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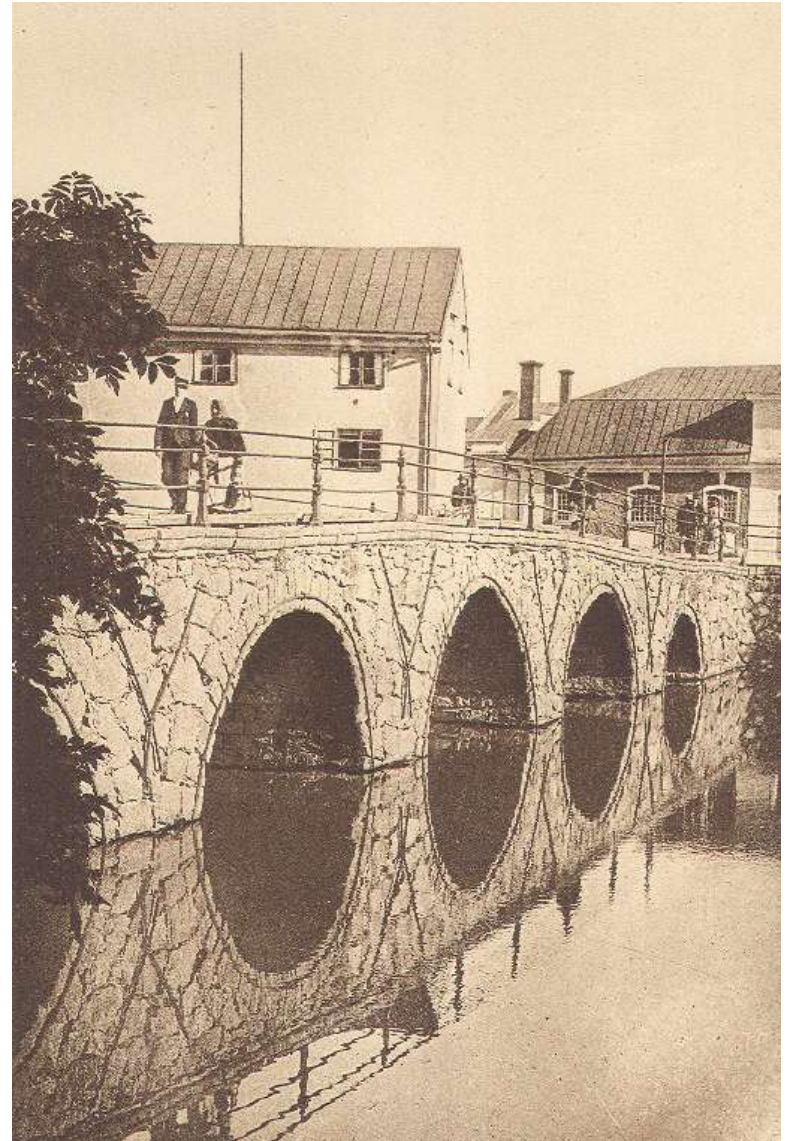
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OLD BRIDGE AT OEREBRO.

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CHAPTER I

HOW KING ROLF WON HIS BRIDE

At one time very many centuries ago, we cannot say just when, for this was in the days of the early legends, there reigned over Upsala in Sweden a king named Erik. He had no son and only one daughter, but this girl was worth a dozen sons and daughters of some kings. Torborg she was named, and there were few women so wise and beautiful and few men so strong and valiant. She cared nothing for women's work, but was the equal of any man of the court in riding, fighting with sword and shield, and other athletic sports. This troubled King Erik very much, for he thought that the princess should sit in her maiden chamber like other kings' daughters; but she told him that when she came to succeed him on the throne she would need to know how to defend her kingdom, and now was the time for her to learn.

That she might become the better fitted to rule, she asked him to give her some province to govern, and this he did, making her queen of a third of his kingdom, and giving her an army of stout and bold warriors. Her court was held at Ulleraker in Upland, and here she would not let any one treat her as a woman, dressing always in men's clothing and bidding her men to call her King Torborg. To fail in this would be at risk of their heads. As her fame spread abroad, there were many who came to court her, for she was at once very beautiful and the heiress of a great kingdom. But she treated all such with laughter and contempt. It is even said that she put out the eyes of some, and cut off the hands and feet of others, but this we do not like to believe. At any rate, she drove away those who troubled her too much with lance and spear. So it was plain that only a strong and bold man could win this warlike maiden for his wife.

At that time King Götrik who ruled in Gothland, a country in southern Sweden, had sent his younger son Rolf to be

brought up at the court of his foster-brother King Ring of Denmark. His elder son Kettil he kept at home, but did not love him much on account of his pride and obstinacy. So it happened that when Götrik was very old and like to die, he decided that Rolf, who was very tall and strong, and very fit and able, should succeed him, though he was the younger son. All agreed to this, even Kettil, so Rolf was sent for and made king of Gothland, which he ruled with skill and valor.

One day Rolf and Kettil, who loved each other as brothers should, were talking together, and Kettil said that one thing was wanting to the glory and honor of Rolf's rule, and that was a queen of noble birth and goodly presence.

"And whom have you in mind?" asked Rolf.

"There is Torborg, the king of Upsala's daughter. If you can win her for wife it will be the greatest marriage in the north."

To this advice Rolf would not listen. He had heard of how the shrewish Torborg treated her suitors, and felt that wooing her would be like taking a wild wolf by the ears. So he stayed unmarried for several years more, though Kettil often spoke of the matter, and one day said to him contemptuously:

"Many a man has a large body with little courage, and I fear you are such a one; for though you stand as a man, you do not dare to speak to a woman."

"I will show you that I am a man," said Rolf, very angry at these words.

He sent to Denmark for his foster-brother Ingiald, son of King Ring, and when he came the two set out with sixty armed men for the court of King Erik in Upsala.

One morning, about this time, Queen Ingerd of Upsala awoke and told King Erik of a strange dream she had dreamed. She had seen in her sleep a troop of wolves running from Gothland towards Sweden, a great lion and a little bear leading them; but these, instead of being fierce and shaggy, were smooth-haired and gentle.

"What do you think it means?" asked the king.

"I think that the lion is the ghost of a king, and that the white bear is some king's son, the wolves being their followers. I fancy it means that Rolf of Gothland and Ingiald of Denmark are coming hither, bent on a mission of peace, since they appear so tame. Do you think that King Rolf is coming to woo our daughter, Torborg?"

"Nonsense, woman; the king of so small a realm would show great assurance to seek for wife so great a princess as our daughter."

So when Rolf and his followers came to Upsala King Erik showed his displeasure, inviting him to his table but giving him no seat of honor at the feast. Rolf sat silent and angry at this treatment, but when Erik asked him why he had come, he told him courteously enough the reason of his visit.

"I know how fond you Goths are of a joke," said Erik, with a laugh. "You have a way of saying one thing when you mean another. But I can guess what brings you. Gothland is little and its revenues are small and you have many people to keep and feed. Food is now scarce in Gothland, and you have come here that you may not suffer from hunger. It was a good thought for you to come to Upsala for help, and you are welcome to go about my kingdom with your men for a month; then you can return home plump and well fed."

This jesting speech made Rolf very angry, though he said little in reply. But when the king told Queen Ingerd that evening what he had said she was much displeased.

"King Rolf may have a small kingdom," she said, "but he has gained fame by his courage and ability, and is as powerful as many kings with a wider rule. You did not well to mock him."

The next day Erik, thus admonished, begged Rolf's pardon, saying that the ale had made him speak foolishly, and thus he became reconciled with his guest. As for Rolf's desire to win his daughter, he would first have to gain Torborg's consent,

which would be no easy matter. The king promised not to interfere but would do no more.

Soon after this Rolf and his men arrived at Ulleraker, reaching there when the whole of Torborg's court were assembled in the great hall. Fearing a hostile reception, Rolf took wary precautions. He choose twelve of his stoutest men, with himself and Ingiald at their head, to enter the court with drawn swords in their hands. If they were attacked, they were to go out backward fighting, but they were bidden to conduct themselves like men and let nothing alarm them. The others remained outside, keeping the horses in readiness to mount.

When the party entered the hall, Rolf at their head, all there were struck with his great size and noble aspect. No one assailed them and he walked up the hall, on whose high seat at the front he saw what seemed a tall and finely formed man, dressed in royal robes. Knowing that this must be the haughty princess whose hand he had come to seek, he took off his helmet, bowed low before her, and began to tell what brought him to her court.

He had scarcely begun when she stopped him. She said that he must be joking; that she knew his real errand was to get food and that this she would give him; but he must apply for it to the chief of the kitchen, not to her.

Rolf had not come so far to be laughed out of the court, and he sturdily went on with what he had to say, speaking to her as a woman, and demanding her hand in marriage. At this she changed her jesting manner, her cheeks grew red with anger, and springing up, she seized her weapons and called upon her men to lay hold upon and bind the fool that had dared affront their monarch. Shouting and confusion followed and a sharp attack was made on the intruders, but Rolf put on his helmet and bade his men to retire, which they did in good order. He walked backward through the whole hall, shield on arm and sword in hand, parrying and dealing blows, so that when he left the room, though no blade had touched him, a dozen of the courtiers lay

bleeding. But being greatly overmatched, he ordered his men to mount, and they rode away unscathed.

Back to West Gothland they went and told Kettil how poorly they had fared.

"You have suffered a sore insult and affront at a woman's hand," said Kettil, "and my advice is that it be speedily avenged," but Rolf replied that he was not yet ready to act.

Torborg had not taken the trouble to ask the name of her wooer, but when she learned who it was she knew very well that the matter had not reached its end and that her would-be lover would return stronger than before. As she did not want him or any man for husband she made great preparations for an attack, gathering a large body of warriors and having a wall of great strength and the finest workmanship built round the town. It was so high and thick that no battering ram could shake it, while water-cisterns were built into it to put out the fire if any one sought to burn it. From this we may judge that the wall was of wood. This done, Torborg made merry with her court, thinking that no lover in the wide world would now venture to annoy her.

She did not know the kind of man she had to deal with in King Rolf. He had fought with men and fancied he was fit to conquer a woman. The next summer he had a battle with Asmund, son of the king of Scotland, and when it was over they became friends and foster-brothers and went on viking cruises together. Next spring Rolf armed and manned six ships and, taking Kettil and Ingiald and Asmund with him, set sail for Upsala. He proposed now to woo the warrior princess in another fashion.

Queen Ingerd about this time dreamed again, her dream being the same as before, except that this time there were two white bears, and a hog which was small but spiteful, its bristles pointing forward and its mouth snarling as if ready to bite anything that came before it. And the bears did not look as gentle as before, but seemed irritated.

She interpreted this dream to mean that Rolf was coming again to avenge the affront he had received, and that the fierce hog must stand for Kettil, of whose character she had been told.

When Rolf now arrived King Erik received him with honor, and again agreed to remain his friend, no matter how stormy a courtship he might have. From Upsala he set out for Ulleraker and sent a herald to Princess Torborg, asking speech with her. She presented herself at the top of the wall, surrounded by armed men. King Rolf renewed his suit, and told her plainly that if she did not accept his proposal he had come to burn the town and slay every man within its walls.

"You shall first serve as a goatherd in West Gothland before you get any power over me and mine," answered Torborg haughtily.

Rolf lost no time in assailing the walls, but found them stoutly defended. The Swedes within poured boiling water and hot pitch on their assailants, threw down stones and beams, and hurled spears and arrows from the wall. For fourteen days the siege continued without effect, until the Goths, weary of their hard fighting and the mockery of the defenders, began to complain and wanted to return home. The townspeople derided them by showing costly goods from the ramparts and bidding them come and take them, and ridiculed them in many other ways.

King Rolf now saw that he must take other measures. He had a cover constructed of boards and brushwood and supported by stout beams, making a strong roof which was set against the wall and defied all the boiling water and missiles of the Swedes. Under its shelter a hole was dug through the wall and soon the Goths were in the queen's citadel.

