing* at Dragseid, near Stadt, on the west coast, where the people from Sogn, Firdafylke, Søndmør, and Romsdal met. The king had a strong military force, and gave them the choice between receiving baptism, and fighting with him. When they saw that they could not resist him, they submitted and were baptized. After these meet-

ings in Moster and Dragseid, Olav summoned the Gulathing, where Christianity was declared to be the lawful religion of the whole Gulathingslag.

The legend of St. Sunniva originated in Olav Tryggvason's time, and seems to have been first officially published at the *thing* at Dragseid. In the rocky caverns on the Norwegian coast in these parts, human bones and skeletons have been found, often in a good state of preservation. They may be the remains of persons who have sought refuge in these places, or of people who in prehistoric times have used these caverns as dwellings. Such a find was made in a cavern in the island of Selja, and the rumor spread that the bones were the remains of St. Sunniva, a pious Irish princess, who fled to

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, ch. 55.

<sup>2</sup> It has been thought that the old stone church still standing in the island is the one erected by King Olav, but it is not certain. The church built by Olav may have been a wooden structure.



escape a vicious suitor, and of the holy persons who accompanied her across the sea. Miracles were said to happen in this place. King Olav and Bishop Sigurd visited the cavern while the *thing* was in session at Dragsæid, and found there the bones referred to. A church was erected there, and July 8th, supposed to be the saintly princess' death day, was consecrated as the St. Sunnivasmas in 996. Norway had thus received her first national saint. A monastery was also founded there, the ruins of which are still to be seen in the island.<sup>1</sup>

King Olav had now introduced Christianity in southern and southwestern Norway. The way had here been paved for the new faith, and the resistance offered to it had been weak and half-hearted. But Trøndelagen, with its famous old temples at Lade and Mæren, still remained the great bulwark of the Asa-faith. Here lived many of the great leaders of the old aristocracy, and the ideas of local autonomy were kept alive. If these populous and well-organized districts, which were properly regarded as the center of military and economic strength in the country at that time, should present a united front against the missionary efforts of the king, the opposition would be formidable enough to endanger the whole movement. Olav was, no doubt, aware of this, and when he entered Trøndelagen, his tactics quickly assumed a military character, as if he well knew what would happen. Odd Munk<sup>2</sup> tells that at Christmas time he prepared a feast at Lade, where he was now staying, and invited all the chieftains of Trøndelagen. When they were seated at the table, the king arose and spoke to them about the religious situation. He said that if he should return to the old faith, he would revive the very ancient custom of human sacrifice, but he would not sacrifice slaves, but the chieftains themselves. He told them that an armed force had surrounded the house, and stood ready to do his bidding.

<sup>1</sup> The name Sunniva is English, and the legend is the same as that of Ursula and the 11,000 maidens. *Historiske Afhandlinger tilegnet Professor Dr. J. E. Sars*. Yngvar Nielsen, *De gamle Helligdomme paa Selja*. See A. Taranger, *Den engelske Kirkes Indflydelse paa den norske*, 155. Gustav Storm, *Monumenta, Acta Sanctorum in Selio*. Ludvig Daae, *Norges Helgener*, 137 ff. Konrad Maurer, *Die Bekehrung des norwegischen Stammes*, I, 287 ff. Odd Munk, *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*. Sunniva is not mentioned in *Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna*, or the larger *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*.

<sup>2</sup> Odd Munk, *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, ch. 23.

The chieftains understood the situation, and submitted to the king. Olav destroyed the temple at Lade, and carried away its treasures, but the people gathered an army, and he proceeded to the district of Haalogaland till the storm blew over. In this far northern province the old pagan religion still flourished in all its original vigor. The chieftains, Haarek of Tjotta, Eyvind Kinnriva, and Thore Hjort, met the king with an armed force, and he returned to Trøndelagen. The situation looked threatening. The people kept a large force in the field, and the king lived as if in a military camp, always surrounded by his army. He tried to win the leaders in various ways, but with little success. In 998 he summoned the Frostathing, where all the chieftains in Trøndelagen met, but when he asked them to accept the Christian faith, their leader, Jernskjegge, answered that if the king did not desist from his attempt to introduce Christianity, they would do with him as they had done with Haakon Jarl. Olav spoke words of conciliation and promised to meet them again at the *thing* in Mæren. The *thing* assembled in 999, and Olav came with a force of 300 men. All the chieftains who were most determined in their resistance to Christianity had also met with an armed force. When the *thing* was called to order, says the "Heimskringla," the king spoke, and asked the people to accept the Christian religion. Jernskjegge again answered him in behalf of the people, and said that they were of the same opinion now as before, that the king should not break the law. "We demand," he said, "that you take part in the sacrifice as other kings before you have done," and the people shouted their assent.<sup>1</sup> This scene reminds us of the one enacted on a similar occasion between Asbjørn of Medalhus and Haakon the Good. But Olav was not Haakon. He did not answer Jernskjegge, but said that he would go into the temple and look at the sacrifices. As soon as Olav disappeared in the temple, one of his men cut Jernskjegge down at the entrance, and Olav came out and offered the people the choice of receiving baptism or of fighting with him. Discouraged by the loss of their leader, they submitted and were baptized.

Olav did not wish to stay at Lade, where he was constantly reminded of the old pagan worship. Across the river Nid he founded,

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Olav Trygvasonssaga*, 68.

in 997, the city of Nidaros, later called Trondhjem. Here he built a royal hall, and erected a church dedicated to St. Clemens, the patron saint of commerce. The city became in time a great center of commercial activity and religious life in Norway.<sup>1</sup>

Haalogaland was also Christianized. The king won the greedy Haarek of Tjotta for the Christian faith by granting him large possessions. The stories told in the sagas that Olav caused Eyvind Kinnriva and Raud den Ramme to be tortured to death, because they refused to be baptized, are fiction — literary ornaments of the kind often used by the saga writers.<sup>2</sup>

Norway was now, in a way, Christianized. The heathen temples were destroyed, sacrifices and the practice of sorcery were forbidden by law; churches were built, and Moster, Selja, and Nidaros became centers of Christian life and missionary activity. But the church was still but an infant. No church organization existed, few were the missionaries who were to instruct the people in the Christian faith, and the old paganism had not been very deeply shaken by King Olav Tryggvason's crusade. And yet, the people had seen, though faintly, the new light, which was now no longer a dream, but an experience. Christianity, this strange force, had entered into the people's life and development as a new and recognized factor, under the seal and sanction of the law.

### 36. INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE FAROE ISLANDS AND ICELAND

The "Fagrskinna" says that Olav Tryggvason Christianized Norway, and, also, several other lands: the Orkneys, the Faroe Islands, the Shetland Islands (Hjaltland), Iceland, and Greenland.<sup>3</sup> Whether he Christianized the Shetland Islands is doubtful, and missionary work seems to have been done in the Orkneys before his reign; but it is quite certain that through his efforts Christianity was introduced in the Faroe Islands, and in Iceland, and, probably, also in Green-

<sup>1</sup> Henrik Mathiesen, *Det gamle Trondhjem*. H. G. Heggtveit, *Trondhjem i Fortid og Nutid*, Horten, 1897. *Festskrift udgivet i anledning av Trondhjems 900 aars Jubilæum*, 1897, Trondhjem.

<sup>2</sup> *Heimskringla*, *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, chs. 76 and 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Fagrskinna*, p. 57.



land. The Faroe Islands had in course of time become a Norwegian dependency, but in Haakon Jarl's days the powerful and cunning chieftain Trond i Gata had gained complete control of the islands. He was the head of the Gateskjegger, the most powerful family in the islands, who traced their descent from King Olav the White of Dublin, and his queen, Aud the Deepminded. The chivalrous Sigmund Brestesson, the national hero of the islands, whose father had been slain by Trond, and who had subsequently spent a long time in exile in Norway, received aid from Haakon Jarl, and returned to the Faroe Islands, where he defeated Trond. He received the islands as a fief from Haakon, and became his *lendermand*. Sigmund was now the most powerful and popular chieftain in the islands. He resembled Olav Tryggvason in prowess and accomplishments, and was highly admired by his people. Even at this time he seems to have been among those who had practically repudiated the pagan faith. When Haakon Jarl asked him concerning his religious views, he answered that he believed in his own strength and power.<sup>1</sup> Olav invited Sigmund to come to Norway. Here he was baptized, and at the request of the king, he undertook to introduce Christianity in the Faroe Islands. But the task was made difficult by his old rival and enemy Trond i Gata, who stirred up the people against him, and troubled and embarrassed him in every way. Finally, on a dark and stormy night, Sigmund with thirty followers proceeded to the rocky island of Austrey, where Trond was dwelling, took him prisoner, and forced him to receive baptism. The work of Christianizing the islands was now quickly accomplished, but this form of conversion brought with it no great change of heart. Though the outer forms of Christianity had been accepted, life long continued to be heathen in spirit in these islands.

The time had been when the Christian faith was not wholly unknown in Iceland. Many of the early settlers came from the colonies in the British Isles, where they had spent a great part of their life in more or less close contact with the native Christian population, and not a few had been so far influenced by the new faith and culture that they were regarded as Christians, at least by their own

<sup>1</sup> *Færeyingasaga*, ch. 23. Konrad Maurer, *Bekehrung des norwegischen Stammes*, I., 339-346.



(FÆRØERNE)  
FAROE  
ISLANDS

Slatarutindur  
Saxin  
Hvalbyr  
Vestmannaahavn  
Thorshavn  
Kirkjubø  
KOLTIR  
HESTUR  
SANDOYJ  
SANDOY  
SKUVØYJ  
(SKUVØ)  
STÓRI DIMUN  
STORE DIMUN  
LITLI DIMUN  
LILLE DIMUN  
Frøbbá  
Frøbbá  
Sunneðar  
Sunneðar Steinur  
MUNKEN  
FUGLOYJ  
FUGLO  
Fugloyar  
Stapi  
Bispen  
SVINØYJ  
SVINØ  
NOLSOYJ  
(NOLSO)  
KABELN  
(KABELN)  
GASHOLMUR  
(GAASEHOLMUR)  
TINGHOLMUR  
(TINGHOLMUR)  
MIKJUNES  
MIKJUNES





countrymen, while some, no doubt, were baptized. The "Landnámabók" says:<sup>1</sup> "It is said by men who are well informed that many of the *landnaamsmænd* who had migrated to Iceland were baptized, especially of those who came from the West across the sea; among these are mentioned: Helge Magre, Orleyg Gamle, Helge Bjolla, Jørund Kristne (the Christian), Aud the Deepminded, and Ketill Fíflske, and many others who came from the West across the sea; and some of these remained Christians till their death day; but their descendants did not long continue in the faith, for even the sons of some erected temples, and sacrificed to the gods. The land was entirely heathen for well-nigh a hundred years."<sup>2</sup> Those who at this time were regarded as Christians must, however, have been comparatively few in number, and, as they lived scattered among a heathen people, they could not have exercised any marked influence on the life of their fellow countrymen.

A German bishop, Friedrich, and his friend, the Icelfander Thorvald Vidfórle, who had traveled far and wide, were the first missionaries to Iceland. They arrived there in 981, and succeeded in baptizing a few persons, but when Thorvald ventured to preach at the Althing, he was so twitted and ridiculed that he slew two of his antagonists, and both he and the bishop were outlawed, and had to leave the island.<sup>3</sup>

Many Icelanders came to Norway every year. They were generally influential men at home, and King Olav Tryggvason used every opportunity to win them for the Christian faith. The sagas mention many leading Icelanders who in this way became Christians. The most notable instances of this kind were, probably, the conversions of the poet Hallfrød Vandrædaskald, and of Kjartan Olavsson, a hero famous in saga literature, and one of the leading men in Iceland.<sup>4</sup>

In 996 King Olav sent Stevne Thorgilsson as missionary to Ice-

<sup>1</sup> *Landnámabók*, V., ch. 15.

<sup>2</sup> A great hundred, or  $10 \times 12 = 120$ . A similar account is found in the younger *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, ch. 119.

<sup>3</sup> See *Kristnisaga*, the younger *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, ch. 165. Konrad Maurer, *Bekehrung des norwegischen Stammes*, I., 201 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See *Laxdølasaga*, ch. 40. *Heimskringla*, *Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, ch. 82 and 83. Odd Munk, ch. 30.

land. He marched about the country with an armed force, destroying the temples, pulling down the altars, and raiding the country in true Viking fashion. This was Stevne's idea of missionary work. The Althing passed a law that any one who spoke disrespectfully of the gods, or harmed their images, should be outlawed. In accordance with this measure Stevne was outlawed, and had to leave Iceland. But Olav did not abandon the idea of Christianizing Iceland. The priest Thangbrand, who had come with Olav to Norway, had aroused the king's displeasure by his violent and unchristian conduct, and as a punishment he was ordered to go to Iceland as a missionary. Thangbrand spent the first winter with the thoughtful and influential Sidu-Hall at Þottaa, in eastern Iceland, and Hall was baptized, together with his family. The next spring, 998, Thangbrand began the missionary work in earnest. He was a strong and courageous man, always ready for a fight whenever he encountered opposition. The sagas say that he carried a crucifix before his shield, a wise thing to do, no doubt, or he might have been mistaken for a real Viking.<sup>1</sup> More than once it came to blows, and Thangbrand killed many persons, but the people were impressed by his rough and ready way of dealing with his opponents, and many of the leading men accepted the Christian faith. Dissatisfaction with his methods was, nevertheless, growing, and he was finally outlawed, and had to return to Norway. King Olav was very angry when he learned that Thangbrand's mission also had proved a failure, but two leading Icelanders, Gissur Hvite and Hjalte Skjeggesson, who were then staying in Norway, promised the king to return home, and renew the attempt. In the year 1000 they set sail for Iceland, accompanied by the priest Thormod. The Christians had already become so numerous that they met at the Althing as a strong and well-organized party. But the hostility between the adherents of the two religions was so intense that when Gissur and Hjalte spoke in favor of Christianity, civil war was with difficulty averted. The wise and moderate Sidu-Hall, and the still heathen *lorsigemand*, Thorgeir Ljosvetningagode, succeeded in bringing about a compromise between the contending factions. Thorgeir spoke of the evils which would attend a civil war. Perhaps he pointed out to them, also, what effect it might

<sup>1</sup> For an account of Thangbrand see *Njálssaga*, ch. 100 ff.

have on their future autonomy if they continued to resist King Olav in this matter. He suggested a way of settling the difficult question, to which both factions finally agreed. All the people of the island should accept Christianity and be baptized, the heathen temples should be destroyed, and any one who sacrificed publicly to the gods should be outlawed for three years. But any one might sacrifice to the gods privately, eat horse meat, and expose infants as heretofore. Christianity was now the officially acknowledged religion of Iceland, but in thought and spirit the greater part of the people were yet heathen. Generations were still to pass before the precepts of Christian teaching gained full and general recognition.

That no greater change was effected in the people's life and ideas by the first preaching of Christianity was of importance to the development of the saga literature. Had the change been deep and sudden, this literature could never have been produced. The period 930-1030 is known as the great Saga Age. In this period lived the greater number of the renowned persons and families about whom the sagas have been written; such as, Egil Skallagrimsson, Olav Paa, Kjartan Olavsson, Njál paa Bergthórshvål, Gunnar paa Lidarende, Sidu-Hall, Snorre Gode; Bergthora, Hallgerd, Gudrun Usvivsdotter, Aud the Deepminded, and Helga the Fair. Commerce was maintained, not only with Norway and Denmark, but also with Ireland, England, and Normandy. It was a time of enterprise and great achievements, and wealth and luxury could be found among the better families in Iceland in those days. The "Laxdølasaga" tells us that the sons of Hjalte of Hjaltadal entertained twelve hundred (= 1440) guests at their father's funeral. When Hoskuld Dalakollsson died, his son, Olav Paa, invited all the leading men in that part of Iceland to the funeral. Nine hundred guests came (= 1080), and the festival lasted for two weeks. Olav built himself a famous residence, Hjardarholt, the walls of which were decorated with wood carvings representing myths of the Asa-religion. The pictures were later described in the poem "Húsdrápa." The proud memories of this great age were preserved by oral tradition for a couple of centuries; the greater number of the best sagas were not written till in the period 1200-1300, which is regarded as the classic period of Old Norse prose literature. When pagan life is still so perfectly



reflected in the sagas, and the Old Norse literary style is found in its classic purity, unmarred by Latin influence, it is due to the fact that paganism survived in Iceland for centuries after Christianity had been officially recognized as the state religion.

King Olav had reunited and Christianized Norway, and all colonial possessions had pledged their submission and loyalty to the mother country. As king he was strong and popular, but the integrity and independence of the kingdom were threatened by powerful enemies. The Danish king was still looking for an opportunity to recover Viken, and the kings of Sweden had reluctantly surrendered their claims to the border province of Ranrike, or Bohuslen, between Svinesund and the Göta River. Eirik and Svein, the sons of Haakon Jarl, had sought refuge in Sweden and Denmark after leaving Norway, and were trying to form a powerful alliance against King Olav. Svein was engaged to Holmfrid, the daughter of the Swedish king, Eirik Seiersæl, and Svein married Gyda, the daughter of King Svein Tjugeskjeg of Denmark. Olav seems to have been aware of the impending danger. He formed an alliance with Jarl Ragnvald Ulvsson of Vestergötland, and gave him his sister Ingebjørg in marriage, a step which he would scarcely have taken without some political motive. The same is probably true of his courtship of Queen Sigrid Storraade, widow of the Swedish king, Eirik Seiersæl. Both affairs reveal a desire to strengthen the friendly relations with the neighbor state. Sigrid is described as a rich and powerful queen, very proud and haughty. The marriage had been arranged, says the saga,<sup>1</sup> and she came to meet King Olav in Konghelle, in south-eastern Norway, but when he asked her to accept the Christian faith, she refused, whereupon he struck her in the face with his glove, and called her a heathen. This ungallant act aroused the temper of the proud queen, and she retorted angrily that it might cost him his life. She returned home, and soon afterward married King Svein Tjugeskjeg of Denmark, while Olav married Thyre, Svein's sister, as it appears, without her brother's consent. From this time on Sigrid continually plotted against King Olav, from motives of revenge. Through her efforts an alliance was formed against him by the kings of Denmark and Sweden, and the jarls Eirik and Svein. It is true that Sigrid

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, ch. 61.

married King Svein of Denmark, and that Olav married Thyre, but the story that Olav struck Sigrid in the face with his glove, because she refused to accept Christianity, is a bit of conventional fiction used in various forms also about other persons both in Norse and Irish sagas. Neither does it seem to be true that the alliance against King Olav was the work of the revengeful Sigrid. The warlike and ambitious Svein Tjugeskjeg was, no doubt, the prime mover in the affair. Already as prince he returned to paganism, and rebelled against his father. He hated King Olav, and felt especially offended because he had married Thyre without obtaining his consent; but the chief motive was his desire to reconquer Viken, and, possibly, all Norway. The time for forming an alliance was especially opportune. His queen, Sigrid, was the mother of the young king of Sweden, Olav Skotkonung, and the jarls Eirik and Svein were ready to join in an undertaking which gave them hope of regaining their power and possessions in Norway. Sigvalde Jarl of Jónsborg, who had suffered defeat in Hjørungavaag, also became a secret partner to the compact. In the harbor of Nidaros Olav Tryggvason had for several years been busy building a new fleet of ships of a size and elegance in equipment hitherto never seen in the North. Especially conspicuous were the ships "Tranen" (the "Crane"), "Ormen Korte" (the "Short Serpent"), and "Ormen Lange" (the "Long Serpent"). In the year 1000 he sailed with a fleet of seventy-one ships southward to Vendland for the purpose, as the sagas have it, of collecting an inheritance belonging to his queen, Thyre, who had formerly been married to Duke Miesco of Poland. The larger ships, especially, were manned by the most select warriors in Norway at that time. Olav's brother-in-law, Erling Skjalgsson of Sole, commanded a squadron of the fleet. His other brothers-in-law, Thorgeir and Hyrning, and his half-brother, Thorkel Nevja, were with Olav on the "Long Serpent." Here were, also, a band of distinguished chieftains, such as Ulv Røde, Kolbein Stallare, Thorgrim Thjodolvsson of Hvin, and Einar Tambarskjælver, a giant in strength, and the best archer in Norway, though only eighteen years of age. Queen Thyre also accompanied Olav on the expedition. What the real purpose of the expedition may have been is not apparent, though it seems reasonable to suppose that it was something more weighty than the collection of the queen's inherit-

ance. The "*Historia Norwegiae*"<sup>1</sup> states that Olav had forty missionaries with him on the "Long Serpent." This gives it, to some degree, the appearance of a crusade undertaken, possibly, for the purpose of Christianizing the Wends. Certain it is that Olav formed an alliance with Boleslav, king of Poland, doubtless against King Svein of Denmark. He also negotiated with Sigvalde Jarl of Jónsborg, who treacherously promised to aid him, being at the time a secret ally of the Danish king. Unconscious of danger, Olav set sail for the homeward voyage. He allowed a great part of his fleet, consisting of the lighter and swifter vessels commanded by Erling Skjalgsson of Sole, to proceed at full speed, and thus to separate from the squadron of heavier vessels under his own command. Sigvalde Jarl, who was playing the rôle of a friend and ally, followed the king's squadron with a number of ships, and succeeded in decoying him into the estuary of Svolder, where the kings of Sweden and Denmark, and the jarls Eirik and Svein with a great fleet lay ready to attack him. Too late King Olav discovered the plans of his enemies, but he scorned to seek safety in flight. He quickly placed his ships in order of battle, and on the 9th of September, in the year 1000, was fought the memorable battle of Svolder, still famous in the songs and annals of the North. Though overwhelmed by numbers, King Olav and his men fought with prodigious valor until his enemies finally boarded the king's ship, the "Long Serpent," and Olav leaped overboard with his few remaining followers. Queen Thyre is said to have died of grief a short time afterward.<sup>2</sup> Thus ended Olav Trygvason's short but brilliant career, and the unity and independence of the kingdom of Norway perished with him. "He came from the unknown, and disappeared in the dark," says Alexander Bugge, "but his reign was of epoch-making importance. It represents the transition from the Viking Age to the Middle Ages."

After the battle of Svolder Norway was divided among the victors. King Svein of Denmark got Viken, excepting the province of Ranrike, which was incorporated in the kingdom of Sweden. The Swedish king also received the four *fylker* in Indtrøndelagen, together with Nordmør, Romsdal, and Søndmør. These possessions he gave as a

<sup>1</sup> *Historia Norwegiae*, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Heimskringla, Olav Trygvasonssaga*, ch. 102 ff.



fief to Svein Jarl, who had married his sister Holmfrid. Eirik Jarl became independent sovereign over the whole coast region, from Finmarken to Lindesnes. Raumarike and Vingulmark, and two districts in Viken, he received as a fief from his father-in-law, King Svein Tjugeskjeg. In Oplandene the kings regained their old autonomy, and the island possessions, too, drifted away from the mother country in the period of disintegration and weakness which was now inaugurated. Jarl Sigurd Lodvesson ruled the Orkney and Shetland Islands as an independent prince, and in the Faroe Islands the old pagan party, led by Trond i Gata, rose against Sigmund Brestesson, who was finally slain. Trond gained full control in the islands, and paid no heed to Norway, which was now divided among foreign princes and self-seeking jarls — a dismembered kingdom with an empty throne.

### 37. THE DISCOVERY AND COLONIZATION OF GREENLAND

About the year 900 a man by the name of Gunbjørn, while on a voyage to Iceland, was driven out of his course far to the westward, where he claimed that he discovered a new land.<sup>1</sup> In Iceland stories were told of his adventure, and the land which he claimed to have seen was called Gunbjørn's Skjær (skerry, rock). In 982 Eirik the Red, a settler near the mouth of the Breidafjörð in northwestern Iceland, was outlawed for killing a man in a brawl. He left Iceland with a few followers, and undertook to find the land which Gunbjørn had seen. He reached the ice-bound east coast of Greenland, and, finding it uninhabitable, he continued the voyage southward along the coast, rounded the southern extremity of the island, and came finally to a fjord on the west coast, which he called Eiriksfiord (Tunugdliarfik). During the following three years he explored the west coast of Greenland, and sought out the places where colonies might be established. He then returned to Iceland to induce people to migrate to the new land. He called it Greenland, because he thought that it would be easier to persuade people to go there, if the land had a fine name.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The O. N. documents dealing with the colonization of Greenland and the discovery of America are found in the *Antiquitates Americanae*, Copenhagen, 1837, edited by Carl Christian Rafn.

<sup>2</sup> Are Frode, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 6. *Eyrbyggjasaga*, ch. 25.

In 986<sup>1</sup> twenty-five ships sailed for Greenland, but only fourteen reached their destination. The rest were lost, or had to return. It is possible that the fleet was caught in the great earthquake which is known to have occurred at that time. The "Flateyjarbók" mentions a Christian colonist from the Hebrides who accompanied Herjulf, one of the early settlers, on his voyage to Greenland. He wrote a poem, the "Hafgerðingadrápa," about the great breakers in the ocean, from which he prays God to protect him. Only a single stanza of the poem has been preserved.<sup>2</sup>

The colonists found no native inhabitants where they settled, but numerous traces of human beings convinced them that Greenland was inhabited. The reliable old writer Are Frode<sup>3</sup> says: "They found remnants of human dwelling places both eastward and westward in the land, stone weapons and fragments of boats, from which it was evident that the same people who inhabit Vinland, and whom the people of Greenland call Skrælings,<sup>4</sup> had also sojourned here." Two settlements were founded on the west coast. The Eastern Settlement, in 60°-61° N. L., corresponding to the present Julianehaab district; and the Western Settlement farther up the coast, in 64°-65° N. L., located in the present district of Godthaab.<sup>5</sup>

The Eastern Settlement numbered at one time 190 dwellings, twelve churches, a cloister, and a monastery; the Western Settlement had ninety dwellings and four churches. The number of inhabitants in the two settlements probably never exceeded 2000.

In Greenland the winters are long and cold, and the sea is covered with huge icebergs till quite late in the spring. But in the summer months a green belt of vegetation stretches along the western coast,

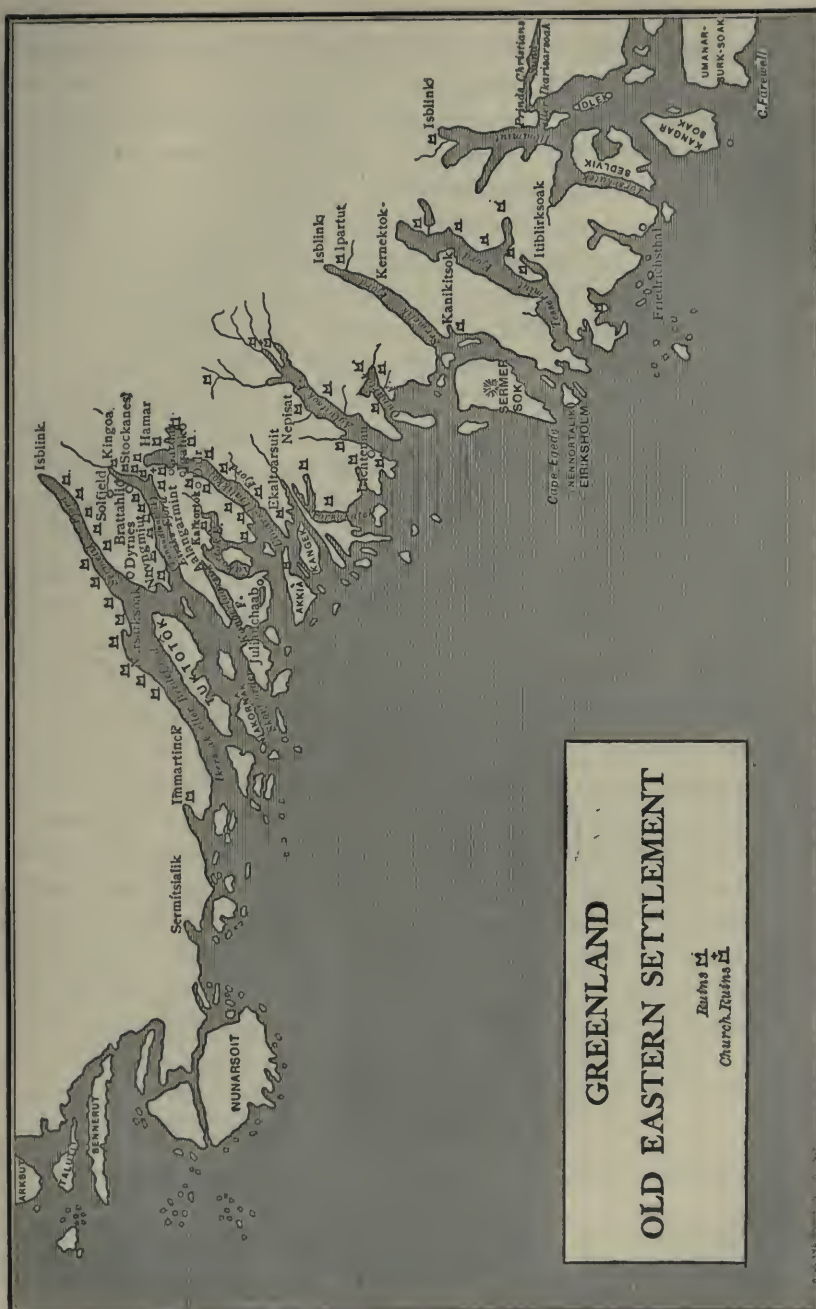
<sup>1</sup> *Islandske Annaler*, edited by Gustav Storm, p. 104 and 464.

<sup>2</sup> See *Landnámabók*, V, ch. 14; also, *Voyages of the Norsemen*, edited by Professor Julius E. Olson in *Original Narratives of Early American History*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Kongespeilet*, ch. 16, gives a more detailed account of this phenomenon. Are Torgilsson Frode, born in Iceland 1067, wrote the *Íslendingabók*, probably in the period 1120-1130. It is a work of fundamental importance in Old Norse history writing. The work has been preserved in a somewhat abridged form of a later date.

<sup>4</sup> Skræling, from O. N. *skral*, puny, thin, small.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Bruun, *Det høie Nord, Færøernes, Islands og Grønlands Udforskning*, Copenhagen, 1902.



GREENLAND  
 OLD EASTERN SETTLEMENT  
*Ruins of  
 Church Ruins*





behind which tower the immense glaciers, and huge, snow-covered mountains.<sup>1</sup> The weather during this season of the year is agreeable, and the scenery beautiful. Explorers claim that those who have stayed long enough to become acquainted with conditions, always like to return to Greenland. The vegetation in the summer is quite varied. There are no forests, but birch trees reach a diameter of six inches, and a height of twenty feet, and they are numerous enough to form considerable groves. There is an abundance of grass, flowers, berries, and brush. The blue fjords and green valleys, the calm, clear air, the sun shining on glaciers and snow-covered mountains, give the region in the summertime a serene and tranquil beauty. Fish are found in abundance in the streams, as well as in the sea, and seals, walrus, polar bears, and furbearing animals are plentiful. Cattle, sheep, goats, and horses thrived well, and were kept in goodly numbers by the settlers. "The King's Mirror" says: "It is said that in Greenland there is good pasturage. The people have many sheep and cattle, and make cheese and butter in large quantities." But no grain could be raised, and we are told that many of the people living there, especially those of the poorer class, had never tasted bread.

By the Eiriksfiord lay Brattahlid, the home of Eirik the Red, the first chieftain's residence erected in Greenland. By the Einarsfiord (Igaliko) lay Gardar, where the Althing met every summer. The Icelandic laws and system of government were introduced. The settlements were divided into districts, or *sysler*, and all important matters were brought before the Althing, where the *lovsigemand* presided.

The settlers continued to explore the west coast of Greenland. In the summer they sailed northward to a place called Norðrsetur, in the region about Disco Bay, to hunt seal, and to gather driftwood. How far north they penetrated is not known, but in 1824 a rune-stone was found in the island of Kingigtorsuak, 72° 55' 20" N. L., which shows that they reached this latitude. Professor Magnus Olsen thinks that the stone dates from about 1300.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Finnur Jónsson og Helga Pettursson, *Um Grønland að Fornu og Nyju*, Copenhagen, 1899.

*Kongespeilet* gives a lengthy description of the climate of Greenland, which is equally correct at the present time.

<sup>2</sup> The stone has the following inscription: "Erling Sighvatsson, Bjarne Thordarsson and Endride Oddsson Saturday before gagndag (April 25)

The colonists built their houses and churches of stone, and many ruins of these early buildings are still found. Their dwelling houses were of good size, and separate stables were built for horses, cattle, and sheep. Intellectual life flourished, and literature was produced also in Greenland. The "Atlamál" of the "Elder Edda" was, no doubt, composed there in the second half of the eleventh century. Kostbera's dream of the polar bear coming into the house and devouring the people shows that the poem was written in Greenland. It may, indeed, happen that polar bears reach the coast of Iceland on cakes of ice, but such instances are rare, and it could not have occurred to an Icelandic poet to describe such a bear as coming into the houses and devouring people. A few lines of a "Norðrsetudrápa" written in Greenland have also been preserved. Stories and sagas were told at the Althing in Greenland as well as in Norway and Iceland.

Navigation between Greenland and Iceland was often difficult and dangerous, and was at times entirely interrupted by ice. In 999 Leiv Eiriksson, the son of Eirik the Red, struck boldly across the Atlantic, and sailed from Greenland to Norway by way of the Hebrides. This was the first voyage made directly across the Atlantic Ocean, and marks the beginning of ocean navigation. When we consider that the voyage was made in open boats, and without compass, we can understand the daring of these northern sailors. It is an achievement which ranks with the greatest in the history of navigation. A new route of commerce and travel was thus opened between Norway and Greenland, and a lucrative trade soon sprang up between the two countries. "The King's Mirror" ("Kongespeilet") says that "some go to Greenland because of the renown which they gain by exposing themselves to great dangers; others go to satisfy their curiosity, but some for the sake of profit. The Greenlanders have to import nearly all things needed in the colonization of the country: iron, building material, and other necessities; but they sell hides, seal skins, walrus teeth, and ropes of walrus hide."<sup>1</sup> Grain was also a leading article of import.

While Leiv Eiriksson was in Norway, he visited King Olav Tryggva-  
built these varder (cairns) and cleared . . ." Then follow a few runes which have been erroneously interpreted to mean 1135. Professor L. Fr. Löffler interprets them to mean ice.

<sup>1</sup> *Kongespeilet*, ch. 17.



son, who persuaded him to receive the Christian faith. He undertook to introduce Christianity in Greenland on his return, and the king sent a missionary along to aid him in the work. The people received the new faith without much difficulty, but their moral and spiritual life was at first but slightly influenced by the change, and heathen customs continued to prevail. Leiv's father, Eirik the Red, refused to be baptized, and continued to worship an old polar bear staying in the neighborhood of Brattahlid. Greenland became a bishopric, probably about 1110, though Arnaldr, who was ordained bishop in Lund, in Skåne, 1124, is the first bishop of Greenland known to have been ordained. A cathedral was erected at Gardar, where the bishop resided, but the foundations alone remain of the once proud structure. Its massive walls of red sandstone have been used as a quarry where the inhabitants in modern times found convenient



FIG. 44.—Ruins of the church at Kakortok, Greenland.

building material. The foundations and ruins of five churches from this period have been found, among others a well preserved ruin at Kakortok of a church, which, probably, was never completed. Excavations have been made in these ruins, and a number of relics have been brought to light.<sup>1</sup> In the Eastern Settlement the ruins of about 100 dwellings have been found.

In perusing the later history of the colonies it grows constantly darker, until, at length, the light completely fails. When modern intercourse again brings this remote region to view, it presents to the inquisitive eye of the traveler, not flourishing settlements, but a graveyard where all traces of the colonists are lost. What, we ask, became of the now extinct colonies? In 1261, in the reign of King Haakon Haakonsson, Greenland became a Norwegian dependency, or crown colony. Till the beginning of the fourteenth century con-

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Bruun, *Udgravninger paa Grønland. Grønlands historiske Minde-merker.*

siderable traffic was maintained between Greenland, Iceland, and Norway, but the Black Death, which reached Norway in 1349, gave this traffic a severe blow. Great harm had already been done by making colonial trade a royal monopoly, so that no trading vessels could go to the colonies, except a few which were in the king's service. This monopoly stopped all enterprise, and virtually put an end to commercial intercourse with Greenland. When the Hanseatic merchants finally gained control of Bergen, the most important commercial city in Norway at that time, and swept Norwegian commerce from the sea, the colonies in Greenland were completely cut off from all communication with the mother country, on which they depended for so many of the necessities of life. Nothing more was heard about them, and they were soon entirely forgotten. The last mention of the colonies is found in a papal letter issued by Pope Alexander VI., in the first year of his pontificate (1492-1493), dealing with the appointment of a new bishop for Greenland. "For eighty years, or thereabouts," says the Pope, "absolutely no bishop or priest governed that church (of Greenland) in personal residence," and he complains that Christianity has almost died out there.<sup>1</sup> Being left without aid by the mother country, the settlers were in sore straits, and were, probably, forced little by little to adopt the mode of life of the Eskimos. The Western Settlement seems to have been abandoned prior to 1340. A priest, Ivar Baardsson, from Norway, came to Greenland in 1341, and was sent to the Western Settlement with a small force to aid the settlers, but he did not find a person there. The colony was entirely destroyed, says the account, only a few almost wild sheep and cattle were found and brought to the Eastern Settlement. For the year 1379 the "Icelandic Annals" contain the following notice: "The Skrælings attacked the Greenlanders, killed eighteen of them, and carried away two boys, whom they made slaves."<sup>2</sup> Where this fight took place, or what was the cause of it, is not known. In 1418 the Skrælings again attacked the settlers, killed many people, and burned

<sup>1</sup> The letter is printed in the *Flatey-book and Recently Discovered Vatican Manuscripts Concerning America as Early as the Tenth Century*, published by the Norrœna Society, New York, London; etc., 1908. Also in *Original Narratives of Early American History*, New York, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> *Islandske Annaler*, edited by Gustav Storm, Christiania, 1888, p. 364. *Grønlands historiske Mindesmerker*, III., p. 258.

# GREENLAND

**M Ruins**  
**+M Church**



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houses and churches. References to these events are found in a letter by Pope Nicolaus V., dated Sept. 20, 1448,<sup>1</sup> in which he speaks of the calamities which befell the church and people of Greenland thirty years earlier. What, finally, became of the settlers is left to conjecture. Did they all perish? or did they finally join the Eskimos after all hope of aid from the mother country had to be abandoned? The Danish explorer, Normann Hansen, in a lecture on his investigations of the ruins of the Old Norse colonies in Greenland recently delivered at Copenhagen, states that at the head of one of the fjords he and his companions made their way up a fork-shaped river, and found, in a place difficult of approach, a ruin which, from its situation, seems to have been the last place of refuge of the Norse colonists. The buildings in this remarkable retreat were constructed in a more substantial way than elsewhere. On the top of a high mountain, Igdlersfigsalik, two stone circles are found which seem to be the remains of stone huts erected there by the Norse colonists. Mr. Daniel Bruun thinks that these huts have been used by watchmen who year after year maintained the fruitless outlook for aid from the mother country, which never came till the last colonist had perished. Professor Nansen maintains that the views hitherto generally held, that the colonists were exterminated by the Eskimos, are untenable for many reasons. The attacks on the colonists which the Eskimos are reported to have made must have been provoked by the settlers themselves, as the Eskimos are a very peaceful people, and these conflicts could scarcely have been so serious as to lead to the destruction of the colonies. The report that Ivar Baardsson in 1341 found the Western Settlement destroyed rests on a misconception, according to Nansen. The report says that he found no people, but only some sheep and cattle. This does not prove that the people

<sup>1</sup> The letter is printed and translated in *Original Narratives of Early American History*, Scribner's Sons, New York, 1906. Also in *Flatey-book and Recently Discovered Vatican Manuscripts Concerning America as Early as in the Tenth Century*, Norrœna Society, New York, 1908. Nansen shows that the Pope has not been well informed about conditions in Greenland, and that many statements in the letter are erroneous. The events as here described can scarcely be regarded as historical, though there may have been conflicts between the Skrælings and the settlers. See *Nord i Taakeheimen*, p. 373. (English title, *In Northern Mists*.)

had been killed. But the report itself seems to be erroneous. The sheep and cattle could have existed in Greenland uncared-for but a short time during the summer months. If the settlement had been destroyed, this must have happened, then, shortly before Baardsson's arrival, in which case traces of the final conflict would still have been visible. Norse loan-words and traditions still found among the Eskimos indicate that the Norse settlers finally joined them. During long periods the colonists had no priests to maintain the Christian religion among them, and they gradually returned to paganism. This can be seen, both from Pope Alexander VI.'s letter, and from an entry in "Gisle Oddsson's Annals," written in Iceland in 1637: "The people of Greenland fell away from the true faith and the Christian religion, and after having lost all good customs and true virtues they returned to the American people."<sup>1</sup> This can only mean that they turned to the ways of the native inhabitants. Professor Nansen shows that the Eskimos' mode of life was the only one possible for the colonists in Greenland after the connections with the mother country had been severed.

In 1406 a ship sailing from Norway to Iceland strayed from its course, and finally landed in Greenland, where it remained till 1410, when it returned to Norway. This is the last definite mention of a voyage from Norway to Greenland. But the letter of Pope Alexander VI., 1492, indicates that news had been brought from Greenland regarding conditions there shortly before the letter was written. There are also other indications that a voyage was made to Greenland in the latter part of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Some sources even state that the expedition took place in 1476. After this time no mention is made of voyages to Greenland. When John Davis, in 1585, reached the coast of Greenland, the "Land of Desolation," six hundred years after Eirik the Red had first discovered it, he found Eskimos there, but the white settlers had disappeared, and Davis thought he was the real discoverer of the country.

<sup>1</sup> *Grønlands historiske Mindesmerker*, III., p. 459.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Bruun, *Det hvide Nord*, p. 176. Fridtjof Nansen, *Nord i Taakeheimen*, p. 376 f.



## 38. THE DISCOVERY OF THE MAINLAND OF NORTH AMERICA

After the Norsemen had succeeded in establishing colonies in Greenland; after ocean voyages were successfully made across the North Atlantic to Norway, and their exploring expeditions found the way northward through Davis Strait into the polar regions, it is by no means surprising that they should also have found the neighboring coast of the mainland of North America. Though no relic has been found which can be offered as a proof that the Norsemen ever visited these shores, the fact that they discovered America about the year 1000 is so well established as to leave no room for doubt or controversy. Professor Fridtjof Nansen, who in his work "In Northern Mists" (1911) has subjected all accounts of the Vinland voyages and the discovery of America by the Norsemen to a most searching criticism, says: "Icelandic literature contains many remarkable statements about countries to the southwest or south of the Greenland settlements. They are called 'Helluland' (*i.e.* slate or stone-land), 'Markland' (*i.e.* wood-land), 'Furðustrandir' (*i.e.* the marvel-strands), and 'Vínland' (also written 'Vindland,' or 'Vinland'). Yet another, which lay to the west of Ireland, was called 'Hvítramanna-land' (*i.e.* the white men's land). Even if certain of these countries are legendary, as will presently be shown, it must be regarded as a fact that the Greenlanders and Icelanders reached some of them, which lay on the northeastern coast of America; and they thus discovered the continent of North America besides Greenland, about five hundred years before Cabot (and Columbus)."<sup>1</sup>

Vinland is first mentioned by Adam v. Bremen about 1070. In the fourth chapter of his church history of the archbishopric of Hamburg, "*Gesta Hammaburgensis*," is found a description of the lands and islands in the far North, "*Discriptio Insularum Aquilonis*." Adam's geographical knowledge is derived from various sources: from old classic authors, from Bede, Paulus Warnefridus, and other old writers, and partly from information gathered at the court of the Danish king, Svein Estridsson, where he was staying at the time. He says about Vinland:

<sup>1</sup> Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, vol. I., p. 312.

"He (the king of Denmark) mentioned also another island which has been discovered by many in this ocean, which is called Winland, because grapevines grow wild there, and yield the best wine. That self-sown grain is found there in abundance, we have learned, not through fabulous conjecture, but through reliable accounts given by the Danes. Beyond this island there is no habitable land in that ocean, but all which lies beyond is full of unbearable ice and boundless gloom. Of this circumstance we are reminded by Marcian: 'Three days' sailing beyond Thule the ocean is congealed.' Harald, the king of the Norsemen, a prince very desirous of knowledge, experienced this when he explored the whole width of the northern ocean with his ships, and as the disappearing edge of the earth grew dark before his eyes, he scarcely escaped in safety the great abyss by returning."<sup>1</sup>

The next mention of Vinland is found in Are Frode's "Íslendingabók" (1120-1130):

"The land which is called Greenland was discovered and colonized from Iceland. Eirik the Red, a man from Breidafjord, went thither, and took land in a place since called Eiriksfiord. He gave the land name, and called it Greenland, saying that it would entice people to go there, if the country had a fine name. They found human dwelling places both east and west in the land, remnants of boats, and stone implements, from which they could judge that the same people had wandered about here, which inhabit Vinland, and which the Greenlanders call Skrælings. But he began to colonize the country fourteen or fifteen winters before Christianity was introduced in Iceland,<sup>2</sup> according to what was told Thorkel Gellisson in Greenland by one who had accompanied Eirik the Red thither."<sup>3</sup>

Hvítramannaland and Vinland are mentioned in the "Landnámabók" about 1250.

"Hvítramannaland, which some call Ireland the Great, lies in the western ocean near Vinland the Good. It is considered to be six days' sailing west of Ireland."<sup>4</sup>

The Hauk version of the "Landnámabók" also states that Karlsevne found Vinland the Good.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adam v. Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, IV., 38.

<sup>2</sup> According to Are, Christianity was introduced there in the year 1000.

<sup>3</sup> *Íslendingabók*, ch. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Landnámabók*, part II., ch. XXII.

<sup>5</sup> Part III., ch. X.

A most interesting allusion to Helluland, Markland, and Vinland is found in an old Icelandic geography, thought to have been written, in part at least, by Abbot Nikulás Bergsson of Thverá, who died in 1159. "South of Greenland," he says, "lies Helluland, then comes Markland, and not very far from there lies Vinland the Good, which some believe to be connected with Africa; but if this is the case, then the great ocean must come between Markland and Vinland. It is said that Thorfinn Karlsevne chopped a tree for a *husa-snotra* (an ornament on a building), and that he afterwards set out to find Vinland the Good, and came to the place where this land was supposed to lie, but he was not able to explore it, and did not establish himself there. Leiv the Lucky first discovered Vinland, and he rescued some merchants whom he found in the sea in great danger. He also introduced Christianity in Greenland, which so prospered that a bishopric was established at Gardar."

We find, then, in the oldest existing form of the tradition the following quite distinct features: South of Greenland three lands had been discovered; Helluland, Markland, and Vinland. The discovery is attributed to Leiv Eiriksson, called Leiv the Lucky, who also introduced Christianity in Greenland. Thorfinn Karlsevne led an expedition to Vinland, but no permanent colony was established there.

Vinland is mentioned also in several sagas from the classic period of saga literature. In the "Eyrbyggjasaga," of about 1250, the following statement is found: "Snorre went to Vinland the Good with Karlsevne. They fought there with the Skrælings, and Thorbrand Snorresson, the bravest of men, was killed."

The same saga tells also of a merchant by the name of Gudleiv, who sailed from Norway to Dublin. From there he was going to Iceland, but was driven by strong winds far westward into the ocean, where he finally came to an unknown land. The warlike natives met them in large numbers, but the chieftain, who proved to be an Ice-lander, soon addressed them in their own language, and made inquiries about his relatives in Iceland. After a long conversation he advised them to leave the country, and sent with them presents to his friends at home.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Eyrbyggjasaga*, chs. 48, 64.



Vinland is mentioned in the "Heimskringla," written about 1230, in the "Kristnisaga," prior to 1245, and in the "Grettissaga," from 1290. The only lengthy description existing of the discovery of America, and the subsequent voyages to Vinland, are found in the "Saga of Eirik the Red,"<sup>1</sup> written in the thirteenth century, and in the "Grønlandingaþáttur" in the "Flateyjarbók," dating from about 1387, but the narratives in these two sources differ in many respects. According to the "Grønlandingaþáttur," it was Bjarne Herjolvsson who first discovered Vinland. On a voyage from Norway to Greenland he was driven out of his course towards the American coast. He finally reached Greenland, but he said nothing about his discovery till several years afterward, when he was staying in Trondhjem, in Norway, at the court of Eirik Jarl. He was criticized by many because he had not spoken about it, and Leiv Eiriksson bought a ship, and set out to discover the land which Bjarne had seen. The "Saga of Eirik the Red" says that Leiv Eiriksson discovered America. The "Flateyjarbók" describes five different voyages to Vinland. The "Saga of Eirik the Red" mentions only two; the discovery by Leiv Eiriksson, and Karlseвне's attempt to colonize the new land. Professor Gustav Storm has subjected all the sources dealing with this question to a critical examination in his excellent work "Studier over Vinlandsreiserne" (1887), in which he shows that the "Saga of Eirik the Red," written in the classic period of Icelandic literature, has preserved the tradition regarding the discovery of America in its most reliable form. He points out that this saga bears all the marks of general truthfulness, that it agrees in the main with independent older sources, and that, therefore, the account given must be accepted as reliable in its main features. The "Flateyjarbók" is a later production, written at a time when the saga literature was fast degenerating, and the tradition had been partly forgotten. He shows that where it differs from the "Saga of Eirik the Red" it stands unsupported by other evidence, that it often relates things in themselves quite incredible, and that it must be discarded as a reliable historical source.

By following the more reliable "Saga of Eirik the Red" the account

<sup>1</sup> Finnur Jónsson is of the opinion that this saga was written about 1200, while Gustav Storm regards the period 1270-1300 as a more likely date.

of the events connected with the discovery of the mainland of North America, and of the attempts to found a colony somewhere on the coast will be as follows: <sup>1</sup>

Leiv Eiriksson, the son of Eirik the Red, sailed from Greenland to Norway in 999. He came to the court of King Olav Tryggvason, and was well received. The king persuaded him to accept the Christian faith, and Leiv undertook to proclaim Christianity in Greenland on his return. In the spring of 1000 Leiv started on the homeward voyage.

"Leiv put to sea when his ship was ready for the voyage. For a long time he drifted about in the sea, and he came upon lands of which he previously had no knowledge. There were self-sown wheat fields, and vines grew there. There were also the trees which are called *masur* (*mqsurr*), and of all these they had some specimens. Some trees were so large that they were laid in houses" (*i.e.* used as house-beams).

"On his homeward voyage Leiv found some men on a wreck, and took them home with him and gave them all shelter for the winter. He showed much nobility and goodness, he introduced Christianity into the country, and rescued the men; he was called Leiv hinn heppni (the Lucky)."

After Leiv's return home "there was much talk that they ought to seek the land which Leiv had found. The leader was Thorstein Eiriksson,<sup>2</sup> a good man, and wise, and friendly."

Eirik the Red was also asked to join in this undertaking.

"Eirik was asked, and they trusted in his good fortune and foresight being greatest. He was against it, but did not say no, as his friends exhorted him to do it. . . . They drifted about the sea for a long time and did not arrive where they had desired. They came in sight of Iceland, and they had also birds from Ireland; their ship was carried eastward over the ocean. They came back in the autumn, and were then weary and worn."

Thorstein Eiriksson now married Gudrid, a young woman who shortly before had come over from Iceland. They settled in Lysefjord,

<sup>1</sup> *The Saga of Eirik the Red*, also called the *Saga of Thorfinn Karlsevne*, is translated in *Original Narratives of Early American History*.

<sup>2</sup> A brother of Leiv Eiriksson.

in the Western Settlement, but Thorstein died that same winter, and Gudrid returned to Eirik the Red, in Brattahlid in 1001.

The following summer two ships came from Iceland. One was owned by Thorfinn Karlsevne. Along with him came Snorre Thorbrandsson. The other ship belonged to Bjarne Grimolvsson and Thorhall Gamlason. They came to Brattahlid to Eirik the Red, and remained there that winter. After Christmas Karlsevne married Gudrid, Thorstein Eiriksson's widow. In the spring he prepared an expedition for the purpose of establishing a colony in Vinland.

In 1003, three ships were fitted out; one by Karlsevne and Snorre Thorbrandsson, another by Bjarne Grimolvsson and Thorhall Gamlason, and a third by Thorvald, a son of Eirik the Red, and Thorhall Veidemand (the Hunter). Karlsevne's wife, Gudrid, accompanied him, and Freydis, a daughter of Eirik the Red, also joined the expedition.

"They had in all 160 men when they sailed to the Western Settlement and thence to Bjarneyjar (Bear Islands). From there they sailed away with a north wind. They were on the sea two *dægr*.<sup>1</sup> Then they found land, and rowed along it in boats, and examined the country, and found there on the shore many flat stones so large that two men might easily lie stretched upon them sole to sole. There were many white foxes there. They gave the land a name and called it 'Helluland' (*i.e.* Land of Flat Stones)."

This land is thought to have been Labrador.

Then they sailed for two *dægr* towards the southeast and south, and then a land lay before them, and upon it were great forests and many beasts.

An island lay to the southeast off the land, and there they found a polar bear, and they called the island "Bjarney"; but the country they called "Markland" (*i.e.* Woodland) on account of the forests.

This is thought to have been Newfoundland, where extensive forests are found, and where red deer still exist in large numbers. Polar bears occasionally reach the coast of Newfoundland on large cakes of ice, but have not been found farther south.

"After they had sailed again for two *dægr*, they sighted land and sailed under the land. There was a promontory where they first

<sup>1</sup> *dægr* = 12 hours.



came. They cruised along the shore, which they kept to starboard (*i.e.* to the west). It was without harbors, and there were long strands and stretches of sand. They went ashore in boats, and found there on the promontory a ship's keel, and called it 'Kjalarnes' (*i.e.* Keelness). They also gave the strands a name and called them 'Furðustrandir' (*i.e.* Marvel Strands, or the wonderful, strange strands), because it took a long time to sail by them."

Gustav Storm held that Kjalarnes was located somewhere on the coast of Cape Breton Island, and that the ship's keel must have been carried thither by the ocean currents. Fridtjof Nansen thinks that the name has, probably, been suggested by the shape of the cape, which may have resembled a keel. This was the more common way in which such names originated.<sup>1</sup>

South of the Furðustrandir "the land was indented by bays (*vág-skorit*) and they steered the ships into a bay." Karlsevne put on shore the Gaelic runners (the man Haki and the woman Hekja) whom Leiv and Eirik had given him. They were to run southward, and examine the condition of the country, and return before three days were past. Karlsevne cast anchor and waited during their absence; "and when three days were past, they came running down from the land, and one of them had grapes in his hand, the other self-sown wheat. Karlsevne said that they seemed to have found a fertile country. They sailed along the coast and came to anchor in a fjord."

"There was an island outside, and round the island strong currents. They called it 'Straumsey.' There were so many birds there that one could hardly put one's foot between the eggs. They held up the fjord, and called it 'Straumsfjord,' and unloaded the ships, and established themselves there. They had with them all kinds of cattle, and sought to make use of the land. There were mountains there, and fair was the prospect. They did nothing else but search out the land. There was much grass. They stayed there the winter, and it was very long; but they had not taken thought for anything, and were short of food, and their catch decreased. Then they went out to the island expecting that there they might find some fishing, or something might drift up (*i.e.* a whale be driven ashore?). There was, however, little to be caught for food, but their cattle thrived

<sup>1</sup> Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, vol. I., p. 324.

there. Then they prayed to God that he might send them something to eat; but no answer came so quickly as they had hoped." The heathen Thorhall the Hunter then disappeared for three *dægr*, and doubtless held secret conjurations with the red-bearded one (*i.e.* Thor). A little later a whale was driven ashore, and they ate of it, but were all sick. When they found out how things were with Thorhall and Thor, "they cast it over the cliff, and prayed God for mercy. They then made a catch of fish, and there was no lack of food. In the spring (1004) they entered Straumsfjord, and had catches from both lands (*i.e.* from both sides of the fjord), hunting on the mainland, eggs on the island, and fish in the sea."

Thorhall the Hunter seems to have been much disappointed. He quarreled with Karlsevne, and wished to go northward in search of Vinland, while Karlsevne decided to go southward. With nine others, who probably wished to return home, he left the expedition. While he was preparing his ship for the voyage, he sang the following lay:

"Let us go homeward,  
where we shall find fellow countrymen;  
let us with our ship seek  
the broad ways of the sea,  
while the hopeful  
warriors (those who praise  
the land) on Furðustrandir  
stay and boil whales' flesh."

"Then they parted (from Karlsevne, who had accompanied them out) and sailed north of Furðustrandir and Kjalarnes, and then tried to beat westward. Then the westerly storm caught them, and they drifted to Ireland, where they were made slaves and ill-treated. There Thorhall lost his life, as merchants have reported.

"Karlsevne, with Snorre, Bjarne, and the rest, continued southward along the coast.

"They sailed a long time, until they came to a river, which flowed down from the interior into a lake, and thence into the sea. There were great sandbars before the mouth of the river, so that it could only be entered at high water. Karlsevne and his people sailed to the mouth of the river and called the country 'Hóp' (*i.e.* a small land-locked bay).

There they found self-sown wheat fields, where the land was low, but vines wherever they saw heights. As every brook was full of fish, they dug trenches on the shore below high-water mark, and when the tide went out, there were halibuts in the trenches. In the forests there was a great quantity of beasts of all kinds. They were there half a month amusing themselves, and suspecting nothing. They had their cattle with them. But early one morning, when they looked about them, they saw nine hide-boats<sup>1</sup> (*hudkeipa*), and wooden poles were being waved on the boats, making a noise like threshing-flails, and they were moved with the sun. Karlsevne's men took this to be a token of peace, and bore a white shield towards them. Then the strangers rowed towards them, and wondered, and came ashore. They were small (or black) men,<sup>2</sup> and ugly, and they had ugly hair; their eyes were big, and they were broad across the cheeks. They stayed there awhile, and wondered, then rowed away and went south of the headland."

Professor Nansen says of this first meeting of white men with the North American Indians: "This, then, would be the description of the first meeting in history between Europeans and the natives of America. With all its brevity it gives an excellent picture; but whether we can accept it is doubtful. As we shall see later, the Norsemen probably did meet with Indians; but the description of the latter's appearance must necessarily have been colored more and more by greater familiarity with the *Skrælings* of Greenland when the sagas were put into writing. The big eyes<sup>3</sup> will not suit either of them, and are rather to be regarded as an attribute of trolls and underground beings; gnomes and old fairy men have big, watery eyes. The ugly hair is also an attribute of the underground beings."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Storm thinks that the saga writer has failed to distinguish between bark canoes and skin canoes. So, also, John Fiske, *Discovery of America*, I., 191. Professor Yngvar Nielsen has advanced the theory that the natives which the Norsemen met in America were Eskimos, a theory which has not been accepted. See *Historisk Tidsskrift*, fjerde række, vol. III., p. 277 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The Vellum A.M. 557 says "smair menn" (small men). The *Hauksbók* says "svartir men," meaning, probably, black-haired and dark-eyed.

<sup>3</sup> Storm suggests that the expression "eygðir váru þeir mjök" (they had large eyes) may refer to the size of the eye sockets. *Studier over Vinlands-reiserne, Vinlands Geografi og Ethnografi*, p. 54 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, vol. I., p. 327.



"Karlsevne had built their houses above the lake, some nearer, some farther off. Now they stayed there that winter (1004-1005). No snow fell at all, and their cattle were out at pasture."

Regarding the probable location of Vinland there has been much difference of opinion. In the "Flateyjarbók" the statement is made that day and night are of more equal length there than in Greenland or Iceland. "The sun had there *eyktarstaðr* and *dagmálastaðr* on the shortest day of the year"; i.e. the sun was up at *eyktar* time and *dagmála* time in the darkest season of the year. According to the interpretation of the passage by the scholars the shortest winter day would be of such a length that Vinland would have to be located in latitude 41° 24' 10'', or on the coast of Rhode Island. This was the interpretation given by Torfæus in his "Vinlandia," 1705, and later writers followed it, until it was regarded as quite firmly established that Vinland was located on the coast of Rhode Island or Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> In conformity with this view it was also thought that the inscription on the Dighton Rock, on the Taunton River, was a runic inscription made by the Norsemen, and that the old stone tower at Newport, R. I., was the remains of a building erected by them.<sup>2</sup> Gustav Storm has shown that this passage in the "Flateyjarbók" has been misinterpreted, and that no theory as to the location of Vinland can be adduced from it. He shows that

<sup>1</sup> Professor Eben Norton Horsford in his work, *Discovery of America by the Northmen*, 1888, tries to show that many place names along the coast of Massachusetts are of Norse origin. See also *The Defenses of Norumbega*, 1891, and *The Problem of the Northmen*, 1890, by the same author.

To this effort Justin Windsor remarks: "We can see in Horsford's *Discovery of America by the Northmen* to what fanciful extent a confident enthusiasm can carry it." *Narrative and Critical History of America*. Rev. B. F. De Costa, *The Northmen in Maine and a Chapter on the Discovery of Massachusetts Bay*, Albany, 1870.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Christian Rafn, *Antiquitates Americanae sive Scriptores septentrionalis rerum ante-Columbianarum in America*, Copenhagen, 1837. Carl Christian Rafn, *Abstracts of the Historical Evidence for the Discovery of America by the Scandinavians in the Tenth Century*, London, 1838. Rev. Abner Morse, A.M., *Further Traces of the Ancient Northmen in America, with Geological Evidences of the Location of their Vinland*; read before the New England Historico-Genealogical Society, and published at their request, Boston, 1861. North Ludlow Beamish, *The Discovery of America by the Northmen in the Tenth Century*, London, 1841. T. H. Webb, *Descriptio vetusti Monumenti in Regione Massachusetts reperti*, *Antiquitates Americanae*, p. 355 ff. B. F. De

Helluland, in all probability, was Labrador, that Markland must have been Newfoundland, and that Vinland, which according to the saga narrative was located as far north as wild grapes were growing, in all likelihood was the coast of Nova Scotia. The Newport stone tower has been shown to have been an old stone mill, and the Dighton Rock inscription has been found to be Indian picture writing.

"When spring came, they saw early one morning a number of hide-boats rowing from the south past the headland, so many that it seemed as if the sea had been sown with coal in front of the bay, and they waved wooden poles on every boat. Then they set up shields and held a market, and the people wanted most to buy red cloth; they also wanted to buy swords and spears, but this was forbidden by Karlsevne and Snorre." The Skrælings gave them untanned skins in exchange for the cloth, and trade was proceeding briskly when "an ox, which Karlsevne had, ran out of the woods and began to bellow. The Skrælings were scared, and ran to their boats and rowed south along the shore. After that they did not see them for three weeks. But when that time was past, they saw a great multitude of Skræling boats coming from the south, as though driven on by a stream. Then all the wooden poles were waved against the sun, and all the Skrælings howled loudly. Then Karlsevne and his men took red shields and bore towards them. The Skrælings leaped from their boats, and then they made towards each other and fought; there was a hot exchange of missiles. The Skrælings also had catapults (*valslongur*). Karlsevne and his men saw that the Skrælings hoisted upon a pole a great ball about as large as a sheep's paunch, blue in color, and slung it from the pole upon the land over Karlsevne's people, and it made a great noise when it came down.<sup>1</sup> At this, great terror

Costa, *The Pre-Columbian Discovery of America by the Northmen*, Albany, 1868. The views of Horsford, De Costa, Morse, T. H. Webb, Beamish, and others of their school regarding Vinland must now be regarded as wholly abandoned.

<sup>1</sup> Speaking of this remarkable style of fighting, John Fiske says: "According to Mr. Schoolcraft, this was a mode of fighting common among the Algonquins in New England and elsewhere. This big ball was what Mr. Schoolcraft calls the 'balista,' or what the Indians themselves call the 'demon's head.' It was a large round boulder, sewed up in a new skin and attached to a pole. As the skin dried, it enwrapped the stone tightly; and then it was daubed with grotesque devices in various colors.

"It was borne by several warriors who acted as balisteers. Plunged upon

smote Karlsevne and his people, so that they had no thought but of getting away and up the river, for it seemed to them that the Skrælings were assailing them on all sides; and they did not halt until they had reached certain crags. Then they made a stout resistance. Freydis came out and saw that they were giving way. She cried out: 'Wherefore do ye run away from such wretches, ye gallant men? I thought it likely that ye could slaughter them like cattle, and had I but arms, I believe I should fight better than any of you.' None heeded what she said. Freydis tried to go with them, but she fell behind, for she was with child. She nevertheless followed them into the woods, but the Skrælings came after her. She found before her a dead man, Thorbrand Snorreson, and a flat stone was fixed in his head. His sword lay unsheathed by him, and she took it up and defended herself with it. Then the Skrælings came at her. She then took her breasts out of her sark and whetted the sword on them. At that the Skrælings became afraid, and ran away back to their boats, and went away. Karlsevne and his men met her and praised her happy device. Two out of Karlsevne's men fell, and four of the Skrælings; but nevertheless, Karlsevne had suffered defeat. They then went to their houses to bind up their wounds, and to consider what swarm of people it was that came against them from the land. It seemed to them now that there could have been no more than those who came from the boats, and that the other people must have been glamour."

It was probably a well planned Indian ambush, a mode of warfare with which the Norsemen were not acquainted.

"The Skrælings also found a dead man, and an ax lay beside him; one of them took the ax and struck at a tree, and so one after another, and it seemed to delight them that it bit so well. Then one took and smote a stone with it; but when the ax broke, he thought it was of no use, if it did not stand against stone, and he cast it from him.

"Karlsevne and his men now thought they could see that although a boat or canoe, it was capable of sinking it. Brought down upon a group of men on a sudden, it produced consternation and death.' This is a most remarkable feature of the narrative, for it shows us the Icelandic writer (here manifestly controlled by some authoritative source of information) describing a very strange mode of fighting, which we know to have been characteristic of the Algonquins." *The Discovery of America*, I., p. 192.



the land was fertile, they would always have troubles and disquiet with the people who dwelt there before. Then they prepared to set out, and intended to go to their own country. They sailed northward and found five Skrælings sleeping in fur-jerkins, and they had with them kegs with deer's marrow mixed with blood. They thought that they could understand that these were outlaws and they killed them. Then they found a headland and a multitude of deer, and the headland looked like a crust of dried dung, from the deer lying there at night. Now they came back to Straumsfjord, and there was abundance of everything. It is reported by some that Bjarne and Gudrid remained behind there, and a hundred men with them, and did not go farther; but they say that Karlsevne and Snorre went southward with forty men and were no longer at Hóp than barely two months, returning the same summer.

"Karlsevne then set out with one ship in search of Thorhall the Hunter, but the greater part of the company remained behind. They sailed to the northward around Kjalarnes, and then bore to the westward, having land to the larboard. The country there was a wooded wilderness as far as they could see."

On this voyage Thorvald Eiriksson was killed by an arrow shot from the shore — by a uniped,<sup>1</sup> says the saga. They returned to Straumsfjord, and remained there that winter. The next summer (1006) they sailed for Markland, and thence to Greenland. The winter (1006-1007) they spent at the home of Eirik the Red, at Brattahlid.

Professor Fridtjof Nansen holds that the "Saga of Eirik the Red," though it contains features which show that the Norsemen must have visited the American continent, and that they met with North American Indians, is, nevertheless, a piece of fiction;<sup>2</sup> that the description

<sup>1</sup> A fabulous being with only one leg.

<sup>2</sup> Nansen's views have hitherto met with strong opposition from many leading scholars in Norway and Denmark; especially from Finnur Jónsson, *Erik den rødes Saga og Vinland, Historisk Tidsskrift, femte række, vol. I., p. 116 ff.*, and Alexander Bugge, *Spørgsmaalet om Vinland, in Maal og Minne, Festskrift til H. F. Feilberg, 1911, p. 226 ff.*

Professor Bugge holds that Nansen, assisted by Professor Moltke Moe, has treated the question from a standpoint of literature rather than from that of history. Many features of the "Saga of Eirik the Red" may have been borrowed from legendary tales, but this cannot be the origin of the story of

of Vinland is patched together from traditions about the *Insulae Fortunatae*, found in many old Latin writers. "To sum up, it appears to me clear that the saga's description of Wineland must in its essential features be derived from the myth of the *Insulae Fortunatae*."<sup>1</sup> The description of the grapes and the self-sown wheat said to have been found in Vinland he regards as features borrowed from these old traditions.<sup>2</sup> The name Vinland has its origin, he thinks, in the Irish legend of St. Brandan, or it is, possibly, simply a translation of the name *Insulae Fortunatae*, while the description of the *Skrælings* shows them to have been imaginary beings with the characteristics usually ascribed to such beings in popular superstition. About Leiv Eiriksson he says:

"In the year 999, according to the saga, Leiv, the son of Eirik the Red, sailed from Greenland to Norway. This is the first time we hear of so long a sea voyage being attempted, and it shows in any case that this long passage was not unknown to the Icelanders and Nor-

Vinland. The name Vinland is older than the story *Navigatio S. Brandani*, and Bugge thinks that it is the actual name of the country discovered by Leiv Eiriksson. He also points to the fact that Nansen himself holds that the Norsemen discovered America. The main features of the saga, that the Norsemen found the continent of North America, that they met the Indians, and that they reached a point so far south that they found wild grapes (probably south of Nova Scotia), he says, seem wholly trustworthy.

See also Juul Dieserud, *Vinlands Beliggenhed nok engang*, *Symra*, 1909, p. 35 ff. Julius E. Olson, *Nansens Angreb paa Vinlands-sagaerne*, *Symra*, vol. VII., p. 129 ff. Henrik Nissen, *Vinlands-taagen*, *Symra*, vol. VIII., p. 193 ff. P. P. Iverslie, *Gustav Storms Studier over Vinlandsreiserne*. P. P. Iverslie, *Kvartalskrift udgivet av det norske Selskab i Amerika*, VI., p. 6 ff. William H. Babcock, *Early Norse Visits to North America*, Washington, 1913.

<sup>1</sup> Fridtjof Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, vol. I., p. 352. Professor Carl Marstrand supports Nansen's views in an article in *Aftenposten*, Feb. 6, 1913. He holds that the name "Vinland" is derived from old Irish *Find*, the land of the blessed (*i.e.* *Insulae Fortunatae*).

<sup>2</sup> Nansen thinks that M. L. Fernald's theory, that what the sagas call grapes was really whortleberries, and the self-sown wheat was wild rye (*Elymus arenarius*), must be rejected for many evident reasons. See *Rhodoræa*, *Journal of the New England Botanical Club*, vol. 12, 1912, February number, *Notes on the Plants of Wineland the Good*, by M. L. Fernald.

Schübeler, *Om den "Hvede" som Nordmændene i aaret 1000 fandt vildt-voerende i Vinland*; *Forhandlinger i Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania*, 1858, p. 21 ff. Schübeler believes that this grain which is called wheat was *Zizania aquatica* or wild rice.

wegians. Formerly the passage to Greenland had been by way of Iceland, thence to the east coast of Greenland, southward along the coast, and round Hwarf. But capable seamen like the intrepid Leiv thought they could avoid so many changes of course and arrive in Norway by sailing due east from the southern point of Greenland. Thereby Leiv Eiriksson becomes the personification of the first ocean voyager in history who deliberately and with settled plan steered straight across the open Atlantic, without seeking to avail himself of harbors on the way. It also appears clearly enough from the sailing directions for navigation of northern waters which have come down to us, that voyages were made across the ocean direct from Norway to Greenland. It must be remembered that the compass was unknown, and that all the ships at that time were without fixed decks. This was an exploit equal to the greatest in history; it is the beginning of ocean navigation.”<sup>1</sup>

The claim, however, that Leiv Eiriksson first discovered the North American mainland rests, according to Nansen, on weak and unreliable evidence. He says about the “Saga of Eirik the Red”: “It will therefore be seen that the whole narrative about Wineland voyages is a mosaic of one feature after another gathered from east and west. . . . It looks as though the tale of Leiv had been inserted without proper connection. In the ‘Grønlendingaþátttr,’ too, this discovery is attributed to another man, Bjarne Herjolvsson, which shows that the tradition about Leiv had not been firmly rooted.”<sup>2</sup>

The question then arises: Is there anything in the saga narrative which must be regarded as reliable? Nansen answers that although the saga in its main features must be regarded as invention, the chief personages in the narrative may be historical. The description of the barren and stony Helluland (Labrador), of the forest covered Markland (Newfoundland), and of Kjalarnes seems to rest on local topographical knowledge. The oldest and most original features of the saga are the verses found in it, which give a different, and as it appears, a more realistic picture of the newly discovered land, where the explorers drank water, and ate the flesh of whales which had drifted ashore. He points out that the trading with the natives described in the saga, and the subsequent war with them, must rest on

<sup>1</sup> *In Northern Mists*, vol. I., p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I., p. 315; vol. II., p. 21.

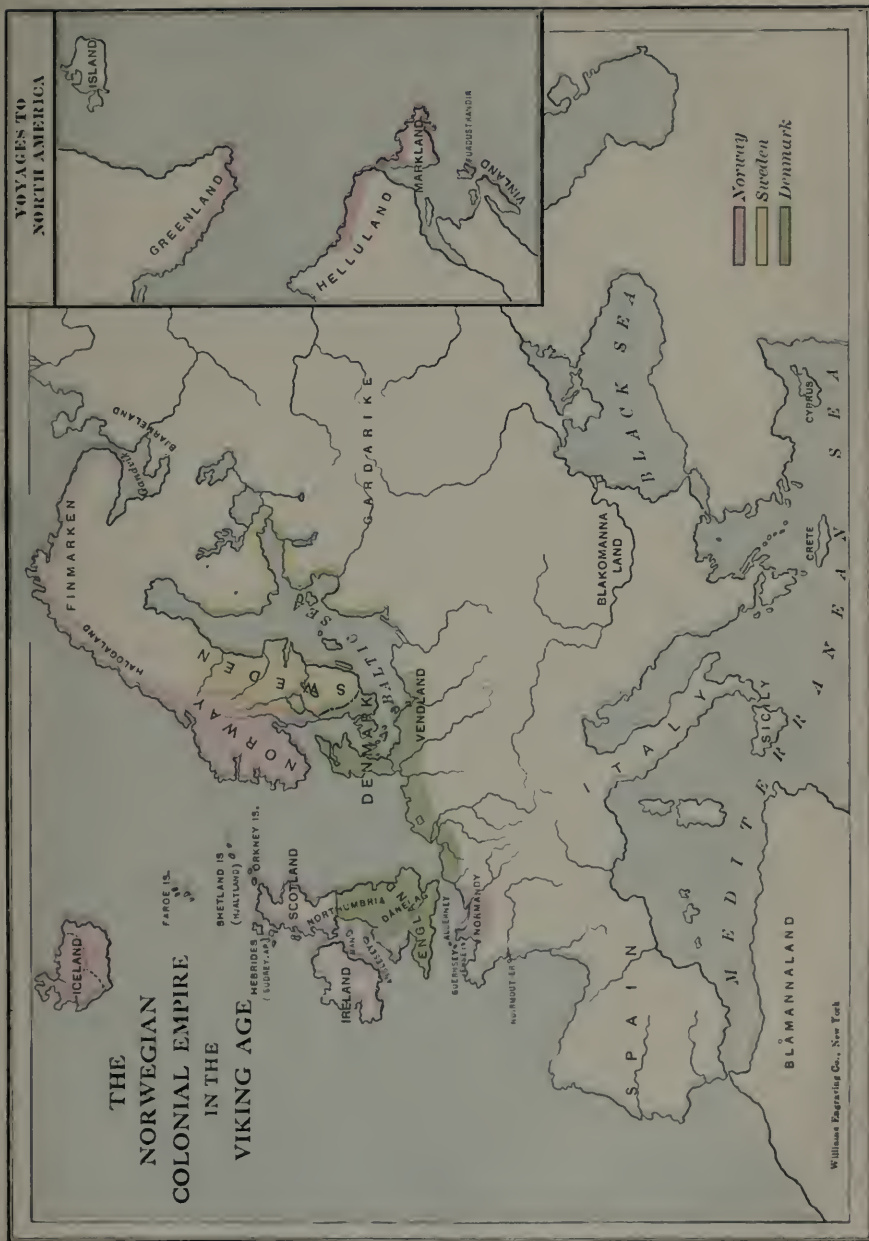


actual experience. These features cannot be explained by the traditions about the *Insulae Fortunatae*, nor can the ideas of bloody battles with the natives in which the Norsemen were defeated have originated in Greenland. It must represent an actual encounter with the Indians. It is impossible that the Greenlanders or Icelanders should have described a battle with the unwarlike Eskimos of Greenland in this way. There can be no doubt that the Norsemen had reached America, and had met the North American Indians. This is further substantiated by the description of so remarkable a weapon as the "balista," known to have been used by the Algonquin Indians. - The references to the discovery of America found in the "*Landnámabók*" and in the "*Íslendingabók*" by the reliable old writer, Are Frode, show that the tradition was old and firmly established before the "Saga of Eirik the Red" was written.<sup>1</sup>

The most reliable evidence that these discoveries were actually made is found, according to Nansen, not in the sagas, but in an entry in the "*Íslandske Annaler*" (*Skálholt-Annals*) for the year 1347: "There came also a ship from Greenland smaller in size than the small vessels that trade to Iceland (*i.e.* ships plying between Norway and Iceland). It came to the outer Straumfjord (on the south side of Snæfellsnes in Iceland); it was without an anchor. There were seventeen men on board, and they had sailed to Markland, but afterwards (*i.e.* on the homeward voyage to Greenland) they were driven hither (*i.e.* to Iceland)." Nansen thinks that, as the "*Skálholt-Annals*" were written not very long after the event here mentioned (probably about 1363), it must be regarded as certain that this ship had been

<sup>1</sup> Nansen thinks that the game of ball, "Lacrosse," found among many Indian tribes, was introduced in America by the Norsemen, as Ebbe Hertzberg has before maintained. (*Historiske Skrifter tilegnede Professor Ludvig Daae*, p. 186.) This theory finds additional support in the fact that a very similar game, which they seem to have learned from the Norsemen, was played by the Eskimos in Greenland. Dr. W. J. Hoffmann has described the game as it is found among the various Indian tribes. See *Fourteenth Annual Report of Ethnology*, 1892-1893, Washington, 1896, vol. I., p. 127 ff. Also *American Anthropologist*, vol. III., p. 134 f. Hoffmann thinks that the game originally came from the Algonquins in the St. Lawrence Valley, and from there to the Hurons, the Iroquois, the Cherokees, etc. This is the way it must have spread, if it were introduced by the Norsemen. See Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, vol. II., p. 38 ff.

# THE NORWEGIAN COLONIAL EMPIRE IN THE VIKING AGE







in Markland, probably for the purpose of bringing home wood and timber. The driftwood which could be found did not supply the demand, and for bows and the like it was useless. He says: "But if this voyage took place in 1347, and we only hear of it through the accident of the vessel getting out of her course, and being driven to Iceland, we may be sure that there were many more like it; only that these were not the expeditions of men of rank, which attracted attention, but everyday voyages for the support of life, like the sealing expeditions to Norðrsetur, and when nothing particular happened to these vessels, such as being driven to Iceland, we hear nothing about them. We must therefore suppose that, even if they had given up the idea of forming settlements in the West, the Greenlanders occasionally visited Markland (Newfoundland or the southernmost part of Labrador), perhaps chiefly to obtain wood of different kinds.