To their surprise they found it empty. Not a soul was to be seen, but in every room they found well-cooked food and many articles of value.

"This is a fine capture," said Kettil. "Let us enjoy ourselves and divide the spoil."

"Not so," said Rolf. "It is a lure to draw us off. I will not rest till I have the princess in my power."

They sought the palace through and through, but no one was there. Finally a secret passage was discovered, leading underground, and the king entered it, the others following. They emerged in a forest where they found Torborg and all her men and where a sharp battle began. No warrior could have fought more bravely than the man-like princess, and her men stood up for her boldly, but they gradually gave way before the onset of Rolf and his tried warriors.

Rolf now bade Kettil to take Torborg prisoner, but not to wound her, saying that it would be shameful to use arms against a woman. Kettil sprang forward and gave the princess a sharp blow with the flat of his sword, reviling her at the same time with rude words. In return, Torborg gave him so hard a blow on the ear with her battle-axe that he fell prostrate, with his heels in the air.

"That is the way we treat our dogs when they bark too loud," she said.

Kettil sprang up, burning with anger, but at the same moment Rolf rushed forward and grasped the warlike princess in his powerful arms, so that she was forced to surrender.

He told her that she was his prisoner, but that he did not wish to win a wife in the viking manner and that he would leave it to her father to judge what should be done. Taken captive in his arms, there was nothing else for her to do, and she went with him to Upsala, where King Erik was delighted at Rolf's success. As for the warlike princess, she laid down her arms at her father's feet, put on a woman's garments, and seemed glad enough to have been won as a bride in so warlike a manner and by so heroic a wooer.

Soon after this the marriage took place, the festivities being the grandest the court could afford and lasting for fourteen days, after which Rolf and his followers returned home, his new queen with him. The sagas say, as we can well believe after so strenuous a wooing, that afterwards King Rolf and Queen Torborg lived a long and happy life.

CHAPTER II

RAGNAR LODBROK AND HIS WIVES AND SONS

The old sagas, or hero tales of the north, are full of stories of enchantment and strange marvels. We have told one of these tales in the record of King Rolf and Princess Torborg. We have now to tell that of Ragnar Lodbrok, a hero king of the early days, whose story is full of magical incidents. That this king reigned and was a famous man in his days there is no reason to doubt, but around his career gathered many fables, as was apt to be the case with the legends of great men in those days. To show what these tales were like we take from the sagas the marvellous record of Ragnar and his wives.

In East Gothland in the ancient days there lived a mighty jarl, or earl, named Herröd, who was descended from the gods. He had a daughter named Tora, who was famed for her beauty and virtue, but proved as hard to win for a wife as Princess Torborg had been. She dwelt in a high room which had a wall built around it like a castle, and was called Castle Deer, because she surpassed all other women in beauty as much as the deer surpasses all other animals.

Her father, who was very fond of her, gave her as a toy a small and wonderfully beautiful snake which he had received in a charmed egg in Bjarmaland. It proved to be an unwelcome gift. The snake was at first coiled in a little box, but soon grew until the box would not hold it, and in time was so big that the room would not hold it. So huge did it become in the end that it lay coiled in a ring around the outer walls, being so long that its head and tail touched.

It got to be so vicious that no one dared come near it except the maiden and the man who fed it, and his task was no

light one, for it devoured an ox at a single meal. The jarl was sorry enough now that he had given his daughter such a present. It was one not easy to get rid of, dread of the snake having spread far and wide, and though he offered his daughter with a great dower to the man who should kill it, no one for a long time ventured to strive for the reward. The venom which it spat out was enough to destroy any warrior.

At length a suitor for the hand of the lovely princess was found in Ragnar, the young son of Sigurd Ring, then one of the greatest monarchs of the age, with all Sweden and Norway under his sway, as the sagas tell. Ragnar, though still a boy, had gained fame as a dauntless warrior, and was a fit man to dare the venture with the great snake, though for a long time he seemed to pay no heed to the princess.

But meanwhile he had made for himself a strange coat. It was wrought out of a hairy hide, which he boiled in pitch, drew through sand, and then dried and hardened in the sun. The next summer he sailed to East Gothland, hid his ships in a small bay, and at dawn of the next day proceeded toward the maiden's bower, spear in hand and wearing his strange coat.

There lay the dreaded serpent, coiled in a ring round the wall. Ragnar, nothing daunted, struck it boldly with his spear, and before it could move in defence struck it a second blow, pressing the spear until it pierced through the monster's body. So fiercely did the snake struggle that the spear broke in two, and it would have destroyed Ragnar with the venom it poured out if he had not worn his invulnerable coat.

The noise of the struggle and the fierceness of the snake's convulsions, which shook the whole tower, roused Tora and her maids, and she looked from her window to see what it meant. She saw there a tall man, but could not distinguish his features in the grey dawn. The serpent was now in its death throes, though this she did not know, and she called out:

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

Ragnar answered in this verse:

"For the maid fair and wise
I would venture my life.
The scale-fish got its death wound
From a youth of fifteen!"

Then he went away, taking the broken handle of the spear with him. Tora listened in surprise, for she learned from the verse that a boy of fifteen had slain the great monster, and she marvelled at his great size for his years, wondering if he were man or wizard. When day came she told her father of the strange event, and the jarl drew out the broken spear from the snake, finding it to be so heavy that few men could have lifted it.

Who had killed the serpent and earned the reward? The jarl sent a mandate throughout his kingdom, calling all men together, and when they came he told them the story of the snake's death, and bade him who possessed the handle of the spear to present it, as he would keep his word with any one, high or low.

Ragnar and his men stood on the edge of the throng as the broken head of the spear was passed round, no one being able to present the handle fitting it. At length it came to Ragnar, and he drew forth the handle from his cloak, showing that the broken ends fitted exactly. A great feast for the victor was now given by Jarl Herröd, and when Ragnar saw the loveliness of Tora, he was glad to ask her for his queen, while she was equally glad to have such a hero for her spouse. A splendid bridal followed and the victor took his beautiful bride home.

This exploit gave Ragnar great fame and he received the surname of Lodbrok, on account of the strange coat he had worn. Ragnar and Tora lived happily together but not to old age, for after some years she took sick and died, leaving two sons, Erik and Agnar, who grew up to be strong and beautiful youths. Ragnar had loved her greatly and after her death said he would marry no other woman. Nor could he comfort himself at home

but began to wander abroad on warlike voyages, that he might drive away his sorrow.

Leaving Ragnar Lodbrok to his travels, let us take up the strange story of another fair maiden, who was to have much to do with his future life. She was named Aslög and was the daughter of King Sigurd Fafnisbane, of Germany. Soon after she was born enemies of her father killed him and her mother and all of his race they could find. Her life was saved by Heimer, foster-father to her mother, who to get her away from the murderers had a large harp made with a hollow frame, in which he hid the child and all the treasure he could find.

Then he wandered far as a travelling harper, letting the child out when they came to solitary woods, and when she wept and moaned silencing her by striking the strings of the harp. After long journeying he came to a cottage in Norway called Spangerhed, where lived a beggar and his wife. Seeing a gold bracelet under Heimer's rags, and some rich embroidery sticking from the harp, the beggar and his wife killed him during the night and broke open the harp. They found in it the wealth they sought, but the discovery of the pretty little girl troubled them.

"What shall we do with this child?" he asked.

"We will bring her up as our own, and name her Kraka, after my mother," said his wife.

"But no one will believe that ugly old people like us can have so fair a daughter."

"Let me manage it," said the wife. "I will put tar on her head so that her hair will not be too long, and keep her in ragged clothes and at the hardest work."

This they did and little Aslög grew up as a beggar's child. And as she kept strangely silent, never speaking, all people thought her dumb.

One day, when Aslög was well grown, Ragnar Lorbok came that way, cruising along the Norway coast. The crew was out of bread and men were sent ashore to bake some at a house

they saw in the distance. This house was Spangerhed, where Kraka dwelt.

She had seen the ships come up and the men land, and was ashamed to be seen by strangers as she was, so she washed herself and combed her hair, though she had been bidden never to do so. So long and thick had her hair grown that it reached to the ground and covered her completely.

When the cooks came to bake their bread they were so surprised at the beauty of the maiden that they let the loaves burn while looking at her, and on being blamed for this carelessness on their return to the ship said they could not help it, for they had been bewitched by the face of the loveliest maiden they had ever gazed upon.

"She cannot be as lovely as Tora was," said Ragnar.

"There was never a lovelier woman," they declared, and Ragnar was so struck by their story that he sent messengers ashore to learn if they were telling the truth. If it were so, he said, if Kraka were as beautiful as Tora, they were bidden to bring her to him neither dressed nor undressed, neither fasting nor satisfied, neither alone nor in company. The messengers found the maiden as fair as the cooks had said and repeated the king's demand.

"Your king must be out of his mind, to send such a message," said the beggar's wife; but Kraka told them that she would come as their king wished, but not until the next morning.

The next day she came to the shore where the ship lay. She was completely covered with her splendid hair, worn like a net around her. She had eaten an onion before coming, and had with her the old beggar's sheep dog; so that she had fulfilled Ragnar's three demands.

Her wit highly pleased Ragnar and he asked her to come on board, but she would not do so until she had been promised peace and safety. When she was taken to the cabin Ragnar looked at her in delight. He thought that she surpassed Tora in

beauty, and offered a prayer to Odin, asking for the love of the maiden. Then he took the gold-embroidered dress which Tora had worn and offered it to Kraka, saying in verse, in the fashion of those times:

"Will you have Tora's robe? It suits you well.
Her white hands have played upon it.
Lovely and kind was she to me until death."

Kraka answered, also in verse:

"I dare not take the gold-embroidered robe which adorned Tora the fair.

It suits not me. Kraka am I called in coal-black baize.

I have ever herded goats on the stones by the sea-shore."

"And now I will go home," she added. "If the king's mind does not change he can send for me when he will."

Then she went back to the beggar's cottage and Ragnar sailed in his ship away.

Of course every one knows without telling what came from such an invitation. It was not long before Ragnar was back with his ship and he found Kraka quite ready to go with him. And when they reached his home a splendid entertainment was given, during which the marriage between Ragnar and Kraka took place, everything being rich and brilliant and all the great lords of the kingdom being present. It will be seen that, though the Princess Aslög pretended to be dumb during her years of youthful life in the beggar's cottage, she found her voice and her wits with full effect when the time came to use them.

She was now the queen of a great kingdom, and lived for many years happily with her husband Ragnar. And among her children were two sons who were very different from other men. The oldest was called Iwar. He grew up to be tall and strong, though there were no bones in his body, but only gristle, so that he could not stand, but had to be carried everywhere on a litter. Yet he was very wise and prudent. The second gained the name of Ironside, and was so tough of skin that he wore no armor in

war, but fought with his bare body without being wounded. To the people this seemed the work of magic. There were two others who were like other men.

Since the older brothers, the sons of Tora, had long been notable as warriors, the younger brothers, when they grew up, became eager to win fame and fortune also, and they went abroad on warlike expeditions, fighting many battles, winning many victories, and gaining much riches.

But Iwar, the boneless one, was not satisfied with this common fighting, but wanted to perform some great exploit, that would give them a reputation everywhere for courage. There was the town of Hvitaby (now Whitby, in Yorkshire, England), which many great warriors had attacked, their father among them, but all had been driven back by the power of magic or necromancy. If they could take this stronghold it would give them infinite honor, said Iwar, and to this his brothers agreed.

To Hvitaby they sailed, and leaving their younger brother Ragnwald in charge of the ships, because they thought him too young to take part in so hard a battle, they marched against the town. The place was ably defended, not only by men but by two magical heifers, their charm being that no man could stand before them or even listen to their lowing. When these beasts were loosed and ran out towards the troops, the men were so scared by the terrible sound of their voices that Ironside had all he could do to keep them from a panic flight, and many of them fell prostrate. But Iwar, who could not stand, but was carried into battle upon shields, took his bow and sent his arrows with such skill and strength that both the magic heifers were slain.