"In the so-called 'Greenland Annals,' put together from old sources by Björn Jónsson of Skardsá (beginning of the seventeenth century), it is said of the districts on the west coast of Greenland, to the north of the Western Settlement, that they 'take up trees and all the drift that comes from the bays of Markland.' This shows that it was customary to regard Markland as the region from which wood was to be obtained. The name itself (= woodland) may have contributed to this view. But the fact that it survived long after all mention of Wineland had ceased, may probably be due to communication with the country having been kept up in later times, and to this name being the really historical one on the coast of America."<sup>1</sup>

On the farm Hønen, in the district of Ringerike, in southern Norway, a rune-stone was still to be seen in 1823. The stone is now lost, but the inscription has been copied and preserved. It reads as follows, according to Sophus Bugge:

"They came out (into the ocean) and over wide expanses (vítt) and needing cloth to dry themselves on, and food, away toward Wineland, up into the ice in the uninhabited country. Evil can take away luck, so that one dies early."

Bugge thinks that the inscription dates from the period 1000-1050, but it is difficult to decipher it, and the interpretation will always remain doubtful. The inscription seems to have been chiseled on the

<sup>1</sup> *In Northern Mists*, vol. II., p. 37.

stone in commemoration of some man of note who had lost his life on a voyage to the Far West. On this voyage they were driven far into the ocean in the direction of Vinland. After having suffered shipwreck they had left their ships, and had probably tried to save themselves on the drifting ice off the coasts of Greenland. Some perished, but some one must have survived to tell the story. If the interpretation of the inscription is correct, this is the first known mention of Vinland.

The last mention of a voyage to Vinland is an entry in the Icelandic annals for the year 1121, stating that in that year Bishop Eirik (Eirik Gnupsson) went to search for Vinland.<sup>1</sup> This Eirik may have been the first bishop in Greenland. He must have lost his life on the expedition, as nothing more was heard of him, and in 1122 or 1123 the Greenlanders were making efforts to get another bishop.

That the Norsemen failed to establish colonies in America is in nowise remarkable. There was at this time no general emigration from Norway to the colonies, and the new and poorly equipped settlements in Greenland had neither the means nor the population to successfully carry out such an undertaking. They had few ships, and lacked the materials for building new ones. Arms, implements, and supplies were scarce, and were difficult to procure. Their scant resources had to be employed in procuring the necessities of life on those bleak and inhospitable shores where they maintained a precarious existence for well-nigh five hundred years.

However the sagas may be interpreted in detail, all scholars agree that the mainland of North America was discovered by the Norsemen about the year 1000. But this discovery led to no abiding results.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Islandske Annaler*, edited by Gustav Storm, p. 19, 59, 112, 252, 326, 473.

<sup>2</sup> The theory that Columbus, in undertaking his great voyage of exploration, profited by his knowledge of the discovery of the New World by the Norsemen was first advanced by Finn Magnusen in an article *Om de engelskes Handel paa Island*, in *Nordisk Tidsskrift for Oldkyndighed*, II., 1833. The same has been maintained also by Axel Emanuel Holmberg in his work *Nordbon under Hednatiden* (1852-1854); by R. B. Anderson in his work *America not Discovered by Columbus*; and by Marie A. Brown, *The Icelandic Discoverers, or Honor to Whom Honor is Due*, Boston, 1888. It has been shown, however, that this theory rests wholly upon conjecture. See Gustav Storm, *Christopher Columbus og Amerikas Opdagelse; Christopher Columbus paa*

It is one of the closing episodes of the Viking Age, not the beginning of a new era. The world was not yet ready to profit by so auspicious an event. The Viking colonial empire had reached its final limits, both in extent and power, and the nations of Europe had to slumber and gather strength for another five hundred years before empire building in the New World could be begun.

### 39. THE DOWNFALL OF VIKING DOMINION IN IRELAND. THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF

The final overthrow of the Vikings in Ireland is connected chiefly with the name of Brian Borumha, the greatest of Irish kings. Muirchertach had fought with great success against the strangers, but he fell in 944 in a battle with the Vikings of Dublin. Brian's older brother, Mathgamhain, king of Munster, carried on an unsuccessful struggle against the Vikings of southwestern Ireland, and was compelled to make peace, but Brian refused to yield. He withdrew with his followers into the forests, and from his retreats he carried on a successful guerrilla warfare against the enemy. The struggle waxed more serious, and King Ivar of Limerick finally took the field with all available forces, but was defeated by Mathgamhain in 968; Limerick was taken and sacked by the Irish king, who captured great quantities of gold, silver, fine cloth, and other valuable wares which the Norsemen had brought home to their city through commerce with many lands. After some time the Vikings again succeeded in regaining possession of the town, but the redoubtable Brian, who, upon the death of his brother Mathgamhain had become king of Munster, defeated and slew King Ivar and his sons, and Limerick became a dependency of Munster, under Brian's overlordship. Malsechnaill, king of Tara, also styled Ard-Righ, or high-king of Erin, inspired by Brian's success, attacked King Olav Kvaaran in 980, defeated him in the battle of Tara, in Meath, and even seized the city of Dublin. Brian and Malsechnaill had hitherto been rivals, but in 998 they came to a friendly understanding. Brian became king of southern Ireland, and, in return, acknowledged Malsechnaill ruler of the

*Island og vore Forfædres Opdagelser i det nordvestlige Atlanterhav, Det norske geografiske Selskabs Aarbog, IV., p. 67 ff. H. Weitemeyer, Columbus, Copenhagen, 1892.*



northern half. The hitherto independent Leinster now joined the Norsemen of Dublin, but their united forces were defeated by the two kings in the bloody battle of Glenmama, where 1200 Norsemen are said to have fallen. Olav Kvaaran's son and successor, Sigtrygg Silkbeard, had to flee, but on submitting to Brian he received again the throne of Dublin as a vassal king. Maelsechnaill was deposed as Ard-Righ, and Brian became high-king of all Ireland.

The life of the Norsemen had undergone a great change during their long stay in Ireland. They were no longer mere invaders, dwelling in military camps. The occupations of trade and traffic had especially absorbed their attention, and they had settled down to a peaceful and well regulated urban life in the cities which they had built or developed. Dublin, Waterford, Wexford, Cork, and Limerick had become important centers of trade, and the Norsemen, who were ever fond of seafaring, now spread their sails chiefly as enterprising merchants who sought the markets of Chester, Bristol, France, and Spain, of the countries around the Baltic Sea, and even of distant Novgorod, whence they brought home to Ireland such valuable goods as wheat flour, costly embroidered mantles, swords, furs, and wine. A part of the tribute which they had to pay the victorious Brian Borumha, according to a contemporary Irish poet, Mac Liag, was 150 butts of wine from the Norsemen of Dublin, and a tun of wine for every day in the year from the Norsemen of Limerick. "This tribute of wine," says Alexander Bugge, "presupposes a considerable trade with southwestern France, as the place where any one from Ireland might most easily obtain his wine." In the glossary of Cormac, from about 900, mention is made of a vessel for measuring wine, spoken of in the "sea laws." This can only refer to Norse sea laws, as neither the Franks nor the Irish were seafaring nations, and it seems to indicate that already at this time the Norsemen had a maritime code.<sup>1</sup> The many terms of weight and measure and money, such as *pundar*, *bismari*, *mørk*, *pennigr*; and naval terms, as *knørr*, *karfi*, *leiðangr*, *lypling*, *styrimaðr*, *þilja*, and *þopta*, which have been incorporated in the Irish language, show that the development of trade and commerce in Ireland was due to the Norsemen.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Contributions to the History of the Norsemen in Ireland*, III., p. 4., Christiania, 1900.

The Viking cities in Ireland were surrounded by stone walls. In Dublin the royal castle, with its formidable stone tower, was conspicuous in the center of the city. Another prominent building was the temple, erected for the worship of the gods of the Asa-faith. But at this time paganism was fast disappearing; the Norsemen were being converted to Christianity, and the temples were replaced by Christian churches. It has already been noted elsewhere that King Olav Kvaaran of Dublin became a Christian in his old age, and died as a monk on the island of Iona. His son and successor, Sigtrygg Silkbeard, was married to Brian Borumha's daughter, and his court resembled in every way that of Knut the Great in England. In his *hird* were found both Icelandic scalds and Irish bards, who vied with each other in the art of song, and great splendor was maintained in dress and accouterments of war. The king's *hirdmænd*, equipped with helmets and shirts of mail, fought on horseback like William the Conqueror's mounted knights, but King Sigtrygg himself lacked the warlike spirit to such a degree that he did not even take part in the great battle of Clontarf, fought beneath the very walls of Dublin, but stood with his queen on the battlements of the city, and watched the great combat as an idle spectator.

The Norse system of laws and government was introduced also in the Norse colonies in Ireland. In Dublin the *thing* was regularly assembled at a place known throughout the Middle Ages by the name of "Thengmota" (the meeting place of the *thing*). A *lagrette*, consisting of thirty-six members, of whom twelve seem to have acted at a time, was chosen to act as a tribunal in deciding cases brought before the *thing*. This institution so impressed the Irish that they called the Norsemen the "Twelve Judges Tribe."<sup>1</sup>

But the Irish were also benefited in no small degree. Ireland had hitherto never experienced such a period of progress in commerce

<sup>1</sup> "Soon his twelve judges tribe before  
my valiant troop shall flee;  
and their proud king shall fall, no more  
his isles of boars to see."

From the Irish ballad "Laoidh Maghnus moir, righ Lochlainn," i.e. "Lay of Magnus the Great, King of Lochlainn" (King Magnus Barefoot), translated by Miss Brooke in her *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, Dublin, 1739. See Alexander Bugge, *Contributions to the History of the Norsemen in Ireland*, II.

and navigation, in the building of cities, and the development of urban life, wholly due to the enterprise and activity of the practical Norsemen, who possessed less lovable, but more distinctly masculine qualities. The old writer Geraldus Cambrensis says that the Norsemen were allowed to build cities in Ireland on condition that they should bring to Ireland from other lands the merchandise which the Irish wanted.<sup>1</sup> Norse influence had left deep traces, also, in Irish literature and intellectual life. Professor Alexander Bugge says that "many of the Irish mythical conceptions have been formed under the influence of the Norsemen."<sup>2</sup> In speaking of Irish literature he says: "Professor Zimmer,<sup>3</sup> by his admirable investigations, has thrown fresh light upon the ancient Irish sagas, and has shown in how many ways they are interwoven with Norse elements and reminiscences from the Viking Age. But we see that the Norse influence on Gaelic tradition and story-telling is not confined to the Viking Age. A recollection of the Norsemen has been retained for centuries, and down to the present time Lochlann (Norway) still plays a very conspicuous part in Irish and Gaelic ballads and fairy-tales."

Though a spirit of hostility naturally prevailed between the Irish and the Norsemen, a quiet amalgamation was, nevertheless, going on which would ultimately have led to the complete absorption of the Norse element. Not infrequently the two peoples would meet as good friends and neighbors in convivial gatherings, and many Norse loan-words in the Irish language relating to social life show that in daily intercourse they were coming into closer touch.<sup>4</sup> The Norsemen would often select Irish foster-fathers and foster-mothers to rear their children; but still more important was the growing frequency of intermarriage.<sup>5</sup> Had the process of amalgamation, with the attendant blending of the traits characteristic of both peoples, been allowed to proceed uninterrupted, it might have produced a national character of the right temper to carry Ireland successfully through

<sup>1</sup> *Topographia Hibernica*, dict. III., ch. XLIII.

<sup>2</sup> *Contributions to the History of the Norsemen in Ireland*, II., *Norse Elements in Gaelic Traditions of Modern Times*, Christiania, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> Zimmer, *Keltische Beiträge*.

<sup>4</sup> Zimmer, *Keltische Beiträge*. See also W. A. Craigie, *Oldnordiske Ord i de gæliske Sprog*, *Arkiv for nordisk Filologi*, 1894, p. 1 ff.

<sup>5</sup> L. J. Vogt, *Dublin som norsk By*.



all future struggles. But the possibility of such a solution of the difficult situation was, to a great extent, removed by the battle of Clontarf.

The Norsemen, who, after the defeat at Glenmama, were sinking into a state of dependency, could not, as in earlier days, lean on the mother country for support. But there were numerous Viking settlements around the Irish Sea, and the powerful Jarl Sigurd Lodvesson in the Orkneys, and the people elsewhere in the colonies felt the necessity of coöperation at so critical a juncture, since the overthrow of Norse dominion in Ireland would weaken the Viking power everywhere in the West. When King Sigtrygg Silkbeard came to the Orkneys to solicit aid, Jarl Sigurd promised to bring an army to Ireland. The Viking chieftain Broder also promised to support him. About the middle of March a great Viking armament began to gather before Dublin. Ships and warriors came from the Orkneys, the Shetland Islands, Caithness, and the Hebrides, and from the Norse settlements on the coast of Scotland, Cumberland, and Wales. They were joined by the men of Leinster, and by the Norse forces raised in Ireland, except those of Limerick, who were now King Brian's subjects, and joined his standards. Brian had collected a large army, and Malsechnaill also came to his aid with a considerable force. On Good Friday, April 23, 1014, the two armies met at Clontarf, a little village lying a short distance north of Dublin, and here was fought the last great battle of the Viking Age, generally known as the battle of Clontarf, but in the Norse songs and traditions it is usually called the Brian battle. The right wing of the Viking army was led by Broder; in the center stood Sigurd Lodvesson and Maelmorda, the king of Leinster, with their forces; the left wing was formed by the men of Dublin. Brian's son, Murchad, led the Irish left wing against Broder, and his grandson, Tordelbach (the Kertjalfad of the sagas), commanded the center. On the right wing stood the Viking chieftain Uspak and the men of Connaught. Brian, who was now a very old man, was present on the field of battle, but did not lead the army in person. From morning till evening the combat raged with unabated fury, and the men fell on both sides like a field of grain that is being harvested. But towards evening the Viking right wing gave way, and Broder fled with his men into the forest of Thor, in the neighbor-

hood of Dublin. On their retreat they accidentally found King Brian, who was too feeble to participate in the battle, and had been left there almost unguarded. He was pointed out to Broder, who slew him with his battle-ax; but Broder was soon after killed by his pursuers. Soon Sigurd Lodvesson also fell in a fierce dash against Magduna, where Brian was staying. He was met by Murchad's forces, and in the *mêlée* Murchad was also mortally wounded. The Norsemen were now thrown into complete rout. Their retreat was cut off except toward the sea, and great numbers were slain in the headlong flight which ensued. According to the "Ulster Annals," Brian's army lost 4000 men and the Norsemen 7000. Nearly all the prominent leaders of both armies lay dead upon the field. Besides Broder and Sigurd Lodvesson, the Norsemen had also lost Dugald Olavsson, who led the men of Dublin, and Maelmorda, king of Leinster, a brother of King Sigtrygg Silkbeard's Irish mother, Gormflaith, (the *Kormlød* of the sagas). The Irish had lost Brian, Murchad, and Turlogh, Brian's grandson.

Many omens are said to have preceded the battle of Clontarf. The most noteworthy is the frightful vision described in the "Darrad-song" in the "Njálssaga," in which Darrad, at Caithness in Scotland, on the day of the battle saw twelve valkyries weave the web of the bloody conflict at Clontarf with human entrails on a loom of swords and spears. The song contains this remarkable prophecy, which, for Ireland, has become but too true:

"Those will now soon rule the land,  
who formerly had the naked head-lands for a home.

Such sorrow shall come to the Irish people,  
as men never shall forget."

The battle of Clontarf had no very noteworthy immediate results. Maelsechnaill succeeded Brian as high-king of Ireland, but Dublin was not captured, and the Norsemen continued to occupy the same cities and territories as heretofore. They devoted themselves very extensively to commerce, and retained their laws and national customs. When the English began their conquest of Ireland in 1170, Norse commerce still flourished there. At the capture of Waterford

a Norse ship was taken in port, laden with wheat and wine.<sup>1</sup> As late as 1292 we still hear of the wine trade of the Norsemen at Waterford.<sup>2</sup> The English expelled the original inhabitants from the cities which they captured, and assigned them quarters outside the old towns. This is the origin of the Ostmantown (Oxmantown) of Dublin and Waterford. The Norsemen chafed under such oppression, and when King Haakon Haakonsson of Norway came to Ireland with a fleet, in 1263, they sent messengers to him asking him to deliver them from the English yoke. This is the last mention of any attempt on their part to maintain relations with the mother country. Their saga in Ireland was ended.

But although the Norsemen continued to live and thrive in Ireland so long after their defeat at Clontarf, their power was, nevertheless, destroyed in this great battle, and in others immediately preceding it. Their leaders were gone, and their fighting force was annihilated. Henceforth they existed as isolated settlements, unable to unite in a common effort, or to exercise any influence on the trend of events in Ireland. The Irish had won a notable victory, and had regained full control of affairs in their own country, but this display of strength was due to a single great leader — Brian Borumha. No one was able to continue his work; the customary feuds between the native princes were renewed, and Ireland quickly lapsed into the old confusion. Clontarf was a brilliant feat of Irish arms, but in the light of subsequent history it must be regarded as a calamity, rather than as a national victory. This overwhelming defeat of the Norsemen weakened Ireland's sinews of strength, and, when the English conquest began, the Irish showed no greater ability to repel foreign invasion than they had done several centuries earlier when the Vikings bore down upon the island.

#### 40. THE NORSEMEN IN THE HEBRIDES, AND IN THE ISLE OF MAN

During the great invasion of the British Isles in the early part of the Viking Age, the Norsemen took possession also of the Isle of Man, and of the Hebrides, which they called Sudreyjar (Southern

<sup>1</sup> Vogt, *Dublin som norsk By*, p. 386.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Contribution to the History of the Norsemen in Ireland*, III., p. 4. *Njálssaga*, ch. 155 f.



Islands), because they lay south of the Orkneys and the Shetland Islands. The story of the Norse settlements in these islands is imperfectly told in the sagas, and but little is known of their history.<sup>1</sup> The "Landnámabók" states that King Harald Haarfagre sent Ketil Flatnev to the Sudreyjar to win the islands from some Vikings who had established themselves there. Ketil subdued the Vikings, but made himself ruler of the islands, and paid the king no taxes. According to the "Laxdølasaga," Ketil Flatnev, *herse* in Romsdal in western Norway, had to leave the country because he would not submit to King Harald. He became a man of great power and influence in the island colonies, and his daughter Aud married King Olav the White of Dublin.<sup>2</sup> On his expedition against the Vikings, King Harald Haarfagre also subjugated the Hebrides and the Isle of Man, and many of the leading men of these islands fled to Iceland. Among those who emigrated to Iceland at this time was, also, Ketil Flatnev's daughter Aud, widow of King Olav the White.

It appears that King Harald's successors did not maintain the suzerainty over the distant possessions of Man and the Hebrides. Professor P. A. Munch thinks it likely that the islands for a time were a part of the dominions of the Norse kings of Dublin. But from the middle of the tenth century we meet with independent "kings of Man and the Isles." Among the names of these are Ragnvald, Harald, Gudrød, Olav, and Maccus. After Olav Kvaaran was driven away from Northumbria in 952, he seems to have remained for some time in the Isle of Man or in the Hebrides, before he gained the throne of Dublin. About 970 Maccus, son of Harald, became king of Man and the Isles. He is mentioned in 973 as one of the eight kings who at Chester did homage to Eadgar, king of England, and rowed him in his barge to and from church on the river Dee. He took possession of the island of Inniscathaig at the mouth of the Shannon, and delivered from captivity King Ivar of Limerick, but he was defeated

<sup>1</sup> The chief sources of information are the *Chronica Regum Manniae et Insularum* (The Chronicle of Man and the Sudreys) contained in a manuscript codex in the British Museum, edited with historical notes by Professor P. A. Munch, Christiania, 1860; and the *Orkneyingasaga*; but neither of them is very reliable in details. See also Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, I.

<sup>2</sup> It appears from other sources that Ketil Flatnev was a son of Bjørn Buna, of Sogn.

and slain by Brian Borumha in 976. He was succeeded by Gudrød, who seems to have been his brother. Gudrød captured Anglesea on the Welsh coast, which now received its Norse name.<sup>1</sup>

In 980 Sigurd Lodvesson, great-grandson of Torv-Einar, became jarl of the Orkneys. He was ambitious to enlarge his dominions, and succeeded in capturing Caithness, Ross, Moray, and Argyll in Scotland. He also extended his sway over the Hebrides, which hitherto had paid taxes to the king of Norway.<sup>2</sup> These islands were now ruled by a tributary jarl, Gilli, who had married Sigurd's sister. Sigurd Lodvesson acknowledged himself the vassal of Haakon Jarl in Norway, and, later, of King Olav Tryggvason, but when Olav, in the year 1000, fell in the battle of Svolder, he seems to have remained wholly independent till his death in the battle of Clontarf, in 1014. His four sons now divided his possessions, but no mention is made of the Hebrides. Thorfinn Jarl, the youngest son, became even more powerful than his father. He lived longer than the other brothers, and finally united the Orkneys, the Shetland Islands, the Hebrides, and large parts of Scotland under his rule. He died in 1064.

Gudrød Crowan, son of Harald Svarte of Islay and the Hebrides, was the founder of a dynasty which ruled Man, and sometimes, also, the Hebrides for about two hundred years. He took part in the battle of Stamford Bridge, and after the defeat he fled to the Isle of Man. After several unsuccessful efforts he finally conquered the island in 1079, and made himself king.

On his expeditions to the British Isles, 1093-1103, King Magnus Barefoot of Norway again established Norse suzerainty over these island possessions, but the ties between them and the mother country were henceforth gradually weakened, and in 1266 King Magnus Lagabøter ceded the Hebrides to Scotland for a money consideration by the treaty of Perth, but their ruler, who bore the title "Lord of the Isles," was still almost independent. Man passed in course of time under English control. In 1405 King Henry IV. of England granted the island as a fief to Sir John Stanley. In 1825 it came under direct control of the English crown. The Hebrides and the Isle of Man constituted together the bishopric of Sodor<sup>3</sup> and Man, which

<sup>1</sup> It was formerly called *Mon*. *Angles -ea* from O. N. *Qnglus -ey*. O. N. *Qngull* = fishhook, *ey* = island. <sup>2</sup> See *Floamannasaga*. <sup>3</sup> Sodor from *Sudreyjar*.

was joined to the archbishopric of Nidaros, in Norway, when this was created in 1152.

The Norsemen found in Man and the Hebrides a dense native population, which never entirely disappeared during the many centuries of foreign occupation. The remarkable mixture of Norse and Gaelic names on these islands attests to the gradual amalgamation of the two peoples.<sup>1</sup> Many of the islands of the Hebrides group have Norse names, easily enough recognized still through the endings *-ay*, or *-a* (= Norwegian *øy* or *ø*, O. N. *ey* = island). Wiay is derived from Norse *Vē-ey* (holy island), Vist from *Vist* (dwelling), Gighay from *Guðey* (island of the gods), Lewis from *Ljóðhus*, Eriksay from *Eiriks-ey*, Grimisay from *Grims-ey*, Trodday from *Tronds-ey*, Ulva from *Ulv-ey*, Sanda from *Sand-ey*, Fladda from *Flat-ey*, Heist from *Hestr* (i.e. the horse), etc. In Lewis four-fifths of all place-names are Norse. In the southern islands the proportion is smaller. The blond type prevalent in many districts, the temperament of the people, and many customs and traditions still existing among them, clearly bespeak their Norse origin. After the Hebrides were ceded to Scotland, the Gaelic population again increased in the islands, and the Norse language has long since disappeared, but a vague tradition still exists among the people that their ancestors came from Lochlann (Norway).

In the Isle of Man the Norse influence is still more clearly seen in the names, speech, and character of the people. In stories and fairy-tales the Manx have preserved a multitude of interesting reminiscences of their Norse ancestry. A number of place-names in Man have the Norse termination *-by* (= O. N. *býr*, *bær* = dwelling place), as Kirby from *Kirkeby*, Dalby, Jurby from *Ivarby*, Sulby, etc. The suffix *-garth* (= O. N. *garðr* = dwelling place) is found in Fishgarth. In the names of fjords, mountains, promontories, bays, valleys, etc., the Norse forms are strongly represented, which is shown by endings like *-wick* (O. N. *vík* = bay), *-fell* (O. N. *fell*, *fjall* =

<sup>1</sup> Skene states that there was frequent intermarriage between the two races who occupied the islands, "and this would not only lead to the introduction of personal names of Norwegian form into families of pure Gaelic descent in the male line, but must, to a great extent, have altered the physical type of the Gaelic race in the islands." Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, I., 39.



mountain), and *-way* (O. N. *vágr*, = fjord or bay), thus Ronaldsway from *Rognvaldsvágr*, Fleshwick, Garwick, and Snæfell.<sup>1</sup>

Of special interest are the various rune-stones and stone crosses of Norse workmanship found in the Hebrides and the Isle of Man. Prior to the arrival of the Norsemen a number of stone crosses had been made by Celtic monks in various parts of the British Isles. These crosses are carefully chiseled, and are decorated with pictures representing persons and scenes from the Bible. The Norse settlers began to imitate them, and a number of ornamented crosses of Norse origin are found, especially in the Isle of Man. They are less carefully made than the Celtic crosses, but there is a variety of new ideas in the designing of ornaments, and the pictures generally portray scenes from Norse mythology and tradition. Gaut Bjørnson is mentioned as the first representative of this art in Man. The inscriptions, which are always in the Norse language, are usually short, and present a strange mixture of Christian and pagan ideas.<sup>2</sup> Alexander Bugge says that these runic monuments show more clearly than anything else that the Norsemen and Celts in the Isle of Man dwelt peaceably side by side, that they intermarried, and that they mutually influenced one another. "We can observe, not only that men of Norse descent had Celtic wives, but that men with Celtic names erected crosses with pictures representing the gods of the Asa-faith and heroes of Norse tradition."<sup>3</sup>

The government of the Isle of Man is still, in its essential features, a continuation of the Norse institutions established by the Viking colonists. The governor is the representative of the crown, and the chief executive. The law-making assembly, called the Court of Tynwald (Tynwald < O. N. *Þingvöllr*), consists of two chambers; an upper house, the Council, consisting of the governor, the bishop, and six other leading officials; and a lower house, the House of Keys, consisting of twenty-four members chosen by popular vote. Until

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Moore, *Manx Names*, 2d ed., London, 1903. Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, I., p. 172 ff. P. A. Munch, *The Chronicle of Man and the Sudreys*, p. xx., and historical notes.

<sup>2</sup> P. A. Munch, *Runeindskrifter fra Øen Man og Suderøerne, Samlede Afhandlinger*, III., 181-199.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, I., p. 196. George Henderson, *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, p. 40 ff.

1866 this house was self-elective. When a member died, a new member was chosen by the house. The members are called "Keys," because, at the time when the laws were yet unwritten, they should keep the words of the law in their bosoms, and maintain law and justice. The Court of Tynwald meets at Douglas, the capital city, but all new laws must be proclaimed on Tynwald Hill (Þingvǫllr), near Peel, the old capital. This hill was constructed by the early Norse settlers for this purpose. Around it lies a level plain where the people could assemble. The governor and the law-making assembly meet here every year, and after religious service has been held, they are escorted by soldiers to the top of the hill. The governor is seated on a chair with a drawn sword before him, and the court is formally opened. The House of Keys is clearly a continuation of the *lagrette* of the old Norse *thing*. The *lagrette*, which prepared all decisions and other measures to be voted on by the assembly, sat in a circle hedged in by ropes, the *vêbond*, or sacred cords, inside of which no strife or disturbance was tolerated. When the Court of Tynwald has assembled on Tynwald Hill, the coroner still proclaims the peace by declaring loudly: "I fence the court." The two deemsters (thought by some to be O. N. *dómsþjóri*), or judges, are members of the Council. Till in the eleventh century they judged according to unwritten laws, called the "breast laws," of which they were the depositaries.<sup>1</sup>

We observe again how the Norsemen, whenever they founded colonies, whether in Man, in France, or in distant Greenland, established a system of laws and government of a high type, and maintained order and justice, and an efficient administration of all public affairs. Their government, though not truly representative in form, approached so near to it in spirit that we feel the popular will and sense of justice expressed in their laws, and in the legal decisions rendered by the *thing*. It was their talent for organization, and their sense of legal justice and good government, as much as their enterprise in navigation and commerce, which enabled them to establish the Norse colonial empire at this early period.

<sup>1</sup> J. J. A. Worsaae, *Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene*. Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne*, I.; *Norges Historie*, I.

## 41. THE NORSEMEN IN SCOTLAND

The earliest predatory attack by Viking bands in Scotland of which we possess definite information, was the ravaging of Icolmkill, or Iona, in 794. Four years later we hear of an attack on Ireland and Alban (Scotland), and Iona was repeatedly ravaged during the early decades of the next century. Galloway was laid waste in 823 by Norse Vikings, who were also instrumental in placing Kenneth McAlpin on the Pictish throne. According to the "Ulster Annals," Olav and Ivar, two Norse kings, attacked Dumbarton Rock in 870, and took it after a four months' siege. We have already seen how a general emigration from Norway was set on foot during the reign of Harald Haarfagre, when many left the country because they would not submit to the powerful king. According to the "Laxdølasaga," Ketil Flatnev, who finally established himself as independent ruler in the Hebrides, came first to Scotland about 890, and was well received there. He was accompanied by his daughter, Aud the Deepminded, who later married King Olav the White of Dublin. According to the "Orkneyingasaga" Thorstein the Red, a son of Aud and Olav, invaded the northern mainland of Scotland.<sup>1</sup> "He ravaged the country far and wide, and was always victorious," says the saga. "Later he made an agreement with the king of the Scots by which he received half of Scotland, over which he became king."<sup>2</sup> Thorstein seems to have been the first to establish Norse influence on the mainland of Scotland, and his power probably extended over Caithness, Sutherland, and Ross. The "Heimskringla" states that Thorstein the Red, and Sigurd, a son of Ragnvald Mørejarl, took possession of Caithness and Sutherland as far as Eikkjalsbakke, *i.e.* the region about the Oikel River. When Sigurd died, "his son Guthorm ruled the lands one winter, and died childless. Afterwards the Vikings established themselves in these lands, Danes and Norsemen."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Who Thorstein the Red was is not clear. Olav the White's son was called Eystein, not Thorstein.

<sup>2</sup> *Laxdølasaga*, ch. 4. *Orkneyingasaga*, edited by Joseph Anderson. *Landnámabók*, part 1, ch. XI.

<sup>3</sup> *Harald Haarfagre's Saga* in *Heimskringla*, ch. 22.



When Sigurd Lodvesson became jarl of the Orkneys, he took possession of the Scotch districts of Caithness, Moray, Ross, and Argyll. He married a daughter of King Malcolm II. of Scotland, who became the mother of Thorfinn Jarl. At this time the district of Galloway, in southwestern Scotland, was also extensively colonized by Norse settlers who came over from the neighboring Isle of Man. The Norse influence in this district is apparent, especially in many personal names of Norse origin, such as M'Ketterick, M'Kittrick, from Norse Sigtrygg, Sitric; M'Eur, M'Cure, from Norse Ivar, or Ingvar; M'Burney from Bjørn; etc.<sup>1</sup> When Sigurd's fall at Clontarf, 1014, was rumored in Scotland, King Malcolm II. gave the earldom of Caithness to Thorfinn, his daughter's son by Sigurd, then twelve years of age, while Sigurd's three other sons by a former marriage, Sumarlide, Bruse, and Einar, divided the Orkneys among themselves. Sumarlide died soon, and the unpopular Einar was slain. Thorfinn acquired the possessions of both, and when Bruse died, he became jarl of all the Orkneys. Upon the death of King Malcolm II., his maternal grandfather, he also seized Sutherland, Ross, and Galloway. The saga states that he also took possession of the Sudreys (Hebrides), and that he sent his friend and relative Kalv Arneson to maintain his authority there. Thorfinn had married Ingebjørg, daughter of Finn Arnesson, Kalv's brother. "Jarl Thorfinn retained all his dominions till his dying day," says the saga, "and it is truly said that he was the most powerful of all the jarls of the Orkneys." <sup>2</sup>

"He was a man of large stature, uncomely, sharp-featured, dark-haired, and sallow and swarthy in his complexion. Yet he was a most martial-looking man, and of great energy; greedy of wealth and of renown; bold and successful in war, and a great strategist."

Thorfinn's cousin,<sup>3</sup> Duncan, the son of another daughter of Malcolm II., succeeded his grandfather, but Macbeth, well known from Shakespeare's drama of the same name, who was also Duncan's cousin, had, probably, an equally valid claim to the throne. He

<sup>1</sup> George Henderson, *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, 1910, p. 18.

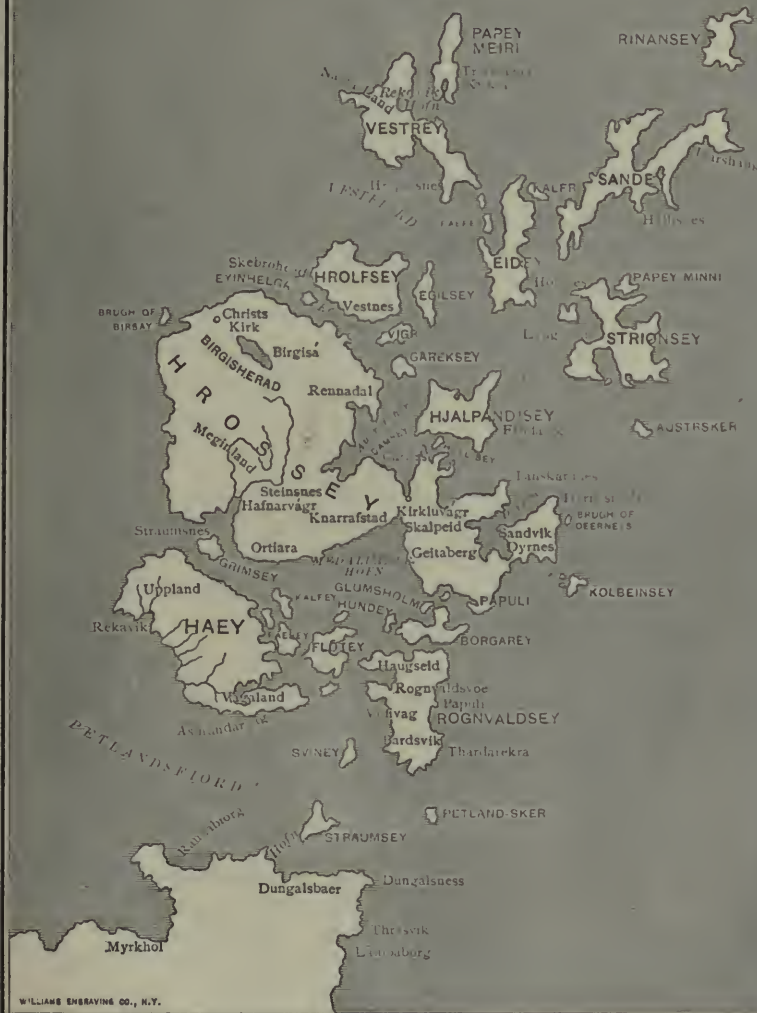
<sup>2</sup> *Orkneyingasaga*, ch. 22.

<sup>3</sup> In the sagas he is called Karl Hundason, "a name which is clearly a translation," says George Henderson.

(ORKNEYJAR)  
ORKNEY ISLANDS

FRIDAREY  
FAIR ISLE

About 30 miles  
north of  
RINANSEY







was maormor<sup>1</sup> of Moray and Thorfinn's firm friend and ally. When Duncan became king, he claimed suzerainty over Caithness and Sutherland, but Thorfinn refused to acknowledge his overlordship, because Malcolm II. had granted him this earldom in full possession. Macbeth, who, no doubt, also coveted the throne, supported Thorfinn, also because he feared that Duncan would do as Malcolm II. had done, who increased his power at the expense of the maormors. Duncan attacked Thorfinn, but was entirely discomfited in the sharp naval engagement at Dyrness, in the Orkneys. Earl Moddan, who led Duncan's land forces into Caithness, was slain by Thorkel Fostri, at Thurso. Duncan fled, but he soon gathered a large army and renewed the attack. He met Thorfinn at Torfness, in northern Scotland, but suffered a crushing defeat. According to Scotch sources Duncan was slain in 1040, near Elgin. George Henderson says: "The probability is that he was attacked and slain by Macbeth in the confusion and discord following upon the defeat at Torfness, which has been identified with Burghead." <sup>2</sup>

Upon the death of Duncan, in 1040, Macbeth became king of Scotland, and ruled for many years. He was a just and equitable prince, with none of those dark traits of character portrayed by the great dramatist. In 1050 King Macbeth made a pilgrimage to Rome to obtain absolution from his sins, and as Thorfinn also went to Rome for the same purpose, it is likely that the two friends made the journey together.<sup>3</sup> Skene shows that, although Macbeth occupied the throne, his sway in Scotland rested on the power and influence of Earl Thorfinn and the Norsemen of the Orkneys.<sup>4</sup> Malcolm Canmore, the son of Duncan, finally took the field against Macbeth, who was defeated in the battle of Dunsinane in 1054. In 1057 he was slain in the battle of Lumphanan. Malcolm had married Ingebjørg, the daughter of Thorfinn and his wife, who was a daughter of Finn Arnesson of Norway, and when Malcolm ascended the throne, the Norwegian girl became queen of Scotland. Thorfinn,

<sup>1</sup> Mormaer or maormor = earl.

<sup>2</sup> *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> George Henderson, *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, p. 29. *Orkneyingasaga*, edited by Joseph Anderson, Introduction, p. xxxii, p. 43 n. P. A. Munch, *The Chronicle of Man and the Sudreys*, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> Skene, *The Highlanders in Scotland*, I., p. 113 ff.

who, undoubtedly, had aided Macbeth, also met with reverses, and probably had to give up his possessions in southern Scotland. The strife between Malcolm and Thorfinn continued until the latter's death in 1064. The colonies in Caithness and Sutherland continued to exist as distinct Norse settlements ruled by Norse jarls, but after Thorfinn's death they passed permanently under the overlordship of the king of Scotland. Thorfinn's sons, Paul and Erlend, succeeded to the government of the Orkneys. As vassals of the king of Norway they were called upon to aid King Harald Sigurdsson (Haardraade) when he invaded England in 1066. They were both present at the battle of Stamford Bridge, where King Harald fell. In 1098 Magnus Barefoot, king of Norway, came to the British Isles with a large fleet. He subdued the Sudreys (Hebrides), and seized Løgman, the son of Gudrød, king of the Isles. The king of Scotland sent messengers to him to offer peace. "They said that the king of the Scots was willing to give him all the islands lying west of Scotland, between which and the mainland he could pass in a vessel with the rudder shipped. Thereupon King Magnus landed in Satiri (Cantire), and had a boat drawn across the isthmus, he himself holding the helm, and thus he gained possession of the whole of Satiri, which is better than the best island of the Sudreys, Man excepted."<sup>1</sup> Magnus seized, also, jarls Paul and Erlend, and sent them to Norway, where they died. Their sons Haakon and Magnus then became rulers of the Orkneys for some time, but trouble arose between them, and Haakon captured Magnus and had him executed. When Haakon died, his sons succeeded him. One of them, Harald, "held Caithness from the king of the Scots, and he resided frequently there, but sometimes, also, in Scotland (Sutherland?), for he had many friends and kinsmen there." In the reign of William the Lion, who was crowned king of Scotland in 1166, Harald Ungi came to Scotland with his followers. "Jarl Harald requested King William to grant him half of Caithness, which Jarl Røgnvald had held. The king granted him this, and Jarl Harald went, then, down to Caithness to gather troops." ("Orkneyingasaga," ch. cxiii.) When Harald Ungi died, Harald Madadsson took forcible possession of Caithness without asking the king's leave. He was also ruler of

<sup>1</sup> *Orkneyingasaga*, ch. xxx.

the Orkneys and the Shetland Islands. But King Sverre of Norway seized the Shetland Islands, and King William the Lion forced Harald to hold Caithness on the same terms as his predecessor, Harald Ungi. The "Orkneyingasaga" relates, also, how the Norse people in Caithness killed Bishop Adam, because he increased their taxes. This event, which happened in 1222, is recorded in the "Islandske Annaler,"<sup>1</sup> and, also, in a letter from Pope Honorius, dated February 13, 1223. The Norse settlers gradually ceased to stand apart as a distinct foreign element. They lost their national identity, and mingled with the native population, but only after influencing the language, culture, and character of the people of Scotland so deeply and permanently that the Scotch were henceforth a mixed people, showing clearly the characteristic traits of both races. In speaking of the Norse influence in Scotland Dr. George Henderson says: "The influence was so mighty that had the Gaelic language not been one of the most vigorous forms of speech, it must have died out; but the Gaelic people at the time were martial and powerful to an extent that afterwards made the perfervid genius of the Scots proverbial in Europe. But the result of this racial fusion is that Celtic Scotland of to-day holds a mediating position in point of race, and is much better equipped than it otherwise could have been for adapting itself to the requirements of the world. Carlyle once called the Highlanders a Norse breed, and he was in a rough way nearer the truth than many imagine."<sup>2</sup>

The Norse influence in various fields of Scotch culture is so extensive that only a few prominent features can be mentioned here by way of illustration. A more detailed and complete discussion of this subject will be found in Dr. George Henderson's excellent work, "Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland," which has already been quoted.

In Scotland, as well as in Man and the Hebrides, remnants have been found of decorated Viking stone crosses with runic inscriptions. "Most interesting of all is a stone with Scandinavian art-work, found by Mr. Collingwood in the chapel of St. Oran, and now deposited in the cathedral of Iona, an isle which is the burial-place of eight

<sup>1</sup> *Islandske Annaler*, edited by Gustav Storm; 1222, I. III. IV. V. VII. VIII. IX. (1220 X).

<sup>2</sup> *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, p. 2.



Norse kings. This Iona cross-shaft of the Viking Age has the usual Scandinavian dragon, with irregular interlacing, as also a galley with its crew, a smith with his hammer, anvil, and pincers — and so greatly resembles the Manx crosses that it may have been the tombstone of one of the Norse kings of Man,” says Dr. Henderson. Sword-hilts and rare brooches and other ornaments of Norse origin have been unearthed in many Viking burial-places. These articles are so exquisitely designed, and wrought with such consummate skill that they prove the makers to have been adepts in the goldsmith’s and jeweler’s art. A sword-hilt of the Viking time found in Eigg is especially fine. Dr. J. Anderson says of it: “I know no finer or more elaborate piece of art workmanship of the kind either in this country or in Norway.”<sup>1</sup>

The number of personal and place names of Norse origin in Scotland is so large that the few which can be cited as illustration cannot well convey any idea of the extent of Norse influence on this point. Huisdean, from the older form *Huisduin*, Anglicized Hugh, is from the Norse *Eysteinn*; M’Iver from *Ivar*, or *Ingvar*; MacAndy from Norse *Andi*, a form found in *Andabú* and *Andestad*; MacSwan from *Sveinn*; M’Siridh from Norse *Sigridr*; MacUsbaig from *Uspakr*; M’Asgill, or MacAskill from *Asketill*; Lamont from *Lagman*; MacAulay from *Anlaf*, *Olave*; MacLeod, or M’Cloyd, from the older form *MacLjotr* from Norse *Ljotr*; MacCrimmon from Norse *Rumun*; MacCodrum from *Guttormr*. In speaking of Norse place-names in Scotland, Dr. Henderson says:<sup>2</sup> “Many of the chief features in the Scottish mainland, from Eskadale, Norse *Eskidale*, ‘Ash-dale,’ by the Beauly River, of old Uisge Farrar, and northwards round the coasts of Ross and Sutherland and Caithness, and along the western border, southward to Galloway and Liddesdale, the *Hlið-dalr* of the Viking settlers, are Norse. As soon as we cross from the Beauly valley into Urray we have Tarradale, from Norse *Tarfr-dalr*, ‘bull-dale’; Alcaig in Urquhart from N. *Alka-vík*, ‘auks-bay’; Culbo in Resolis from N. *Kúla*, a ball or knob, and *ból*, ‘a farm-stead’; Udale in Cromarty, N. *Y-dalr*, ‘yew-dale.’ Seatwell in Contin is from N. *scat-vqllr*, ‘the scat-field’ or land which yielded tax, *i.e.*

<sup>1</sup> *Scotland in Pagan Times, The Iron Age*, p. 48-49. Quoted by Dr. Henderson.

<sup>2</sup> *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, p. 152.

*scat* to the Northern earls whose seat of justice is commemorated prominently in Dingwall, N. *þing-vøllr*, the field of the *þing* or Norse court of justice. N. *vøllr* meets us in Brae-langwell, N. *lang-vøllr*, 'longfield,' in Resolis, repeated again in Lang-well, Caithness. Cadboll, Catboll (1561), is from N. *kattar-ból*, 'cat-stead.' When we cross to Sutherland, Norse names abound with the Norse terminations in *-dale*, *-boll* ('homestead'), *-gil*, *-vøllr*, *-bakki* ('bank'), *-ery* (-ary, 'shieling'), *á* ('river'). A few prominent names may suffice for illustration, such as Swordale = *Sward-dale*; Helmsdale = *Hjalmund's dale*; Strath Halladale = *helga-dalr*, 'holy-dale'; Torrisdale = *þorir's-dale*; Ceoldale = cold-dale, or 'keel'-dale."

Norse influence on the Scotch language has been both extensive and lasting. A large Norse vocabulary has been incorporated in the original Gaelic tongue once spoken in Scotland, so that the Highland Scotch speech is no less a composite language than the people themselves are a mixed race. The words referring to dress and armor, pasture, agriculture, peat, trees, carpentry, fish and fishing, birds and animals, time, measure, house, household, family life and government, sea and ships, are Norse to a very large extent. The more rapid discarding of inflectional endings in northern Scotland is also due to Norse influence. But "above all," says Henderson, "it is the difference in intonation, in modulation in the use of the voice between speakers from Central Lochaber, say, where there are no Norse place-names, and between Sutherland or Lewis speakers, where Norse influence is strong, that makes one instinctively feel the presence of the foreigner. . . . One thing is certain: there are great similarities between Norse accentuation and that of the Highland area. This has been noted by Dr. Waltman, of Lund, in a contribution to the Swedish "Nordiska Studier" entitled "Nordiska aksentformer i Gäliska."<sup>1</sup> "Not only Ireland, Bretland, or Wales came to know the Vikings," says the same author; "they had made a great part of Scotland their own." He quotes the following words from Dasent, in the introduction to the "Njálssaga." "To this day the name of almost every island on the west coast of Scotland is either pure Norse, or Norse distorted so as to make it possible for Celtic lips to utter it. The groups of Orkney and Shetland are

<sup>1</sup> *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, p. 109 f.

notoriously Norse, but Lewis and the Uists, and Skye and Mull are no less Norse; and not only the names of the islands themselves, but those of reefs and rocks and lakes and headlands bear witness to the same relation, and show that, while the original inhabitants were not expelled, but held in bondage as thralls, the Norsemen must have dwelt, and dwelt thickly, too, as conquerors and lords."

Norse influence may also be traced in charms, fairy-tales, and popular beliefs, and in many quaint customs still to be found in Scotland. Noteworthy is the idea of hell as a cold place, which is repeatedly met with in Highland poetry. Dr. Henderson calls attention to Mackenzie's "Beauties of Gaelic Poetry," from which he cites, among other illustrations, a stanza from an old Caledonian poem which in translation reads as follows:

"Woe to the one who chooses cold Hell, for it is a cavern with sharp thorns: I abhor Hell, with its cold and wet, a place of bitterness everlasting, where bitter is the drink for aye."<sup>1</sup>

Incantations were used in Scotland to charm away sickness and evil from the cattle as late as 1767, a heathen practice which has been in vogue among the peasantry of Norway till in very recent years. In the Hebrides the old custom, well known from Iceland, of carrying fire around the possessions belonging to each family has been in use within the memory of people still living. The numerous traces of Norse influence in the culture and temperament of the people of Scotland show the permanent importance of the Norse element to their whole development as a nation. Dr. Henderson says: "The Scottish love of freedom, in short, has been intensified by the advent of the Norseman, who within his lights was law-abiding at home if cruel as Viking abroad." "Perhaps to him," says Dr. Magnus Maclean, "we owe our continuance as a race to this day. He has carried with him over the wave the breath of freedom and strenuous endeavor, and fused them into the life of this great nation, helping Britain to build up and maintain a world-wide empire and the supremacy upon the seas."<sup>2</sup> The benefit which

<sup>1</sup> *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Scottish Historical Review*, 1909, p. 137. See *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, p. 293.



the Vikings themselves derived from their prolonged efforts to conquer and colonize new territory may seem relatively small. Their voyages brought them to countries where permanent colonization was impossible, and it is an apparently tragic feature of Viking history that their marvelous expenditure of energy during several centuries brought them no other permanent possessions than the barren islands in the North Atlantic. But if the permanent territorial acquisitions were limited, the Norsemen were richly compensated in other ways. They stimulated the slumbering nations to new activity, engendered a spirit of liberty and enterprise, and furnished ideas which became important factors in the development of western Europe. "They carried strength to others," as the poet expresses it. This was, indeed, no misfortune, but a victory more lasting and glorious than the mere conquest of territory. The Norsemen had become a nation great in fame and power, in culture, and in conscious self-reliance. The Viking expeditions had given them the opportunity to develop in a broad way their latent powers, and to mold on a wide theater of action the national character which has been the vital force in all subsequent Norwegian history.

#### 42. CONDITIONS IN NORWAY DURING THE REIGN OF THE JARLS EIRIK AND SVEIN

The creation of the united kingdom of Norway by Harald Haarfagre and the introduction of Christianity by Olav Tryggvason were the two epoch-making events in the national development of the Norwegian people prior to the year 1000. But the new ideas of a united and Christian Norway represented by these two great kings had as yet failed to gain the active support and conscious loyalty of the whole people. There had always been much secret opposition and silent ill-will on the part of the aristocracy, and the common people, who were yet strangers to the idea of national patriotism, allied themselves with their own local chieftains. The battle of Svolder was a result of existing conditions. The opportunity came, and the new national kingship received a crushing blow. The aristocracy regained its power; Norway was divided between the kings of Sweden and Denmark, and the jarls Eirik and Svein, who

ruled the country as their vassals. Independence was lost as well as national unity, but no word of protest or complaint was heard. The people seemed to be well satisfied with the new arrangement. One great element necessary to national growth was still wanting — patriotism, which makes a people a nation, conscious of its own distinct life and destiny. The entrance of this new force into the history of the Norwegian people is associated with the name of King Olav Haraldsson, commonly known as Saint Olav.

The rule of the jarls was, in general, a return to the old ways. Nominally they were Christians, but they showed no interest for the new faith, and did nothing to promote or to maintain it. "Eirik Jarl and Svein Jarl were both baptized, and received the true faith," says the saga, "but so long as they ruled Norway, they let each man do as he pleased with regard to Christianity."<sup>1</sup> As a result of this indifference Christianity was soon forgotten, and the people returned to their pagan worship.

Eirik Jarl resided at Lade, and Svein Jarl dwelt at Stenkjær, at the head of the Trondhjemsfjord. The commercial town Nidaros (Trondhjem), which Olav Tryggvason had founded, was allowed to decay. In Oplandene (southeastern Norway) the *herser* and petty kings regained their old independence, and in Vestlandet (south-western Norway) Erling Skjalgsson of Sole, the brother-in-law of Olav Tryggvason, ruled with unrestricted authority without submitting to the jarls. The king of Sweden collected taxes in Trøndelagen, but King Knut the Great of Denmark, the son of Svein Tjugeskjæg, who was now engaged in the conquest of England, paid little attention to his Norwegian possessions. Eirik and Svein were unable to exercise any great authority. They were satisfied with enjoying the privileges and emoluments of their high office, due them according to ancient custom. The people seem to have been well pleased with their mild rule and the gradual return to the old order of things. "They maintained well the old laws and all customs," says the saga, "and they were popular men and good rulers."<sup>2</sup>

An important change was, nevertheless, taking place at this time. The aristocracy had learned the necessity of united action, if they wished to maintain their old privileges against a national king, who

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Olav Tryggvasonssaga*, ch. 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

might at any time appear upon the scene. In France and the British Isles they had also become acquainted with a social system in which the aristocracy owned nearly all the land, and exercised a far greater authority over the common classes than did the Norwegian chieftains, who had hitherto stood in a more or less patriarchal relation to the people. These lessons were not forgotten. The more powerful families, of which there were many in Norway at this time, now made an effort to become more firmly united through intermarriage, and the great chieftains began to enlarge their estates to a hitherto unknown extent. One of the most powerful chieftains was Thore Hund of Bjarkey in northern Haalogaland (Nordland). He had a monopoly on the trade with the Finns, and became very wealthy through the export of furs to England. His brother was the powerful Sigurd of Trondanes, who was married to a sister of Erling Skjalgsson. His sister was married to Ølve of Egge, the greatest chieftain in Indtrøndelagen. Haarek of Tjotta was another man of great note in Haalogaland. Many free-holders lived in the island of Tjotta, but he gradually bought them out, until he finally owned the whole island. He made much money by trade, and became very rich. Few men in Norway at this time wielded greater influence than Einar Tambarskjælver in Uttrøndelagen, who had been with Olav Tryggvason at Svolder. He was married to a daughter of Haakon Jarl, and lived at Gimsar in Guldalen. In Søndmør dwelt the great Arnmødling family. The brothers Thorberg, Kalv, Finn, Arne, and Arnbjørn Arnesson played an important part in public affairs in the reign of Olav Haraldsson. Their sister Ragnhild was married to Haarek of Tjotta, and Thorberg, the lord of Giske, was married to the daughter of Erling Skjalgsson, who was the greatest of all the chieftains. The saga says that Erling always had a force of men with him, resembling a king's *hird*. He was tall, strong, and beautiful; and in all manly sports he resembled Olav Tryggvason. On his estate he had thirty slaves and a number of serfs. He gave the slaves a piece of land to till. This piece they worked during spare hours, and they were allowed to sell the grain which they raised. They could purchase their freedom for a fixed price, and when they had become free, Erling either retained them in his service, or gave them land which they might clear and culti-



vate. When Erling traveled by sea, he always had a fully equipped war ship, and when Eirik Jarl or Svein was near, he had with him two hundred men (240) or more. "It is the common opinion," says the saga, "that Erling Skjalgsson was the greatest of all *lendermænd* in Norway." In Gudbrandsdal the great *herse* Dale-Gudbrand ruled as an independent prince. Of the many petty kings which ruled in southeastern Norway may be mentioned King Sigurd Syr of Ringerike, Saint Olav's stepfather; and King Rørek in Hedemarken.

The aristocracy, which controlled the greater part of the wealth and resources of the country, could now present a united front against a king who should presume to encroach on their established rights. Eirik and Svein were of their number, and ruled in the interest of their class; the two brothers seem to have been worthy representatives of that old class of chieftains. Eirik Jarl had especially distinguished himself as a warrior. He had borne the brunt of the battle against the Jómsvikings at Hjørungavaag, and had taken Olav Trygvason's famous ship, the "Long Serpent," at Svolder. He was a man of great prowess and ability. The more it is to be regretted that he had drawn his sword against his king and his country for motives of sordid gain and self-aggrandizement.

"Then faded away his old renown,  
Till in foreign lands a grave he found.  
The death-knell sounds in the breast of the man  
Who draws his sword 'gainst his native land." <sup>1</sup>

#### 43. OLAV HARALDSSON OR OLAV THE SAINT

Olav Haraldsson, son of King Harald Grenske and Aasta, descended from Harald Haarfagre.<sup>2</sup> His father died before he was born, and Aasta was married a second time to King Sigurd Syr of Ringerike, where Olav was raised. The people of this fertile inland district had taken little part in the Viking expeditions, but they dwelt near the centers of trade in southern Norway, and the new

<sup>1</sup> From the poem "Eirik Jarl" by Peer Sivle.

<sup>2</sup> Harald Haarfagre > Bjørn Farmand > Gudrød Bjørnsson > Harald Grenske > Olav Haraldsson.

ideas and elements of culture which trade and commerce brought from foreign lands were easily accessible. Ringerike and the neighboring districts, like Hadeland and Toten, became at this time a center of culture, which is still evidenced by the many decorated rune-stones which were erected here during this period. Two of the finest specimens are the Dyna stone from Hadeland, and the stone at Alstad in Toten.<sup>1</sup> These districts were also making great progress economically. King Sigurd Syr, who seems to have been a peaceful man of no great ability, was more devoted to farming than to military exploits; but Aasta was a high-minded and ambitious woman, who wished her sons to gain power and renown. Her words to her son Olav are characteristic: "If I had the choice I would rather that you become over-king of Norway, though you should live no longer in the kingdom than did Olav Tryggvason, than that you should become no greater king than Sigurd Syr, and die of old age."<sup>2</sup> The sagas state that when Olav was three years old, Olav Tryggvason visited Ringerike, and Sigurd Syr, Aasta, and Olav were baptized; but according to the Norman chronicles and the Catholic legends he was baptized much later at Rouen. Alexander Bugge thinks that the saga statement may be true, since



FIG. 45. — The Dyna rune-stone at Hadeland, Norway.

<sup>1</sup> On the estate Alstad lived, about the year 1000, a lady of high birth by the name of Jørund. In memory of her husband she erected a stone monument decorated with pictures of a falcon-chase, which had been his favorite sport. The monument bears the following runic inscription: "Jørund erected this stone in memory of — [the name is nearly effaced] who had her for a wife; and brought the stone from Ringerike, from Hole; and she caused it to be ornamented with pictures."

The stone from Dyna was erected by another lady of noble birth, Gunvor Trireksdatter, in memory of her daughter Astrid. It is richly ornamented with pictures and bears the following runic inscription: "Gunvor Trireksdatter made a bridge in memory of her daughter Astrid. She was the most dexterous in using the hand of all maidens in Hadeland."

<sup>2</sup> *Heimskringla, Saga of Olav the Saint*, ch. 35.

the boy was called Olav, a name not before found in the family.<sup>1</sup> Olav was still very young when he went on Viking expeditions together with his foster-father Rane Vidfôrle. They went first to Denmark, where they joined some Viking bands in a descent on the shores of Sweden and Finland. On their return they visited Jónsborg, where Thorkel the Tall, a brother of Sigvalde Jarl, was preparing an expedition to England. Olav joined Thorkel's forces, and they sailed southward along the coast of Jutland. After a battle at Søndervik, they proceeded to the coast of Friesland and Holland.<sup>2</sup> Tiel, an important commercial town, was sacked and burned, and the suburbs of Utrecht were plundered, 1008 or 1009. From Holland Thorkel sailed for England, and arrived there in August, 1009.<sup>3</sup>

After Olav Tryggvason had concluded peace with King Æthelred, and had returned to Norway in 995, Svein Tjugeskjæg of Denmark continued military operations against England. In 997 and the following years the southern districts were continually ravaged by Viking bands. A number of Danes and Norsemen had settled in England, and Æthelred feared that they might make common cause with the invaders. His fear and cowardice led him to secretly arrange a general massacre of the Danes, which was carried out on St. Brice's Day (Nov. 12), 1002. How far the slaughter extended, is not known, but it must have been confined to southern England, where the Danish settlers were few. This event again brought King Svein to England with a large fleet in 1003. A war began which ended in the final conquest of England. King Æthelred fled to Normandy, and Svein was hailed as king of England in 1013. During these ten years the war had been continuous, but in 1009, when the fleet of Thorkel the Tall arrived, Svein was not in England, and it is possible that the fleet had been sent with his aid and approval. At Southwark they made a fortified camp, but failed in an attempt to take London. The next year they ravaged the country exten-

<sup>1</sup> *Norges Historie*, I. 2, p. 325.    <sup>2</sup> Bloch, *Geschichte der Niederlande*.

<sup>3</sup> In Senja, in northern Norway, a number of old articles of silver were found some years ago. Among these was a collar of silver with the following runic inscription: "We went to visit the men of Friesland, and to divide the war-clothes with them." The inscription, which dates from about the year 1000, must have been made by one of Olav's followers on the expedition to Friesland. See A. Bugge, *Norges Historie*, I., p. 327.



sively and defeated Ulvkel Jarl and the East Anglians at Ringmere, and King Æthelred was forced to promise them a tribute of 48,000 pounds of silver. In 1011 the Vikings besieged Canterbury. Through treachery they gained entrance to the city and they carried away, among numerous other captives, Archbishop Ælfeah, who had confirmed King Olav Tryggvason. They held him for a ransom, but as neither this, nor the Danegeld granted by Æthelred, was paid, they stoned the unfortunate archbishop to death. He was buried in St. Paul's church at London, and became one of the most venerated of English saints. The Danegeld was finally paid, and the Viking army gradually disbanded. Thorkel the Tall and Olav Haraldsson entered the service of King Æthelred with forty-five ships. They defended London against King Svein in 1013, and made such brave resistance that he failed to take the city. But after Æthelred had fled, and all England had been subjugated, London also submitted to King Svein.

In this way Olav Haraldsson had been schooled in the art of war, and had lived through a period of youthful storm and stress. He had seen the wildest kind of Viking warfare in company with the professional buccaneers of the Jónsborg, but he had also come into direct touch with European life and ideas in Friesland, Holland, Normandy, and England. What impression this had made on him we do not know. He was still a Viking, but nobler thoughts and higher ideals soon made him turn away from the adventurous path of rude Viking warfare. The spirit of Christianity, and the charms of a new and better culture inspired him with the ambition to devote his life to the attainment of higher aims. The lost cause of Christianity and national unity in Norway was still waiting for a leader strong enough to break the evil spell which had fallen upon it. To wrest the leadership in national affairs from the unwilling hands of a strong and reactionary aristocracy, and to launch the nation upon a period of national development in compact with new ideas was the great end to which destiny seems to have consecrated the life, the heroic courage, and singular devotion of this remarkable prince.

King Svein died suddenly in 1014, and his oldest son Harald succeeded him as king of Denmark. But the Anglo-Saxons recalled King Æthelred and his son Edmund Ironside, and Svein's son Knut,

later called Knut the Great, who was in East Anglia, was forced to leave the country. In 1015 he returned with a large fleet. Thorkel the Tall had now joined him, and he had also called to his assistance Eirik Jarl of Norway. Some hard campaigns were fought with the English forces led by Edmund Ironside, but King Æthelred and Edmund both died in 1016. Knut became king of England, and married Emma of Normandy, King Æthelred's widow.

Olav Haraldsson left England in 1013 in company with King Æthelred, and went to Normandy to aid Duke Richard II. in a war against Count Odo of Chartres. He accompanied Æthelred back to England, but left again shortly after on an expedition to France and Spain. He sailed southward along the coast of France, fought a battle with William V. of Aquitaine, and then proceeded to the northern coast of Spain, where he captured Gunvaldsborg, and took Jarl Geirfinn prisoner and forced him to pay a ransom. He seems also to have visited Portugal and southern Spain. The saga tells us that Olav sailed into the Guadalquivir (Karlsaaerne). "But while he was lying there waiting for favorable wind to sail into the Strait of Gibraltar (Norvasund), and thence to the Holy Land, he dreamed that a strange and powerful, but also fearful man appeared and bade him give up the plan of going into foreign lands: "Go back," he said, "to your *odel*, for you shall become king of Norway forever."<sup>1</sup> This is, of course, a legend. But Olav returned to Normandy, where he was well received. He spent the winter in Rouen, where he is said to have been baptized; but it is probable that he was confirmed here by Archbishop Robert, a brother of Duke Richard.

In the spring of 1015 Olav sailed from Normandy to England, and thence to Norway, where he would take up the struggle to reëstablish Christianity and to regain the throne of his ancestors. He had only two merchant vessels, about 140 men, and a few missionaries. The moment was opportune. Eirik Jarl had gone to England to aid King Knut, and had left his son Haakon in charge of his possessions at home. The two merchant vessels which arrived from England created no suspicion. Haakon was at this time in Vestlandet with only one war vessel, and Olav entrapped him and took him prisoner. He was liberated on the condition that he should

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Saga of Olav the Saint*, ch. 18.

leave the country and never again bear arms against Olav. Haakon went to England, where his uncle King Knut made him jarl of Worcestershire. Eirik Jarl was made ruler of Northumbria, where he died in 1023. Olav sailed southward along the coast of Norway, entered the Foldenfjord (Christianiafjord), and came to his step-father, King Sigurd Syr, in the autumn. He was now about twenty-two years of age. He was of middle size, but strong and well-built, with auburn hair, red beard, and ruddy cheeks. He had large bright eyes and a majestic look. The saga says that he was well skilled in all manly sports, but it does not state that he surpassed others in this respect. In speech he was wise and eloquent. He lacked, however, the charm of personality and the chivalric qualities which had made Olav Tryggvason so popular. He was less cheerful, less willing to compromise; at times he was irritable and unnecessarily obstinate; but he possessed the resolute will and singleness of purpose which accomplishes great things. He had a strength of character and an ability to sacrifice all for a lofty aim, which makes him a great and tragic figure in history. Olav acquainted King Sigurd with his plans, and received his promise of support. By rich presents and persuasion he gained many friends and adherents in Oplandene, and Sigurd Syr gave him all possible aid. The saga says that Sigurd held a meeting with the other kings of Oplandene in Hadeland, where Olav was present. He urged upon them the necessity of throwing off the foreign yoke which the Swedes and Danes had laid upon them. They could now get a man who could take the lead in this affair, and he told them of Olav Haraldsson's many exploits. King Rørek of Hedemarken expressed his regret that Harald Haarfagre's kingdom had fallen to decay, but they were well satisfied, he said, with the present arrangement. The over-kings were now so far away that they did not oppress them. It was doubtful if their condition would be better if a native prince became over-king of Norway. They yielded, however, to persuasion, and Olav was proclaimed king of Norway at a general *thing* assembled in Oplandene. The powerful Dale-Gudbrand, *herse* in Gudbrandsdal, also pledged him his allegiance. In the winter before Christmas, Olav crossed the Dovre Mountains, and surprised Svein Jarl, who dwelt at Stenkjær in Trøndelagen. Svein had to flee, and Olav



seized the food which he had prepared for the Christmas feast. He also advanced to Nidaros, and began to restore the buildings of the deserted town. Here he met the scald Sighvat Thordsson, who had just arrived from Iceland. Sighvat became Olav's hirdscald and his lifelong friend and companion. But Svein Jarl and Einar Tambarskjælver soon appeared on the scene with a large force, and Olav had to return to Oplandene. He now went to Viken, where he drove away the Danish officials. It appears that these districts submitted without offering any resistance; but a decisive combat would yet have to be fought with the powerful Svein Jarl, and both prepared for the inevitable struggle. In the spring of 1016 Olav sailed through the Foldenfjord (Christianiafjord) to meet Svein, who was approaching with a large fleet, and on Palm Sunday they met at Nesjar, near Tunsberg, where Svein was defeated after a sanguinary battle. He fled to Sweden, and died on an expedition to Russia the following year. The battle of Nesjar marks the final overthrow of the rule of jarls in Norway. Olav, who was now master of the whole realm, went to Trøndelagen, where he was proclaimed king of Norway at the Ørething, according to old custom.

#### 44. FOREIGN RELATIONS

Olav had ascended the throne of his ancestors, and Norway was again a united kingdom; but the kings of Sweden and Denmark, who, since the fall of Olav Tryggvason, had exercised sovereign authority in the country, had not recognized its integrity, or independence. The situation was extremely difficult. The powerful nobles at home might seize the first opportunity to join King Olav's enemies, as Eirik Jarl and Svein had done in the days of Olav Tryggvason; and such an opportunity was sure to come, since Olav would have to defend his kingdom against his powerful neighbors, who now claimed it with some show of right. The king of Sweden sent tax collectors into Trøndelagen, as before, and held Jämtland and Ranrike, which he had seized. King Olav refused to pay him taxes, and prepared for war. At the Sarp Falls of the Glommen River, in southeastern Norway, he erected a walled fortress, called "Borg" (later Sarpsborg), inside of which he founded a city, and built a

church to St. Mary. The ruins of the fortifications are still visible. Olav gathered stores at Borg, or Sarpsborg, and remained there during the winter of 1017-1018. He carried on secret negotiations with the people in Ranrike, and as the chieftains gave him their support, the province soon renewed its old allegiance to Norway. Olav advanced with an army, drove out the Swedish officials, and war began along the border. Ragnvald Ulvsson, jarl of Vestergötland, who was married to Olav Tryggvason's sister Ingebjørg, felt himself bound to King Olav through this bond of relationship, and became his faithful friend. Olav and Ragnvald agreed that peace should be maintained between them, and, as the war was unpopular on both sides of the border, Olav sent an embassy to the Swedish king to negotiate peace. In the spring of 1018 a *thing* was held at Upsala where Ragnvald Jarl was present, and urged the king to conclude peace with King Olav. The powerful Torgny Lagmand also arose and spoke in favor of peace with such authority that the king yielded. The agreement was made that the king of Sweden should give Olav his daughter Ingegerd in marriage, and that the wedding should be celebrated at Konghelle in the fall; but Olav Skotkonung did not keep his word. He married his daughter to Grand Duke Jaroslaf of Gardarike (Russia), and when King Olav came to Konghelle to celebrate his nuptials, the bride did not arrive. Olav was very angry and wished to renew the war, but he was, finally, persuaded to send another embassy to Sweden. Sighvat Scald was intrusted with the mission. He came to Ragnvald Jarl, where he saw the beautiful Astrid, another daughter of the Swedish king, and Ragnvald undertook to arrange a match between her and King Olav. He took the princess to Sarpsborg, where she was married to Olav without her father's consent. Olav Skotkonung of Sweden would, probably, have continued the war, but circumstances forced him to make peace with Olav Haraldsson. King Knut, who ruled all England, had also been chosen king of Denmark on the death of his brother Harald; and he might seize Norway and, possibly, also Sweden unless some balance of power was maintained. The Swedish king, therefore, met Olav at Konghelle, where peace was concluded, 1019. The independence of Norway was recognized, and the borders were fixed between the two kingdoms.

#### 45. KING OLAV ESTABLISHES CHRISTIANITY IN NORWAY. HIS LAWS AND ADMINISTRATION

After the peace of Konghelle King Olav ruled for many years without being molested by foreign enemies. It was his ambition to make Norway a strong Christian monarchy like other Christian states of Europe, and he labored assiduously to carry through a great program of organization and reform by which the foundations were laid for the future national development of Norway. The problems confronting him were many and difficult. Norway would have to regain its integrity and independence, Christianity had to be reëstablished, the laws were in need of revision, and the aristocracy had to be reduced to submission and to full obedience to the laws.<sup>1</sup> In the years prior to 1019, while he was yet engaged in the struggle with the king of Sweden, he introduced Christianity in Oplandene. He visited every district and petty kingdom, placed missionaries there to instruct the people, and punished severely all those who refused to accept the Christian faith. The kings of these districts were much displeased, and assembled to form an alliance against him; but a friend informed him of their plot. He surprised them and took them prisoners while they were still deliberating upon the uprising, and punished them severely. Some he banished, others he maimed or blinded, says the saga; the rule of petty kings in Norway was ended. Oplandene, which hitherto had been nearly independent, was now placed immediately under the crown. After the treaty of peace with Sweden in 1019, Olav could devote himself to the missionary work with greater energy, and he was ably assisted by the bishops which he had brought from England and Normandy. Of those mentioned, — Rudolf, Bernhard, Grimkel,<sup>2</sup> and Sigurd, — Grimkel was the most important. He was a man of learning, tact, and ability. The name indicates that he was of Norse descent, but

<sup>1</sup> Konrad Maurer, *Die Bekehrung des norwegischen Stammes zum Christenthume*, vol. I., 39. A. D. Jørgensen, *Den norske Kirkes Grundlæggelse og første Udvikling*, p. 476 ff. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, part I., vol. II., 589 ff. R. Keyser, *Den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*.

<sup>2</sup> Adam v. Bremen mentions Sigurd, book II. c. 55, together with Grimkel, Rudolf, and Bernhard; but it is not certain that Sigurd came to Norway with King Olav.



he must have been born in England. He was King Olav's chief adviser and assistant both in the missionary work and in lawgiving. Among the king's most powerful and devoted friends were also: Bjørn Stallare (*comes stabuli*), Sighvat Thordsson the great scald, Thord Foleson, Aslak Fitjaskalle, Thormod Kolbrunarskald, and Hjalte Skjeggesson.

In 1019 Olav went to Nidaros, where he remained that winter. The following summer he introduced Christianity in Haalogaland, the most northern district of Norway, and Haarek of Tjotta and Thore Hund of Bjarkey, the most powerful chieftains in those parts, pledged their submission to the king. In Uttrøndelagen Christianity had been maintained since the days of Olav Tryggvason, but in Indtrøndelagen the people had returned to paganism, and the powerful Ølve of Egge continued to officiate as priest in the heathen temple in spite of King Olav's warning. Olav, therefore, marched against the Indtrønders while they were assembled for the spring sacrifices, captured Ølve, and caused him to be executed. He gave his widow and his estates to Kalv Arnesson, whom he made a *lendermand*. The people of Gudbrandsdal were converted to Christianity in 1021, after some resistance. When the army which they sent against the king was defeated at Breidevangen, south of Sell, a *thing* was assembled at Hundtorp, where the *herse* Dale-Gudbrand was baptized, and the people accepted Christianity. Dale-Gudbrand built a church at Hundtorp, and Olav left missionaries to instruct the people. The story told in the sagas that the people carried out an idol representing the god Thor, thinking that it would frighten King Olav, and that Kolbein the Strong, one of Olav's men, demolished it with a club, is a piece of fiction introduced by Snorre for dramatic effect. It symbolizes the combat of Christianity against heathenism, and King Olav's war against the idols. It marks the beginning of a whole literature of folk-tales connected with the name of Saint Olav.<sup>1</sup> In 1023 Olav also introduced Christianity in the Gula-

<sup>1</sup> The story is found in the *Saga of Olav the Saint* in the *Heimskringla*, and also in the *Olavssaga ins helga*. This saga is also written by Snorre, and differs little from the *Saga of Olav the Saint* in the *Heimskringla*. It is but a new revised edition of it. See Gustav Storm, *Snorre Sturlasons Historieskrivning*.

thingslag and in Valdres. In many places, as in Viken, in Uttrøndelagen, and in localities on the west coast where churches had been built by Olav Tryggvason, Christianity had not altogether disappeared, but it had been obscured and corrupted through heathen ideas and customs. It, therefore, became King Olav's second great task to give the Church of Norway a permanent organization, and to establish for it a code of church laws according to which it might be governed. With the assistance of Bishop Grimkel and other ecclesiastics, he produced such a code of laws written in the Norwegian language. The "Heimskringla" says: "The church laws he made according to the advice of Bishop Grimkel and other teachers, and devoted all his energy to eradicate heathenism and old customs which he considered contrary to the Christian spirit."<sup>1</sup> He called a general *thing* in the island of Moster, where people from Viken, Gulathingslag, and Frostathingslag were present. Here King Olav and Bishop Grimkel explained the new laws to the people, and they were finally adopted. For the Eidsivathingslag Olav made a new code in which the church laws were incorporated. The districts of Viken were also organized into a *thingslag*, called "Borgarthingslag," because the *thing* met at Borg, or Sarpsborg. It received a code of laws to which the church laws were also added.<sup>2</sup> It is not certain, however, that the Borgarthingslag was originally organized by King Olav. In the Gulathingslag and Frostathingslag there was one principal church in each *fylke*;<sup>3</sup> in the Borgarthingslag two, and in the Eidsivathingslag three. The principal churches had resident priests who received the income from church lands set aside for their maintenance. The final step taken by King Olav in the organization of the Church of Norway was to place it under the higher ecclesiastical

<sup>1</sup> These church laws are found in the *Gulathingslov*, the *Frostathingslov*, and as supplements to the *Eidsivathingslov*, and the *Borgarthingslov*. See *Norges gamle Love*, vol. I.

<sup>2</sup> The Eidsivathing's code and the Borgarthing's code have been lost, but the church laws of both codes have been preserved. See *Norges gamle Love*, vol. I.

<sup>3</sup> "The next is that we should maintain all the churches and the Christianity which Saint Olav and Bishop Grimkel established on the Moster-thing, and all since built. But there is one church in each fylke which we call the main church which all men in the fylke must maintain." *Gulathingslov*, ch. 10.

authority of an archbishop. This might have led to a closer affiliation with the Church of England, since Christianity had been brought to Norway from that country, but the political situation proved unfavorable. Knut the Great, who was now king of England, had not relinquished his claim on Norway, and any closer relations between the two countries, even in religious matters, might have contributed to strengthen his hold. King Olav, therefore, sent Bishop Grimkel to negotiate with Archbishop Unvan of Bremen, with the result that the Church of Norway was placed under the supervision of the Archbishop of Bremen.

Christianity began henceforth to gain general favor. The old pagan conceptions were not eradicated, however, through the hasty conversion. They gradually assumed Christian forms and continued to live in the religious life as well as in the songs and stories of the people. Christ was substituted for Odin as the divine ruler. The poet Eiliv Gudrunsson sang about Christ the mighty king of Rome, who sits in the South at the Well of Urd, and rules over the lands of the mountain kings. King Olav takes the place of Thor as the red-bearded champion of light, who is ever victorious in his war against trolls and evil spirits. Freyja reappears as the Virgin Mary, who rules over the animals of the forest. She is also the midwife, and assists at the birth of children.<sup>1</sup> This naïve but poetic blending of Christian forms and pagan ideas marks the advent of the intellectual life of the Christian Middle Ages, from which the folk-songs and fairy-tales have sprung.

It became necessary for Olav also to revise the civil laws, to bring them into closer conformity with Christian principles. The "Heimskringla" states that "he made the laws according to the counsel of the wisest men; he took away, or added, as he considered it just." We have already seen that he gave the Eidsivathingslag a new code, and it is probable, though not certain, that he established the Borgarthingslag. The laws of the Gulathingstag and of the Frostathingstag were so thoroughly revised that these old codes were henceforth known as the "Laws of Saint Olav." The revision of the laws by the king and his learned assistants, who were familiar,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. A. Chr. Bang, *Udsigt over den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, p. 77 f.



not only with Christian principles, but also with the laws of the Christian kingdoms of western Europe, was a legal work of the greatest importance. The "Laws of St. Olav" were destined to become the foundation of future Norwegian jurisprudence. King Olav's lawgiving represents in itself a centralization of power, and a growth of royal authority which carries with it the greatest change in the political institutions of Norway. King Haakon the Good had, indeed, been a lawgiver, but not to the extent which this function was now exercised by King Olav. The old laws were regarded as having been given by the gods themselves; they were inherited, time-honored custom, the expression of the sense of legal justice of the whole people, who originally had exercised the power of law-making. But after the union of Norway, and the introduction of Christianity, when the laws had to be revised and brought into harmony with the new conditions, the king gradually assumed this power; and after Olav Haraldsson's time the people had little direct influence on legislation. The old *lagthings*, which had been well suited to the old tribal organization, were conspicuously defective as lawmaking assemblies for the united kingdom of Norway. They were four in number, not a single assembly for the whole country, and they were provincial, not national in character.<sup>1</sup> They had no power of taxation, and the laws were introduced by the king, or in his name. The powers of administration, taxation, and legislation were, therefore, quite naturally united in the hands of the sovereign. The king, not the *lagthings*, became the exponent of the national will. But he was not an absolute monarch; the people still exercised indirectly no small influence on legislation. If they desired a new law, or the revision of an old one, they negotiated privately with the king, and when an understanding was reached, the measure was proposed at the *lagthing* in the king's name. If he wished to propose a new law, he negotiated with men of influence to gain the necessary support. In these preliminary negotiations the people could exercise considerable influence through their spokesmen. To become a law, the new measure had to be proposed at the *lagthing* and accepted by the people. In matters of taxation the king was also dependent on the will of the people. If new taxes had to be

<sup>1</sup> T. H. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*.

levied, even for special emergencies, a proposal was brought before the various local or *fylkestings*, where the assent of the people had to be secured.

The establishment of the kingdom of Norway based on the theory of a strong national monarchy with centralized legislative and administrative powers necessitated many important changes in the whole system of government. Many new departures of far-reaching importance had been made, especially by Harald Haarfagre, and Olav Haraldsson continued his great predecessor's work of reorganization. The *herser*, or tribal chieftains, who had ruled over larger local districts, were now replaced by *lendermænd* (= men holding lands from the king), or officials appointed by the king. The *herser* had been the leaders of the people — an old aristocracy; the *lendermænd* became the representatives and adherents of the king. The *aarmænd*, who in Harald Haarfagre's time were men of humble station, appointed as overseers of the royal estates, were now replaced by *sysselmænd*, or royal officials. They collected the taxes in their districts, and arrested and punished criminals in the name of the king.

The *hird* was also reorganized. Three classes are mentioned: *hirðmænd*, *gestir*, and *huskarlar*. The *hirðmænd*, usually sons of *lendermænd* and other leading men in the country, constituted the king's court. The *gestir* were sent on difficult and dangerous missions, and executed the police duties exercised by the king throughout the kingdom. The *huskarlar* had charge of the work about the royal residence, and furnished the necessities for the king's household. This class does not seem to have belonged to the *hird* proper. The "King's Mirror" says: "All men who serve the king are called 'huskarlar,' but honor and power are divided among them according to their ability to serve him, and according as he wishes to grant preferments to each. There are some *huskarlar* in the king's *hird* who receive no salary, neither are they permitted to eat or drink with the rest of the *hird*. They must do all things about the royal residence which the overseer demands."<sup>1</sup> They seem to have been

<sup>1</sup> See the description of the *hird* in *The King's Mirror*, XXV. ff. R. Keyser, *Norges Stats og Retsforfatning i Middelalderen*, p. 77 ff. T. H. Ashehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, p. 33. Ebbe Hertz-

young men of good family, who sought this kind of service as a possible road to promotion and royal favor. At the head of the *hird* stood the great officials of the king's court, who acted in the capacity of ministers of state. They were called *hirðstjórar* (leaders of the *hird*). The chief officials were: the *stallari*, who had charge of the royal equipages, and acted as the king's representative at the *thing*; the *merkismaðr*, or royal standard-bearer, the *féhirðir*, or treasurer, and the hirdbishop, who was the king's adviser in ecclesiastical affairs. All public offices, from the lowest to the highest, had thus been organized into an articulate system of national administration.

During the reign of Eirik Jarl and Svein, the powerful chieftains in the colonies had cast off all allegiance to Norway, and ruled as independent princes. The task of reuniting these island possessions with the kingdom required, therefore, the most vigilant attention. Through energetic and tactful measures King Olav soon succeeded in bringing the Orkney and Shetland Islands back to their old allegiance. The Faroe Islands accepted the king's code of church laws, but so long as the crafty Trond i Gata lived, no taxes were paid to the king of Norway. King Olav investigated diligently how Christianity was maintained in Iceland. He persuaded the Icelanders to abolish many heathen customs which were still practiced, but his church laws do not seem to have been established there. He sought to gain the friendship of the Icelandic chieftains, and many of them visited him in Norway. He negotiated with them in regard to the relation between Norway and Iceland, and an agreement was made about 1022, called "The Institutions and Laws Which King Olav Gave the Icelanders." According to this agreement the Icelanders should virtually enjoy the rights and privileges of citizens of Norway. They had the same right of *odel* as other freeholders, and could inherit property in Norway on the same terms as native citizens. They paid no taxes except the *landþre*, which was paid for the privilege of trade and intercourse with Norway. In return, the king's men should have the same rights in Iceland as native citizens, and the suits at law should be brought directly to the highest court. In

berg, *En Fremstilling af det norske Aristokratis Historie*, p. 58 ff. *Hirðskrá*, 43-45, *Norges gamle Love*, vol. II., and Glossary, vol. V. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, part I., vol. II., p. 639 f.



time of war the Icelanders who happened to be in Norway owed the king military service, and could not leave the country. Two out of every three would then have to join the royal standards. This arrangement lasted till 1262, when Iceland was finally united with Norway. King Olav rebuilt the city of Nidaros, which Olav Tryggvason had founded, and restored the royal hall and the St. Clemens church, which had been erected in Olav Tryggvason's time.

More difficult than any other task in King Olav's great work of reorganization was that of reducing the recalcitrant aristocracy to proper submission. Many of the great chieftains who reluctantly had pledged the king a nominal allegiance, soon manifested a hostile opposition to his plans, but King Olav, none the less, proceeded with characteristic energy to restrict their power to what he considered reasonable limits. The powerful Haarek of Tjotta had to divide his *sysse*l with King Olav's friend Osmund Grankelsson, and Aslak Fitjaskalle was made *sysse*lmand in Hordaland, in southwestern Norway, where Erling Skjalgsson of Sole ruled with almost royal power. The king enforced the laws with strict impartiality, and punished with uncompromising severity even the most powerful offenders. The "Heimskringla" says: "He meted out the same punishment to the powerful and to the small, but the great men of the country regarded this as arrogance, and they were greatly offended when they lost their kinsmen through the king's just decision, even if the case was true. This was the cause of the uprising of the great men against King Olav, that they could not tolerate his justice. But he would rather surrender his kingdom than his uprightness."<sup>1</sup> Erling Skjalgsson and others sent their sons to King Knut the Great in England, who received them well, gave them rich presents, and did what he could to encourage the defection of the Norwegian chieftains. King Knut was a powerful monarch who ruled over England, Scotland, Wales, and Denmark. He, also, called himself king of Norway, and claimed even the throne of Sweden. He was tall and stately, with light hair and bright eyes, generous and sociable, a king whom the young nobles loved to serve. So long as Knut was fully occupied with affairs in England, the aristocracy did not venture to rebel openly against King Olav, but the growing power

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Saga of Olav the Saint*, ch. 181.

and influence of King Knut was a steadily growing menace to Norwegian independence. The new king of Sweden, Anund Jacob, was a brother of Olav's queen, Astrid. The two kings made a joint attack on Denmark in an endeavor to seize the country, but King Knut met them with a large fleet, and an undecisive battle was fought by Helgeå, near Skåne, after which all thought of conquering Denmark had to be abandoned. Erling Skjalgsson and Haarek of Tjotta had thrown off all allegiance to King Olav, so that he could find no support in northern and western Norway. King Knut, who had made active preparations to invade the country, left England with a fleet of fifty ships, in 1028, and a Danish fleet lay ready to join him. When this news reached Norway, the chieftains of Trøndelagen assembled the Ørething and proclaimed Knut king, and Erling Skjalgsson hastened to his assistance at the earliest opportunity. But Olav would still strike a blow for his throne and his country. He left Viken with thirteen ships, and met Erling Skjalgsson's squadron near Utstein in southwestern Norway. A battle was fought which resulted in the defeat and death of Erling. It was now late in the fall, and a great fleet was advancing against him from Trøndelagen. All further resistance was useless. He steered his ships into a fjord in Søndmør, took leave of his friends, and through the winter's snow he made his way across the mountains to Sweden. He spent some time in the island of Gothland, where he introduced Christianity. From there he proceeded to Novgorod, and finally to Kief, where he found refuge at the court of his brother-in-law, Duke Jaroslaf of Gardarike.

#### 46. NORWAY UNDER DANISH OVERLORDSHIP. THE BATTLE OF STIKLESTAD. KING OLAV THE SAINT

King Knut the Great, who was now over-king of Norway, placed Haakon, the son of Eirik Jarl, in charge of the kingdom as his deputy or vassal. Haakon went to England, where he married Gunhild, a daughter of King Knut's sister, but on his return voyage he was drowned in the Pentlandsfjord, and the great Ladejarl family became extinct in the male line. Both Kalv Arnesson and Einar Tambar skjælver aspired to become his successor, but Knut let them under-

stand that he intended to make his own son king of Norway. This was a great disappointment to the ambitious nobles. It became apparent that the benefit which they were to derive from their rebellion against King Olav would be considerably smaller than they had been led to anticipate. Einar Tambarskjælver became quite disgusted, and remained absent from Norway till after the battle of Stiklestad.

Olav Haraldsson languished in exile at Grand Duke Jaroslaf's court. He was moody and unhappy, and could never wholly relinquish the idea of rescuing Norway from foreign rule. The "*Heimskringla*" states that Olav Tryggvason appeared before him in his dreams, and told him to return to Norway and claim the kingdom which God had given him. "It makes a king renowned to gain victory over his enemies, but it is a glorious death to fall on the battlefield with one's men." Many of Olav's men had joined him in Gardaríke, and they encouraged him to attempt to wrest Norway from the foreign conquerors. When the news spread that Haakon was dead, he determined to return to Norway. He left his son Magnus at the court of Jaroslaf, and proceeded to Sweden, where King Anund Jacob gave him great aid, though he did not dare to form an alliance with him against King Knut. He gave him a number of soldiers, and allowed him to recruit many more.<sup>1</sup> His adherents in the eastern districts of Norway also aided him. His half-brother Harald Sigurdsson, son of King Sigurd Syr and Aasta, the later chieftain of the Varangians in Myklegard (Constantinople), joined him with a force of 720 men. People of all sorts drifted to his standards, and he was able to enter Norway with a considerable army. He had some good troops, but the greater portion of these hasty levies were of inferior quality.<sup>2</sup> In Trøndelagen the chieftains, on hearing of King Olav's return, had gathered a large army of the

<sup>1</sup> Queen Astrid remained in Sweden at the court of her brother, King Anund, and did not return to Norway till in the reign of Magnus the Good. She was accompanied by their only daughter, Ulvhild, who later married Orulf, son of the Duke of Saxony, of the House of the Welfs.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Norges Historie*, vol. I, 2, p. 404. Olav, who had made Christianity his special cause, possessed the ardor and vehemence of a crusader, but the *Heimskringla* is evidently in error when it states that before the battle of Stiklestad he sent away 600 men who would not accept



best forces in the country under such able generals as Kalv Arnesson, Tore Hund, and Haarek of Tjotta. Kalv Arnesson had the chief command. The "Heimskringla" states that their army numbered 12,000 men, while Olav had only 3600 men; but these figures are, no doubt, too large. Henrik Mathiesen<sup>1</sup> estimates the forces of the chieftains to have numbered about 5000 men. Sighvat Scald says that they gained the victory because they had twice as many men as King Olav, who, accordingly, must have had a force of about 2500 men. Olav marched across the mountains to Værdalen in Trøndelagen, and selected a very advantageous position at Stiklestad. According to the "Olavssaga ins helga" he remained here a few days before the arrival of the chieftains and their forces, waiting for Dag Ringsson, who was bringing reënforcements; but Dag reached Stiklestad too late to be of any assistance. On the morning before the battle, legend tells, while the army was still resting, King Olav fell asleep, leaning his head upon the knee of Finn Arnesson, Kalv Arnesson's brother, who had remained faithful to him. He dreamed that a ladder reached from the earth to heaven, and that he had reached the highest round. Here Christ stood and beckoned to him, and promised him reward for his faithful work. At noon, on July 29, 1030, the two armies faced each other on the field of Stiklestad in full battle array. King Olav stood in the midst of his army in brynje and gilt helmet. He carried the sword "Hneiter" and a white shield on which a golden cross was painted. His white standard with a dragon in the center was carried by his standard-bearer, Thord Foleson. About one o'clock, the war trumpets sounded the signal for advance. The serried columns of warriors rushed down the sloping ground to the combat; the most notable battle in Norwegian history had begun. Olav's plan was to throw his opponents into disorder by a vigorous assault, and in this he was partly successful. The lines in his front yielded before the furious onset, and great confusion resulted. But the experienced generals and well disciplined forces of the enemy soon regained their foothold. Olav's

the Christian faith. The scald Sighvat, who was with him in the battle, says: "Not all the warriors believed in God; the army was divided into two parts; the famous king asked the Christians to stand on his right hand."

<sup>1</sup> *Det gamle Trondhjem*, p. 104 ff.

small army was outflanked and surrounded, attacked in front and rear, and overwhelmed by superior numbers. The king was soon wounded in the mêlée. He had dropped his sword and stood leaning against a stone when Kalv Arnesson and Tore Hund, who pressed forward toward the royal standard, found him and cut him down. Thord Foleson the standard-bearer, Bjørn Stallare, and many other leading men of the royal army were now dead, and many were wounded. Among the latter were Thormod Kolbrunarskald, who on the morning of the battle had awakened King Olav's army with a song. He withdrew from the conflict with an arrow in his bosom and died before evening.<sup>1</sup> Dag Ringsson now arrived and made a spirited attack, but he could not prevent the complete rout of the royal forces. Those who could sought safety in flight; among others Harald Sigurdsson, who was severely wounded. After his recovery, Harald went to Russia to Grand Duke Jaroslaf, and later he proceeded to Constantinople, where he became captain of the Varangians in the service of the Greek Emperor.

Christianity was no longer the issue in the battle of Stiklestad. The Christian faith had been so firmly established that the chieftains did not attempt, and, probably, did not even desire, to subvert it. The memorable battle was a struggle between the old system of aristocratic rule, and the new royalty leagued with the ideas of national union, independence, and progress toward higher cultural ideals. For this cause King Olav had labored, and in devotion to it he gave his life. But the aristocracy had triumphed. The king lay dead on the field of battle, and the national cause seemed hopelessly lost when the rumor got abroad that Olav was a saint. The glory of his martyrdom emanating from the battlefield of Stiklestad kindled the first sparks of patriotism, and gave the lost national cause a new and sacred consecration. Those who had opposed Olav the king now willingly bent the knee before Olav the saint. His name became the rallying cry of patriots; his great work and still greater sacrifice for his high ideals had united all hearts; his defeat at Stiklestad had turned into a national victory.

An English lady Ælfgifu (N. Alfiva) bore King Knut a son, Svein,

<sup>1</sup> The story of Thormod's death is told in the *Heimskringla, Saga of Olav the Saint*, ch. 234.

who was now about fourteen years of age. Svein was made viceroy of Norway, and his mother accompanied him, acting as his adviser, though it is generally acknowledged that she was the real ruler during Svein's short reign. The old form of aristocratic government was not reestablished as might have been expected. King Knut was not satisfied with maintaining merely a nominal overlordship, as Harald Gormson had done in earlier days, but demanded for his son powers and privileges far exceeding those which King Olav had claimed. Svein and Alfiva established Danish laws, and began to rule as if they were exercising unlimited dominion over a conquered people, though it was the Norwegian nobles, and not the Danes, who had defeated King Olav. No one was permitted to leave the country without permission from the king. The property of persons convicted of murder was confiscated by the king, and the inheritance of persons outlawed for crime was swept into the royal coffers. The fishermen had to give a part of their catch to the king; a tax called "Christmas gifts" was levied; all ships leaving Norwegian harbors had to pay a tax called "landøre," and the people had to erect all buildings needed on the royal estates. Each seventh man had to do military service, and the testimony of a Dane (a member of the king's *hird*) was to be worth that of ten Norsemen. King Knut's failure to keep his promise to the Norwegian nobles had caused great disappointment, but the government which he established added insult to injury, and awakened the bitterest resentment even among the chieftains who had given him the kingdom. King Olav, who had fought so bravely for national independence, was contrasted with the foreign oppressors. His justice and heroism were extolled, and the deep mutterings of popular discontent soon grew into angry avowals that disloyalty to him was treason, and that slavery under foreign rulers had been substituted for national independence. The rumor that King Olav was a saint added new strength to the growing storm of discontent. The eclipse which occurred on August 31st, a month after the battle of Stiklestad, was thought to be in some way connected with King Olav's defeat and death, and the association of ideas soon established the conviction that the eclipse took place at the time of the battle. Miracles were said to have happened while the king's body was lying on the battlefield. Thorgils Halm-



ason and his son Grim, who were living near Stiklestad, saw on the night after the battle a light issue from the place where the king's body was lying. They carried the corpse away, and hid it carefully from his enemies, but the same light was seen every night. King Olav's cheeks did not fade, but retained their ruddy color. His hair, beard, and fingernails continued to grow, and sick persons who prayed to the dead king were healed. King Svein and his mother made every effort to hush down and explain away these stories about Olav, but this only nursed the wrath of the people against the enemies of their patriotic and sainted king. The disappointed nobles supported the growing opposition to the Danes. "It was Einar Tambarskjælver's boast that he had not taken part in the uprising against King Olav. He remembered that King Knut had promised him a jarldom in Norway, and that he had not kept his word. Einar was the first of the chieftains to maintain that King Olav was a saint."<sup>1</sup> Olav's body was brought to Nidaros and interred in the St. Clemens church, which he had built. Bishop Grimkel proclaimed him a saint, and the 29th of July, the day of his death, was dedicated as a church holiday, the Olavmas, in his honor.<sup>2</sup> A pretender by the name of Tryggve now appeared, who claimed to be a son of Olav Tryggvason. He came to Norway with a small force, but was defeated and slain by Svein. But the powerful *lendermænd* gave the king no support. They summoned a *thing*

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Saga of Olav the Saint*, ch. 241.

<sup>2</sup> In early Christian times the congregation had the right to declare a person a saint, but canonization by an act of the Pope originated as early as 975, and in the twelfth century, in the pontificate of Alexander III., the Holy See claimed the sole power of canonization. In later times, the local saints, who had not received papal sanction, were called "beati," while those who were canonized by the Pope were called "sancti," or saints of the highest order. Bishop Grimkel's declaration was still at this time the only official act necessary to make King Olav a saint of the first rank, and his saintship was later recognized in papal letters by Alexander VI., 1255, and by Clemens IV, 1266. The sagas tell us that King Olav had been buried a year and five days before he was finally interred in the St. Clemens church. Before the interment Bishop Grimkel opened the coffin, and showed the king to the assembled people. His cheeks had not faded, but he looked as if he slept, and a pleasant odor arose from the body. It seems certain that the priests had embalmed the body before it was buried, as it is known to have existed 500 years later. Ludvig Daae, *Norges Helgener*, p. 5.

at Nidaros, where the people presented their complaints, but Svein and his mother were unable to give any answer. Einar Tambar-skjælver arose and said, "Go home, ye people! A bad errand you have now, as you have had before when you appealed to Alfiva and King Svein. You might as well await injustice at home as to seek it all at once in this one place. Now you listen to the words of a woman, but you refused to listen to King Olav, who was in truth a saint. A vile treason was committed against him, and our punishment has been severe, while such great humiliation has fallen on our people since this rule was established over them. God grant that it may not last long! It has already lasted too long."<sup>1</sup>

King Svein and his mother tried in vain to assemble a new *thing*. No one came in answer to their summons. They began to fear a general uprising, and in the winter (1033-1034) they left Nidaros, and Danish dominion in Norway was ended. The people of Trøndelagen determined to place St. Olav's son, Magnus, on the throne. Einar Tambar-skjælver and Kalv Arnesson were sent to Gardarike as special envoys to offer him the crown. He accompanied them to Norway, and was proclaimed king in 1034, or 1035.

Olav's canonization was an event of the greatest importance, not only because of the immediate results which it produced, but also through the influence which St. Olav was destined to exercise on the religious and national development in the future. The hero-king and great lawgiver had become the patron saint and supreme representative of the nation, the *perpetuus rex Norwegiae* under whose egis both royalty and hierarchy could henceforth exercise permanent and unquestioned authority. The old church still standing at Stiklestad was built, it is thought, on the very spot where King Olav fell, and the rock near which he suffered death is said to have been inclosed in the altar of the church. But Nidaros, where the king was buried, became the chief St. Olav sanctuary in Norway, and pilgrims from many lands visited the saint's grave every year. They came from Sweden, Denmark, and Russia; from the Baltic Sea countries, and from the British Isles.<sup>2</sup> In course of time their

<sup>1</sup> *Olavssaga ins helga*, ch. 102. *Fagrskinna*, ch. 119.

<sup>2</sup> "The capital of the Norsemen is Trondensis, which is beautified by many churches, and which is visited by a great number of people. There

rich offerings to the Saint enabled the archbishop of Norway to erect a cathedral in Trondhjem, the most magnificent in the Scandinavian North. Crosses and chapels were erected in various places made sacred by Olav; but the commemoration of the saint spread also to other countries, and many churches were dedicated to him in foreign lands. In the island of Gothland; in Ångermanland, Hel-singland, Upsala, and other districts in Sweden he was especially honored. There were St. Olav churches in Norrköping and Lödöse, and the monasteries in Åbo, Strengnes, Skara and Enköping were dedicated to him. In Denmark the commemoration of St. Olav was very widespread, which can be seen from the number of churches dedicated to him in all parts of the Danish kingdom. In England a number of churches were named in his honor. In London alone there were four St. Olav churches: one in Southwark, one in Silver street, and two in the eastern part of the city. There was also a Tooley (= St. Olav) street, and Exeter had a St. Olav church. Chester has still an Olaf's church and an Olaf street. York has an Olaf's church, and Norfolk a St. Olave's bridge. Churches were also dedicated to St. Olav in Reval in Esthonia, in Novgorod and Constantinople, and there is evidence that he was commemorated also in Ireland, Scotland, and Normandy.<sup>1</sup>

#### 47. MAGNUS THE GOOD. THE UNION OF NORWAY AND DENMARK

Magnus Olavsson met with no resistance on his arrival in Norway. King Knut the Great died in England in 1035, and Svein and Alfiva (Ælfgifu) fled to Denmark, where Svein died the year following. What plans King Knut had with regard to the succession is not

rests the body of Olav, the blessed king and saint, at whose grave God till this day performs great wonders of healing, so that many people journey thither from distant lands, hoping to receive help through the merit of the holy martyr." Adam v. Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, IV., ch. 39.

"His day of commemoration, which is the 29th of July, is held sacred by all the people dwelling about the northern ocean: Norsemen, Swedes, Götar, Danes, Sembs and Slavs, by perpetual celebration." Adam v. Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, II., ch. 59. Kristian Bing, *Norsk Tradition om Middelalderens Olavsfest*, *Bergens historiske Forenings Skrift*, no. 8.

<sup>1</sup> P. Nordmann, *St. Olavs Dyrkan i Finland*. Jacobus Langebek, *Scrip-tores Regum Danicarum, Legendae aliquot de Sancto Olavo Rege Norwegiae*.



known, but it is probable that he desired his realm to remain united under his one legitimate son Hardeknut, son of Emma, who had already been crowned king of Denmark.<sup>1</sup> But Harald Harefoot, the son of Knut and his English mistress Alfiva, the mother of Svein, was staying in England, and when Knut died he became an active candidate for the throne. Hardeknut was, therefore, compelled to come to an understanding with King Magnus. In order to terminate the hostilities between Norway and Denmark, which had already been in progress for some time, the two kings met at Brennørne, near the mouth of the Göta River, in 1038, and concluded a treaty of peace. Hardeknut recognized the independence of Norway, and a compact was entered into by the kings that if one of them died without an heir, the other should inherit his kingdom, and twelve leading men of each country took an oath to maintain the compact. The treaty of Brennørne is a counterpart of the treaty of Konghelle concluded with Sweden in 1019. The integrity and independence of Norway had now been duly recognized, and the kings of the Yngling dynasty were regarded as possessing the same full legitimacy as the royal families of Denmark and Sweden. King Olav's great fame both as king and saint had made a deep impression on the whole Scandinavian North, and contributed greatly to win for Norway an unqualified recognition as a sovereign and independent state. When Magnus returned to Trondhjem, says the saga, he placed King Olav's body in a beautiful casket ornamented with gold, silver, and precious stones. He also began the erection of a St. Olav's church, in which the remains of the saint were to be deposited; but this structure was not completed till in the next reign.

Before Magnus became king, he had to promise full amnesty to those who had taken part in the armed opposition to his father. It seems that he also agreed to abrogate the noxious laws introduced by King Svein, and to reëstablish the laws of King Olav. But youthful impetuosity soon led him to deal harshly with his father's old enemies. When Haarek of Tjotta was killed by a personal

<sup>1</sup> Laurence M. Larson, *The Efforts of the Danish Kings to Recover the English Crown after the Death of Harthacnut*. *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1910.

enemy, the offender was not punished. Tore Hund died on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and Kalv Arnesson had to flee to the Orkneys to Thorfinn Jarl, who was married to Ingebjørg, the daughter of his brother Finn Arnesson. There had been much secret rivalry between Kalv and Einar Tambarskjælver, both of whom had aspired to become jarl. Einar, who had taken no part in the uprising against King Olav, gained the friendship of Magnus, but the young king was unable to forgive Kalv, who had been the leader of the opposition to his father. Einar was styled the king's fosterfather, or chief councilor, and exercised great influence. Many who had taken part in the battle of Stiklestad against Olav were made to feel the king's wrath, and the laws of Svein were not repealed as quickly as had been expected. The people grew dissatisfied and chose as their spokesman the scald Sighvat Thordsson, who had been King Olav's closest friend, and who now occupied a similar position of honor and confidence at the court of King Magnus. In a song called "Bersøglisvísur"<sup>1</sup> the scald reminded the young king of his promises to the people, showed him how ill it befits a king to break his word, and pointed to the growing dissatisfaction and the danger of such a situation. So deeply was Magnus impressed with the song that he immediately changed his ways. He became so just and kind that the people henceforth called him Magnus the Good. He granted amnesty to all, and promised to improve the laws by gradually revoking the more oppressive measures of King Svein's reign.

The ties which united the island colonies with the mother country were weakened by the repeated overthrow of the government, as

<sup>1</sup> Sighvat was one of the foremost scalds, and the "Bersøglisvísur" is one of the finest specimens of scaldic poetry. Others excelled him in imagination and brilliant word-painting, but Sighvat thinks deep and fine thoughts, and we see behind his lines a wise and high-minded man. He sings less about war and battles than do other scalds, but more about lofty aims, and the ends to be attained by man's efforts. The greater part of the song has been preserved. Nine stanzas are found in the *Heimskringla*.

Accounts of the events of this period are found in the *Ágrip*, in Theodricus Monachus' *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, *Morkinskinna*, *Flateyjarbók*, *Fagrskinna*, and in *Heimskringla*. The relation of these sources has been discussed by Professor Gustav Storm in his work *Snorre Sturlasons Historieskrivning*.

well as by the establishing of foreign dominion in Norway. As the Danish kings paid little attention to the Norwegian colonies, the jarls and chieftains who ruled over the island groups found opportunity to make themselves independent. In the Orkneys Thorfinn Jarl had regained his old independence after the fall of St. Olav, and the crafty and powerful Trond i Gata had ruled the Faroe Islands according to his own pleasure since the death of Sigmund Brestesson. But when Trond died in 1035, Leiv Assursson, another Faroe chieftain, went to Norway and tendered his submission to King Magnus, who placed him in charge of the colony. Thereby Norwegian sovereignty was again established in the Faroe Islands.<sup>1</sup> The king's measures with regard to the Orkneys proved less successful. It has been noted elsewhere that, on the death of Sigurd Lodvesson, the Orkneys were divided among his sons Sumarlide, Bruse, and Einar; but none of them lived long, and their half-brother, Thorfinn Sigurdsson, became jarl, and seized all their possessions. Bruse's son, Ragnvald, who was staying at the court of the Grand Duke Jaroslaf, in Gardarike, had accompanied Magnus to Norway. Magnus gave him the title of jarl, and granted him his father's possessions in these islands. Ragnvald was well received by Thorfinn, who at this time was engaged in wars in Scotland. He granted him two-thirds of the islands, and they became friends and allies. But while Kalv Arnesson, the uncle of Thorfinn's wife Ingebjørg, was staying in the Orkneys, Thorfinn and Ragnvald became enemies, and hostilities resulted in which Ragnvald lost his life. The colony did not return to its allegiance to Norway till in 1066, in the reign of Harald Haardraade.

King Knut the Great is thought to have been about forty years old at the time of his death. He came to England as a conqueror, but proved to be one of the ablest and wisest of English kings. During the last five years of his reign he ruled over a great empire including England and Scotland, Denmark, Norway, the Orkney Islands, and the Viking colonies in the Hebrides and the Isle of Man. The

<sup>1</sup> The memory of the three great chieftains, Brester, Sigmund Brestesson, and Leiv Assursson has been preserved in a runic inscription on a rune-stone found in the Faroe Islands. N. Winter, *Færøernes Oldtidshistorie*, p. 154 ff. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, part I., vol. II., p. 859.



extensive possessions under his own immediate rule he governed with a wisdom and moderation which entitles him to be numbered with the greatest monarchs.<sup>1</sup> He did not confiscate the people's lands for the benefit of his own followers, or in other ways treat England as a conquered country. His soldiers received a money payment, and the people were allowed to keep their lands. He established the old English laws, known as the "Laws of Edward the Confessor," and ruled as a native English sovereign. He was one of the wisest and most prolific of early English lawgivers; he became an earnest Christian, and remained throughout his reign deeply attached to the intellectual life and higher culture of western Europe. But Knut's worthless sons did not walk in their father's footsteps. In 1036 Harald Harefoot (son of Ælfgifu or Alfiva) succeeded him on the throne of England, but his reign was short and inglorious. He was ambitious and violent, and seemed more devoted to hunting than to the affairs of the state, wherefore the people, fitly enough, nicknamed him Harefoot. He died at Oxford in 1040 at the moment when his half-brother Hardeknut (son of Emma) finally arrived in England. Hardeknut was, if possible, even less qualified to occupy a throne than his worthless brother. He promised amnesty to all who had hitherto sided with Harald Harefoot, but as soon as he was crowned king he began to levy heavy taxes to pay his large army. He was harsh and narrow-minded, and lacked every kingly quality. When this unworthy son of the great King Knut suddenly died in his twenty-fifth year, in the second year of his reign, the people felt it as a riddance. He was succeeded by his half-brother, Edward the Confessor, the last surviving son of King Æthelred and Emma.

According to the treaty of Brennørne, King Magnus of Norway succeeded Hardeknut as king of Denmark. King Knut's family was now extinct in the male line, and Svein Ulvsson, or Svein Estrids-son, a son of Ulv Jarl and Knut's sister Estrid, who was the nearest heir to the throne, was unable to rally the people to his support. King Magnus Olavsson was now eighteen years old, a well-built young man with light auburn hair and noble features. He was brave, well skilled in the use of arms, and had already gained a reputation for justice. The Danes welcomed him with unfeigned enthusi-

<sup>1</sup> Laurence Marcellus Larson, *Canute the Great*.

asm, mixed with a veneration accorded him as the son of the greatest saint in the North. With characteristic generosity King Magnus made Svein Estridsson a jarl, with the understanding that he should defend the borders of Jutland against the Wends. He married his sister Ulvhild to Ordulf, son of the Duke of Saxony, and secured thereby the friendship and support of that powerful family. Magnus, who enjoyed great power and renown, claimed also the throne of England as the heir of King Hardeknut according to the treaty of Brennørne. The "Saga of Magnus the Good"<sup>1</sup> states that he sent the following message to King Edward the Confessor: "You may have heard of the agreement which was made between King Hardeknut and myself, that the one who lived longest should inherit the lands and subjects of the other, if he died without a male heir. Now it has come to pass, as I know you have learned, that I have fallen heir to all the Danish possessions of King Hardeknut. But at the time of his death he held England no less than Denmark, and I, therefore, claim England according to the agreement made. I desire that you give up the kingdom to me, otherwise I will attack it with an army both from Denmark and Norway, and he will then govern it who wins the victory." The "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" shows that in 1046 an invasion from Norway was expected, and that the English fleet was stationed at Sandwich ready to defend the coast. But "Svein's fight with him (*i.e.* with Magnus) hindered him from coming hither," says the chronicle. Subsequent events in Denmark prove the correctness of these statements. Einar Tambar skjælver is said to have shaken his head when he heard that Magnus had made Svein Estridsson a jarl. "Too powerful a jarl," was his comment. Svein was soon tempted to begin an uprising against King Magnus. He made an alliance with the Wends, against whom he was to protect the borders, and Magnus had to call out half the military forces of Norway to put down the rebellion. Svein was compelled to flee, but at any favorable moment he might renew the attack, and with so dangerous an enemy at his back Magnus did

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Saga of Magnus the Good*, ch. 36. *Diplomatarium Norwegicum, Oldbreve*, edited by Alexander Bugge, Christiania, 1910, nittende samling, part I., p. 25. Letter of King Magnus to King Edward, p. 26, King Edward's answer.

not venture to undertake an invasion of England. The fortified city of Jónsborg was also an inconvenient neighbor. So long as this independent Viking stronghold did not submit to King Magnus it was a constant source of danger to his kingdom, and he resolutely marched against it and captured it after a spirited resistance. In the meanwhile the Wends,<sup>1</sup> who had not been held in check by Svein Estridsson, poured over the borders, and committed fearful depredations in southern Jutland. Magnus gathered a large army at Hedeby, and his brother-in-law, Ordulf of Saxony, came to his assistance with a considerable force. On Michaelmas, Sept. 29, 1043, he faced the Wendish host on Lyrskog Heath, and defeated them in a most sanguinary battle. Under these circumstances the intended invasion of England had to be abandoned, but Magnus had won great renown through his many victories. He had overcome all opposition, and the peace and security of the Danish kingdom was safely established. Everything now augured well for a prosperous and peaceful reign, but Magnus was still to learn that "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." A most formidable rival suddenly appeared to place new difficulties in his path. This was Harald Sigurdsson,<sup>2</sup> a half-brother of St. Olav, son of Aasta and King Sigurd Syr. During the fifteen years which had passed since the battle of Stiklestad, he had gained great renown as chief of the Varangians in the service of the Greek Emperor at Byzantium. He had married Elizabeth (Ellisiv), daughter of Grand Duke Jaroslaw of Gardaríke, and brought great treasures with him to Norway. Elizabeth seems to have died soon after their marriage, as Harald married Thora of the Arnsmødling family shortly after his arrival in Norway. Harald was a talented leader of the old martial type, who never hesitated to make the sword the arbiter of every controversy. The sagas describe him as

<sup>1</sup> In the early centuries of the Christian era the Germanic peoples on the south shores of the Baltic Sea began a general migration towards the borders of the Roman Empire. The Slavs pushed westward and occupied the vacated territory as far as the mouth of the Elbe. They were generally known as the Wends. They were still heathens, and were often very troublesome neighbors.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Friedrich Suhm, *Forsøg til Forbedringer i den gamle danske og norske Historie*, Harald Haardraade. *Heimskringla*, Harald Haardraade's Saga. Theodricus Monachus, *De Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, ch. XXV. *Fagrskinna*, p. 106 ff. *Morkinskinna*, p. I. ff. *Agrip*.



very tall and strong, resolute and energetic. He possessed in an eminent degree the spirit of enterprise and reckless daring which characterized the great Viking chieftains, and his military achievements in the Levant were soon extolled in a whole literature of fictitious tales, in which he is represented as the central figure in every historic event with which he was in any way connected. The saga narratives, based partly on these tales, and partly on scaldic songs which were often misunderstood, because they told of unknown and distant lands, are wholly unreliable in details. Only the more general features which are corroborated by other sources can be accepted as history. P. A. Munch has shown that the scaldic songs agree in all main features with the Byzantine writers, and that a reliable account of Harald's early career can be extracted from these sources.<sup>1</sup> The correctness of Munch's position was later proven

<sup>1</sup> In his *Samlede Afhandlinger*, vol. I., p. 505 ff., and in *Det norske Folks Historie*, part II., Professor P. A. Munch has examined critically all the sources dealing with Harald Sigurdsson's sojourn in the far East. He finds that the most elaborate account is found in the *Flateyjarbók*, which is a comparatively late production from about 1380. But the account is, evidently, borrowed from the *Morkinskinna*, which, with the exception of the fragment *Ágrip*, is the oldest existing connected history of the Norwegian kings written in the Norse language, dating from about 1220. The chapters in the *Morkinskinna* treating of King Magnus the Good and Harald Sigurdsson have been lost, but the corresponding chapters in *Flateyjarbók*, III., 251-441, have preserved the *Morkinskinna* version, which is the oldest existing form of the narrative. The *Fagskinna*, which is somewhat younger, and which is written with more critical ability, has eliminated many of the more legendary features; and Snorre in his *Heimskringla*, from about 1230, has discarded many more of the untrustworthy features. He says that he has left much unwritten about Harald's great deeds. "This is due partly to our lack of knowledge, and partly because we do not want to record in books stories which rest on no sure testimony. Even though we may have heard things told, or spoken of, it seems better that something should be added later, than that anything should have to be stricken out." *Heimskringla*, *Harald Haardraade's Saga*, ch. 36.

The account of Harald's exploits in the Orient is also found in the two fragments of history of the Norwegian kings *Hrykkjarstykki* and *Hrokkinskinna*, on which the text of the *Fornmanna Sögur*, vol. VI., has been based. The Byzantine sources are the *Chronicle of Kedren* (George Kedrenos), and the *Annals of Zonaras*, who lived in the middle of the twelfth century. His contemporary, Glykas, follows Kedren. The most reliable Norse sources are the songs of the scalds. Many stories about Harald's exploits are found in Saxo Grammaticus and William of Malmesbury.

through the discovery of a document which threw new light on the subject. In 1881 Professor Wassilievsky of Moscow published a treatise on a newly discovered Greek manuscript from the eleventh century, written by a contemporary of Harald Sigurdsson.<sup>1</sup> The author tells us that Araltes (Harald) was a son of the king of Varangia, and that his brother Julavos (Olav) had made him next to himself in rank. But Araltes, who was young and had learned to admire the power of the Romans, wished to do homage to Emperor Michael Paflagōn (also called Michael Katalaktus), and came to Constantinople with 500 brave warriors. This agrees with the "Heimskringla," which states that Harald had many men. The author further states that the Emperor sent him to Sicily, where the Roman army was carrying on war. He must have served under the imperial general Georgios Maniakes, whom he aided in the conquest of Sicily, 1038-1040. He performed great feats of arms, says the author, and on his return the Emperor gave him the title of "manglabites." Then it happened that Delianos in Bulgaria rose in rebellion. Harald accompanied the Emperor into that province, and performed such deeds as befitted his rank and valor. On his return to Constantinople the Emperor conferred on him the title of "spatharo-kandidatos."<sup>2</sup> Harald's campaign in Bulgaria is not mentioned in the sagas, but it is referred to in a song by the scald Thjodolv Arnorrson. Harald was staying in Constantinople when the Emperor died in December, 1041, and also during the short reign of Michael Kalifates, who was dethroned April 21, 1042. He did military service for a while also under the next Emperor, Konstantin Monomachos, but he sought permission to leave, "because he wished to return to his own country." This request was refused, but Harald made good his escape, 1043 or 1044. The author is also able to state that Harald became king in his own country after his brother Olav, and that as king he maintained his old friendship with the Romans. From the scaldic songs, which corroborate the statements of the author, and on many points supplement the account, we learn that Harald also took part in

<sup>1</sup> Gustav Storm, *Harald Haardraade og Væringerne i de græske Keiseres Tjeneste*, *Historisk Tidsskrift udgivet af den norske historiske Forening*, Christiania, vol. IV., p. 354 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Spatharo-kandidatos* = officer of the swordsmen, or officer of the Emperor's bodyguard.

campaigns in Syria and Mesopotamia, and that he went to Jerusalem with a body of Varangians, probably to guard the architects and laborers sent by the Emperor to erect a new church in that city.

After Harald left Constantinople, he went to Grand Duke Jaroslav in Gardaríke. He married Ellisiv, the grand duke's daughter, as already stated, and after having spent some time at his court, he crossed the Baltic with a single ship, and came to Sigtuna in Sweden. Here he met Svein Estridsson, who sought to persuade him to join in an attack on King Magnus; but Harald decided to try negotiations. He proceeded to Denmark, and found Magnus stationed with his fleet in Øresund (the Sound), on the coast of Skåne. Harald had a stately vessel, beautifully painted, with gilt dragon head and dragon's tail, and with a sail of costly material. The sudden appearance of such a ship caused no small surprise on the royal fleet, and King Magnus sent a vessel forward to hail the stranger. In answer to the inquiry of the king's messengers a tall and stately man came forward and told them that he was sent by Harald Sigurdsson, King Magnus' uncle, to learn how he would receive him. The tall stranger was Harald Sigurdsson himself. When this news was brought the king, he immediately sent word that he would receive his uncle with open arms. Harald then landed and was received by King Magnus and all his leading men. In a few days negotiations were begun. Harald asked if Magnus would recognize his right of succession to the throne, and grant him one-half of his kingdom; to which Magnus replied that in such matters he would follow the advice of his chief counselors. Einar Tambarskjælver then arose and said that if Harald received half the kingdom, it was but fair that he should divide his treasures with King Magnus; but this Harald refused to do. Einar, who was ruffled by the refusal of so generous an offer, said to him: "Far away you were, Harald, while we won the kingdom back from the Knytlings (King Knut and his sons), and we have no desire to be divided between chieftains. Hitherto we have served only one at a time, and so it shall be as long as King Magnus lives. I will do all in my power to prevent you from getting any part of the kingdom." Harald now returned to Sweden, where he formed an alliance with Svein Estridsson. Denmark was attacked, and Harald harried the Danish islands in true Viking fashion, as it appears,



against the will of Svein, who could only gain the people's ill-will through such depredations. When Magnus came with a fleet, Harald made his way to Norway, where he hoped to be proclaimed king in Magnus' absence. He first tried to win his own home districts in Oplandene, but the people remained indifferent. In Gudbrandsdal he was more successful. His powerful relative, the youthful Thore of Steig, aided him. Harald called a *thing*, where Thore gave him the royal title, which, together with the band of followers which he had gathered, gave him new prestige. When Magnus learned of Harald's whereabouts, he quickly returned to Norway, but a clash of arms was averted by the chieftains, who did not want to see two near relatives wage war against each other. A meeting was arranged, and negotiations were renewed. It seems that the chieftains were determined not to divide the kingdom, and not to tolerate two kings except as joint sovereigns. An agreement was finally reached on the basis of Einar Tambarskjælver's earlier proposition. Harald should share the throne of Norway with Magnus, and in return he should divide his treasures with him. The joint sovereignty appears to have been limited to Norway, which was now for the first time to be ruled by two kings exercising equal authority. The kings had each their own *hird*, but rivalry and jealousy between their followers and adherents soon bred serious trouble. Harald, who was harsh and uncompromising, was nicknamed Haardraade (Hard-ruler), and was often contrasted in a disparaging way with the kind and generous Magnus the Good. The people, especially the chieftains, sided with Magnus, and Harald grew very embittered against Einar Tambarskjælver, who became the leader of an opposition to the new king, whom he regarded as an usurper. In 1047 Magnus and Harald made an expedition to Denmark, and drove out Svein Estridsson, but Magnus died suddenly in Seeland. According to Saxo Grammaticus, Svein Aagesson, and Adam v. Bremen, he was thrown from his horse while pursuing Svein, and received so severe an injury that he died shortly after on board his ship, 1047. Before he died he willed the kingdom of Denmark to Svein Estridsson, whom he had learned to respect as a courageous and able prince. Magnus was highly beloved by the Norwegian people, and his death caused general mourning. He left no son to succeed him

on the throne; a fortunate circumstance, perhaps, as civil strife between rival candidates was thereby averted. Harald immediately assembled all the warriors of the fleet, and announced to them that he did not want to abide by the decision of King Magnus, as he regarded Denmark as well as Norway his rightful inheritance. But the warriors refused to follow him on a campaign in Denmark until he had properly buried King Magnus. Einar Tambarskjælver told him that he would rather follow Magnus dead than any other king living. With a large part of the fleet he left King Harald, and set sail for Trondhjem, where Magnus was interred in the St. Clemens church by the side of his father, St. Olav. Harald could do nothing against Denmark for the present. He went to Viken in southern Norway, and assembled the Borgarthing, where he was proclaimed king of all Norway. He was also proclaimed King Magnus' successor at the Ørething, in Trøndelagen, according to old custom, and the following year he married Thora, the daughter of Thorberg Arnesson of Giske, as already mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

#### 48. THE REIGN OF HARALD HAARDRAADE

Olav Trygvason and Olav Haraldsson had to win the throne as a prize in armed conflict with the aristocracy, but Harald Sigurdsson Haardraade became king of Norway without opposition, though he was very unpopular. Since St. Olav's time a complete change had taken place in the people's attitude towards the centralized power of monarchical government. Kingship was now looked upon as a fully legitimated national institution, and Harald succeeded to the throne

<sup>1</sup> The *Heimskringla* is authority for the story that King Harald had two wives at the same time. In 1045 he married Ellisiv (Elizabeth), daughter of Grand Duke Jaroslaf, and three years later he married Thora, daughter of Thorberg Arnesson of Giske. Snorre says that when Harald departed on his expedition to England, he left Queen Thora in Norway, but Queen Ellisiv and her daughters, Maria and Ingegerd, accompanied him. *Heimskringla*, *Harald Haardraade's Saga*, ch. 82. That Harald, who was a Christian king, could live in open bigamy without protest from the Pope or the clergy is quite incredible, and as it is nowhere stated that Ellisiv followed Harald to Norway, it is safe to assume that she was dead when Harald married Thora. The statement in the *Heimskringla* is due to some strange error in the tradition. See Gustav Storm, *Harald Haardraades paastaade Dobbeltgifte*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, tredje række, vol. III., p. 424 ff.

by right of inheritance, or *odel*, which no one ventured to challenge. There was no longer any organized opposition to the king. The aristocracy had accepted the new form of government, and submitted loyally to the king's authority when it was exercised with proper moderation. They had given King Magnus their undivided support in all his undertakings, and he was very popular and highly beloved by all. But his rule had been benign, and the nobles had exercised a great influence in public affairs. During his minority Kalv Arneson had acted as regent, and later Einar Tambarskjælver became his chief counselor. Magnus was not a tool in the hands of the nobles, but he listened to their advice, and showed them no unnecessary effrontery. King Harald Haardraade was of a different type. He was harsh and greedy, not always conscientious as to the means which he employed, disposed to be arbitrary and to have slight regard for others. His character was of the kind that breeds discord, and quarrels with recalcitrant nobles were numerous in his reign. But he was able and ambitious, and came to the throne with the fixed purpose of making the royal power supreme in church and state, and of extending full authority over all the lands which belonged or which had belonged to the Norwegian crown. He was a most able and energetic ruler, who brooked no interference from nobles at home or from powers abroad. He loved independence as passionately as he coveted renown, and wielded the sword of state with a grim recklessness, like a soldier's broadsword, to gain for himself and his kingdom the greatest possible prestige and power. From the outset he met with considerable opposition and ill-will, caused by his own greed and harshness. He was greatly chagrined by what he considered the arrogant behavior of some of the chieftains. One of the principal offenders was Einar Tambarskjælver in Trøndelagen, who acted as the spokesman of the people, and on more than one occasion forced the king to recede from his harsh, and sometimes unjust, demands. King Harald had a suspicion that many of the chieftains were carrying on secret negotiations with King Svein of Denmark. In order to test their loyalty he engaged spies who claimed to be secret agents sent by King Svein to offer the Norwegian nobles riches and great honors if they would aid him against King Harald. When these spies came to Einar Tambarskjælver, he told them that



although he was not Harald's friend, he would do everything in his power to aid him in defending the kingdom against King Svein. The king praised Einar for his loyalty, and invited him to a festive gathering in Nidaros. It now looked as if old differences would be forgotten, that peace and friendship would, finally, be established between them. But King Harald gave the great noble new offense, as if from pure love of mischief. The old enmity was still further aggravated, and Einar and his son Eindride were treacherously murdered at the instigation of the king. This wanton deed caused the greatest resentment in Trøndelagen, and the people threatened to rise in open rebellion. Einar's widow, Bergliot, sent word to her powerful relative, Haakon Ivarsson in Oplandene, and asked him to avenge Einar's death. Harald sent Finn Arnesson to Haakon, who promised to remain loyal if the king would give him Ragnhild, the daughter of Magnus, in marriage, together with a dowry suitable to her rank. This was promised him, and the threatened uprising was averted. Finn Arnesson, who had been St. Olav's special friend, and who had adhered no less faithfully to his successor, was not much better rewarded than Einar Tambarskjælver. His brother Kalv, who at Finn's request had been permitted to return from his exile, accompanied Harald on an expedition against Denmark, but the king sent him against the enemy with a handful of men, and he was overpowered and slain. Finn felt so aggrieved that he abandoned both his king and his country, and went to King Svein in Denmark, who made him jarl over the Danish province of Halland, on the southwest coast of Sweden. After some time Haakon Ivarsson asked King Harald to fulfill his promise of giving him Ragnhild, King Magnus' daughter, in marriage. Harald said that he had no objection, but Haakon would have to obtain the maiden's own consent. Haakon agreed to do this, but he was unsuccessful in his courtship. Ragnhild told him that although he was a handsome and noble-looking man, she, being a princess, could not marry him so long as he was only a *lendermand*. He then asked Harald to give him the rank of jarl, so that he could marry Ragnhild, but this he would not do. It had been a rule, he said, ever since the time of St. Olav, not to have more than one jarl in the kingdom at one time. Orm Eilivsson was now jarl, and he could not deprive him

of his title and dignity. This strange answer convinced Haakon that Harald did not intend to keep his promise, and he went to King Svein in Denmark, where he was well received. He was later reconciled to King Harald, and married Ragnhild, who had learned to love him, and now accepted him without interposing any conditions. Harald promised to raise him to the rank of jarl on the death of Orm Eilivsson, but when Orm died, he again failed to keep his promise, and Haakon and Ragnhild returned to Denmark to King Svein, who invited them to stay at his court, and welcomed St. Olav's granddaughter with special fondness. Haakon was made jarl of Halland to succeed Finn Arnesson, who had died.

It is quite clear from these and other similar episodes that Harald Haardraade was bent on destroying the power of the aristocracy, and he could ill conceal his feeling of satisfaction when the powerful nobles one after another disappeared. He is even said to have stated in scaldic verse that he had caused the death of thirteen men, but who they were is not mentioned. It cannot be doubted that by pursuing such a policy of removing the old chieftains who possessed sufficient prestige to be able to offer resistance, the king gradually strengthened his own power. He possibly even gave the throne increased stability, but this practice weakened Harald in his foreign wars. It deprived him of the aid of many of the ablest men. Some left the country to use their influence in stirring up opposition to him both at home and abroad, and many who remained at home gave him but a half-hearted support.

The enmity between Harald and King Svein developed into a feature of European politics, and shaped Harald's attitude in the administration of church affairs. In order to strengthen his position, Svein allied himself more closely with Archbishop Adalbert of Bremen, and with the German Emperor, while Harald continued in the old friendship with the Saxon dukes. He severed all connections with Archbishop Adalbert, received bishops from the Greek Church, and maintained friendly relations with Byzantium. The Norwegian bishops were no longer consecrated by the Archbishop of Bremen,<sup>1</sup> but in Rome, England, France, or in the Orient.

<sup>1</sup> Hamburg became an archbishopric in 834, and St. Ansgar, the missionary who had introduced Christianity in Denmark and Sweden, became

Archbishop Adalbert protested to Pope Alexander II. against Harald's flagrant disregard of the authority of the archbishop over the Church of Norway, and the Pope wrote a letter reprimanding the king. Adalbert also sent messengers to Harald to protest against his course of action, and threatened him with ban and other punishments, but Harald replied: "I know of no archbishop in Norway except myself, King Harald." He maintained the independence of the Church of Norway throughout his whole reign with such unbending pertinacity that he was accused of all sorts of vile practices by his angry opponents. Adam v. Bremen, who stayed at the court of Archbishop Adalbert, indulges in the bitterest invectives against Harald, whom he pictures as the most cruel and unprincipled tyrant.<sup>1</sup> This is not history, but the expression of acrimonious partisan spirit. Konrad Maurer<sup>2</sup> quotes the following from Kemble<sup>3</sup>: "Every wise and powerful government has treated with deserved disregard the complaint that the 'Spouse of Christ' was in bondage. Boniface, himself an Englishman, papal beyond all his contemporaries, laments that no church is in greater bondage than the English,—a noble testimony to the nationality of the institution, the common sense of the people, and the vigor of the state!"

The hostility existing between Harald Haardraade and King Svein seems to have led Harald to establish the city of Oslo (now incorporated in the city of Christiania) on the Foldenford in Viken. Here he would be within more easy reach of Denmark, and in better position to defend the country than if stationed in the far-away Nidaros. A new national sanctuary was established in the city to give it greater prestige, as Harald seems to have entertained the hope that Oslo might become to southern Norway what Nidaros and the shrine of St. Olav was to Trøndelagen. The saint interred in the new city was Halvard, a native of the district, and a cousin of the

the first Archbishop of Hamburg. The city was sacked by the Norsemen in 845, and in 848 the archbishop's see was moved to Bremen. In 864 Pope Nicolas I. united Bremen and Hamburg into an archbishopric usually called Bremen.

<sup>1</sup> *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, III., ch. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Konrad Maurer, *Die Bekehrung des norwegischen Stammes*, II., p. 658. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. II., p. 208 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Kemble, *The Saxons in England*, II., p. 373.



king.<sup>1</sup> He is said to have been the son of a landed proprietor, Vebjørn, and his wife Torny, a sister of Aasta, the mother of St. Olav and King Harald Haardraade. Already in his youth he was noted for great piety and purity of life. His father was a merchant, and Halvard assisted him in his work, but he was so conscientious that he made two weights, a lighter one for weighing the part which he himself was to receive, and a heavier for weighing his brother's part. One day, as he left home to go across the Drammensfjord, a woman came running to him, beseeching him to rescue her. She was pursued by three men who claimed that she had committed theft in their brother's house. She protested her innocence, and Halvard took her into his boat and started across the lake, but the pursuers soon caught up with them. In vain he pleaded for the woman. When he refused to give her up, they killed both him and her, fastened two millstones to his body and lowered it into the lake. Some time afterward, his body, with the millstones still fastened to it, was found floating on the lake, and twigs, which had been used in searching for the corpse, budded several times in succession. The Icelandic annals state that St. Halvard was slain in 1043, and Adam v. Bremen says that many miraculous cures occurred at his grave. He must, therefore, have been generally regarded as a saint at the time when Adam v. Bremen wrote (about 1070), but when and in what way he was proclaimed a saint is not known. His body was probably interred in the St. Mary's church erected by King Harald. In the twelfth century a new cathedral church, dedicated to St. Halvard, was erected at Oslo. King Harald also built a St. Mary's church in Nidaros, in which the shrine of St. Olav was deposited. As the city had grown, and private houses were erected around the St. Clemens church and the royal hall, the king selected for the new church a location farther from the center of the city. Here he also erected a new royal residence. He completed the St. Olav's church which King Magnus had begun, and the unfinished royal hall from King Magnus' time was remodeled into a church dedicated to St. Gregorius.

King Harald maintained the supremacy over the colonies with

<sup>1</sup> Ludvig Daae, *Norges Helgener*, II., p. 163, *Den hellige Halvard. Acta Sanctorum*, tom. III. *Heilagramannasögur*, I., p. 396 ff.

energy and firmness. Thorfinn, the powerful jarl of the Orkney and Shetland Islands, who had remained independent since the death of St. Olav, hastened to Norway as soon as he heard of the death of Magnus the Good, and was well received at the court. It must be inferred that he submitted to Harald, and that these island colonies returned to their old allegiance as dependencies under the king's overlordship. Thorfinn seems to have been the more willing to offer his submission, because King Macbeth of Scotland, with whom he was closely associated, was threatened by Malcolm Canmore, the son of Thorfinn's cousin King Duncan. Thorfinn was sure to be involved in the struggle in Scotland, and he would not risk the possibility of coming into collision with King Harald. Hostilities between Macbeth and Malcolm began in 1054. Aided by his foster-father, the powerful Earl Siward of Northumbria, Malcolm defeated Macbeth at Dunsinane the same year, and in 1057 Macbeth was slain in the battle of Lumphanan. What part Thorfinn played in the struggle cannot be stated, but it is quite certain that he aided his old friend Macbeth. Thorfinn had also added the Hebrides (Sudreys) to his dominions, and when he submitted to the king, they became a Norwegian dependency. Kalv Arnesson acted as governor in the islands till his return to Norway in Harald Haardraade's reign.<sup>1</sup> The Faroe Islands remained in firm allegiance to Norway. Since Leiv Assursson was made governor by King Magnus after the death of Trond i Gata, no attempt was again made by the colony to assert its independence. Harald also made earnest efforts to attach Iceland more closely to the crown. He sought by rich gifts to gain the good-will of the leading men, and when a famine occurred in Iceland, he sent several shiploads of provisions. Many Icelandic scalds became his *hirdmænd* and were shown great honors. As a result of these favors the Icelanders held Harald in high esteem, but they did not formally acknowledge themselves subject to the king of Norway. The intercourse with the colonies in Greenland was

<sup>1</sup> "Jarl Thorfinn subdued all the islands, and made all the inhabitants his subjects, even those who had sworn allegiance to Jarl Ragnvald. Thorfinn then fixed his residence in the Orkneys, keeping a great number of men about him; he imported provisions from Caithness, and sent Kalv Arnesson to the Sudreys and ordered him to remain and maintain his authority there." *Orkneyingasaga*, ch. 16.

well maintained, and voyages were made every year across the Atlantic directly from Norway to Greenland.

Harald refused to abide by the arrangement made by King Magnus that Svein Estridsson should receive the kingdom of Denmark, and continued to claim the Danish throne. He repeatedly harried the coasts of Denmark, but as these attacks, which seem to have been mere raids, proved unavailing, Harald finally challenged Svein to a pitched battle. The challenge was accepted, and a naval engagement was fought off Nisaa near the mouth of the Göta River on the 9th of August, 1062. Throughout the whole bright summer night the combat raged. Harald gained the victory, but he returned to Norway immediately afterwards, and this battle was as barren of results as former expeditions.

King Anund Jacob of Sweden had died, and his successor, Stenkil Ragnvaldsson, had granted Vermland to Haakon Ivarsson, who had been made jarl of Halland by King Svein. At the head of an army Haakon entered Ringerike in southeastern Norway, and collected taxes as if he were a jarl. Haakon was popular in these districts, while Harald was disliked, because he levied excessive taxes and deprived the people of many old rights and privileges. A serious uprising seemed imminent, and Harald finally decided to make peace with Denmark, 1064. King Svein was henceforth left in undisturbed possession of the Danish throne. Harald attacked and defeated Jarl Haakon, and the uprising in Oplandene was speedily put down.

#### 49. THE SECOND CONQUEST OF ENGLAND

The weak King Edward the Confessor, who succeeded Hardeknut on the throne of England, was better fitted to be a monk than a king, and throughout his reign he was a tool in the hands of the powerful earls, Godwin of Wessex, Leofric of Mercia, and Siward of Northumbria. Godwin, who was his father-in-law and the most powerful man in England, exercised for a long time almost regal powers, and his sons Sweyn, Harold, and Tostig were granted large possessions. Harold was a man of eminent ability, and his generosity and uprightness of character made him very popular. When his father died in 1051, he was about thirty-one years of age, and during the declin-



ing years of Edward the Confessor he administrated the affairs of the realm with great wisdom and ability. His brothers Sweyn and Tostig were men of a different type — greedy and lawless ruffians, who were a constant source of strife and mischief. Sweyn abducted the beautiful abbess Eadgifu from a nunnery, and committed other vile deeds, for which he was finally banished. Tostig, who was King Edward's favorite, was made Earl of Northumbria on the death of Earl Siward, but he seldom visited his possessions except to extort unjust taxes. The long-suffering people finally rebelled and drove him away, and Morkere, a grandson of Leofric, was chosen to succeed him. King Edward died on the 5th of January, 1066. As he left no son, the kingdom of England became a prize to be contended for by a number of rival candidates, all men of fame and ability, whose claims to the throne were equally clouded and uncertain. The four candidates who claimed to be the lawful heirs of the deceased king were: Duke William of Normandy, Earl Harold, son of Godwin, King Svein Estridsson of Denmark, and King Harald Haardraade of Norway. Earl Harold claimed that King Edward had bequeathed him the kingdom. This would give him no valid title to the throne, since the king could not elect his successor. But Harold was the only native English candidate who could be considered at this critical moment, and he was chosen king by the Witenagemot, which alone possessed the right of choice. This made Harold rightful king of England, but it did not extinguish the title which the other candidates claimed to have. Duke William urged that King Edward the Confessor had promised him the throne of England. He also maintained that Harold had sworn fealty to him, and had solemnly promised to support his claim. Harold had been shipwrecked on the coast of Ponthieu in France some years before. The count of that district took him prisoner, and turned him over to Duke William of Normandy, and he was forced to give William the stated pledges to obtain his liberty. Neither of these reasons gave Duke William any right to the throne of England, as neither King Edward nor Earl Harold could give away the kingdom, but what he needed was a fair pretext; for the rest he trusted to his valiant sword. Svein Estridsson of Denmark claimed the English throne as the heir of his cousin King Hardeknut, and of his uncle King Knut the

Great. Harald Haardraade of Norway based his claim on the treaty of Brennørerne by which Hardeknut made Magnus the Good his heir. This was, in a way, the same claim which Magnus himself had urged against Edward the Confessor, but it had been reduced to an empty pretense, since Magnus on his death-bed had surrendered Denmark to Svein Estridsson. The plotting Earl Tostig had negotiated with all the three foreign pretenders, and stood ready to sell his support to the highest bidder.

As soon as rumor got abroad that Harold had been crowned at London, January 6, 1066, Duke William of Normandy sent messengers to remind him of his promise, and began active preparations for an invasion of England. He mustered all his barons, and induced a great number of knights from Anjou, Brittany, Poitou, Flanders, and other places to join in the enterprise by offering them lands and treasures. He had prevailed on Pope Alexander II. to issue a bull approving of the expedition, and ships were built to carry the army across the English Channel. According to William of Aquitaine,<sup>1</sup> he also sent an embassy to Svein Estridsson to solicit his aid. This must have been Tostig, who, according to the sagas, went to King Svein as soon as his brother Harold was crowned king, to induce him to invade England. Svein did not venture upon such an undertaking, and Tostig then turned to King Harald Haardraade of Norway without any authority from Duke William. Harald is said to have promised to send an expedition to England in the summer, and Tostig promised to aid him with all the forces which he could gather. When the conquest was completed, he was to be made jarl over one-half of England as King Harald Haardraade's vassal.<sup>2</sup> But Tostig, who was as impatient as he was unreliable, hastened to Flanders, and before either Duke William or King Harald were ready to set sail, he gathered a fleet of sixty vessels, manned partly by his own adherents, partly by adventurers and freebooters of all sorts, and made an attack on the southern coast of England. King Harald came against him with a large fleet and army, and he

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. II., p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> Accounts of these negotiations are found in the *Morkinskinna*, 18 a and b, in *Fagrskinna*, ch. 119; in Theodricus Monachus, *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, ch. 28; and in Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

fled northward, and entered the Humber, where his fleet was destroyed by Earl Edwin of Mercia. With twelve ships he reached Scotland, where he was harbored by King Malcolm III.

In the summer of 1066 Harald Haardraade was busy making preparations for his expedition to England. He had chosen the Solund Islands, on the coast of Sogn, in southwestern Norway, as the rendezvous for his fleet, and by the beginning of September he had gathered a large armament of 250 war vessels and about 20,000 men. Before his departure he made his eldest son, Magnus, regent, and caused him to be crowned king. His younger son, Olav, accompanied him on the expedition. He sailed first to the Shetland Islands, and thence to the Orkneys. The Orkney jarls, Paul and Erlend, had to join the expedition with a large number of ships and troops.<sup>1</sup> When he reached the Tyne in Scotland, about the 10th of September, he was also joined by Tostig, who acknowledged him as his lord. They landed at various places along the coast, captured Scarborough after some resistance, and took possession of the coast districts as far as the Humber. The fleet ascended the Humber and the Ouse, but came to anchor at Riccal, eight miles south of York. Here Harald landed his army, and marched along the river towards the city. The earls Morkere of Northumbria and Edwin of Mercia, who had gathered a large army in York, came out to meet Harald at Fulford, about two miles from the city. A bloody battle was fought, in which the earls suffered a crushing defeat. The remnants of their army fled back to York, while Harald took possession of the neighboring district, and intrenched himself at Stamford Bridge on the Derwent River. The city of York offered to capitulate, and on September 24 Harald advanced with his army to meet the citizens outside the city, where the terms of peace were arranged. They acknowledged him their lord, promised to supply him with provisions, and agreed to give 500 hostages. In the evening Harald returned to his fleet, but planned to advance on the following morning to Stamford Bridge, where the hostages were to be delivered.

In the meantime Harold Godwinson had arrived at York with his army, and had been watching Harald's movements. In the

<sup>1</sup> According to various sources, Harald had now no less than 300 war vessels and 30,000 men.



night he was secretly admitted into the city. The next morning Harald advanced with a part of his army; the other part was left in charge of his son Olav and the Orkney jarls Paul and Erlend to guard the fleet. The day was warm, and, as no hostilities were anticipated, the men marched without their brynies. When they arrived at Stamford Bridge, Harold suddenly fell upon them with his whole force. The saga says that Harald did not follow Tostig's advice to retreat to the ships, but sent messengers to bring the rest of the army to his support. This was a fatal mistake. Before help arrived, Harald's forces were overwhelmed and defeated, and he was mortally wounded in the fight. The "*Heimskringla*" gives a vivid description of the battle of Stamford Bridge. It tells how Harald, when he found himself face to face with the whole English army, planted his banner, formed a shield-ring, and made ready for the combat. But before the battle began, a horseman rode up, spoke to Earl Tostig, and offered him the earldom of Northumbria if he would join the English. Tostig asked how much he would give Harald Sigurdsson, the Norwegian king. The horseman said that he would gladly give him six feet of ground, and as much more as he was taller than other men;<sup>1</sup> but Tostig rejected the offer, says the saga. When the horseman rode away, they discovered that it was King Harold Godwinson himself. The fight commenced, and the Norsemen in their shield-ring resisted stoutly the attack of the English cavalry. But when they thought that the attack had failed, and that the English began to retreat, they rushed eagerly forward in pursuit. The shield-ring was broken, and they were attacked from all sides. A fearful carnage resulted. King Harald rushed into the midst of the fray, but an arrow pierced his throat, and he fell mortally wounded. Tostig now assumed command. Supported by the reinforcements which arrived from the fleet, he rallied the broken columns to renewed efforts, but the men had become exhausted on the forced march from the fleet. Towards evening the Norse army broke and fled in wild disorder, and darkness alone saved the broken remnants from destruction.

This dramatic description of the battle is manifestly erroneous.

<sup>1</sup> Harald Sigurdsson Haardraade is said to have been almost seven feet tall.

The English are represented as fighting on horseback, though we know that their army was very deficient in cavalry. The English were foot-soldiers, as we see from the battle of Hastings, which occurred less than three weeks later. The saga writer seems to have confused the battle of Stamford Bridge with that of Hastings, where the Norman mounted knights made repeated attacks on the English foot-soldiers, who stood firm behind their shield-wall, until by a feint they were led to pursue the enemy, and suffered a crushing defeat. The cavalry fight in the battle of Stamford Bridge is not mentioned in the older Norse sources,<sup>1</sup> nor in the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle." We are left completely in the dark, therefore, as to the details of the battle. We only know that at Stamford Bridge King Harald Haardraade suffered an overwhelming defeat. "There King Harald of Norway and Earl Tostig were slain," says the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,"<sup>2</sup> "and a great number of men with them, both Norsemen and English." The chronicle states that Harold Godwinson suffered Harald's son Olav and the Orkney jarls to depart with twenty-four ships and the remnant of the army. We may well doubt the accuracy of the statement that only twenty-four ships left. Olav and the jarls, who were in charge of the fleet, had both time and opportunity to hold the ships in readiness, as they knew that a battle was in progress. That the whole large army of 30,000 men should be so utterly destroyed that only twenty-four ships could be manned seems quite incredible. The statement in the "Heimskringla" that Harold let Olav depart with the fleet and the remnant of the army seems more worthy of belief. Harold had no time to waste. On Sept. 28th, three days after the battle of Stamford Bridge, Duke William landed at Pevensey, in southern England, with 60,000 men, and on the 6th or 7th of October Harold was again in London making preparations for the still greater battle fought at Hastings,

<sup>1</sup> *Ágrip*, Theodricus Monachus, *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*.

<sup>2</sup> Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles*, p. 199. Harald Haardraade is called Harald Haarfagre in the Chronicle. This may be an error, but it is possible that the epithet "Haarfagre" was applied to Harald Sigurdsson by his contemporaries, because of his long flaxen hair. This seems the more likely as he is called "Haarfagre" also by Ordericus Vitalis, book III., p. 116, P. Kierkegaard's translation.

October 14, 1066. In this hard-fought battle Harold Godwinson fell, and William the Conqueror became king of England.

The defeat and death of the warlike Harald Haardraade changed the political situation in the North. Svein Estridsson of Denmark felt that all danger of an attack from Norway was now removed, and as he considered his claim to the throne of England as valid as ever, he resolved to invade England and expel King William. Many Danes who had been banished from England, or had suffered other wrongs, were also urging him to assert his claim. But the preparations proceeded very slowly, and three years passed before the expedition was finally ready to start. In the month of August, 1069, 240 ships set sail for England, led by Svein's brother Asbjørn, his sons Harald and Knut, and Jarl Thorkil. After attacking Dover, Sandwich, and Norwich without success, the fleet entered the Humber, and advanced toward York. Northern England, where the Viking element still was strong, had not submitted to King William. The boy Eadgar the Ætheling, grandson of Edmund Ironside, was chosen king when Harold fell at Hastings, but he had fled to Scotland after the battle. He was now in Northumbria, where the earls Morcere and Edwin were aiding him in organizing a great revolt against William. The arrival of the Danish fleet in the Humber became the signal for a general uprising. York was taken by the combined forces of Danes and Northumbrians, but the Norman garrison burned the city before surrendering, and the victors leveled the fortifications with the ground. When King William arrived, the Danes retreated to their ships, and the Northumbrians returned to their homes, but as soon as he departed the attack was renewed. William was unable to assail the Danish fleet for want of ships, but he succeeded in bribing the Danish commander, Asbjørn, to remain inactive, and finally to depart from England. On northern England he wreaked a fearful vengeance, wasting it with fire and sword. No such devastation had ever passed over an English community as that wrought by William the Conqueror in Northumbria. The prosperity of this flourishing district was wiped out, and its spirit and power of resistance was broken. Asbjørn returned to Denmark with his ships laden with booty, but the enterprise had failed, and his own conduct had been reprehensible. In 1075 another Danish



fleet of 200 vessels, led by Svein's son Knut, and Jarl Hagen, again visited England, and entered the Humber, but not a hand was raised to aid or welcome them, and they returned home after collecting some booty in the neighborhood of York. This was the last Viking expedition to England.

#### 50. OLAV KYRRE. A PERIOD OF PEACE

Olav, Harald's son, spent the winter 1066-1067 in the Orkneys, and returned to Norway in the spring. His brother Magnus had been crowned king before the expedition left for England, but Olav was also made king on his return. The "*Heimskringla*" says that they were made joint kings, but Magnus was to rule the northern and Olav the southern half of the country.<sup>1</sup> The loss of the great army sent to England was a severe blow; nothing less than a national calamity. The country's resources were badly drained, and the available stores and military forces were gone. Under these circumstances King Svein of Denmark found the time opportune to put forward a claim to overlordship over Norway. Magnus and Olav refused to listen to these demands, and he gathered a fleet and prepared to invade the country. This he could now do without violating any agreement, since the treaty of peace concluded between him and King Harald in 1064 should remain in force only so long as the kings lived. Hostilities commenced, but the peace-loving Olav began negotiations with King Svein, which resulted in a new treaty of peace between Norway and Denmark in 1068. This treaty should be binding for all times, and neither kingdom should claim supremacy over the other. King Magnus, who had been sickly for some time, died in 1069, and Olav became king of all Norway. The "*Heimskringla*" describes him as follows: "Olav was a large man, and well built. It is a common opinion that no one has seen a man better looking, or of nobler appearance. His yellow, silky hair fell in rich locks; he had fair skin, beautiful eyes, and well proportioned limbs. He was, generally, reticent, and spoke little

<sup>1</sup> The kingdom was still looked upon as the *odel*, or property of the king, which could be divided among his heirs, like another private estate. This division is the beginning of a long series of partitions of the kingdom between the sons and heirs of the ruling king.

at the *thing*, but he was glad and talkative at the drinking-feast. He drank much, and was cheerful and peace-loving to the end of his days.”<sup>1</sup> Because of his quiet disposition and peaceful reign he was called Olav Kyrre (the quiet). His efforts to maintain peace at home and abroad had a most beneficent effect at this time, not only because the kingdom needed to recover from the heavy losses incurred in the fruitless military exploits of his martial father, but also because the people’s mind needed to be turned away from the strut and vainglory which usually attends war and adventure, to seek employment and honor in peaceful pursuits. Conditions in the neighboring kingdoms were also favorable to the maintenance of peace, as both Denmark and Sweden were so occupied with internal strife or foreign conquests that they could not pursue any aggressive policy in their relations with Norway. Christianity had not been firmly established in Sweden, and many people were displeased because of King Stenkil’s efforts to promote the missionary work. The violent reaction against the church which occurred when he died in 1067, was caused, perhaps, in part by the overzealous Bishop Egino of Skåne, who had threatened to destroy the great heathen temple at Upsala. Many people returned to their old faith, and sacrificed to the heathen gods. Several rival candidates were also contending for the throne, and the country was torn by civil strife for many years, until Inge Stenkilsson finally overpowered his rivals, and succeeded his father on the throne. In Denmark King Svein was engaged in preparing his great expeditions to England, which brought him only loss and disappointment. When he died in 1076, his son Harald became his successor, but he soon died, and a younger brother, Knut, became king of Denmark. He was an ambitious and warlike young man, who could not forget that his ancestors had occupied the throne of England. Not discouraged by his father’s fruitless attempts at conquest, he determined to send a new expedition to England. He was a great friend of Olav Kyrre, and solicited his aid for the undertaking. Olav refused to join the expedition, but as a good friend he placed sixty warships fully manned at his disposal. In 1084 Knut began to collect a large fleet, but time passed, and when the preparations finally were near

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Olav Kyrre’s Saga*, ch. I.

completion, most of the Danish chieftains grew impatient and returned to their homes. Norway was thereby saved from renewed hostilities with England. King Knut, who thus suddenly found himself deserted, was very wroth. He began to rule harshly, and collected unjust and excessive taxes. This produced a general rebellion, and he was killed by an angry mob in St. Alban's church in Odense where he had sought refuge. In the reign of his successor, Olav Hunger, he was declared holy, and he soon became the national saint of Denmark, though his only merit seems to have been that he was slain in a church.<sup>1</sup>

Olav Kyrre, who was pious as well as peaceful, was deeply interested in the labors of the clergy, and worked zealously throughout his long reign to give the Church of Norway a more stable and efficient organization. The defiant attitude which his father Harald Haardraade had assumed over against the Archbishop of Bremen he seems to have regarded as improper, if not unfortunate. His own disposition, as well as his friendly relations with Denmark, which was a part of the archdiocese of Bremen, inclined him to favor the archbishop, and to uphold his authority over the Norwegian clergy. He was also encouraged in his loyalty to the Roman See and its representative the archbishop by the Pope himself, who in his letters to the king expressed deep solicitude for the church in the North. The powerful Gregory VII., who occupied the papal throne at this time (1073-1085), was the real founder of the papal power, and the organizer of the Roman hierarchy. The constant strife between ruling princes, the violence and turmoil everywhere rampant convinced him that the church alone possessed the wisdom and authority to maintain peace, and to act as arbiter in every controversy. He wished to reform the world by organizing a universal religious monarchy with the Pope as supreme ruler. "Human pride," he wrote, "has created the power of kings. God's mercy has created the power of bishops. The Pope is the master of the

<sup>1</sup> Olav, who had been imprisoned by his brother, King Knut, was made king of Denmark. In his reign a drought produced a great famine, which the people regarded as a chastisement sent upon them by the angry God, because Knut had been slain in the St. Alban's church. They began to venerate the dead king as a saint, and Olav was called King Olav Hunger because of the famine.



emperors. He is rendered holy by the merits of his predecessor, St. Peter. The Roman Church has never erred, and Holy Scripture proves that it can never err. To resist it is to resist God.”<sup>1</sup> The growing power of the hierarchy, and the increased devotion to the Roman Church, which was the result of Pope Gregory’s activity, was fast ripening into the great religious movement which culminated in the crusades, the impulse of which was felt in every land in western Europe. Cathedrals were built, and crusading missionary work was carried on with zeal, while all nations were drawn closer to Rome, which was the center of religious and intellectual life.