Then courage came back to the troops and the townsmen were filled with terror. And in the midst of the fighting Ragnwald came up with the men left to guard the ships. He was determined to win some of the glory of the exploit and attacked the townsmen with fury, rushing into their ranks until he was cut down. But in the end the townsmen were defeated and the valiant brothers returned with great honor and spoil, after

destroying the castle. Thus it was that the sons of Kraka gained reputation as valiant warriors.

But meanwhile Kraka herself was like to lose her queenly station, for Ragnar visited King Osten of Upsala who had a beautiful daughter named Ingeborg. On seeing her, his men began to say that it would be more fitting for their king to have this lovely princess for his wife, instead of a beggar's daughter like Kraka. Ragnar heard this evil counsel, and was so affected by it that he became betrothed to Ingeborg. When he went home he bade his men to say nothing about this betrothal, yet in some way Kraka came to know of it. That night she asked Ragnar for news and he said he had none to tell.

"If you do not care to tell me news," said Kraka, "I will tell you some. It is not well done for a king to affianc himself to one woman when he already has another for his wife. And, since your men chose to speak of me as a beggar's daughter, let me tell you that I am no such thing, but a king's daughter and of much higher birth than your new love Ingeborg."

"What fable is this you tell me?" said Ragnar. "Who, then, were your parents?"

"My father was King Sigurd Fafnisbane and my mother was the Amazon Brynhilda, daughter of King Budle."

"Do you ask me to believe that the daughter of these great people was named Kraka and brought up in a peasant's hut?"

The queen now told him that her real name was Aslög and related all the events of her early life. And as a sign that she spoke the truth, she said that her next child, soon to be born, would be a son and would have a snake in his eye.

It came out as she said, the boy, when born, having the strange sign of which she had spoken, so that he was given a name that meant Sigurd Snake-in-Eye. So rejoiced was Ragnar at this that he ceased to think of Ingeborg and all his old love for Kraka, or Aslög as she was now called, came back.

The remainder of the lives of Ragnar and Aslög and of their warlike sons is full of valiant deeds and magic arts, far too long to be told here, but which gave them a high place in the legendary lore of the north, in which Ragnar Lodbrok is one of the chief heroes. At length Ragnar was taken prisoner by King Ethelred of England and thrown into a pit full of serpents, where he died. Afterwards Iwar and his brothers invaded England, conquered that country, and avenged their father by putting Ethelred to death by torture. Iwar took England for his kingdom and the realms of the north were divided among his brothers, and many more were the wars they had, until death ended the career of these heroes of northern legend.

CHAPTER III

HAROLD FAIR-HAIRED FOUNDS THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY

To the far-off island of Iceland we must go for the story of the early days of Norway. In that frosty isle, not torn by war or rent by tumult, the people, sitting before their winter fires, had much time to think and write, and it is to Iceland we owe the story of the gods of the north and of the Scandinavian kings of heathen times. One of these writers, Snorri Sturlasson by name, has left us a famous book, "The Sagas of the Kings of Norway," in which he tells of a long line of ancient kings, who were descended from the gods. Here are some of their names, Aun the Old, Ingjald III-Ruler, Olaf the Wood-Cutter, Halfdan Whiteleg, and Halfdan the Swarthy. There were others whom we need not name, and of these mentioned the names must suffice, for all we know of them is legend, not truth.

In those times there was no kingdom of Norway, but a number of petty provinces, ruled over by warriors who are spoken of as kings, but whose rule was not very wide. Most powerful among them was Halfdan the Swarthy, who was only a year old in 810 when his father was killed in battle.

He lived for many years, and he and his wife Ragnhild had strange dreams. The queen dreamed that a thorn which she took out of her clothes grew in her hands until one end of it took root in the ground and the other shot up into the air. It kept on growing until it was a great tree, so high that she could barely see its top. The lower part of it was blood-red, higher up it was bright green, and the spreading branches were white as snow. So widely they spread that they seemed to shade the whole country of Norway.

King Halfdan did not like it that his wife had such strange dreams and he had none. He asked a sage why this was so, and was told that if he wanted to have dreams as strange he must sleep in a pig-sty. A queer recipe for dreams, one would think, but the king tried it, and dreamed that his hair grew long and beautiful and hung in bright locks over his shoulders, some of them down to his waist, and one, the brightest and most beautiful of all, still farther down.

When he told the sage of this dream, the wise man said it meant that from him was to come a mighty race of kings, one of whom should be the greatest and most glorious of them all. This great hero, Snorri tells us, was supposed to be Olaf the Saint, who reigned two hundred years later, and under whom Christianity first flourished in Norway.

Soon after these dreams a son was born to the queen, who was named Harold. A bright, handsome lad he grew to be, wise of mind and strong of body and winning the favor of all who knew him. Many tales which we cannot believe are told of his boyhood. Here is one of them. Once when the king was seated at the Yuletide feast all the meats and the ale disappeared from the table, leaving an empty board for the monarch and his guests. There was present a Finn who was said to be a sorcerer, and him the king put to the torture, to find out who had done this thing. Young Harold, displeased with his father's act, rescued the Finn from his tormentors and went with him to the mountains.

On they went, miles and leagues away, until they came to a place where a Finnish chief was holding a great feast. Harold stayed there until spring, when he told his host that he must return to his father's halls. Then the chief said:

"King Halfdan was very angry when I took his meat and ale from him last winter, and now I will reward you with good tidings for what you did. Your father is dead and his kingdom waits for you to inherit. And some day you will rule over all Norway."

Harold found it to be as the Finn had said, and thus in 860, when he was only ten years old, he came to the throne. He was young to be at the head of a turbulent people and some ambitious men there were who sought to take advantage of his youth, but his uncle guardian fought for him and put them all down. Harold was now the greatest among the petty kings of Norway and a wish to be ruler of the whole land grew up in his soul.

Here comes in a story which may not be all true, but is pretty enough to tell. It is to the effect that love drove Harold to strive for the kingdom. Old Snorri tells the story, which runs this way.

King Erik of Hördaland had a fair daughter named Gyda, the fame of whose beauty reached Harold's ears and he sent messengers to win her for himself. But the maid was proud and haughty and sent back word:

"Tell your master that I will not yield myself to any man who has only a few districts for his kingdom. Is there no king in the land who can conquer all Norway, as King Erik has conquered Sweden and King Gorm Denmark?"

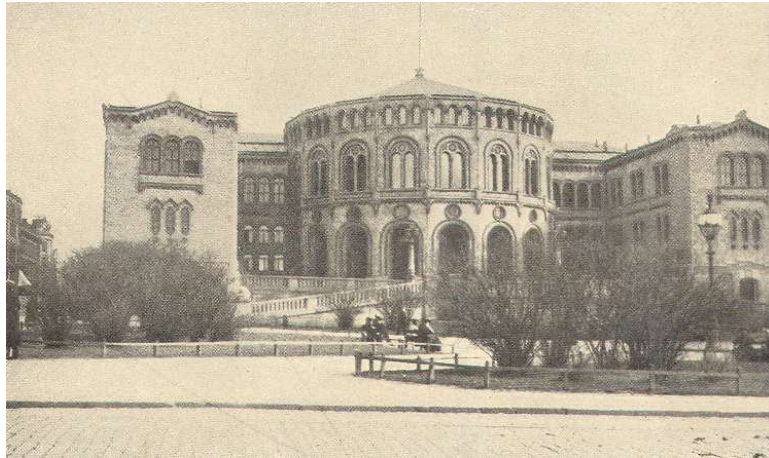
This was all the answer she had for the heralds, though they pleaded for a better answer, saying that King Harold was surely great enough for any maid in the land.

"This is my answer to King Harold," she said. "I will promise to become his wife if for my sake he shall conquer all Norway and rule it as freely as King Erik and King Gorm rule their kingdoms. Only when he has done this can he be called the king of a people."

When the heralds returned they told the king of their ill success and advised him to take the girl by force.

"Not so," Harold replied. "The girl has spoken well and deserves thanks instead of injury. She has put a new thought into my mind which had not come to me before. This I now solemnly vow and call God to witness, that I will not cut or comb my hair

until the day when I shall have made myself king of all Norway. If I fail in this, I shall die in the attempt."



HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT, NORWAY

Such is the legend of Gyda and the vow. What history tells us is that the young king set out to bring all Norway under his rule and prospered in the great enterprise. One after another, the small kings yielded to his power, and were made earls or governors under him. They collected taxes and administered justice in his name. All the land of the peasants was declared to be the property of the king, and those who had been free proprietors were now made the king's tenants and were obliged to pay taxes if they wished to hold their lands. These changes angered many and there were frequent rebellions against the king, but he put them all down, and year after year came nearer the goal of his ambition. And his hair continued to grow uncut and uncombed, and got to be such a tangled mass that men called him Harold Lufa, or Frowsy-Head.

There was one great and proud family, the Rafnistas, who were not easily to be won. To one of them, Kveld-Ulf, or Night-Wolf, Harold sent envoys, asking him to enter his service, but the chief sent back word that he was too old to change. Then he offered Bald Grim, old Night-Wolf's son, high honors if he

would become his vassal. Bald Grim replied that he would take no honors that would give him rank over his father.

Harold grew angry at this, and was ready to use force where good words would not prevail, but in the end the old chief agreed that his second son Thorolf might be the king's man if he saw fit. This he agreed to do, and as he was handsome, intelligent and courtly the king set much store by him.

Not only with the Norway chiefs, but with the king of Sweden, Harold had trouble. While he was busy in the south King Erik invaded the north, and Harold had to march in haste to regain his dominions. But the greatest danger in his career came in 872, when a number of chiefs combined against him and gathered a great fleet, which attacked Harold's fleet in Halfrs-Fjord. Then came the greatest and hottest fight known to that day in Norway. Loudly the war-horns sounded and the ships were driven fiercely to the fray, Harold's ship being in the front wherever the fight waxed hottest. Thorolf, the son of Night-Wolf, stood in its prow, fighting with viking fury, and beside him stood two of his brothers, matching him blow with blow.

Yet the opposing chiefs and their men were stout fighters and the contest long seemed doubtful, many brave and able men falling on both sides. Arrows hissed in swift flight through the air, spears hurtled after them, stones were hurled by strong hands, and those who came hand to hand fought like giants. At length Harold's berserkers—men who fought without armor, replacing it with fury of onslaught—rushed forward and boarded the hostile ships, cutting down all who opposed them. Blood ran like water and the chieftains and their men fell or fled before this wild assault. The day was won for Harold, and with it the kingdom, for after that fatal fray none dared to stand up before him.

His vow accomplished, all Norway now his, Harold at last consented to the cutting of his hair, this being done by Ragnvald, the earl of Möre. The tangled strands being cut and the hair deftly combed, those who saw it marvelled at its beauty,

and from that day the king was known as Harold the Fair-Haired. As for Gyda, the maid, the great task she set having been accomplished, she gave her hand to Harold, a splendid marriage completing the love romance of their lives.

This romance, however, is somewhat spoiled by the fact that Harold already had a wife, Aasa, the daughter of Earl Haakon, and that he afterwards married other wives. He had his faults and weaknesses, one of these being that he was not faithful to women and he was jealous of men who were growing in greatness. One of the men whom he began to fear or hate was Thorolf, who had aided him so mightily in battle and long stood highest in his favor.

Thorolf married a rich wife and grew very wealthy, living like a prince, and becoming profuse in his hospitality. He was gracious and liberal and won hosts of friends, while he aided the king greatly in collecting taxes from the Finns, who were not very willing to part with their money. Despite this service Harold grew to distrust Thorolf, or to hate him for other reasons, and the time came when this feeling led to a tragedy.