That Olav Kyrre was imbued with the spirit of the age is rendered evident by his labors to organize the Church of Norway according to the general plan of the Catholic Church in other countries, as well as by his efforts to introduce in Norway the culture and refinement of the aristocratic circles in England and continental Europe. His reign marks a final victory of medieval ideas, which found their best expression in crusades and knight-errantry, but the Roman incubus, which was so potent in controlling the governments, and in shaping the intellectual life of the age, was far less marked in Norway than elsewhere in Europe. Celibacy of priests, which the Pope now enforced as a part of the Roman church discipline, was not introduced in Norway. The clergy remained subject to the king, who exercised firm control in ecclesiastical affairs. The scaldic poetry flourished, the national saga literature and history writing were yet to blossom forth, and there were but scant traces of a religious literature fostered under the influence of the church. The separation of the North from the archdiocese of Bremen gave the Norwegian people a new opportunity to preserve their independence in church affairs, and to develop a strong national spirit. The attempt of Pope Gregory VII. to assert his supremacy over the German Emperor precipitated the famous struggle between the Pope and Emperor Henry IV., which divided the whole Empire into the warring factions of Welfs and Ghibellines, friends of the Pope and supporters of the Emperor. Archbishop Adalbert of Bremen was one of the Emperor’s staunchest supporters. His successor, Liemar, also adhered to the Ghibelline party, even after the Emperor had been excommunicated,

<sup>1</sup> T. F. Tout, *The Empire and the Papacy*, p. 126.

and Pope Gregory VII. punished the disobedient prelate by depriving him of his office. King Svein Estridsson of Denmark and his successors were adherents of the Pope, and this finally led to the separation of the Scandinavian countries from the Bremen archdiocese, and the creation of a new archbishopric in the Danish city of Lund, in Skåne, in 1104. During this period of strife, which paralyzed the power of the Archbishop of Bremen, the highest ecclesiastical authority in Norway was exercised by the king. The state-church principle, which had been practiced by St. Olav, and which had been so imperiously maintained by Harald Haardraade, was now further strengthened by circumstances which made the king the natural leader of the Church of Norway. King Olav Kyrre divided Norway into three bishoprics: Nidaros, Selja, and Oslo, each with its diocesan bishop, who received the rank of jarl. New incumbents were chosen by the chapters of the diocese, but they had to present themselves before the king, who in reality selected the candidates. Each diocese had its own saint: Nidaros, St. Olav; Oslo, St. Halvard; and Selja, St. Sunniva. In Trondhjem Olav erected a cathedral church on the spot where St. Olav was thought to have been buried the first time. It was dedicated to the Trinity, but was generally called the Christ church. The altar was placed on the spot where St. Olav's body was supposed to have rested, and the shrine of the saint was moved to the new church. On the foundations of this church the Trondhjem cathedral was later erected. King Harald Haardraade's body, which had been brought back to Norway, was interred in the St. Mary's church, which he had built. On the west coast of Norway, Olav Kyrre founded the city of Bergen (O. N. Bjørgvin),<sup>1</sup> which, because of its favorable location, soon became one of the chief commercial towns in the North. The bishop of the diocese was to reside here, and the king began the erection of a

<sup>1</sup> The exact time is not given, but the city is thought to have been founded somewhere between 1070 and 1075. See Yngvar Nielsen, *Bergen fra de ældste Tider indtil Nutiden*, Christiania, 1877. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, II., 433 ff. Alexander Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre før Hanseaternes Tid*, Christiania, 1899. *Fagrskinna*, p. 149. *Heimskringla*, *Olav Kyrre's Saga*, ch. I.; *Morkin kinna*, p. 125. *Historisk Tidsskrift*, tredje række, vol. V., p. 433, Gustav Storm, *De kongelige Byanlæg i Norge i Middelalderen*.

large cathedral of stone, the Christ church. This was finished in 1170, and the St. Sunniva relics were then transferred from Selja to Bergen. In the Orkneys Jarl Thorfinn founded a bishopric and built a cathedral church at Birgsaa 1050-1064.<sup>1</sup> In Iceland Gissur Isleivsson, who became bishop in 1081, erected a cathedral on his estate Skálholt, which he donated to the church as a permanent bishop's residence.

The long period of peace during the reign of Olav Kyrre produced a marked improvement in economic conditions. The cities grew, and commerce increased; no extra taxes were imposed for military purposes, and good harvests seem to have added to the general prosperity. It is evident from the saga accounts that this reign was long remembered as a sort of golden age of peace and plenty. "In the reign of Olav Kyrre there were good harvests and such abundant good fortune that Norway had never been more prosperous under any king since the days of Harald Haarfagre," says the saga.<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances a taste for luxury and comfort was naturally developed, and the king labored earnestly to bring the civilization and culture of his people into full harmony with the Christian spirit, and to introduce in Norway the elegance and courtly manners which were being developed everywhere in Europe during this age of chivalry. The *hird* was doubled in number, so that it consisted of 120 *hirdmænd*, sixty *gestir*, and sixty *huskarlar*. The *hirdmænd* were divided into groups, at the head of which stood *skutilsveinar*,<sup>3</sup> or officers of the king's guard. After the creation of this new office the *lendermænd* do not seem to have sought the king's *hird* as before, but they held now the highest rank in the country, as King Olav did not appoint any jarls after the death of Haakon Ivarsson. The *kertisveinar*,<sup>4</sup> corresponding to the French pages, waited at the king's

<sup>1</sup> See L. Dietrichson, *Monumenta Orcadica*, p. 19; *Orkneyingasaga*, ch. xxi.

<sup>2</sup> *Morkinskinna*, *Olav Kyrre's Saga*, 20 b.

<sup>3</sup> *Skutilsveinn*, from *skutill* (Lat. *scutula*, a dish), a plate, or small table placed before a guest. The title does not properly indicate the duties of the office. The *skutilsveinar* were officers of the guards, not waiters at the table, though they may have waited on the guests at the table on special occasions. About their duties see *Hirðskrá*, *Norges gamle Love*, vol. II.

<sup>4</sup> *Kertisveinn* from *kerti* = candle. Their duties are mentioned in the *Hirðskrá* (the laws of the court), ch. 25, *Norges gamle Love*, vol. II.



table. Behind each guest at the table stood a *kertisveinn*, with a burning candle.

The people of the higher classes began to wear costumes of foreign pattern borrowed especially from England and Normandy. "The people began to dress with great splendor according to foreign fashions," says the saga. "They wore fine hose ruffled about the knee. Some put gold rings about the legs; many wore long mantles with slit sides tied with ribbons, and with sleeves five ells long, and so narrow that they had to be pulled on with a cord, and arranged in folds up to the shoulders. They wore high shoes, embroidered with silk and even ornamented with gold."<sup>1</sup> From the upper classes, who were in sympathy with the spirit and higher culture of the age, the new tastes and ideas were soon communicated to the common people, who through a natural instinct for imitation gradually adopted as much of the new customs as environment and circumstances would permit. King Olav also introduced many improvements in the construction of dwelling-houses. Hitherto the fireplace, *arinn*, was placed in the center of the house, and the smoke escaped through an opening in the roof, the *ljóri*. Olav built houses with stone floors and introduced the oven, which was erected in a corner of the room with a flue for carrying away the smoke. The *ljóri* disappeared, and the houses received a loft, the beginning of a second story. Windows became more common, though glass windows seem yet to have been limited to the king's own dwellings.

From the earliest times the Norsemen took great delight in social and religious festivities; their great hospitality and the liberal entertainment of friends and travelers have already been mentioned as a conspicuous national trait. The period of prosperity and peace in the time of Olav Kyrre gave new stimulus to the development of social life. Permanent clubs or guilds (N. *gilde*, O. N. *gildi*), organized under the protection of the church, were instituted by King Olav to afford better opportunity for social intercourse.<sup>2</sup> These guilds

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla*, *Olav Kyrre's Saga*, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Alexander Bugge says: "It is, in fact, nowhere in the sagas mentioned that Olav Kyrre introduced the first guilds into Norway, but only that he instituted guilds in the Norwegian towns. On the contrary, the sagas seem to presuppose that guilds existed at a still earlier date, *i.e.* in the younger saga of St. Olav where Ølver á Eggju answers King Olav:

had their own guild halls, women were also members, the rules were strict, and much attention was paid to fine manners and good conversation. Christian spirit was also fostered in the guilds, as they were placed under the supervision of the church. The members were mutually pledged to assist one another in times of need, a very fortunate arrangement at a time when municipal government was yet in its infancy. Thereby the guilds became the forerunners of political clubs, insurance companies, pension funds, and like organizations which have sprung from the feeling of social interdependence. The members were jointly responsible for each other's houses and stables. If a member suffered loss of house or stable by fire, the guild would rebuild it. If a man's granary burned, he received a certain amount of grain; if he lost three head of cattle or more, each member should give him a measure of grain; if the member

'*sagði at bøndr hefði engar veizlur haft þat haust, nema gildi sín ok hvirfings drykkjur*' (Fornmannasögur, IV., ch. 102), or where the holy bishop Martin in a dream says to Olav Tryggvason: '*þat hefir verit háttir manna her í landi sem víða annarstoðar, þar sem heidit folk er, at Þór ok Óðni er ǫl gefit, þar sem samdrykkjur eðr gildi ero haldin.*' I believe like Hegel (*Städte und Gilden*, I., p. 412), and Munch (*Det norske Folks Historie*, II., p. 442 f.), that Olav Kyrre in imitation of western European fashion, erected guild halls in Norwegian towns. But I also believe that the guilds themselves existed at a still earlier time and that they were connected with the heathen sacrificial banquets (*blotveizlur*).'' *The Earliest Guilds of Northmen in England, Norway, and Denmark*, in *Sproglige og historiske Afhandlinger viede Sophus Bugges Minde*, Christiania, 1908.

The origin of the guilds is very obscure. They are known to have existed in the Empire of Charlemagne in the ninth century, and probably even earlier. A. Bugge says: "I regard the Empire of the Franks as the birthplace of the guilds, the country from which this most typical institution of the Middle Ages has spread to all parts of western and northern Europe." *The Earliest Guilds of the Northmen in England, Norway, and Denmark*, in *Afhandlinger viede Sophus Bugges Minde*, p. 197 ff. See also Alexander Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel før Hanseaterne*. W. A. Wilda, *Das Gildenwesen im Mittelalter*, Halle, 1831. O. P. K. Hartvig, *Untersuchungen über die ersten Anfänge des Gildenwesens*, Göttingen, 1860.

Various influences contributed to their later development. Alexander Bugge has shown that the guilds of England have been strongly influenced by the Danes and Norsemen. "First of all," he says, "the word 'guild' itself is probably a Scandinavian word (= O. N. *gildi*). The Thanes' Guild of Cambridge from the first half of the eleventh century bears especially the impression of being influenced by Scandinavian institutions." See also Falk og Torp, *Etymologisk Ordbog*, "gilde."

was a merchant, and lost his goods by shipwreck, he also received a compensation. If a member was imprisoned in a foreign land, he was ransomed by the guild; if he was slain by one who did not belong to the guild, the other members would assist in prosecuting the slayer; but if a member committed murder, he was expelled from the guild, and was not again allowed to appear in the guild hall. When a member died, all the other members were present at the funeral. The guilds were generally named after patron saints, under whose special protection they were supposed to stand. In Bergen they were especially numerous, and the names of many are still familiar in that city. The most important was the St. Jatmund's (St. Edmund's) Guild, to which, according to an old writer, even "kings, dukes, counts, barons, knights, and other noblemen belonged." In Trondhjem the oldest was the Mykle Guild (the Great Guild), organized by Olav Kyrre, and dedicated to St. Olav. Tunsberg had the St. Olav's Guild and the St. Anna's Guild; Oslo, the Guild of the Holy Body, St. Anna's Guild, and the Shoemakers' Guild. The country districts, too, had their guilds. They are mentioned as having existed in Salten, Aalen, Opdal, Medalen, in Herø in Søndmør, and in many other places. That many guilds existed of which no records have been preserved can be seen from place-names like Gildeskaale, Gildehus, Gildevang, Gildevold, Gildesaker, etc. In course of time when the cities became industrial centers, the guilds very naturally developed into craft-guilds, in which men of the same profession or handicraft were associated together.<sup>1</sup> But in Norway the guilds were controlled by the king and the church, and at no time did they become independent political organizations hostile to the ruler, something which happened not infrequently in some countries of Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Of the statutes (*skrå*) of the guilds only two have been preserved: the *skrå* of the Olav's Guild in Gulathingslag, and the *skrå* of the St. Olav's Guild in Onarheim, Søndhordland. *Norges gamle Love*, vol. V., p. 7-13. These statutes are the chief source of our knowledge of the guilds and their work. Accounts of the guilds are found in Christian C. A. Lange, *De norske Klostres Historie i Middelalderen*, and P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. II. Alexander Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel før Hanseaterne*. Alexander Bugge, *The Earliest Guilds of the Northmen in England, Norway, and Denmark*, published in *Afhandlinger viede Sophus Bugges Minde*, Christiania, 1908.



Among the more prominent men in Norway in Olav Kyrre's time may be mentioned especially Skule Kongsfostre, the king's chief adviser, a man of high rank, who had followed him from England. He seems to have been the king's foster-father, not the son of Earl Tostig, as some sources have it. Skule was placed at the head of the *hird*, and he was also sent to England to bring back the body of King Harald Haardraade. The king gave him the old royal hall in Oslo, when a new royal dwelling was erected, and he granted him also a number of estates at Oslo, Konghelle, and Trondhjem; and also Rein in Nordmør, from which his descendants derived their name. From Skule Kongsfostre descended Duke Skule (Skule Jarl), famous in the reign of King Haakon Haakonsson. Dag Eilivsson, the father of Gregorius Dagssøn, in Viken, Sigurd Ulstreng in Trøndelagen, the son of Rut af Viggen who fell at Stiklestad, Thore af Steig, in Oplandene, who was the king's secret opponent, and Sveinke Steinarsson, who ruled the border districts on the Göta River, were among the most powerful men in the kingdom at this time. King Olav Kyrre died in 1093, in the twenty-seventh year of his reign.

## 51. A REVIVAL OF THE VIKING SPIRIT. MAGNUS BAREFOOT

When Olav Kyrre died, his son Magnus was proclaimed king in Viken, while the people of Oplandene were led, as it appears, by Thore of Steig, to choose his nephew Haakon. The arrangement of joint kingship, first introduced in the time of Magnus the Good and Harald Haardraade, was now repeated. The kingdom does not seem to have been divided, though some sources seem to indicate it. According to the "*Morkinskinna*,"<sup>1</sup> the two kings ruled together for two years, but the older sources, Theodricus Monachus and "*Ágrip*," state that the joint kingship lasted only one winter. Haakon was then killed by a fall from his horse. Thore of Steig, the old opponent of Olav Kyrre, did not even now acknowledge King Magnus, though, after the death of Haakon, the young king was the only legitimate heir to the throne. Thore formed an opposition party in support of the pretender Svein, and started a revolt; but this was easily

<sup>1</sup> *Morkinskinna*, *Magnus Barefoot's Saga*. Theodricus Monachus, ch. xxx. *Ágrip*, 72-73.

put down, and the two leaders, Thore of Steig and Egil Askelsson, were captured and executed.

The king found another opponent in Sveinke Steinarsson, who was a *lendermand*, a sort of *markgraf* in the border districts on the Göta River. In these far-off districts his will was law, and he protected the people against the robbers and outlaws who infested the region along the border. He had not taken part in the revolt, but he did not submit to the king, and managed all affairs according to his own mind. He was summoned to the Borgarthing, where the *stallare*, Sigurd Ulstreng, represented the king. After the *thing* was assembled, they saw a body of warriors approaching, dressed in steel so bright that they looked like a moving block of ice.<sup>1</sup> This was Sveinke, who came to the *thing* with 500 armed followers. He ridiculed the *stallare*, and after some altercations, Sigurd had to flee. The king marched against the arrogant *lendermand*, but hostilities were averted through the intercession of friends. Sveinke was banished for a short period, but he was soon recalled, and became one of the king's best friends.

Magnus Barefoot was a warrior like his grandfather Harald Haardraade. In his reign the air was again filled with the sounds of war trumpets and the din of arms. The Viking spirit flared up anew from the smoldering embers, fanned into life by the martial spirit of the young king, who is reported to have said that a king ought to court honor rather than a long life. King Magnus was brave to foolhardiness, and energetic to rashness, a sort of demigod, who was loved by his followers even for his faults. But it would be manifestly unjust to regard him as a mere Viking chieftain, or as a romantic dreamer, who spent the ten years of his reign in the pursuit of the phantom of military glory. It is evident that he followed a clearly conceived plan, and that he was never led by vain ambition to waste his means in rash and impossible adventures. He did not aspire to the throne of England, like his grandfather had done, nor did he attempt to conquer Ireland, as some old writers would have us believe. The chief, if not the only, purpose of his expedition to the British Isles seems to have been to reduce the Norse island possessions to full submission to the home government. But the

<sup>1</sup> *Morkinskinna*, p. 137.

ever recurring war expeditions increased the burdens of taxation, removed great numbers of the ablest men from productive employments, and retarded the peaceful development inaugurated by Olav Kyrre. The history of Magnus Barefoot's reign is a record of his military campaigns; of the internal affairs of the country in his time little is known; of real progress history has nothing to record.

As soon as Magnus was securely seated on the throne, he provoked a war with Sweden by claiming the Swedish province of Dal, or Dalsland, lying between Ranrike and Lake Venern. He crossed the Göta River with an army, and harried the districts until they had to offer their submission. On Kåland Island, in Lake Venern, he built a fort, and left a garrison of 360 men, but when he returned home for the winter, the Swedish king, Inge Stenkilsson, captured the fort and drove away the garrison. The following spring Magnus renewed his campaign, and a battle was fought at Fuxerna, on the Göta River. According to "Ágrip," Magnus was victorious, but according to Theodricus Monachus he lost the battle. The last version is probably correct, since a peace conference was called at Konghelle in 1101, where the three kings, Magnus Barefoot of Norway, Inge Stenkilsson of Sweden, and Eirik Eiegod of Denmark were all present. According to the terms of the treaty here concluded, the kings should retain the territories which their predecessors had held, but Magnus should receive the hand of Margaret, King Inge's daughter, in marriage, and her dowry should be the districts in dispute.<sup>1</sup> She was nicknamed Fredkulla (the peace maiden). Snorre gives the following description of the three kings as they appeared together at Konghelle: "Inge was the largest and strongest, and looked most dignified, Magnus seemed the most valiant and energetic, but Eirik was the handsomest."

The most noteworthy features of King Magnus' reign were his expeditions to the British Isles. Two earlier expeditions, which Magnus was thought to have made in 1092 and 1093-1094, have been described by the old scholar Torfæus. Buchanan, a Scotch

<sup>1</sup> Theodricus Monachus, *De Antiquitate*, ch. xxxi. *Ágrip*, 79, found in Gustav Storm's *Monumenta Historica Norwegiæ*. The terms of the treaty are stated both by Theodricus and by the *Ágrip*, and seem to be correct, though the dowry is not mentioned by Snorre, who simply states that Magnus married Margaret, the daughter of the Swedish king.



historian of the sixteenth century, who bases his account on Fordun's "Scotichronicon," also tells how King Magnus in 1094 aided Prince Donaldbane to gain the throne of Scotland. The account of the last-named expedition has been considered to be historic also by the great Norwegian historian P. A. Munch, but Gustav Storm has shown that Magnus made neither of these expeditions. The passage in the "Scotichronicon" is shown to be an interpolation by a late writer, and the foundation for the statement referring to Magnus' operations in Scotland in 1094 disappears wholly when it is made clear that at this time he was still in Norway, busily engaged in securing his succession to the throne.<sup>1</sup> Norse sagas mention only the two expeditions in 1098-1099 and 1102-1103, about which Welsh chronicles, Irish annals, and verses of contemporary scalds give the most reliable information.

After the peace at Konghelle, Magnus sailed to the British Isles with a fleet of 150 ships. He landed in the Orkneys, where he deposed the jarls Paul and Erlend, and sent them to Norway, possibly, because they had been neglectful of their duties as vassals. Soon afterward he took King Gudrød Crowan of the Hebrides prisoner, and forced him to submit. He then proceeded to the Isle of Man, which was regarded by the Norsemen as belonging to the Hebrides group (Sudreyjar). Civil strife between rival chieftains had here been in progress, and he found on the battlefield of Sandvad the corpses still lying unburied, says the chronicle.<sup>2</sup> He took possession of the island and erected a number of houses and castles. According to Ordericus Vitalis,<sup>3</sup> he brought over a large number of colonists from Norway, because the inhabitants had been greatly reduced in numbers by the incessant feuds. The real reason for the new colonization may have been that he could put little trust in the loyalty of the Manx, who were partly of Gaelic descent, and who had lived isolated in their island homes too long to feel any attachment for Norway.

During the reign of William Rufus (1087-1100) the Normans in

<sup>1</sup> Gustav Storm, *Magnus Barfods Vesterhavstog, Historisk Tidsskrift, anden række*, vol. III. Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica. Orkney-ingasaga*, ch. xxviii ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Chronica Regum Manniæ et Insularum*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, p. 767.

England were engaged in subduing Wales.<sup>1</sup> The king was unsuccessful in his campaigns against the Welsh mountaineers, but Norman barons and adventurers had gradually pushed their way into the country, where they seized one district after the other, and erected castles. When the king of South Wales fell in the battle of Brecknock, in 1093, three Norman lordships came into being in South Wales. In Northern Wales the Normans had been less successful, but the conquest was pressed with energy. The Earl of Chester had pushed across the Menai Strait to Anglesea, where he built a castle at Aberlleiniog. But the Welsh rallied in 1095-1096, and destroyed all the Norman castles on Welsh soil except that of Pembroke. King William marched against them, and vowed that he would exterminate the entire male population, but he had to return home without having won a single victory. The Norman earls were more successful. In 1098 the earls of Shrewsbury and Chester marched through northern Wales, crossed over to Anglesea, and rebuilt the castle of Aberlleiniog. The Welsh turned to Magnus Barefoot for aid. He accepted the invitation, and quickly crossed over from the Isle of Man with his fleet. In attempting to prevent the Norsemen from landing, the Earl of Shrewsbury was mortally wounded, and the Normans, who had become thoroughly alarmed, evacuated Anglesea. Magnus returned to the Orkneys for the winter. King Lagman of Man, whom he had taken captive, was made vassal king of Man and the Hebrides, and he seems to have ruled till 1101.

When the king and his men returned to Norway, they wore Scotch national costumes. As these had never before been seen in Norway, they attracted much attention, and the people, who were ever fond of descriptive nicknames, called the king Magnus Barefoot.

King Lagman of Man and the Hebrides disappears in 1101. Whether he died in that year, or departed on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land as stated in the "*Chronica Regum Manniæ*" cannot be definitely determined. The chronicle also states that Magnus sent another king, Ingemund, to Man; but he was slain, and Magnus went to the Islands to restore order and submission. This gives

<sup>1</sup> H. C. W. Davis, *England under the Normans and Angevins*, p. iii ff., London, 1909.

a credible explanation of Magnus' second expedition, which he seems to have undertaken for the purpose of organizing the western possessions for his son Sigurd, who was made "king of the Islands" in 1102. His plan seems to have been to make Sigurd ruler of this new island kingdom, while his older son Eystein was to inherit the throne of Norway. The Welsh chronicle states that Magnus visited Anglesea, cut a great deal of timber, and brought it to Man, where he built three castles, which he garrisoned with his own men. From Man he sailed to Dublin in 1102. The "Heimskringla" states that he captured Dublin and Dublinshire, and spent the winter with King Myriartak (Muirchertach) in Kunnakter (possibly Connaught), but this is wholly erroneous. The "Ulster Annals" have the following entry for the year 1102: "In this year King Magnus came to Man, and he made peace with the Irish for one year." The Four Masters give a more detailed account: "An Irish army was assembled at Dublin to resist Magnus and the Norsemen, who came to ravage the country, but they made peace for one year, and Muirchertach gave King Magnus' son Sigurd his daughter in marriage, and many costly presents with her."<sup>1</sup> This shows that Magnus' second expedition could not have been undertaken with a view to conquer Ireland, but that it has been his aim to attach the island possessions more closely to the Norwegian crown. In these efforts he had been very successful. He reestablished order in the islands, built and garrisoned forts for the maintenance of peace, brought in new colonists to settle and develop the districts which had been laid waste during the period of anarchy and misrule, and united the islands under a king, who was to govern them, subject to the authority of the king of Norway. These wisely conceived and ably directed efforts to establish an efficient government in these distant islands which had hitherto been the spoils of reckless adventurers, and the haunts of freebooters, might have had abiding results; a new era of peace and development might have dawned for them, had not death suddenly cut short King Magnus' career. It appears that in the summer of 1103 he left the Isle of Man, bound on a homeward voyage. He landed on the northeast coast of Ireland, where he made

<sup>1</sup> Sigurd's marriage must have been arranged with a view to strengthen his power and prestige as king.



a raid into the country with but a small force. After he had penetrated quite a distance inland he was suddenly attacked by an Irish army. Trusting in his bravery he refused to retreat, but his men were overpowered by superior numbers in the marshes where the battle was fought, and Magnus himself fell. He was at this time thirty years of age. The accounts of this raid into Ireland as given by the different sources are much at variance. The sagas describe it as a foraging expedition, and state that Magnus was waiting for cattle to be brought him "ofan af Kunnöktum,"<sup>1</sup> when the Irish suddenly fell upon him. Ordericus Vitalis relates that Magnus landed on the coast of Ireland. The Irish were much afraid, and did not dare to meet him in battle, but, speaking fair words, they prevailed on him to debark, and when he had marched two miles into the country he was ambushed and slain.<sup>2</sup> The "*Chronica Regum Manniæ*" states that Magnus hastened ahead of his fleet with sixteen ships; that he imprudently landed in Ireland, where he was surrounded by the Irish, who slew the king and nearly all his men. He was buried at the St. Patrick's church at Down (Downpatrick), the chronicle adds. The essence of the whole matter seems to be contained in the statement of the "*Ulster Annals*" that Magnus was attacked and killed by the Ulstonians on a plundering expedition.

When Sigurd heard of his father's death, he became disheartened and returned to Norway. King Muirchertach had formed an alliance with King Henry I. of England, as both seem to have regarded Magnus as a dangerous neighbor, and Olav Bitling, a son of the former King Gudrød Crowan, was placed on the throne of Man.

Though Magnus' plans thus suddenly came to naught, his work had, none the less, produced permanent results. The jarls of the Orkneys and the kings of Man and the Hebrides became more closely attached to Norway than hitherto, and the system and organization introduced by King Magnus continued to exist in the Islands for well-nigh 150 years.

The closer relations established with the lands in the West gave a great stimulus, also, to commercial intercourse between Norway and the British Isles, and new costumes and articles of luxury were introduced from Scotland and England. Magnus himself had formed a

<sup>1</sup> *Morkinskinna*, 24 a. *Fagrskinna*, 240.

<sup>2</sup> Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, XI. 8. *Orkneyingasaga*, xxxii.

sort of partnership with an English merchant in Lincoln, who kept his treasury, and supplied him with arms, ornaments, and other necessary articles. After King Magnus' death, Henry I. of England forced the merchant to turn over to him 20,000 pounds of silver.

## 52. THE NORWEGIAN COAT OF ARMS

The Norwegian coat of arms, which consists of a golden lion with crown and battle-ax in a red shield, was thought to have originated on Magnus Barefoot's expeditions to the British Isles. Snorre says that when Magnus fought and fell in Ireland, "he wore a helmet, and carried a red shield on which appeared a lion wrought in gold. He was girded with the sword 'Leggbit,' the best of weapons. Its hilt was of walrus teeth, decorated with gold. He carried a spear, and over his shirt of mail he wore a cloak of red silk on which a lion was embroidered both on the front and in the back."<sup>1</sup> Professor Gustav Storm observes<sup>2</sup> that the oldest account of Magnus' last battle in Ireland, found in the "Ágrip af Norregs Konungasögum," not in the "Heimskringla," mentions neither the red cloak nor the lions, but states that he had helmet, sword, and spear, and that he wore kilt (*silkihjup*) and stockings (*stighosor*) — the Scotch dress in which he was usually attired. The later saga writers are evidently guilty of the anachronism of describing Magnus as wearing the royal attire, adorned with the coat of arms used in Snorre's own time by King Haakon Haakonsson and Skule Jarl, a very common failing of the saga writers. The question then confronts us: When and how did the Norwegian coat of arms originate? We have seen that the Norsemen usually decorated their ships and weapons with figures representing beasts and birds of prey, like the dragon heads on their warships, and the raven (Odin's bird) on their sails and banners. These figures were symbols of bravery, and were employed to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy, but they had no heraldic character. In the twelfth century the knight errants began to decorate their shields and banners with heraldic figures and devices, and in

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Magnus Barfotssaga*, ch. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Gustav Storm, *Norges gamle Vaaben, Farver og Flag*, Christiania, 1894. Dr. G. L. Baden, *Undersøgelse om Ælden af Flags Brug i vort Norden, Samlinger til det norske Folks Sprog og Historie*, vol. IV., p. 514 ff.

the course of the thirteenth century these devices became family coats of arms.<sup>1</sup> Professor Storm shows that the golden lion on a red shield as a royal coat of arms is traceable to the time of Haakon Haakonsson and Skule Jarl (*i.e.* not earlier than 1217). Both King Haakon's and Skule Jarl's seals, though damaged, have been preserved. Their device is a golden lion, without crown or battle-ax, on a red three-cornered shield. King Haakon's son, Crown Prince Haakon Haakonsson the younger, chose the eagle as his coat of arms, but his younger brother, Magnus, who on Haakon's death became heir apparent to the throne, had selected the lion, which thereby became the coat of arms of the royal family. Magnus' son and successor, Eirik Magnusson (Priesthater), retained this device, but the lion appears in his seal with the crown and the battle-ax of St. Olav.

### 53. NORWAY PARTICIPATES IN THE CRUSADES. EYSTEIN MAGNUSSON AND SIGURD THE CRUSADER

King Magnus Barefoot had many sons, but none of them was born in lawful wedlock. Eystein, the oldest, who was fourteen years of age, Sigurd, the next oldest, and Olav succeeded their father as joint kings. The *hird* and *lendermænd* were divided among the kings, perhaps also the royal estates. But Olav was a mere child under the guardianship of his brothers, and as he died before he became of age, he may be left out of account. Harald Gille, who was still a child staying with his Irish mother in Ireland, is also generally acknowledged to have been a son of King Magnus, though his own assertion is about the only evidence of his royal descent. His mother called him Gillechrist, *i.e.* the servant of Christ. A later pretender, Sigurd Slembediakn, also claimed to be a son of Magnus, but he was generally regarded as an impostor, and was finally captured and put to death. / The principle prevailed that all the king's sons, illegitimate as well as legitimate, had an equal right to the throne. Kingship was regarded as an inherited right; the kingdom was looked upon as an inheritance which could be held in joint ownership, or divided

<sup>1</sup> The *Thidrikssaga*, ch. 172-185, describes the coats of arms of King Thidrik and all the heroes in his hall. King Thidrik has a red shield decorated with a golden lion. Hildebrand has a red shield on which is painted a white castle with golden towers, etc.



among the heirs.<sup>1</sup> The practice of joint kingship, established in the time of Magnus the Good and Harald Haardraade, was adhered to. The kings kept their own *hird*, and shared equally in the royal revenues, but the kingdom was not divided. The reign of the joint kings was regarded as lasting while any of them remained on the throne.

With the death of Magnus Barefoot, and the accession of his young sons, a period of peace was again inaugurated, which lasted till the outbreak of the civil wars in 1130. / During this period the archbishopric of Lund in Skåne was established, as already stated. Norway and Sweden, as well as Denmark, were included in this new church province, and the Scandinavian North was thereby separated from Germany with regard to ecclesiastical affairs.<sup>2</sup> / The intense religious enthusiasm which had been awakened through the efforts of the Pope, and especially by the crusaders, and the zeal of the monastic orders had also reached the North, and the two kings, who were deeply influenced by the general spirit of the age, gave their most zealous efforts to the causes and ideals which had been created by the new awakening. The more warlike Sigurd became a crusader, while the peace-loving Eystein, who ruled the kingdom during his brother's absence, revived the policy of his grandfather Olav Kyrre. He built churches and monasteries, improved the laws, maintained peace and order in the kingdom, and devoted special attention to useful internal improvements.

In 1095 Pope Urban II. preached at Clermont in France the first holy war against the infidels. The religious fervor was soon fanned into white heat by zealots like Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless, and large numbers of pilgrims gathered on the Rhine and in northern France to march against the Turks. The sovereigns of western Europe took no part in the first crusade. Two of them,

<sup>1</sup> T. H. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, p. 14 ff. R. Keyser, *Norges Stats- og Retsforfatning i Middelalderen*, p. 41 ff.

<sup>2</sup> In theory the Archbishop of Bremen was still the head of the church in the North. His supremacy was confirmed by Pope Calixtus II. in 1123, and when a dispute arose on this point between the archbishops of Lund and Bremen, Pope Innocent II. sent a cardinal to investigate the matter, whereupon he confirmed the supremacy of the Archbishop of Bremen through a letter of May, 1133. But this supremacy was merely nominal, and was soon transferred to the Archbishop of Lund.

the Emperor Henry IV. and King Philip I. of France, were under the ban of the church, the king of Spain was fighting against the Saracens at home, and the vicious William Rufus of England was hostile. The crusading hosts were, therefore, led by the great feudal magnates of Lotharingia, Burgundy, Normandy, Flanders, and the Norman colonies in southern Italy; men like Raymond of Toulouse, Hugh of Vermandois, a brother of King Philip I. of France, Robert, Duke of Normandy, his cousin Robert II. of Flanders, Stephen of Blois, the son-in-law of William the Conqueror, Godfrey of Bouillon, and the Italian Norman, Bohemund of Tarent, a son of Robert Guiscard. The armies marched overland to Constantinople, where Emperor Alexius Comnenus had them transported across the Bosphorus into Asia Minor, after the leaders had taken an oath of fealty to him. Nicæa was captured in 1097, Antioch fell into their hands in 1098, and on June 15, 1099, Jerusalem was stormed by the sick and starving crusaders. Jerusalem was organized into a kingdom, and Godfrey of Bouillon became ruler, with the title of "Baron and Advocate of the Holy Sepulchre." Bohemund the Norman became Prince of Antioch, and Baldwin, brother of Godfrey, became Count of Edessa. Warriors from the Scandinavian kingdoms also participated in the first crusade, but as they joined the main army in smaller bands, little is known of their fate or achievements. In 1097 a Danish noble, Svein by name, a member of the royal family, led a band of crusaders to Palestine. They took part in the capture of Edessa, and marched to join in the siege of Antioch, but on the way they were betrayed into the power of the Mohammedans, who cut them down to the last man.

In 1102 the Norwegian *lendermand*, Skofte Agmundsson, who had quarreled with King Magnus Barefoot, organized a crusading expedition to the Holy Land. Accompanied by his sons Finn, Agmund, and Thor, he sailed southward with five ships to Flanders, where he wintered. The next summer (1103) they sailed for Italy, but Skofte died in Rome. His sons also found their graves on Italian soil. "Thor died in Sicily,"<sup>1</sup> says the saga, but whether this happened before they reached Palestine, or on the homeward journey, is not stated, though the saga narrative seems to show that the expedition

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Magnus Barefoot's Saga*, ch. 20.

reached the Holy Land. "When the sons of Magnus became kings, some men who had followed Skofte Agmundsson came from Jorsala-land (Jerusalem), and others from Myklegard (Constantinople). They were very renowned, and brought many new tidings, and these accounts made many desirous of going thither."<sup>1</sup> The news of the crusades, which by this time had reached Norway through many channels, reawakened the old spirit of martial adventure among the Norsemen at home no less than among their kinsmen in Normandy and southern Italy. The transition from Viking expeditions to crusades, already noticeable in Olav Tryggvason's career as crusading Christian king, was neither great nor sudden, and it was now finally accomplished through the general change of conditions as well as through the growth of Christian spirit. We cannot doubt that many were eagerly awaiting an opportunity to go to Palestine to fight against the Mohammedans, but we hear nothing of any great religious enthusiasm, and it appears that most of them were actuated less by Christian zeal than by love of war and adventure, and the prospects of gain and renown. "They asked of the kings that one of them should be the leader of those who wished to join in this enterprise," says the saga. "The kings agreed to this, and both of them together fitted out an expedition in which many leading men took part, both *lendermænd* and *storbønder*. When everything was ready, it was decided that Sigurd should lead the expedition, but Eystein should rule the kingdom in the name of both."<sup>2</sup> This undertaking was a regularly planned and prepared crusade against the Turks in Palestine. The preparations lasted four years. A fleet of sixty ships was fully equipped and manned with 10,000 volunteer warriors from all parts of Norway. King Sigurd set sail from Hordaland, possibly from Bergen, in the fall of 1107, and went to England, where he was well received by King Henry I., who offered him his

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, The Saga of the Sons of Magnus*, ch. I.

<sup>2</sup> *Morkinskinna*, 25. King Eirik Eiegod of Denmark, and his queen Bodil, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1103. Eirik did not reach his destination. He died of fever in the island of Cyprus. Queen Bodil died on the Mount of Olives, at Jerusalem, and was buried in the valley of Josaphat. The fame of these royal pilgrims may have done much to stimulate the kings of Norway to undertake a crusade. See *Danmarks Riges Historie*, vol. I., p. 505 ff. Peter Friedrich Suhm, *Forsøg til Forbedringer i den gamle danske og norske Historie*, p. 159 ff.



friendship and assistance, since he was engaged in so praiseworthy an undertaking.<sup>1</sup> Sigurd spent the winter at the gay English court, and gave many rich presents to various English churches. In the spring (1108) he continued his voyage, but he was much retarded by stormy weather, and did not reach Spain till late in the summer. He therefore decided to spend the winter there, and the governor of Galicia not only gave him permission to establish his winter quarters in that province, but promised, also, on certain conditions, to supply him with the necessary provisions throughout the winter. But the governor took this promise rather lightly, and by Christmas time King Sigurd and his men were in want. With sword in hand they decided to pay the governor a visit in his own castle, but he very discreetly abandoned it in haste, and they provisioned the fleet with the abundant stores which they found.

Early in the spring (1109), as they sailed southward along the west coast of Spain (now Portugal), they met a fleet of Moorish freebooters. The two fleets joined in battle, and after a hard fight, in which a great number of Moors fell, King Sigurd captured eight galleys, while the rest succeeded in making their escape.<sup>2</sup> He thereupon landed at Cintra in Portugal, which had been taken by the Moors, and aided Count Henry in capturing the city. He offered the Moorish garrison their lives if they would accept the Christian faith, but when they refused, he had them all put to death in the true fashion of crusaders. From Cintra he marched to Lisbon, which was also in the hands of the Moors. The sagas state that he battered down the walls and took the city, but this seems to be erroneous, since the place is known to have remained in the possession of the Moors after King Sigurd left.<sup>3</sup> The contemporary scald Haldor Skvaldre, who seems to have accompanied Sigurd, simply states that King Sigurd won his third victory by the *borg* which is called Lisbon.<sup>4</sup> It seems likely that he won a victory over the Moors

<sup>1</sup> *Morkinskinna*, 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Fagrskinna*, ch. 243.

<sup>3</sup> *Morkinskinna*, 25 b. *Fagrskinna*, ch. 243.

<sup>4</sup> In the South a third victory,  
able descendants of kings,  
you won when you landed;  
Lisbon the burh is called.

— *Heimskringla, Saga of the Sons of Magnus*, ch. 5.

outside of the city, but he did not capture the city itself. The sagas state, quite correctly, that Lisbon was the boundary between heathen and Christian Spain. The Moors had seized that part of Portugal which lies south of the River Tejo, while the rest was still in the hands of the Christians. In the so-called heathen Spain Sigurd captured a castle which is called "Alkasa" in the sagas, but as this name is only a corruption of *alcazar*, a Spanish loan-word from Arabic, meaning castle, as shown by Professor P. A. Munch, it is impossible to determine where this fortress was situated.

After leaving Spain he fought another successful engagement with the Moorish freebooters, who at this time controlled the Mediterranean Sea. He then continued his voyage eastward till he reached the Island of Formentera, in the Balearic Isles. Here the freebooters had established a stronghold in a cave in the side of a mountain. The steep ascent leading to the entrance of the cave was protected by a breastwork of stone, and the cave itself was divided into two parts, or chambers, of which the innermost seems to have served as a storehouse for the booty which they gathered from all the Mediterranean coasts. Sigurd tried to capture the cave, but his men were unable to ascend the steep incline against the showers of stones and missiles hurled upon them by the freebooters, who felt so secure in their inaccessible retreat that they jeered and ridiculed the Norsemen, and showed them costly articles to betoken their contempt. King Sigurd then took two boats, filled them with warriors, and lowered them by ropes from the top of the mountain before the entrance to the cave. The men in the boats shot with arrows, and compelled the Moors to abandon the breastwork and retreat into the cave. The assailants were now able to break through the stone wall in front of the entrance, and gain access to the cave. The Moors fled to their inner chamber, but the Norsemen kindled a fire, and smoked them out. They were all killed, and all their booty fell into the hands of the Norsemen.<sup>1</sup> After visiting the islands of Iviza, Minorca, and, possibly, also Majorca,<sup>2</sup> where they also fought with the Moors,

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Saga of the Sons of Magnus*, ch. 6.

<sup>2</sup> "Sigurd, the king of the Norsemen, who in his earlier days deserved to be numbered among the bravest, tarried on his voyage to Jerusalem a whole winter in England after he had asked for the king's peace. He gave much







NORWEGIAN WOVEN TAPESTRY REPRESENTING THE ENTRANCE OF KING SIGURD THE CRUSADER INTO CONSTANTINOPLE.

they sailed to Sicily and Apulia, where they met their kinsmen the Normans, who had gained control of those parts of southern Italy. The Normans in Italy still felt themselves akin to the Norsemen, and Duke Roger of Sicily was married to Edla, the widow of King Knut the Saint of Denmark. King Sigurd and his army of crusaders were, therefore, received with the greatest joy and hospitality. "There was a splendid reception, and every day Duke Roger himself waited on King Sigurd at the table," says the saga. "But on the seventh day of the feast, after the men had taken a bath, King Sigurd took the duke by the hand and led him to the high-seat and gave him the title of 'King of Sicily.'"

Sigurd spent the winter in Sicily and arrived at Ascalon in Palestine in August, 1110.<sup>1</sup> Fulker of Chartres gives the following account of his achievements in Palestine:<sup>2</sup>

"In the meantime there had landed at Joppa (Jaffa) a people called the Norsemen, whom God had stirred up to journey from the western ocean to Jerusalem. Their fleet consisted of sixty ships. Their leader was a young man of exceedingly fine appearance, a

gold to the churches, and after the west wind had opened the gates of spring and quieted the ocean, he again went on board and set sail. He terrified with his sword the Balearic Isles, called Maiorica and Minorca, and left them an easy prey for William of Montpellier. From there he went to Jerusalem, which he reached successfully with all his ships except one." William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, V.

<sup>1</sup> The *Heimskringla* and other sagas state that Sigurd landed at Akersborg (*i.e.* Aere), but many contemporary ecclesiastics in other countries have written about the crusades, and as they seem to have had better knowledge of the geography of Palestine, their statements on such points must be regarded as reliable. These sources are found in *Samlinger til det norske Folks Sprog og Historie*, vol. I. The *Historia Hierosolymitanæ Expeditionis*, by Albert Canonicus of Aachen, says: "In the meantime Magnus, a brother of the Norwegian king (Magnus is a mistake for Sigurd Magnusson), arrived in the harbor of Ascalon with a well equipped and strong army with forty warships and 10,000 warriors, after having spent two years on the voyage over the great ocean from his kingdom. He anchored for a day near the city to see if any one would come against him, either by sea or land, with whom he might come into a fight either purposely or inadvertently, but as the people of Ascalon remained quiet and did not dare to come out, he landed the following day at Joppa (Jaffa), as he was desirous of worshiping in Jerusalem," ch. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Gesta Peregrinatum Francorum cum armis Hierusalem Pergentium*, ch. 36.

brother of the king of that country. As the king (Baldwin) had returned to Jerusalem, he rejoiced exceedingly over their arrival, spoke kindly to them, admonished them, and asked them out of love of God to stay a while in the land to which they had come, and help him to spread Christianity; they could then, after having served the cause of Christ in some way, give thanks to God when they returned to their own country. They assented gladly, and answered that they had come to the Holy Land with no other intention; they promised to follow him with their fleet wherever he would go with his army, if he would provide them with the necessary provisions. This was agreed to and fulfilled. They first decided to go to Ascalon, but later they laid the better plan of attacking and besieging the city of Sidon. The king led his army from Ptolemaida, which is now generally called Achon, while the Norsemen, well armed, sailed from the harbor of Jaffa. The fleet of the emir of Babylonia lay at that time hidden in the harbor of Tyre. The Saracens annoyed the Christians, our pilgrims, on their buccaneering expeditions, and they provisioned by various routes the sea coast towns which were still in the hands of the king of Babylonia, but when they heard about the Norsemen, they did not venture to leave the harbor of Tyre, for they did not dare to fight with them. When the king came to Sidon, he laid siege to the city, while the Norsemen attacked it from the sea. With war machines they so terrified the inhabitants that the garrison asked the king to be permitted to depart unharmed, he could then, if he wished, keep the people of the city, and use them for tilling the soil. This was asked and granted. The garrison retired, but the landsfolk remained in peace according to the agreement. The sun had visited the archer (the constellation) nineteen times when the Sidonians in the month of December (19th of December, 1110) surrendered their city." This account, which is in full accord with the sagas, is substantiated also by a number of other sources.<sup>1</sup> Sigurd claimed no reward for aiding in the capture

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Saga of the Sons of Magnus*, ch. II. *Fagrskinna*, 245. Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitanae Expeditionis*, lib. xi., ch. 31-34. Archbishop William of Tyre, *Historia Rerum in Partibus Transmarinis Gestarum a Tempore Successorum Mahumeth usque ad Annum Domini mclxxxiv.*, lib. xi., ch. 14. *Secunda Pars Historiae Hierosolimitanae*, A.D. 1110.



of Sidon, but Baldwin distributed rich presents among his men, and gave him a chip of the Holy Cross, which Sigurd promised under oath to preserve at the shrine of St. Olav. He also made a vow to introduce the system of tithes in Norway, and to do everything in his power to secure the establishment of an archbishopric in Nidaros. King Sigurd left Palestine shortly after the capture of Sidon, and went to Constantinople, where he was magnificently entertained by Emperor Alexios Comnenos (called Kirialax in the sagas). Sigurd and his men were escorted through the golden portal, *porta aurea*, through which the Emperors alone entered the city when they returned in triumph from successful military campaigns. They were quartered in the Blachernæ palace, and were entertained with games in the hippodrome at the Emperor's expense. When Sigurd left, he gave Alexios all his ships, and many of his men remained in Constantinople, and entered the service of the Emperor. Sigurd and his crusaders returned through Bulgaria, Hungary, Austria, and Germany. About midsummer they arrived in Schleswig, where the Danish jarl Eiliv entertained them. King Nicolas (Nils) of Denmark, who was married to Sigurd's stepmother, Margareta Fredkulla, received him with the greatest hospitality, accompanied him through Jutland, and gave him a fully equipped ship on which he returned to Norway in July, 1111. He was received with great rejoicing, and his brother Eystein, who had ruled the kingdom during his three and a half years' absence, cheerfully surrendered to him the share of the kingship which he had held in trust. "It was a common opinion," says the saga, "that no one had made a more memorable expedition from Norway." He was called Sigurd Jorsalafarer (Jorsal = Jerusalem), a name by which he is generally known in history.<sup>1</sup>

#### 54. KING EYSTEIN MAGNUSSON'S REIGN. THE ACQUISITION OF JÆMTLAND

During Sigurd's absence Eystein ruled the kingdom with great ability. He showed rare talent for administration, and furthered a

<sup>1</sup> Paul Riant, *Skandinavernes Korstog og Andagtsreiser til Palestina*, Copenhagen, 1868.

peaceful development with such devoted interest that his reign is remembered as one of the most benign and prosperous in the history of the country. He is described as a man of medium size with blue eyes and light curly hair. He had acquired extensive legal knowledge, and he distinguished himself through equanimity and great wisdom in council. The people loved him highly for his friendly and cheerful disposition and his love of peace and justice.

His brother Sigurd Jorsalafarer (Crusader) was not like him. He had auburn hair, and was tall and well-built, but not good looking. He was a great athlete and a very ambitious prince, but usually gloomy and reticent. At times he showed a violent temper, and he often punished offenders severely; but he was generous to a fault, frank, brave, and upright. The more untoward traits of his character can only be explained as an inception of insanity, which in his later years enveloped him in mental darkness.

With the instinct of a statesman King Eystein soon took steps to join the province of Jämtland to the Norwegian kingdom. This independent border district had been settled in early days by colonists from Trøndelagen, and when Harald Haarfagre had won all Norway, many people who were dissatisfied with the new order of things emigrated into Jämtland and the neighboring districts, Helsingland and Herjedalen. We have seen that in the time of Haakon the Good the people of Jämtland voluntarily placed themselves under the authority of the king of Norway, as they preferred his overlordship to that of the Swedish king. This step proves that they considered themselves as Norsemen. The province belonged to Norway till in the time of King Olav the Saint, when it was seized by the king of Sweden, and it remained a Swedish dependency until it was reunited with Norway in Eystein's reign.<sup>1</sup>

In ecclesiastical affairs, however, it always formed a part of the diocese of Upsala. Herjedalen, which is often mentioned together with Jämtland, belonged to the diocese of Trondhjem, and seems always to have been a Norwegian province. "King Eystein sent messengers to Jämtland to the wisest and most powerful men,"

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. II., p. 596 ff. *Samlinger til det norske Folks Sprog og Historie*, vol. I., p. 34 ff., *Nye Bidrag til den gamle norske Provins Jämtlands Historie*.

says the saga, "and invited them to visit him. He received with great cordiality those who came, and gave them valuable gifts. He also sent presents to some who did not come, and in this way he gained the friendship of all those who ruled that country. He spoke to them and showed them that the people of Jämtland had acted unwisely in withdrawing their allegiance and their taxes from the kings of Norway. He mentioned that the people of that province had given their allegiance to Haakon Adalsteinsfostre (Haakon the Good), and had long remained subject to the Norwegian kings. He pointed out how many necessary articles they could get from Norway, and how much trouble it would cause them to get what they needed from the king of Sweden. He succeeded so well with his arguments that the people of their own accord made an offer, and asked that they might be allowed to pledge their allegiance to King Eystein, which they termed their need and necessity. The union was brought about in the following manner: The leading men asked the people to take an oath of fealty, and afterwards they went to King Eystein and gave him the country." <sup>1</sup>

How the province of Jämtland could be enticed away from Sweden and joined to Norway without causing an open rupture between the two countries it is not easy to explain, even if according to Eystein's view of the matter Norway still had a valid claim to this border district which Sweden had unrightfully seized. The inactivity of the Swedish king must have been due to circumstances which made it impossible for him to pay attention to this distant province, but what these circumstances were is left to conjecture. If King Inge Stenkilsson was still alive, which is not known, he was now an aged man, possibly too weak to take a very active part in the affairs of state. If he was dead, it is not improbable that jealousy between rival candidates for the throne had temporarily crippled the government, and that King Eystein used such a moment of weakness for his shrewd and well-planned move.

Monasticism made its appearance in Norway at this time, and several monasteries of the Benedictine order were built during the twelfth century. Sigurd Ulstreng founded a monastery of this order, probably in 1104, and King Eystein began the erection of a St. Michael's

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, The Saga of the Sons of Magnus*, ch. 15.



church and monastery at Nordness, near Bergen. The buildings were large stone structures, but it is not known whether they were finished in Eystein's time. It has been thought that the St. Albanus monastery at Selja, and the three nunneries, Gimsø at Skien, Nonnesæter in Oslo, and Bakke in Trondhjem, were also founded in Eystein's reign,<sup>1</sup> but this is doubtful. The St. Albanus monastery is not heard of till in King Sverre Sigurdsson's reign, and the nunneries are not mentioned till in the second half of the twelfth century. The rules of the order required the Benedictine monks to divide the time not spent in devotional exercises between physical labor, especially gardening and horticulture, and study, which consisted chiefly in the copying of books and manuscripts. They introduced many new varieties of plants and trees, and the fruit raising which now flourishes in many districts of Norway was developed mainly by their skillful and painstaking efforts. To their literary activity we are indebted especially for some valuable works on the early history of Norway, the most noteworthy of which is the "*Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*," by Theodricus Monachus.

Owing to the interest of the kings in religious matters, Norway was fast swinging into line with regard to church organization and ecclesiastical affairs generally. The diocese of Bergen was divided, and a new bishopric was established at Stavanger. No city had yet been founded there, but wharves had been built on the fine harbor, which was visited by merchant ships in great numbers. When the bishop's residence was located there, a new development began, and Stavanger is spoken of as a city already in the latter half of the twelfth century. Reinald (Reginald), a Benedictine monk from Winchester, England, was made bishop, and his first thought seems to have been to erect a cathedral church, which of necessity had to adorn every bishop's seat in those times. It was a great undertaking, as the cathedrals were built by the church, not by the state, but the Catholic bishops were men of wealth and power; they had the rank of jarls, and enjoyed a princely income. Large tracts of land had been granted to the diocese, and when King Sigurd the Crusader introduced the system of tithes, the bishops also received one-fourth of

<sup>1</sup> Chr. C. A. Lange, *De norske Klostres Historie i Middelalderen*, p. 17 f.



THE STAVANGER CATHEDRAL.



INTERIOR OF THE STAVANGER CATHEDRAL.





this new revenue. They had also a considerable income from royal fiefs and from fines paid by those who transgressed against the ordinances of the church. For undertakings of special importance the bishop could also call upon the people for a general contribution. A cathedral was erected, which is still the pride of the beautiful city of Stavanger. It was built in the Romanesque style after the pattern of the Winchester cathedral in England, and seems to have been completed about 1150.<sup>1</sup> It was dedicated to St. Swithun, bishop of Winchester in England (837-862), and a shrine containing some relics of the saint, which had been brought from England for the purpose, was deposited in the church. A new bishopric was also established at Hólar in Iceland in 1106,<sup>2</sup> and a cathedral was erected at Kirkebø in the Faroe Islands, where a diocese was now permanently established. The attempt of Bishop Eirik Gnipsson of Greenland to Christianize the Skrælings in Vinland has already been mentioned elsewhere. He was, evidently, lost on the voyage, as he was never again heard of. King Eystein erected churches in Trondhjem, and at Trondenes in Nordland. In Bergen he built a royal residence, which was said to be the finest wooden structure in Norway. Close to this hall he built the Apostle church, which was used as a royal chapel. Eystein's efforts were wholly directed towards the peaceful upbuilding of the kingdom through internal improvements and the encouragement of commerce. He constructed a new harbor at Agdenes, at the entrance to the Trondhjemsfjord, and improved the harbor of Sundholm Sound near Bergen. On the mountain tops along the coast he caused beacons to be erected for the guidance of mariners. These improvements were of importance to commerce, which was developing rapidly at this time, especially through the increased export of herring and codfish.

The numerous pilgrimages to St. Olav's shrine had increased travel across the Dovre Mountains, but as the journey through the wilds from eastern Norway to Trondhjem was difficult and dangerous,

<sup>1</sup> Tveteraas, *Stavanger Domkirke, Stavanger Aftenblad*, April 12, till June 1, 1911. *Stavanger Domkirke, etc., udgivet av Foreningen til norske Fortidsmindesterkers Bevaring, med Text av N. Nicolaysen, Christiania, 1896.*

<sup>2</sup> A. D. Jørgenson, *Den nordiske Kirkes Grundlæggelse og første Udvikling*, p. 875.

Eystein erected three mountain stations, where travelers could find shelter and refreshments. Though primarily intended for pilgrims, these stations proved to be such an aid to all travelers that the traffic across the mountains was greatly increased.

The relation between the kings, though peaceful, was not cordial, and at times it was marred by more serious clashes provoked by Sigurd's jealous disposition and violent temper. Snorre has pictured an altercation between them in the "Heimskringla," in the happiest vein of his inimitable style. The episode as he describes it must be regarded as drama rather than history, but it gives a most vivid picture of the temper and character of the two kings: "One winter the kings Eystein and Sigurd were entertained in Oplandene, and each had his own residence. But as the estates where they were to dwell were not far apart, their followers agreed that the kings should stay together, and that they should visit one another in turn. At first they were all assembled at the home of King Eystein; but in the evening when the drinking-feast began, the ale was not to their liking, and the men were reticent. Eystein said: 'The men are silent, but it is more in keeping with custom to be merry over the drinking-cup. Let us have some merriment, and there will still be good cheer among the men. It is proper, brother Sigurd, that we should begin some jocular conversation.' But Sigurd replied curtly: 'Be as talkative as you please, but allow me to be quiet.' King Eystein said: 'It has often been customary at the drinking-feast that one compares himself with another, so let it be now.' But Sigurd remained silent. 'I see,' said Eystein, 'that I have to begin this diversion. I will compare myself with you, brother. I must mention that we are equal in honor and possessions, and there is no difference in our descent or education.' King Sigurd answered: 'Do you remember that I could throw you in a wrestling match whenever I pleased, though you are a year older?' Eystein said: 'But I also remember that you did not win in the contests which require agility.' Sigurd said: 'Do you remember that when we were swimming I could duck you under whenever I pleased?' Eystein answered: 'I swam as far as you did, and I could swim equally well under water. I could also skate so well that I know of no one who could compete with me in that sport,

but you could not skate better than an ox.' Sigurd said: 'It seems to me that it is a sport better fitted for chieftains to be able to shoot well with bow and arrow, but you cannot use my bow if you draw it with your feet.' Eystein answered: 'I am not so strong with the bow, but there is little difference in our ability to hit the mark. In skiing I am your superior, and that has hitherto been accounted a fine sport.' Sigurd said: 'It seems to me especially befitting a chieftain that he, who is to be the leader of others, should be tall and strong, and better able to wield the weapon than other men, so that he can be easily recognized where many are assembled.' King Eystein said: 'It is no less important that a man is handsome, he is then easily recognized in a multitude; that, too, appears to me to be a quality of a chieftain, for fine clothes suit well a handsome man. I am also better versed in the laws than you are, and when we speak, I am more eloquent.' Sigurd said: 'It may be that you know more tricks in law than I do, for I have had other things to contend with. No one denies that you have a smoother tongue, but many say that you do not always keep your word, but that you take your promises lightly; that you seemingly agree with every one you talk with, and that is no kingly conduct.' King Eystein said: 'When people bring their suits before me, my first thought is to bring the cause of each party to a conclusion that will seem best to him; but then comes also the counterpart, and the quarrel is then often adjusted in a way satisfactory to both. It often happens that I promise to do what people ask of me, for I desire that all should go away well pleased. But I have the choice, also, if I wish, to do like you, and threaten everybody with punishment, and I have heard no one complain that you do not keep your promise.' King Sigurd said: 'It has been generally recognized that the expedition which I made when I left our land was an achievement worthy of a chieftain, but you stayed at home like your father's daughter.' King Eystein answered: 'Now you touched the ulcer. I should not have started this conversation if I could make no reply on this point. It should almost seem as if I sent you from home like my sister when you were equipped for the expedition.' King Sigurd said: 'I suppose you have heard that I fought many battles in Turkey, which you have heard mentioned. I was victorious in all of them, and secured a



great deal of valuable booty, such as never has been brought to this land. I was most honored where I met the best men, but I am afraid that you are still the home-bred greenhorn.' King Eystein said: 'I have heard that you fought some battles abroad, but it was of more value to our country that I erected five churches from the very foundations. I also constructed a harbor at Agdenes where there was no harbor before, and where every sailor had to pass in going north or south along the coast. I also built the stone tower in Sundholm Sound, and the royal hall in Bergen, while you sent Saracens to the devil in Turkey, which, I think, was of little benefit to our kingdom.' King Sigurd said: 'On my expedition I went even as far as the river Jordan, and I swam across the river; but on the river bank are some small trees, and among these I tied a knot, and spoke over it, that you, my brother, should untie it, or you should be spoken of accordingly.' King Eystein said: 'I will not untie the knot which you have tied for me, but I might have tied you a knot which you would have been far less able to untie, the time when you sailed with one ship into my fleet on your return.' After this they remained silent, and both were angry."<sup>1</sup>

A more serious collision between the two kings occurred in connection with the suit brought by King Sigurd against his *lendermand* Sigurd Ranesson, whom he accused of defalcation and fraud. Ranesson had been a faithful friend and companion of King Magnus Barefoot, and he was married to Skjaldvaar, King Magnus' sister. He had been appointed royal tax collector in Finmarken,<sup>2</sup> and had a monopoly on the trade with the Finns. King Sigurd accused him of having withheld sixty marks of silver yearly which rightfully

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, The Saga of the Sons of Magnus*, ch. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Finmarken, as far as to the White Sea, was at this time a Norwegian dependency, and the Finns had to pay tribute to the kings of Norway. This tribute was farmed out to powerful nobles in Haalogaland in northern Norway. They agreed to pay the king a certain sum every year, and in turn they were granted exclusive right to trade with the Finns, and to collect what tribute they might get from them. This *sysse*, or office of royal tax collector, was regarded as very profitable.

The original sources dealing with this noted case have been collected and edited by Gustav Storm in his work *Sigurd Ranessons Proces*, Christiania, 1877. See also *Samlinger til det norske Folks Sprog og Historie*, vol. I., p. 112 ff.

belonged to the royal treasury, and Ranesson feared that, although he was innocent, the decision might go against him when the suit was brought before the *thing*. He therefore hastened to Viken, placed his case before King Eystein, and asked his assistance. Eystein investigated the matter carefully, and advised Ranesson as to what course to pursue.

In the spring King Eystein went to Trondhjem for the purpose of bringing about a reconciliation between Ranesson and King Sigurd. But Sigurd summoned a *bything* where he accused Ranesson of having collected taxes, and of having seized the trade with the Finns without authority. Eystein pointed out that the case was of such a character that it could not be tried at a *bything*, but would come under the jurisdiction of a regular *thing*, and Sigurd had to postpone the matter. He summoned a *thing* to meet within two weeks, and left the meeting with his men. At the appointed time both kings appeared at the *thing* with a large number of armed followers, and Sigurd reiterated his accusations against Ranesson, who maintained that he was innocent, and that the king had been misinformed. Eystein spoke very eloquently in Ranesson's behalf, and showed that if the case was to be settled according to law and justice, it would have to be brought before the Thrandarnesthing, as the *thing* which King Sigurd had summoned had no jurisdiction over a vassal. After the *lagmænd* (those learned in the law) had carefully weighed the matter, they declared the point raised by King Eystein to be well taken. The *thing* had to be adjourned, and King Sigurd summoned Ranesson to plead his cause at the Thrandarnesthing within a fortnight.

Both kings gathered strong forces and met on the day appointed. "When King Eystein approached the *thing*, he said to Ranesson: 'What offer doest thou intend to make, and how wilt thou defend thyself to-day at the *thing*?' Ranesson answered: 'From you I expect to get counsel and help.' Eystein said: 'Come now hither, if thou wilt follow my advice, and give me thy hand as a token that thou wilt transfer thy cause to me. It is proper that we brothers should look each other in the eye, and see who is best versed in the law.' This was done, and Eystein went to the *thing* with his men." King Sigurd repeated his charges against Ranesson, and Eystein

again spoke in his defense, but when Sigurd declared that he was determined to have the case settled according to law, King Eystein said: "I have indeed said, brother, that you should bring this case against Ranesson before the Thrandarnesthing, but since a slight change has now taken place, so that the kings themselves are parties in the case, it cannot be decided at a *fylkesthing*, but must be brought before the *lagthing*. The Frostathing alone has now jurisdiction in this case, and there it must be decided, if it must absolutely be decided according to law. I have taken upon myself this case against Sigurd Ranesson, so that we kings are now parties in it. This you cannot gainsay." King Sigurd declared that he would not yield, and he summoned Eystein to appear before the Frostathing. But this *thing* had already been adjourned, and would not assemble again till the following summer.

When the *lagthing* convened, King Sigurd preferred his charges against Ranesson in the most carefully prepared legal form, and Eystein undertook to conduct the defense. The *lendermand* Jón Mornev, a man very learned in the law, was leader and spokesman for the *lagrette*.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that *lagmænd* were also present at the thing.<sup>2</sup> Ranesson was able to prove that King Magnus Barefoot had granted him the trade with the Finns as a monopoly, and that he had made the provision that this grant should also continue throughout the reign of his sons. It was for the *thing*, then, to decide whether Magnus could make a grant for a period extending beyond his own reign. The *lagmænd* found that the king could make permanent grants, but in order to be valid such grants had to be published at all the *lagthings* (Frostathing, Gulathing, etc.), but Ranesson had no witnesses to prove that he had complied with the law on this point. King Sigurd declared that he would not recognize this to be the law, that a

<sup>1</sup> The *lendermand* were not chosen to the *lagrette* except with the consent of the *haulds* or *bønder*.

<sup>2</sup> The *lagmænd* were a sort of judges who declared and interpreted the law. The decisions to be voted by the *thing* were prepared by the *lagrette*. The office corresponded somewhat to that of *lovsigemand* in Iceland. About the age of the institution of *lagmænd* in Norway there has been considerable discussion, but it is clear that it existed at this time, and even much earlier. See Konrad Maurer, *Das Alter des Gesetz-sprecheramtes in Norwegen*; Ebbe Hertzberg, *Grundtrækkene i den ældste norske Proces*; Gustav Storm, *Sigurd Ranessons Proces*.



king could make a grant for a longer period than his own reign, and maintained that it had now been proven that Ranesson had no right to the trade with the Finns. Eystein maintained that the king had the right to make such grants, but as it seemed impossible to wholly remove all doubt on this point, the chieftains proposed that the kings should cast lots as to whose view should prevail. To this they consented. Sigurd was successful, and he declared his view to be adopted. The point was now raised whether Ranesson had gained possession of the wares which he had collected, without the consent of the owners. The *lendermand* Bergthor Bokk testified against him on this point, and King Sigurd demanded that the defendant should be declared guilty and punished. But Eystein had not yet exhausted all his resources in this legal duel. He said that it seemed to him to be very unjust to find Ranesson guilty when King Magnus had made the grant in behalf of his sons, and it had hitherto not been revoked. He requested the *thing* to pause a few moments before rendering a decision, and this was granted. He then called witnesses to prove that the case had already been dismissed at three previous *things*, and showed that when a case, because of irregular procedure, had been dismissed thrice it could not again be brought before a *thing*. This law point was accepted by the *lagrette* as applying to the case, and no decision could be given by the *thing*. We can scarcely blame King Sigurd for waxing wroth when he again found himself worsted in this way. He left the *thing*, and vowed that since Eystein had blocked justice by shrewd tricks he would now seek it in some other way.

The relations between the brothers were now strained to the breaking point, and civil war seemed imminent. In the evening after the *thing* adjourned Eystein returned to his residence, and talked with his men about the trial just concluded. He asked Ranesson what he thought of the outcome, and Ranesson answered that he was very thankful to the king for what he had done for him. The "Morkinskinna" continues: "Shortly afterwards Sigurd Ranesson found an opportunity to leave the house. It was late in the evening, and when he had assured himself that no one noticed him, he walked hastily away alone. He had no mantle, he wore a scarlet coat and blue trousers buttoned outside the coat and buckled about the waist; in his hand he carried a javelin with a handle so short that

his hand touched the iron. He walked down the street, and did not stop until he came to the wharf which touched the stern of King Sigurd's ship. A man sat there keeping guard. Ranesson asked permission to enter the ship, but the guard refused. 'Choose then,' said Ranesson, 'leave the wharf now, or this spear will pierce you.' The guard withdrew, and he entered the ship and walked forward towards the front. There the men were seated by the tables, and no one noticed him until he knelt before the king and said: 'I do not wish, King Sigurd, that you brothers, as it now appears, should begin war against one another for my sake. I will rather give myself and my head into your power. Do with me as you please, for I will rather die than cause hostilities between you and your brother.' Many of the men interceded for him, and begged Sigurd to show him mercy since he had surrendered himself to the king. King Sigurd said: 'You are truly a noble man, Sigurd Ranesson, and you have taken a course which is best for us all. It looked as if a misfortune was about to happen, so great that God alone could know the outcome. I had decided to go up to Julvold in the morning with my men, and fight with King Eystein. I am now willing to bring about a reconciliation if you will leave the matter to my decision.' This Ranesson did. King Sigurd said: 'I will not delay settlement, for this case has been long drawn out. You must pay a fine of fifteen marks, which sum is to be paid in full to-morrow before the services are at an end in the Christ church. My brothers intended to disgrace me, but I will guard their honor as carefully as my own. You must pay five marks to King Eystein and five marks to King Olav,<sup>1</sup> and you must pay them before you pay me. This fine you are to pay in pure gold, for I have been told that you have grown rich in gold from taxes which you have collected. But if you do not pay this money exactly in the manner which I have now stated, the reconciliation between us is at an end.' Sigurd Ranesson answered: 'I thank you, my lord, for your willingness to become reconciled, howsoever it may be with my wealth.' Sigurd Ranesson had no gold,

<sup>1</sup> The boy king was still living. He died in 1115, fifteen years of age. Since Ranesson was fined for fraudulently appropriating to his own use money collected as royal taxes, it was proper to divide the fine equally among the kings, as Sigurd did.

but he succeeded in borrowing five marks from his friends. This sum he first offered King Eystein, but he refused to accept it, and told Ranesson that he would make him a present of it. When he brought the gold to King Olav, he said that he would do as his brother Eystein had done. Finally he offered Sigurd the five marks. The king said that he would give him the gold, if he would be his friend in case hostilities should ever break out between him and Eystein. Ranesson answered: 'I hope that you will never again disagree, for I wish both you and your brothers well; but however much gold will be at stake, yes, even if it should cost me my life, I will esteem no one higher than King Eystein as long as I live.' The king then gave him the gold without condition. Ranesson thanked him, and invited the king to dine with him that same day with as many followers as he wished to bring, and King Sigurd accepted the invitation. After mass he went to Ranesson's house with forty men. When they entered the hall, they found it beautifully decorated with tapestries and weapons; the walls were hung with shields, and everything was so elegantly arranged that the king and his men were quite surprised. The feast was very magnificent and lasted the whole day. Ranesson and his men waited on the guests, carried in beverages and everything which they wanted. When they were gone, so that the king was alone with his followers, he said to them: 'Where have you ever seen a house of a vassal furnished like this? You will not find the like even in the halls of kings. It surpasses anything that is to be seen anywhere.' Bergthor Bokk answered: 'Fine weapons these are, indeed, and everything is beautifully arranged, but it would have been a greater honor for our host if he had owned some of these fine things himself and had not borrowed them all.' King Sigurd became offended and replied: 'We can see how many friends the man has, when we notice that he can get from others everything which he wishes; but thou hast not spoken kindly.' Ranesson now stepped into the hall, and he had heard what had been said. When the bells tolled for the vespers, the king prepared to leave. Ranesson gave him costly presents and invited him to return after the vespers to drink a toast to the memory of Christ.<sup>1</sup> This invita-

<sup>1</sup> This was a continuation of an old heathen custom of drinking toasts to the honor of the gods.



tion the king accepted. When King Sigurd and his men returned to the hall, all the shields had been removed except an old shield and a mantle which hung by the table where the drinks were served. 'A sudden change has taken place while we were gone,' said Sigurd. 'It is but to be expected, my lord,' said Ranesson, 'that each one wants his articles returned. I own no shield save this old one which hangs yonder, and whether or not I am to keep that you shall decide. The story of this shield is as follows: We accompanied your father, King Magnus, on his expedition to Ireland, and we landed for the last time on the Irish coast, which we should not have done. An invincible Irish army came against us; a battle began, as you know, and the great misfortune happened that King Magnus your father, Stallare Eyvind Olboge, and many other brave heroes fell. Our army fled, and all hurried to the ships as fast as they could; but I was not among the first to flee. As they hurried to the ships, a deep swamp near the coast retarded their flight. They attempted to jump over it, and some succeeded, but others did not, and many of those who did not get across were stabbed with spears. When we approached the swamp, I saw a man in front of me; he had this shield on his back, and this mantle about him. When he noticed that it was difficult to cross the swamp, he first threw away the shield, then he tore off his mantle. He wore a silk cap, and the most honorable thing he did, it seemed to me, was that he did not also throw away the cap. It seemed to me that this man was Bergthor Bokk; but Vidkun Jónsson knows, for he was present when I picked up the shield and the mantle. In the battle I had had no shield. Since then I have kept this shield, and now, my lord, you may decide whether I or Bergthor should own it.' The king answered curtly: 'Keep thou the shield.' The king left, and Bergthor was very angry. Shortly afterward King Olav died, as has already been told; Sigurd and Eystein were both kings, but from this time on they were not real friends, though peace was maintained while they lived."

King Eystein died in 1122, thirty-three years of age, at Hustad in Romsdal, and was interred in the Christ church in Trondhjem. "At no man's bier had there been so many mourners since the death of King Magnus the Good, the son of St. Olav," says the "Heimskringla."

The report of the case against Sigurd Ranesson is one of the most valuable documents in all saga literature dealing with Norse jurisprudence. It brings to view a highly developed legal system adapted to an intricate court procedure by astute lawyers, whose skillful pleadings remind us of the proceedings in modern common-law courts. The laws had not been made by great law-givers, but had been gradually evolved from the sense of justice of the whole people. The *things*, both local and superior, gave the people an opportunity to participate directly in the deliberations on all important public questions. All controversies were adjudicated there, and the decisions rendered expressed the best sentiment and most intelligent will of the community. This system developed in time an intimate knowledge of the law, the love for its details, the pride in its intricacies, but also the profound respect for its authority which was the virtue and strength of the Norse social organization. The thing-system developed in the people an ability for self-government, a sense for legal justice, a regard for the rights of the individual which made arbitrary decisions and tyrannical government impossible. The people in council at the *thing* was the highest tribunal and authority in the land, before which even kings had to plead their cause. During the centuries in which the life and traits of the Norsemen were rapidly fashioned into a permanent national character, these institutions of popular self-government were developing in the Norwegian people the spirit of freedom which expresses itself in an intense love for individual autonomy and national independence in all subsequent Norwegian history.

## 55. THE REIGN OF KING SIGURD THE CRUSADER

After Eystein's death, Sigurd ruled Norway for seven years, pursuant to the policy of peace and cultural development inaugurated by his brother. He made a crusade against the Swedish province of Småland, and forced the yet heathen inhabitants of this district to accept the Christian faith, but the expedition seems to have been undertaken for the purpose of fulfilling a promise which he had made in Palestine that he would do everything possible to further the cause of Christianity. Sigurd was imbued with a religious zeal

of the crusading type characteristic of the age, and he sought earnestly to improve the organization of the church, and to give the clergy more power and greater independence of secular authorities. By these efforts he was clearly assisting the church in its efforts to establish itself as an independent power and supreme authority, though he was, possibly, unable to foresee that this new power, once securely established, would recoil most forcibly against the royal authority which had been instrumental in creating it. The statement of Ordericus Vitalis<sup>1</sup> that Sigurd first built monasteries in Norway and established permanent bishoprics there is, indeed, erroneous, but he established a fourth bishopric at Stavanger, though the year when this happened cannot be determined. He continued the work on the Christ church in Bergen, and completed the St. Halvard's church in Oslo. He had also promised, while in Jerusalem, to make his kingdom an archbishopric, but this promise he could not fulfill, as the Church of Norway was still too little developed to be organized into an independent ecclesiastical province. The most important step taken by Sigurd in church affairs was the introduction of the system of tithes. This was a tithe on incomes, and was to be substituted for the salaries which had hitherto been paid the priests and functionaries of the church. But the salaries were collected as before, and the clergy could now rejoice over a great increase in their income.

King Sigurd established his permanent residence in the trading town of Konghelle, in southeastern Norway, which through his efforts soon ranked with the most important cities in the kingdom. He erected a large castle there, and surrounded it with walls and moats. Inside the walls he built a royal residence, and erected the church of the Holy Cross, to which he gave the chip of the cross of Christ which he had received in Jerusalem. He had promised to deposit it in the Christ church in Trondhjem, but he donated it to this new church, as it seems, for the purpose of giving the growing town of Konghelle increased prestige. On the altar of the church he placed a costly chest which he had received from Prince Eirik Emune of Denmark, and also a *plenarium*<sup>2</sup> written with golden letters, which

<sup>1</sup> Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, X., p. 767.

<sup>2</sup> Plenarium (= complete book), so called because it contained a complete collection of texts for all Sundays in the year.



the patriarch of Jerusalem had given him. In speaking of the Norwegian cities at this time Ordericus Vitalis says: "Along the coast of Norway, by the sea, are found the following five cities: Bergen, Konghelle, Kaupang (Nidaros), Borg (Sarpsborg), and Oslo. There is also a sixth city by the name of Tunsberg, which lies eastward towards the Danes." Stavanger is not mentioned.

King Sigurd had suffered at times from serious mental aberrations which plunged him into the deepest anguish and despondency. As years passed, his mental condition grew worse, until he was seized with violent fits of insanity. On Pentecost Sunday, as he sat in his hall with his queen, Malmfrid, surrounded by many friends and guests, his men noticed to their horror that the king had suddenly become insane. He rolled his eyes wildly and stared around the hall and at his men. He grabbed a costly book written with golden letters, which he had brought from Constantinople, looked at the queen and said: "How much can be changed in a person's lifetime. When I came to this land, I had two things which I considered more precious than all others, this book and my queen. Now it seems to me that one is worse than the other. The queen does not know how horrid she looks. She has a goat-horn in her forehead, and the more lovely she looked then, the more horrid she looks now. This book is worth nothing." With these words he threw the book into the fire, and struck the queen in the face. She wept, but more because of the king's illness than because of his conduct towards her. Before the king stood a young *kertisveinn* (page), Ottar Birting, small in stature, but handsome and dark-haired. He snatched the book from the fire, and said to the king: "It is different now, my lord, from the day when you returned with honor and glory to Norway, and all your friends hastened to meet you, and greeted you with reverence as their king. Now days of sorrow have come. Many of your friends have assembled to celebrate this festival, but they cannot be glad because of your sad condition. Be good, my lord, and take my advice. Console with your kindness the queen, whom you have grievously wronged, and also your chieftains, your *hird*, your friends, and your servants." "What!" shouted the king, "darest thou ugly peasant boy of the humblest descent to give me advice?" He jumped up and raised the sword with both hands over the boy's

head. But Birthing looked at him calm and fearless, and the king dropped the side of the sword on his shoulder, and sat down without saying a word. Everybody in the hall was silent. The king had now regained his composure and looked around with calmness. "But late one tries his own men, and learns how they really are," he said. "Here my best friends are assembled: *lendermænd*, *stallarar*, *skutilsveinar*, and the foremost men in the land, but no one served me as well as this page, whom, I suppose, you consider very inferior to yourselves. This page is Ottar Birthing; he has shown me the greatest devotion. Here I, an insane man, was about to destroy my treasure, but he saved it so that it was not damaged. Neither did he fear death, but he spoke to me in such words that I felt honored. He did not mention anything that could arouse my anger, although he had good reason to do so. He spoke so well that no one present could have spoken better. I jumped up in a rage and was going to strike him with the sword, but he was so brave that he showed no fear, therefore I did him no harm, for he ought not to die because of his virtue. But now, my friends, I will let you know how I intend to reward him. Hitherto he has been my *ker-tisveinn*; now he shall be my *lendermand*, and, more than that, he shall from this moment be the foremost among the *lendermænd*. Take, therefore, Ottar, thy seat among the *lendermænd*. Thou shalt serve no longer." Ottar became afterwards a prominent and highly honored man.<sup>1</sup>

It may have been largely due to his diseased state of mind that Sigurd finally put away Queen Malmfrid, and married a young lady, Cecelia, with whom he had fallen in love. Bishop Magne of Bergen refused to allow this marriage to be performed, but Sigurd finally induced Bishop Reinald of Stavanger to grant permission, by offering to contribute liberally to the Stavanger cathedral which the bishop was building.<sup>2</sup> King Sigurd died in Oslo in the spring of the year 1130, and was interred in the church of St. Halvard.

<sup>1</sup> *Morkinskinna*, 30 b.

<sup>2</sup> *Tveteraas, Stavanger Aftenblad*, April 12 to June 1, 1911.

## 56. THE PERIOD OF CIVIL WARS. MAGNUS THE BLIND, HARALD GILLE, AND SIGURD SLEMBEDIAKN

King Sigurd the Crusader had his faults, but he was an able ruler, and was loved and respected by his subjects. His expeditions abroad had won him honor and distinction; at home he continued with ability and upright purpose the policy of peaceful development inaugurated by Eystein, which made the reign of the sons of Magnus Barefoot one of the most benign and prosperous in the early centuries of Norwegian history. The darkness of the long period of civil strife, bloodshed, and confusion which followed upon the death of Sigurd becomes still deeper when we view it against the background of the prosperous and peaceful era which preceded it. Instead of great national kings, the period of civil wars ushers past with kaleidoscopic rapidity arrogant and incompetent heirs to the throne, contemptible pretenders, daring fortune-seekers, and worthless puppet kings who hold the throne for a day, to be swept from the political chessboard by plots and assassinations. Progress is retarded, and the energies of the nation wasted by the endless strife between rival candidates for the throne. The old writers look upon the period as if the wrath of heaven had suddenly fallen upon the country. Saxo Grammaticus compares the coming of Harald Gille to Norway with a destructive thunderstorm which suddenly swept over the country;<sup>1</sup> and the "Morkinskinna" lets King Sigurd prophesy that evil days would come after his death: "Unfortunate are you, Norsemen, that you have an insane king to rule over you, but the time will come when you would give red gold to have me for a king rather than Harald Gille or Magnus, the one cruel, the other foolish."<sup>2</sup>

But we need not explain the evils of this period either as the wrath of an offended deity, or as the result of the wickedness or incompetence of a single man. The civil wars were only a revival of old evils in an aggravated form, and they were due, in the main, to the same causes which had produced civil wars in earlier days. The circumstance that there was no regulated succession to the throne, but that all the sons of the king or kings had an equal claim to the kingship whether they were born in lawful wedlock or not was in

<sup>1</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, part III., book XIII.

<sup>2</sup> *Morkinskinna*, p. 196.



itself sufficient cause for civil strife, as it became possible for any bold adventurer to put forward a claim to the throne, based on the assertion that he was of royal blood. During this period the various aspirants to the throne were weak and worthless men, children, or ill-starred adventurers. In such hands royal power could become nothing but a name and a shadow. The aristocracy gained control, and willingly aided the worthless kings in weakening and destroying one another. The chieftains fought, indeed, under various standards with seeming zeal for the claims and rights of the candidates whose cause they espoused, but in reality they sought their own advantage, and strengthened their own influence at the expense of the crown, which gradually lost its luster. The clergy, too, were eagerly reaching out for more prestige and power, and would gladly despoil the king of the authority and supervision which he had hitherto exercised in the church. This tendency became especially marked after the creation of the Norwegian archbishopric of Nidaros in 1152. In their efforts to despoil royalty of its power, we soon find the clergy firmly leagued with the aristocracy, and in time these two allied forces ruthlessly swept away the last vestige of real significance of the crown.

With a young woman of good family, Borghild of Dal, King Sigurd had the illegitimate son Magnus, whom he caused to be proclaimed successor to the throne. King Eystein had only one child, a daughter, Maria, and as Magnus was Sigurd's only son, it was expected that he would become sole king without opposition. But two years before the death of Sigurd a young man of Irish birth, Harald Gille, or Gilchrist, came to Norway, and claimed to be an illegitimate son of King Magnus Barefoot. Harald was tall and slender, with dark hair, and looked in all respects like an Irishman; he spoke the Norwegian language imperfectly, and never learned to speak it well; his whole career showed him to be a man of weak character and small ability. He asked King Sigurd to grant him permission to prove his royal extraction by ordeal, and after some deliberation Sigurd, strangely enough, granted this request, as he seems to have felt convinced that Harald was really his half-brother. Harald passed successfully through the ordeal of walking over red-hot plowshares, and Sigurd made him a member of his *hird* and became quite attached

to him, though he made him swear a solemn oath that he would never attempt to become king of Norway as long as Magnus lived. Magnus seems to have regarded Harald Gille as a rival, and felt intense hatred for him from the start. This was in itself natural enough, but Magnus' own vicious character aggravated the situation, and foreboded serious trouble. Though yet very young he was avaricious, proud, quarrelsome, violent, and intemperate. This must have made it easy for the profligate but cheerful Harald Gille to secure a large number of friends and followers. When Sigurd died, Magnus succeeded to the throne, but Harald, who was in Tunsberg at the time, assembled a *thing* there, and when it became apparent that he had as many adherents as Magnus, he was also proclaimed king in spite of the oath he had taken. Magnus was forced to give his consent, and the two became joint kings, each with his own *hird*. The first few years passed quietly, but it was evident from the start that peace could not long be maintained. In 1134 hostilities commenced. Magnus collected a large army, and Harald Gille crossed the Dovre Mountains into Viken and Bohuslen, where he hoped to get support from his friend King Eirik Emune of Denmark. But he was completely defeated by Magnus, and fled to Denmark, where he received the province of Halland as a fief from the Danish king. The shortsighted and arrogant Magnus would listen to no advice, and he took no precaution to guard his kingdom against attack. Harald Gille gathered a new army and received substantial aid from King Eirik Emune. He came to Norway the same year, and quickly gained control of the southeastern districts, where he had many friends. When he reached Bergen, Magnus was still busy trying to gather an army, but he had no force to put in the field against his rival. Harald took him prisoner, caused him to be maimed and blinded, and imprisoned him in a monastery at Nidarholm, near Trondhjem. He was afterwards known as Magnus the Blind. The vicious Harald Gille pursued with innate cruelty the adherents of Magnus; killed, maimed, and blinded many of them to get possession of the royal treasures. He seized Bishop Reinald of Stavanger, and hanged him, because he could not pay the sum of twelve marks of gold which Harald Gille demanded when the bishop could not reveal the place where King Magnus had hidden his treasures. To hang a bishop

like a common thief was regarded as the vilest of crimes, but we hear of no bull of excommunication issued against Harald, though a provincial church council was assembled shortly afterwards. Harald Gille had, indeed, become king, but during his short reign he was a tool in the hands of his followers. He spent his treasures with lavish hands, and let his men do as they pleased. This gave him a certain popularity among the leaders, who felt that he was weak and pliant enough to leave them in actual control. During his inglorious reign the foundation was gradually laid for a rule of the aristocracy through their most powerful representatives, the *lendermænd*.<sup>1</sup>

Very little is known of Harald Gille's reign. In 1135 the Wends appeared on the coast of Norway with a large fleet. They attacked the city of Konghelle, but it is nowhere recorded that King Harald made an attempt to aid the city. The castle was besieged and taken, the church and king's residence were burned, the city was pillaged, and a large number of the inhabitants were carried into captivity. The prosperity of the town was destroyed, and it never regained its prestige. It became henceforth an ordinary trading place, as it probably had been before the days of Sigurd the Crusader. An event of some importance was the successful attempt of Kale Kolsson, or Ragnvald Jarl, to get possession of the Orkneys. King Sigurd

<sup>1</sup> The office of *lendermand* was not hereditary. The king might make any one a *lendermand*, as we see in the case of Ottar Birthing; but this was an exception. The son was generally appointed to succeed his father, and the *lendermænd* as a class belonged to the old aristocracy. They received the total income from large estates, and in return for these grants they had to entertain the king and his court when he traveled through the country, and in time of war they had to serve him with a certain number of armed men. In war the *lendermænd* commanded the military levies of their districts. According to the *Hirðskrá*, they were allowed to keep forty armed men, *huskarlar*, even in time of peace, as they had to exercise police authority and maintain peace and order in their districts. They were of higher rank than the *hirdmænd*, and when at court, they were *hirðstjórar*, or the chief officials of the *hird*. Together with the jarl, *stallare*, and *merkismaðr* they constituted the king's chief council. The rank of the *lendermænd* resembled that of the lords and barons in England, while the position of the *hirdmænd* resembled that of the knights. P. A. Munch, *Samlede Afhandlinger*, vol. I., p. 77 ff.; vol. III., p. 444 ff. See *Hirðskrá*, 19. *Norges gamle Love*, vol. II., p. 407. Gustav Storm, *Om Lendermandsklassens Talrighed i tolvte og trettende Aarhundrede*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, anden række, vol. IV., p. 129 ff. Ebbe Hertzberg, *En Fremstilling av det norske Aristokratis Historie*.



had granted Kale one-half of the Orkneys, and he gave him the name and title of Ragnvald Jarl, after Ragnvald Bruseson, one of the most renowned of the Orkney jarls. The grant seems to have been made for the purpose of uniting the islands more closely with Norway, since Jarl Paul, who ruled them at this time, sought to gain the friendship of the king of England, for the purpose, no doubt, of becoming able to throw off all allegiance to King Sigurd. When Magnus became king, he deprived Ragnvald both of his title and his possessions, but Harald Gille renewed the grant, and Ragnvald captured Jarl Paul, and made himself ruler over both the Shetland and Orkney groups. As he owed full allegiance to the king of Norway, the danger of a separation of these colonies from the mother country was averted.

Harald Gille had not been king very long when a new pretender appeared and claimed the right to share the throne with him. This was Sigurd Slembediakn, who also claimed to be a son of Magnus Barefoot. His mother, Thora, daughter of Saxe of Vik, was married to the priest Adalbrecht, and it does not appear with what show of right he called himself the son of King Magnus. He had been considered the son of Adalbrecht, and had been brought up for the church, but he began a life of adventure, visited the Holy Land, and engaged in trading expeditions to Ireland, Scotland, and the Orkneys. In Denmark he proved his paternity by ordeal, as Harald Gille himself had done in Norway, but when he presented himself before the king in Bergen, and asked him to recognize him as his brother, Harald refused. The leading men also refused to believe the story, though they were, probably, not troubled so much by the doubt of his veracity as by the fear that this gifted and resolute man might be able to exercise authority over them, if he were allowed to ascend the throne. Sigurd was imprisoned and placed on trial for killing Thorkel Fostre, the son of Sumarlide, in the Orkneys, and it seems that Harald sought to rid himself of the inconvenient rival by having him secretly carried away at night and drowned. But Sigurd, who suspected the design, pushed two of the guards into the sea, jumped from the boat and escaped to the mountains. For some time nothing was heard of him, but on the night of the 13th of December, 1136, he gained access with a few followers to the house where Harald Gille was sleeping after a drinking-feast, and killed him in his bed.

From the deck of a vessel in the harbor Sigurd addressed the people of Bergen, as soon as day dawned, and asked them to accept him as their king, but they refused. They gathered in large numbers on the shore and proclaimed him an outlaw. Sigurd then left Bergen and went to Hordaland, in southwestern Norway, where he was well received by the people. But Harald Gille's queen, Ingerid, hastened to Viken and assembled the Borgarthing, where her one-year-old son, Inge, was proclaimed king. In Trøndelagen the Ørething assembled as soon as the people heard of Harald Gille's death, and his illegitimate son Sigurd, three years of age, was placed on the throne. He was later known as Sigurd Mund.

When Sigurd Slembediagn saw that he had no chance to gain the throne for himself, he resolved to take Magnus the Blind from the monastery, and present him as a candidate. On a dark night, shortly after Christmas, in 1137, he landed at Nidarholm, took Magnus from the monastery, and sailed southward along the coast to the mouth of the Romsdalsfjord, where they parted. Magnus proceeded up the Romsdal valley into Oplandene, where he spent the winter, and Sigurd set sail westward across the sea, hoping that he would be able to rally a strong party around the blind king. In this expectation he was not disappointed. The return of Magnus awakened once more the loyalty to the son of Sigurd the Crusader, and many of the chieftains joined him. But in Viken Thjostolv Aalesson and other leaders, who were guarding King Inge, gathered an army, marched against King Magnus, and defeated him in a battle at Minne. Thjostolv Aalesson carried the child-king, Inge, with him in the battle, and he was hurt so that he grew up to be a lame and crippled hunchback. In history he is usually called Inge Krokryg (Hunchback). Magnus fled to Jarl Karl Sunnesson in Vester-götland, and persuaded him to espouse his cause. The jarl invaded Norway, but Thjostolv Aalesson and Aamunde Gyrðsson met him at Krokaskog and defeated him. Magnus now fled to Eirik Emune of Denmark, and employed all his power of persuasion to stir this tyrannical and ambitious king to lead his forces against the Norwegian chieftains. He told him that the country was now ruled by children, and that if he came with his whole army, no one would venture to raise a sword against him. King Eirik found the

moment favorable and the outlook tempting. He gathered a large fleet of 250 ships, and sailed for Oslo, where Thjostolv Aalesson was stationed with a small garrison. Aalesson retreated, bringing with him the shrine of St. Halvard. The St. Halvard church was destroyed by fire and the city was sacked and burned, but the *lender-mænd* soon met King Eirik with large forces, and he was unable to make further progress. All his attempts were unsuccessful, and he lost a number of men. Finally he returned to Denmark, deeply chagrined at his failure. The people's ill-will against him had increased, and he was assassinated at the Urnehovedthing, in Schleswig, shortly after his return. Eirik Haakonsson, generally known as Eirik Lam, was chosen his successor.

Sigurd Slembediakn, who had been in the Orkneys, returned too late to aid Magnus in his campaigns. When he reached Norway, and heard of Magnus' defeat, he turned southward to Denmark, where King Eirik Lam allowed him to gather ships and warriors. His operations henceforth can scarcely be characterized as anything but piratic expeditions, carried on with great cleverness and daring, but leading to no definite results. He attempted to get a footing at Konghelle, but was driven away by Thjostolv Aalesson. In another attempt at Portør, in Viken, he was equally unsuccessful. With seven ships he then made a descent on Lister in southern Norway, and killed the *lendermand* Bentein Kolbeinsson, but the people soon drove him away, and he sailed northward to Bjarkey, in Haalogaland, where he was well received by Vidkun Jónsson, Magnus the Blind's fosterfather. In the spring of 1139 he again joined Magnus in Denmark, and the two gathered what forces they could find for a new attack on Norway. They had in all thirty ships, of which twelve were Norwegian, while eighteen were auxiliary Danish forces. The kings Inge and Sigurd sent twenty ships against them, and at Holmengraa, near Bohuslen, the battle was fought on November 12, 1139. The Danes sailed away before the battle began, and Sigurd and Magnus were soon overpowered. Magnus fell, and Sigurd Slembediakn was captured and put to death in a most cruel manner. This terminated the first period of the civil wars, and the country enjoyed peace for a few years. The aristocracy, now secure in their power, had nothing to fear so long as the kings were young, but when



they grew to manhood they might become more difficult to manage. Inge Krokryg proved to be weak and tractable, but Sigurd Mund was a dissolute and violent youth. His first act when he became of age was to cause the assassination of Ottar Birting, the leading man in Trøndelagen. In order to further weaken the power and influence of the crown, the *lendermænd* sought to create as many kings as possible. Six years after Sigurd and Inge had been placed on the throne, Eystein, an older son of Harald Gille, came from Scotland with his mother, Beathach. Harald had told his men of this son, and no other evidence of his royal descent was demanded. He was speedily proclaimed king at the Ørething in Trøndelagen. Harald Gille had a fourth son, Magnus, who was reared by the old chieftain Kryinga-Orm of Stødle, and he was also proclaimed king, though he was a sickly cripple, and did not live long. Norway had now four kings at the same time, and if this system of succession was to be followed, the kingdom might be blessed with four times four kings before another generation had passed. When we observe such a canker of weakness and decay eating at the very vitals of the state, we can understand the feelings of the old historian, Theodricus Monachus, when he cuts short his "Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium" at the close of the reign of Sigurd the Crusader, and says that he will not record for posterity all the dastardly and lawless acts committed in the period which followed that reign.

These struggles between rival candidates for the throne do not seem, however, to have disturbed the peace and contentment of the rank and file of the people. The armed conflicts were carried on by the kings, the pretenders, the greater chieftains, and their personal followers. That there was no general war can be seen from the small number of ships and men engaged even in the more serious encounters, as in the battle of Holmengraa, where Sigurd and Magnus had only twelve small vessels, and the united forces of King Inge Krokryg and Sigurd Mund numbered only twenty ships. There is evidence that general prosperity and contentment prevailed, and that commerce was rapidly developing. The commercial towns of Véey in Romsdal, Skien (Skidan), in southern Norway, and Kaupang in Sogn sprang into existence, and the cities of Stavanger and Hamar also began their first real growth at this time.

The Cistercian monastic order was introduced in Norway during this period, not from France, but from England. Two monasteries of this order were founded: the Lyse monastery at Bergen, and the Hovedø monastery at Oslo (Christiania); also a cloister for nuns of the same order, the Nonneseter cloister in Bergen.<sup>1</sup> Lyse monastery, which was founded by Bishop Sigurd of Bergen, July 10, 1146, was the first monastery of this order in Norway. The Hovedø monastery was founded May 18, 1147. The Nonneseter cloister seems also to have been founded by Bishop Sigurd about the same time as the Lyse monastery.

#### 57. THE INNER ORGANIZATION AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH OF NORWAY

Among pagan nations, religion has always been regarded as an affair properly belonging within the domain of state administration. In pagan Norway, public worship was a state affair to such an extent that there was not even a distinct priesthood. The kings and chieftains performed the priestly functions in the temples, and as they were the leaders of the people in war and at the *thing*, they were also the custodians of the sanctuaries, and the wardens of the old faith. The feeling that the king was the highest authority in religious matters as well as in affairs of government grew out of the oldest traditions of the nation, and it was only intensified through the introduction of Christianity. The new faith was established by the kings themselves, who exercised full authority in all matters pertaining to the church, and made laws governing its organization and future work. Christianity had become their special cause, in the opinion both of friends and opponents a part of the new system which they sought to establish. When the aristocracy suffered defeat, and the old political and religious opposition disappeared, the king became the head of the church as well as of the state, not only because of the power which he exercised, and the organization which he had created, but also because the tradition and sentiment of the nation freely

<sup>1</sup> Christian C. A. Lange, *De norske Klostres Historie i Middelalderen*. N. Nicolaysen, *Om Lysekloster og dets Ruiner*, udgivet av Foreningen til norske Fortidsmindesmærkers Bevaring. N. Nicolaysen, *Hovedø Kloster og dets Ruiner*. B. E. Bendixen, *Nonneseter Klosterruiner*.

accorded him that position.<sup>1</sup> Even after the Church of Norway was placed under the supervision of the Archbishop of Bremen, and later under the archbishopric of Lund in Skåne, which was created in 1104, the king continued to be its real head. King Harald Haardraade's answer to Archbishop Adalbert of Bremen: "I know of no archbishop in Norway except myself, King Harald,"<sup>2</sup> is characteristic, and illustrates well the situation. The archbishop, who was far away and wholly unknown to the people, could exercise but a nominal authority; all real power was in the hands of the king. This gave the Church of Norway a somewhat unique position. The character of its organization was determined by the laws issued by the king, and its complete dependence on royal authority stood in sharp contrast to the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church in other countries of Europe.

The bishops were at first missionaries without fixed dioceses. They were chosen by the king, and were called *hird*-bishops, as they were regarded as belonging to the king's *hird*. They were his advisers in ecclesiastical affairs, but owed him the same obedience as other *hirdmænd*. The "*Heimskringla*" says of St. Olav:<sup>3</sup> "The church laws he made according to the advice of Bishop Grimkel and other teachers, and he devoted all his energy to the eradication of paganism and old customs, which he considered contrary to the Christian spirit." The necessity of obtaining the consent of the people to the laws thus made constituted, however, an effective check on the royal authority.<sup>4</sup> Even after permanent dioceses had

<sup>1</sup> Konrad Maurer, *Die Bekehrung des norwegischen Stammes*, II. A. D. Jørgensen, *Den norske Kirkes Grundlæggelse*. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*. J. E. Sars, *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, part II. R. Keyser, *Norges Stats- og Retsforfatning i Middelalderen*, p. 183 ff. R. Keyser, *Den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*.

<sup>2</sup> Adam v. Bremen, Book III., 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Saga of Olav the Saint*, ch. 58.

<sup>4</sup> "In each of the three (Scandinavian) countries, separate, though not very complete codes of church laws were enacted, which should take the place of the canonical code. The oldest of these laws were enacted, at least in Norway and Denmark, by coöperation of the king, the bishops, and the people. They gave the church no right to inflict civil punishments, neither did they exempt the clergy from trial by the regular courts of justice." T. H. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*. These old Norwegian church laws are found in *Norges gamle Love*, published by R. Keyser and P. A. Munch.



been established the choice of bishops was still controlled by the king. They were still dependent on him for their maintenance as well as for their office, and when they traveled through the country superintending the church work, they came as the king's representatives.

The churches erected during the early Christian period were of three kinds. Each *fylke* had one or more principal churches, *fylke's* churches. These received grants of land from the king, and the people were also required to contribute to their support. In course of time churches were also built in the *herreds*, or local districts, and many of the leading men erected chapels, *høgende's* churches, on their own estates. The priests of the *fylke's* churches were chosen by the king, and received an income, partly from the church lands, and partly in form of contributions and fees from their parishioners. The *herred* priests were chosen by the people, and were wholly dependent on the parishioners for their salary. The priests in the *høgende's* churches were appointed and paid by the owner of the church, or by the *fylke's* or *herred's* priests whom they served as assistants. This very democratic church organization differed widely in character from the hierarchic system of the Church of Rome. The bishops exercised authority, each in his own diocese, but they were not leagued together in any higher unity. They were dependent on the king, as the priests were dependent on their parishioners, both for their office and their subsistence. The clergy were amenable to the state laws, like other citizens, as the church laws were only a part of the civil code. The church had no laws of its own, and exercised no separate jurisdiction. In social life the priests and bishops were still bound closely to the rest of the people through intermarriage, as celibacy was not enforced in Norway till in the latter part of the thirteenth century. But in time the influence of the Roman hierarchy, which dominated all intellectual and spiritual life of the age, made itself more strongly felt also in Norway. The religious enthusiasm aroused by the crusaders inspired kings like Olav Kyrre and Sigurd the Crusader with ardent devotion to the cause of the church, and they were easily persuaded to enlarge its privileges even at the expense of their own power. The spirit of the times, the zeal and ability of the popes, together with the conditions at home gave the Church of Norway a hierarchic character,

and made it an organization independent of the state, able to exert a controlling influence over state affairs. The religious fervor of the kings originated this new development. The introduction of the system of tithes in the reign of Sigurd the Crusader made the clergy independent economically, and the period of the civil wars hastened the growth of the power and independence of the church. The weak and worthless kings who occupied the throne in that period were as unfit as they were unable to exercise supreme control over religious affairs. In struggles with their rivals they willingly bartered away powers and principles for temporary advantages; the royal power was weakened, and the government demoralized. In such a period of anarchy and commotion the church would, naturally, assume control of its own affairs, not only because of the opportunity, but as a matter of necessity.

The chief step towards a hierarchic organization of the Church of Norway was the establishing of the archdiocese of Nidaros in 1152, and the new regulations then made for the Norwegian Church.<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Nicolaus Brakespeare of England<sup>2</sup> was sent by Pope Eugenius III. as papal legate with instructions to establish archbishoprics in Norway and Sweden, and he also brought with him the pall for the new archbishops. The archdiocese of Nidaros should include the five bishoprics of Norway,<sup>3</sup> and also the six bishoprics in the Norwegian colonies: Skálholt and Hólar in Iceland, Kirkwall (O. N. Kirkjuvágr) in the Orkneys,<sup>4</sup> Gardar in Greenland, Kirkebø

<sup>1</sup> We hear of Reidar who was appointed Archbishop of Norway in 1150, but he died in southern Europe and never reached his archdiocese. According to the "Icelandic Annals" he died in 1151. He is not mentioned in the sagas, but he seems to have been appointed by the Pope before the archbishopric of Nidaros was formally established. All sources agree that Jón Birgersson, Bishop of Stavanger, became the first archbishop. Chr. Lange, *Norsk Tidsskrift*, vol. V., p. 41. P. A. Munch, *Samlede Afhandlinger*, II., 555. *Festskrift udgivet i Anledning af Trondhjems 900 Aars Jubilæum 1897*. Ludvig Daae, *En Krønike om Erkebiskopperne i Nidaros. Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, III., no. 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> In 1154 Cardinal Nicolaus was elected Pope, and assumed the name of Adrian IV.

<sup>3</sup> The diocese of Oslo was divided, and a new bishopric was established at Hamar. The five bishoprics were: Trondhjem (Nidaros), Bergen, Oslo, Stavanger, and Hamar.

<sup>4</sup> The Orkneys were originally a part of the archbishopric of York. Thorfinn Jarl, while on a pilgrimage to Rome about 1050, succeeded in having

(O. N. Kirkjubœr) in the Faroe Islands,<sup>1</sup> and the bishopric of the Hebrides (Sudreyjar) and Man (Sodor and Man). New regulations were also made for the election of bishops in the five bishoprics of Norway proper. A chapter, or college of priests, was organized in each diocese. The members of this chapter (*canonici*) should constitute the bishop's council; they were also to perform the duties of his office in case of vacancy, and should elect his successor without interference from secular authorities. The archbishop was chosen by the chapter of the diocese of Nidaros, but he was consecrated by the Pope, and received the pall from him. The colonial dioceses had no chapters, and their bishops were chosen by the chapter of the diocese of Nidaros. The tax called "Peter's Pence" was introduced, and each grown person should pay a penning to the church. Regulations were also made for disposing of property by testament, which had not hitherto been customary, and it must be inferred that the church hoped to profit by this arrangement. A person should have the right to give away by testament one-tenth of his inherited property and up to one-fourth of property which he himself had acquired. A woman might grant by will one-tenth of her dowry, and up to one-fourth of her one-third share of the property which she held in joint ownership with her husband. Celibacy of the clergy was also established, but it was not yet enforced. The priests were to be appointed by the bishops, but it is not clear to what extent the bishops exercised this right.

The Roman Church asserted everywhere its spiritual supremacy over the state, and claimed certain privileges and powers as its own indisputable right. The chief of these were: The right of the church to legislate in all ecclesiastical matters. The church law consisting of the canonical code, supplemented by the decrees which the Pope and the church councils might issue from time to time, should be independent of the civil law, and should govern all affairs pertaining to the church and the clergy. Separate ecclesiastical courts were to be established, and the church should exercise full jurisdiction in a bishop appointed for the islands. The bishop's seat was at first at Birgsaa, but it was transferred to Kirkwall, where the Magnus cathedral was built. The Orkneys became a part of the archbishopric of Nidaros in 1152.

<sup>1</sup> The bishopric of the Faroe Islands seems to have been established in 1103. Gudmund was the first bishop, and served from 1103 till 1139.



all cases involving religion, the church, and the clergy. The church was to enjoy freedom from any but voluntary contributions to the state.

By the new regulations of 1152 these "rights" were established in theory, at least, and the bishops henceforth claimed them in the name of the church. But neither the kings nor the people were at first willing to grant the clergy such privileges. The claims remained for a while only the abstract principles of the spiritual supremacy of the church, and its independence of all secular authority. But the time came when the church arrayed itself against the state in an effort to enforce its claims, and we find the bishops themselves fanning the flames of civil strife. This new power, which had been nursed under the king's special care, allied itself, after 1152, with the reactionary aristocracy in opposition to the crown. The energies of the clergy were largely devoted to the perfecting of its outward organization, and to the incessant combats waged for new privileges and increased influence. The priests were often poorly qualified for their calling, worldliness grew, and more emphasis was laid on the outer form than on the inner spirit of Christian life and faith. As Christianity had been introduced by royal decree, as the knowledge even of the fundamentals of the Christian faith was more than imperfect, and the bishops and priests were often more intensely interested in politics and other temporal affairs than in the religious instruction of the people, Christianity was generally regarded as a new law which the king had proclaimed. The new faith became a sort of witch's chaldron in which remnants of paganism, superstitions, and fragments of Christian belief were hopelessly mixed. In too many cases it could scarcely be called Christianity. The hierarchic organization of the church probably increased at first its efficiency as a moral agent. It could now act with great authority, and could display a power and splendor which made a strong impression on the popular mind. But its missionary spirit gradually gave way to love of wealth and power, and the attention was gradually directed to the outward forms of the church service which could work no regeneration of spirit. The work of conversion was begun, but the Roman hierarchy showed itself unable to lead the people forward to full spiritual daylight.

The religious and moral growth, so slow in Norway, was, if possible, even more behindhand in the colonies. Christianity was accepted as the state religion in Iceland in the year 1000, but the legislative act of the Althing which abolished the old worship produced no perceptible change in the moral life or the religious views of the people. The Christian church in Iceland was too poorly organized to become even a fair substitute for the old temples which were torn down. The churches were all built by influential chieftains, who often took holy orders and served as priests in their own churches, when no priests could be had. In this way they could combine the priestly functions with their political and social leadership, as in pagan times. If they found this arrangement inconvenient, they took boys into their homes, and instructed them sufficiently so that they could read the church service, and made them priests in their churches. These boys had no social standing, but were classed with the servants of the household. It is quite evident that under such circumstances Christianity could be but a thin varnish over a completely pagan life. The loss of the old faith and the lack of instruction in the new produced, not immediately, but in due course of time a religious indifference and general moral laxity which comes so prominently into the foreground in the bloody Sturlung period 1160-1262, a complete counterpart to the period of civil wars in Norway. In speaking of this period Professor J. E. Sars says: "In the so-called Sturlung period the country was more and more torn by the wildest party strife, the final result of which was that the Icelandic people — exhausted, torn, and despairing — gave up their independence and threw themselves into the arms of the kingdom of Norway. The accounts of these feuds reveal a bloodthirstiness, hardheartedness, and violent desire for wealth and power which is not surpassed in pagan times, and furthermore a faithlessness and treachery, a lack of respect for law and justice, a licentiousness, and a dissolution of domestic life, to which the saga period prior to 1030 furnishes no parallel."<sup>1</sup>

Konrad Maurer says of the Sturlung period: "The fearful disorders are ascribable in part to the political situation, but in part, and perhaps for the greater part, they are due to another circum-

<sup>1</sup> J. E. Sars, *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, part II., p. 57.

stance, namely the change to the new faith, as paradoxical as this may sound. The more completely paganism as a thoroughly national religion had grown together with the whole life of the Norsemen, the more definitely and comprehensively it had embraced and shaped the people's moral and legal conceptions, the more grievous was the loss caused by abandoning it. On the other hand, the more outward the motives had been which had led the masses of the people to change their faith, the less the new faith, we must admit, was able to compensate for the loss. During the first decades after the introduction of Christianity this misfortune would be less keenly felt, since, on the one hand, paganism still continued for a time to dominate the minds of the people, while, on the other hand, the glowing fervor and truly Christian conduct of the few who from a deep inner conviction professed the new faith won for Christianity, as far as their influence went, a powerful influence also over external life. But after the generation which had been brought up under paganism had passed away, and also their nearest descendants, who through lack of priests had been reared to a large extent in the pagan spirit; after Christianity, on the other hand, had become a custom, represented, not by zealous neophytes, but by priests who were poorly trained, and who generally were so occupied with the outward forms of the new religion that they could pay but little attention to its inner contents, while their great political importance, and their unfortunate social position turned their thoughts from their religious calling, the gap produced in the people's minds by the change of faith, outwardly accomplished, but inwardly far from completed, showed itself in all its fearful significance. It is easily understood that the unrest caused by this sudden rupture of all existing conditions brought to the surface the worst elements of the people and the most objectionable traits of their national character."<sup>1</sup>

It would be erroneous, however, to think that the blight thrown upon Christianity by these conditions was altogether general. Long before the introduction of the Christian faith, many of the most earnest and intelligent had ceased to believe in the old gods, and were searching for new light. To many of them Christianity must have

<sup>1</sup> Konrad Maurer, *Inland von seiner ersten Entdeckung bis zum Untergang des Freistaates*, p. 278-280. The passage is quoted by Sars.



come as glad tidings, and though their Christian knowledge was very imperfect, it must have chastened their spirit, and inspired them with new love for the goodness which is heaven born. The new moral standards established by the Christian teaching could not long remain a secret to those who had dreamed of virtues which paganism did not know, and the force of their example, and their words of admonition and counsel would not be lost on those who suffered from all the evils of a dark and lawless age. Through the tumult of the civil wars we hear nothing of these, but we are, nevertheless, sure that they were found, yes, that they were numerous, and that they were gradually bringing about a great change in the social, religious, and moral life of the nation. The effect of this new spiritual and moral leaven is shown among other things by the disappearance of slavery. It happened even in pagan times that a man would grant a slave his liberty on certain conditions, especially if the slave had done him some great service; or the slave might buy his freedom. But new ones were constantly bought in the numerous slave markets. But with the advent of Christianity the slave markets were gradually closed. In the old laws, usually called the "Laws of St. Olav," it was enacted that at the meeting of every *lagthing* a slave should be given his freedom, "to the honor of God," and the remuneration given the owner should be paid by the whole *lagdømm*. In Olav Kyrre's time this law was so amended that each *fylkesthing* should liberate a slave every year.<sup>1</sup> This had a great influence on public opinion, and in the twelfth century, before the civil wars were ended, slavery had ceased to exist in Norway. Although religious life made slow progress during the period of storm and stress caused to some degree by the change of faith, a new cultural life, born in part of the new spirit, was growing, budding, and giving promise of the great intellectual awakening, the luxuriant unfolding of literature, art, and national greatness in the period that followed; an age of almost unparalleled productivity which in a hundred years gave Norway and Iceland the great Old Norse literature, which saw great cathedrals erected, science and learning cultivated, and Norway, politically strong and economically prosperous, highly honored among the

<sup>1</sup> *Gulathingslov*, p. 5 f., *Norges gamle Love*, I. *Frostathingslov*, III., 19. *Norges gamle Love*, I.

states of Europe. Such conditions could not be produced suddenly, as if by accident, but followed as a result of a development which, though obscured and retarded, was not interrupted by the tumultuous feuds of the civil wars, and which gives even that period a tinge of hopefulness and a touch of wayward charm.

The period which was marred by so much domestic turmoil showed marked signs of an awakening of literary activity. The books were usually written in Latin, which was the literary language elsewhere in Europe. The mass, which was the most important part of the church service, was also conducted in that language, but the custom of preaching to the people in their own tongue had been introduced from England by the first missionaries in the time of Olav Tryggvason and Olav the Saint, and homilies were written in Old Norse to be read in the churches. The legends about the Norwegian saints were also embodied in writing. The oldest St. Olav legend<sup>1</sup> was written in Latin about 1140. It seems to have been composed by a priest in Trondhjem to be read to pilgrims and visitors on St. Olav's day, and it was soon followed by a whole literature of similar character. Einar Skúlason's poem "Geisli," a drápa written about St. Olav, which the poet recited in the Christ church in Trondhjem in 1153, was also based on this legend.

The most important literary work of the period was the embodiment in writing of the old laws of Norway in the great codes: the "Frostathingslov," "Gulathingslov," "Eidsivathingslov," and "Borgarthingslov."<sup>2</sup> These codes, together with the "Bjarkeyjarréttir," or municipal laws, the "Hirðskrá," and other old laws were all written in the Old Norse language. The time when they were written can be determined only approximately from internal evidence from the codes themselves, as the sources contain no direct statement with regard to it. The old writers regarded it as certain that the old laws were first written by St. Olav himself. Theodricus Monachus says of Olav: "*Leges patria lingua conscribi fecit*," and the "Legenda de Sto. Olavo" says: "*Leges divines et humanas scripsit et promul-*

<sup>1</sup> Edited by Metcalf. Jacobus Langebek, *Scriptores Regum Danicarum*, vol. II., *Legendae de Sancto Olavo*.

<sup>2</sup> These codes have been published by R. Keyser, P. A. Munch, Gustav Storm, and Ebbe Hertzberg in five stately volumes with glossary.

*gavit.*" Saxo Grammaticus holds the same opinion.<sup>1</sup> But Konrad Maurer has shown that this opinion has nothing to support it except St. Olav's great reputation as lawgiver, while the wording of the codes themselves proves that they could not have been written by him or under his direction.<sup>2</sup> Ebbe Hertzberg finds that the church laws (Kristenret), which form a supplement to all these codes, were written before the system of tithes was introduced by Sigurd the Crusader (1111-1120), and as the other laws must have been written as soon as possible after the task was once begun, the whole work was probably finished in Olav Kyrre's reign, prior to 1111.<sup>3</sup>

### 58. RAGNVALD JARL'S CRUSADE

In 1150 the young *lendermand* Eindride Unge returned from Constantinople, where he had served in the Varangian guard of the Emperor, and he could tell much about the exploits of the Varangians, and also about the second crusade, led by King Louis VII. of France, and Emperor Conrad III. of Germany, 1147-1148. Eindride met Ragnvald Jarl of the Orkneys, who was then in Norway, and encouraged him to lead a crusade to the Holy Land. Erling Ormsson Skakke and others also spoke in favor of the undertaking, and agreed to join in it. Ragnvald agreed to go, and when it became known that he and Erling were organizing a crusade, many prominent men joined them. Ragnvald should be the leader, and Eindride Unge, who had already been in the Orient, should act as guide for the expedition.<sup>4</sup> Two years were to be devoted to preparations, and Ragnvald returned to the Orkneys in the fall. In 1152 he came again to Norway, and the ships were made ready for the voyage. They set sail from Bergen, but when they reached the Orkneys, they decided to remain there that winter, as it was already late in the

<sup>1</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, book X.

See Ebbe Hertzberg, *Vore ældste Lovtexters oprindelige Nedskrivelsestid, Historiske Afhandlinger tilegnede Professor dr. J. E. Sars*, Christiania, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> Konrad Maurer, *Gulathingssløg, Ersch and Gruber's Encyclopedia*.

<sup>3</sup> Ebbe Hertzberg, *Vore ældste Lovtexters oprindelige Nedskrivelsestid, Historiske Afhandlinger tilegnede Professor dr. J. E. Sars*. Of the *Eidsiva-thingslov* and the *Borgarthingslov* the church laws alone remain.

<sup>4</sup> *Orkneyingasaga*, translated by John A. Hjalptalin and Gilbert Goudie, edited with notes and introduction by Joseph Anderson, ch. lxxx, ff.



season. The arrogant Eindride Unge, who, contrary to agreement, had fitted out more splendid ships than the others, was shipwrecked on the coast of Shetland, and had to get a new ship from Norway. In the summer of 1153 all preparations were completed, and Ragnvald and his followers set sail from the Orkneys with fifteen large ships. As each ship must have had a crew of 120 men or more, they were in all probably about 2000 men.

"They then sailed till they were south of England, and thence to Valland (west coast of France). There is no account of their voyage until they came to a seaport called Verbon.<sup>1</sup> There they learned that the earl who had governed the city, and whose name was Geirbjörn, had lately died; but he had a young and beautiful daughter, by name of Ermingerd, and she had charge of her patrimony under the guardianship of her noblest kinsmen. They advised the queen (*i.e.* the earl's daughter) to invite Jarl Ragnvald to a splendid banquet, saying that her fame would spread far if she gave a fitting reception to noblemen arrived from such distance. The queen left it to them; and when this had been resolved upon, men were sent to the jarl to tell him that the queen invited him to a banquet, with as many men as he himself wished to accompany him. The jarl received her invitation gratefully, and selected the best of his men to go with him. And when they came to the banquet there was good cheer, and nothing was spared by which the jarl might consider himself specially honored. One day, while the jarl sat at the feast, the queen entered the hall, attended by many ladies. She had in her hand a golden cup, and was arrayed in the finest robes. She wore her hair loose, according to the custom of maidens, and she had a golden diadem round her forehead. She poured out for the jarl, and the maidens played for them. The jarl took her hand along with the cup and placed her beside him, and they conversed during the day. The jarl sang:

Lady fair! thy form surpasses  
All the loveliness of maidens,  
Though arrayed in costly garments,  
And adorned with costly jewels:

<sup>1</sup> Where this seaport was located is not known.

Silken curls in radiant splendor  
Fall upon the beauteous shoulders  
Of the goddess of the gold-rings.  
The greedy eagle's claws I reddened.

The jarl stayed there a long time and was well entertained. The inhabitants of the city solicited him to take up his residence there, saying that they were in favor of giving him the queen in marriage. The jarl said that he wished to complete his intended journey, but that he would come there on his return, and then they might do what they thought fit. Then the jarl left with his retinue, and sailed round Thrassness. They had a fair wind, and sat and drank and made themselves merry. The jarl sang this song :

Long in the prince's memory  
Ermingerd's soft words shall linger ;  
It is her desire that we shall  
Ride the waters out to Jordan ;  
But the riders of the sea-horses,  
From the southern climes returning,  
Soon shall plow their way to Verbon  
O'er the whale-pond in the autumn.

"They went on till they came west to Galicialand, five nights before Jule-tide, and they intended to spend Christmas there. They asked the inhabitants whether they were willing to sell them provisions ; but food was scarce in that country, and they thought it a great hardship to have to feed such a numerous host. It so happened that the country was under the rule of a foreigner, who resided in the castle, and oppressed the inhabitants greatly. He made war on them if they did not do everything he wished, and menaced them with violence and oppression. When the jarl asked the inhabitants to sell him victuals, they consented to do so until Lent, but made certain proposals on their part — to wit, that Jarl Ragnvald should attack their enemies, and should have all the money which he might obtain from them. The jarl communicated this to his men, and asked them what they would be inclined to do. Most of them were willing to attack the castle, thinking that it was a very likely place

to obtain booty. Therefore Jarl Ragnvald and his men agreed to the terms of the inhabitants."<sup>1</sup>

The castle was taken, but the chief (Gudifrey, or Godfred) escaped. "They plundered far and wide in heathen Spainland," that is in the part of Spain occupied by the Saracens, and they sailed then through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean Sea. Here the wrongheaded Eindride Unge left the expedition with six ships, and went to Marseilles in France. With the remaining nine ships Ragnvald continued the voyage. "Over against Sardinia they met two very large Saracen ships of the type called dromones." One of these ships escaped, but the other one was attacked by the Norsemen and captured after a hard fight. After this battle Ragnvald landed on the coast of Africa, where he concluded a seven-day peace with the inhabitants, and sold the booty which he had gathered. He then sailed to Crete, where he was detained for some time by bad weather. As soon as they got favorable wind they continued their voyage to Palestine, and landed at Acre in 1154; but soon after their arrival they were smitten with a contagious fever, and many died. They were now so far reduced in numbers that they do not even seem to have attempted military operations. After visiting the holy places they left Palestine for Constantinople, where they were well received by Emperor Manuel I. On their homeward journey they visited Apulia and Rome, whence they returned by the customary overland route through Germany and Denmark. The visit to Verbon and the fair Ermingerd seems to have been abandoned.

#### 59. THE SECOND STAGE OF CIVIL WARS. THE RULE OF ERLING SKAKKE AND MAGNUS ERLINGSSON

The difference in character between the kings Inge Krokryg, Sigurd Mund, and Eystein became very marked when they grew to manhood. Sigurd was tall and well built. He was of a jovial disposition and carried himself well among his men; but he was of a violent temper, perverse, capricious, imprudent, and hard to please. Eystein was also a well-built and athletic young man, but he was of an imperious disposition, had a violent temper, and was very covetous.

<sup>1</sup> *Orkneyingasaga*, ch. lxxx.



The crippled Inge, on the other hand, was very meek and mild-tempered.<sup>1</sup> He had also the advantage of being born in lawful wedlock. His very weakness and his gentle disposition attached to him a great number of powerful nobles who virtually ruled in his name. The most influential of his adherents was the powerful Gregorius Dagssøn, who reminds us of Erling Skjalgsson and Einar Tambar skjælver in earlier days. But while Erling and Einar had been the leaders of the old aristocracy in opposition to the king, Gregorius was the leader of a faction, and acted as the king's representative. Inge's weakness proved to be his strength, and he became the most powerful and influential of the three kings. Sigurd and Eystein formed a secret alliance against him, and agreed to dethrone him, because he was a cripple.<sup>2</sup> But the alert Gregorius Dagssøn frustrated their plans. With King Inge he hastened to Bergen, and shortly after King Sigurd also arrived. A *thing* was assembled, and Gregorius appeared in gilt helmet with a great number of armed men. Inge told the people of the plot, and asked their help, which was cheerfully promised. Sigurd also addressed the *thing*, and said that the report of the plot was wholly unfounded, that it had been circulated by Gregorius Dagssøn to hurt him and Eystein, but he hoped that he would soon meet Gregorius in such a way that his gilt helmet should roll in the dust. No hostilities seem, however, to have been seriously contemplated, but bloody encounters which took place a few days afterwards between the followers of the two kings precipitated a general fight, in which King Sigurd was killed. Some days later King Eystein arrived in Bergen with thirty ships, but no further hostilities occurred at this time. Inge went to Trondhjem, and Eystein sailed southward to Viken. Shortly after this meeting in Bergen Eystein made an unsuccessful attempt to surprise and capture Gregorius Dagssøn, and, as a result, the relations between the two kings grew constantly more strained. Inge succeeded in winning over many of Eystein's most influential adherents, and Eystein, who was less popular, revenged himself by committing many dastardly acts. Finally, in 1156, open hostilities commenced, and both kings gathered forces for a decisive struggle. Inge collected eighty ships, while Eystein had only forty-five, and when the two

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Ingessaga.* <sup>2</sup> *Fagrskinna*, ch. 260. *Morkinskinna*, p. 223.

fleets met, most of Eystein's ships deserted, and he was compelled to flee without fighting a battle. The following year he was captured and put to death.

No reasonable objection could now be made to Inge Krokryg as sole king of Norway. According to the rule of succession the reign of the joint kings should be a single reign, which should continue so long as any one of them lived. The sons of the deceased kings could, therefore, not rightfully succeed to the throne as long as King Inge lived. He had, moreover, been very popular, and had won the support of the greater part of the people and the aristocracy because of his mild rule and gentle disposition. But some of the followers of King Eystein refused to submit to him, and chose Haakon Herdebreid, the illegitimate ten-year-old son of Sigurd Mund, as their candidate for the throne.<sup>1</sup> The struggle was no longer waged for any principle. It was not even a contest between rival candidates for the throne, but a feud between hostile and rival factions of the aristocracy. The leaders of King Inge's party were Gregorius Dagssøn and Erling Skakke. Among the leaders of the comparatively small faction which still remained in opposition were Sigurd of Reyrr, a personal enemy of Gregorius Dagssøn, and Eindride Unge, who had partaken in Ragnvald Jarl's crusade together with Erling Skakke, but the two had parted as bitter enemies. The struggle was kept up by such rivalries and animosities between ambitious nobles, and new pretenders were put forward in the interest of the contending factions. Professor Sars says: "In earlier days the kings had created the parties, at least in an external way, but now the king was created by the party."<sup>2</sup> The king had ceased to be anything but a name. The aristocracy had gained full control, and the only issue was which faction should wield the greater power."

King Inge Krokryg sought to strengthen his position as far as possible. He stationed Gregorius Dagssøn in Viken to defend the southern districts against Haakon Herdebreid and his party. He carried on negotiations with the king of Denmark, and succeeded in

<sup>1</sup> *Orkneyingasaga*, ch. lxxxiii.

<sup>2</sup> J. E. Sars, *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, part II., p. 88. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, II., p. 860. *Heimskringla*, *Haakon Herdebreidssaga*. *Fagrskinna*, p. 175.

having his chaplain, Eystein Erlendsson, elected Archbishop of Trondhjem. The new archbishop was a man of extraordinary ability, and could wield great influence in his behalf in that part of the kingdom. Haakon Herdebreid's party, which, to begin with, was quite small, had sought refuge across the Swedish border, and when they made an attempt to capture Konghelle, they were defeated by Gregorius Dagssøn. But they soon advanced into Trøndelagen, where they received reënforcements, and Haakon Herdebreid was proclaimed king over one-third of Norway, to which he was regarded as being entitled as the heir of his father, King Sigurd Mund. His chance of success now rapidly improved. In 1161 Gregorius Dagssøn fell in a skirmish against Haakon's followers at Bevja (Bevera), in Bohuslen, — a severe blow to Inge's party. The saga states that when Inge heard of Gregorius' death he shed tears and said: "The man has fallen who has been my best friend, and who has done the most to preserve my kingdom for me. But I have always thought that we should not long be parted."<sup>1</sup> This foreboding proved prophetic. In February of the same year, while Inge was in Oslo celebrating the marriage of his brother, Orm Kongsbroder, to Ragna Nikolasdotter, the widow of King Eystein, Haakon suddenly marched against the city. A battle was fought on the ice of the fjord, near Oslo, in which King Inge fell, at the age of twenty-six.

The able and ambitious Erling Skakke now became leader of Inge's party. He belonged to one of the most powerful families, and was married to Christina, the daughter of Sigurd the Crusader and his queen Malmfrid. He had won renown as a crusader, and was at this moment the most sagacious and powerful noble in the kingdom. When he had heard of King Inge's death, he called a meeting of the party leaders in Bergen to lay plans for the future. They were not willing to submit to Haakon Herdebreid, who counted among his followers many of their bitterest enemies. They agreed, therefore, to keep the party together, and promised under oath faithfully to support each other. The most difficult task was to find a suitable candidate for the throne around whom the party could rally. In casting about among several not very available candidates, they finally selected the five-year-old Magnus Erlingsson,

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Haakon Herdebreidssaga*, 15.



the son of Erling Skakke and his wife Christina, daughter of Sigurd the Crusader. But by this choice they set aside all rules of succession. Magnus, the son of Erling Skakke, was not a king's son, and had no right whatever to the throne. This choice, in flagrant violation of the law, was dictated by Erling's own ambition, and by party interests. In order to gain additional support Erling hastened to Denmark to negotiate with King Valdemar, who promised to aid him on condition that the province of Viken should be ceded to Denmark, and Erling, in his eager desire for power, committed the treasonable act of subscribing to this condition.<sup>1</sup>

While Erling was absent, Haakon Herdebreid was proclaimed king of Norway at the Ørething in Trøndelagen, and Sigurd of Reyrr, one of his chief supporters, was made jarl. Haakon stationed himself at Tunsberg, and sent Jarl Sigurd to Konghelle to guard the southern districts of Norway against Erling, but on his return from Denmark Erling seized Tunsberg without difficulty. Haakon retreated in haste to Trøndelagen, and Jarl Sigurd joined him there soon afterward. In the spring of 1162 Haakon equipped both fleet and army, and prepared to meet Erling Skakke. He advanced southward along the coast, gathering men and ships in the adjoining districts, but at Véey, in Romsdal, he quite unexpectedly encountered Erling's whole fleet. A battle was fought near the island of Sekken in the Romsdalsfjord, where Haakon fell, and his forces suffered a complete defeat. Haakon was only fifteen years of age, and the saga describes him as playful and boyish; tall, broad-shouldered, and good looking. After the battle Erling Skakke sailed to Nidaros and summoned the Ørething, where his son Magnus was proclaimed king of Norway.

Haakon's party was defeated, but it was not crushed, and as the old royal line was not extinct, they were able to find a new candidate for the throne who had some legitimate claim to it. This was Sigurd Sigurdsson, another illegitimate son of Sigurd Mund, who seems to have been a mere child. He was staying in Oplandene with his foster-father, Markus of Skog, and is generally known as Sigurd Markusfostre. But now as before they were unable to cope with the redoubtable Erling Skakke. In 1163 he defeated and slew

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Magnus Erlingssonssaga*, ch. 2.

Sigurd Jarl in a battle at Ree, northwest of Tunsberg, and shortly after he captured Markus of Skog and the young King Sigurd, and caused them both to be executed. But Erling saw that his son Magnus would find it difficult to maintain himself on the throne as a mere usurper. It was necessary to create the impression that he was a lawful king, and he hoped to secure for him an appearance of legitimacy by having him anointed and crowned. This would give him the support of the church, which would thereby officially approve his elevation to the throne. For this purpose he entered into negotiations with Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson, but the sagacious and powerful prelate drove a hard bargain, and granted his request only after Erling had subscribed to conditions which destroyed both the power and the dignity of the crown. In the summer of 1164 a council of magnates was assembled at Bergen consisting of the archbishop, the bishops, and a certain number of representative and influential men from each *lagdømme*.<sup>1</sup> The newly elected bishop, Brand Sæmundsson of Hólar, and the great chieftain Jón Loftesson of Odda, in Iceland, were also present. Before this assembly the seven-year-old Magnus Erlingsson was crowned king of Norway, and all questions regarding the succession to the throne were now discussed and settled. King Magnus had to subscribe to the following conditions: He surrendered himself and his kingdom for all times to St. Olav (*i.e.* to the church), and promised to rule as his vicar and vassal.<sup>2</sup> As a sign of submission, his crown, and those of his successors, should be placed as an offering on the altar of the cathedral in Nidaros, at their death.<sup>3</sup> By this agreement the king virtually became a feudal tenant under the church. But his influence and independence would be still further limited by enforcing

<sup>1</sup> *Heimskringla, Magnus Erlingssonssaga*, ch. 21. *Fagrskinna*, ch. 268.

<sup>2</sup> "*Deo namque in hac die gloriose resurreccionis me cum regno in perpetuum et glorioso martyri regi Olao. cui integraliter speciali deuocione secundo post dominum. regnum assigno Norwegie. et huic regno. quantum deo placuerit. velut eiusdem gloriosi martyris possessioni hereditarie. sub eius dominio. tamquam suus vicarius et ab eo tenens presidebo.*"

<sup>3</sup> "*In perpetue quoque subieccionis testimonium. hoc pro me et pro omnibus meis catholicis successoribus priuilegium huic metropolitane ecclesie concedo et literis meis sigillatis confirmo. ut post voccationem meam regale diadema et meum. quod hodierna die sacro altari in confirmationem offero. et omnium mihi succedencium. presenti delegetur ecclesie.*"

the new rules of succession which were now adopted. These almost shattered the old principles of an hereditary monarchy, since the king in many instances was to be elected, and the church was given full control of the election. When the king died, a council of magnates should be summoned to meet in Trondhjem to determine whether the heir to the throne possessed the required qualifications. This assembly should consist of the archbishop, his suffragan bishops, the abbots, the *hirðstjórnar* and the *hird*, and twelve men from each bishopric, to be appointed by the bishops. The king's eldest legitimate son should succeed to the throne, as sole king, but if the assembly found him to be unworthy, or otherwise disqualified, that legitimate son which the assembly considered best qualified should become king. If the king had no legitimate son, they might choose the nearest heir, or any one else whom they considered well qualified. The choice should be decided by a majority vote, provided the archbishop and the bishops consented.<sup>1</sup> The arrangement that the king's oldest legitimate son should inherit the throne was a good feature, as it did away with the most flagrant fault of the old system, that any illegitimate son, or any bold adventurer, might aspire to the crown. But this single good feature was vitiated by giving the assembly, or in fact the clergy, the power of deciding who was worthy or qualified to become king. This enabled them to exclude at will any legitimate heir to the throne, while the election of a new candidate was delegated to them. The king of Norway, the successor of Harald Haarfagre and St. Olav, could scarcely be reduced to a more impotent shadow. The aristocracy and the clergy, who had now joined hands in their effort to divest the crown of all real power, could rejoice in a complete triumph.

Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson sprang from a noble family in Trøndelagen. He was related to the powerful Arnunge family, and

The document is found in *Norges gamle Love*, I, 442. Ebbe Hertzberg, *Den første norske Kongekroning, Historisk Tidsskrift*, fjerde række, vol. III, p. 29. Gustav Storm, *Om Magnus Erlingssøns Privilegium til Nidaros Kirke 1164*, *Videnskabs-Selskabets Skrifter*, Christiania, 1895.

<sup>1</sup> *Gulapingsbók* 2., *Norges gamle Love*, vol. I. R. Keyser, *Norges Stats- og Retsforfatning i Middelalderen*, p. 45 ff. T. H. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatning i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, p. 19. Ebbe Hertzberg, *En Fremstilling af det norske Aristokratis Historie*, p. 126 ff.



through them also with the royal family itself. According to the standards of those times he was well educated, and there can be no doubt that he had studied in foreign lands for many years, though no record is found of it. He was in every way a chieftain, a gifted and ambitious man, who set his mind on the accomplishing of great things. When he was chosen archbishop in 1157, he went to Italy, as it seems, to get the pall from the Pope, but he must have encountered some difficulty, as he was not consecrated till in 1161. The delay may have been caused by the struggle between Alexander III. and Victor IV., who were rival candidates for the papal throne. Pope Adrian IV. died in 1159, and Alexander III. was elected by a majority of the cardinals; but Emperor Frederick Barbarossa would not sanction his election, and caused Victor IV. to be chosen. A bitter fight was waged by the two popes, but Alexander III. was quite generally regarded as the true Pope. Even the new antipopes chosen after the death of Victor IV. were finally forced to withdraw. In Italy and elsewhere in southern Europe, Eystein had seen the Roman Church in all its outward splendor, and he returned to Norway with a firm resolve that the cathedral church of his own archdiocese of Nidaros should betoken by its outward appearance the dignity and power of the Church of Norway. The Christ church which Olav Kyrre had built was too plain and small, and he immediately commenced to reconstruct it. He began the work by rebuilding the transepts in the Anglo-Norman style in vogue at the time. A great architectural work was thus begun, which led to the erection of the magnificent Trondhjem cathedral, the grandest structure ever built in the Scandinavian North.<sup>1</sup> In order to get the necessary means for so ambitious an undertaking he increased in many unusual ways the revenues of his diocese. His income grew with the building, and the taxes were constantly increased. He made the regulation that the taxes paid to the church should henceforth be paid in pure silver, not in coin, which had been debased. This nearly doubled his income. He shipped grain to Iceland without paying export duty, and infringed in other ways on the royal preroga-

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Munch and H. E. Schirmer, *Trondhjems Domkirke*, Christiania, 1859. A. Freiherrn von Minutoli, *Der Dom zu Drontheim*, Berlin, 1853. Hermann Schirmer, *Kristkirken i Nidaros*, Christiania, 1885.

tive. Erling Skakke was much displeased, but he had to acquiesce in these arbitrary innovations. This was, no doubt, one of the conditions on which the archbishop finally agreed to crown Magnus Erlingsson at the assembly of magnates in Bergen in 1164. Erling, who controlled the crown lands and the royal estates, found a compensation by driving his opponents into exile and confiscating their estates.<sup>1</sup>

When Magnus Erlingsson was crowned, King Valdemar of Denmark sent messengers to Norway to demand the district of Viken, which Erling Skakke had promised in return for the aid which he had given him. But Erling gave an evasive answer. The people of the district would have to speak for themselves, he said. When the Borgarthing was assembled, the people declared loudly that they would never consent to being transferred to Denmark. Valdemar was very wroth when he discovered Erling Skakke's deceitfulness, and as Erling's personal enemies encouraged Valdemar to attack him, he sent spies to Norway to learn what the popular sentiment was. They came as pilgrims to Nidaros, and many of Erling's opponents promised to aid Valdemar. When Erling found this out, he seized those who had implicated themselves, and punished them most severely. Valdemar made an expedition to Norway in 1165, and visited Sarpsborg and Tunsberg, but when he found that the people were almost unanimously opposed to Danish overlordship, he returned home without attempting to forcibly occupy the district.

Haakon Herdebreid's party in the southern districts put a new pretender in the field against Erling and his son Magnus. This was

<sup>1</sup> The great minster in Bergen, the Christ church, which was begun in the time of Olav Kyrre, was completed in 1170, and St. Sunniva's shrine was brought from Selja and placed on the altar of the church. It remained there till 1531, when the church was destroyed. The Maria church in Bergen, which is still standing, and which is now the oldest building in the city, must also have been erected in Archbishop Eystein's time, as it is mentioned in 1183. *Kunst og Haandverk fra Norges Fortid, udgivet af Foreningen for norske Mindesmerkers Bevaring*, IV., Kirker, pl. XIV-XXI. The Elgeseter monastery near Trondhjem, and the Castle monastery at Konghelle, both of the order of St. Augustine, were also founded by Eystein. He was a special friend and admirer of Thomas à Becket, the fearless and headstrong Archbishop of Canterbury, whom he sought to emulate. When Becket was killed, he was regarded as a martyr also in Norway, and his biography, the *Thomassaga*, became very popular reading.

Olav Ugæva, the son of King Eystein's daughter Maria. He gathered formidable bands of followers called "Hettusveinar," who avoided pitched battles, but levied tribute on the people for their maintenance, and exercised great power in the southeastern districts and in Viken. At one time Erling himself barely escaped falling into their hands. These bands were the forerunners of the Birkebeiner (Birchlegs), who were to play such an important part in future events.

Olav Ugæva and his followers sought support in Denmark, and Erling, who feared the powerful King Valdemar, was evidently alarmed, and eagerly grasped what seemed to him an opportunity to avert the danger. While Valdemar was absent on an expedition against the Wends, Buris, one of his vassals, a descendant of King Svein Estridsson, formed a treasonable plot to overthrow him. He negotiated with Erling, who promised to attack Denmark with the Norwegian fleet. The plot was revealed in time, and Valdemar called Buris before him and accused him of treason. Buris denied the charge, but the king kept him in custody until the Norwegian fleet arrived on the coast of Denmark. This proved his guilt, and he was imprisoned as a traitor. Erling captured some Danish ships at Dyrsaa, in Jutland, plundered Grindhøg (Grenaa), and arrived before Copenhagen. But the vigilant Bishop Absalon met him with a strong force, and Erling did not attack the town. A peace was concluded between him and the bishop, and after an unsuccessful attack on Holland Erling returned home.

King Valdemar decided to punish the Norsemen for this attack on his kingdom. The following spring he sailed with a large fleet to Viken, where, according to Saxo Grammaticus, he was well received by the people; no doubt, by the adherents of Olav Ugæva. At Tunsberg the townsmen even marched in procession to meet him. But Erling arrived with a fleet, and Valdemar was forced to take to sea. His men became mutinous and wished to return home, but the voyage was continued along the coast "until they came so far north that at the summer solstice the nights are as light as the day, and one can read at midnight the finest writing without difficulty," sagely remarks the learned Saxo. It may be supposed that they were somewhere on the southwestern coast of Norway. As he was



short of provisions, and as the resistance and ill-will on the part of his men continued to trouble him, he sailed back to Denmark; but for the future he laid an embargo on all trade between Denmark and Norway.

Although hostilities had ceased, a state of war still existed between the two countries. But worse than the war was the interruption of the trade with Denmark, on which the southern districts of Norway were especially dependent. The people in Viken demanded that peace should be concluded with King Valdemar, and Erling sent his wife Christina, a cousin of Valdemar, to Denmark, ostensibly on a visit, but really for the purpose of quietly gaining information as to the prevailing sentiment. She was well received by the king, and Erling sent Bishop Helge of Oslo to negotiate peace. Bishop Stephanus of Upsala also became his representative. Erling was summoned to Denmark, and the peace was concluded at Ringsted in 1170. According to the "Heimskringla" the district of Viken was given to Valdemar, who in return made Erling a jarl, and gave him the district as a fief under the Danish crown. Through his selfish and unpatriotic policy Erling Skakke had alienated a part of the kingdom of Norway, something which had not happened since the days of his prototypes, Haakon Jarl and his sons.<sup>1</sup> The authority exercised over the district by King Valdemar was purely nominal, it is true, but Erling's system of statesmanship was of the most pernicious sort, and might have led to very serious consequences if he and his party had remained in power.

After he had made peace with Denmark he guarded eagerly against all pretenders, and with the eye and spirit of a tyrant he sought to exterminate the family of Harald Gille. This aroused the hostility of the Swedish jarl Birger Brosa, who was married to Harald Gille's daughter Bergitta, and henceforth his opponents found en-

<sup>1</sup>Saxo Grammaticus says that Erling became King Valdemar's vassal, and promised to furnish him sixty ships in time of war. He promised also to rear his young son, Valdemar (Valdemar the Victorious), to give him the title of duke, and to have him elected king of Norway, if Magnus died without legitimate heirs. He does not mention Viken, but it is evident that it was only as jarl of Viken that he was Valdemar's vassal, as this conforms to the original agreement between him and King Valdemar. *Historia Danica*, part III., book XV. *Fagrskinna*, ch. 273-274.

couragement and support in Sweden. No one wielded a mightier sword than Erling Skakke. He combined craft and resourcefulness with great energy and courage; but he had the tyrant's fear, and as his heart grew harder and his methods bloodier, his real power decreased, and an opponent mightier than he arose to overthrow him.

#### 60. THE ENGLISH CONQUEST OF IRELAND. EVENTS IN THE COLONIES

After the battle of Clontarf the Norsemen ceased to rule in Ireland. Their military power was broken, and they submitted to the Irish kings. They continued, however, to hold their fortified cities, and as the Irish, because of incessant feuds, were able to exercise but a nominal overlordship, they continued their commerce, governed themselves according to their own laws, and remained a distinct nationality as before. By old Irish and English writers they are generally called Ostmen (*i.e.* men from the East), a name still preserved in Oxmantown (= Ostmantown) in Dublin. Giraldus Cambrensis speaks of them as a distinct people given to seafaring and commerce ("gens igitur hacc, quae nunc Ostmannica gens vocatur").<sup>1</sup> About the middle of the twelfth century the Irish feuds raged with their accustomed fury, and led finally to the conquest of Ireland by the Anglo-Normans in 1169-1171. The principal resistance to the invaders was offered by the fortified Norse towns, but as there was no national government and no general leadership, each town fell in turn, and the conquest was easily accomplished.

In 1166 Ruaidhri O'Connor became high-king of Ireland. He went to Dublin, where he was also hailed as king by the Ostmen; but this was scarcely more than a ceremony, since the men of Dublin were still ruled by their own king, Askill (Hasculf) Ragnvaldsson. With O'Connor's aid Diarmait MacMurchadha, king of Leinster, a very restless and troublesome chief, was driven away from Ireland. He hastened to King Henry II. of England for aid, found him in Aquitaine, and promised to do homage to him for his kingdom, if he would help him to regain it. This gave Henry a welcome opportunity

<sup>1</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topographia Hiberniae*. J. J. Worsaae, *Minder on de Danske og Nordmændene i England, Skotland og Irland*, p. 432.

to undertake the conquest of Ireland, which he seems to have planned for some time. He had already obtained a bull from Pope Adrian IV. (the former Cardinal Nicolaus Brakespear), in which the Pope permitted him to take possession of the country, and blessed the undertaking as one prompted by "ardor of faith and love of religion." King Henry promised the Pope to "subject the people to laws, to extirpate vicious customs, to respect the rights of the native churches, and to enforce the payment of Peter's Pence." He could not leave for Ireland at once, but he gave Diarmait a letter granting his vassals permission to aid him. With this letter Diarmait returned to England, and Richard Clare, Earl of Pembroke, also called Strongbow, and many other Anglo-Norman barons promised to assist him. Strongbow bargained for the hand of Diarmait's daughter, and was to become heir to the throne of Leinster.

In 1169 the half-brothers Robert Fitz-Stephens and Maurice Fitz-Gerald went to Ireland with a small force and captured Wexford. Strongbow followed the next year with 1000 men and 200 mounted knights. Waterford was stormed, and a large number of the inhabitants were put to death. After celebrating his wedding with Diarmait's daughter, Aife, Strongbow made haste to attack Dublin. The city was taken by a stroke of perfidy executed during an armistice arranged for the purpose of negotiating about the terms for capitulation. Askill (Hasculf) and some of the Ostmen who succeeded in escaping to the ships sought refuge in the Orkneys and the Hebrides, but the city was sacked, and a great number of people were slain. The victors made Dublin their headquarters, and it was clearly their plan to subdue the whole country; but King Henry's jealousy of Strongbow's success, and the resolute resistance offered by both Norsemen and Irish, threw new obstacles in their path. Henry ordered the barons to return to England, and when Diarmait died, the people of Leinster chose his nephew as their king, and turned their backs on Strongbow, who was, thereby, placed in a most difficult situation, as he could get no further reinforcements.

In the meantime Askill, who had gone to the Orkneys, had gathered a fleet of sixty ships and a large number of warriors, who, according to Giraldus Cambrensis, wore shirts of mail, and carried



round, red shields.<sup>1</sup> The leaders of this army were Askill Ragnvaldsson and Jón Ode, a chieftain from the Orkneys. They made a vigorous assault on Dublin, but were finally defeated. Jón Ode fell, and Askill, the last Norse king of Dublin, was captured and put to death.

Archbishop Laurentius, who still hoped to rid Ireland of the enemy, sent messengers to King Gudrød of Man, and to the chieftains of the Hebrides, and asked for help. King Gudrød came with a fleet of thirty ships, and invested Dublin from the seaside, while the high-king besieged it with an army of 30,000 men. Strongbow, who was in command of the garrison, was brought to desperate straits, and he even began negotiations for surrender; but the siege was not pushed with vigor, and by a sudden sally from the city he defeated and drove away the Irish army, and returned with rich booty. The high-king had to yield, and Strongbow took possession of Leinster as Diarmait's heir. But the garrison at Wexford had been overwhelmed, and Strongbow, who saw that he could not succeed without reënforcements, hastened to England to offer his submission to King Henry II. While he was away, the Irish made another unsuccessful attempt to capture Dublin. We hear also about this time of the last Viking expedition led by the last Viking, Svein Asleivsson of the Orkneys, who undertook to capture Dublin. It is possible that the expedition was undertaken to avenge the death of Askill Ragnvaldsson, and that it was made while Strongbow was in England. The "Orkneyingasaga" gives the following account of it: "They went all the way south to Dyflin (Dublin), and took the inhabitants by surprise, so that they did not know till they were in town. They took a great deal of plunder, and took captive the rulers of the city, and their negotiations ended in the surrender of the city to Svein, and they promised to pay as much money as he might levy on them. He was to quarter his men in the town, and have the command of it, and the Dyflin men confirmed this arrangement with oaths. Svein and his men went down to their ships in the evening, but in the morning they were to come into the town and receive hostages from the inhabitants.

<sup>1</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald de Barri) was a priest, who accompanied the Anglo-Norman barons to Ireland, and wrote a chronicle of the expedition and a description of the country, *Topographia Hiberniae*.

"Now it is to be told what was going on in the town during the night. The rulers of the town had a meeting, and considered the difficulties in which they were placed. They thought it a grievous hardship that they should have to surrender their town to the Orkney men, especially to him whom they knew to be the most exacting man in the whole West; and they came to the determination to play him false if they could. They resolved to dig a large pit inside of the city gates, and in many other places between the houses, where it was intended that Svein's men should come in, and armed men were hidden in the houses close by. They placed such coverings over the pits as were sure to fall in when the weight of the men came upon them. Then they covered all over with straw, so that the pits could not be seen, and waited till morning.

"Next morning Svein and his men arose and armed themselves, and went to the town; and when they came near the gates, the Dyflin men ranged themselves on both sides from the gates along by the pits. Svein and his men, not being on their guard, fell into them. Some of the townsmen ran immediately to the gates, and others to the pits, and attacked Svein's men with weapons. It was difficult for them to defend themselves, and Svein perished there in the pit, with all those who had entered the town."<sup>1</sup>

When Strongbow arrived in England, King Henry was already preparing an expedition to Ireland. The earl obtained the king's pardon by surrendering to him the Irish seaports; he did homage to him for Leinster, and accompanied him to Ireland. Henry placed English garrisons in Dublin, Wexford, and Waterford, received the homage of the Irish chieftains, and returned home.

But although the Norsemen were conquered, they were not driven from Ireland.<sup>2</sup> They are mentioned in the "Annals of the Four

<sup>1</sup> *Orkneyingasaga*, translated by Jon A. Hjalalin and Gilbert Goudie, edited by Joseph Anderson, ch. exi-exii. Svein Asleivsson is also mentioned in the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* about 1174.

<sup>2</sup> The Norsemen were forced to withdraw from the cities, and they built new towns outside the city walls as at Dublin. The Ostmantown (Oxmantown), which thus originated, merged in course of time with the original city. See Alexander Bugge, *Contributions to the History of Ireland*, no. 6., p. 4. J. J. Worsaae, *Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene i England, Skotland og Irland*, p. 435 ff.

Masters," 1174, and also by Giraldus Cambrensis, who states that the same year the English asked the Ostmen for help against the Irish, and in a battle near the city 400 Ostmen from Dublin fell. J. J. A. Worsaae says: "Over a century later many Ostmen were yet found in the larger towns of Ireland, where they, as it appears, still preserved their Norse characteristics which distinguished them from the Irish and the English. In the year 1201 a decision was rendered at Limerick by twelve Irishmen, twelve Englishmen, and twelve Ostmen regarding Limerick church lands, churches, and other belongings, which show that the Ostmen were still so numerous that they were accounted equal to the Irish and English.<sup>1</sup> Even from the year 1283 there is found preserved in the Tower of London a document issued by King Edward I., ordaining that the Ostmen of Waterford, in conformity with the regulations made by King Henry II., should be amenable to the same laws as the English who were living in Ireland."<sup>2</sup> This shows that the Ostmen were still a distinct people.<sup>3</sup> In 1292 the wine trade of the Ostmen is still spoken of in old documents, which shows that this once flourishing commerce was not yet dead, though over a hundred years had passed since the Norse towns in Ireland had fallen into the hands of the English.

After the Norsemen lost their independence, they gradually mixed with the Irish and English inhabitants. "The Irish annals," says Worsaae, "mention several clans which were of Norse descent, or strongly mixed with Norse blood. In the annals and genealogical tables from the Middle Ages we find many, both among the clergy and outside, with Norse names. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries we find among the canons and monks of the Christ church in Dublin, which was erected by the Norsemen, such names as Harold, Olaf, Siwird (Sivard), Regenald (Ragnvald), Iwyr, etc." The old

<sup>1</sup> "As late as 1251 Magnus Mac Olav Duff proposed to raise a force in Ireland to invade the territory of the king of Norway in the Isle of Man," says Alexander Bugge. *Contributions to the History of Norsemen in Ireland*, no. 5, p. 24; *Calendars of Documents relating to Ireland*, I., no. 3206.

<sup>2</sup> This document, from *Patent Roll II.*, Edward I., no. 9, is printed as an appendix to Worsaae's book.

<sup>3</sup> Worsaae, *Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene*, p. 432 f. Alexander Bugge, *Contributions to the History of the Norsemen in Ireland*, III., p. 10 f. *Historical and Municipal Documents of Ireland*.



chronicler Duald MacFirbis, who wrote in the middle of the seventeenth century, says: "And as for the greater part of the merchants in the city of Ath Cliath up to the present day they are of the family of Amhlaibh Cuaran (Olav Kvaaran), and of the family of Sadhbh, daughter of Brian Borumha, who was his wife when the battle of Clontarf was fought." And he adds: "Thus the race of this Amhlaibh Cuaran in the town of Ath Cliath (Dublin) is opposing the Gaedhels (Irish) of Erin."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Worsaae points out that traces of the Norsemen are still found in Ireland, especially in personal names of Norse origin still in use, as MacHitteric or Shiteric (son of Sigtrygg), O'Bruadair (son of Broder), McRagnall (son of Ragnvald), Roailb (Rolv), Auleev (Olav), Manus (Magnus), Harrold (Harald), Iver (Ivar), Cotter or McOtter (Ottar), and others.

The civil wars had a tendency to weaken the ties which still bound the colonies to the mother country. The Orkney jarls continued to do homage to the kings of Norway for their possessions, but during such a period of weakness and confusion they could exercise sovereign authority without much interference or restraint. King Gudrød of Man and the Hebrides had long been waging war with his rival Sumarlide. In 1154, or 1155, he made an expedition to Ireland, where he defeated King Muirchertach's brother, and was hailed as king of Dublin. He returned to Man, but became so tyrannical that many people in the Sudreys turned away from him, and chose Sumarlide's son, Dugald, as king. This brought about a permanent partition of the kingdom of Man and the Hebrides, 1158. Gudrød was finally defeated by Sumarlide, and went to King Inge

<sup>1</sup> *On the Fomorian and Norsemen by Duald MacFirbis*, the original Irish text edited with translation and notes by Alexander Bugge, p. 11.

Lindssay's *The Coinage of Ireland*, Cork, 1839, enumerates the following Norse kings of Dublin: Anlaf (Olav) 853, Ifar (Ivar) 870, Ostinus (Eystein) 872, Godfred (Gudrød) 875, Sihtric (Sigtrygg) 893, Sihtric 896, Regnald (Ragnvald) 919, Godfred 920, Anlaf 934, Blacar 941, Godfred 948, Anlaf 954, Godfred 960, Anlaf 962, Regnald, Gluniaran 981, Sihtric 989, Ifar 993, Sihtric 994, Anlaf 1029, Sihtric 1034, Anlaf 1041, Ifar 1050, Eachmargach 1054, Mælnambo 1064, Godred Crovan 1066 (?), Godfred Merenach 1076, Gilalve 1094, Thorfinn 1109, Regnald 1125, Godfred 1147, Oicterus (Ottar) 1147, Broder 1149, Askel 1159, Roderick 1171-1200. Of the kings of Waterford and Limerick only a few are mentioned. See Worsaae, *Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene*, p. 395.

Krokryg in Norway, who confirmed his title to his kingdom. But Gudrød deserted his suzerain in the battle of Oslo, and joined his opponent Haakon Herdebreid. He remained in Norway till Sumarlíde fell in 1164, when he returned with a large military force, and seized Man and a part of the Hebrides, which possessions he ruled till 1187, while the other part of the island kingdom was ruled by Sumarlíde's son Dugald.<sup>1</sup>

## 61. SVERRE SIGURDSSON AND THE BIRKEBEINER

Erling Skakke's harsh régime, and his attempt to exterminate all descendants of Harald Gille created a most determined opposition to his rule, and brought new forces into the field against him. Many had no choice but to resort to armed resistance in their own self-defense, for although they were convicted for no wrongdoing, they knew that Erling was plotting their destruction, and with their band of followers they sought refuge in mountains and forests, where they led a life almost like brigands in constant want and danger. They were called "Birkebeiner" (Birchlegs), because they were sometimes forced to wrap their feet in birch bark for want of shoes. In their fight against the tyrannical Erling and the puppet king, Magnus, the Birkebeiner stood forth as persecuted patriots, who under the guidance of an extraordinary leader brought about a revolution, and revived the lost ideal of a united and independent Norway.

The Birkebeiner first rallied around Eystein, a grandson of Harald Gille. He was small and fair-faced, and was nicknamed Meyla (*i.e.* maiden). Jarl Birger Brosa, who was married to Brigida, a sister of Eystein's father, promised to aid him, and furnished him with both men and money. Eystein and his men spent two years in Viken and neighboring districts, and in 1176 he sailed to Nidaros, captured the city, and was proclaimed king.

He had assembled an army of 2400 men, and with this force he crossed the mountains into southern Norway, but in January, 1177, King Magnus Erlingsson met him at Ree, where Eystein was defeated

<sup>1</sup> *Orkneyingasaga*, ed. by Anderson, p. 181 and note. *Chronica Regum Manniæ*, ed. by Munch, p. 12, note p. 81. *Heimskringla*, *Haakon Herdebreid's Saga*, ch. 17. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. II., 940.

and slain. His followers were scattered, and many of them sought refuge across the Swedish border.