Thorolf had been made bailiff of Haalogaland, and when Harold came to this province his bailiff entertained him with a splendid feast, to which eight hundred guests were invited, three hundred of them being the king's attendants.

Yet, through all the hilarity of the feast, Harold sat dark and brooding, much to his host's surprise. He unbent a little at the end and seemed well pleased when Thorolf presented him with a large dragon ship, fully equipped. Yet not long afterwards he took from him his office of bailiff, and soon showed himself his deadly foe, slandering him as a pretext for attacking him on his estate.

The assailants set fire to Thorolf's house and met him with a shower of spears when he broke out from the burning mansion. Seeing the king among them Thorolf rushed furiously towards him, cut down his banner-bearer with a sword blow, and

was almost within touch of the king when he fell from his many wounds, crying: "By three steps only I failed."

It is said that Harold himself gave the death blow, yet he looked sadly on the warrior as he lay dead at his feet, saying, as he saw a man bandaging a slight wound: "That wound Thorolf did not give. Differently did weapons bite in his hand. It is a pity that such men must die."

This would indicate that King Harold had other reasons than appears from the narrative for the slaughter of his former friend. It must be borne in mind that he was engaged in founding a state, and had many disorderly and turbulent elements with which to deal, and that before he had ended his work he was forced to banish from the kingdom many of those who stood in his way. We do not know what secret peril to his plans led him to remove Thorolf from his path.

However that be, the killing of the chief sent his father to his bed sick with grief, and he grew content only when he heard that the king's hand had slain him and that he had fallen on his face at his slayer's feet. For when a dying man fell thus it was a sign that he would be avenged.

But the old man was far too weak to attack Harold openly, and was not willing to dwell in the same kingdom with him; so he, with his son Bald Grim and all his family and wealth, took ship and set sail for Iceland. But long he lingered on Norway's coast, hoping for revenge on some of Harold's blood, and chance threw in his way a ship containing two cousins of the king. This he attacked, killed the king's cousins, and captured the ship. Then Bald Grim, full of exultation, sang a song of triumph on the ship's prow, beginning with:

"Now is the Hersir's vengeance
On the king fulfilled;
Wolf and eagle tread on
Yngling's children."

There were other chieftains who sought refuge abroad from Harold's rule, men who were bitterly opposed to the new

government he founded, with its system of taxation and its strict laws. They could not see why the old system of robbing and plundering within Norway's confines should be interfered with or their other ancient privileges curtailed, and several thousand sailed away to found new homes in the Orkneys, the Hebrides, and Iceland.

One of the chief of these, Rolf, or Rollo, son of the king's friend, Ragnvald of Möre, defied Harold's laws and was declared an outlaw. His high birth made the king more determined to punish him, as an example to others, and no influence could win forgiveness for Rolf the Walker, as men called him, saying that he was so tall and heavy that no horse could carry him.

We must follow the outlaw in his journey, for it was one destined to lead to great events. Setting sail with a fleet and a large number of followers, he made his way to the coast of France, and fixed himself there, plundering the people for several years. Charles the Simple, king of France, finding that he could not drive the bold Norseman off, at length gave him a large province on condition that he would become a Christian, and hold his land as a vassal of the king. The province was given the name of Normandy, and from Rollo descended that sturdy race of kings one of whom conquered England in the following century. Thus the exile of Rollo led to events of world-wide importance.

When the proud Norseman was asked to kiss King Charles's foot in token of fealty to him, he answered: "I will never bend my knee before any man, nor will I kiss any man's foot."

He could hardly be persuaded to let one of his men kiss the king's foot as a proxy for him. The man chosen strode sturdily forward, seized the foot of the king, who was on horseback, and lifted it to his lips so roughly that the poor king turned a somersault from his horse. The Norsemen laughed in derision while the king's followers stood by grim and silent.

But despite his unruliness at home, Rollo, when he got a kingdom of his own, ruled it with all the sternness of King Harold, hanging all robbers that fell into his hands, and making his kingdom so secure that the peasants could leave their tools in the fields at night without fear of loss. Five generations after him came to the throne William the Conqueror, who won himself the kingdom of England.

To go back to Harold, the builder of the kingdom of Norway, we shall only say in conclusion that he built his rule on sure foundations and kept a court of high splendor, and died without a rebel in his realm in 933, seventy-three years after he succeeded his father as ruler of a province.

CHAPTER IV

GORM THE OLD, DENMARK'S FIRST KING

In ancient times Denmark was not a kingdom, but a multitude of small provinces ruled over by warlike chiefs who called themselves kings. It was not until the ninth century that these little king-ships were combined into one kingdom, this being done by a famous chieftain, known by the Danes as Gorm den Gamle, or Gorm the Old. A great warrior he was, a viking of the vikings, and southern Europe felt his heavy hand. A famous story of barbarian life is that of Gorm, which well deserves to be told.

He was the son of a fierce pagan of Norway, Hardegon, who was of royal blood, being a grandson of the half-fabulous Ragnar Lodbrok. A prince with only his sword for kingdom, Hardegon looked around for a piece of land to be won by fighting, and fixed upon Lejre, in the fruitful Danish island of Sjælland, which was just then in a very inviting state for the soldier of fortune. Some time before it had fallen into the hands of a Swedish fortune-seeker named Olaf, who left it to his two sons. These in turn had just been driven out by Siegric, the rightful king, when Hardegon descended upon it and seized it for himself. Dying, he left it to his son Gorm.

It was a small kingdom that Gorm had fallen heir to. A lord's estate we would call it to-day. But while small in size, it stood high in rank, for it was here that the great sacrifices to Odin, the chief Scandinavian deity, were held, and it was looked upon as one of the most sacred of spots. Hither at Yuletide came the devotees of Odin from all quarters to worship at his shrine, and offer gifts of gold and silver, precious stones and costly robes, to the twelve high priests of whom the king of Lejre was the chief. And every worshipper, whether rich or poor, was expected to bring a horse, a dog, or a cock, these animals being

sacred to Odin and sacrificed in large numbers annually at his shrine. In the special nine-year services, people came in great numbers, and it is probable that on these occasions human sacrifices were made, captives taken in war or piratical excursions being saved for this purpose.

As one may see, the king of Lejre had excellent opportunity to acquire wealth, and young Gorm, being brave, clever, and ambitious, used his riches to increase his landed possessions. At least, the Danish historians tell us that he began by buying one bit of land, getting another by barter, seizing on one district, having another given him, and so on. But all this is guess-work, and all we actually know is that Gorm, the son of a poor though nobly-born sea-rover, before his death gained control of all Denmark, then much larger than the Denmark of to-day, and changed the small state with which he began into a powerful kingdom, bringing all the small kings under his sway.

The ambitious chief did not content himself with this. Long before his kingdom was rounded and complete he had become known as one of the most daring and successful of the viking adventurers who in those days made all Europe their prey.

Early in his reign he made a plundering cruise along the shores of the Baltic and joined in a piratical invasion of Russia, penetrating far inward and pillaging as he went. We hear of him again in 882 as one of the chiefs of a daring band which made a conquering raid into Germany, intrenched itself on the river Maas, sallied forth on plundering excursions whose track was marked by ruined fields and burnt homesteads, villages and towns, and even assailed and took Aix-la-Chapelle, one of the chief cities of the empire of Charlemagne and the seat of his tomb. The reckless freebooters stalled their horses in the beautiful chapel in which the great emperor lay buried and stripped from his tomb its gilded and silvered railings and everything of value which the monks had not hidden.

The whole surrounding country was similarly ravaged and desolated by the ruthless heathens, monasteries were burned,

monks were killed or captured, and the emperor, Charles the Fat, was boldly defied. When Charles brought against the plunderers an army large enough to devour them, he was afraid to strike a blow against them, and preferred to buy them off with a ransom of two thousand pounds of gold and silver, all he got in return being their promise to be baptized.

Finding that they had a timid foe to deal with, the rapacious Norsemen asked for more, and when they finally took to their ships two hundred transports were needed to carry away their plunder. The cowardly Charles, indeed, was so wrought upon by fear of the pagan Danes that he even passed the incredible law that any one who killed a Norseman should have his eyes put out and in some cases should lose his life.

All this was sure to invite new invasions. A wave of joy passed through the north when the news spread of the poltroonery of the emperor and the vast spoil awaiting the daring hand. Back they came, demanding and receiving new ransom, and in 885 there began a great siege of Paris by forty thousand Danes.

King Gorm was one of the chiefs who took part in this, and when Henry of Neustria, whom the emperor had sent with an army against them, was routed and driven back, it was Gorm who pursued the fugitives into the town of Soissons, where many captives and a great booty were taken.

The dastard emperor again bought them off with money and freedom to ravage Burgundy, Paris being finally rescued by Count Eudes. In 891 they were so thoroughly beaten by King Arnulf, of Germany, that their great leaders fell on the field and only a remnant of the Norsemen escaped alive, the waters of the river Dyle running red with the blood of slain thousands.

Gorm was one of the chiefs who took part in this disastrous battle of Louvaine and was one of the fortunate few who lived to return to their native land. Apparently it was not the last of his expeditions, his wife, Queen Thyra, taking care of the kingdom in his many long absences.

Thyra needed ability and resolution to fitly perform this duty, for those were restless and turbulent times, and the Germans made many incursions into Sleswick and Jutland and turned the borderlands on the Eyder into a desert. This grew so hard to bear that the wise queen devised a plan to prevent it. Gathering a great body of workmen from all parts of Denmark, she set them to building a wall of defense from forty-five to seventy-five feet high and eight miles long, crossing from water to water on the east and west. This great wall, since known as the Dannevirke, took three years to build. There were strong watch-towers at intervals and only one gate, and this was well protected by a wide and deep ditch, crossed by a bridge that could readily be removed.

For ages afterwards the Danes were grateful to Queen Thyra for this splendid wall of defense and sang her praises in their national hymns, while they told wonderful tales of her cleverness in ruling the land while her husband was far away. Fragments of Thyra's rampart still remain and its remains formed the groundwork of all the later border bulwarks of Denmark.

Queen Thyra, while a worshipper of the northern gods, showed much favor to the Christians and caused some of her children to be signed with the cross. But King Gorm was a fierce pagan and treated his Christian subjects so cruelly that he gained the name of the "Church's worm," being regarded as one who was constantly gnawing at the supports of the Church. Henry I. the Fowler, the great German emperor of that age, angry at this treatment of the Christians, sent word to Gorm that it must cease, and when he found that no heed was paid to his words he marched a large army to the Eyder, giving Gorm to understand that he must mend his ways or his kingdom would be overrun.

Gorm evidently feared the loss of his dominion, for from that time on he allowed the Archbishop of Bremen to preach in his dominions and to rebuild the churches which had been destroyed, while he permitted his son Harald, who favored the Christians, to be signed with the cross. But he kept to the faith of

his forefathers, as did his son Knud, known as "Dan-Ast," or the "Danes'-joy."

The ancient sagas tell us that there was little love between Knud and Harald; and that Gorm, fearing ill results from this, swore an oath that he would put to death any one who attempted to kill his first-born son, or who should even tell him that Knud had died.

While Harald remained at home and aided his mother, Knud was of his father's fierce spirit and for years attended him on his viking expeditions. On one of these he was drowned, or rather was killed while bathing, by an arrow shot from one of his own ships. Gorm was absent at the time, and Thyra scarcely knew how the news could be told him without incurring the sworn penalty of death.

Finally she put herself and her attendants into deep mourning and hung the chief hall of the palace with the ashy-grey hangings used at the grave-feasts of Northmen of noble birth. Then, seating herself, she awaited Gorm's return. On entering the hall he was struck by these signs of mourning and by the silence and dejection of the queen, and broke out in an exclamation of dismay:

"My son, Knud, is dead!"

"Thou hast said it, and not I, King Gorm," was the queen's reply. The news of the death had thus been conveyed to him without any one incurring the sworn penalty. Soon after that—in 936—King Gorm died, and the throne of Denmark was left to his son Harald, a cruel and crafty man whom many of the people believed to have caused the murder of his brother.

CHAPTER V

ERIK BLOOD-AXE AND EGIL THE ICELANDER

In the year 900 Harold the Fair-Haired, the famous monarch who made a kingdom of Norway, passed a law which was to work mischief for centuries to come. Erik, his favorite son, was named overlord of the kingdom, but with the proviso that his other sons should bear the kingly title and rule over provinces, while the sons of his daughters were to be made earls. Had the wise Harold dreamed of the trouble this unwise law was to make he would have cut off his right hand before signing it. It was to give rise to endless rebellions and civil wars which filled the kingdom with ruin and slaughter for many reigns and at last led to its overthrow and long disappearance from among the separate nations of the earth.

A bold and daring prince was Erik, with the old viking blood in his veins. When only twelve years of age his father gave him five ships, each with a sturdy crew of Norsemen, and sent him out to ravage the southern lands, in the manner of the sea-kings of those days. Many were the perilous exploits of the young viking admiral and when he came back to his father's halls and told him of his daring deeds, the old king listened with delight. So fierce and fatal were many of his fights that he won the name of Blood-Axe, but for this his father loved him all the more and chose him to be his successor on the throne.

Before his father died Erik had shown what was in him, by attacking and killing two of his brothers. But despite all that, when the old king was eighty years of age he led Erik to the throne and named him as his successor. Three years later Harold died and Norway fell under the young sea-king's hand—a brave, handsome, stately ruler; but haughty, cruel, and pitiless in his wrath, and with the old viking wildness in his blood.

He had married a woman whom men called a witch—cruel, treacherous, loving money and power, and with such influence over him that she killed all the good in his soul and spurred him on to evil deeds.



HOME OF PEASANTS, NORWAY

Strange stories are told of the wicked Queen Gunhild. It was said that she had been sent to Finland to learn the arts of sorcery, in which the Finns of those days were well versed. Here Erik met her in one of his wanderings, and was taken captive by

her bold beauty. She dwelt with two sorcerers, both bent on marrying her, while she would have neither of them. Prince Erik was a suitor more to her liking and she hid him in her tent, begging him to rescue her from her troublesome lovers.

This was no easy task, for sorcerers have arts of their own, but Erik proved equal to it, cut his way through all the difficulties in his path and carried Gunhild away to his ships, where he made her his wife. In her he had wed a dragon of mischief, as his people were to learn.

She was of small size but of wonderful beauty, and with sly, insinuating ways that fitted her well to gain the mastery over strong men. But all her arts were used for evil, and she won the hatred of the people by speaking words of ill counsel in her husband's ears. The treachery and violence he showed were said to be the work of Gunhild the witch, and the nobles and people soon grew to hate Erik Blood-Axe and his cruel wife, and often broke out in rebellion against them.

His brothers, who had been made kings of provinces, were not ready to submit to his harsh rule, and barely was old King Harold dead before Halfdan the Swarthy—who bore the name of his grandfather—claimed to be monarch in Trøndelag, and Olaf, another brother, in Viken. Death came suddenly to Halfdan—men whispered that he had been poisoned by the queen—but his brother Sigfrid took his place and soon the flame of rebellion rose north and south. Erik proved equal to the difficulty. Sigfrid and Olaf were in Tunsberg, where they had met to lay plans to join their forces, when Erik, whose spies told him of their movements, took the town by surprise and killed them both.

Thus, so far, Erik Blood-Axe was triumphant. He had killed four of his brothers—men said five—and every one thought that Gunhild would not be content until all King Harold's brood except her own husband were in the grave.

Trouble next came from a region far away, the frost-king's land of Iceland in the northern seas, which had been

settled from Norway in the early reign of Harold the Fair-Haired, some sixty years before. Here lived a handsome and noble man named Thorolf, who had met Erik in his viking days. He was the son of the stern old Iclander Bald Grim, and nephew of the noble Thorolf who had been basely slain by King Harold.

Bald Grim hated Harold and all his race, but Thorolf grew to admire Erik for his daring and made him a present of a large and beautiful ship. Thus Erik became his friend, and when Thorolf came to Norway the young prince begged his father to let him dwell there in peace. When he at length went home to Iceland he took with him an axe with a richly carved handle, which Erik had sent as a present to his father.

Old Bald Grim was not the man to be bought over by a present. The hate he felt for Harold he transferred to his son, and when Thorolf set sail again for Norway his father bade him take back the axe to the king and sang an insulting song which he bade him repeat to Erik. Thorolf did not like his errand. He thought it best to let the blood-feud die, so he threw the axe into the sea and when he met the king gave him his father's thanks for the fine gift. If Thorolf had had his way the trouble would have been at an end, but with him came Egil, his younger brother, a man of different character.

Stern old Bald Grim seemed born again in his son Egil. A man of great size, swarthy face, harsh of aspect, and of fierce temper, in him was the old, tameless spirit of the Norse seakings, turbulent, passionate, owning no man master, he bent his strong soul to no man's rule. Rash and adventurous, he had a long and stormy career, while nature had endowed him with a rich gift of song, which added to his fame. Such was the type of men who in those days made all Europe tremble before the Norsemen's wrath, and won dominion for the viking warriors in many lands.

Thorold when in Norway before had gained powerful friends in the great nobles, Thore Herse and Björn the Yeoman. On this visit the brothers became Thore's guests, and Egil and

Arinbjörn, Thore's son, became warm friends. The young Iclander's hot temper soon brewed trouble. Sickness kept him from going with Thorolf to the house of Björn the Yeoman, whose daughter, Aasgard, he was to marry; but he soon got well and went on a visit to Baard, a steward of the king. As fortune decreed he met there King Erik and Queen Gunhild.

Egil was not the man to play the courtier and his hot blood was under little control. When Baard neglected him in favor of his royal visitor, he broke into such a rage that the queen, to quiet him, tried one of her underhand arts. She bade Baard to mix sleeping herbs with his beer.

Suspecting treachery from the taste of the beer Egil flung his flagon to the floor, struck Baard dead in his fury, and, fleeing for his life, swam to an island in the neighboring stream. When men were sent to search the island and capture him he killed some of them, seized their boat, and made his escape.

King Erik was furious, but Thore Herse got him to accept a money payment for Baard's death—as was then the custom of the land—and he agreed to let Egil dwell in Norway unharmed.

This was not to the queen's liking. She was fond of Baard and was deeply incensed at Egil for his murderous act, and she stormed at the king for his mildness of temper till he broke out:

"You are forever egging me on to acts of violence; but now you must hold your peace, for I have given my kingly word and cannot break it."

Gunhild, thus repulsed, sought other means of revenge. A great feast of sacrifice to the old heathen gods was to be held at the temple of Gaule, and at her instigation her brother, Eyvind Skreyja, agreed to kill one of Bald Grim's sons. Finding no opportunity for this, he killed one of Thorolf's men, for which act Erik outlawed him.

The remainder of the story of Egil's career is largely that of a viking, that is, a piratical rover, bent on spoil and plunder and the harrying of sea-coast lands. With Thorolf he took to the

sea and cruised about in quest of wealth and glory, finally landing in England and fighting in a great battle under the banner of King Athelstan. He made his mark here, but Thorolf was slain, so Egil went back to Norway, married his brother's widow, and sailed for his old home in Iceland, which he had not seen for twelve years.

Iceland was too quiet a land to hold the stirring sea-king long and news from Norway soon made him take ship again. Björn the Yeoman, his wife's father, had died, and Queen Gunhild had given his estate to Berg-Anund, one of her favorites. Storming with rage, he reached Norway and hotly pleaded his claim to the estate before the assembly or *thing* at Gula, Erik and Gunhild being present. He failed in his purpose, the *thing* breaking up in disorder; and Egil, probably finding Norway too hot to hold him, went back to Iceland.

If King Erik now fancied he was rid of the turbulent Iclander he was mistaken. Rankling with a sense of injury and borne onward by his impetuous temper, Egil was soon in Norway again, sought the Björn estate, surprised and killed Berg-Anund, and went so far in his daring as to kill Ragnvald, the king's son, who was visiting Berg. Carried to extremes by his unruly temper he raised what was called a shame-pole, or pole of dishonor, on a cliff top, to the king and queen. On it he thrust the head of a dead horse, crying out:

"I turn this dishonor against all the land-spirits of this land, that they may all stray bewildered and none of them find his home until they have driven King Erik and Queen Gunhild out of this land."

This message of defiance he cut in runes—the letters of the Northland—into the pole, that all might read it, and then sailed back to Iceland.

Egil had not long to wait for his curse to take effect, for Erik's reign was soon threatened from a new source. He had not killed all his brothers. In the old days of King Harold, when near seventy years old, he had married a new wife, who bore him a

son whom he named Haakon,—destined in later life to reign with the popular title of Haakon the Good. This boy, perhaps for his safety, had been sent to England and given over to King Athelstan, who brought him up almost as his own son.

Erik had been four years on the throne when Haakon came back to Norway, a handsome, noble youth, kind of heart and gentle in disposition, and on all sides hailed with joy, for Erik and his evil-minded wife had not won the love of the people. Great nobles and many of the people gathered around Haakon, men saying that he was like King Harold come back again, gentler and nobler than of old and with all his old stately beauty and charm.

The next year he was crowned king. Erik tried to raise an army, but none of the people were willing to fight for him, and he was forced to flee with his wife and children. Only a few of his old friends went with him, but among them was Arinbjörn, Egil's former friend.

Sudden had been King Erik's fall. Lately lord of a kingdom, he had now not a foot of land he could call his own, and he sailed about as a sea-robber, landing and plundering in Scotland and England. At length, to rid himself of this stinging hornet of the seas, King Athelstan made him lord of a province in Northumberland, with the promise that he would fight for it against other vikings like himself. He was also required to be baptized and become a Christian.

Meanwhile Egil dwelt in Iceland, but in bitter discontent. He roamed about the strand, looking for sails at sea and seeming to care little for his wife and children. Men said that Gunhild had bewitched him, but more likely it was his own unquiet spirit. At any rate the time came when he could bear a quiet life no longer and he took ship and sailed away to the south.

Misfortune now went with him. A storm drove his ship ashore on the English coast at the mouth of the Humber, the ship being lost but he and his thirty men reaching shore. Inquiring in

whose land he was, people told him that Erik Blood-Axe ruled that region.

Egil's case was a desperate one. He was in the domain of his deadly foe, with little hope of escape. With his usual impetuous spirit, he made no attempt to flee, but rode boldly into York, where he found his old friend Arinbjörn. With him he went straight to Erik, like the reckless fellow he was.

"What do you expect from me?" asked Erik. "You deserve nothing but death at my hands."

"Death let it be, then," said the bold viking, in his reckless manner.

Gunhild on seeing him was eager for his blood. She had hated him so long that she hotly demanded that he should be killed on the spot. Erik, less bloodthirsty, gave him his life for one night more, and Arinbjörn begged him to spend the night in composing a song in Erik's honor, hoping that in this way he might win his life.

Egil promised to do so and his friend brought him food and drink, bidding him do his best. Anxious to know how he was progressing Arinbjörn visited him in the night.

"How goes the song?" he asked.

"Not a line of it is ready," answered Egil. "A swallow has been sitting in the window all the night, screaming and disturbing me, and do what I would I could not drive it away."

At that Arinbjörn darted into the hall, where he saw in the dim light a woman running hastily away. Going back he found that the swallow had flown. He was sure now that Queen Gunhild had changed herself into a swallow by sorcery, and for the remainder of the night he kept watch outside that the bird should not return. When morning broke he found that Egil had finished his song.

Determined to save his friend's life if he could, he armed himself and his men and went with Egil to the palace of the king,

where he asked Erik for Egil's life as a reward for his devotion to him when others had deserted him.