A more formidable leader now appeared on the scene to champion the lost cause of the Birkebeiner. This was Sverre Sigurdsson, who claimed to be an illegitimate son of King Sigurd Mund. The "*Sverressaga*,"<sup>1</sup> which gives a full, though not impartial, account of King Sverre's life and deeds,<sup>2</sup> states that Unas Kambari, a brother of Bishop Hroi (Roe) in the Faroe Islands, married a Norse wife named Gunhild, in the reign of the sons of Harald Gille. She bore a son, who was called Sverre, and he was thought to be the son of Unas. When he was five years old, he was sent to the Faroe Islands, where he was reared by Bishop Hroi, who educated him for the priesthood, and ordained him as priest. Sverre did not know who was his real father until he was twenty-four years of age. At that time his mother Gunhild went to Rome, where she made the confession that Sverre was not the son of Unas, but of King Sigurd Mund. This confession was laid before the Pope, and she was commanded to inform her son of his real parentage. She returned to Norway, and sailed thence to the Faroe Islands, where she told Sverre that he was King Sigurd's son.<sup>3</sup> The next year he went to

<sup>1</sup> *The Saga of King Sverri of Norway*, translated by J. Sephton, M.A., London, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> The *Sverressaga* was written by Abbot Karl Jónsson of Thingeyre in Iceland, who was staying at the court of King Sverre, and began the work in 1185. The prologue states that it was written "according to the book which Abbot Karl Jónsson wrote when King Sverre sat over him and settled what he should write." This seems to make clear also the question of the authorship, but the prologue in the "*Flateyjarbók*" says that "Priest Styrmi the historian followed that book (Abbot Karl's) when he wrote." Professor P. A. Munch held that Karl Jónsson did not write the whole saga, but that Styrmi wrote the last part. *Det norske Folks Historie*, part III., p. 395. Dr. Vigfusson has made it quite clear, however, that Abbot Karl has written the whole work. See J. Sephton's translation of the *Sverressaga*, Introduction, p. XVII.

As the *Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna*, and other collections of sagas of the Norse kings stop with the year 1177, the *Sverressaga* is the most important source for the reign of King Sverre.

<sup>3</sup> Whether King Sverre was of royal blood was a much debated question in his own day, and there is no more unanimity of opinion on this point among modern scholars. R. Keyser says: "Whether Sverre really was a son of King Sigurd Mund, as he claimed to be, could scarcely be determined with



Norway to see what he could do. He mingled with the people, visited Erling Skakke, spoke with the king's bodyguard, and learned to know the general sentiment, but he did not disclose his plans or his identity. At last he made his way through Gautland to Jarl Birger Brosa, where he arrived three days before Christmas, weary and exhausted. The jarl's wife, Brigida, was a sister of Sigurd Mund, and he confided his troubles to her and Jarl Brosa, but they

certainly in his own day, and it is still more difficult to do so now." (*Norges Historie*, II., p. 166.) Professor P. A. Munch is inclined to regard Sverre's assertion regarding his descent as true, though he points to the lack of positive evidence, and says that it is a question which cannot be definitely settled. (*Det norske Folks Historie*, part III., p. 50 ff.)

Dr. G. Vigfusson (*Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, II., p. 255 f.) held that the story of Sverre's royal descent was pure invention. J. E. Sars finds Sverre's assertions untrustworthy, but he considers it probable that he was a son of King Sigurd Mund, or at least that he thought he was. (*Udsigt over den norske Historie*, II., p. 122 ff.) In 1901 Professor Gustav Storm wrote a treatise on this subject: *Kong Sverres fædrene Herkomst* (*Historisk Tidsskrift*, fjerde række, vol. II., p. 163 ff.), in which he takes the position that Sverre was really what he claimed to be, a son of Sigurd Mund. He finds the best evidence of this in the *Gesta Henrici Secundi*, written by a contemporary of King Sverre, the English abbot Benedict of Peterborough, 1169-1181. Benedict gives an account of the political events in Norway which is quite accurate, and shows that the author was well informed. He says that Sigurd Mund had three illegitimate sons: Haakon, Sigurd, and Sverre, and they had different mothers. Another contemporary English writer, Robert de Hoveden, who wrote a history of England up till 1201, and partly used Benedict as a source, gives a similar account of Sverre's descent. Storm holds that these English historians were impartial, while other old writers, like William Parvus of Newburgh, who wrote his *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, 1196-1198, and likewise Saxo Grammaticus, have received their information from Sverre's enemies, the adherents of Magnus Erlingsson and the Norwegian hierarchy. In *Historisk Tidsskrift*, fjerde række, vol. III., 1905, Professor Ludvig Daae has written a reply to Gustav Storm's treatise under the title: *Var Sverre Kongesøn?* in which he states that he has not been convinced by Storm's arguments. Among those who hold an opposite view of Sverre's descent he mentions Vigfusson, Dahlmann (*Geschichte von Dänemark*, Hamburg, 1840-1843), and Werlauff (*Anecdoton, Historiam Sverreri, Regis Norwegiae Illustrans*, Copenhagen, 1815). In the story which sets forth how Sverre discovered that he was a son of Sigurd Mund, Daae finds so many features which he considers wholly incredible that he regards the whole as a fabrication, and holds that the probability of Sverre's royal descent is very slight. It is probably correct when Vigfusson sees in Sverre's great talents a proof that he was "no chip of the Gilchrist block," and with Dahlmann we can most properly regard him as "the son of his own deeds."

would not help him, because they had promised to support Eystein Meyla (his cousin), and because they had heard that Erling Skakke had sent this young man to them in mockery. But Sverre stayed with them during Christmas, and spoke to them constantly about his plans. After Christmas he went to Vermland to visit Sigurd Mund's daughter Cecilia, the wife of Folkvid Lagmand, and she received him with great joy. Rumors had already reached him of Eystein Meyla's defeat and death, and the Birkebeiner, who had learned that Sverre, a son of Sigurd Mund, was staying in Vermland, sent messengers to him and asked him to be their leader. At first he refused, because the Birkebeiner were small disorganized bands in want of everything, but when they threatened to kill him to gain King Magnus' good-will if he did not join them, he consented. With a band of seventy men he started for Viken in southern Norway, and the number increased on the march till he had 420 men. A *thing* was called, and the Birkebeiner hailed Sverre as king, though he was opposed to assuming the royal title under so unfavorable circumstances. He soon resumed his march, following the Swedish side of the border to Trøndelagen. He kept strict discipline, and forbade his men to plunder. On these weary marches he was deserted by all but his most resolute followers, so that his little force again dwindled to seventy men. With this small band he suddenly appeared before Trondhjem; but the city was well garrisoned, and the commanders marched against him with a force of 1450 men. Sverre retreated, but bewildered them with circuitous marches until he had secured some reënforcements. He then attacked them in a position well suited to his tactics, and won a decisive victory. He seized the ships in the harbor, and defeated several small squadrons which were coming to join the fleet in defending Trondhjem. King Magnus' *lendermænd* fled, the city surrendered, and Sverre was received by the people in festive procession to the chiming of bells. He assembled the *Ørething* (twelve representatives from each of the eight *fylker*), and was proclaimed king of Norway according to St. Olav's law; that is, according to the old law of succession which did not exclude a king's illegitimate son from the throne. The law of 1164 was not recognized, and King Magnus would be treated as an usurper. Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson, who is not mentioned in connection

with these events, must have been absent from Norway at this time, a circumstance which, probably, enabled Sverre to seize Trondhjem.

The rumors of the events in Trøndelagen had reached Magnus and Erling, who hastened with their fleet northward along the coast. Sverre did not await their arrival, but marched across the mountains into Gudbrandsdal, and advanced to Lake Mjøsen, where he found Magnus' *lendermænd* stationed with 1400 men and eighteen ships. He did not venture to attack them, but sent a detachment to the Randsfjord; the vessels on that lake were seized, and the local forces defeated. But Orm Kongsbroder, Magnus' chief lieutenant in southern Norway, was advancing from Viken with a strong force. With great difficulty Sverre succeeded in transporting some of the small vessels overland from Randsfjord to Mjøsen. With these he attacked the *lendermænd*, surprised and defeated them, and captured all the vessels on the lake. All the districts of Oplandene now submitted to him, but as his force was so small that he could leave no garrisons, he was unable to hold permanently any of the territory which he had won. For some time this indecisive guerrilla warfare continued with forced marches and daring exploits in which Sverre proved himself a peerless leader, but his forces were too small to risk a decisive engagement, and his daring ventures represented no substantial progress. King Magnus and Orm Kongsbroder, who had united their armies in Viken, soon compelled Sverre to withdraw from Oplandene. In the winter of 1177 he crossed the mountains in an effort to capture Bergen, but the city had been warned; a fleet was patrolling the coast, and at Voss an army confronted him which he could not hope to cope with. He had no choice but to retrace his steps across the snow-covered mountains. For weeks they struggled through the pathless wilds, without fire or shelter. Horses and military stores were lost, and many of his men perished from cold or exhaustion before they finally reached the settlements in Valdres. Even here he did not dare to tarry, as all avenues of escape might be cut off. He continued his retreat to Østerdalen, where he camped during Christmas; but when he learned that Erling Skakke was approaching, he withdrew across the Swedish border.



Sverre began the campaign of 1178 in Jæmtland, where he forced the Jamts to swear allegiance to him. It seems to have been his plan to secure a base of operations from which he might attack Trondhjem, which again had fallen into the hands of King Magnus and Archbishop Eystein, but he entertained no great hope of success. When he reached Namdalen, a district north of Trondhjem, he assembled his men and discussed the situation with them. Three courses, he thought, now remained open: "One to make a voyage north to Haalogaland, obtain friends and ships, and then sail south to Bergen to see if he could win a victory over his foes; the second course, to leave the land, and sail to the Western Isles, where there were good prospects, he considered, of obtaining support; the third course, to go on a plundering expedition to Ireland, or other western lands, for he was of the opinion that the popularity of King Magnus and Erling Jarl would grow less the longer they ruled over the country. 'But at present,' he said, 'their power is great, and to contend with them will be a hard matter.'" <sup>1</sup> The Birkebeiner would not listen to Sverre's advice, but thought that they could capture Trondhjem now as easily as they had done before. But Archbishop Eystein was at home, and urged the Trønders to resist the Birkebeiner to the utmost. "I have been told," he said, "that their numbers are few and their ships small; the men, moreover, are in an exhausted and wretched condition. It befits not yeomen and merchants to give up their clothes or goods to such thieves and evil-doers as Sverre has scraped together." King Sverre risked the attack, but he suffered a crushing defeat, and narrowly escaped losing his life. After this mishap he again sought refuge in the mountains, but marched slowly southward towards Viken. When King Magnus heard of the approach of the Birkebeiner, he hastened to meet them with a strong force. Sverre, who saw that he could gain no further support until he gained a victory over his opponents, told his men that he would rather die now in an honorable battle with King Magnus than to be constantly driven from pillar to post. At Hirta Bridge he resolutely attacked King Magnus' forces. Both the king and Orm Kongsbroder were wounded, many of their men fell, and they retreated from the field. Shortly afterwards he also succeeded in destroying a

<sup>1</sup> *Sverressaga*, ch. 22.

part of King Magnus' fleet at Konghelle. These successes inspired his men with new confidence, and he stationed himself in Viken, where he could obtain both provisions and reënforcements. From this time on his fortunes began to mend. In the fall of 1179 he returned to Trondhjem, where he defeated the forces of King Magnus, captured the city, and took ten ships; but this victory was in no way decisive. The great leaders—King Magnus, Erling Skakke, Orm Kongsbroder, and Archbishop Eystein—were staying in Bergen, and when they heard of Sverre's success they collected a large fleet with which they intended to attack him as soon as the new campaign should open in the spring. When winter was past, Sverre sailed southward with the fleet which he had collected, but off Stadt he met Magnus, Erling, Orm, and Eystein with so overwhelming a force that the only question became how to avoid falling into their hands with the whole fleet. To save himself Sverre steered for the open sea. In a fog his pursuers lost sight of him, and as they were unable to determine what course he had taken, Orm Kongsbroder and Eystein were sent with a part of the fleet to protect Bergen, while King Magnus and Erling proceeded to Trondhjem. Sverre was already in the city when they arrived, but they landed without opposition, and took up a position on the Kalveskind, a peninsula formed by the river Nid and the sea, while Sverre held the opposite bank of the river. After some fruitless parleying Sverre marched away, and the rumor spread that he had retreated into the mountains. So confident was Erling Skakke that he would not return that he allowed his men to feast and drink in the town, and did not heed the warning of his lieutenants that he should keep good watch. Sverre, who well knew the significance of the combat now imminent, had hastened into Guldal to collect reënforcements. On the night of the 18th of June he returned to Trondhjem. He reached the city at daybreak, halted a few moments and addressed his men, telling them how much depended on the battle which was to be fought, and what they might gain if they were victorious. "I will now make known to you what is to be gained," he said: "whoever slays a *lendermand*, and can bring forward evidence of his deed, shall himself be a *lendermand*; and whatever title a man shall cause to be vacant, that title shall be his; he shall be king's man who slays a

king's man, and he shall receive good honor beside." <sup>1</sup> King Magnus' sentinels had noticed the approaching Birkebeiner, and the war trumpets called the men to the standards. The first onset was so fierce that Erling's men were forced backward, his standard was cut down, and he received a halberd thrust in the abdomen, and fell mortally wounded. King Magnus' forces broke into disorderly flight. In rushing past, Magnus noticed his father; he bent down and kissed him and said: "We shall meet again on the day of joy, my father." Erling's lips moved, but he could not speak. Magnus had to flee for his life, and Erling soon breathed his last among his enemies. Magnus boarded a ship and sailed away from Trondhjem. His defeat was overwhelming. Ten *lendermænd* had fallen, and half of his *hird*. The decisive battle between the two parties had been fought. Erling Skakke was buried near the south wall of the Christ church, but his burial place now lies inside the much larger Trondhjem cathedral which was erected later.<sup>2</sup>

After the battle of Nidaros Magnus fled to Bergen, which was held by Archbishop Eystein and Orm Kongsbroder. Sverre fortified Trondhjem with palisades, and took special care to strengthen his fleet, knowing that this branch of the military service would be of the greatest importance in the future. Magnus and Eystein spent the winter in Viken, and the following spring they assembled again a large fleet and sailed to Trondhjem to try conclusions with the victorious Sverre. He proposed that they should make peace; that he and Magnus should rule as joint kings, but the offer was rejected. On the 27th of May, 1180, another battle was fought at Ileoldene in Trondhjem, in which Magnus was again defeated. His army was torn up, six *lendermænd* fell,<sup>3</sup> and Magnus retreated to Bergen with the remnants of his forces. But his victorious pursuers followed close on his heels, and as he was unable to offer any effectual resistance, he abandoned the struggle and fled to Denmark. Archbishop Eystein also left Norway, and sought refuge in England. King Henry II. was no special friend of prelates, but he, nevertheless,

<sup>1</sup> *Sverressaga*, ch. 35.

<sup>2</sup> King Sverre's speech at the grave of Erling Skakke is a fine specimen of eloquence, spiced with playful wit and biting sarcasm. See *Sverressaga*, translated by J. Sephton, ch. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Gustav Storm, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, anden række, vol. IV., p. 156.



treated the archbishop with due respect, and assigned him the monastery of Edmundsbury for a residence; but he granted him but a small allowance, probably because he did not want to make it appear that he was supporting King Sverre's enemies.

The great defeats had weakened the aristocracy, but had not destroyed their power of resistance. Not only could the chieftains still raise forces in nearly every district in the kingdom, but they did not hesitate to seek the support of the king of Denmark, who was willing enough to aid them as long as they were opposing the representative of a strong national government and an independent Norway. Sverre had indeed gained control of the whole kingdom, but his task was only rendered more difficult, as he had to defend it against the combined attacks of domestic and foreign enemies. In the spring of 1181, while sailing from Bergen to Viken, he suddenly encountered King Magnus and Orm Kongsbroder, who came from Denmark, with a fleet of thirty-two large ships.<sup>1</sup> His own fleet was much smaller, and he fell back to Bergen, where a bloody naval engagement was fought. By superior generalship he won the victory, but the battle was not decisive, as both sides suffered heavy losses. To know where the next attack would be made was impossible. Sverre hastened to Trondhjem, garrisoned the city and marched overland to Oslo for the purpose of defending Viken; but Magnus attacked Trondhjem, overwhelmed the garrison, and captured Sverre's whole fleet of thirty-five ships. When Sverre returned to aid the city, Magnus sailed away to Bergen, and Sverre could not pursue him for want of ships. The situation had once more become critical, as everything which Sverre had gained in many hard-fought campaigns was lost by one fell swoop. But he wasted no time in mourning his losses; with characteristic energy he set about repairing them as far as possible. The necessity of strengthening the defenses of the city so that it could be held by a garrison of reasonable size had become apparent. He greatly strengthened the fortifications, and erected a castle which he called "Zion," generally known as the "Sverreborg," where he stationed a part of the garrison.

<sup>1</sup> The followers of Magnus were called "Heklungur," from *hekla*, a chasuble.

"In the spring he caused palisades to be set up, so that a complete line stretched (from the castle) along the sea-coast, then inland along the guild-halls, and over the Eyra (Øren) across to the river, and along the river to the quays. A catapult was fixed on Bratøren by the sea, and a blockhouse was erected close to the sea."<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime Sverre had collected twenty small vessels, and with a strong north wind he set sail for Bergen. Magnus' ships were riding at anchor in the harbor. He entered quite unexpectedly, cut the anchor ropes, and towed the fleet out into the fjord, while a vigorous assault was made on the city. King Magnus fled after a short resistance, and again sought refuge in Denmark. Archbishop Eystein, who had returned to Norway after a three years' exile, was in Bergen at this time. He tendered his submission, and was allowed to return to his archdiocese in Trondhjem. The terms imposed by Sverre are not known, but it is quite certain that the constitution of 1164 was annulled, and that Eystein acknowledged him to be the rightful king of Norway.

Archbishop Eystein's political career was now ended. For eighteen years he had helped to keep Magnus Erlingsson on the throne. He had suffered defeat, he had languished in exile, and the great work which he had dreamed of accomplishing in his new archdiocese had been interrupted. He longed to return to his beloved Nidaros, and the last few years of his life were devoted to the erection of the great Trondhjem cathedral. Before his exile he had rebuilt and greatly increased in height the transepts of the Christ church which Olav Kyrre had erected; but during his sojourn in England and Normandy he was greatly impressed by the beauty of the Gothic architecture of the magnificent cathedrals which were built during this period.<sup>2</sup> When he returned to Trondhjem, he razed the choir of the Christ church, and built a new magnificent choir in the Gothic

<sup>1</sup> *Sverressaga*, ch. 71.

<sup>2</sup> In the neighborhood of Edmundsbury, where Eystein was staying, the Norwich cathedral was being repaired, and the Peterborough cathedral, which was begun in 1117, was nearing its completion in 1177-1180. The cathedral of Canterbury had been damaged by fire in 1174, and the work of restoration was begun in the following year. In Normandy the choir of the St. Etienne cathedral, in Caen, was erected 1180, and the Notre Dame in Seéz had been completed in 1126. See M. Schirmer, *Kristkirken i Nidaros*.



RUINS OF THE TRONDHJEM CATHEDRAL.



THE TRONDHJEM CATHEDRAL AS IT LOOKS AT PRESENT.





style. To this was joined the octagonal Lady's chapel, a minor choir (retrochorus). The main altar was placed in the choir proper over the grave of St. Olav. The Lady's chapel contained a minor altar for the Virgin Mary and her image, richly ornamented with precious stones. Underneath the walls of the Lady's chapel is the holy St. Olav's well, which, according to the legend, "welled up" on the spot where St. Olav's body was buried. It is forty-four feet deep, and walled with stone from the bottom. The reconstructed transepts, the new choir, and the Lady's chapel were probably finished when Eystein died in January, 1188.<sup>1</sup> The work of erecting a new nave in harmony with the other new parts of the cathedral was not begun till 1248.

After receiving aid from King Knut Valdemarsson of Denmark, Magnus returned to Norway in the spring of 1184 with twenty-four ships and a force which must have numbered about 3000 men. At Fimreite in Norefjord (a narrow arm of the Sognefjord) he met King Sverre, who at that moment had only fourteen ships and a force not exceeding 2000 men. The fierce battle which began in the afternoon of the 15th of June lasted till midnight. Twenty-one hundred and sixty men are said to have fallen, but Sverre was finally victorious. King Magnus perished together with the flower of the aristocracy, and Bergen and the districts of southwestern Norway which had given him the most loyal support hastened to tender their submission to King Sverre. After the battle Magnus' body was brought to Bergen, and buried in the Christ church. "Fair speeches were made over the grave. Nicolas Sultan spoke, a brother of King Sverre's mother, and one of the most eloquent of men. The king himself made a long speech in which he said: 'We stand here now at the grave of one who was kind and loving to his friends and kinsmen; though he and I, kinsmen, had not the good fortune to

<sup>1</sup> In 1229 Eystein was proclaimed a saint by a church council held in Trondhjem. His body was placed in a shrine, and deposited in the Trondhjem cathedral, where it remained till the time of the Reformation. His silver coffin was then brought to Copenhagen and given to the royal treasury. On an old oak confessional in the north transept of the cathedral is still found painted in gold the three saints: *St. Olaus, St. Halvardus, and St. Augustinus* (i.e. Eystein). See Peter Friedrich Suhm and Gerhard Schøningh, *Forsøg til Forbedringer i den gamle danske og norske Historie*, p. 449 ff.

agree. He was hard to me and my men; may God forgive him now all his transgressions. Yet he was an honorable chief in many respects, and adorned by kingly descent.' The king spoke with many fine words, for he did not lack them on whatever course he was bent. The burial of King Magnus was put in careful order by King Sverre, coverlets were spread over the tombstone, and a railing was set up around it."<sup>1</sup>

## 62. KING SVERRE'S REIGN

While the struggle between Sverre and Magnus had the appearance of a personal contest for the possession of the throne, even a casual observer would soon discern that a revolution had been set on foot in which the Birkebeiner, or common people, under the leadership of Sverre had undertaken to wrest the power from the aristocracy and the clergy. Sverre could assert his right to the throne only according to the old rule of succession as the illegitimate son of Sigurd Mund, while Magnus Erlingsson wore the crown by the special arrangement of 1164, which virtually transferred the sovereign power to the church and the nobility. With Sverre on the throne the era of puppet kings and the rule of the nobility would be at an end; the constitution of 1164 would be overthrown, and a régime would be inaugurated to which Sverre himself gave the keynote in his speech at the funeral of Erling Skakke: "Times are greatly changed, as you may see, and have taken a marvelous turn, when one man stands in the place of three — of king, of jarl, of archbishop — and I am that one." Sverre would rule in the spirit of Harald Haarfagre and St. Olav, as the sovereign of a national and independent kingdom exercising the highest authority in ecclesiastical and state affairs within the realm. But although he had gained the power, and was fully resolved to use it, he did not exercise it in a harsh or arbitrary way. With the instinct of a true statesman, he took care to gradually lessen the influence of the nobility, to put more power into the hands of the common people, and to organize the administration and the judicial procedure in such a way as to lodge the power more firmly with the central government, and leave less to the whim of the individual or the caprice of fortune.

<sup>1</sup> *The Saga of King Sverri*, J. Sephton, ch. 97.



We have seen that the local administration was originally controlled by the *herser*, or hereditary chieftains. The *lendermænd*, who succeeded them, were appointed by the king, but exercised to a large extent the same power. They controlled the local military organization, and exercised extensive police power; they attended the *thing* in the capacity of police officers to maintain peace and order, and they were still regarded by the people as their chieftains. They usually belonged to the old aristocracy, and although they exercised their power in the name of the king, they were quite independent of royal authority because of their rank and influence. The *aarmænd* were the king's real representatives in local administration. They were overseers of the royal estates, collectors of taxes, and procured the necessaries for the entertainment of the king and his *hird* when he stayed in their district. They had to meet at the *thing* to maintain the king's cause; they should see to it that the *thing* was assembled at the right time, and should arrange for the election of *nefndarmenn*, or members of the *lagthing*; it was their duty, also, to keep in custody persons under arrest, and to inflict on them the punishments imposed by the *thing*. But they were of low birth — often they were freed slaves — and they were neither loved nor respected by the people. When determined resistance was offered, they were often unable to execute efficiently the duties of their office. In such a case the *lendermand* might from sheer kind-heartedness condescend to aid them; but as the *aarmænd* stood under the supervision of the king, not of the *lendermænd*, we may be sure that such assistance was both rarely and grudgingly given. In cases of special lack of efficiency in the local administration, or for special purposes, the king would appoint one of his trusted men as his *sysselmand*, or personal representative, clothed with an authority superior even to that of the *lendermænd*. But such appointment was not permanent except in far-away districts like Haalogaland and Jæmtland. The *sysselmænd* were royal officials, men of standing and ability. They had all the duties and powers of the *aarmænd*, except that of acting as overseers over the royal estates, which was considered menial service. They also performed many of the duties of the *lendermand*. They had police power, collected fines and taxes, and assembled the *thing*, where they proclaimed new laws in the king's name. They

acted as prosecutors, and defended the people in their rights over against the clergy; as royal deputies they had numerous duties, and possessed great power.<sup>1</sup> The appointment of *sysselmænd* grew more common in the twelfth century, but during the period of the civil wars, while the king exercised only a nominal authority, this institution could not be of very great importance. Not till in King Sverre's time can it be said to have developed into a general and permanent system of local administration. After the battle of Nidaros he appointed *sysselmænd* in the whole of Trøndelagen. The office does not seem to have been established everywhere in the kingdom in his reign, but it was rapidly extended under his successors. The *aarmænd* continued for a time to act as subordinate officials under the *sysselmænd*, but as the more important functions of their office were delegated to him, they became superfluous and gradually disappeared. The *lendermand* institution was left intact. Sverre pursued a conciliatory policy, and left the *lendermænd* in undisturbed possession of their lands and powers. He even appointed many of them as his *sysselmænd*. But in the civil wars their ranks had been greatly thinned, and Sverre rewarded many of his own men by elevating them to this high rank even if they were men of humble birth. Many of his followers he married to the widows and daughters of those who had fallen in the wars. He thereby attached the *lendermand* class more closely to himself, and by appointing them *sysselmænd*, they became royal officials dependent on the king, while the office of *lendermand*, stripped of its old significance, gradually became an empty title.

Of no less significance was the change made by King Sverre in the hitherto obscure office of *lagmand* (O. N. *lögmaðr*). Much difference of opinion has prevailed regarding the origin of this institution in Norway. R. Keyser, P. A. Munch, and Fr. Brandt held that the office of *lagmand* was created by Sverre, that before

<sup>1</sup> In regard to the various duties of *aarmænd*, *lendermænd*, and *sysselmænd* see *Norges gamle Love*, vol. V. Glossary under *ármaðr*, *lendrmaðr*, and *sysslumaðr*. See also T. H. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, p. 49 ff. R. Keyser, *Norges Stats- og Retsforfatning i Middelalderen*, p. 209 ff. T. H. Aschehoug, *De norske Communes Retsforfatning før 1837*, p. 8 ff. E. Hertzberg, *Len og Veitzla i Norges Sagatid*, *Festskrift for Konrad Maurer, Germanistische Studien*, p. 283-331.

his time the word "lagmand" signified a man well versed in the law, who exercised no prescribed function in the judicial system.<sup>1</sup> Konrad Maurer held that the *lagmænd* were a separate class, distinct from the *lendermænd* and the people. He points to the very closely related institution of *lovsigemand* (*logsoğumaðr*), the leader of the *thing* in Iceland; and the *lagmand* in Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Jæmtland, and finds that the existence of this institution in the Norwegian colonies can only be explained by supposing that it also existed in the mother country. Ebbe Hertzberg does not fully agree with either view, but holds that the office of *lagmand* dates from an earlier period than Sverre's reign,<sup>2</sup> which is shown especially by Sigurd Ranesson's noted case, where the *lagmænd* are mentioned several times. "Then King Eystein asked the *lagmænd* if it was law in Norway that *bønder* should judge kings. The *lagmænd* answered that suits between kings would have to be tried at the Ørething." When the laws in course of time became more numerous and complicated, few knew them well, and those who were to render decisions at the *thing* would, naturally, ask the opinion of those who were well versed in the law. "In course of time," says Hertzberg, "the word 'lagmand' came to designate one who was well versed in the law, who at the *thing* was requested to give his opinion as to the law, and thus for the occasion acted as *lagmand*." This view must be regarded as the one which is best supported by the evidence of the old writers. Several such *lagmænd* were present both at the *fylkesting* and the *lagthing*, but they were not officially appointed. Archbishop Eystein attempted also to give the clergy control over the courts of law by making a regulation that at the *thing* the law-book should be read by a priest, who would thereby get the office of principal *lagmand*. King Sverre's attention had, probably, been directed to this important office by Eystein's attempt. He reduced the number of *lagmænd*, and made them royal officials appointed by

<sup>1</sup> Keyser, *Norges Stats- og Retsforfatning*, p. 247. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, II., p. 106. Brandt, *Langes Tidsskrift*, vol. V., p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Maurer, *Kritische Vierteljahrsschrift für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft*, München, 1868, p. 374. Ebbe Hertzberg, *Grundtrækkene i den ældste norske Proces*, edited by Dr. Fr. Brandt, Christiania, 1874, p. 156 ff. Maurer, *Die Entstehungszeit der älteren Gulathingsslógg*, München, 1872. *Gilssaga*, ch. 57.



the king. The duty of the *lagmand* should be to give his *orskurd*, i.e. to state the law according to which the *lagrette* should decide the case. It became customary, also, to bring cases before the *lagmand* outside of the *thing*, and to settle them according to his *orskurd*, or legal opinion. This relieved people of the burden of expensive litigation at the *thing*. At first the contending parties would not necessarily have to abide by the *orskurd* of the *lagmand*, but by a law of 1244 a fine of three marks was imposed on any one who disregarded the *orskurd*.<sup>1</sup> The *lagmand* had become a high judicial functionary appointed by the king. He exercised great influence over the judiciary, and tended to strengthen greatly the monarchic principles.

Over against the hierarchy King Sverre asserted the principle of the sovereign power of the king in all affairs within the realm with more uncompromising vigor. He not only annulled the agreement of 1164, but also all the laws inspired by Archbishop Eystein, by which this prelate had sought to enhance the privileges of the clergy at the expense of royal power. The struggle with the church soon waxed very bitter, since Eystein's successor, Archbishop Eirik, who had been elected in spite of Sverre's protest, was an avowed opponent of the king, and a most determined advocate of church supremacy. The archbishop based his claim on the new code of church laws called "*Gullfjōðr*," a revision of the older laws, completed under the supervision of Archbishop Eystein, in which many privileges were granted the church. Sverre refused to acknowledge these laws, and appealed to the laws of St. Olav as they were found in the old code "*Grágás*" from the time of Magnus the Good. He declared "that Erling Skakke ought not to have broken the laws of Olav the Saint to have his son appointed king. For Magnus was not rightly chosen, inasmuch as never before since Norway became Christian had one been king who was not a king's son, nor yet in heathen times."<sup>2</sup> King Sverre regarded as unlawful usurpation every innovation introduced by Erling Skakke and King Magnus, and would

<sup>1</sup> *Frostathingslov*, 16, *Norges gamle Love*, vol. I. Konrad Maurer, *Die Entstehungszeit der Frostathingslög*. Ebbe Hertzberg, *Grundtrækkene i den ældste norske Proces*. See under *lögmaðr* and *orskurðr*, *Norges gamle Love*, Glossary; and Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog*.

<sup>2</sup> *Sverressaga*, ch. 112.

force the church to surrender its illegally obtained privileges. "One subject of dispute between them was the old law and practice by which the king and the yeomen should build churches, if they wished, on their own homesteads and at their own cost, and should themselves have control of the churches and appoint priests thereto. But the archbishop claimed rule and authority in each church as soon as it was consecrated, and over all those whom he permitted to officiate in them. The king requested that the law should hold, but the archbishop refused."<sup>1</sup> Sverre also demanded that the taxes which the archbishop levied in his diocese should be reduced to what they had been before the time of Magnus, and that he should not keep more than thirty armed followers, the number prescribed by law. "The archbishop," he said, "has no need of a bodyguard, or of warriors, or of a ship all bedecked with shields; and he so far exceeds what the law says, that he sails in a smack having twenty benches manned by ninety men, or more, and bedecked with shields from stem to stern. We Birkebeiner will call to mind the ship sent by the archbishop to attack us under the Hattarhamar, and that we thought the same too hardily manned by his husearls. So, too, in Bergen, when we attacked the fleet, the archbishop's ship and his company were much readier with their weapons to fight against us than were the king's company. I should think it more righteous before God if the archbishop had no guardsmen beyond what is lawful, for no one will plunder him or the church property, and if he used the cost to set men to the quarries to transport stone, to do mason's work, so as to advance the building of the minster for which preparations have already been made." The archbishop made an arrogant reply, and Sverre declared that within five days he would outlaw the men which he might have in excess of the prescribed number. The archbishop thereupon fled to Denmark.

Another controversy arose over the election of bishops. Sverre claimed the right to control their election, and maintained that in early Christian times the bishops were chosen by the king. This practice had been adhered to in the time of St. Olav, and even in the days of Eystein, Sigurd, and Inge, the sons of Harald Gille.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Sverressaga*, ch. 117.

<sup>2</sup> See Sverre's *En Tale mod Biskopperne*, edited by Gustav Storm, p. 22.

concessions made by King Magnus he wholly disregarded, and the right of the clergy to elect the bishops, which had been conceded in principle even in the reign of the sons of Harald Gille, he interpreted to mean that in case two or more kings ruled jointly, and could not agree on a candidate, the clergy might elect. He says about the right of election in his speech against the clergy: "We have heard these people (the clergy) state that the king has surrendered this right, and has given it to them. But any one will perceive, whom God has given understanding in the bosom, that even if the king would relinquish this power he could not do so, inasmuch as he must account for it to God himself. For God will call the king to account for everything which he has given the kingdom, and, in like manner, he will hold the bishop responsible for everything which he has given the bishopric. One cannot alter it for the other by giving or receiving, as this is contrary to God's own disposition and command."<sup>1</sup>

When a new bishop was to be elected for the diocese of Stavanger, the choice fell on Nicolas Arnesson, a half-brother of King Inge and Orm Kongsbroder. Nicolas was a staunch adherent of King Magnus, and had fought against Sverre in the battle of Ilevoldene. The king, who feared that he would use his influence to support the archbishop and to strengthen the hierarchic party, refused to sanction the election. But the cunning Nicolas wrote a letter to the queen, and she interceded for him. Sverre yielded to her pleadings, and sanctioned the choice. The bishop elect was transferred to the diocese of Oslo, and in later events he comes into the foreground as the most sinister figure in Norwegian history. His misfortune has been that little is known about him save what is told in the "Sverressaga," which was written by his enemies, and all posterity has learned to regard him as the treacherous arch-conspirator, the very incarnation of evil. This view is, no doubt, both erroneous and unjust, but it finds its explanation in the fact that he became the real organizer and leader of the hierarchic-aristocratic opposition party known as the "Bagler," and fanned into flame the passions of party spirit and civil strife. Nicolas exhibited talent mixed with cunning and selfishness. He must have been educated, but he had, probably, no specific religious training. His martial spirit indi-

<sup>1</sup> *En Tale mod Biskopperne*, p. 21.



cates that he lacked true religious feeling, and he seems to have been partisan and narrow. His career shows him to have been a chieftain of the old type rather than a bishop. The "Sverressaga" relates that it happened one day while Sverre lay in the Seimsfjord that his men rowed him in a cutter close under the land. Bishop Nicolas exclaimed to him: "Why don't you come on land, Sverre? Are you not willing to fight now, you renegade? You think no life equal to that of robbing and harrying. Now I will wait for you here. Behold my sleeve" (and with that he held up his shield); "the miter and staff which by the Pope's command I bear against you are this helmet and sword; I will carry these weapons until you are slain or driven from your realm."<sup>1</sup> However we may regard the words quoted by the saga writer, they probably give a correct picture of the warlike prelate in martial array, hostile and bitter in his opposition to King Sverre.

That the position taken by Sverre would produce a renewed conflict with both the hierarchy and the aristocracy might be expected. Archbishop Eirik was well received in Denmark by the powerful Archbishop Absalon, who gave him all possible aid. He instructed Abbot William of Ebelholt to write a letter to the Pope in Eirik's behalf, and describe the king's action against the archbishop and the church.<sup>2</sup> The letter emphasized especially that Sverre had requested the archbishop to crown him, but he had refused to do so except with the consent of the Pope. This had made Sverre and his whole army angry, as he claimed that in such an affair he was not dependent on the favor of the Pope, since kings might let themselves be anointed wherever and by whomsoever they pleased. The letter received no immediate answer. Pope Clement III. died in April, 1191, and the new Pope, Celestine III., was too much occupied with affairs in Germany and Italy to devote much attention to the far-away province of Norway. In 1193 the two archbishops sent men to Rome with a new letter, and now the Pope issued a bull in which he placed Archbishop Eirik and his successors under his apostolic protection, confirmed all rights and privileges of the Norwegian clergy, and made new regulations.<sup>3</sup> The bull concludes with the threat that

<sup>1</sup> *Sverressaga*, ch. 131.

<sup>2</sup> *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, vol. VI., no. 3.

<sup>3</sup> The document is found in the *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, vol. II., no. 3.

whoever resists it shall lose his authority, his title of honor, and shall be excommunicated.

Sverre did not long enjoy peace even after the overthrow of the Heklungs, and the death of Magnus Erlingsson. New armed hosts were constantly placed in the field against him by the nobles. These strong bands, which were usually recruited from the most lawless elements, did much harm, and Sverre's ability as a general was often taxed to the utmost to defend the various sections of the kingdom against them. But their operations were planless raids, which the saga gives undue prominence, and pictures with unnecessary minuteness of detail. After the battle of Fimreite the followers of Magnus took from the Hovedø monastery at Oslo a monk known as Jón Kuvlung<sup>1</sup> whom they hailed as king, claiming that he was a son of Inge Krokryg. The clergy and aristocracy supported him, and as all adventurers and lawless elements joined his standards, Sverre found it difficult enough to cope with the "Kuvlungs," as these bands of rebels were called. They captured Bergen and took the Sverreborg, which the king had built in the city. Another time they seized Trondhjem and destroyed the Sverreborg of that city. But they were finally taken unawares by Sverre in Bergen; Jón Kuvlung fell, and he was proven to be a simple impostor, the son of a man by the name of Peter and his wife Astrid.

Even before the Kuvlungs had been scattered, a new band of rebels and marauders, the "Varbelgs," made their appearance in Marker, a border district of southeastern Norway. Their leader, Sigurd, an Icelander of low birth, claimed to be a son of King Inge Krokryg. He was defeated and slain by the angry farmers; but after the fall of the Kuvlungs the chieftains put forward another pretender, Vikar, a mere child, who had been brought from Denmark, and was said to be a son of Magnus Erlingsson. The Varbelgs were finally defeated at Bristein by the men from Tunsberg, and Vikar was slain.

During the next two years (1190-1192) no band of rebels disturbed the kingdom, and a joint crusade to the Holy Land was organized in Denmark and Norway. After Jerusalem had been

<sup>1</sup> Kuvlung, from kuvl (= eowl), a name given him in derision by the Birkebeiner.

captured by the Turks in 1187, Pope Gregory VIII. preached a new crusade against the infidels, and the three most powerful sovereigns in Europe at that time: Frederick Barbarossa of Germany, Philip Augustus II. of France, and Richard Cœur de Lion of England became the leaders of the third crusade. The papal legates also came to Denmark with letters from the Pope, and met King Knut Valdemarsson at a diet assembled in Odense. The great noble Esbern Snare arose and urged the Danes to forget their domestic quarrels, and to use their strength and resources to rescue the Holy Sepulcher. Many Danish nobles took the cross, and sailed to Konghelle in Norway, where Ulv af Lauvnes, one of King Sverre's ablest Birkebein chieftains, lay ready to join them. Warriors from all the three Scandinavian countries joined in this crusade; Bernardus Thesaurarius says: "Norsemen, Götar, and the other inhabitants of the islands which lie between the North and the West, tall and warlike people, despising death, came armed with battle-axes, and sailing on round ships called snekkjar."<sup>1</sup> Ulv af Lauvnes became the leader, as he was the most experienced seaman. They first sailed to Bergen, where the Danish chieftains visited King Sverre and asked his forgiveness for having aided the rebel bands which had risen against him. Sverre readily granted them his pardon, embraced them as his friends, and wished them a safe journey. On their voyage across the North Sea they suffered much from stormy weather, and when they reached Friesland, they decided to leave their damaged ships, and journey overland. They marched along the Rhine, and finally reached Venice, where they chartered a ship to transport them to the Holy Land. They reached Palestine in September, 1192, just as Richard Cœur de Lion had made a truce with Saladin, and was about to depart for home. They could, therefore, take no part in military operations, and after visiting the Holy City and the river Jordan, some returned to Constantinople, where they were well received by the Greek Emperor, Isaac Angelus, and his Varangian guards, while others returned by way of Rome. Ulv af Lauvnes is not mentioned in later events in Norway, and it is possible that he lost his life on the expedition.

The brief period of peace which followed the overthrow of the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., p. 224.



Kuvlungs and Varbelgs was but a lull before the storm. In the spring of 1193 a new band of rebels had been organized. They were called "Eyskjegger," because they had assembled in the Orkney Islands. Hallkel Jónsson, who was married to Ragnhild, a sister of Magnus Erlingsson, Sigurd Erlingsson, a son of Erling Skakke, Olav Jarlsmaag, a brother-in-law of Jarl Harald Madadsson of the Orkneys, and Bishop Nicolas Arnesson were the leaders of this new uprising, and the boy Sigurd, a son of Magnus Erlingsson, was their candidate for the throne. After successful operations in Viken they sailed to Bergen, and tried to capture the city, but they were unable to take the Sverreborg, and on Palm Sunday the following spring King Sverre defeated them in the battle of Florevaag, west of Bergen. Hallkel Jónsson, Sigurd Erlingsson, Olav Jarlsmaag, and the pretender Sigurd Magnusson lost their lives. King Sverre went to Viken, and summoned before him Bishop Nicolas, who had to admit that he was implicated in the rebellion. To appease the irate king he agreed to crown him. Sverre summoned the bishops of Hamar and Stavanger to meet in Bergen, where he was crowned by Bishop Nicolas, June 29, 1194. He also caused an English clerk, Martin, to be chosen Bishop of Bergen to succeed Bishop Paul, who died before the battle of Florevaag. In the summer of the same year the Pope excommunicated Sverre, and on the 18th of November he also published a bull of excommunication against the Norwegian bishops, which should take effect if they continued to show obedience to the king. Sverre summoned the bishops to meet at a council of magnates assembled in Bergen to confer with him about the situation. They all promised to remain faithful to him, and it was decided to send messengers to the Pope to place the situation in Norway in its right light. Bishop Nicolas Arnesson seems to have protested his faithfulness to the king, like the other bishops, but as soon as he had returned to Oslo, he went to Denmark, joined Sverre's enemies, and received absolution from Archbishop Eirik for having crowned him. Jarl Harald Madadsson of the Orkneys was also present in Bergen to obtain King Sverre's pardon for having tolerated the Eyskjegger in his dominions. The king granted him pardon, but did not let him escape unpunished. He confiscated the estates of those who had taken part in the uprising, and separated

the Shetland Islands permanently from the jarldom of the Orkneys, and joined them to the kingdom of Norway. These islands were henceforth governed by a royal *sysseľmand*.

### 63. BIRKEBEINER AND BAGLER. KING SVERRE AND POPE INNOCENT III.

Sverre had shown that he could cope successfully with rebellious bands of the kind which had hitherto opposed him. His enemies saw that no hope could be pinned on future efforts of that sort, and Archbishop Eirik and Bishop Nicolas Arnesson, who were in Denmark at this time, undertook in 1196 to unite the supporters of the aristocratic-hierarchic principle into a strong party called the "Bagler" (from begall, baculus = crozier) in a final effort to overthrow the king. Archbishop Eirik had become blind, and Bishop Nicolas became the soul and real leader of the new party. No bloodier civil war had ever been fought in Norway than the struggle which now began between the Bagler and the king's party, the Birkebeiner. King Sverre was placed in a most trying position. He had gained the throne by the aid of the common people, the Birkebeiner, but he now found himself opposed by the most opulent and powerful aristocracy as well as by the Pope and the clergy. The people were, moreover, divided geographically. The Bagler gained the support of the southern and western districts, while the Birkebeiner controlled only Trøndelagen and the northern districts. The struggle between the Birkebeiner and Bagler is a parallel to the contest between Welfs and Ghibellines in Germany, the only difference being that Sverre was opposed by nearly the whole nobility.

The Bagler appeared in Norway in 1196, and reënforcements were ready to join them. They took Viken and assembled the Borgarthing, where the pretender Inge Magnusson, whom they claimed to be a son of Magnus Erlingsson, was proclaimed king. The *lendermand* Halvard of Saastad, in Oplandene, joined them, and when Bishop Thore of Hamar died in February, 1197, they chose Ivar Skjaalge, one of their own party, to succeed him. By his remarkable skill as a strategist Sverre was able to defeat the Bagler at Oslo, but the victory was of no avail, for they soon captured Trondhjem,

destroyed the Sverreborg, and seized his fleet. Bergen was burned, and one district after another fell into their hands until they controlled the whole coast. Only the *fylker* of Trøndelagen proper still remained in Sverre's possession. He seemed to be hopelessly defeated, and Bishop Nicolas could say with a boast: "Priest Sverre now holds no more of Norway than a single ness; it would be a very fit lot for him to govern the part of Eyra outside the palisades, and be hanged there on the gallows. We Bagler care very little, I should suppose, where he goes with his sea rams that he has got together in the town. Before the Trønders receive any good from them, I expect all their buildings will be charcoal. We will roam over the fjord as we please, in spite of them, quite free from fear, for they have no force to bring against us." <sup>1</sup>

To make a desperate situation seem still more hopeless, Sverre was at this time attacked also by the powerful Pope Innocent III. This great pontiff, who succeeded Celestine III. on January 8, 1198, made all the monarchs of Europe tremble, and in course of time the kings of Aragon, Portugal, Poland, and England had to bow in submission, and acknowledge themselves his vassals. In the quarrel between Philip of Swabia and Otto IV. in Germany he claimed the right to "examine, approve, anoint, consecrate, and crown the Emperor elect, if he be worthy; to reject him, if unworthy." Nothing could escape his attentive eagle eye, and he was determined to humble the refractory King Sverre, as he did humble every prince who resisted him. In the fall of 1198 the storm broke loose in earnest. Innocent placed Norway under interdict, declared Sverre to be excommunicated and deposed, and hurled the most violent anathemas against him.<sup>2</sup> He also sent letters to the kings of Denmark and Sweden, and to Jarl Birger Brosa, in which he recounted Sverre's "crimes," and asked them to arm themselves in defense of the churches and the clergy, and to overthrow this monster, and thereby earn God's reward and the gratitude of the Pope. None of the bishops dared any longer remain loyal, and an opportunity was given,

<sup>1</sup> *Sverressaga*, ch. 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, VI., p. 7-14, XVII., no. 1233. The bull of excommunication is found translated in P. A. Munch's *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. III., p. 331.



not only those who were at heart disloyal, but all the indifferent and faint-hearted to sever their allegiance. But Sverre could yet count on his war-scarred Birkebeiner. They had placed him on the throne, and had followed him in all his campaigns. They feared no one, not even the Pope in distant Romaborg, and their religion was not of a kind to make them over-scrupulous in doctrinal matters. They trusted in their swords, and clung to their leader with a faithfulness which had been their forefathers' prime virtue of old.

King Sverre's courage rose with the danger, and his clear intellect sought out the loftiest and most effective means to neutralize the effect of the Pope's attack. He would fight the hierarchy with their own weapons. In answer to the Pope's anathema he published his "Speech against the Bishops," a remarkable document, written in the Norse language, in which he appeals with great eloquence and consummate skill of argument to the Norwegian people, places before them the principles involved in the controversy, shows them the fallacies of the clergy and the arrogance of their claims, and asks them to judge. He compares the church to the human body whose members have their special functions. "Christ himself is the head, the church is the trunk of this body. The eyes should be our bishops, who should point us to the right way and the safe road, free from all erring paths, and should moreover have a careful oversight of all the members. The nostrils should be the archdeacons, who should perceive the scent of all the perfume of righteousness and sacred truth. The ears should be the deans and provosts, who should hear and decide causes and difficult suits in holy Christianity. The tongue and lips should be our priests, who should preach to us sound doctrine, and themselves afford good example by their conduct. The heart and breast should be the kings, whose duty lies in solicitude, in deliberating and in acting, in emboldening and defending all other members.

"But," he continues, "now exists the evil, that all the members suffer change in their nature, and each forsakes the office and service which it should perform. The eyes look sideways, and see dimly. The same scales have fallen upon the eyes of our bishops that fell on the eyes of the apostles the night when God was taken. The same drowsiness and heaviness is come upon them, and they see all things as in a dream, where they distinguish neither clear

light nor true appearance. The nostrils perceive only a stench, and not a perfume or sweet smell. The ears are now dull of hearing, and can hear neither truth nor good sense. Indeed, truth is neither heard nor seen. Our bishops and other rulers, who should watch over Christianity, are blinded by covetousness, excess, ambition, arrogance, and injustice. There have now arisen bishops such as those whom God himself slew aforetime, Hophni and Phineas, sons of Eli, high-priest in Shiloh, who did violence to the holy sacrifices which the people would offer to God, and seized with wrong and robbery all His offerings and holy sacrifices from God's holy people. And it has now come to pass that in the same manner our tithes and charitable offerings are demanded with threats and ban and excommunication. We are urged to build churches, and when they are built, we are driven from them like heathens. We are urged to undertake the cost, but are given no rule over them. Sins and offenses into which men fall are used as rent-producing farms; sinners are not chastised with right punishments, as every one is at liberty to compound for his sins if he wishes, for silence is at once kept when money is offered. We are deprived of some of our property with the sanction of the law; but where the law fails to apply, it is taken unjustly and by laying charge against us; and the wealth that is obtained and amassed is removed out of the country on an evil errand, for it is transmitted to Rome to purchase excommunication and anathemas, which are sent to our land as recompense for our Christianity and the consecration of churches. These are the gifts and presents brought to us in return for our tithes and other property. We are given gall to drink instead of wine, and poison instead of God's blood."

After having indicted the hierarchy in this strain he says that he does not blame the Pope, who knows no more about what happens in Norway than in other distant lands, but he blames the bishops and the clergy, who have misrepresented things to him. He quotes from the Decretals of the Popes to prove that an unjust decree issued by the church cannot hurt the innocent person against whom it is directed, but recoils on those who issued it. "To the same effect Pope Gelasius bears witness in the same cause when he speaks: 'An innocent man subjected to ban and anathemas shall pay the less

heed to it, because a misplaced ban injures no one before God and holy church, nor weighs upon him. He shall not seek absolution to be released from the ban, for he knows himself guiltless and not subject to it, inasmuch as it was unjustly pronounced.'

"These examples, and many others, bear witness that wrong judgments cannot injure us, though the deceitful wickedness of our clergy has had the power to put us to shame, for they flee from us and from this land as if we were heathens. Either the wise rulers of the holy church and Christendom have pronounced no excommunication though they have been urged, or else excommunication has been pronounced, and it has certainly fallen upon those who by injustice and wickedness requested it, and has not fallen upon us, who certainly deem ourselves innocent, and certainly believe ourselves free from all excommunication."

He urges those who are not guilty of treason or of spreading false reports to remain loyal, and asks those who may be implicated in wrong-doing against the king and the nation to depart from those evil ways.

"All should know, clerical and lay, that the clerical leaders are not set over God's people to tread scornfully upon their necks, to cast shame in their teeth, to regard them as good to be pillaged and wrongfully plundered of their goods. Still less are they set over God's people to turn them away from God to hell, as into the mouth of the ravenous wolf, either by wrongful ban and anathema or by false persuasion."

In discussing the power of the king he shows by quotations from Holy Scriptures and the Decretals that royal power is divinely instituted, and that he exercises the highest authority in church and state by God's appointment.

"So great a mass of examples show clearly that the salvation of man's soul is at stake when he does not observe complete loyalty, kingly worship, and a right obedience; for kingly rule is created by God's command, and not after man's ordinance, and no man obtains kingly rule except by divine dispensation. A king would not be more powerful or mightier than others if God had not set him higher than others in his service; for in his kingly rule he serves God, and not himself. Now, inasmuch as duty binds him to answer to God



himself, and to render an account of his protection and care of holy church, according to the cause just quoted; and as duty binds a minister of holy church to be obedient to the king, to afford him hearty worship and a guileless loyalty; therefore we cannot understand with what reason our clergy wish to remove the king from the oversight which he should have in holy church, and for which God requires him to answer, when we certainly know that men of inferior rank to the king have to exercise power in holy church. For knights and guardsmen, and even yeomen, have oversight in holy church if they are patrons of churches. There are three cases in which a man comes to have such oversight in holy church — the first, if he inherits an estate after his father, or mother, or other kinsmen, and the upholding of the church goes with the inheritance; the second is when a man buys an estate, and the upholding of the church goes with the lands which he buys; the third is when a man builds a church at his own pains and cost and endows it with lands for its future upholding. It must now be made clear so that all may fully understand, what oversight it is which those whom we have just mentioned lawfully exercise in holy church, according as it is said in *xvi. causa et ultima questione ejusdem cause*, and found in other places in the writings of the apostles (popes) themselves; ‘This oversight in holy church has to be exercised by the sons, grandsons, and other fit heirs of the man who built the church or has been its upholder. Those who are rightful heirs shall have a care that no one through deceit or transference remove anything which the upholder of the church gave to it at the outset. That which was set apart for the maintenance of the priest at the beginning shall so remain; and that which was set apart at the beginning for tar, for lights, and for vestments in the church shall so remain. And if the priest makes any change in what was thus set apart at the beginning, so that the church is injured thereby, then shall the patrons whom I have just named make the matters known to the bishop, and ask him to devise a remedy, if they themselves are unable to devise one; and if the bishop will not devise a remedy, or if he himself does such things as those I have mentioned, then shall the patrons of the church make the matter known to the archbishop, and ask him to devise a remedy. If the archbishop will not devise a remedy, or

if he himself does such things, then shall the patrons lay the matter before the king, and cause him to rectify it by the authority which God has placed in his hands.' Now, this bears witness that the king is set above all other dignitaries; for the king has here to direct the bishop or archbishop to do justice, if they themselves will pay no heed to it. This, be it said, relates to direction and guardianship of holy church, and not to those other violations of law which might occur in secular matters. How great is the king's power in secular matters may thus be seen, since he sits even in the highest seat of judgment in matters relating to holy church, which would have been thought, if men had not heard this quotation, to lie under the direction of the bishop." He shows that it is usually the bishops, and not the kings, who lead the people into errors in religious matters.

"It may now be seen whether the king is to blame, and claims their rights to rob them of their dignity, or they quarrel with the king's honor, and wish to deprive him of it and render him honorless. And if this unrest turns into heresy, as seems too likely, heresy and the profanation of Christianity will be seen to proceed from a source whence they have aforetime proceeded. We know few instances where kings have originated heresies, but we know many where kings have overthrown them when bishops have originated them. You may now hear the names of those who in various ways have been heretics."

Then follows an exposition of the fallacies of many ecclesiastics who have been regarded as heretics; among others, Arius, Bishop of Alexandria, Macarius, Bishop of Antioch, Donatus, Bishop of Numidia, Tertullian and Pelagius. But "the very worst, the cause of most harm, was called Nicolas Advena, a disciple of the Lord himself. He was afterwards bishop in Serkland (Saracenland), and is now known as Mahomet." Professor P. A. Munch thinks that Sverre especially emphasizes the name of this reputed founder of Mohammedanism, because he bears the same name as Bishop Nicolas Arnesson.

"Not many kings will be found who have originated heresy, for kings ever talk of their realm, of their kingly rule, and the defense of their lands. Bishops are appointed to proclaim truth and Christianity, and whether they preach in church, or at the assemblies

(*things*), they declare before the people that all they preach must be followed; to fail in carrying out all they command is wrong, they say, and opposed to Christianity.

"Let these encroachments now cease which for a time have found place among men, and be just to one another. When both parties observe what stands in the holy writings, there is freedom for both; but when they wish to transgress what is written, they practice unrighteousness, and will be rejected by God, by good men, and by equity."<sup>1</sup>

The document sets forth clearly the doctrine of the divine right of kings in opposition to the claim of Pope Innocent III. that the rule of the whole world had been given to the Pope, and that "no king could reign rightly unless he devoutly served Christ's vicar."

It was clearly the intention that this document should be read in the churches and at the *things* wherever this could be done, as many copies of it are known to have been distributed. In this speech King Sverre not only exhorts his people to remain loyal, but he instructs them as to the legitimate power and the proper sphere of activity of king and clergy. His logic seems to have disconcerted his opponents, and the people listened as to a man inspired. Many of the Birkebeiner who had left the king returned to their old allegiance; Bishop Nicolas was henceforth called "the heretic," and his party "the excommunicated Bagler." The king had been able to awaken the people's patriotism, and to turn public sentiment against his opponents — a more signal victory than could be gained by arms.

Sverre succeeded in maintaining friendly relations with the neighboring kingdoms in spite of the letters sent by the Pope. King Knut Valdemarsson of Denmark did not attempt to attack Norway, though he had lost his supremacy over Viken, and King Sverker of Sweden remained friendly. His son Karl married Sverre's daughter Ingebjørg, and Sverre himself was married to the Swedish princess Margaret, daughter of King Eirik the Saint. Jarl Birger Brosa

<sup>1</sup> *En Tale mod Biskopperne*, edited by Gustav Storm, Christiania, 1885. *Anecdoton Sverreri*, translated by J. Sephton, *The Saga of King Sverri of Norway*, Appendix II. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. III., p. 335-348.



remained friendly, and Sverre made his son Philip jarl of Oplandene and Viken, and kept him at his court. Even with regard to the relation of the neighboring powers to the kingdom of Norway the mandate of the Pope had produced no startling effect.

In the winter of 1199 Sverre stayed in Trondhjem, where he was busily engaged in building a new fleet. Each of the eight *fylker* of Trøndelagen had promised to build one large war vessel, and he remodeled many merchant vessels into warships. In the spring he left Trondhjem with the new fleet, and met the Bagler in the Strindenfjord near Frosta. A fierce battle was fought, in which pardon was neither asked nor granted. The Bagler were defeated, all their larger ships were taken, and many of their chieftains fell; but Bishop Nicolas escaped to Denmark, and did not return to Norway while Sverre lived. Some of the Birkebeiner pursued the fleeing Bagler northward, and recovered Haalogaland, while the king himself with the main fleet proceeded southward to Viken, where he spent the summer. He had now regained control of the whole kingdom, but the Bagler were not yet annihilated. In the winter of 1200, while Sverre was staying in Oslo, great forces from Oplandene, Viken, Telemarken, and Tunsberg joined in an attack on the city. The campaign was well planned, and the enemy was approaching the town from different sides when Sverre became aware of the movement. Now, as many a time before, he went in disguise to the enemy's lines to learn their plans, and he set his men to cut a passage through the ice-bound harbor, so that the fleet might be extricated in case of defeat. He found that three armies were converging on the city, each one larger than his own. One had already gained the mountain heights east of the town, another was marching up the fjord on the ice, and a third was approaching from the west. Sverre's strategic skill, and the superior discipline of his veterans enabled him to keep the armies apart, and to defeat each in turn, but the struggle was long and desperate, and the victory could not have been decisive, as Sverre left Oslo and sailed to Bergen. The Bagler also attacked Bergen and Trondhjem, but they met with small success. Before the winter was over, the king began a new campaign against them in Ranrike and the southeastern districts of Norway. He forced them to retreat, and placed strong garrisons in Viken.

They made their last stand in Tunsberg, where one of their ablest leaders, Reidar Sendemand, intrenched himself in the citadel of the town, which was erected on a steep mountain height. Sverre could not take this strong citadel by storm, and in September, 1201, he laid siege to the place with 1000 men. After five months Reidar had to surrender, and Sverre, who was always ready to show clemency to his defeated enemies, pardoned the whole garrison, and cared well for the half-starved men. Reidar was ill for a long time, and Sverre kept him at his court, and gave him the best care and medical attendance. "Thus," says Munch, "this prince, who was excommunicated and decried by a political party among the clergy as an infidel, showed a conciliatory Christian spirit, and a humaneness which his opponents would scarcely have shown under like circumstances, and which in that age was extremely rare. But he showed that herein as in so many other respects he was far in advance of his times."

With the surrender of Reidar Sendemand at Tunsberg the war with the Bagler may be said to have ended, and Sverre returned victorious to Bergen. He had freed all parts of the kingdom from foreign overlordship; he had successfully resisted the encroachments of the hierarchy, and the attacks of the Pope; he had wrested the power from the aristocracy, and had reestablished the sovereignty of the crown in harmony with the monarchic principles of Harald Haarfagre, Olav Tryggvason, and Olav the Saint; but he was not to enjoy the fruits of his victory. He fell sick at the siege of Tunsberg, and returned to Bergen only to die. There is a tone of sadness in the words which he spoke on his death-bed: "The kingdom has brought me labor and unrest and trouble, rather than peace and a quiet life. But so it is, that many have envied me my rank, and have let their envy grow to full enmity. May God forgive them all; and let my Lord now judge between me and them, and decide all my cause." He passed away on the 9th of March, 1202, and was laid to rest with elaborate ceremonies in the cathedral at Bergen. King Sverre was one of Norway's greatest sons. His character was of the highest type, combining courage with prudence and perseverance. He was witty and eloquent, wise, just and humane; great as statesman and general, noble and amiable as a

man. His saga, which was written by a contemporary, characterizes him as follows: "King Sverre was most polished in manner. He was low of stature, stout and strong, broad of face and well featured. His beard was usually trimmed, and his eyes were hazel in color, set deeply and handsomely. He was calm and thoughtful. He was most eloquent in speech, and when he spoke, the ring of his voice was so clear that though he did not appear to speak loud, all understood him, though they were far off. He was a seemly chief as he sat in his high-seat grandly dressed; for though his legs were short he sat high in the seat. He never drank strong drink to excess, and always ate but one meal a day. He was valiant and bold, very capable of enduring fatigue and loss of sleep." In comparing him with his supposed father, King Sigurd Mund, the saga writer further says of him: "Sverre was steadfast and calm, careful in the choice of his friends, staunch and even-tempered. He was true to his word, reserved, sagacious, and conscientious."

#### 64. KING SVERRE'S IMMEDIATE SUCCESSORS

When Sverre died, his only living son, Haakon Sverresson, ascended the throne. Sigurd, Haakon's older brother, who died some time previous, left a young son, Guttorm, but no attempt was made to secure for him any share in the kingdom. The principle that the realm should be ruled by a single king was thus tacitly accepted by all. On his death-bed Sverre had written a letter to his son, in which he advised him to bring about a reconciliation with the church, and Haakon invited the bishops, who were still staying in Denmark, to meet him for the purpose of arranging a satisfactory settlement. The bishops gladly accepted the offer, as they were tired of living in exile, and the archbishop even revoked the interdict without awaiting the permission of the Pope. An agreement was reached, the terms of which were embodied in a proclamation issued by the king, but this document was couched in a language so vague that it is impossible to determine definitely what concessions were made by either side. It is quite clear, however, that the king did not recede from the position taken by Sverre, except on minor points, while the bishops were required to swear allegiance to him as their



lawful sovereign. The clergy seem to have been anxious to bring about a reconciliation on almost any terms. The Bagler party had been so weakened by defeats that they could have little hope of success if the struggle were renewed, and they learned to their sorrow that the dreaded weapons of the Pope — excommunication and interdict — had been of little real aid. The clergy ceased to oppose the king, and kept aloof from future struggles for the throne. The Bagler, who were still led by the doughty Bishop Nicolas, became a political faction, and their conflict with the Birkebeiner lost all real significance. While Haakon Sverresson lived, the Bagler did not attempt any new uprising, as his right to the throne could not be questioned; but his peaceful reign was cut short by his sudden death on New Year's day, 1204.

Haakon Sverresson was thought to have died childless, and his brother Sigurd's four-year-old son, Guttorm, was chosen king. Haakon Galin, son of King Sverre's sister Cecilia, a brave warrior and dashing noble, was made regent during his minority. The Bagler party now thought that the opportunity had come for them to regain their lost power. Bishop Nicolas sought to persuade them to place his nephew, Philip Simonsson, on the throne, but he was merely a noble, and they chose instead the pretender Erling Steinvæg, who claimed to be an illegitimate son of Magnus Erlingsson, and Philip Simonsson was elevated to the rank of jarl. Thereby the Bagler also repudiated the constitution of 1164, which excluded illegitimate sons from the throne. King Valdemar the Victorious of Denmark promised to aid Erling on condition that he should acknowledge him his suzerain. He came to Tunsberg with a fleet of 360 ships in 1204, and Erling Steinvæg, Philip Simonsson, and the rest of the Bagler chieftains, true to their unpatriotic policy of former years, did homage to him as their overlord. Valdemar gave them thirty-five war vessels and returned to Denmark. This might have seriously endangered Norwegian independence, but Valdemar's wars with the Wends, and his campaigns in northern Germany, so completely absorbed his attention that he took no steps to maintain his supremacy over any part of Norway. Guttorm Sigurdsson died in August, and, as the Birkebeiner would not recognize Erling Steinvæg, a new king had to be chosen. A posthumous son, Haakon,

had in the meantime been born to Haakon Sverresson by Inga of Varteig, probably in the month of June, but this was not yet known, and the choice fell on Inge Baardsson, a son of King Sverre's sister Cecilia. His half-brother, Haakon Galin, was made jarl and commander of the army, and one-half of the royal income should fall to him.<sup>1</sup>

The struggle between the Birkebeiner and the Bagler was renewed. The Birkebeiner, who had Sverre's fleet, were the stronger party, but they nevertheless suffered heavy losses. In 1206 the Bagler surprised and took Trondhjem, and captured their whole fleet. Many of the leading Birkebeiner fell, and King Inge Baardsson barely escaped being taken prisoner. When Erling Steinvæg died at Christmas time, 1206-1207, Philip Simonsson was proclaimed king by the Bagler. They captured Bergen twice and destroyed the Sverreborg; but their campaigns were mere raids, undertaken at favorable moments, when the Birkebeiner were stationed in other parts of the country. After years of bloodshed and destruction of property neither side had any signal advantage to its credit. Both parties finally tired of this bloody feud, in which both were losers, and a peace was concluded in the summer of 1208 at Hvittingsey. Philip received Viken as a fief, for which he did homage to Inge Baardsson as his overlord, and Ranrike was placed directly under King Inge. Thereby the independence and integrity of Norway was assured. Nothing seems to have been said about what title Philip was to bear, but he retained his royal seal, and continued to call himself King Philippus. He received Sverre's daughter Christina in marriage, and their wedding was celebrated in Oslo in 1209.

When the civil wars had been terminated by the peace of 1208, friendly relations were established with Denmark, and both parties

<sup>1</sup> The chief sources for this period are the *Saga of the Three Kings*, or the *Boglungasögur*, and the *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, written by Sturla Thordsson. The *Saga of the Three Kings* (Haakon Sverresson, Guttorm Sigurdsson, and Inge Baardsson) is found in two editions: a longer version, found only in translation by Peter Claussøn Friis, from 1633, and a briefer version dealing with the period 1202-1210. The short version is only an epitome of the more complete version, which has been written by a well-informed Icelandic belonging to the Bagler party. These sagas are found in translation by P. A. Munch, *Norges Kongesagaer fra de ældste Tider, etc.*, edited and continued by O. Rygh, vol. II., Christiania, 1871.

united in an expedition to the Orkneys, where Jarl Harald Madadsson had made himself independent, and had reëstablished his authority over the Shetland Islands. His sons David and Jón, who were now jarls, submitted without resistance, and they were allowed to retain the Orkneys on the condition that a great part of their income was granted the king of Norway. King Ragnvald Gudrødsson of Man and the Hebrides, who had thrown off all allegiance, was also forced to submit. He went to Norway, swore fealty to King Inge, and promised to pay tribute.

Such military expeditions furnished a welcome employment for the hosts of idle warriors who would have been a source of disturbance and danger in a period of peace. After the expedition returned from the Orkneys, many went on a crusade to Palestine under the leadership of the Bagler chieftain Reidar Sendemand, and Peter Steyper, a nephew of King Sverre. Steyper died on the way, but Reidar reached the Holy Land. Later he entered the service of the Emperor at Constantinople, where he died in 1214. During the last years of his pontificate Pope Innocent III. preached another general crusade in all the countries of western Europe. Many leading men in Norway took the cross, and King Inge, who was too ill to leave home, promised to send ships and warriors to aid the crusaders, but he died in Trondhjem, April 23, 1217, before the fifth crusade had commenced.

#### 65. KING HAAKON HAAKONSSON AND SKULE JARL

King Haakon Haakonsson came from the unknown like his great predecessors Olav Tryggvason, Olav the Saint, and Sverre Sigurdsson. He was an illegitimate child, born in obscurity by Inga of Varteig after King Haakon Sverresson's death. Had he fallen into the hands of King Sverre's old enemies, his history would, probably, have been short, but the faithful Birkebeiner guarded the child against the plotting Bagler chieftains. The "Haakon Haakonsson's Saga" gives the following account of Haakon's early years: "Thronð Priest knew that Haakon Sverresson was the child's father. He baptized it and kept this so secret that he did not dare to let any one bring it to the baptism, save his two sons and his wife.



He reared the child in secrecy. There was a man called Erlend of Husabø, a relative of King Sverre, of Guttorm Graabarde's family. Thronð Priest sought Erlend, and spoke to him about the child, and they agreed that it had to be kept hidden as well as possible. The first year the child stayed with Thronð Priest; but the next winter before Christmas Thronð and Erlend made ready to go northward from Borgarsyssel, and they took the prince and his mother with them. They went with the greatest possible secrecy to Oplandene. On Christmas eve they came to the city of Hamar, in Hedemarken, where there were two Birkebein *sysselmænd*, Fredrik Slaffe and Gjavalð Gaute. They had a large number of men, and were much afraid because the Bagler were round about in Oplandene. Bishop Ivar was in Hamar at the time, and he was then as always a bitter enemy of Sverre's family and of all the Birkebeiner. However secretly they went with the child, the bishop soon learned that a king's son had come to the city. The bishop then invited the prince and his mother to stay with him during Christmas, saying, as in sooth was the case, that the prince was his relative. But the Birkebeiner did not trust him, and answered, saying that the king's son should come to him after Christmas, that both he and his mother were now too tired from the journey to stay where so many people were assembled. But as soon as Christmas day was over, the *sysselmænd* took three horses, and brought the prince and his mother away from the city. They did not stop until they came to Lillehammer, where they remained on a little farm in the greatest secrecy till after Christmas. During Christmas the Birkebeiner sent word to Toten and all neighboring districts, and summoned all the Birkebeiner to meet them. After Christmas they left Hamar and came to Lillehammer, and took the prince and his mother with them, and went to Østerdalen, whence they would go to Trondhjem. On this journey they suffered much from cold, snow, and bad weather; at times they had to spend the night in forests and in uninhabited wilds. One evening the weather became so bad that they did not know where they were. They then sent Thorstein Skevla and Skervald Skrukka, two of the best ski-runners, in advance with the prince; they got two men who were well acquainted with the locality to act as guides. They traveled as fast as they could, but

did not find the way to the settlements; they came then to some out-farm sheds, made fire, and prepared a bed there for the child. Later the guides returned to find the others, and they came back to the sheds about midnight. It was uncomfortable to stay there, for it was dripping everywhere when the snow was melted by the fire, and most of them thought they might as well stay outside as inside. They had no other food for the child than snow, which they melted and poured into its mouth. The place where they stayed was called Navardal. Afterwards walking became so difficult that they could not break a path through the snow otherwise than by pounding it down with their spear-handles. In Østerdal the people helped them in every way; wherever they came they lent them horses, and guided them on the road.

“Thoughtful men have said that the troubles and difficulties which the Birkebeiner encountered on this journey, and the fear they also had for their enemies until they came to Trondhjem with the prince, could best be compared with the dangers to which Olav Tryggvason and his mother Astrid were exposed when they fled from Norway to Svitiod from Gunhild and her sons.”<sup>1</sup> The Birkebeiner brought Haakon to Trondhjem to King Inge Baardsson, who reared him, and acknowledged him to be the son of Haakon Sverresson, and rightful heir to the throne. Among Sverre’s old veterans the boy was a great favorite. “He was very lively, though small, and young in years; he was very mature in his speech, so that the jarl and all who knew him had great fun over his comical sayings. Often two of the Birkebeiner took him, one by the head and the other by the feet, and stretched him in fun, saying that this would make him grow; for it seemed to them that he was growing too slowly.”

When King Inge died, the ambitious Skule Baardsson, his brother, openly aspired to the throne, although he supported for a time King Inge’s eleven-year-old son Guttorm. But the Birkebeiner, led by Vegard af Veradal, a prominent man within the *hird*, rallied around Sverre’s young grandson Haakon Haakonsson, who proved to be a more popular candidate. Skule pretended to doubt Haakon’s royal descent. He sought the support of the clergy, reaffirmed

<sup>1</sup> *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, ch. 3.

the constitution of 1164, which excluded illegitimate sons from the throne, and sought to prevent the choice of a king as long as possible. Haakon's supporters grew impatient. The *hird* assembled under Vegard's leadership, and demanded that Haakon should be proclaimed king without further delay. A letter was also brought from the Gulathingslag by the Birkebein chieftain, Dagfinn Bonde, stating that if the Trønders hesitated to proclaim Haakon king, who was the rightful heir to the throne, they would immediately hail him as king at the Gulathing. The Ørething was then assembled, and Haakon was proclaimed king of Norway, 1217, at the age of thirteen. Accompanied by Skule Jarl, Haakon then went to Bergen, where he was also hailed as king. It was decided that Skule should receive one third of all the royal revenues, but he was jealous and dissatisfied. He plotted with the Bagler, persuaded King Philippus in Viken to demand one-half of the revenues of the kingdom, and without Haakon's knowledge and consent he used the royal seal, which was still in his possession. Archbishop Guttorm and the bishops would not acknowledge Haakon before he had given better proof of his royal birth, and the matter was referred to a council of magnates which was assembled at Bergen in 1218, where the archbishop, bishops, and *lendermænd* were present. Inga of Var-teig had to submit to trial by ordeal to prove that Haakon was the son of Haakon Sverresson. She passed the ordeal successfully, and Haakon's elevation to the throne was sanctioned by the council; the archbishop and the clergy acknowledged him the lawful king of Norway, and Skule Jarl could no longer resist with any show of right. The king granted favors without partiality to the leaders of all groups, and the Bagler now disappeared as a distinct party. In 1218 a new rebel band, the Slitungs, had assembled in the border district of Marker, and had chosen as their leader a pretender by the name of Bene, or Benedict. They caused great disturbance in many districts, but were finally dispersed by the united forces of the Bagler and Birkebeiner. The Ribbungs, who appeared later, were more powerful, and their leader, Sigurd Ribbung, who claimed to be a grandson of Magnus Erlingsson, carried on a guerrilla warfare in the southeastern districts for many years. They did not disappear until 1227, after Sigurd Ribbung's death. In order to



establish a more permanent friendship between the king and Skule Jarl, Haakon was betrothed to Skule's daughter Margaret in 1219, but she was at that time only nine or ten years of age, and their marriage was not solemnized till 1225. The new distinction of being the king's father-in-law flattered the ambitious jarl, and for a time he seems to have been well disposed towards King Haakon. It must have been evident even to Skule Jarl that it would be impossible at that moment to organize a successful revolt against the popular grandson of King Sverre. The whole nation was weary of the endless feuds between rival pretenders, and longed to bind up their many wounds. With intuitive foresight, born of secret but earnest longing, they were soon able to prognosticate that Haakon Haakonsson would inaugurate a new era of peace, towards which many looked as to a promised land after many generations of bloody civil strife. The martial notes died away in song and saga, and the writers tell us with rejoicing how Haakon's peaceful and benign reign made the land blossom, and nature grow suddenly fruitful as if awakened by a new impulse. "When Haakon was made king it was such a good year in the land that it was general that fruit-trees blossomed two times, and that the birds laid eggs twice," says the saga.<sup>1</sup> The scald Sturla Thordsson says in a song about King Haakon: "It is certain that twice blossomed the fruit-trees in one summer, and that from the beginning of the year wild birds laid eggs twice without suffering from cold, when the ruler, desirous of glory, had taken the name of king, and his good fortune, destined to reach the highest fame, began to grow.

"Saw, then, all that the elements on the wide ocean-encircled earth would welcome the noble king."

All might now have been well, but ambition gave Skule Jarl no rest. It stole the contentment from his heart, and filled his mind with treasonable thoughts. In 1223 he went to Denmark to visit King Valdemar the Victorious, who was at that time the most powerful monarch in the North. It seems to have been his plan to make himself king of southern Norway by Valdemar's aid, and to acknowledge him as his overlord. But Valdemar had been taken prisoner

<sup>1</sup> *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, ch. 28 (25). *Det norske Oldskriftselskabs Samlinger*, xv., *Konungasögur*, edited by C. R. Unger.

by one of his own vassals, Henry of Schwerin, and Skule had to resort to his old method of intriguing against Haakon. In 1223 the king would be of age (eighteen years old); Skule could no longer act as his guardian, and the last remnant of royal power would slip from his hands. He had not abandoned his claim to the throne, and his attitude grew more hostile as the time approached when Haakon would hold the reins of power, but even under these circumstances Haakon showed the wise moderation which distinguished him throughout his whole reign. No one could justly question his title to the throne, but he, nevertheless, summoned a council to meet at Bergen on Olavmas, July 29, 1223, where all pretenders should meet and have their claims carefully examined. A greater meeting of notables had never assembled in Norway. Beside the king sat the *lendermænd*, *sysselmænd*, and *lagmænd* from the whole kingdom; the archbishop, the bishops, and many other ecclesiastics. The Orkneys were represented by Jarl Jón and Bishop Bjarne, the Faroe Islands by Bishop Sørkve, and the Shetland Islands by Archdeacon Nicolas, and the royal *sysselman* Gregorius Kik, who was married to King Sverre's daughter Cecilia. The pretenders present were: Skule Jarl, Guttorm, son of Inge Baardsson, Sigurd Ribbung, and Junker Knut, son of Haakon Galin, and a nephew of King Sverre. After all claims had been carefully examined, the *lagmænd* declared that Haakon Haakonsson was the rightful heir to the throne, and the archbishop solemnly proclaimed him the lawful king of Norway. Skule was to rule over one-third of the kingdom, but had to swear fealty to the king. He received Trøndelagen, Haalogaland, Nordmør, Romsdal, and Søndmør. In these northern districts where the people were very loyal to King Sverre's family, he would find small opportunity to secure aid from Denmark if he should venture to attempt an uprising against the king.

In the opinion of posterity as well as in the eyes of his own times Haakon Haakonsson was a truly great king, who ruled with wisdom and carried himself with dignity. In his day Norway reached the zenith of her power. The great activity in literature and architecture, the splendor of his court, and the high honor which he enjoyed among the crowned heads of Europe made his reign the Augustan Age in Norwegian history. King Haakon was rather short of

stature, says the saga, but he was well-built and broad-shouldered. In appearance he resembled King Sverre. He had a broad face and fair complexion, fine hair and large, beautiful eyes. He was cheerful, quick, and lively; always kind to those who were poor and in distress. "Wise men who were sent to him from other rulers said that they had seen no prince who seemed to be more truly both companion, king, and lord." We notice in King Haakon a quiet dignity and calm judgment coupled with magnanimity and rare mental equipoise. He adhered firmly to the policy inaugurated by Sverre, but his statesmanship was broad-minded and clear-sighted. Though firm in principles, he was generous and conciliatory in minor matters. He reconciled and united all factions, built, legislated, and improved; and rounded into completion the work of his great predecessors Harald Haarfagre, Olav Tryggvason, St. Olav, and King Sverre. Even his family life was an ideal one. In 1225 he married Skule Jarl's daughter, Margaret, who was then about seventeen. She was a most affectionate wife, and clung to her husband with the greatest tenderness even when her father turned traitor and became Haakon's implacable enemy. The feeling that he held the throne by unclouded title, and ruled a prosperous and united people by their full consent and undivided support, gave Haakon a confidence, and threw about his life and reign a halo of harmony and dignified repose to which Skule's ill-starred career, torn by unsatiated ambition and treasonable plots, forms a most tragic contrast. Unable to remain satisfied within his proper sphere, though the magnanimous king granted him the greatest honors, knowing that he could not openly gain the throne to which he had no title, Skule's heart was torn by doubt; he hatched plots, used underhand means, tried finally open revolt, and paid for it all by yielding his life to his pursuers in a last obscure retreat.

In the fight between the Ghibellines and the Welfs, the kings of Denmark supported the latter, as they feared the German Emperor, who attempted to make their kingdom a vassal state under the imperial crown. But the Danes in turn sought to establish an overlordship over Norway, or its southern provinces, and, as Skule Jarl solicited King Valdemar's aid in his ill concealed efforts to obtain the crown, King Haakon endeavored to counteract this move by



entering into closer relations with the Ghibelline Emperor Frederick II. of Germany, the most powerful monarch in Europe at that time. Frederick sent ambassadors to Norway; Haakon called the Emperor his friend, and it is quite apparent that he counted on his support if Valdemar and Skule Jarl should venture to attack him. He also entered into friendly relations with Henry III. of England, and an agreement was made by which restrictions on trade between the two kingdoms were removed.<sup>1</sup>

After Haakon had taken the reins of government into his own hands, he had to devote much time and energy for several years to put down the Ribbung uprising. When Sigurd Ribbung died in 1226, Junker Knut became the leader of these rebels. They had always received aid from the border provinces in Sweden, and Knut's mother, Christina, who was married to *lagmand* Eskil, in Vester-götland, aided her son liberally; but Haakon pushed the campaigns against him with such vigor that Knut submitted, and disbanded the Ribbungs in 1227. Haakon now returned from Oslo to Bergen. Near Lindesness he met Skule Jarl, who was on his way to Denmark with many large ships to aid Valdemar the Victorious. The Danish king had regained his liberty, and was endeavoring to punish his rebellious vassals, and regain the territory which he had lost. Haakon did not upbraid Skule, though he met him on so suspicious an errand, but he could inform him that Valdemar had just suffered a crushing defeat at Bornhøved. Skule, who understood that he could accomplish nothing in Denmark under these circumstances, returned with Haakon to Bergen.

For some time the relations between the two were, seemingly, friendly, but Skule built a fleet of his own, and conducted himself in a way which awakened grave suspicion as to his loyalty. In 1233 he was summoned before a council at Bergen to answer to charges preferred against him, but he boldly denied every accusation, and no further action was taken in the matter.

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to the bailiffs of Lynn, dated Aug. 31, 1225, Henry III. instructs them to receive the Norwegian merchants in a friendly way, as he has granted the Norwegians permission to bring their wares to Lynn without hindrance for a period of three years. *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, vol. 19, 1, p. 128.

King Haakon still treated Skule with considerate regard, but the jarl's conduct became more and more openly disloyal, especially after an illegitimate son, Peter, was born to him. In 1235 he took a step which might have plunged the country into civil war. For a second time he was summoned before a council of magnates at Bergen to explain his conduct. He left Trondhjem with twenty warships, but spent the whole summer in Steinavaag, in Søndmør, and did not go to Bergen, though repeatedly requested to appear. The king finally sailed northward with a fleet of forty ships to meet him. Skule hesitated for a while. Some advised him to come to an understanding with the king, others appealed to his pride and whetted his jealousy. He followed the advice to which his nature inclined him, left his ships on Haakon's approach, and crossed the mountains into Opplandene and the southern provinces. In order to avoid an open conflict the king made him the offer that he could collect the royal revenues of the southern one-third of the kingdom if he would not begin hostilities until a peaceful settlement could be negotiated. This offer was accepted by Skule, who used the respite thus granted to organize a new band of rebels called "Varbelgs." After repeated efforts a reconciliation was again brought about between Haakon and Skule Jarl. A new division of territory was made by which Skule should have one-third of all the *sysler*, or administrative districts, in the kingdom, and at the Ørething in 1237 he was given the title of duke (hertug = dux). He received no additional power, but the new title must have been granted him as the greatest honor which could be bestowed upon a subject, as it had never before been used in Norway. But even this new honor could not long satisfy the ambitious jarl. The following year he took the decisive step. After collecting a large military force in Trøndelagen, and levying heavy taxes for its support, he assembled the Ørething, where he was proclaimed king of Norway. He took the oath on the shrine of St. Olav, which his son Peter and a few others had forcibly removed from the Christ church. In the opinion of many this desecration of the sanctuary was a rather inauspicious omen for the rebellion thus set on foot. Skule sought to prevent word from being sent to the king of the step which he had taken, but the news was brought King Haakon in Bergen on the night of the 15th of November by Grim Keikan,

one of his *hirdmænd*, who had succeeded in eluding the Varbelgs. The saga says: "There were not many with the king when he received this news. He sat a while silent and then said: 'God be praised that I now know the situation from this day on, for that which has now come to light has long been planned.' He went to the queen's lodging and asked to be admitted. Light was burning in her apartments, and some of her servants and maids were sleeping there. The king approached her bed where she was standing in a silk sleeping-gown. She threw a red cloak about her and greeted the king, and he returned her greeting cordially. She took a silk pillow and bade him be seated, but he declined. The queen then asked him if he had received any news. 'Nothing very important,' he said, 'but now there are two kings in Norway.' She said: 'Only one can be the rightful king, and that is you. God and St. Olav grant that it may always be thus!' The king then told her that her father had been proclaimed king at the Ørething. 'Things must still be better than that,' she said; 'believe it not, for God's sake, until you have received full assurance.' Then she burst into tears, and she could say no more. The king bade her be of good cheer, and said that she should not suffer for her father's conduct. Shortly afterwards he left; and as soon as day came, he caused mass to be said, and then summoned his counselors. Grim was present, and told them the news which he brought. It was then decided to send war-bulletins both north and south from Bergen, and call thither half the *almenning*." <sup>1</sup>

Skule Jarl sent his Varbelgs into many districts to burn and pillage. He left Trondhjem, and went to the southern provinces, where he gained some advantages over the king's *sysselmænd*, but Haakon soon arrived and defeated him in the battle of Oslo. With a few followers Skule fled northward to Trondhjem, but the city was soon taken by the royal forces, and his son Peter was killed. For some days Skule roamed about in the forests, not knowing what course to pursue. He finally sought refuge in the monastery of Elgesæter, but the angry Birkebeiner set fire to it, forced him to come out, and slew him, May 24, 1240. This was the closing episode of the civil wars. Skule had attempted rebellion in an age which would not

<sup>1</sup> *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, ch. 207.



be disturbed. The uprising did not prove dangerous, and Haakon treated with the greatest leniency all those who had taken part in the revolt.

#### 66. KING HAAKON'S CORONATION. COLONIAL AFFAIRS

King Haakon had long desired to be crowned, but because of his illegitimate birth, he had to obtain the Pope's dispensation, and so long as Skule Jarl lived, his efforts in this direction were frustrated. After Skule's death he renewed the negotiations regarding the coronation, and Pope Innocent IV., who ascended the throne of the popes in 1243, encouraged him by a most friendly attitude. Innocent had maintained with more than usual vigor the supremacy of the Pope, and as a result he soon quarrelled with Emperor Frederick II. In his struggle with this powerful monarch he felt the necessity of keeping on friendly terms with other princes. To gain Haakon's good-will he sent Cardinal William of Sabina as a legate to Norway to crown him. He also wrote a letter by which he removed all blemish with regard to King Haakon's birth, so that it should neither mar his royal dignity nor the right of his legitimate sons to inherit the crown.<sup>1</sup> When the cardinal arrived in Norway, he tried to persuade Haakon to acknowledge the overlordship of the Pope, but when the king refused, he did not urge the point. The coronation took place in Bergen with great ceremony July 29, 1247.<sup>2</sup> The ceremonies in connection with the coronation are vividly described by the author of the "Haakon Haakonssonssaga": "The Olavmas-eve was a Sunday. On the Olavsday mass was sung in the whole city, whereupon the people were summoned to the Christ church by the blowing of trumpets. Eighty *hirdmænd* in military attire cleared the way to the church. The royal procession was arranged thus: First came the *hirdmænd* who were to clear the way, two abreast; then the standard-bearers with standards, the *skutilsveinar* and the

<sup>1</sup> *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, I., 29.

<sup>2</sup> According to the *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, ch. 247, the bishops of Norway tried to force King Haakon Haakonsson to take the same oath which Magnus Erlingsson had taken when he was crowned in Bergen in 1164. This would have made Haakon, like Magnus Erlingsson, a helpless tool in the hands of the church. The statement is manifestly erroneous.

*sysselmænd* in fine attire, and the *lendermænd* with beautiful swords; thereupon came four *lendermænd* carrying aloft a table on which were placed the coronation robes and all the royal insignia; after them came Sigurd, the king's son, and Munaan Bishopsson carrying two silver scepters, one ornamented with a golden cross, and the other with a snake of gold; then came the younger King Haakon<sup>1</sup> with the crown, and Jarl Knut carrying the coronation sword. Archbishop Sigurd and two bishops escorted King Haakon. At the entrance to the royal residence the priests in procession met the king, and chanted the responsory: *Ecce mitto angelum meum*; after which they proceeded to the church. The cardinal with his clerks and two bishops stood by the church door, where they sang a song, whereupon they followed the king to the altar. Mass was then sung, and the coronation was carried out in the usual manner. After the mass the archbishop and the bishops followed the king to his residence in the same order as before, singing hymns in praise of God. The king took off the coronation robes, and put on the royal robes and insignia. The crown he wore the whole day. He then proceeded to the hall, where the royal banquet was prepared, together with all those who were to take part in it. The walls of the hall were hung with colored cloth, and cushions were placed there covered with pell and gold-inwoven silk. The seats were so arranged that the king sat by the north wall between the inner pillars. At his right sat the cardinal, the archbishop, the bishop of Bergen, and other bishops. On the right side, toward the sea, sat the abbots, the priors, the provosts, and other learned men. In the middle of the hall, over against the high-seat, was a second high-seat, where the younger King Haakon sat, together with Jarl Knut and Sigurd, the king's son; and many *lendermænd* sat on either side of them. On the king's left sat the queen, and next to her sat her mother, Ragnhild, then Christina and Cecilia, the king's daughters, Abbess Rangrid, the abbesses, and other ladies. Along the southern wall sat the king's *hird*. Two rows of tables extended along the middle of the hall from one end to the other. Outside of these sat the guests, also by two rows of tables. In all there were thirteen rows of tables

<sup>1</sup> King Haakon's son, Haakon, had received the title of king in 1240.

along the hall. The multitude, who did not find room inside, stayed in tents around the hall.”<sup>1</sup>

Cardinal William of Sabina spoke at the royal banquet of the impressions which he had received on his visit to Norway. He said: “God be praised that I have now fulfilled the errand which was given in my charge by my lord the Pope. Your king is now crowned, and honored more highly than any king in Norway before. God be praised, also, that I did not turn back on the way, as I was urged to do. I was told that I would find few people here, and if I found any, they would resemble animals in their conduct more than human beings. Now I see here a great assembly of the people of this country, and it appears to me that they show good manners. I see here so many men from foreign lands and such a multitude of ships that I have never seen a greater number in any harbor; and I believe that most of these ships have been laden with good things for this country. They scared me by saying that I would get little bread or other food, and what I would get would be of poor quality; but it seems to me that there is such an abundance of good things that both houses and ships are full. I was told that I would get nothing to drink here but water and diluted milk, but I see an abundance of all good things. God keep our king, the queen, the bishops, the learned men, and the whole people. He grant that my errand to this land may so terminate that it may be an honor to you, and a joy for us all both in this life and in the life to come.”

The council of magnates which had gathered in Bergen for the coronation found opportunity, also, to discuss many features of state and church polity, and by the aid of the cardinal many important reforms were carried through. The laws regarding the strict observance of Sunday and church holidays were modified. The cardinal found that the weather and the general environment had to be taken into due consideration, and that the people ought to be allowed to fish and to harvest their grain when there was an oppor-

<sup>1</sup> The *Haakon Haakonssonssaga* was written in the reign of King Haakon's son Magnus Lagabøter, at his request, and under the supervision of the king and the leading men of his court. Haakon's letters and the documents of the archives were placed at the disposal of the historian. The saga is based on reports given by the king himself and his contemporaries.



tunity, except on the principal holidays.<sup>1</sup> Trial by ordeal (*jernbyrd*) was abolished, "as the cardinal said that it was not proper for Christians to summon God as witness in human affairs." It is very probable that this reform was initiated by the king, who must have been as anxious as the cardinal to see this mode of trial abolished. His own mother, Inga of Varteig, had been forced to submit to ordeal to prove his royal descent, and many bold pretenders had, by means of it, made good their claim to the throne. Those who rebelled against the king should be punished by excommunication. The queen was granted the right of advowson over three royal chapels which the king had built, and also over missionary churches built on the border of the kingdom for the conversion of the heathens.<sup>2</sup> This was an important concession, since the priests of these churches would stand under direct supervision of the king. The cardinal also adjusted many minor complaints of the people and the lower clergy against the bishops, and he finally issued a proclamation regarding the relation of church and state in Norway, or what he considered to be their relation. He said that he found the church in full and peaceful possession of separate jurisdiction in all ecclesiastical affairs, whosoever were the parties in the case, and over the clergy in all cases whatsoever. He also found that the church had full right of advowson, except in case of the royal chapels above mentioned; and, finally, that the election of bishops and prelates was made by the clergy according to the right granted them by the canon law, without interference of secular authority.<sup>3</sup> These rights were universally claimed by the Catholic Church at that time, but it is by no means clear that the church of Norway possessed them in

<sup>1</sup> In regard to herring fishery on Sunday a concession was granted in 1184 by Pope Alexander III. It is found in the *Frostathingslov*, ch. 26. "This is the relief and grace which Pope Alexander granted and confirmed about herring fishery in Norway; that herring may be caught at any time when it approaches the shores, except on the principal holidays." These days are then enumerated. <sup>2</sup> *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, I., no. 37.

<sup>3</sup> See Keyser, *Den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, p. 382. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., p. 36 ff.

The cardinal's document, both in the original Latin text and in Norse translation, is found in *Norges gamle Love*, vol. I., p. 450. The translator has greatly modified the expressions of the original, probably because he found that they exceeded the truth.

the degree here stated by the cardinal. King Sverre, and likewise his successors, maintained the right of the king to sanction the choice of bishops. The bishop-elect had to be presented to the king, who in this way exercised great influence on the election. As to the right of advowson there was much dispute, and the old Norse church laws recognized no ecclesiastical courts. Keyser thinks that the proclamation was a secret document placed by the cardinal in the hands of the bishops, to be used at some future moment. After a generation or two it could be appealed to as an authority. To further please King Haakon the cardinal sent a letter to Iceland, requesting the Icelanders to acknowledge the overlordship of the king of Norway. He did this, also, because the Roman church did not recognize a republic as a legitimate government. Haakon immediately sent a governor, or *sysseľmand*, to Iceland to assert the king's authority over the island.

The Norse colonial empire, which had been founded in the Viking Age, was still intact. The colonies in Ireland and Normandy, as well as the settlements along the coast of Scotland, Wales, and northern England, were no longer Norse communities; but Man and the Hebrides, the Orkneys, the Faroe Islands, and the Shetland Islands were still Norse colonies; and Greenland and Iceland, though politically independent, were tied to the mother country as closely as ever before. Norway's commerce and her power at sea depended in a large measure on her colonial possessions, through which she still maintained an open highway of trade and communication with the countries of the West. The revenues directly obtained were often in arrears when measured with the cost of fitting out military expeditions to keep the chieftains in these island possessions in due submission, but the kings of Norway guarded the colonies, not only because they were felt to be in a sense a part of Norway, but because they never lost sight of their real importance.<sup>1</sup> The protracted civil

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Munch says: "It is a significant circumstance that from the moment when Norway lost the Sudreys (Hebrides), 1266, we note the beginning of the Hanseatic influence, the decay of national commerce, and the entering of Norway into the continental political system." *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. II., p. 529.

See also Alexander Bugge, *Handelen mellem England og Norge indtil Begyndelsen af det 15de Aarhundrede*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, tredje række, vol. IV.

wars had diverted the attention from affairs in the colonies, and tended to weaken the ties which bound them to the kingdom, but though their allegiance was severed at times, it was reëstablished quickly and without difficulty. A greater danger to Norse overlordship was the close proximity of many of these island groups to England and Scotland. That future development would lead to an absorption of these islands by the kingdoms to which they geographically belonged could not fail to be apprehended by foresighted statesmen.

In 1158 the kingdom of Man and the Hebrides was divided between King Gudrød and Sumarlide's son, Dugald. Ragnvald (Reginald) Gudrødsson, who succeeded his father in 1187, threw off all allegiance to Norway, but the expedition to the Orkneys and Hebrides in 1209-1210 forced Ragnvald and his son Gudrød to repair to Norway and offer their submission to King Inge Baardsson. Ragnvald took his oath of allegiance lightly. In 1219 he swore fealty to King Henry III. of England, and in obedience to a request made by the papal legate, Pandulf, he issued a document, dated September 1, 1219, by which he transferred the kingdom of Man to the church of Rome, and received it back as a fief from the Pope, promising to pay a yearly tribute of twelve marks Sterling.<sup>1</sup> The Pope formally accepted the gift May 23, 1223, and placed Ragnvald and his kingdom under the protection of St. Peter.

A war now broke out between Ragnvald and his brother Olav Svarte, whom he had imprisoned and ill-treated. Olav, who had regained his liberty, attacked Ragnvald with a fleet of thirty-two ships, and forced him to divide his kingdom with him. Ragnvald sought aid in Scotland, and Earl Alan of Galloway, the most powerful of the Scotch magnates, acting, as it appears, under the instructions of the energetic King Alexander II., came to his support. In the bloody conflict which ensued, Ragnvald lost his life, and Gudrød, who had been maimed and blinded by Olav, fled to Norway. But Alan made great preparations to attack Olav, and even threatened to attack Norway, saying, that it was no more difficult to go from Scotland to Norway than from Norway to Scotland, there being no less facility of finding ports or shelter for a fleet there than in

<sup>1</sup> *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, XIX., no. 123.



the firths of Scotland. It was clearly the plan of King Alexander II. to seize the islands, and Olav, who was unable to cope with so powerful an enemy, hastened to Norway to seek aid. When news was brought by fugitives of the situation in Man and the Hebrides, King Haakon took the matter in hand. Olav's most trusted lieutenant, Paul Baalkesson, had sought the support of Skule Jarl, and the king could not trust one party much more than the other. He therefore divided Ragnvald's possessions between Olav and Gudrød. Over the portion which had belonged to Sumarlide's son Dugald, he placed Uspak, Sumarlide's grandson, who was a veteran Birkebein chieftain in the king's service. He bestowed on him the title of king and gave him his own name, Haakon. When Olav arrived in Norway, a fleet of thirteen ships commanded by Uspak-Haakon was ready to sail to the colonies. Both Olav and Gudrød returned with the fleet, which in the Orkneys received reinforcements till it finally numbered eighty ships. They sailed past Cantire to Bute, where the Scots had strongly garrisoned Rothesay castle. The castle was taken, but the Norsemen lost 360 men. Uspak-Haakon was wounded, and died shortly afterwards. Olav, who succeeded him as commander of the fleet, sailed to Man and took possession of that island. The division of the islands between Olav and Gudrød was now consummated, and after Torquil Mac Dermot had been expelled from the island of Lewis (Ljodhus), the fleet returned to the Orkneys. Hostilities immediately broke out between the two kings in Man and the Hebrides. Gudrød was slain, and Olav seized the whole kingdom; but when the fleet returned to Norway, 1231, King Haakon thanked his men for what they had achieved. Norse sovereignty over these colonies had been maintained, and Alan of Galloway did not again attack Man or the Hebrides.

In the Orkneys there were also feuds between rival chieftains and hostile factions. Jón Jarl was killed, and his successor Magnus held Caithness as a fief from the king of Scotland. The Orkney jarls became more and more closely connected with Scotland and Scotch interests, and Caithness became the most important part of their possessions. The inhabitants, both in this province and in the Orkneys, were beginning to lose their Norse nationality. The number of Scotch settlers increased, and Scotch language and customs

were gaining ground; an indication that Norse influence in these colonies was waning.

## 67. CRUSADES AND CRUSADERS

In the summer of 1217 the fifth crusade began, and many chieftains from Norway took the cross and went to Palestine. Sigurd Kongsfrænde, a nephew of King Sverre, seems to have been the first to depart. He journeyed through Denmark to Germany, and joined the army of crusaders which assembled at Spalato under the leadership of King Andrew of Hungary. The army reached the Holy Land, but accomplished nothing of importance, and King Andrew led his forces back to Europe.

Erlend Thorbergsson and Roar Kongsfrænde, another nephew of King Sverre, sailed with two ships for Palestine. The saga says:<sup>1</sup> "The same summer that the king and the jarl were in Viken, Roar Kongsfrænde went to Jerusalem. He had a large and beautiful ship. With him went a man by name of Erlend Thorbergsson, who had another ship, which the townsmen had built at their own expense.<sup>2</sup> Roar's ship came to Acre, but the townsmen's ship reached even Darnat (Damietta in Egypt), and both were successful on this expedition."

Roar and Erlend joined the large fleet collected in Germany, Holland, Denmark, Scandinavia, and England, which sailed from the Netherlands in the spring of 1217. On the way they stopped in Portugal, where they captured the strong castle Alcazar from the Moors. The siege lasted until October, and they spent the winter in Lisbon. The next spring they sailed for the Levant, and joined the crusaders who were operating against Egypt. Damietta was taken in November, 1219, after a long siege in which the capture of the chain-tower was the most notable event. It is quite certain that the Norsemen played a prominent part in the capture of this stronghold, as they possessed great skill in that kind of warfare. Wilkens says that in order to capture this citadel a remarkable tower was constructed on two ships.<sup>3</sup> This corresponded to the *húnkastali*

<sup>1</sup> *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, ch. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Probably the people of Trondhjem.

<sup>3</sup> *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, vol. VI., p. 126, 127, 163-179, P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. III., p. 593 ff.

(*i.e. turris ambulatoria*) which the Norsemen were accustomed to construct when they attacked fortified cities. "The King's Mirror" gives an elaborate account of the weapons and tactics employed in sieges. The father says to his son :

"When one is to attack a castle with the weapons which have been mentioned, then he needs also to have catapults (*valsløngur*) along, both stronger and weaker ; the stronger to throw big stones against the walls, that they, perchance, may be made to fall by the great impact ; the weaker to throw stones over the walls to destroy the houses within the castle. But if the stone-walls can not be broken down or rent asunder by the catapults, one must try to use a machine called *veðr* (*i.e.* a battering-ram), covered in the end with iron ; few stone-walls can stand against it. But if the stone-wall should not be shaken apart or fall, then one can use, if he wishes, the *grafsvín*.<sup>1</sup> A tower built on wheels (*i.e. turris ambulatoria*) is also good to capture a castle with, if it is higher than the one which is to be taken, even if it is only seven ells, but it is better to take the castle with the higher it is. Ladders on wheels, which can be pulled back and forth, well covered with boards below, and with railings on both sides, are also good for this use. In short, all weapons are good in the taking of a castle, but one who wishes to take part must know just when to use each weapon.

"But those who defend a castle may use most of the weapons here mentioned and many others ; both big and small catapults (*valsløngur*), hand-slings, and stave-slings. Crossbows (*låsboði*) are also good weapons for them, and likewise all other bows, and other weapons to shoot with, lances and palstaves, both light and heavy. Against catapults and *grafsvín*, and against that which is called *veðr* (battering-ram) it is well to strengthen the walls inside with oak timbers, but if there is enough earth or clay, that is the best. Those who defend a castle make also great hurdles (*flaki*)<sup>2</sup> of big oak branches and cover the walls with three to five layers of them, but these hurdles should be well filled with sticky clay. Against the impact of the battering-ram they fill big sacks with hay and chaff, and lower them

<sup>1</sup> A musculus constructed of boards and hides to protect the men while they undermined the walls.

<sup>2</sup> Crates made of boards and branches, and filled with clay.



in light iron chains in front of the ram where it would strike the wall. There may be so much shooting that the men cannot stand in the embrasures (*vigskarð*), then it is well to make hanging embrasures of light hurdles; they should be two ells higher than the real embrasures of the castles, and three ells deeper, and they must hang so far from the wall that the men can use all kinds of weapons between the real embrasures of the castle and the hanging ones. They must also hang on light beams which they can pull back and shove out again whenever they wish. An *igulkqttr*<sup>1</sup> is also a good weapon for those who are to defend a castle; it must be made of big and heavy trees with oak spines along the back, like a brush; it is fastened outside the walls by the embrasures, and it is dropped on those who approach the castle. *Slagbrandar*, made of long, heavy trees, with sharp teeth of hard oak, are raised on end near the embrasures so that they may be dropped down on the men who approach the castle. A *brynklungr* (spider) is also a good weapon; it is made of good iron with bent teeth of steel, and on each tooth there is a barb. It must be so made that the ropes which are nearest to it, and higher than a man can reach, should be barbed iron chains so that they can neither cut them nor hold them fast. Above this point one may use any kind of rope, if it is strong enough. Such a contrivance is good to throw down among the men to try to grab some and pull them up.”<sup>2</sup>

The author mentions several other kinds of weapons together with hot water, and molten glass and lead, which may be thrown upon the besiegers; also a war-machine called *skjoldjqtun*, which spews out fire and flames. How this was constructed is not known, but it must have been a machine by which fire and hot objects were hurled at the enemy.

Even in earlier centuries the Vikings showed great engineering skill both in constructing and capturing fortified strongholds; and the high military science familiar to the author of “The King’s Mirror,” who wrote his work in Haakon Haakonsson’s reign, probably in 1250–1260, justifies the assumption that the Norse crusaders played an important part in the capture of the fortresses at Damietta and other places. When the Norsemen returned from the crusade is

<sup>1</sup> *Igulkqttr* = porcupine, so called because of its resemblance to this animal.

<sup>2</sup> *The King’s Mirror*, XXXIX.

not known, but the saga says that they came home in safety. The *lendermand* Gaut Jónsson returned from a crusade in 1218, and Agmund of Spaanheim, who made an expedition to the land of the Permians (O. N. Bjarmeland) and journeyed through Russia by way of Novgorod and the Black Sea, to Constantinople and Palestine, must also have taken part in the fifth crusade.

Haakon was a statesman of high rank. He showed, indeed, less originality than his grandfather, King Sverre, but he acted with greater moderation, and managed foreign as well as domestic affairs with such wisdom and firmness that he won for his kingdom high honor and great influence among the powers of Europe. He continued to strengthen his fleet, until Norway ranked all nations as a naval power; a circumstance which, together with the king's great reputation as a statesman and ruler, gave his kingdom an influence which can best be seen in the efforts of the crowned heads to gain his friendship. He took no part in the struggle between the Welfs and the Hohenstaufers (Guelfs and Ghibellines) in Germany, but remained a friend both of the Pope and the Emperor.

The throne of Germany was considered vacant by the church, since the Pope had declared Emperor Frederick to be deposed, and the cardinal was empowered by the Pope to offer King Haakon the imperial crown, an honor which Haakon had wisdom enough to decline. He seems also to have been interested in the crusading movement which was now drawing to a close. At this time the sixth crusade to the Holy Land was being prepared by St. Louis, king of France, as the quarrel between the Pope and the Emperor prevented the organization of a general crusade. Matthew Paris says that St. Louis invited Haakon to accompany him on the crusade, and offered him as "the powerful and experienced on the sea" the command of the whole French fleet.<sup>1</sup> Louis IX. sent Matthew Paris to Norway with a letter to the king,<sup>2</sup> but Haakon declined the honor. It seems that, although Haakon had pledged himself, probably in good faith, to embark on a crusade to the Holy Land, the

<sup>1</sup> *Chronica Majora* (London, 1877), IV., p. 651.

<sup>2</sup> The letter of Louis IX. to King Haakon, in which he invites him to take part in the crusade, and offers him the command of his whole fleet, is found in *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, 19, 1, p. 160.

Pope took no umbrage at his refusal to accompany King Louis ; and it is not strange that the king hesitated to leave his kingdom, and to spend his resources in distant lands at a moment when northern Europe was threatened by a grave danger. At the beginning of the thirteenth century the great Tartar conqueror Genghiz-Khan united the tribes of central Asia into a great empire. He subjugated China, Turkestan, India, and Persia ; and after his death his son Oktai continued the work of conquest and devastation. He sent his nephew Batu-Khan to subdue the countries of the West. In 1240 Kief was sacked, and Russia, Poland, and Hungary were soon overrun by their hordes ; but at Liegnitz in Silesia their further progress was checked by the Germans under Henry the Pious. Batu-Khan returned to Asia, but Europe was in great alarm. Many fugitives from Russia, especially Permians from the White Sea region, flocked into the districts on the Baltic Sea, and also into Finmarken, where King Haakon permitted them to settle.

The relations with the neighboring kingdoms, Sweden and Denmark, had not been good. Since the time of the Ribbung revolt the king of Sweden had maintained a hostile attitude, but Haakon finally succeeded in effecting a reconciliation. A treaty was concluded between the two kingdoms, and the bond of friendship was further strengthened by the marriage of Crown Prince Haakon to Rikitz, the daughter of Birger Jarl of Sweden.

Denmark had also been unfriendly since the time of Valdemar the Victorious, and sharp commercial competition aggravated the situation. For some time Haakon tried in vain to arrange a peaceful settlement ; the growing enmity culminated in open hostilities, and Haakon sailed with a strong fleet to Copenhagen. A more serious clash was averted, however, by timely concessions made by the Danish king, and a treaty of peace was signed in 1257. During these troubles the crown prince, Haakon the Younger,<sup>1</sup> died, and his brother Magnus succeeded him as heir apparent to the throne. In 1261 his marriage to Ingebjørg, the daughter of the king of Denmark, was celebrated at Bergen. After the wedding festivities King Haakon caused Magnus to be proclaimed king, and the young

<sup>1</sup> In the sagas King Haakon is generally called Haakon the Old, to distinguish him from his son, Haakon the Younger.



royal pair were crowned with elaborate ceremonies. With England Haakon maintained very friendly relations, and King Alfonso X., the Wise, of Castile sought to gain his friendship and support. He sent an embassy to Norway to bring about the marriage of Haakon's daughter Christina to his son Don Philip. Christina was escorted to Spain, and the wedding was celebrated at Valladolid. An alliance was formed between the two kings, in which it was stipulated, however, that Haakon should not be asked to aid Castile against England, Sweden, or Denmark; nor should Alfonso X. be requested to help Haakon against Aragon or France.

King Haakon's life and reign reflect the high ideals, the Christian character, and true religious sentiment which gave his public acts, and all his measures of social and legal reform a mark of moderation and good-will. He held firmly to the principle that the king was the highest authority in church as well as in state, and placed himself squarely against every attempt to place new restrictions on the royal authority. But he had a high regard for the church. He adopted the measures which it advocated, when he found them to be just and beneficial; he dealt conscientiously with all ecclesiastical matters, and it was said to his praise that no king since St. Olav had done so much to further Christianity in Norway. He accepted in part the plan so long advocated by the clergy regarding the succession. He adhered firmly to the principle that Norway should be an hereditary kingdom, but he recognized the expedience and wisdom of excluding illegitimate sons from the throne, so far as this could be done without endangering the hereditary principle. The new law of succession given at the Frostathing in 1260 makes the provision that "the one shall be king of Norway who is the king's oldest legitimate son, odel-born to realm and thanes; but if there is no legitimate son, then the king's son shall be king even if he is not legitimate, and if there is no son, then the one shall be king who is odel-born, nearest in inheritance, and of the royal family."<sup>1</sup> It was established, then, by this law that Norway in the future should be an undivided kingdom with a single king. In the succession preference was given to the king's oldest legitimate son, but in order to preserve the strict principle of an hereditary monarchy, illegitimate

<sup>1</sup> *Hákonarbók, Norges gamle Love*, vol. I., p. 263.

sons, or other members of the royal family, might succeed to the throne.

The king retained the old right of legislating for the church, and the code of church laws in the "Frostathingslov" was prepared under his supervision.<sup>1</sup> This code was more in harmony with the canon law than the older church laws, and Haakon enforced it throughout the whole kingdom. The relation between the king and the church was thereby made clear. Since the king could make and amend the laws of the church, and since no ecclesiastical courts existed, but all cases had to be tried in the secular courts, where the king's *lagmand* declared and interpreted the laws, the Church of Norway was a state church, subject to the authority of the king and the laws of the realm.

King Haakon's legal reforms and his revision of the old codes of law was a work of the greatest importance. The change which had taken place in social conditions and in the moral and religious spirit of the nation made many of the old laws seem antiquated and even adverse in spirit to the prevailing public sentiment. It seems to have been Haakon's aim to revise the old laws both in church and state so as to bring them into harmony with the more enlightened conception of justice. In 1244 he published an amended edition of the "Frostathingslov" together with a code of church laws (*kristenret*) which seems to have been written by Archbishop Sigurd Eindridesson of Trondhjem with the advice and sanction of the king.<sup>2</sup> In 1260, a new revision of the "Frostathingslov" appeared together with many new laws placing restrictions on feuds and the execution of personal vengeance. Hitherto the friends and relatives of a person killed

<sup>1</sup> An old law from the reign of King Magnus Eiriksson, of September 14, 1327, mentions this code "which the worthy Lord Haakon the Old and Archbishop Sigurd of Nidaros established with the advice and consent of the worthiest men." *Norges gamle Love*, vol. III., p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> Konrad Maurer says that the publication of these church laws must be placed in the year 1244 for weighty reasons, "and as no other date of publication can be assigned for the other parts of the code, it must be assumed that Haakon in this year revised the whole law (Frostathingslov) and divided it into sixteen books, and that with the advice of Archbishop Sigurd he has caused the church laws to be revised." *Udsigt over de nordgermanske Retskilders Historie*, p. 28. See also P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., p. 110 ff.

might proceed, not only against the slayer himself, but against his whole family, and instead of having recourse to legal justice, they often sought satisfaction for the injury by killing a near relative of the slayer. This often led to protracted and bloody feuds, which brought sorrow and suffering in their trail. This evil custom could not be abolished at once, but Haakon established the principle that the wrongdoer alone could be punished for his crime, a fundamental element of legal justice, which, when once recognized, would form a new foundation for criminal jurisprudence.

## 68. THE ANNEXATION OF ICELAND AND GREENLAND

After the completion of the colonization of Iceland, after a system of laws and government had been established, and Christianity had been acknowledged to be the state religion, the throes of organization were over, and the people enjoyed a period of peaceful development, which may be said to have lasted from about 1000 till 1150. By the adoption of the laws of Ulvljot in 930 the new state received its constitution. The Althing and the *fjórðungsthings* were organized, and the local *thing* districts were limited to twelve; each with three *goder*, except in the northern district, or *fjórðung*, where there were four *thing* districts, making in all thirty-nine *godord* in Iceland. In 1004 a supreme court of appeal, the *fimtardómr*, was created in connection with the Althing to decide cases which could not be settled at the *fjórðungsthings*, and twelve new *goder* were created to sit in this tribunal. The *fimtardómr* should consist of nine *goder* from each of the four districts (*fjórðungar*) and the twelve new *goder*, in all forty-eight; but as the prosecution could discard six and the defense six, only thirty-six rendered the decision. This new tribunal proved to be very beneficial. The resorting to duels (*holmgang*) in settling disputes had become very common, but after the creation of the *fimtardómr* duels were abolished in Iceland, 1006. In 1022 the relations between Iceland and the mother country were definitely established by the agreement known as the "Institutions and Laws which St. Olav gave the Icelanders." We have already seen that by this agreement a quasi Norwegian citizenship, which, indeed, they had enjoyed since Harald Haarfagre's reign, was granted the Ice-



landers; *i.e.* the right of *odel*, the right to join the king's *hird*, to bring suits before the *thing*, to cut wood and timber, to inherit property, and to trade and traffic in Norway. In return for these privileges they had to pay a small tax, *landþre*, and of those who happened to stay in Norway in time of war, two of every three had to do military service. The intellectual, no less than the economic and commercial relations, tended to strengthen the bonds between the colony and the mother country. Every year ships from Iceland entered the harbors of Norway to carry back the wares needed at home, but still stronger were the ties knit by common religious and literary interests, a common language, and intimate intercourse in the fields of intellectual activity, which nursed strong the feeling that the people of the two countries were one nation. Christianity had been introduced in Iceland by Norwegian missionaries, sent by the Norwegian kings, and the two bishoprics in the island were joined to the archdiocese of Nidaros. In Iceland saga literature and scaldic poetry flourished as nowhere else in the North, but most of the Icelandic scalds and sagamen stayed in Norway, where they found welcome, honor, and reward at the king's court. The Icelanders felt as keenly as did any Norseman at home that the king of Norway and his court were the center of Norse intellectual and national life, and the embodiment of the strength and unity of the Norse nation. Of this they have given ample proof in their songs and sagas about the kings of Norway. But the old love of freedom and local autonomy was also kept alive in the aristocratic republic of Iceland, and their political independence was lost only after internecine strife had paralyzed law and government, and created unbearable conditions which made a strong central government a paramount necessity. Two principal defects in the political institutions of Iceland, the alienability of the *godord*, and the absence of a central government, led gradually to the disappearance of popular government and the destruction of law and order. The thirty-nine *goder* of the minor *thing* districts were, besides the *lovsigemand*, the only officials in the Icelandic state.<sup>1</sup> Their office (*godord*) was hereditary; they were the wealthiest and most influential and powerful men in their com-

<sup>1</sup> The twelve new *goder* created for the *fimtardómr* had no duties or powers except in connection with this tribunal.

munity, and usually kept a band of forty to sixty armed followers. They had charge of the local administration, and were to maintain law and order in their communities; they sat in the *lagrette*, where they exercised all legislative power, and they also appointed the judges, who performed the judicial functions at the various *things*. The *lagmand* and the *goder* had to attend the Althing, and the *bønder* (farmers) who had a small amount of property were also required to attend. It is clear that the *goder*, who had well-nigh all the powers of government, were the pillars of the state. The more pernicious was the right which they possessed of alienating their office and of placing it in the hands of grasping and ambitious chieftains. Rival families gathered into their possession one *godord* after another, until a few powerful chieftains had usurped all political power, and ruled with sovereign power, each in his own district.<sup>1</sup> As no central government existed, their private feuds developed into a permanent state of civil war. They brought armies in the field, and fought pitched battles; houses were burned and property destroyed; the laws were a dead letter, since they could not be enforced. In 1217 a powerful family, the Oddaverjer, in southern Iceland, felt themselves offended by the Norwegian merchants, and attacked and plundered some Norwegian merchant vessels. The Sturlungs sided with the merchants, and killed many of the Oddaverjer. The news of these disturbances was brought to Norway by the great saga writer Snorre Sturlason, who had to promise King Haakon to use his influence to bring Iceland under Norwegian overlordship. He was made *lendermand*, and returned to Iceland, but he did not seem very eager to fulfill his promise, and as his countrymen resisted all attempts of that kind, nothing was accomplished. The struggle between the Icelandic chieftains continued. Snorre Sturlason's brother, Sighvat Sturlason, and his son Sturla Sighvatsson became very prominent in the century 1160-1262, which is also called the Sturlung period. Sturla forced Snorre and his son Urøkja to leave Iceland, but his arrogance so angered the other chieftains that they combined against

<sup>1</sup> Konrad Maurer, *Island von seiner ersten Entdeckung bis zum Untergang des Freistaates*. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*. R. Keyser, *Norges Historie*, vol. II. Salmonsens, *Konversations-Leksikon*; "Island," "Althing," "Gode."

the Sturlungs, and defeated and killed both Sturla and his father in the battle of Örlygsstad, in 1238.<sup>1</sup>

Snorre and his son had repaired to Norway to the court of Skule Jarl, and when they heard that Sturla was dead, they made ready to return to Iceland. King Haakon had sent Snorre a message requesting him not to leave before he could make some arrangements with him regarding Iceland, but Snorre paid no heed, and departed without seeing the king. After Skule Jarl's death Haakon instructed the Icelandic chieftain Gissur Thorvaldsson to send Snorre to Norway, or else to kill him. Gissur had been married to Snorre's daughter, but had parted from her, and he and his father-in-law were bitter enemies. He marched with an armed band to Snorre's home, Reykholt, in Borgarfjord, and killed the great saga writer, who was then sixty-three years old (1241). Snorre was a great historian, but his contemporaries describe him as self-seeking and treacherous.

When King Haakon found that he could accomplish nothing in Iceland by the aid of the chieftains, he decided to strengthen his influence in the island by the assistance of the clergy. The bishops of Iceland had hitherto been chosen by the clergy and the people, but as this was contrary to the canon law, Haakon got the right of election transferred to the Archbishop of Nidaros and the cathedral chapter. By 1238 Norwegian ecclesiastics had been made bishops in Iceland, and they naturally sought to strengthen the hold of Norway in the island. While the bloody feuds continued unabated, Haakon summoned two of the leading chieftains, Thord Kakale and Gissur Thorvaldsson, to Norway and retained them there for some time. In 1255 he sent one of his own men, Ivar Englessen, to Iceland, who, by the aid of Bishop Henrik of Hólar, succeeded in getting the people of the northern districts to submit to the king. In 1258 Haakon made Gissur Thorvaldsson jarl, and permitted him to return to Iceland after he had solemnly promised to bring the whole island into submission. Gissur did not act with much energy in the matter, and in 1261 the king sent Halvard Guldsko to Iceland. Through his

<sup>1</sup> The principal source for the history of Iceland during the Sturlung period is the *Sturlungasaga*, written in Iceland about 1300. This is not a family saga, but an historical work dealing with the affairs of Iceland during this period. See also *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*.



efforts all the people of Iceland, save the eastern districts, were persuaded to take the oath of allegiance, and to acknowledge themselves subjects of the king of Norway. A compact was made between the king and the people of Iceland stipulating what rights and privileges they were to enjoy. According to this compact they were to pay taxes to the king. They should keep their own laws, and they could not be summoned before a court outside of their own country. Six ships should sail from Norway to Iceland every year; the *landþre* tax should be abolished, the *lovsigemand* and the *sysselmænd* should be Icelanders, and the island should be governed by a jarl appointed by the king.<sup>1</sup> In 1264 the people of the eastern districts also tendered their submission to King Haakon. In 1261 Greenland had formally placed itself under the king of Norway. The "Haakon Haakonssons-saga" says: "That fall Odd of Sjalte, Paul Magnusson, and Knarrar-Leiv came from Greenland. They had been gone four winters. They said that the Greenlanders had resolved to pay the king taxes as well as fines for manslaughter, whether the person killed was a Norseman or a Greenlander, and whether the murder happened in the settlements or in Norðrsetur, so that the king now received wergeld as far north as under the polar-star."

#### 69. HAAKON HAAKONSSON'S EXPEDITION TO THE HEBRIDES. THE CLOSE OF HIS REIGN

King Alexander II. of Scotland had manifested great desire to gain possession of the Hebrides. He was even on the point of beginning a war for this purpose, when he suddenly died in 1249. His son, Alexander III., was then a mere child, and a regency was appointed to rule during his minority. The kings of Man and the Hebrides were loyal to King Haakon, and for a time no danger seemed to threaten the colonial possessions; but when Alexander III. became old enough to control the affairs of government, he revived his father's plan of joining the Hebrides to the Scotch kingdom. In 1261 he sent two envoys to Norway, as it appears, for the purpose of persuading King Haakon to cede the islands, but the attempt was unsuccessful. In the summer of the following year news was

<sup>1</sup> *Norges gamle Love*, vol. I., p. 460.

brought to Norway that William Earl of Ross, together with many other Scotch chieftains, had attacked the island of Skye, and harried it most cruelly, the report adding that it was King Alexander's intention to conquer all the isles. The attack was evidently made by his orders, since hostages were carried to Scotland, where they were kept in custody at the Iverness castle at the expense of the government.<sup>1</sup> This made Haakon very angry, and by the advice of his council he decided to declare war. In the spring of 1263 he began to make preparations for an expedition to Scotland. He committed the government at home to his son Magnus, and collected a large fleet at Bergen. An advance squadron of eight vessels was dispatched to aid King Magnus Olavsson of Man, but because of stormy weather it did not reach its destination before the main fleet arrived on the coast of Scotland. On the 5th of July the king sailed from Bergen, accompanied by Magnus Jarl of the Orkneys, who had been called to Norway, as it seems, for the purpose of assisting in the undertaking. How large the fleet was is not definitely stated in the saga, which says that "Haakon had over 120 ships" when the whole fleet was assembled in the Hebrides. The old Scotch historian Fordun states that he had 160 ships and 20,000 men,<sup>2</sup> which agrees quite well with the saga. This was probably the largest army ever sent from Norway to the British Isles, and great alarm spread through the coast districts of Scotland, where the attack might be expected at any time. Haakon sailed by way of the Shetland Islands to the Orkneys, where he stopped for a few days to work out a more detailed plan of campaign. He would divide his fleet into two squadrons, one of which should go to Moray Firth and attack the eastern districts of Scotland, while the king himself would proceed to the Hebrides with the other. But his captains refused to go anywhere except under the king's direct command, and the plan had to be abandoned. While waiting for the forces from the Orkneys to complete their preparations, he went to Caithness,

<sup>1</sup> *The Chronicle of Man and the Sudreys*, ed. Munch, p. 27; and notes, p. 110. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, part IV., vol. I., p. 387. *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, ch. 314. Skene, *The Highlanders in Scotland*, vol. II., p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> Fordun X., 15 (vol. II., p. 97); see P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., p. 396. *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, ch. 319.

and compelled the people to pay tribute, because they had accepted the overlordship of the king of Scotland. He offered them peace if they would pay a certain amount, probably of stores and provisions, and they promptly accepted the terms. King Alexander III. strengthened the garrisons and defenses of the castles in all the districts where an attack might be expected. At Iverness, on Moray Firth, at Ayr and Wigtoun, in the southern part, and even at Stirling the garrisons were strengthened, and energetic measures were taken to collect ships, and to build new ones.

On the 10th of August Haakon left the Orkneys. The forces of these islands had not yet completed their armament, but they were ordered to follow as soon as they could. He sailed by the way of Lewis into the Sound of Skye and came to anchor at the little island of Cailleachstone (N. Kerlingarstein), where he was joined by the king of Man, and the forces which had been dispatched to that island. When he entered the Sound of Mull, King Dugald of the Hebrides met him in a light craft, and piloted the fleet to Kerrera, where the forces from the islands had assembled to join the main fleet. Both King Magnus Olavsson of Man and King Dugald Mac Rory (Ruaidhri) of the Hebrides were loyal to King Haakon, but Eogan of Argyll,<sup>1</sup> whom he had given the title of king, and invested with the island of Mull, had joined Alexander III. Eogan held large fiefs on the mainland of Scotland, and as he found it impossible to serve two masters, he dropped his royal title, and with it his allegiance to King Haakon. From Kerrera Haakon sent fifty ships in command of King Dugald, King Magnus, and some Norwegian captains to Cantire, and fifteen ships to the castle of Rothesay, in the island of Bute; with the rest of the fleet he advanced to the island of Gigha. The lords Murchaed and Angus of Cantire came to Haakon to offer their submission, and took an oath of allegiance to him, but they had to pay a tribute of 1200 head of cattle. The castle of Rothesay also capitulated without much resistance. Envoys now also came from Ireland to King Haakon, and offered the submission of the people of Ireland, if he would deliver them from

<sup>1</sup> In *Haakon Haakonssonssaga* he is called Jón, by Matthew Paris, Oneus or Genus, in the *Chronicle of Man and the Sudreys*, Johannes. See this *Chronicle*, notes, p. 112 ff.



the oppressive English rule. It is not stated who these envoys were, but it is quite clear that they came from the Norse colonies, who felt sorely oppressed under English rule. It has already been stated elsewhere that the English had taken their cities, and had forced the Norsemen to withdraw and found new settlements outside the city limits. Haakon sent Sigurd from the Hebrides to Ireland with some light vessels to investigate the conditions, while he moved his fleet around Cantire to the island of Aran. Haakon's large fleet, as well as the victories which he had already won, so alarmed King Alexander III. that he sent messengers to sue for peace, and Haakon welcomed this opportunity to terminate the hostilities. The summer was nearly spent, and he foresaw the danger of exposing his fleet to the severe autumn storms in these dangerous waters. An armistice was arranged, but King Alexander would not accept the terms offered, and much time was wasted in fruitless negotiations. Finally Haakon grew impatient, and gave notice that he would renew the campaign. He had advanced up the Firth of Clyde, whence he sent sixty ships into Loch Long, while the main force was to land at Largs to fight the Scotch army stationed there. The forces sent into Loch Long brought boats to Loch Lomond, and ravaged the country as far as Stirling; but on the 1st and 2d of October a hurricane swept over western Scotland, and put a sudden end to further operations. Ten ships of the squadron in Loch Long foundered, and of the main fleet at Largs many ships were damaged or driven ashore. The king sought refuge in the island of Cumræ (Kumrey), but many ships drifted to the mainland, where they were attacked by the Scots. When the storm abated somewhat, the king again went on board the ships, and sent aid to the men on shore. The Scots were driven off, and the Norse detachments spent the night on land. In the morning, October 2, the Scotch main army came up. About 1000 Norsemen were now on shore, of whom 240 were stationed on a hillock. They were attacked by overwhelming numbers. Many fell, and the rest fled to the shore, where they made a spirited resistance. At last two captains succeeded in landing fresh troops, and the Scots were driven back upon the hill, and finally put to flight. The battle was over, and the Norsemen returned to their ships. The next morning they landed again, removed the dead from the

battlefield, and buried them near a church, probably in the island of Bute. The squadron from Loch Long again joined the fleet, and Haakon destroyed his stranded ships, and moved his fleet to Lam-bash harbor. Sigurd of the Hebrides, who had been sent to Ireland, now returned with a message from the Irish people to the king that they would keep his army the whole winter if he would come and deliver them from the English. He called a *thing* to consider this proposal, but his men were opposed to it, as it was late in the season, and they were short of provisions. He decided, therefore, to go into winter quarters in the Orkneys, and many of his men were permitted to return to Norway. After a very stormy voyage, he reached these islands during the last days of October.

King Haakon, who was now fifty-nine years old, seems to have overexerted himself in this strenuous naval campaign. Not long after his arrival in the Orkneys, sickness confined him to his bed. "During his illness," says the saga, "he had the Bible and Latin books read to him; but it soon seemed to fatigue him to catch the meaning of the words. He then let Norwegian books be read, day and night, first the sagas of the saints, and when there were no more of them, the sagas of the kings of Norway from Halvdan Svarte, one after the other."<sup>1</sup> He died, deeply mourned by the whole nation, December 15, 1263, and was succeeded by his son Magnus Lagabøter. His body was brought to Bergen, and interred in the Christ church by the side of his father and grandfather.

The celebrated battle of Largs was in reality only a skirmish, in which the Norwegians were victorious; but this great expedition, and the disaster which overtook it, seems to have brought the leading men to ponder the situation more carefully. They began to see how difficult it was to defend the Hebrides, lying snug to the shores of Scotland, when even vassals like Eogan of Argyll sided with the king of Scotland. Could Norway afford to keep a dependency like the Hebrides, when her whole naval force would have to be kept in constant service to defend it? King Magnus Lagabøter and his advisers were wise enough to see that such a cause would not only be futile, but ruinous, and steps were soon taken to conclude peace with Scotland. After negotiations had been carried on for some

<sup>1</sup> *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, ch. 329.

time, King Alexander agreed to buy the Hebrides and Man. By the treaty of Perth, signed July 2, 1266, Magnus transferred these islands to Scotland for the sum of 4000 marks sterling, payable in four annual installments. Scotland also agreed to pay every year perpetually 100 marks to the crown of Norway. A fine of 10,000 marks sterling was to be paid by the party who violated, or did not fulfill, the treaty.<sup>1</sup> At the time when the treaty was concluded, King Magnus Olavsson of Man was already dead. This island was never formally united with Scotland, but was held by the kings of Scotland as a personal possession until it was finally transferred to the crown of England.

#### 70. LITERATURE AND CULTURE IN THE AGE OF HAAKON HAAKONSSON

The old Norse poetic literature (*i.e.* the "Elder Edda" and the songs of the scalds) flourished principally in the period from Harald Haarfagre until the middle of the eleventh century. After Harald Haardraade's time the scaldic poesy began to decay. Many familiar names are, indeed, met with later, but they indicate no revival of the old art of poetry. The three great scalds of Haakon Haakonsson's own time, the historian Snorre Sturlason and his two nephews, Sturla Thordsson and Olav Hvitaskald, possessed great ability as poets, but the vigor and spontaneity had gone out of their verse, and Snorre and Sturla are famous principally as historians and prose writers. Snorre wrote his "Younger Edda" as a textbook for scalds with the intention, as it seems, of creating new interest in the noble old art. It is one of the most valuable works in Old Norse literature, but it failed to produce the result intended; the age of Norse poetry and song was fast drawing to a close. The chief interest now centered upon history and romance, and in the course of the thirteenth century the Old Norse prose literature reached its fullest development. It embraces works on the most varied subjects — history, biography,

<sup>1</sup> The text of the treaty is found in *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, 8, 1; *Acts of Parliaments of Scotland*, vol. I., p. 78, 101. Torfæus, *Orcades*, p. 198. Torfæus, *Historia Norvegiæ*, IV., p. 343. Peterkin, *Rentals of Orkney*, Johnstone's *Antiq. Cello-Normannicæ*, p. 52. See P. A. Munch, *The Chronicle of Man and the Sudreys*, p. 132. *Islandske Annaler*, ed. Gustav Storm, p. 258.



geography, legend, and romance — all known by the common name of “saga” (*i.e.* narrative); to which must also be added treatises on grammar, mythology, and poetry, codes of laws, and other miscellaneous works. The sagas are written in a style of noble simplicity and classic beauty. Rich in contents, fascinating in form and diction, they rank with the Eddic songs among the greatest achievements in the domain of literature. “Few persons in our day adequately realize the extent of the early Icelandic literature or its richness,” says Professor John Fiske. “The poems, legends, and histories earlier than the date when Dante walked and mused in the streets of Florence survive for us now in some hundreds of works, for the most part of rare and absorbing interest. The ‘*Heimskringla*,’ or chronicle of Snorre Sturlason, written about 1215 [should be about 1230], is one of the greatest history books in the world.”<sup>1</sup>

The historical sagas may be divided into three great groups: the Icelandic family sagas, dealing with the history and biography of the great families in Iceland; the sagas about the kings of Norway; the sagas about the Norwegian colonies. This literature began to flourish both in Norway and Iceland towards the middle of the twelfth century, and reached its zenith in Haakon Haakonsson’s reign. The old Icelandic writer, Are Frode (1148), has been called the father of Old Norse history writing. He wrote the “*Íslendingabók*” about 1134, and some scholars have held that he also began the “*Landnámabók*,” which was finished by later writers.<sup>2</sup> About 1150 Eirik Oddsson wrote the “*Hrykkjarstykki*,” a history of Harald Gille and his successors, which has been lost. In the latter part of the same century Odd Snorrason wrote the elder “*Olavssaga Trygvasonar*,” Gunlaug Leivsson wrote another saga by the same name, Karl Jónsson wrote the “*Sverrissaga*,” and some unknown Icелander wrote the “*Boglungasögur*,” or “*Saga of the Three Kings*” (Haakon Sverresson, Guttorm Sigurdsson, and Inge Baardsson). In Norway the monk Thjodrek (Theodricus Monachus) wrote a history of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Discovery of America*, vol. I., p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> G. Vigfusson and Björn Olsen regarded Are as the author of the *Landnámabók*, but Konrad Maurer, Eugen Mogk, and others find this view untenable. Mogk thinks that it was written in the period 1200–1225, and that Sturla Thordsson is the author. See *Geschichte der norwegisch-islandischen Literatur*, p. 788.

kings of Norway, "De Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium," in the latter part of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century, and about the same time an unknown Norwegian ecclesiastic, probably in the Orkneys, wrote the "Historia Norwegiae." The "Ágrip af Noregs Konungasögum," the first attempt at a connected account of the kings of Norway in the Norse language, was also written about this time, but only a fragment of this work has been preserved.<sup>1</sup>

From the close of the twelfth century the Latin language, which hitherto had been used occasionally, ceased to be employed in saga literature; the Old Norse classic prose had been developed, and the taste for history writing had been fully awakened. The "Morkin-skinna," a compilation of sagas about the Norwegian kings, was written by some unknown Icelandic author about 1220. A more critical work is the "Fagrskinna," also by an unknown Icelandic author, from the period 1220-1230. It gives the connected history of the kings of Norway from Halvdan Svarte till 1177. On these earlier works Snorre Sturlason based his "Heimskringla," the greatest work of the Icelandic historiographers, written about 1230. Snorre's history is supplemented by the works of his nephew Sturla Thordsson, the last original Icelandic historian. He wrote the "Íslendingasaga," which constitutes the nucleus of the great "Sturlungasaga," or the history of Iceland during the Sturlung period (1160-1262); also the "Landnámabók," one of the most important sources of our knowledge of Germanic life, religion, and jurisprudence.<sup>2</sup> King Magnus Haakonson became acquainted with Sturla Thordsson, and urged him, while on a visit in Norway, to write the history of his father's reign, the "Haakon Haakonssonssaga" ("Hákonarsaga Hákonarsonar"). This saga, which is based on letters and documents of the royal archives, "is the most important source of the history of the Scandinavian North in the thirteenth century, and gives a vivid picture of Haakon Haakonsson's reign. Because of King Haakon's friendship with Emperor Frederick II., and his relations to the Lübeckers and others, it is also of importance to the history of Germany."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gustav Storm thinks that the author of the *Ágrip* was a Norwegian, Konrad Maurer and Eugen Mogk have held that he was an Icelandic, but that he, perhaps, was staying in Norway when he wrote his work.

<sup>2</sup> E. Mogk, *Geschichte der norwegisch-islandischen Literatur*, p. 788.

<sup>3</sup> Eugen Mogk, *Geschichte der norwegisch-islandischen Literatur*, p. 814 f.

This saga seems to have been written shortly after 1263. On a second visit to Norway Sturla was persuaded to write the history of Magnus Haakonsson's reign, the "Magnussaga Hákonarsonar," but only a fragment of this saga remains. To the historical works written about the kings of Norway belongs also the historical "Ólavs-saga ins helga" from about 1250, while the legendary "Olavssaga" must be classified with the legendary and religious literature. Several later works like the "Hulda," the "Hrokkinskinna," the "Gollinskinna," and the "Eirspennill" bear no longer the marks of critical and original scholarship.

The sagas which deal exclusively with the Norwegian colonies are: the "Færeyingasaga," found in the sagas of Olav Tryggvason and Olav the Saint in the "Flateyjarbók." The original, which no longer exists, may have been written in Iceland about 1200 or a little later. The "Orkneyingasaga," also found in the "Flateyjarbók," is thought to have been written before 1250. The "Saga of Eirik the Red," which deals with the history of the Norse colonies in Greenland, and the discovery of the mainland of North America, is found in two manuscripts; the older from the thirteenth century, in the "Hauksbók," the later dates from the fifteenth century. The "Flateyjarbók" is a great collection of sagas and short stories (*þættir*) written in 1387-1395 by two Icelandic priests, Jón Thordsson and Magnus Thorhallsson. The compilers show little originality or critical ability, still the "Flateyjarbók" remains one of the most fruitful sources of our knowledge of Norwegian history and culture.<sup>1</sup>

Of special importance for the history of Iceland are the sagas dealing with the church history of the island; the "Kristnisaga," which treats of the introduction of Christianity and the early history of the church in Iceland; the "Biskupasögur" and "Hungrvaka," which give the history of the bishops of Iceland.

The Icelandic saga writers have also devoted some attention to the history of Denmark. The "Jómsvíkingasaga" narrates the history

<sup>1</sup> Hermann Paul, *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, vol. II., p. 130. Eugen Mogk, *Geschichte der norwegisch-landischen Literatur*. Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Literaturs Historie*. R. Keyser, *Nordmændenes Videnskabelighed og Literatur i Middelalderen*, *Efterladte Skrifter*, I. A. Gjessing, *Undersøgelse af Kongesagaens Fremvæxt*.



of the Jónsvíkings and the Jónsborg, and the "Knýtlingasaga" contains the history of the Danish kingdom from 950 till 1202.

Most of the Icelandic family sagas were written in the period 1200-1300. The more important are: "Egilssaga," "Laxdølasaga," "Gunlaugssaga," "Eyrbyggjasaga," "Fóstbrøðrasaga," "Ljósvetningasaga," "Reykðolasaga," "Vápnfirðingasaga," "Harðarsaga," "Víga Glúmssaga," "Hönsaþóris saga," "Gíslasaga Súrssonar," "Njáls-saga," "Vatsdølasaga," "Kormakssaga," "Grettissaga," "Gullþóris saga," "Svarfdølasaga," "Bjarnarsaga Hítðlakappa," and "Floamannasaga."

A second main division of the Icelandic saga literature is formed by the large number of mythological sagas dealing with the heroic traditions of the Scandinavian North, the "Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda." Among the best known of these are: "Völsungasaga," "Friðþjófssaga," "Örvar Oddssaga," "Hervararsaga," "Ragnarssaga Loðbrókar," and "Hrólfs saga."

Another important part of the Icelandic prose literature are the numerous works of a religious character, such as collections of homilies, and sagas or stories about the apostles and saints. In this extensive literature we find the sagas, or stories, of Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, the "Heilagramannasögur" (sagas of the saints), "Postulasögur," or lives of the apostles, besides a long list of sagas about persons prominent in the New Testament, such as Peter and Paul, John and James, Simon and Jude, Martha and Mary Magdalene, Stephen, Pilate, and others. To this literature belongs, also, the "Stjórn," a large work consisting of translations of the historical books and other portions of the Old Testament, together with commentaries. The greater portion of this Bible translation dates from about 1250.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor Gustav Storm analyses the contents of the *Stjórn* as follows:

1. A Norwegian translation of the historical books of the Old Testament from about 1250 or earlier.

2. An Icelandic translation of the books of the Maccabees, written in Norway 1262-1263 by Brandr Jónsson.

3. A Norwegian commentary together with a translation of the Genesis and half of the Exodus, written at the court of the king of Norway about 1310.

4. An Icelandic edition of the history of Joshua and of the history of the Hasmonæans (Maccabees) and the Idumæans (Edomites) according to

Aside from the Latin historical works already mentioned, the Norwegian sagamen devoted themselves almost exclusively to the writing of fiction, consisting largely of translations or elaborations into prose narratives of chivalric metrical romances introduced from England and the Continent, especially from France. These have been called "Fornsögur Suðrlanda." E. Sars says: "The Norwegian court seems to have given the first impulse to the activity which in the course of the thirteenth century transplanted many French chivalric romances and other foreign literary productions into the Norwegian tongue. About 'Tristan and Isolde Saga,' one of the earliest chivalric romances in the Norse language, it is specifically stated in one of the manuscripts that it was written at the request of Haakon Haakonsson. The same seems to be true of the 'Elis-saga,' 'Íventssaga,' and many other works translated from the French. King Haakon's relatives and successors, who, like himself, had been well educated, also seem to have been interested in this kind of literary activity, and to have acted as its patrons and promoters. According to an old source the 'Barlaamssaga ok Josaphats,' is supposed to have been written by King Haakon Sverresson, who seems, however, to have been confounded with Haakon the Younger, King Haakon Haakonsson's eldest son." From Norway this literary activity of recasting foreign stories into narratives in the Norse tongue was also introduced into Iceland, but these stories did not become popular there, as the style was best suited to the tastes of knights and courtiers. The Icelanders usually based their narratives on Norwegian translations, not on the original text, and many of these sagas, such as the "Þiðrekssaga," the "Karlamagnússaga," and others are, therefore, found in widely different Norwegian and Icelandic versions.

One of the most important and interesting works in Old Norse literature is "The King's Mirror" (O. N. Konungs-Skuggsjá, Lat.

the *Historia Scholastica*, written in the middle of the fourteenth century as a supplement to no. 2 and 3.

5. A short résumé of the later books of Moses by an Icelandic author from the latter part of the fourteenth century, written as a supplement to no. 3. *Arkiv for Nordis Filologi*, 1886, p. 244 ff. See also Eugen Mogk, *Geschichte der norwegisch-islandischen Literatur*. Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie*.

*Speculum Regale*), written in the reign of Haakon Haakonsson, about 1250–1260, by an anonymous Norwegian author, who must have lived in Namdalen, near Trøndelagen. This work occupies a unique position in Old Norse literature. It is a didactic-philosophic treatise in the form of a dialogue between a father and his son, in which the author planned to describe the education, culture, and manners of the four classes of Norwegian society — merchants, courtiers, farmers (*bønder*), and clergy. The father gives this description so that the son may choose his calling with insight, and that he may know what he must learn in order to become successful and honored in his profession. Only two parts have been written, but even in its fragmentary form it gives the most vivid picture of medieval Norwegian society, especially of the upper classes, of any work in existence. It is worthy of note that the agricultural class (*bønder*) is treated, not only as an independent and highly respected class, but as a separate estate, equal in rank to the courtiers and the clergy. This was something quite unusual at this time, when the agricultural classes elsewhere in Europe had sunk into abject serfdom. It is equally worthy of attention that the merchants, also, formed a distinct class, no less highly regarded than the others. The father says to his son: "Though I have been more a king's man (*i.e.* a courtier) than a merchant, still I would find no fault if you would choose this profession, for it is now often chosen by the best men." That the agricultural and merchant classes should stand so high is quite remarkable, when we consider that even the third estate (the citizen of the larger cities) had gained but scant recognition elsewhere in Europe. The father goes on to outline to his son what he must study if he wishes to become a real merchant. He points out the necessity of avoiding drinking and gambling, of being upright, Christian-minded, well-dressed, polite, and cultured, as this constitutes the general basis for a successful career. He must also study the laws, especially the "Bjarkeyjarrétr," or Norwegian municipal laws. He must know the manners and customs of every country where he travels, and, if he wishes to be especially well qualified, he "should study all languages, especially Latin and French, for they reach farthest, but neither must thou neglect thine own language."



He advises his son, also, to get a thorough knowledge of the courses of the heavenly bodies, of the tides, and other natural phenomena of importance to navigation. He must become especially well versed, also, in arithmetic, which is indispensable to merchants. He instructs him how to equip his ships for the voyage, in what seasons of the year he should sail, and what rules he is to observe in doing business. He gives the young man very detailed and elaborate instruction in political and physical geography, in which branches he shows deep interest and remarkable knowledge. He discusses the ocean currents, the prevailing winds, the aurora borealis, the volcanoes, geysers, warm springs, and earthquakes in Iceland, and the glaciers and icebergs in Greenland. He gives a description of Ireland and Iceland, and discusses the climate and the conditions in Greenland with great minuteness and with considerable accuracy. He says to his son: "But since thou doest ask if the sun shines in Greenland, or whether it happens that there is fine weather as in other countries, then thou must know, forsooth, that there is fine sunshine, and that the climate there in the summer time may be called good. But there is great difference in the seasons, for the winter is almost a perpetual night, and summer almost a continuous day. But when the sun is highest, it is strong enough to give light, but it gives but little heat; still it is so strong that where the ground is free from ice, it is warmed so much that it produces good and fragrant grass, therefore people can easily inhabit the land where it is thawed up, but that is indeed only a small area."<sup>1</sup> He describes the fishes and animals in the ocean near Iceland and Greenland, and discusses in detail the fauna of Greenland, the domestic animals of this country, its products, exports and imports, and the mode of life of the people. In the second part, in which he discusses the courtier class, he speaks of the manners and customs of the court, of the power of the king, of the nature and value of the government, and instructs his son in military science and the use of arms.

If we compare this system of education with the established curriculum of the schools in other countries of Europe at that time, we are struck by its superiority over all school plans then existing. The schoolmen were yet confining instruction to their *trivium* and

<sup>1</sup> *The King's Mirror*, ch. xix.

*quadrivium*, which embraced little more than Latin and scholastic dialectics. Of geography there was none, excepting what might be incidentally mentioned as explanatory notes to Latin texts. The mother tongue was banished from the schools, as were all modern languages; natural science was not taught. "Natural science was very much neglected in the Middle Ages. With extraordinary credulity the people regarded the most incredible as true, and, being prepossessed by a belief in invented phantasms and wonders, they did not see God's true wonders in creation," says Karl von Raumer.<sup>1</sup>

The author of "The King's Mirror" finds it necessary for the young man — the prospective merchant — who wishes to be well educated, to study, not only Latin, but French, and especially his own mother tongue, yes all languages, which simply means as many languages as possible. He has to learn the laws of trade and commerce; he must study the courses of the heavenly bodies, and the changing seasons, *i.e.* astronomy. He must learn practical navigation, and he must devote especial attention to the study of nature: climate, ocean currents, glaciers, icebergs, volcanoes, earthquakes, and animal life on sea and land. He must also study political geography, the customs and manners of all nations which he comes in contact with; their products, their imports and exports. Besides acquiring such training, both practical and theoretical, he should also be a Christian and cultured gentleman. This system of education is so modern in spirit and general purpose that with but few modifications we might well accept it to-day without much hesitation. A little reflection and comparison make us feel the truth of the great scholar Sophus Bugge's statement that "The King's Mirror" "was five centuries ahead of its time." Strong evidence, indeed, that no people in Europe were better educated than the Norwegians.

The remarkable growth of Norse prose literature in the thirteenth century represents the culmination of a long literary development, and cannot be directly attributed to the influence of the reign of Haakon Haakonsson. Still the court of the king of Norway was in this period, as heretofore, the center of the intellectual life of the Norwegian people. It was the place where men of learning and ability met, where the impulses from abroad were most directly felt,

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte der Pädagogik*, erster teil, p. 7.

and where many of the leading works were written. Karl Jónsson wrote the "Sverressaga" at King Sverre's court, and by his aid. Sturla Thordsson was persuaded by King Magnus Haakonsson (Lagabøter) to write the "Haakon Haakonssonssaga" at King Magnus' court, and by his assistance. The "Vølsungasaga" is thought to have been written at the court of Haakon Haakonsson for the entertainment of the king, and a part of the "Stjórn" was written at the request of King Haakon Magnusson († 1319). It is certain, also, that Snorre Sturlason was encouraged, especially by Skule Jarl, to write the "Younger Edda" and the "Heimskringla." King Haakon's peaceful and glorious reign and his lofty example proved a powerful stimulus. He was well educated, and could read Latin as well as Norse. He was intensely interested in literature and art; anxious to further the intellectual development of his people, as he was careful to preserve the power and honor of his kingdom, and the prosperity of the nation. The king of Norway was to the Norwegian people what King Arthur was to the Knights of the Round Table — the source of national unity and strength, by whose influence and power they felt themselves united into one nation. The king was the bond of union between the colonies and the mother country, and the source of national tradition and honor. This would alone explain the great influence which the king and his court exerted on the development of literature and culture and the growth of a national spirit.

King Haakon took great interest, also, in commerce and the development of cities. On the coast of Bohuslen he founded the city of Marstrand, probably because of the great herring fisheries along this coast.<sup>1</sup> He improved the harbor of Agdenes at the entrance to the Trondhjemsfjord, and constructed wharfs there. He also sought to protect Norwegian commerce by treaties with England and Lübeck. King Valdemar the Victorious and his successors had not been friendly to Norway, and when war broke out between Denmark and the German city of Lübeck, Norwegian shipping was injured by both parties. Haakon, therefore, seized the ships both of the Danes

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel før Hanseaternes Tid*, Christiania, 1899. Gustav Storm, *De kongelige Byanlæg i Norge i Middelalderen*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, tredje række, vol. V., p. 433.







RUINS OF THE HOVEDØ MONASTERY.



KING HAAKON HAAKONSSON'S GUILD-HALL IN BERGEN, AND THE VALKENDORF TOWER.

and the Lübeckers in Norwegian harbors, a measure which proved so effective that the merchants of Lübeck sent John de Bardevik as ambassador to Bergen to apologize to King Haakon. The result was a commercial treaty between Norway and Lübeck, concluded October 6, 1250.<sup>1</sup> Treaties of commerce were also signed with the king of England.<sup>2</sup>

Haakon devoted much attention to the improvement of the coast defenses. It seems to have been his plan to construct a system of fortresses which would safeguard all important harbors, and protect the whole coast. He rebuilt the Sverreborg at Bergen, reconstructed the Sverreborg at Trondhjem, erected a fortress at Ragnhildarholm, near Konghelle, and fortified Oslo and Tunsberg. The many churches, monasteries, hospitals, and other public buildings erected during this reign testify to Haakon's great interest in cities and city culture. At Bergen he erected the Haakon's hall, a large, two-story royal hall of stone, built in Early English style. It stood completed in 1261 when the wedding of his son Magnus was celebrated there. In later centuries this fine piece of early Norwegian architecture suffered much through neglect, but it has been restored, and it remains one of the proudest old structures which adorns the city. The "Haakon Haakonssonssaga" gives the following account of his activity as a builder :

"He built a church in Tromsø, and Christianized the whole parish belonging to it. Many Permians came to him, who had fled from the East because of the inroads of the Tartars. These he Christianized, and he permitted them to settle on the Melangerfjord. He built a church at Ofoten, a redoubt and piers for wharfs at Agdenes. In Nidaros he built a hall in connection with the royal residence, as well as a chapel over against the royal hostelries. In Bergen he built the Apostle church of stone near the royal residence. He also built a St. Olav's church and a monastery at his own expense. He improved the royal residence at Bergen by erecting two stone halls, and by surrounding it with a stone wall with castles above the portals.

<sup>1</sup> The text of the treaty is found in *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, vol. V., no. 4.

<sup>2</sup> That very friendly relations existed between Norway and England at this time can be seen from Haakon's correspondence with Henry III. *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, vol. XIX., no. 153 ff.



He built the St. Catherine church at Sandbru, together with a hospital, and gave to it property yielding an income of 200 *mánaðrmatr*.<sup>1</sup> In the castle at Bergen he rebuilt all the houses which had been destroyed by fire. He erected two-thirds of the surrounding stone wall with embrasures, and built the outer castle. The All Saints' church at the upper end of the Vaag (*i.e.* the fjord) was also built according to the king's advice, and he gave to it 100 *mánaðrmatr* during his illness. At Agvaldsnes he built a stone church, the fourth in size of all the parish churches in Norway. At Tunsberg he constructed a castellated stone wall around the mountain, and built the Gaute castle across the Daneklev. He built, also, the necessary houses on the mountain, erected a royal residence near the St. Lawrence church, and built a hospital near the St. Olav's church, to which he gave property yielding an income of 300 marks. He caused the channel at Skeljastein to be deepened, so that *kuggr* (*i.e.* merchant ships) now could sail where ferry boats could scarcely float before. He built the Barefoot-brothers' church at Tunsberg, but moved it later to Dragsmark, where he erected a St. Mary's cloister and a stone church, to which he gave property yielding an income of fifty marks. In Oslo he built a castle on the Vaalkaberg, and moved the St. Nicolas church thither; he also built the royal residence in the islands. On the Valdisholm he also built houses. At Konghelle he erected a castle on the Ragnhildsholm; he built a royal dwelling in the city, and houses on Gulløen. He cleared the Eker Islands, and built houses and a wooden church there. He likewise founded Marstrand, and erected buildings in many islands in Viken. He erected a stone castle at Ringsaker on Lake Mjøsen, and built houses there. He built, also, a hall at Steig, and repaired the church, which was nearly in ruins. He also built a hall at Hov, in Breiden, and donated property to it, and at Tofte he built a hall and a chapel. He bought Lo, in Opdal, and built dwelling houses, hall, and chapel there. In Hedemarken he erected halls, at Husabø, in Skaun, and at Ringsaker, and he caused dwelling houses to be built at Vidheim, in Øyer. He also constructed a stone wall around

<sup>1</sup> *Mánaðrmatr* literally means provisions for a month, but the word denotes a certain measure, especially of flour and butter, or in a more general sense, the value of a given amount of these articles.

the Sverreborg, at Stenbergene, and built houses there, since the Bagler had destroyed the castle.”<sup>1</sup>

This catalogue of the great king's many achievements furnishes all necessary evidence of his remarkable energy, and proves how great was his solicitude for the intellectual development as well as for the social and economic welfare of the nation. The greatest architectural work of King Haakon's reign was the building of the nave of the Trondhjem cathedral. After the death of Archbishop Eystein, in 1188, the work on the cathedral seems to have been discontinued. His successor, Archbishop Eirik Ivarsson, engaged in a bitter controversy with King Sverre, and was forced to leave the country in 1190. Sverre charged him with keeping a large force of armed followers, as if he feared an attack upon himself or his church; that he thus spent the money which he should have used to keep workmen in the quarries carrying and cutting stone for the construction of the cathedral according to the original plan. Whether Eirik's successors, Thore Gudmundsson (1206-1214) and Guttorm (1215-1224) continued the work is not known, but it was not resumed with vigor till in the time of Archbishop Sigurd Eindridesson (1231-1252). He began the erection of the nave, which seems to have been nearly completed in the time of Archbishop Jón (1268-1282).<sup>2</sup> The nave, which, like the chancel, was built in the Gothic style, was the most ornate and imposing part of the great cathedral. According to the old writer Absalon Pederssøn Beyer (1530-1574), the west front had “a large gilt circular window cut in stone.” Peder Claussøn Friis (1545-1614), a priest in southern Norway, says of it: “But about that same cathedral, how it is built, or how large it is, I can write nothing save what I have heard of others; namely, that it is built in the form of a cross, of cut stones which are chiseled into all sorts of figures round about the whole church, both inside and outside, so that it is astonishing, and in the west front, which is gilt, large images of the twelve apostles are cut in stone and gilt, and there are numerous pillars of polished

<sup>1</sup> *Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, p. 451 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann M. Schirmer, *Kristkirken i Nidaros. The Cathedral of Trondhjem*, published by order of the Norwegian government, text by Professor P. A. Munch, drawings by Architect H. E. Schirmer, Christiania, 1859. *Teknisk Ugeblad*, Arkitektafdeling, Dec. 4, 1908. Freiherrn v. Minutoli, *Der Dom zu Drontheim*, Berlin, 1853.

marble, both inside and outside in the church, both white and black, and of different color, so smooth that one might think that they had been cast. In the southern portal there are about sixty pillars ingeniously wrought, so that one cannot well estimate what this single door has cost, not to mention the whole church.”<sup>1</sup> How the nave looked when completed, it is difficult to determine, for it was scarcely finished when a series of accidents gradually reduced the proud edifice to a melancholy ruin.<sup>2</sup> But the Norwegian people, who have always cherished piously the memories of their past history, have long since made its restoration a national cause. Since 1869 the work of rebuilding the great cathedral has been in progress under the leadership of the best architects and sculptors in the country. Large sums are contributed yearly to the cause by individuals and private organizations as well as by the state, and before many years have rolled by, the old church will again lift its proud towers over the city of Trondhjem.