Erik made no reply, and then Arinbjörn cried out:

"This I will say. Egil shall not die while I or one of my men remain alive."

"Egil has well deserved death," replied Erik, "but I cannot buy his death at that price."

As he stopped speaking Egil began to sing, chanting his ode in tones that rang loudly through the hall. Famed as a poet, his death song was one of the best he had ever composed, and it praised Erik's valor in all the full, wild strains of the northern verse.

Erik heard the song through with unmoved face. When it was done he said:

"Your song is a noble one, and your friend's demand for your life is nobler still. Nor can I be the dastard to kill a man who puts himself of his own will into my hands. You shall depart unharmed. But do not think that I or my sons forgive you, and from the moment you leave this hall never come again under my eyes or the eyes of my sons."

Egil thus won his life by his song, which became known as the "Ransom of the Head." Another of his songs, called "The Loss of the Son," is held to be the most beautiful in all the literature of Iceland. He afterwards lived long and had many more adventures, and in the end died in his bed in Iceland when he was over ninety years of age. Erik died in battle many years earlier, and Gunhild then went to Denmark with her sons. She was to make more trouble for Norway before she died.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEA-KINGS AND THEIR DARING FEATS

From the word *vik*, or bay, comes the word viking, long used to designate the sea-rovers of the Northland, the bold Norse wanderers who for centuries made their way to the rich lands of the south on plundering raids. Beginning by darting out suddenly from hiding places in bays or river mouths to attack passing craft, they in the end became daring scourers of the seas and won for themselves kingdoms and dominions in the settled realms of the south.

Nothing was known of them in the early days. The people of southern Europe in the first Christian centuries hardly knew of the existence of the race of fair-skinned and light-haired barbarians who dwelt in the great peninsula of the north. It was not until near the year 800 B.C. that these bold brigands learned that riches awaited those who dared seize it on the shores of France, England, and more southern lands. Then they came in fleets and spread terror wherever they appeared. For several centuries the realms of civilization trembled before their very name.

"From the fury of the Northmen, Good Lord deliver us!" prayed the priests, and the people joined fervently in the prayer.

Long before this period the sea was the favorite hunting ground of the daring sons of the north, but the small chiefs of that period preyed upon each other, harrying their neighbors and letting distant lands alone. But as the power of the chiefs, and their ability to protect themselves increased, this mode of gaining wealth and fame lost its ease and attraction and the rovers began to rove farther afield.

Sea-kings they called themselves. On land the ruler of a province might be called either earl or king, but the earl who

went abroad with his followers on warlike excursions was content with no less name than king, and the chiefs who set out on plundering cruises became from the first known as sea-kings. Pirates and freebooters we would call them to-day, but they were held in high distinction in their native land, and some of the most cruel of them, on their return home, became men of influence, with all the morality and sense of honor known in those early days. Their lives of ravage and outrage won them esteem at home and the daring and successful sea-king ranked in fame with the noblest of the home-staying chiefs. We have seen how King Erik began his career as a viking and ended it in the same pursuit; how Rollo, a king's son, adopted the same profession; and from this it may be seen that the term was one of honor instead of disgrace.

From all the lands of the north they came, these dreaded sons of the sea, from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark alike, fierce heathens they who cared nought for church or priest, but liked best to rob chapels and monasteries, for there the greatest stores of gold and silver could be found. When the churches were plundered they often left them in flames, as they also did the strong cities they captured and sacked. The small, light boats with which they dared the sea in its wrath were able to go far up the rivers, and wherever these fierce and bloodthirsty rovers appeared wild panic spread far around. So fond were they of sword-thrust and battle that one viking crew would often challenge another for the pure delight of fighting. A torment and scourge they were wherever they appeared.

The first we hear in history of the sea-kings is in the year 787, when a small party of them landed on the English coast. In 794 came another flock of these vultures of the sea, who robbed a church and a monastery, plundering and killing, and being killed in their turn when a storm wrecked their ships and threw them on shore. As a good monk writes of them: "The heathen came from the northern countries to Britain like stinging wasps, roamed about like savage wolves, robbing, biting, killing not

only horses, sheep, and cattle, but also priests, acolytes, monks, and nuns."

The Norsemen had found a gold mine in the south and from this time on they worked it with fierce hands. Few dared face them, and even in the days of the great Charlemagne they ravaged the coast lands of France. Once, when the great emperor was in one of his cities on the Mediterranean coast, a fleet of the swift viking ships, known by their square sails, entered the harbor. Soon word was brought that they had landed and were plundering. Who they were the people knew not, some saying that they were Jews, others Africans, and others that they were British merchants.

"No merchants they," said the emperor. "Those ships do not bring us goods, but fierce foes, bloody fighters from the north." The warriors around him at once seized their weapons and hurried to the shore, but the vikings had learned that the great emperor was in the city and, not daring to face him, had sought their ships and spread their sails again. Tears came to the eyes of Charlemagne as he watched them in their outward flight. He said to those around him:

"It is not for fear that these brigands can do me any harm that I weep, but for their daring to show themselves on this coast while I am alive. Their coming makes me foresee and fear the harm they may do to my descendants."

This story may be one of those legends which the monks were fond of telling, but it serves to show how the dread Norsemen were feared. France was one of their chief fields of ravage and slaughter. First coming in single ships, to rob and flee, they soon began to come in fleets and grew daring enough to attack and sack cities. Hastings, one of the most renowned of them all, did not hesitate to attack the greatest cities of the south.

In 841 this bold freebooter sailed up the Loire with a large fleet, took and burned the city of Amboise, and laid siege to Tours. But here the inhabitants, aided, it is said, by the bones of their patron saint, drove him off. Four years later he made an

attack on Paris, and as fortune followed his flag he grew so daring that he sought to capture the city of Rome and force the Pope to crown him emperor.

For an account of this remarkable adventure of the bold Hastings see the article, "The Raids of the Sea-Rovers," in the German volume of "Historical Tales." In that account are also given the chief exploits of the vikings in France and Germany. We shall therefore confine ourselves in the remainder of this article to their operations in other lands, and especially in Ireland.

This country was a common field for the depredations of the Norse rovers. For some reason not very clear to us the early vikings did not trouble England greatly, but for many years they spread terror through the sister isle, and in the year 838 Thorgisl, one of their boldest leaders, came with a fleet of one hundred and twenty ships, with which he attacked and captured the city of Dublin, and afterwards, as an old author tells us, he conquered all Ireland, securing his conquest with stone forts surrounded with deep moats.

But the Irish at length got rid of their conqueror by a stratagem. It was through love that the sea-king was lost. Bewitched with the charms of the fair daughter of Malsechnail, one of the petty kings of the land, he bade this chieftain to send her to him, with fifteen young maidens in her train. He agreed to meet her on an island in Loch Erne with as many Norsemen of high degree.

Malsechnail obeyed, but his maidens were beardless young men, dressed like women but armed with sharp daggers. Thorgisl and his men, taken by surprise, were attacked and slain. The Irish chief had once before asked Thorgisl how he should rid himself of some troublesome birds that had invaded the island. "Destroy their nests," said the Norseman. It was wise advice, and Malsechnail put it in effect against the nests of the conquerors, destroying their stone strongholds, and killing or driving them away, with the aid of his fellow chieftains.

Thus for a time Ireland was freed. It was conquered again by Olaf the White, who in 852 defeated some Danes who had taken Dublin, and then, like Thorgisl, began to build castles and tax the people. Two other viking leaders won kingdoms in Ireland, but Olaf was the most powerful of them all, and the kingdom founded by him lasted for three hundred and fifty years. From Dublin Olaf sailed to Scotland and England, the booty he won filling two hundred ships.

The sea-rovers did not confine their voyages to settled lands. Bold ocean wanderers, fearless of man on shore and tempest on the waves, they visited all the islands of the north and dared the perils of the unknown sea. They rounded the North Cape and made their way into the White Sea as early as 750. The Faroe, the Orkney and the Shetland Islands were often visited by them after 825, and in 874 they discovered Iceland, which had been reached and settled by Irishmen or Scots about 800. The Norsemen found here only some Irish hermits and monks, and these, disturbed in their peaceful retreat by the turbulent newcomers, made their way back to Ireland and left the Norsemen lords of the land. From Iceland the rovers reached Greenland, which was settled in 986, and about the year 1000 they discovered North America, at a place they named Vinland.

Such is, briefly told, the story of the early Norse wanderers. They had a later tale, of which we have told part in their conquest of Ireland. Though at first they came with a few ships, and were content to attack a town or a monastery, they soon grew more daring and their forces larger. A number of them would now fortify themselves on some coast elevation and make it a centre for plundering raids into the surrounding country. At a later date many of them ceased to pose as pirates and took the rôle of invaders and conquerors, storming and taking cities and founding governments in the invaded land.

Such was the work of Thorgisl and Olaf in Ireland and of Rollo in Normandy. England was a frequent field of invasion after 833, which continued until 851, when King Ethelwulf defeated them with great slaughter. Fifteen years later they came

again, these new invaders being almost all Danes. During all his reign Alfred the Great fought with them, but in spite of his efforts they gained a footing in the island, becoming its masters in the north and east. A century later, in 1016, Canute, the king of Denmark, completed the conquest and became king of all England.

This is not the whole story of the sea-kings, whose daring voyages and raids made up much of the history of those centuries. One of the most important events in viking history took place in 862, when three brother chiefs, probably from Sweden, who had won fame in the Baltic Sea, were invited by the Russian tribes south of Lake Ladoga to come and rule over them. They did so, making Novgorod their capital. From this grew the empire of Russia, which was ruled over by the descendants of Rurik, the principal of these chiefs, until 1598.

Other vikings made their way southward through Russia and, sailing down the Dnieper, put Constantinople in peril. Only a storm which scattered their fleet saved the great city from capture. Three times later they appeared before Constantinople, twice (in 904 and 945) being bought off by the emperors with large sums of money. Later on the emperors had a picked body-guard of Varangians, as they called the Northmen, and kept these till the fall of the city in 1453. It was deemed a great honor in the north to serve in this choice cohort at Myklegård (Great City), and those who returned from there doubtless carried many of the elements of civilization to the Scandinavian shores.

To some of these Varangians was due the conquest of Sicily by the Northmen. They were in the army sent from Constantinople to conquer that island, and seeing how goodly a land it was they aided in its final conquest, which was made by Robert Guiscard, a noble of Normandy, whose son Roger took the title of "King of Sicily and Italy." Thus it was that the viking voyages led within a few centuries to the founding of kingdoms under Norse rulers in England, Ireland, Sicily, Russia, and Normandy in France.

CHAPTER VII

HAAKON THE GOOD AND THE SONS OF GUNHILD

We have told how King Haakon succeeded his brother, Erik Blood-Axe, on the throne, and how, from his kindly and gentle nature, people called him Haakon the Good. There were other sons and several grandsons of Harold the Fair-Haired in the kingdom, but the new king treated them with friendliness and let them rule as minor kings under him.

He dealt with the peasants also in the same kindly spirit, giving them back their lands and relieving them of the tax which Harold had laid. But he taxed them all in another way, dividing the country into marine districts, each of which was required to supply the king, on his demand, with a fully equipped warship. Yet as this was for the defence of the country, the people did not look on it as oppressive. And as Norway had a long mountainous coast, and important events were often long in becoming known, he gave orders that the approach of an enemy should be made known by signal fires lighted all along the coast.

Haakon made other wise laws, in which he took the advice of the ablest men of the kingdom. But now we have to speak of the most striking event in the new king's career. Norway at that time was a haunt of idolatry. Men worshipped Odin and a host of other gods, and there was not a Christian in the whole land except the king himself, who had been brought up in the new faith by his foster-father, King Athelstan of England.

An earnest Christian, he looked with sorrow on the rude worship and heathen belief of his people, but not until he had been many years on the throne did he venture to interfere with it.