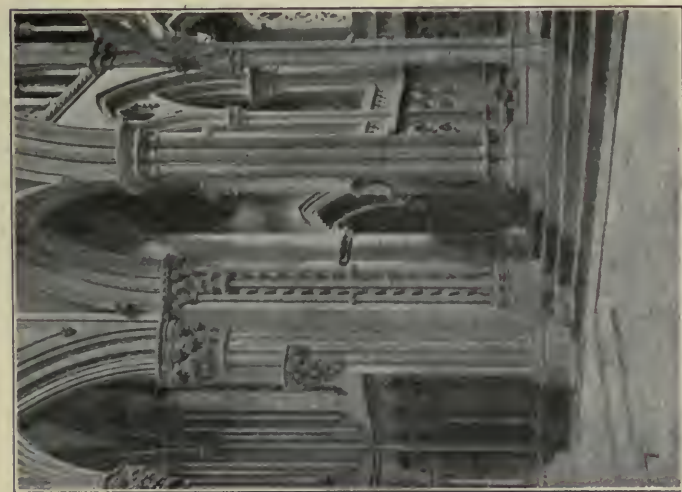
## 71. MAGNUS HAAKONSSON LAGABØTER. A NEW SYSTEM OF JURISPRUDENCE

Magnus Haakonsson, generally called Magnus Lagabøter (the Lawmender), was twenty-five years of age when his father, King Haakon, died in 1263. He had acted as regent during his father's absence, and as he had been crowned king in 1261 at the time of his wedding, he ascended the throne without proclamation or ceremony. He continued Haakon's peaceful policy, not only because wise statesmanship dictated such a course, but also because of his own inclination, since his interest was chiefly centered on lawmaking and

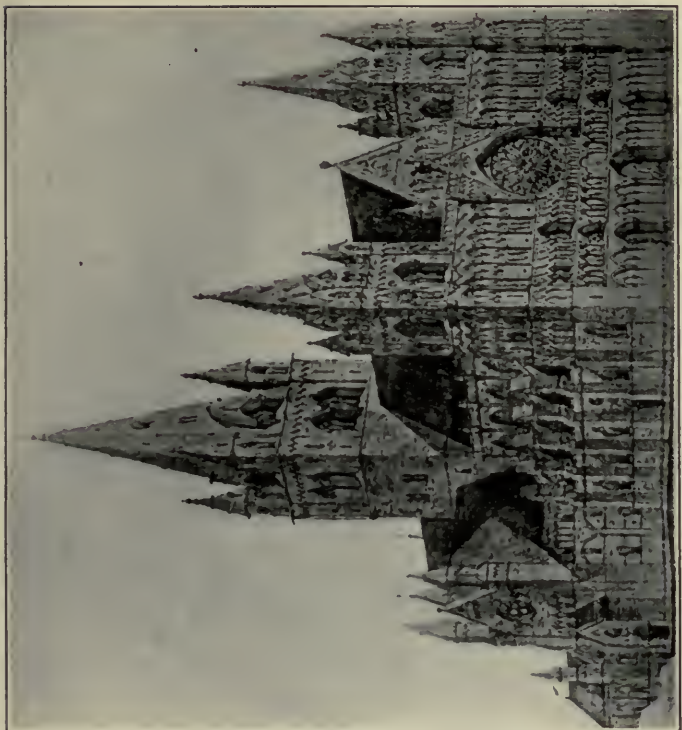
<sup>1</sup> Peder Claussøn Friis, *Samlede Skrifter*, edited by Gustav Storm, Christiania, 1881, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> The cathedral was damaged by fire, April 31, 1328. It suffered still more in the next fire caused by lightning in 1432. After these accidents it was repaired to some extent, but in 1531 it was again set on fire by lightning, and great damage was done. The steeple, which was still standing, was wrecked by lightning in 1687. Two years later it fell and demolished the chapter house, near the church. The hasty repairs which had been attempted from time to time were of little avail. Two more fires, 1708 and 1719, left the church a ruin, and it was abandoned to its fate till in 1869, when the work of restoration was begun.

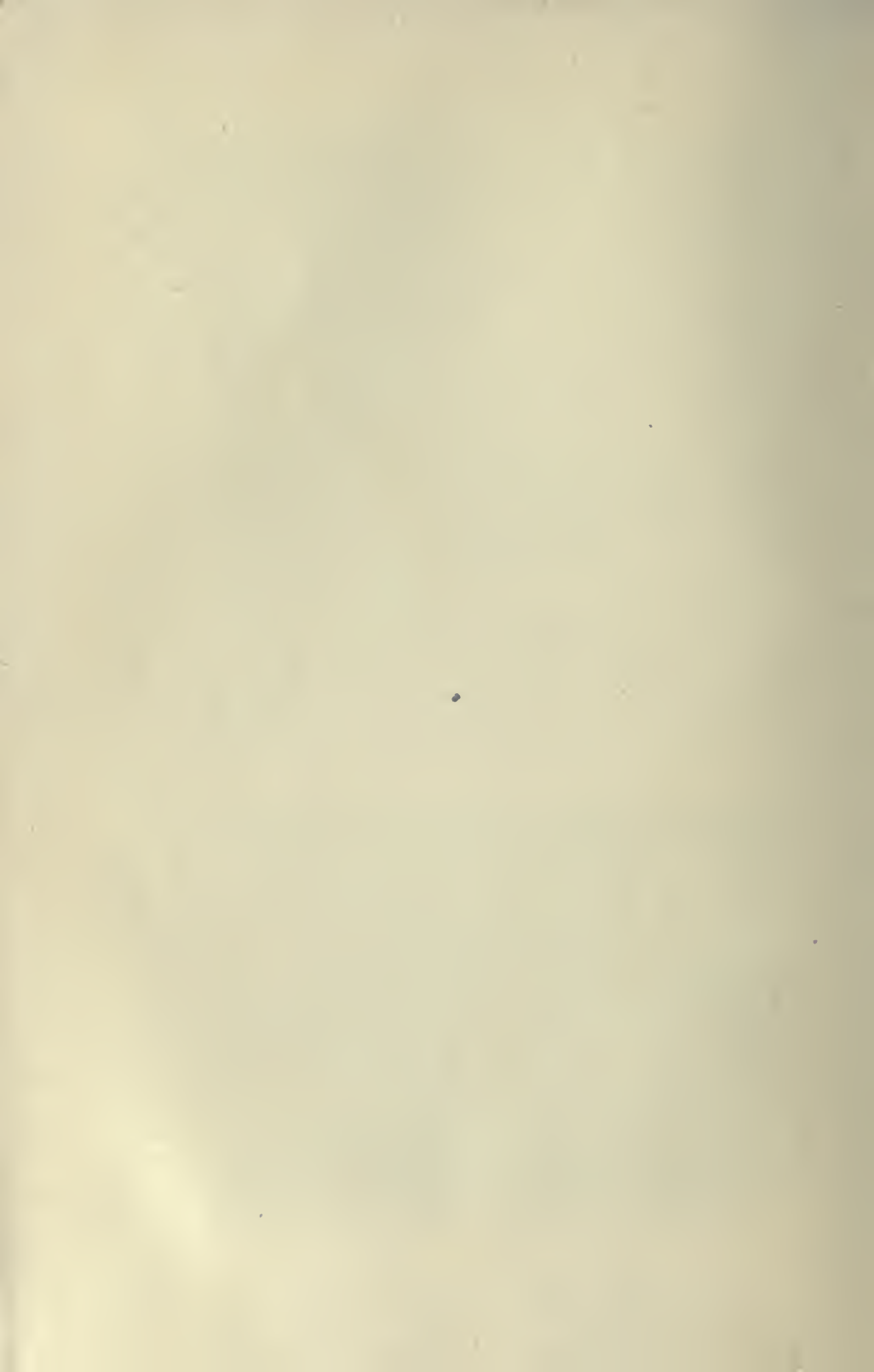




INTERIOR OF THE TRONDHJEM CATHEDRAL.



THE TRONDHJEM CATHEDRAL AS IT WILL APPEAR WHEN RESTORED.



judicial reforms. He labored earnestly to promote the welfare of his people, and devoted special attention to the reorganization of the judicial system which constitutes the chief feature of his reign; but he lacked his father's robust energy and self-confident grasp of international affairs. He found his kingdom a field sufficiently large for his ambition, and the maintenance of peace seems to have been his chief concern in his whole foreign policy. The peace with Scotland, resulting in the cession of the Hebrides by the treaty of Perth in 1266, has already been mentioned. As soon as the war with Scotland was terminated, King Magnus began his legal reforms by publishing a revision of the "Gulathingslov," which, according to the "Islandske Annaler," was accepted by the Gulathing in 1267. The following year the revision of the laws of the Eidsivathingslag and the Borgarthingslag was also completed. According to Konrad Maurer, the two codes of church laws, the "Younger Gulathings Kristenret" and the "Younger Borgarthings Kristenret," are also to be ascribed to King Magnus' lawmaking activity during these early years of his reign.<sup>1</sup> In the Frostathingslag the king was permitted to revise the secular laws, but the church laws were left untouched because of the determined resistance of the arrogant prelate Jón Raude, Archbishop of Trondhjem, who maintained that no secular authority had the right to legislate for the church. The papacy, which had finally vanquished the Hohenstaufen emperors, stood at this time at the very zenith of its power. Archbishop Jón had witnessed the conclusion of this struggle while on a journey to Rome to receive the archbishop's pall, and he returned deeply impressed with the glory of the Roman Church and the power of the Holy Father, eagerly bent on asserting the hierarchic principles in his archdiocese with the utmost vigor. In Norway the state-church principle had been maintained since the introduction of Christianity, with but a short interruption in the time of Magnus Erlingsson. The king, as the head of the church, had also legislated for it, with the advice and assistance of the bishops. In conformity with the principles everywhere urged by the Roman hierarchy at that time. Archbishop Jón denied the king's right to legislate for the church,

<sup>1</sup> Konrad Maurer, *Udsigt over de nordgermanske Retskilders Historie*, p. 34 f.



and King Magnus, with characteristic weakness, yielded to the resolute prelate. In the negotiations between the two regarding the new lawmaking it may have been the archbishop who first suggested that uniform codes of laws for the whole kingdom, both civil and ecclesiastical, ought to be prepared, and it is possible that a compromise was reached, whereby the archbishop was suffered to prepare the code of church laws, though he received no formal authority to do so.<sup>1</sup>

The first fruit of this new system of legislating for the whole kingdom was a code of laws for Iceland, the "*Jarnsǫða*," which was sent to Iceland, and accepted by the Althing in 1271.<sup>2</sup>

On March 29, 1272, Pope Gregory IX. issued a circular letter in which he summoned a church council to meet May 1, 1274, and he also requested all the bishops to report to this council all irregularities within their dioceses. Archbishop Jón believed that many abuses existed in his archdiocese, and he undertook to remedy them in the code of church laws which he was preparing. By his advice Bishop Arne of Skálholt wrote a similar code for Iceland, which was accepted at the Althing in 1275. Jón negotiated with King Magnus with regard to some points concerning which controversy was sure to arise. As a worthy successor of archbishops Eysteinn and Eirík he sought to make the church independent of the state, but Magnus, nevertheless, was quite manageable and conciliatory. At a council assembled in Bergen, 1273, a concordat was arranged in which the king yielded to the archbishop on nearly every point, modifying slightly only his most unreasonable demands. But because of these

<sup>1</sup> Konrad Maurer thinks that a code of church laws generally attributed to King Sverre dates from a later period, that it is an attempt of King Magnus and Archbishop Jón to agree upon a uniform code of church laws for the kingdom. The incomplete sketch has no heading or conclusion, and was never adopted as law. *Udsigt over de nordgermanske Retskilders Historie*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Biskop Arnessaga. Islandske Annaler*, ed. Storm, p. 49.

Because of the erroneous belief that this code was prepared by King Haakon Haakonsson, it has also been called the *Hákonarbók*. The *Jarnsǫða*, with a Latin translation by Th. Sveinbjörnsson, was published at Copenhagen in 1847 under the title *Hin forna Lögbook Íslendinga sem nefnis Jarnsǫða eðr Hákonarbók*. See also, *Norges gamle Love*, vol. II., p. 339, *Erkebiskop Jóns Kristenret*.

modifications the Pope would give only a conditional sanction. This action of the Pope ruffled even the pliant and peace-loving Magnus, and he interpreted it to mean that he had refused to sanction the agreement. Another council was called at Tunsberg in 1277,<sup>1</sup> where the concordat was subscribed to by both the king and the archbishop without going to the trouble of asking for the Pope's sanction. The archbishop's code of church laws may also have been accepted, though this is doubtful, but in his joy over the settlement of the difficulty Magnus showered additional favors on the church.

At the council of Bergen, 1273, King Magnus published a new law regulating the succession to the throne. According to this law, which was later incorporated in the general code, the throne might pass to twelve different heirs in due order of succession. The first five were the following :

- 1st. The king's oldest legitimate son.<sup>1</sup>
- 2d. The king's oldest legitimate grandson.
- 3d. The king's oldest legitimate brother.
- 4th. The king's oldest legitimate uncle (father's brother).
- 5th. The king's oldest legitimate nephew (son of the king's brother).

If none of these twelve heirs was found, then the one which was the nearest heir according to the general law of inheritance was to succeed, but always a man, not a woman.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The agreement entered into at Tunsberg, 1277, as well as that of Bergen, 1273, is found in *Norges gamle Love*, vol. II., p. 455 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Councils, like the one at Bergen in 1273, and at Tunsberg, 1277, had been assembled at various times to settle important questions of general interest. The scope of their power was not defined, nor is it known who were regarded as constituent members. They seem to have been assembled by the king as an advisory body. The advice given was of the greatest weight, and the king would not venture to oppose the council, which acted on behalf of the whole people. Its consent was necessary in order to alter the written laws of the kingdom, as in this case when the king proposed a change in the law of succession, and it was regarded as settled that the king could promulgate no measure which the council refused to sanction. The ordinary administrative work was done by the king, who would ask advice of his *hirðstjórar* (leaders of the *hirð*), prelates, and other leading men of his immediate surroundings. His chief adviser and assistant was his chancellor, or the keeper of the great seal (*sigillum*) which was affixed to all royal documents and communications. Those whom the king thus consulted acted

Magnus Lagabøter's code of laws for the kingdom of Norway was based on the older codes, especially those of the Gulathingslag and the Frostathingslag, but it is not as well written as the old laws. It was accepted as the laws of the kingdom in 1274, in the eleventh year of King Magnus' reign. This code marks a new epoch in the development of Norwegian jurisprudence. Although many of the laws are borrowed almost verbatim from the old codes, new principles of judicial procedure were introduced which were wholly unknown to earlier lawmakers. These new features represent a change in the views regarding the punishment of crime, brought about by the rapid social development after the close of the civil wars. The heathen conceptions had given place to Christian ideas; the old warlike aristocracy was disappearing, and in its place the yeoman class was increasing in numbers and social importance. This class was less able to maintain their rights by force. They trusted in the security which the laws could give, and welcomed every change in the codes which would render justice more easily accessible to the common man. It was, no doubt, the purpose of King Magnus to adjust the legal system of the kingdom to the changed social conditions, and the people seem to have been conscious from the start of the need and importance of his legal reforms. This is revealed also in the prologue to the new code where the king says: "You know how the most discreet men of the Gulathingslag have said to us repeatedly that they have heard that we are engaged in revising the lawbooks of the land with the advice of the best men, and they have asked us that their lawbook may be revised in the same way."<sup>1</sup>

In the old jurisprudence crime was not regarded as a wrong against the state, but as an injury to the individual and the family to which he belonged.<sup>2</sup> The peace was regarded as broken between the

as a royal council (*concilium generale*), which could be assembled only on special occasions. T. H. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, p. 140 ff.

<sup>1</sup> *Norges gamle Love*, vol. II., *Nyere Landslov*, prologus.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Brandt, *Nordmændenes gamle Strafferet*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, første række, vol. IV., p. 327 ff.; anden række, vol. IV., p. 20 ff. J. E. Sars, *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, vol. II., p. 217 ff. Konrad Maurer, *Udsigt over de norske Retskilders Historie*. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., p. 488 ff. R. Keyser, *Norges Stats-og Retsforfatning i Middelalderen*, p. 237, 359. E. Hertzberg, *Grundtrækkene i den ældste norske Proces*.



family of the offender and the family of the party injured, and a state of feud, or private war, existed until a settlement was agreed upon. But it was a private affair which concerned only the families and parties involved. The injury done could be compensated for by a fine, which was agreed upon, either by the parties themselves, or by men selected by them for the purpose of giving an estimate. Only when the crime was of a more serious character, so that the offender would be outlawed, or sentenced to pay fine to the king, did the case have to be brought before the *thing*. Here both parties had to produce their own witnesses. The *thing* secured the observance of the necessary legal formalities, and rendered the decision, but there was no prosecuting authority, and whether the injured party sought redress through vengeance, which was considered lawful, or through private settlement, or at the *thing*, it had to be done through his own initiative, and at his own expense, which made justice costly and difficult to obtain.

The "Code of Magnus Lagabøter" introduced great changes in the principles of Norwegian jurisprudence by altering fundamentally the conception of crime, as well as the method of punishing the criminal. It greatly reduced the opportunity of the aggrieved party to seek redress through personal vengeance. In case of murder the criminal should be turned over to royal officials, who would cause him to be tried and sentenced by the thing. If guilty he was declared an outlaw, and any one might kill him; but the relatives of the person slain could not harm the slayer before he was tried and sentenced. The king had the power to pardon the offender, and the plaintiffs in the case would then have to be satisfied with a money payment. In case of other personal injuries personal revenge was also forbidden. The injured party should complain to the royal officials, whose duty it should be to appoint judges to decide the case, and fix a date for the payment of the fine. If the fine was not paid, the plaintiffs might resort to revenge, but the punishment inflicted should be in proportion to the injury. Crime was no longer regarded as a private affair, but as a violation of the laws, and an offense against the state, which should be punished by a fine paid to the king in addition to the fine paid to the party injured. These fines should be assessed by persons chosen by the royal officials, and not by the parties in the

case. The public officers were given greatly increased powers of apprehending, detaining, and punishing criminals. The code also created a system of public prosecution, according to which the *things* might take the initiative in bringing the criminal to trial. It established the following principle: "Every freeborn man who is of age shall bring his own suit, but if he lacks the necessary knowledge or ability, the royal officials shall bring the suit in his behalf."<sup>1</sup> The judges were not only to hear the witnesses and pronounce the decision, as heretofore, but they were instructed to examine carefully the motives of the person accused, and the circumstances in the case; whether the crime was committed without provocation, whether it was done in self-defense, or whether other extenuating circumstances existed. The code says: "For this purpose courts of law are instituted that there the wrong and misdeeds are to be measured, and the decision should be rendered according to the circumstances of the case, as the *thingmænd* and the leader of the court find the truth to be before God and according to their own conscience, and not as many a fool has hitherto answered, that they judged only according to the law."

This new system of jurisprudence, which placed the administration of justice almost exclusively in the hands of the state, increased greatly also the power and dignity of the king. J. E. Sars says: "In the provincial laws (*i.e.* the *Gulathingslov*, the *Frostathingslov*, etc.) he was still regarded as a semi-private person. His authority had the character of certain well-defined rights which once for all had been given to the royal family, a sort of private domain whose well-defined borders he could not overstep without coming into collision with the rest of society. The 'Code of Magnus Lagabøter,' on the other hand, placed him as an exalted majesty above the people. It says that he has his authority from God, and from this theory it deduces a duty of obedience to him to which no fixed limits can be given."<sup>2</sup> The code expresses this principle as follows: "The king has received from God authority in secular matters, but the bishop has received spiritual authority in spiritual matters. . . .

<sup>1</sup> *Norges gamle Love*, vol. II., *Nyere Landslov*, 8. (*i.e.* Code of Magnus Lagabøter). *Norges gamle Love*, vol. II., *Nyere Landslov*, 17.

<sup>2</sup> J. E. Sars, *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, vol. II., p. 227.

Because they are God's officials; secondly, because all recognize that they can in no way dispense with them; thirdly, that God himself deigns to call himself by their name, he is, indeed, in great danger before God, who does not with perfect love and reverence uphold them in the authority to which God has appointed them."<sup>1</sup> Together with the conception that the king was divinely appointed followed also, as a natural corollary, the idea that he was the fountain of justice. The *lagmænd*, who were royal appointees, presided over the *lagthings*. Civil cases could either be brought before the *herredsting* (local *thing*), or it could be submitted to the *lagmand*. From his decision an appeal could be taken to the *lagthing*, which could only lay the matter before the king. The *herredsthings* were assembled and presided over by the *sysselmænd*, who appointed the judges and executed the decrees of the court. In criminal cases in which the extreme penalty was inflicted, an appeal could be made to the king, who possessed the power of pardon.

The change which was thus quietly brought about in the character both of government and jurisprudence was probably greater than the people themselves realized. In pagan times the laws were regarded as springing from the gods themselves, hence they were considered as being permanent, almost unchangeable. In reality the old laws were the embodiment of old customs and usages expressing the nation's sense of legal justice at an earlier stage of development. These customs had, indeed, been modified by early law-givers, but their fundamental common law character still remained. The new code, though sanctioned and adopted by the people, regarded laws and justice as emanating from the king, whom the people owed loyalty and obedience, not only because he was the head of the state and occupied the throne by inherited right and with the people's sanction and consent, but because he was God's anointed, and ruled by divine right. This view is most clearly expressed in the "King's Mirror," written, as already stated, about 1250. The father says to his son: "Now the king, as thou saidst, ought to be wise, well informed, and also upright, so that he fully understands that he is only God's servant, though, he is so highly honored, and elevated to such great dignity in God's service that all bow before him as before

<sup>1</sup> *Norges gamle Love*, vol. II., p. 23.



God himself; because all serve God and the holy name which he (the king) bears, but not his own person. It is therefore the very essence of royalty that all have great fear and awe before the king, so that no one is irreverent when they hear him mentioned.”<sup>1</sup> “The king is appointed to watch over this holy house (*i.e.* the courts of law), and he is placed in the holy seat to guard God’s holy decrees. He shall so judge between men in matters pertaining to the body that he may receive eternal salvation, and likewise all others who watch over the decrees which are justly rendered. In his hands God has placed the sword of punishment, with which he is to strike when it is necessary, as we said that King Solomon did when he subjected Joab to the punishing sword, and many others, with just punishment.”<sup>2</sup>

This development of kingship was not due to a sudden innovation by Magnus Lagabøter. The idea was latent in the nationalism introduced into Norwegian political life by Harald Haarfagre and his successors, Olav Tryggvason and Olav the Saint. Harald Haardraade and Olav Kyrre had nursed it; but King Sverre’s triumph over clergy and aristocracy, and his position as head of both church and state brought it to full unfolding. In Haakon Haakonsson’s reign it was so fully established that he could proclaim it officially in his code without a word of protest being uttered.

After publishing the general code, King Magnus also undertook to revise the “Bjarkeyjarrétr,” or city laws, a work which was no less urgently demanded. In earlier days the towns and trading places, yet in their infancy, did not constitute independent communities, but belonged to the districts in which they were situated. Nidaros stood under the jurisdiction of the Frostathing, Bergen under the Gulathing, Oslo and Tunsberg under the Borgarthing. The growth of commerce, and the development of town life necessitated special legislation for the regulation of the growing urban communities. The “Bjarkeyjarrétr” gave them a character distinct from the rural districts to which they originally belonged, and may be regarded as their first distinct organization as cities. They received their own *mót*, corresponding to the *thing* of the rural districts, where matters pertaining to trade and to the public peace and order were decided. The *mót* consisted of all permanent residents, *húsfastir*

<sup>1</sup> *The King’s Mirror*, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

*menn*, all of whom enjoyed equal political rights. The cities also had their own courts of law; the *xii. manna dómr*, a tribunal of arbitration for settling legal disputes; and courts for trial of civil suits; but in matters of more general character they were still subject to the *lagthings*, the city courts being legal tribunals of secondary rank. The chief executive officer was the *gjaldkeri*, who acted as major and chief of police.<sup>1</sup> This first development of city government took place, as it seems, in the eleventh century during the period of commercial progress in the peaceful reign of Olav Kyrre.

The new code of municipal laws, which was published in 1277, was based on the old laws of Bergen, and seems to have been intended primarily for that city. Bergen was at that time the largest city in Norway, and one of the most important commercial centers on the shores of the North Sea. Its municipal government was highly developed, and might well serve as a model for the municipal laws for all the cities of the kingdom. One of the chief features introduced by the new code was the creation of a *byraad*, or city council of twelve members, which together with the *lagmand* and *gjaldkeri* had charge of the administrative affairs, and acted as judges at the town-mót. The cities received also their own *lagthing* and *lagmænd*, i.e. their own superior courts of law, corresponding to the general *lagthings*, which hitherto had exercised jurisdiction also over the cities. The *lagthing* should consist of twelve members from each quarter or precinct, appointed by the *gjaldkeri*, and the *sysselmand*, a new city official who shared with the *gjaldkeri* the highest administrative authority. The power of the *sysselmand* was gradually increased until he became chairman of the council, and the most important official in the city.<sup>2</sup> The liberties granted the cities by the "Code of Magnus

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel før Hanseaternes Tid*. Ebbe Hertzberg, *Glossarium, Norges gamle Love*, vol. V. T. H. Aschehoug, *De norske Communers Retsforfatning før 1837*. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., p. 569 ff. R. Keyser, *Norges Historie*, vol. II., p. 271 ff. T. H. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, p. 125 ff.

<sup>2</sup> "The *sysselmand* is mentioned in Magnus Lagabøter's municipal code in many instances together with the *gjaldkeri*, but he was, evidently, the latter's superior. He was himself appointed by the king, and according to the provisions of 1346 he took part in the appointment of the *gjaldkeri*." T. H. Aschehoug, *De norske Communers Retsforfatning før 1837*, p. 106.

Lagabøter" made them wholly independent of the rural districts, and facilitated the development of city life and government. Even before this time the merchant class, or citizens of the larger towns, had been regarded as a separate fourth estate, distinct from the nobility, the yeomanry (*bønder*), and the clergy.<sup>1</sup> The new municipal code of laws for the *hird* was also revised by King Magnus. Laws defining the rights and duties of *hirdmænd* had existed from very early times. Occasionally revisions had been undertaken to bring them into harmony with more advanced culture and increased refinement of courtly etiquette. Such revisions had been made especially by Olav the Saint and Olav Kyrre, and the old laws were finally collected in a single code, the "*Hirðskrá*," which was again altered and enlarged by Magnus Lagabøter. In this revised edition we find first the law governing the succession to the throne as it had been changed and adopted in the reign of King Magnus. Then follow the laws dealing with the organization of the *hird*, and the duties and privileges of the various classes of *hirdmænd*. Next to the duke, or jarl, in dignity were the *lendermænd*, who were the king's advisers, and could keep forty armed followers, or *húskarlar*. Equal in rank with the *lendermænd* was the king's chancellor, who was keeper of the great seal, and prepared all royal letters and documents. He was usually an ecclesiastic. Next to the chancellor in dignity was the *stallare*, who represented the king at the *thing*, and acted as the leader of the *hird*. With these is classed also the *merkismaðr*, or royal standard-bearer, and the *skutilsveinar*, or officers of the *hird*, who on special occasions waited at the king's table. To the *skutilsveinar* belonged also the *dróttseti* and *skenkjari*, who had charge of the king's household. The different classes of the *hird*: *hirdmænd*, *gestir*, *húskarlar*, and *kertisveinar*, have already been spoken of. In 1277 King Magnus gave his *lendermænd* the foreign title of "barons"; the *skutilsveinar* were called "knights"; and both classes were styled "lords." This was not only a change of name, but marks the beginning of a new nobility, which appears later besides the king as the real rulers of the kingdom. Professor Aschehoug shows that the new nobility developed from the *hird*, which afforded the chieftain class the opportunity to win honor and promotion in the personal

<sup>1</sup> *The King's Mirror*, Introduction.



service of the king; but the real foundation for their power was their ownership of land.<sup>1</sup> The system of *leding* (O. N. *leiðangr*) was also changed. The people of the sea-coast districts had hitherto been required to supply the navy with arms and provisions, while in time of war they had to furnish armed men, and to render military service in proportion to the value of their land. But as the navy was now but seldom called into active service, the *leding* was changed into a general yearly tax of the same name, which corresponded to the *visþre* tax for the inland districts. An attempt was also made to strengthen the military forces of the kingdom. The *sysselmænd* were instructed to keep a certain number of armed men in each *skibrede*, or naval military district, and those who held benefices under the crown were required to furnish one warrior for every three marks income. But the standing army thus created was not very large.<sup>2</sup>

Many features of Magnus Lagabøter's reign are imperfectly known, owing to the loss of one of the chief sources for this reign, namely the "Magnus Haakonssonssaga," of which only a fragment now remains.<sup>3</sup> King Magnus' oldest son, Olav, died in 1267. His remaining sons were: Eirik, born in 1268, and Haakon, born in 1270. At a *thing* assembled at Bergen in 1273 the five-year-old Eirik received the title of king, as heir apparent to the throne, while Haakon was given the rank of duke. This was, evidently, done to secure an undisturbed succession in conformity with the provisions of the law.

## 72. THE GROWTH OF TRADE AND THE ORIGIN OF A DISTINCT COMMERCIAL POLICY

In Magnus Lagabøter's reign Norwegian commerce reached the greatest volume and the highest development to which it ever attained before its revival in modern times. A definite public policy with

<sup>1</sup> T. H. Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, p. 95 ff.

<sup>2</sup> P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, IV., 535, 549, says 3284 men. T. H. Aschehoug says that this is a misprint for 2284, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark*, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> The other sources of this reign are: The *Bishop Arnessaga*, the *Islandske Annaler*, the public documents, royal letters, and the old laws. Accounts of the closing episodes of the war with Scotland must be gathered chiefly from Scotch chronicles and public documents.

regard to the regulation and promotion of commerce was now developed for the first time. Each city received a fixed territory within which it had a trade monopoly, as trading in the rural districts was gradually restricted, and trafficking with other cities was prohibited. With this centralization of trade in the cities followed also a regulation that only persons possessing a fixed amount of wealth could become merchants. This hastened the development of a well-organized and opulent merchant class. Commerce was carried on, not only with the Norwegian colonies, especially Iceland and Greenland, but also with England and Flanders, and other countries around the North Sea, as well as with Wisby in Gothland, and other commercial towns on the Baltic coast. The English Custom Rolls show that the merchants of Tunsberg, Oslo, Bergen, and Nidaros carried on a lucrative trade with England, and many families, especially in Bergen, seem to have subsisted exclusively on the traffic with the British Isles. "About the year 1300 Lynn was one of the most important commercial towns in England," says Alexander Bugge. "The oldest Custom Roll for this town covers a period from Feb. 5, 1303, till May 19, 1304. In this period there arrived in Lynn and neighboring smaller towns 235 foreign ships."<sup>1</sup> These ships brought goods to the value of £2036. 4s. 9d. The Norwegian ships alone brought goods to the amount of £1067. 38s. 12d., or over one half of the total amount. In the year 1304-1305, according to the same source, goods were imported to the same towns to the value £3688. 12s. 10d. Of this amount the wares brought by Norwegian ships represented the sum of £834. 27s. For the year following, 1305-1306, the figures are: Goods imported, £2798. 14s. 2d.; Norwegian goods, £913. 50s. Other English documents show that the Norwegians carried on a lively trade with London, Boston, Yarmouth, Newcastle, and other towns on the east coast of England. The chief articles of export from Norway to England were timber, herring, dried codfish, furs, falcons, etc.<sup>2</sup> The trade between Norway and

<sup>1</sup> *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel*, p. 134 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Handelen mellem England og Norge indtil Begyndelsen af det 16de Aarhundrede*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, tredje række, vol. IV. In regard to Norway's export of timber see *Patent Rolls*, 31, Edward I., number 45. *Pl. of Patent Rolls*, Edward III., 1334-1338, p. 350. Vogt, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, anden række, vol. V.

England developed in the latter part of the eleventh century after Olav Kyrre had founded the city of Bergen, and this commerce, which was of great importance to both countries, continued to increase until it was destroyed by the Hanseatic League in the fourteenth century. The earliest English commercial treaties were concluded with Norway, and embassies were frequently sent to England by the kings of Norway to bring greetings and presents to the English king. An alliance was formed between King John of England and King Sverre, which seems to have been more than a mere treaty of commerce, since John sent a hundred English engineers to aid Sverre in the siege of Tunsberg in 1201. In the early years of Haakon Haakonsson's reign this treaty was renewed, and King Haakon and Skule Jarl sent many presents and friendly messages to the English king. In a letter to King Haakon, Henry III. says: "We rejoice greatly, and will continue to rejoice, because our realms are so united that merchants from your kingdom may unhindered come to us, and ours likewise to your realm."<sup>1</sup> The treaty seems to have been ratified in 1222. A very lively commerce was also carried on with Flanders and neighboring provinces, at this time the most densely populated districts in northern Europe. Ypres and Gent were famous for their manufacture of fine cloth, and Bruges was one of the chief commercial cities of Europe, where merchants from all countries met. The traders from France, England, Spain, Italy, Lübeck, Hamburg, Norway, etc., did business here in separate streets which were wholly controlled by them. A report of the im-

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Handelen mellem England og Norge, Historisk Tidsskrift*, tredje række, vol. IV.

King Haakon sent Archdeacon Anders of Bergen, and two other men, Asgaut and Asgeir (Osgoð and Askerus), to England to negotiate with King Henry III. Haakon sent with them a number of falcons as a present to King Henry, and he also wrote him a very friendly letter. The messengers remained in England till 1225, when they returned home, bringing rich presents of grain and malt which Henry III. sent King Haakon. King Henry also wrote to the royal officials of Lynn that he had granted permission to the subjects of his dear friend the king of Norway, notwithstanding the embargo, to export from England 1000 quarteria of grain. He also wrote to the bailiffs of Lynn instructing them to receive the Norwegian merchants in a friendly way, as he had granted them permission to bring their wares to Lynn for a term of three years, beginning with the next Michaelmas. *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, vol. XIX., no. 172, 173, 174.



portation to Bruges for the year 1304 enumerates also the articles brought from Norway: "From Norway come falcons, barrel staves (*merrins*), butter, tallow, codliver oil, or whale fat (*oint?*), tanned hides (*cuir bouli?*) and goat-skins, of which cordovan leather is made."<sup>1</sup> Timber was also exported in ever larger quantities, especially to Friesland and Holland. From about 1300 it became one of the leading articles in the export trade of Norway. Norway's commercial relations with Gothland and the regions around the Baltic Sea date from very early times, when the trade in this quarter was carried on almost exclusively by the townsmen of Skiringssal and Tunsberg.<sup>2</sup> At the close of the eleventh century Bergen became the chief seat of the trade with Gothland, and soon grew to rival Wisby, the only great commercial city in the Baltic. It was especially the dried codfish which brought merchants from all lands to Bergen, and the Gothlanders, who had built up a great commerce, were among the first to profit by the trade with Norway. Danish crusaders who visited Norway in 1191 say about Bergen: "Because of its wealth and power it is the most important city in the land. It has a great number of inhabitants, and many monasteries and cloisters. There is such an abundance of dried codfish that it surpasses measure and number. There one can see a multitude of people who come from all quarters; Irish, Greenlanders, English, Germans, Danes, Swedes, and Gothlanders, and yet many more which it would be too difficult to enumerate."<sup>3</sup> Matthew Paris states that there were 200 ships at one time in the Bergen harbor.<sup>4</sup> It is evident that the trade with Gothland continued to flourish in the thirteenth and also in the fourteenth century, but no account of it has been preserved.

In few countries did commerce ever play so important a part in the economic welfare of the people as in Norway, where even many of the necessities of life had to be imported. Alexander Bugge says:

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel*, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Gollendingernes Handel paa England og Norge omkring 1300*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, tredje række, vol. V.

<sup>3</sup> *De Profectione Danorum in Terram Sanctam*, found in Langebek's *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum*, V. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. III., p. 225 ff. *Monumenta Historica Norwegiae*, ed. by G. Storm, p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> Matthæus Parisiensis, vol. V., p. 36 (*Rerum Britannicarum mediæ Aevi Scriptores*), *The Haakon Haakonssonssaga*, translated by O. Rygh, ch. 258.

"Norway imported especially grain. As our country has never been able to produce this necessary article in sufficient quantity, it has had to import it from abroad. This circumstance, together with the fact that Norway possessed a rich supply of raw materials, led the Norsemen to develop navigation and commerce in very early times. Grain was usually carried unground; flour is not often mentioned in the Custom Rolls. Malt was also an important article of importation. Nearly all ships which sailed from England to Norway carried grain and malt. Of other imported articles may be mentioned especially: cloth, more seldom costly fabrics, lead, spices, fancy articles, ale, beans, and honey."<sup>1</sup> The chief articles of export were herring, codfish, timber and lumber, hides and furs, tallow, codliver oil, etc.

Commerce has not only been necessary for the prosperity of the Norwegian people, but it has always been a fair index to the health and vigor of their national life. When commerce flourished, it imparted new stimulus, and roused the latent energies to the accomplishment of great things; its decline was an indication of national weakness and decay. At this time the Norwegian fleets of merchant ships spread their sails on all the seas, and crowded every important harbor in northern Europe. Prosperity had increased rapidly, and the great achievements in literature, art, and culture had not failed to create a reserved but self-conscious national pride. But a dangerous rival was already looming broadly into sight to the southward. This was a growing union of German merchants, which later developed into the Hanseatic League, a powerful organization with which the Norwegian merchant marine waged a long but losing contest. King Sverre seems to have hated the German merchants who visited Bergen in his day, probably as much through a general instinct as because they imported wine which increased drunkenness and corrupted public morals. The "Sverressaga" relates that the German merchants brought large quantities of wine to Bergen, that many people drank to excess, and that in a brawl many were killed or wounded. King Sverre then assembled a *thing*, and addressed the townsfolk as follows: "We desire to thank the Englishmen, who have brought hither linen or flax, wax or caldrons. We

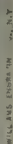
<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel*, p. 166.

desire next to make mention of those who have come from the Orkneys, Shetland, the Faroe Islands or Iceland; all those who have brought here such things as make this land the richer, and we cannot do without. But there are Germans who have come here in great numbers, with large ships, intending to carry away butter and dried fish, of which the exportation much impoverishes the land; and they bring wine instead, which the people strive to purchase, both my men, townsmen, and merchants. From that purchase much evil and no good has arisen, for many have lost life through it, and some their limbs; some carry marks of disfigurement to the end of their days; others suffer disgrace, being wounded or beaten. Overdrinking is the cause. To those Southmen I feel much ill-will for their voyage here; and if they would preserve their lives or property, let them depart hence; their business has become harmful to us and to our realm." The king concludes his speech with a very eloquent plea for temperance. His animosity against the German merchants seems, however, to have had a deeper cause than the not very serious disturbance here mentioned. The keen-eyed king has probably discerned in the thrifty, able, and arrogant German merchants a dangerous rival to Norwegian commerce, "whose business had become harmful" to Norwegian commercial interests. We have seen that his grandson Haakon Haakonsson came into armed conflict with them, but that they sent an ambassador to Norway to make peace with the king, and a commercial treaty was concluded between Norway and Lübeck. From a letter written by King Haakon during the negotiations with Lübeck it appears that the trade with the German cities had already become of great importance to Norway, and that the king was anxious to reestablish peace and friendly relations with them. He says: "You may be assured that we in our kingdom will not injure your citizens in their lawful rights, but that we will readily show you all proper favors, if you will keep the friendship with us inviolable. Send, therefore, in the summer, as usual, your ships to us with the goods which are necessary for our kingdom, namely grain and malt, and permit also our merchants to buy these articles as long as scarcity lasts in our realm." Owing to the growing importance of the German trade King Magnus Lagabøter granted the merchants of Lübeck their





## ICELAND



first charter in Norway, July 18, 1278, in which he calls them his special friends.<sup>1</sup> In August the following year he granted the merchants of Bremen a similar charter. The privileges which they received were not very important, "Magnus was a wise and careful man," says Alexander Bugge. "He saw how dangerous it would be to grant the Germans too great liberties; therefore the privileges which Lübeck and Bremen received were quite insignificant, barely enough to avoid making them his enemies." The initial step was, however, taken in granting special rights to these foreign merchants, who used every future opportunity to tighten their hold on Norwegian trade.

Magnus Lagabøter considered Bergen his capital, and spent most of his time there. He maintained a luxurious court, and as he gave liberal donations to the church and to various religious institutions, because of his great piety, he was often in great financial difficulties, and had to resort to the mischievous practice of debasing the coin to replenish his depleted treasury. But his love of peace, his kind and generous disposition made him very popular, and there was general mourning when he died on the 9th of May, 1280.

### 73. THE REIGN OF EIRIK MAGNUSSON

King Magnus Lagabøter's son Eirik succeeded to the throne at the age of eleven. As he was still too young to rule, a regency was formed consisting of his mother, Queen Ingebjørg, an able and talented lady, and a circle of influential nobles, who acted as her assistants.<sup>2</sup> The most powerful of these were Bjarne Erlingsson, Gaute of Tolga, Bjarne Lodinsson, Hallkel Øgmundsson, Jón Brynjolfsson, Andres Plytt, and the selfish and greedy Audun Huggleiksson Hestakorn, a sinister character, ambitious and unsympathetic, who, like an un-

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, IV., p. 72 f. The letter is found in *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck*, vol. I., p. 142. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., p. 667 ff.

<sup>2</sup> According to the old custom followed in Norway, the king was of age when he became twelve years old. This age limit was extended to eighteen years in the beginning of the thirteenth century, but Eirik was declared to have reached his majority when he became fourteen years old. T. H. Aschehøug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, p. 31. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, III., p. 637.



lucky constellation, trails a deep shadow across the life and reign of the gentle King Eirik Magnusson. The queen and her assistants formed from the start a distinct party. They were the representatives of the aristocracy, they were bitterly opposed to the growing power of the clergy, and exercised great influence over the young king, who was docile almost to weakness. Eirik's younger and more gifted brother, Haakon, had been made duke before King Magnus died, and when the two brothers became old enough to rule, they seem to have exercised the royal power jointly, though Haakon acted alone in all affairs pertaining exclusively to his dukedom. King Eirik was to be crowned in the summer of 1280,<sup>1</sup> but trouble at once arose between the clergy and the nobility as to the nature of the coronation oath which the king should be requested to take. The haughty and inflexible Archbishop Jón demanded that the liberties of the church should be duly acknowledged; especially the concessions which had been obtained during the reign of Magnus Lagabøter. The queen and the nobles were opposed to this, but they finally yielded, and the coronation took place at Bergen on the 2d of July. Archbishop Jón had hoped to secure a permanent ratification of the privileges claimed by the church, the chief of which were exemption from taxation, and freedom from the authority of the secular courts; but he soon learned to his sorrow that the nobles were not disposed to be bound by their promises on this point. Instead of yielding to the archbishop, who would abate nothing of his high claims, the queen and her advisers requested him to submit to them a copy of the resolutions, or statutes, which had been recently adopted at a provincial church council, under the directions of the archbishop and the bishops.<sup>2</sup>

In this document the principles of the canon law regarding the independence of the church and the power of the clergy were set forth in the most uncompromising spirit, and as this had been adopted without consulting the king or his advisers, it gave great offense. A law was promulgated in the king's name for the purpose, as it

<sup>1</sup> In a letter of May 14, 1280, written in the king's name to Edward I. of England, Eirik Magnusson notifies the king of England of his father's death, and of his approaching coronation. *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, vol. XIX., no. 303.

<sup>2</sup> The document is found in *Norges gamle Love*, vol. III., p. 227-241.

was claimed, of amending the "Code of Magnus Lagabøter" on certain points where it was not sufficiently explicit. But the new law made many important provisions, especially with regard to the *leding* tax involving the taxation of church property, by which the concordat, entered into by King Magnus and Archbishop Jón, was broken. No one could doubt that the aristocracy intended this as an open defiance to the archbishop's hierarchic policy.

During the summer of 1281 preparations were made for the king's marriage to Margaret, daughter of Alexander III. of Scotland. The "Chronicon de Lanercost"<sup>1</sup> states that she was so beautiful that King Eirik could not rest before he had sent envoys to Scotland to ask for her hand in marriage; but as he was only in his thirteenth year, and never had seen the princess, he could scarcely be so deeply interested. It was, no doubt, a political marriage, arranged by the nobles, who could, perhaps, figure out that some advantage might be gained through this marriage, as Margaret, in case her only brother should die before her, would fall heir to the throne of Scotland. The wedding was celebrated in the summer of 1281, and Margaret, who was about twenty years old, soon became very popular. She devoted herself to the care of her youthful husband, on whom she exercised a most beneficial influence. But, unfortunately for him, she died in 1283 before he reached the age of mature manhood.

After the royal wedding the struggle between the barons and the clergy was renewed with increased bitterness. The archbishop seems to have demanded that the provisions in the new law which he deemed prejudicial to the interests of the church should be repealed. This request was promptly refused. The king's party refused, also, to accept the code of church laws which the archbishop had prepared, and repealed the privileges granted by Magnus Lagabøter in a letter of September 13, 1277. The cunning Audun Hugleiksson Hestakorn seems to have been the soul in this aggressive anti-church policy. He was related to the royal family, and the king called him his dear relative (*carus consanguineus*). While yet young he came to court, where he rose rapidly through royal favor. Because of his ability and great legal learning he became

<sup>1</sup> *Norges gamle Love*, vol. III., p. 3-12. See P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., 2, p. 19 ff.

the king's *stallare*. He seems to have planned the whole campaign against Archbishop Jón, but he left its execution to others, and when the vengeance of the church fell upon those who were considered its special enemies, Audun Hugleiksson passed unscathed. The archbishop appealed to Pope Martinus IV., but the king's party also sent envoys to plead with the Pope. The Pontiff had heard of Norway as a great naval power, and as he was much taken up with European politics at the time, he gave the archbishop no support. This only added fuel to the fire. When Bishop Arne of Stavanger refused to pay the *leding* tax he was promptly outlawed. Archbishop Jón now resorted to the extreme measure of excommunicating the king, his mother (Queen Ingebjørg), and many of the leading members of the regency, but they answered by driving the archbishop and two of his staunchest supporters, Bishop Anders of Oslo and Bishop Thorfinn of Hamar, into exile. Their possessions were confiscated, and Jón Brynjulfsson was placed in charge of the archbishop's residence and the prebends of the cathedral of Trondhjem. The archbishop fled to Sweden, where he died in December, 1282. His body was not brought back to Trondhjem for interment until the year following, when the excitement caused by the controversy had subsided. Bishops Anders and Thorfinn, who had repaired to Rome to prevail on Pope Martinus IV. to intervene, received but slight satisfaction. After they had waited two years, the Pope finally wrote a letter to King Eirik, admonishing him in a friendly and fatherly tone to have due regard for the rights and liberties of the holy church; but no bull of excommunication was issued. Thorfinn left Rome before the Pontiff had affixed his seal to this letter, and he died shortly afterwards in the monastery of Doest, in Flanders. Bishop Anders returned to Norway, sought reconciliation with the king, and was again installed in his diocese. In 1287 Bishop Jørund of Hamar was finally chosen to succeed Jón as Archbishop of Trondhjem. It is quite evident that King Eirik, who was a mere boy, took no part in this controversy. If he could have ruled, he would, undoubtedly, have continued his father's conciliatory policy. The epithet "Priest-hater" which has been attached to his name is, therefore, wholly undeserved. The clergy was unable to offer further resistance, and the storm of controversy quickly subsided, as matters of



graver importance began to attract general attention. Ever since Queen Ingebjørg had left Denmark in so unceremonious a way to marry Magnus Haakonsson of Norway, strained relations had existed between the two kingdoms. Ingebjørg had received no income from the large estates which were her rightful patrimony, and when she became regent for her son, King Eirik, she took steps to recover her possessions, which the king of Denmark would not surrender. It soon became evident that war could not long be averted, and the Danish king sought to gain the support of the merchants of Lübeck and Hamburg by granting them privileges in the province of Skåne. In Norway the German merchants were growing more unpopular. The queen and her assistants endeavored to enforce the laws against them to the letter, and sought instead to strengthen the friendship with England and Scotland. The marriage of King Eirik to Margaret of Scotland was probably due to this policy, as new ties of friendship between the two kingdoms were thereby created. Before her death Queen Margaret had given birth to a daughter, who was also christened Margaret, and when the only son of Alexander III. died in 1284, this little princess became the nearest heir to the throne of Scotland. The Scotch magnates pledged themselves to acknowledge her as heir to Scotland, Man, and the Hebrides, and to defend her right to the crown.<sup>1</sup> In the summer of 1284 the regency sent an embassy to King Edward I. of England to renew the treaty which had long existed between Norway and England. They were very cordially received, and Edward hoped to bring about a marriage between his son and the Norwegian princess.

The king of Denmark, Eirik Glipping, was opposed by a number of dissatisfied nobles at home, but he showed no disposition to grant the demands of Queen Ingebjørg. With her connivance, but unauthorized by the government, Alv Erlingsson of Thornberg,<sup>2</sup> one of the most powerful of the Norwegian barons, began a series of bold raids on the coast of Denmark. From his castle, Isegram, at the mouth of the Glommen River, he sallied forth into Cattegat and

<sup>1</sup> *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, vol. XIX., no. 309. *Acts of Scotland*, I., p. 82. *Rymeri fœdera*, I., p. 638. See P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., 2, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Alv Erlingsson is the hero of numerous folk-songs, in which he is known as Mindre-Alv.

the Belts, where he took special pleasure in capturing or destroying German merchantmen. Great damage was done by the bold corsair, who is said even to have entered the enemies' ships in disguise, and to have bargained for the prize set on his own head. A number of leading German cities united, and sent a large fleet towards the coast of Norway to stop all Norwegian commerce. In a fight with the Germans Alv at one time captured nine ships, if we may trust the old folk-song, but he was unable to cope with such large forces. The blockade almost isolated Norway commercially, and the government was forced to sue for peace. In the treaty concluded at Kalmar in 1285 Norway agreed to pay an indemnity of 6000 marks of silver, and the merchants of the German cities in question should have the right to buy unhindered whatever they pleased, and export it from Norway. The Norwegian merchants should enjoy the same right in the German cities. Norway was yet able to compete with the Germans, but these foreign merchants had gained a stronger foothold, and their presence soon proved injurious to Norwegian trade.

Even after peace had been concluded with the Germans, the hostility with Denmark continued, and extensive preparations were made to renew the war with that kingdom. Queen Ingebjørg's favorite, Alv Erlingsson of Thornberg (Mindre-Alv, a corruption of Milde Hr. Alv), who had plunged the country into war without authority, was not called to account for his strange conduct, but was instead created jarl, and went to England as special envoy to King Edward I. to secure his help in the war. Alexander III. of Scotland died March 19, 1286, and Princess Margaret of Norway was to succeed to the throne, in conformity with the agreement of 1284. Edward I., who was anxious to bring about a marriage between Margaret and his son Edward, received Alv Jarl very cordially, furnished him a war loan of 2000 marks sterling, and granted permission to knights and others who were willing, to go to Norway to help King Eirik in the war with Denmark. Alv also tried, though without success, to raise military forces in Iceland. Soon after Alv Jarl's return to Norway the Danish king, Eirik Glipping, was assassinated by his rebellious nobles, and the war was thereby averted for a time. Queen Ingebjørg did not live to carry out her plans. She died in March, 1287. The impetuous Alv of Thornberg, who may have been her secret

lover, and who owed his power and influence to her favor, immediately started a revolt in his customary desperate style. He burned a part of the city of Oslo; but King Eirik, aided by his brother Duke Haakon, quickly quelled the uprising, and banished the violent jarl.

Hitherto Queen Ingebjørg and her favorites had shaped, to a large extent, the policy of the government, especially as to its relations with foreign powers, though the king had been of age for some time. But the influence by which he had been dominated ceased at the queen's death, and he could now take the reins into his own hands. The hostile attitude towards Denmark was, nevertheless, continued also by King Eirik, and war broke out in 1289; but the only result of two successive campaigns was a further increase of the growing financial embarrassment of the government. In the second campaign, 1290, the banished Alv Erlingsson of Thornberg again found opportunity to renew his piratic raids, but he was captured by the Danes, and put to death.

King Eirik's attention was more and more absorbed by the question of his daughter Margaret's succession to the throne of Scotland, and the operations against Denmark were for a time discontinued. Edward I. of England was making strenuous efforts to bring about a marriage between his son Edward and Margaret, as he hoped thereby to unite the crowns of Scotland and England. This may have been the reason why the Scotch magnates were no longer willing to abide by their former agreement to defend Margaret's title. Eirik sent an embassy to Edward I. to solicit his aid in securing her recognition, and the king showed his good-will by summoning a council at Salisbury, where the three Norwegian envoys met four Scotch and four English representatives to consider the matter. The Scotch representatives, the bishops of St. Andrews and Glasgow, Sir Robert Bruce the Elder, and Sir John Comyn, agreed to acknowledge Margaret as queen of Scotland, if she came to their country without having contracted any obligation as to marriage, a condition to which the Norwegian envoys agreed. In September or October, 1290, the little six-year-old princess, also called the Maid of Norway, was sent to Scotland, but she fell sick on the stormy voyage across the sea, and died shortly after reaching the Orkneys.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Among the common people a tradition prevailed that the Maid of Norway was not dead, but that she had been sold for a large sum of gold by those



Edward I. now began to act the part of overlord of Scotland. He persuaded the Scotch pretenders, Robert Bruce the Elder, John Balliol, John Comyn, and others, to acknowledge him as the paramount lord of the kingdom, and to submit their claims to his decision. King Eirik also sent ambassadors to urge his claim to the vacant throne as Margaret's heir, but it soon became clear that the only candidates who would be seriously considered were Robert Bruce and John Balliol. Edward I. decided in favor of the latter, who received the crown of Scotland as his vassal. The cordial relations between Norway and England ceased from that moment, and Eirik pursued a policy which brought him into ever closer relations with King Edward's enemies. In 1293 he married Isabella Bruce, granddaughter of Robert Bruce the Elder, and sister of the later King Robert Bruce of Scotland. She bore him a daughter, Ingebjørg, but no son. It seems to have been Eirik's intention to strengthen again the bonds between Norway and Scotland by this marriage, but all closer relations between the two kingdoms now rapidly ceased. Among the common people of Scotland the tradition, nevertheless, continued to live that since the time of the Maid of Norway, the Norwegians claimed Scotland, and would some day return with an armed force, and endeavor to take possession of the country. The Scotch poet, Thomas of Erceldoune (Thomas Rhymer), wrote a popular ditty about the black fleet of Norway which would enter the Firth of Forth. Not till it had left again could they build castles which would last.

It will be seen upon a day  
Between the Bass and Bay  
Craigin and Fidderay —  
The black fleet of Norroway;  
Quhen the black fleet is come and gane  
Then may they bigg thair burgh of lime and stane,  
Quhilk they biggit of straw and hay,  
That will stand till doomesday.<sup>1</sup>

who had her in charge. Ten years later a woman came from Germany to Norway, and claimed to be Princess Margaret. She was tried as an impostor and executed, but she was later regarded as a saint by the common people.

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., 2, p. 204. Bass, or Bass Rock, Craig, and Fidderay, or Fiddra, are isles at the entrance to the Firth

The war with Denmark was renewed in 1293, and after some indecisive campaigns during the following two years a truce was arranged at Hegnesgavel, according to which King Eirik and his brother Duke Haakon should have free use of the Danish estates belonging to their mother, Queen Ingebjørg, and merchants should be allowed to carry on trade unmolested between the two kingdoms. The truce expired in 1298, but it was renewed, and Eirik did not continue his attacks on Denmark.

It is impossible to discover any statesmanlike policy in this protracted quarrel with Denmark, as the advantages which could have been gained even under the most favorable circumstances would scarcely have compensated for the heavy war expenses and the losses incurred by the interruption of commerce. The indemnity to be paid the German merchants for the damages done by Alv Erlingsson of Thornberg, and the outlay incident to the war brought King Eirik into most serious financial difficulties. He was unable to pay the indemnity when it fell due, and the Germans used the opportunity to obtain new privileges in Norway.<sup>1</sup> These were secured to them by a charter of 1294. In 1295, while Edward I. of England was at war with France, King Eirik sent Audun Huggleiksson Hestakorn as plenipotentiary to France for the purpose, as it seems, of obtaining a loan. Audun had risen to great power after Queen Ingebjørg's death. He was the king's favorite, as Alv of Thornberg had been the queen's. He had received the title of jarl, and held the important office of *féhirðir*, or royal treasurer. There can be no doubt that this powerful and unscrupulous baron exercised great influence over the manageable King Eirik, who had learned only too well to submit to those who possessed a will stronger than his own. Audun concluded with France a most remarkable treaty. In consideration of a yearly subsidy of £30,000 he engaged for the kingdom of Norway to furnish for the war with England 200 galleys and 100 large

of Forth. When the black fleet of Norrøway is come and gone, they can build their castles of lime and stone, which they before built of straw and hay.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Handel og Selvstyre før Hanseaterne*, p. 183 ff. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., p. 234 ff. Alexander Bugge, *Handelen mellem England og Norge indtil Begyndelsen av det 15de Aarhundrede*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, tredje række, vol. IV., p. I ff.

ships with arms and provisions for four months of the year, together with 50,000 warriors. He well knew that this was far in excess of Norway's entire military force at this time, and that he contracted for his country obligations which it could not fulfill; but he accomplished his purpose of obtaining money, as the sum of 6000 marks sterling was paid to him immediately. The second part of his mission was to obtain for Duke Haakon the hand of Countess Isabella of Joigny. This request was also granted, but the marriage was never solemnized. Audun returned to Norway about Christmas time, and the king ratified the treaty in March, 1296. If he knew the character of the document when he signed it, and if he acted of his own free will, which is very doubtful, it shows what kind of influence Audun exercised over him. In 1297-1298 Eirik was able to pay the indemnity due the German cities, and it must be inferred that he used the money obtained from France to liquidate this debt. Fortunately the war between France and England stopped, and Norway was never called upon to meet the obligations created by Audun's perfidious bargain. Audun's later career is wrapped in mystery.<sup>1</sup> In 1299 he was imprisoned. Three years later, in the reign of Haakon Magnusson, he was condemned to death and executed, and all his possessions were confiscated. This extreme penalty could be inflicted only for the greatest crime, and although nothing is known as to the nature of his offense, it has been thought that he was convicted of high treason.

About 1287 Duke Haakon built the castle of Akershus, at Oslo. The exact time of its erection cannot be determined, but it is known to have existed in 1300. The building of this castle seems to have been a part of a general plan to enlarge and beautify the city of Oslo. The strategic importance of this town had been repeatedly demonstrated; its beautiful location, its fine harbor, and its proximity to Denmark, Sweden, and the Baltic Sea would also insure its growth as a commercial center. It shows considerable foresight on the part of the young duke when he selected this town for his future capital.

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, vol. IV., 344 ff. Gustav Storm, *Audun Hestakorn og St. Margrete paa Nordnæs*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, anden række, vol. IV., p. 209 ff.





AKERSHUS.



King Eirik Magnusson died in Bergen on the 13th of June, 1299, thirty-one years of age. He had always been sickly, and through a fall from his horse he received in his boyhood severe injuries which further impaired his delicate system. Both physically and intellectually he seems to have been quite insignificant, and though he bore the title of king during the long period of twenty-six years, the helm of state had been controlled by other hands throughout the greater part of his reign. His queen, Isabella Bruce, who at the time of his death was a young woman of twenty, spent her long widowhood quietly at Bergen, where she died about sixty years later.

#### 74. HAAKON MAGNUSSON THE ELDER. THE CHANGE OF NORWAY'S FOREIGN POLICY

King Eirik Magnusson had no sons, and his brother, Duke Haakon, succeeded him on the throne. Haakon was not in Bergen when the king died, as his marriage to Euphemia, daughter of Gunther of Arnstein, Count of Rupin, had just been celebrated at Oslo, but when he received the news, he hastened to Bergen, where he was proclaimed king, August 10, 1299. Later in the fall he and his queen were both crowned in his residence city of Oslo.<sup>1</sup> Haakon

<sup>1</sup> Hitherto the coronation had always taken place at Bergen, where the following kings had been crowned:

Magnus Erlingsson	1164
Sverre	1194
Haakon Haakonsson	1247
Magnus Lagabøter	1261
Eirik Magnusson	1280

This custom was broken when Haakon Magnusson was crowned at Oslo, 1299. R. Keyser, P. A. Munch, and later historians have accepted the account of the *Laurentiussaga* that Haakon was crowned in Trondhjem. The saga says: "Then King Eirik Magnusson died on the 10th of July (should have been the 13th, 1299), and his brother Haakon received the title of king, and he was crowned in Trondhjem with royal consecration. Thither came the most prominent men from Norway and from many other countries. There could be seen the greatest concourse of people in the North." Professor Gustav Storm has shown that the account of the saga is erroneous, that a more trustworthy account is given by another, hitherto unnoticed source found in *Biskop Jens Nilssøns Visitatsbøger og Reiseoptegnelser*, edited by Y. Nielsen, which states that Haakon was crowned in Oslo, 1299. Gustav Storm, *De ældre norske Kongers Kroningsstad, Historisk Tidsskrift*,



Magnusson the Elder, or Haakon V., was twenty-nine years of age when he became king. He had been well educated according to the standards of the times; he could speak and write both Latin and French, and both in appearance and ability he formed a contrast to his weak and sickly brother. The Icelanders called him "Hálegg" (Longlegs), which indicates that he was tall and well-built. His determination to rule according to his own ideas, to make the king's power absolute, and to weaken the power and influence of the aristocracy proves that he was a man of great energy and will-power. But he was rather harsh and autocratic — something of a pedant, and he seems to have lacked the intuitive foresight of a great statesman. "His reign," says Alexander Bugge, "is a turning-point in the history of Norway. With him the older period closes, and a new period begins, not only in the external history, but also in the development of spiritual and material life in Norway." Haakon was the last male member of the royal family, as all side-lines had become extinct. During his brother's reign he had seen the barons exercise an influence in the government which he viewed with deep regret, and in the neighboring kingdoms, Denmark and Sweden, the nobles had formed a strong oligarchy. He feared nothing so much as the recurrence of the conditions which had obtained in the time of Eirik. The establishing of a regency, or the election of a king, if the royal family became extinct, might endanger the stability of the throne. It became his great care, therefore, to secure the succession to the royal family; but this problem became very difficult, as the only child born to him in wedlock was a daughter, Ingebjørg. But neither Ingebjørg, nor his illegitimate daughter Agnes, who was a few years older, could inherit the throne. If Ingebjørg had a legitimate son he would stand in order of succession, but Ingebjørg herself was excluded, as well as Agnes and her children. Haakon succeeded, finally, in bringing about a change in the law of succession by which Ingebjørg

*tredie række*, vol. IV., p. 397 ff. As coronation was not prescribed by law, it was optional with the king whether he would be crowned or not. Storm gives the following table of the coronations of early Norwegian kings:

Bergen	1164	1194	1247	1261	1280
Oslo	1299	1337	1360?	1442	1514
Nidaros	1449	1450	1483		

See also *Islandske Annaler*, edited by Gustav Storm.

herself and her children, and, also, the legitimate sons of Agnes could succeed to the throne. In case a regency had to be created, it should consist of twelve members, whose duties and powers were strictly determined, and the king should not be of age until he was twenty years old. But although the question of succession had been settled, the possibility of a regency had not been eliminated. He feared the *lendermænd*, whose rank and titles had now become almost hereditary. In case of a regency they might again gain the ascendancy, he thought. In order to prevent this he determined to abolish the titles of "jarl" and "lendermand," and to retain only that of "knight." Thereby the old hereditary aristocracy would be destroyed, and the knights, who received their titles from the king, would become personally attached to him. This plan was carried out by a royal decree issued in 1308; but the provision was made that the *lendermænd* then living should retain their title and dignity during their lifetime. He also organized the priests of the royal chapels into a distinct clergy, which should stand under the direct supervision of the king. P. A. Munch observes that Haakon Magnusson was manifestly emulating King Philip the Fair of France, who, at this time, was engaged in humbling the clergy and the aristocracy, and in making the royal power supreme.<sup>1</sup>

Haakon waged no great wars, but the hostile entanglements with Denmark were continued, and to these were also added serious troubles with Sweden, growing out of the closer relations established with that kingdom through the marriage of King Haakon's daughters to Swedish dukes. Aside from the humdrum of these petty wars, carried on at intervals with the neighboring states, in which no clearly defined policy of statesmanship is visible, Haakon's reign was uneventful enough. But in his time, as well as in the days of his brother Eirik, Norway's whole foreign policy underwent a complete change, which was fraught with the gravest consequences to the country's future history. Norway had hitherto maintained the closest relations with the British Isles. New intellectual impulses had been carried over the waves from the West ever since the Viking expeditions began. Great trade centers, like Dublin and Bristol, had been developed by the Norsemen, and the British Isles had formed

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, IV., 2, p. 474 ff.

the pivot of their commercial activity. When England developed her own commerce, her merchants established a lucrative trade with Norway, and the friendly relations always maintained between the two countries prove the importance of this traffic to both peoples. The Norwegians had hitherto been a seafaring and commercial nation. Norway had maintained an insular policy, and had taken no direct part in continental affairs. But Eirik Magnusson and Haakon V. severed the bonds which for centuries had existed between Norway and England, and plunged their country into continental wars and political intrigues. Henceforth the Norwegians ceased to be a maritime nation, and Norway became politically a part of the continent. Personally the kings, no doubt, had the best intentions, and were guided by the most upright motives, but they ruled in a critical period, and had to deal with problems which would have put more sagacious statesmen to a severe test.

We have seen that when Eirik's daughter, the Maid of Norway, died, Edward I. established his overlordship over Scotland. But Eirik, who had hitherto been his friend, married Isabella Bruce, and allied himself thereby with the Scotch. Through the treaty negotiated by Audun Huggleiksson he had also entered into alliance with France. This agreement with France proved to be void of significance, but Eirik had identified himself with Edward's enemies at a moment when England was about to begin her long wars with France and Scotland, and when she was strong enough to wage a successful combat with both of them combined.

The English pursued their trade with Norway very energetically, but they had found dangerous rivals in the German merchants, who had already received important charters and privileges in Norway. The English merchants, conscious of their strength, demanded similar rights, but King Haakon would grant no such concessions. They regarded this attitude of the king as evidence of partiality and ill-will, and began to act with great arrogance. Many outrages were committed which aroused the bitterest resentment among the Norwegians, who made not a few reprisals on English shipping. As long as Edward I. lived, no serious clashes occurred, but when the incompetent Edward II. ascended the throne, the situation grew serious. In 1312 English fishermen on the coast of Bohuslen killed



the royal *sysselmand* and ten others. In Bergen it seems that the *sysselmand*, Bottolf, arrested some English merchants and confiscated their goods, but they resisted to the utmost, and some of the king's men were killed. Exaggerated reports of these disturbances reached England. In a letter to King Haakon Edward II. complains that 400 Englishmen had been imprisoned, and that goods worth £6000 had been confiscated. Haakon answered that he had not imprisoned King Edward's subjects, but that he had permitted them to stay with their friends, and that he had now allowed all, with the exception of six, to return to England.<sup>1</sup>

While the estrangement between Norway and England was growing, Haakon was strengthening the ties of friendship with Scotland. He was still at war with Denmark, at times also with Sweden, and prudence would naturally lead him to welcome every opportunity to establish amicable relations with other powers. Robert Bruce of Scotland, who was waging his heroic fight against England, studied carefully the political situation, and made advances to win Haakon to his side. It is possible that he was aided in this attempt by his sister Isabella, the widow of King Eirik, who was still living quietly at Bergen. The yearly sum which, by the treaty of Perth, Scotland had engaged to pay Norway in return for the cession of the Hebrides had not been paid since Edward I. established his overlordship over Scotland. This also added to Haakon's displeasure with England, and we may suppose that Bruce offered to carry out the provisions of the treaty, if Haakon would recognize him as king of Scotland. Haakon finally decided to act. In 1312 he accepted Bruce's invitation to send envoys to Scotland, and on the 29th of October the treaty of Perth was renewed at Iverness, and most cordial relations were established between the two kingdoms. This did not mend the already strained relations with England, but Edward II. was a weak king, and the important trade relations existing between the two countries contributed to the maintaining of peace.

Over against the German merchants Haakon acted with more energy than his weak predecessor. In 1315 he enforced the already existing rule that only those who imported malt, flour, and grain to

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Handelen mellem England og Norge, Historisk Tidsskrift*, tredje række, vol. IV., p. 1 ff.

Norway should be allowed to export from the kingdom fish and butter. The year following he imposed a high export duty on articles bought and shipped from the country. If any one failed to pay the duty, his ship and goods should be seized. No foreign merchants were allowed to remain in Bergen, Oslo, or Tunsberg longer than the term fixed by law.<sup>1</sup> But the king's quarrel with England proved advantageous to the Germans. With the falling off of English trade their traffic became of ever greater importance to Norway. In the early part of his reign Haakon had been forced by circumstances to treat them with great leniency, and he soon found it necessary to modify the measures by which he had hoped to keep their traffic under control.<sup>2</sup> But to the English merchants he would make no concessions. Haakon had chosen between the German merchants and the English people. Time proved that he had chosen most unwisely. He had estranged the nation with which Norway had hitherto maintained the closest and most profitable relations; he had granted favors and concessions to the country's most dangerous enemy, which before the middle of the century destroyed Norway's commerce and power at sea; and his affiliation with Scotland proved as valueless as that with France.

The war with Denmark, which had lasted about twenty years, was still continued. Haakon was supported by the exiled slayers of King Eirik Glipping and their adherents in Denmark. The exiles held the castles Hunebals and Varberg on the coast of Halland, and the stronghold of Hjelm, built by their leader Mark Stig Andersson in the island of Hjelm, near the coast of Jutland. Haakon made repeated expeditions to Denmark, but no important battles were fought. The Danish king, Eirik Menved, could not resist the Norwegian fleet, and Haakon seems to have made these hostile visits mainly for the purpose of enforcing his claims.

In his anxiety to preserve the royal family from extinction, one of Haakon's great cares was to find suitable husbands for his daughters.

<sup>1</sup> O. A. Øverland, *Norges Historie*, vol. IV., p. 344 ff. J. E. Sars, *Hanseaternes Handelsherredømme, Udsigt over den norske Historie*, III., p. 1 ff. P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, part four, vol. II., p. 578 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Bugge, *Handelen mellem England og Norge, Historisk Tidsskrift*, tredje række, vol. IV. O. A. Øverland, *Norges Historie*, vol. IV., p. 347 ff.

In 1302 Princess Ingebjørg was betrothed to the dashing knight-errant Duke Eirik, son of King Magnus Ladulaas, and brother of King Birger Magnusson of Sweden, while she was a mere child. Duke Eirik visited Oslo, where he spent Christmas, and Queen Euphemia, who found her chief pastime in reading chivalric romances, became quite infatuated with the brilliant duke, in whom she discovered all the knightly qualities of King Arthur's famous knights of the Round Table. Her fondest wish was to see her daughter finally united in marriage with this personified ideal of her dreams. King Haakon does not seem to have been without some suspicion as to his prospective son-in-law's qualities of character, but in 1304 he granted him the important Konghelle as a fief. Duke Eirik was very ambitious, and he felt in no way restrained by any spirit of loyalty. He planned to make himself ruler of all the Scandinavian kingdoms, and Konghelle would form a convenient center for his operations. By marrying Ingebjørg he would secure the throne of Norway; he would drive his brother King Birger from the throne of Sweden, and later he might conquer Denmark. He won his brother, Duke Valdemar, to his side, and the two soon began to quarrel with King Birger, who was less able, and, also, less popular than his more brilliant brother Eirik. They sought aid in Norway, and described the trouble in such a way to Haakon as to gain, for a time, his sympathy and support. But things soon took a turn which he had not expected. In 1306 the dukes treacherously captured King Birger, threw him into prison, and made themselves masters of the kingdom of Sweden. They formed a secret compact, also, with Duke Kristoffer of Denmark, a brother of King Eirik Menved, who was to rebel against his brother and drive him from his throne, and Duke Eirik promised to give Konghelle to the traitorous duke, although this fief did not belong to him, but to King Haakon. Eirik also sought secretly to create a party in Norway, which would favor him, and he attempted to stir up the Norwegian barons against King Haakon. These events led to a complete rupture between the king and his prospective son-in-law. Haakon demanded that Eirik should return to him the fief of Konghelle, but he refused, and war broke out between Sweden and Norway, 1308. King Haakon laid siege to Konghelle, and constructed over against



this stronghold a wooden castle, Bohus, the beginning of the later fortress of Bohus, but after some weeks he marched away without having captured the place. He now concluded peace with Denmark, and entered into alliance with King Eirik Menved. King Birger of Sweden, who had escaped from prison, and had sought refuge in Denmark, was to be restored to his throne, and Princess Ingebjørg was promised in marriage to his son Magnus. Duke Eirik invaded Norway, and captured Oslo, but he could not take the castle of Akershus. He also attacked Jämtland, and defeated a part of Haakon's fleet at Kalfsund, at the mouth of the Göta River, where it had sought refuge in a storm. But the next year, 1309, the dukes found themselves in a most dangerous situation. King Eirik Menved invaded southern Sweden with a large army, and Haakon captured Konghelle. If the two kings had coöperated properly, the dukes would, no doubt, have been defeated, but Haakon paused, and undertook nothing further. Duke Eirik had a powerful ally in Queen Euphemia, who probably used her influence to save her favorite. The Danes could not take the castle of Nyköping, and when winter approached they withdrew and returned home. Haakon also withdrew from Konghelle, and this stronghold again fell into Duke Eirik's hands. In 1310 the dukes concluded peace with King Haakon, and agreed to cede to him Konghelle, Huneahls, Varberg, and the northern part of Halland. King Haakon again agreed to give his daughter Ingebjørg in marriage to Duke Eirik, and his niece, the daughter of King Eirik Magnusson, to Duke Valdemar. The marriage of the two princesses was celebrated at Oslo, September 29, 1312; but Queen Euphemia did not live to see this happy consummation of her fondly cherished hopes, as she died in the month of May the same year. In 1316 a son was born to each of the dukes, and Haakon V. could rejoice to see the succession secured in his own family, as Ingebjørg's son, Magnus Eiriksson, now became heir apparent to the throne. But before long his joy was again turned to grief. The restored King Birger of Sweden, who had not forgotten the ignominy heaped upon him by his brothers, the dukes Eirik and Valdemar, invited them to a feast of reconciliation at the castle of Nyköping, where he seized them and threw them into a dungeon, where they perished. The manner of their death is unknown, but

the rumor spread that they were starved to death, as no marks of violence were seen on their bodies. The shock of this quite unexpected tragedy seems to have shortened King Haakon's life. He died May 8, 1319, forty-nine years of age.

Norway still appeared to be as strong and prosperous as ever heretofore. The hereditary principle, which had been so firmly adhered to, gave the throne great stability and contributed to the centralization of government in the hands of the king, whereby an efficiency in administration and a public order were secured which Denmark and Sweden, torn by internal strife, might well have coveted. The Norwegian fleet was still the strongest in the North, and the colonies were firmly united with the kingdom. But unmistakable signs of decadence, like the creeping shadows of approaching darkness, heralded the passing of Norway's national glory. The growing influence of the Hanseatic merchants, the shrinkage in Norwegian shipping and commerce, and the unhappy change of foreign policy, were not more ominous signs than the decay of the national literature during the first part of the fourteenth century. In King Haakon's reign a considerable literary activity was still maintained. Haakon V., no less than his queen, Euphemia, showed great interest in literature, and stimulated greatly the writing of chivalric romances. "He took great delight in good stories, and caused many romances to be translated from French or Greek to Norwegian."<sup>1</sup> This branch of the Old Norse literature had flourished, especially in Norway, while the historic literature was almost exclusively Icelandic. Through the Viking expeditions, and still more through a lively commercial intercourse, the Norsemen came in direct contact with intellectual life in the British Isles and northern France. In earlier days their scaldic poesy showed marked traces of Irish influence, and we find the same causes still operating later when they produced their great literature of prose romances under the influence of French and English poems of chivalry. When the saga literature produced in Norway is romance, and not history, it only proves what intimate relations the Norsemen maintained with their neighbors across the sea. In many respects the romantic sagas written in Norway bring

<sup>1</sup> E. Sars, *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, II., p. 343. Keyser and Unger, *Strengleikar*, Introduction, p. XI.

evidence of no less originality and literary talent than the histories written by the Icelanders, for although the themes and plots of these stories are of foreign origin, many of the romantic sagas are admirably written, and show many of the best features of the sagaman's art. King Sverre and his successors were well educated. They were thoroughly in sympathy with the cultural life of western Europe, and found great delight in reading these chivalric and romantic tales, as well as the history of their own country, and the lives of the saints. We have seen how they encouraged the writing of history, which is a sufficient proof that they fully appreciated the value of this branch of the old literature; but they also encouraged the writing of romantic sagas for diversion and entertainment. The writing of romances is, therefore, a part of the original and creative literary activity which produced the great Old Norse literature, and when Haakon V. "took great delight in good stories, and caused many romances to be translated from the French or Greek to Norwegian," he only continued the literary activity of his illustrious ancestors. But a notable change had, nevertheless, come. The saga style had ceased to be a suitable vehicle for the thoughts and sentiments engendered in an age of chivalry. Adapted to this purpose it rapidly degenerated, and the romances were becoming verbose and formless nonsense. Before the middle of the century literary productivity ceased, and as the classic saga literature became foreign to the changed spirit of the age, it was no longer read, and was gradually forgotten. At the same time a new literature was springing up among the common people, fostered by impulses received from Germany and Denmark. This new literature of tales, ballads, and folk-songs — half epic and half lyric — afforded new opportunity for a suitable expression of the thoughts and feelings of the age. Norway's first great literary period was closed. The shrill blasts of the war trumpets died away, and the martial notes of the scaldic poetry changed into cooing love-songs and plaintive ballads. The manly vigor which had raised the Norsemen to power and prominence was ebbing, and growing decay had fallen upon national life like an evil destiny. But the old forms of culture passed, only to germinate after a period of rest into more perfect growth. It is the ebb and flow of human life, both alike necessary to its constant rejuvenation and its permanent progress.



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