Then, about 950, when he had won the love of them all, he took steps to carry out his long-cherished desire.

Sending to England for a bishop and a number of priests, the king issued a decree in which the people were forbidden to make sacrifices to the old gods and ordered to accept the Christian faith.

This came like a thunderbolt to the worshippers of the old gods. To bid a whole nation to give up at a word the religion which they had cherished from childhood and which their fathers had held for generations before them was too much to demand. The king brought together a concourse of the people and spoke to them of his wish and purpose, but they had no answer to make except that the matter must be settled by their legal assembly.

When the *thing*, or assembly, was called into session, a great body of the people were present, for never had so important a question been laid before them. Earnest and imploring was the speech made by the king, in which he warmly asked them to accept the God of the Christians and give up their heathen idols of wood and stone.

These words were followed by an angry murmur from the multitude, and many dark looks were bent upon the rash monarch. Then a peasant leader, Aasbjörn of Medalhus, stepped out from the throng and spoke:

"When you, King Haakon, first called us here before you and we took you for our king, it was with deep gladness, as if heaven had opened to us. But was it liberty we gained, or do you wish to make thralls of us once more, that you ask us to give up the faith of our fathers and forefathers for the new and unknown one you offer? Sturdy men they were, and their faith did well for them and has done well for us. We have learned to love you well and have always kept and will always keep the laws made by you and accepted by us. But in this thing which you now demand we cannot follow. If you are so resolved upon it that your mind cannot be changed, then we shall be forced to part from you and choose a new chief who will support us in

worshipping our fathers' gods. Choose, O king, what you will do, before this assembly has dispersed."

So loud were the shouts of approval with which this speech was greeted that not a word could be heard. Then, when quiet reigned again, Earl Sigurd, who had spoken aside with Haakon, rose and said that the king had no wish to lose their friendship and would yield to their wishes. This was not enough to overcome the distrust of the peasants. They next demanded that he should take part in the sacrifices to be given and in the feast to follow. This he felt obliged to do, though he quieted his conscience by making the sign of the cross.

When the next Yuletide sacrifice came Haakon was required to eat horse-flesh at the feast and this time was forbidden to make the sign of the cross when he drank the usual toasts to the ancient gods of Norway. This was a humiliation that cut the proud monarch deeply and it was with an angry soul he left, saying to his attendants that when he came back it would be with an army to punish those who had thus insulted his faith. Back he did not come, for new troubles were gathering around him.

To learn the source of these troubles we must return to the story of Erik Blood-Axe and Gunhild, his wicked wife. After Erik's death that mischief-loving woman sought Denmark with her sons, who grew up to become brave warriors and daring viking rovers, infesting the coast of Norway and giving its king and earls all the trouble they could. At length, backed by Harold Bluetooth, the king of Denmark, their piratical raids changed to open war, and they invaded Norway, hoping to win their father's old kingdom for themselves.

A crisis came in 955. In that year the sons of Erik appeared so suddenly with a large fleet that they took King Haakon by surprise. He had with him only a small force, the signal fires had not been lighted, and the enemy were close at hand before he could prepare to meet them.

"What shall we do?" he asked his men. "Shall we stay and fight, or draw back and gather men?"

The answer came from an old peasant, Egil Woolsack:

"Often have I fought, King Haakon, with King Harold, your father. Whether the foe was stronger or weaker the victory was always his. Never did he ask his friends if he should run; nor need you, for we are ready to fight and think that we have a brave chieftain for our leader."

"You speak well and wisely, Egil," said the king. "It is not my wish to run, and with your aid I am ready to face the foe."

"Good words those!" cried Egil joyously. "It has been so long since I saw the flash of sword that I feared I would die in my bed of old age, though it has been my hope to fall in battle at my chieftain's back. Now will my wish be gained."

To land came the sons of Erik, having six men to Haakon's one. Seeing how great were the odds, old Egil tried strategy, leading ten standard-bearers to a hidden spot in the rear of the hostile army and leaving them there in ambush. When the armies had met and the fighting was under way, he led these men up a sloping hill until the tops of their standards could be seen above its summit. He had placed them far apart, so that when the Danes saw the waving banners it looked like a long line of new troops coming upon them. With sudden alarm and a cry of terror they fled towards their ships.

Gamle, their leader, was quick to discover the stratagem, and called on them to stop, that it was all a trick; but nothing could check their panic flight, and he was swept along with them to the beach. Here a stand was made, but Haakon rushed upon them in a furious attack in which old Egil had his wish, for he fell in the storm of sword blows, winning the death he craved. Victory rested on the king's banners and his foes fled to their ships, Gamle, their leader, being drowned in the flight.

For six years after this the land lay at peace. King Haakon continued a Christian and many of his friends joined him in the new faith. But he was too wise and gentle to attempt again to force his belief upon his people and the worship of the heathen gods went on. All the people, nobles and peasants alike, loved their king dearly and he would have ended his reign in a peaceful old age but for his foes without the kingdom. This is the way in which the end came.

In the summer of the year 961, when Haakon had been twenty-six years on the throne, he with many guests was at feast in the royal mansion of Fitje, in Hørdaland. While at table a sentinel brought in the alarming news that a large fleet of ships was sailing up the fiord.

By the king's side sat Eyvnið, his nephew, who was a famous scald, or bard. They rose and looked out on the fiord.

"What ships are they, of friends or of foes?" asked the king.

The scald replied in a verse, in which he sang that the sons of Erik were coming again.

"Once more they take us unawares," said Haakon to his men. "They are many and we are few. Never yet have we faced such odds. The danger lies before you. Are you ready to meet it? I am loath to flee before any force, but I leave it to the wise among you to decide."

Eyvnið sang another verse, to the effect that it would be ill counsel to advise a man like King Haakon to flee from the sons of Gunhild the sorceress.

"That is a man's song," cried the king, "and what you say is what I wish."

All around him the warriors shouted their war-cry, and while they ran for their weapons he put on his armor, seized his sword and shield, and placed on his head a golden helmet that shone brightly in the sun. Never had he looked more like a born

king, with his noble and inspired countenance and the bright hair streaming down from under his helmet.

The battle that followed was fierce and bloody. Harold, Gunhild's third son, commanded the invaders, who far outnumbered Haakon's small force. And now there was no Egil to defeat the foe by stratagem, but the battle was hand to hand and face to face, with stroke of sword and thrust of spear, the war-shout of the fighters and the death-wail of the fallen.

King Haakon that day showed himself a true and heroic warrior. As the battle grew fiercer his spirit rose higher, and when Eyvnið the scald greeted him with a warlike verse, he answered with another. But the midsummer heat growing hard to bear, he flung off his armor and fought with only his strong right arm for shield. The arrows had now been all shot, the spears all hurled, and the ranks met hand to hand and sword to sword, in desperate affray.

In the front rank stood the king, his golden helmet making him a shining mark for the warriors of the foe.

"Your helmet makes you a target for the Danish spears," cried Eyvnið, and he drew a hood over it to hide its gleam. Skreyja, Harold's uncle, who was storming onward towards the king, now lost sight of him and cried out:

"Where is the Norse king? Has he drawn back in fear? Is he of the golden helmet a craven?"

"Keep on as you are coming, if you wish to meet the Norsemen's king," shouted Haakon, throwing down his shield and grasping his sword with both hands, as he sprang out before them all. Skreyja bounded towards him and struck a furious blow, but it was turned aside by a Norse warrior and at the same instant Haakon's sword cleft the foeman's head down to the shoulders.

This kingly stroke gave new spirit to the Norsemen and they rushed with double fury upon the foe, whom the fall of their best warrior filled with fear. Back to the beach they were

pressed, many being slain, many drowned, a few only, Harold among them, reaching the ships by swimming.

The Norsemen had won against fearful odds, but their king was in deadly peril. In the pursuit he had been struck in the right arm by an arrow with an oddly-shaped head, and do what they would, the flow of blood could not be stopped. It was afterwards said that Gunhild the sorceress had bewitched the arrow and sent it with orders to use it only against King Haakon.

In those days it was easy to have men believe tales like that, but, witchcraft or not, the blood still ran and the king grew weaker. As night came death seemed at hand and one of his friends offered to take his body to England, after his death, that he might be laid in Christian soil.

"Not so," said Haakon. "Heathen are my people and I have lived among them like a heathen. See then that I am laid in the grave like a heathen."

Thus he died, and he was buried as he wished, while all men mourned his death, even his foes; for before breathing his last he bade his men to send a ship after the sons of Gunhild; asking them to come back and rule the kingdom. He had no sons, he said, and his daughter could not take the throne.

Thus death claimed the noblest of the Norsemen, at once heathen and Christian, but in his life and deeds as in his death a great and good man.

CHAPTER VIII

EARL HAAKON AND THE JOMSVIKINGS

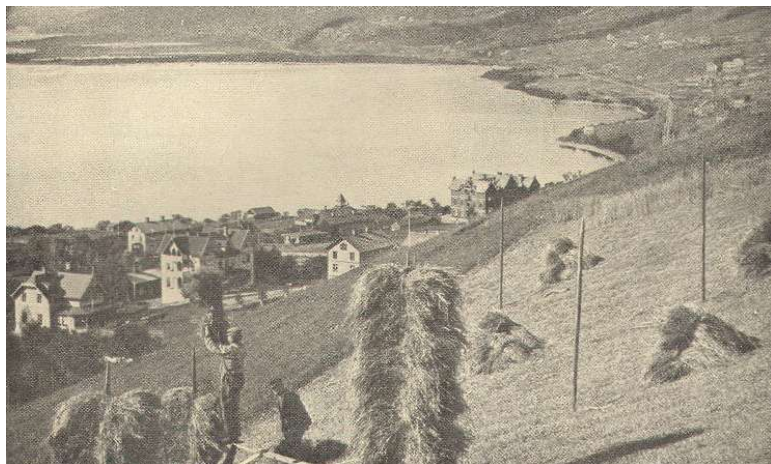
Chief among the nobles of Haakon the Good, of Norway, was Earl Sigurd of Hlade; and first among those who followed him was Earl Haakon, Sigurd's son. After the death of Haakon the Good, the sons of Gunhild became the masters of Norway, where they ruled like tyrants, murdering Sigurd, whom they most feared. This made the young Earl Haakon their bitter foe.

A young man then, of twenty-five, handsome, able in mind and body, kindly in disposition, and a daring warrior, he was just the man to contend with the tyrant murderers. When he was born Haakon the Good had poured water on his head and named him after himself and he was destined to live to the level of the honor thus given him.

It is not our purpose to tell how, with the aid of the king of Denmark, he drove the sons of Gunhild from the realm, and how, as the sagas tell, the wicked old queen was enticed to Denmark by the king, under promise of marriage, and by his orders was drowned in a swamp. Her powers of sorcery did not avail her then, if this story is true.

Haakon ruled Norway as a vassal of Harald Bluetooth, king of Denmark, to whom he agreed to pay tribute. He also consented to be baptized as a Christian and to introduce the Christian faith into Norway. But a heathen at heart and a Norseman in spirit, he did not intend to keep this promise. After a meeting with the Danish king in which his baptism took place, he sailed for his native land with his ship well laden with priests. But the heathen in him now broke out. With bold disdain of King Harald, he put the priests on shore, and sought to counteract the effect of his baptism by a great feast to the old gods, praying for their favor and their aid in the war that was sure to follow. He looked for an omen, and it came in the shape

of two ravens, which followed his ships with loud clucking cries. These were the birds sacred to Odin and he hailed their coming with delight. The great deity of the Norsemen seemed to promise him favor and success.



BUSY FARMERS IN A HILLSIDE FIELD ABOVE ARE, SWEDEN.

Turning against the king to whom he had promised to act as a vassal, he savagely ravaged the Danish coast lands. Then he landed on the shores of Sweden, burnt his ships, and left a track of fire and blood as he marched through that land. Even Viken, a province of Norway, was devastated by him, on the plea of its being under a Danish ruler. Then, having done his utmost to show defiance to Denmark and its king, he marched northward to Drontheim, where he ruled like a king, though still styling himself Earl Haakon.

Harald Bluetooth was not the man to be defied with impunity, and though he was too old to take the field himself, he sought means to punish his defiant vassal. Men were to be had ready and able to fight, if the prize offered them was worth the risk, and men of this kind Harald knew where to seek.

In the town of Jomsborg, on the island of Wollin, near the mouth of the Oder, dwelt a daring band of piratical warriors

known as the Jomsvikings, who were famed for their indomitable courage. War was their trade, rapine their means of livelihood, and they were sworn to obey the orders of their chief, to aid each other to the utmost, to bear pain unflinchingly, dare the extremity of danger, and face death like heroes. They kept all women out of their community, lest their devotion to war might be weakened, and stood ready to sell their swords to the highest bidder.

To this band of plunderers Harald appealed and found them ready for the task. Their chief, Earl Sigvalde, brought together a great host of warriors at a funeral feast to his father, and there, while ale and mead flowed abundantly, he vowed, flagon in hand, that he would drive Earl Haakon from the Norse realm or perish in the attempt. His viking followers joined him in the vow. The strong liquor was in their veins and there was no enterprise they were not ready to undertake. When their sober senses returned with the next morning, they measured better the weight of the enterprise; but they had sworn to it and were not the men to retreat from a vow they had taken.

Erik, an unruly son of Earl Haakon, had fled from his father's court in disgrace and was now in Viken, and here the rumor of the vikings' oath reached his ears. At once, forgetting his quarrel with his father, he hastened north with all the men he could gather to Earl Haakon's aid, preceding the Jomsvikings, who were sailing slowly up the shores of Norway, plundering as they went in their usual fashion. They had a fleet of sixty ships and a force of over seven thousand well-trained warriors. Haakon, warned by his son, met them with three times their number of ships, though these were smaller and lighter craft. On board were about ten thousand men. Such were the forces that met in what the sagas call the greatest battle that had ever been fought in Norway.

Soon the embattled ships met and the conflict grew fast and furious, hurtling weapons filling the air and men falling on all sides. Great was the carnage and blood flowed in streams on the fighting ships. Earl Haakon stood in the prow of his ship in

the heat of the fight, arrows and spears whirling around him in such numbers that his shirt of mail became so torn and rent that he threw it off as useless. The high ships of the vikings gave them an advantage which told heavily against their antagonists, spears and arrows being poured down from their sides.

In the height of the battle Earl Haakon disappeared. As the legends tell he went ashore with his youngest son Erling, whom he sacrificed to the heathen gods to win their aid in the battle. Hardly had he done this deed of blood when a dense black cloud arose and a violent hail-storm broke over the ships, the hail-stones weighing each two ounces and beating so fiercely in the faces of the Jomsvikings as nearly to blind them. Some say that the Valkyries, the daughters of Odin, were seen in the prow of the earl's ship, filling the air with their death-dealing arrows.

Despite the storm and the supernatural terrors that they conjured up, the Jomsvikings continued to fight, though their decks were slippery with blood and melting hail. Only one coward appeared among them, their chief Earl Sigvalde, who suddenly turned his ship and fled. When Vagn Aakesson, the most daring of the Jomsvikings, saw this recreant act he was frantic with rage.

"You ill-born hound," he cried, "why do you fly and leave your men in the lurch? Shame on you, and may shame cling to you to your death!"

A spear hurtled from his hand and pierced the man at the helm, where Sigvalde had stood a moment before. But the ship of the dastard earl kept on and a general panic succeeded, all the ships in the fleeing earl's line following his standard. Only Vagn Aakesson and Bue the Big were left to keep up the fight.

Yet they kept it up in a way to win them fame. When Earl Haakon's ship drew up beside that of Bue, two of the viking champions, Haavard the Hwer and Aslak Rock-skull, leaped on deck and made terrible havoc. In the end an Icelfander picked up an anvil that was used to sharpen their spears and hurled it at

Aslak, splitting his skull, while Haavard had both legs cut off. Yet the indomitable viking fought on, standing on his knees.

The onset of the Jomsvikings was so terrific in this last fierce fight that the earl's men gave back, and might have been all slain had not his son Erik boarded Bue's ship at this crisis and made an irresistible charge. A terrible cut across the face severed Bue's nose.

"Now," he cried, "the Danish maidens will kiss me no more."

Seeing that all was at an end, he seized two chests of gold to prevent their capture by the victors, and sprang with them into the sea, shouting:

"Overboard all Bue's men!"

On Vagn's ship a similar fierce fight was taking place, ending only when all but thirty of the vikings were slain.

Then a savage scene was enacted, one worthy only of those barbarous times. The captives were taken ashore and seated on a long log, their feet bound, their hands free. At the funeral feast in Sigvalde's hall Vagn had boasted that he would kill Thorkill Laiva, one of Erik's chief warriors, and this threatened man was now chosen as executioner.

At the captives he rushed, with uplifted axe, and savagely struck off their heads, one after another. Vagn was to be left to the last, that he might suffer from fear, but instead of this he sat joking and laughing with his men. One of them sang and laughed so loudly that Erik asked him if he would like to live.

"That depends on who it is that asks me."

"He who offers has the power to grant. I am Earl Erik."

"Then I gladly accept."

Another made a pun which so pleased the earl that he, too, was set free.

One of the captives had long, beautiful hair, and as Thorkill came near him on his bloody errand he twisted his hair into a coil and asked the executioner not to soil it with his blood. To humor him Thorkill asked one of the bystanders to hold the coil while he struck. The man did so, but as the axe came down the captive jerked his head aside so that the axe fell on the wrists of the coil-holder, both his hands being cut off.

"Some of the Jomsvikings are still alive," laughed the captive.

"Who are you?" asked Erik.

"I am said to be a son of Bue."

"Do you wish to live?"

"What other choice have I?"

At Erik's command he, too, was released.

Angry at being thus robbed of his prey, Thorkill now sprang towards Vagn, determined that at least his special enemy should fall. As he came near, however, one of the men on the log threw himself forward in such a way that Thorkill stumbled over him and dropped his axe. In an instant Vagn was on his feet, seized the axe, and dealt Thorkill a deadly blow. His boast was kept; Thorkill had fallen by his hand.

Erik saw the bold feat with such admiration that he ordered Vagn to be freed, and the prisoners who remained alive were also set free at his order.

While this was going on Earl Haakon sat apart conversing with his chieftains. As they did so they heard a bow-string twang, and before a hand could be raised a keen-pointed arrow pierced the body of Gissur the White, one of the chiefs, and he fell over dead. The arrow had come from the ship of Bue the Big, and thither men ran in haste. What they saw was Haavard the Hewer, still standing on his knees, though his blood flowed freely.

"Tell me," he cried, "did any one fall at the tree yonder?"

"Yes; Gissur the White."

"Then luck failed me, for that arrow was aimed for Earl Haakon."

And he fell over on the deck, with death at his heart-strings. The viking had sent a herald on before, to announce his coming at Odin's court.

It was Haakon who had ordered the murder of the captives, and Erik his son who gave life to so many of them. The time was near at hand when the earl was to meet the bloody fate which he had dealt out to others. Though Erik had done so much to help him in the battle, he was furious with his son for sparing the life of Vagn Aakesson. As a result they parted in anger, Erik going south again. Here Vagn joined him and from that day forward the two were warm friends and comrades.

But Haakon fell into ways of vice as he grew older, and at length he did a deed that led him to a shameful death. He had his men bring by force to his palace the wife of a rich peasant, and sent them for another, who was famed for her beauty. Orm, her husband, refused to let her go and sent news of the outrage to all the peasants in the valley. From farm to farm flew the tidings, and the peasants, furious at the shameful deeds of the earl, seized their arms and gathered in a great band, which marched upon him at Medalhus.

Earl Haakon was taken by surprise. He had not dreamed of a revolt and only a few men were with him. These he dismissed and fled for safety, only one man, his old servant Kark, going with him. Reaching the Gaul River in his flight, he rode his horse into a deep hole and left his cloak on the ice, so that his pursuers, finding the dead horse and the cloak, might think he was drowned.

From there he sought the nearby home of Thora of Rimul, a faithful woman friend, told her of the hot pursuit and begged her to hide him from his furious enemies. The only hiding place she could provide was a deep ditch under her pig-

sty, and in this filthy hole the great earl was hidden, with food, candles, and bedding. Then boards were laid over the ditch and covered with earth and upon this the pigs were driven.

To Rimul the peasants soon came, filled with fury, and with them came a man of note who had just landed and was seeking to win the throne. This was Olaf, a great-grandson of Harold the Fair-Haired, whose claim to the crown of Norway was far better than that of Haakon. Thinking that Thora had hidden the fleeing earl the pursuers searched the whole place. The fugitive not being found, Olaf stood on a large stone near the pig-sty and called the peasants around him, loudly announcing that any man who should find and slay Earl Haakon would be given a large reward.

His words were plainly heard in the damp and unpleasant underground den where Haakon sat shivering. He looked at Kark, the thrall, whose face showed that he, too, had heard the promise of reward.

"What ails you?" asked the earl. "Your face changes from pale to dark and gloomy. Do you propose to betray me?"

"No," said Kark.

"We were born on the same night, and if one of us dies the other will soon follow," said the earl warningly.

For a long time they sat, listening to the sounds above. At length all grew still and they felt that the night had come. Kark fell asleep, but the earl sat awake, watching him in deep distrust. The slumbering thrall tossed about as if in pain and the earl wakened him, asking of what he had dreamt.

"I dreamed that you and I were on shipboard and that I was at the helm."

"That means that you rule over both our lives. Therefore, Kark, you must be true and faithful to me, as duty bids you. Better days will soon come to us both and then you shall be richly rewarded."

Again the thrall fell asleep and again he seemed to dream. The earl woke him again.

"Of what did you dream?" he asked.

"I dreamed that I was at Hlade and that Olaf Tryggvesson put a golden ring around my neck."

"That means," said the earl, "that if you seek Olaf he will put a red ring [a ring of blood] around your neck. Beware of him, Kark, and trust in me. Be faithful to me and you will find in me a faithful friend."

The night dragged slowly on. The earl dared not let himself sleep, but sat staring at Kark, who stared back at him. When morning was near at hand weariness lay so heavily on the earl that he could no longer keep awake. But his sleep was sorely disturbed by the terrors of that dreadful night. He tossed about and screamed out in distress and at length rose on his knees with the horrors of nightmare in his face.

Then Kark, who had all night been meditating treachery, killed him with a thrust of his knife. Cutting off his head, he broke out of the dark den and sought Olaf, with the grisly trophy in his hand.

Olaf heard his story with lowering face. It was not to traitors like this that he had offered reward. In the end, burning with indignation at the base deed, he ordered the thrall's head to be struck off. Thus Kark's dream, as interpreted by Haakon, came true. The ring put by Olaf around his neck was not one of gold, but one of blood.

CHAPTER IX

HOW OLAF, THE SLAVE-BOY, WON THE THRONE

Many sons had Harold the Fair-Haired, and of some of them the story has been told. One of them, Olaf by name, left a son named Tryggve, who in turn had a son to whom he gave his father's name of Olaf. Wonderful was the story of this Olaf in his youth and renowned was it in his age, for he it was who drove the heathen gods from Norway and put Christ in their place. But it is the strange and striking adventures of his earlier days with which this tale has to deal.

Prince Tryggve had his enemies and by them was foully murdered. Then they sought his dwelling, proposing to destroy his whole race. But Aastrid, his wife, was warned in time, and fled from her home with Thorold, her foster-father. She hid on a little island in the Rand fiord, and here was born the son who was afterwards to become one of Norway's most famous kings.

The perils of Aastrid were not yet at an end. Gunhild, the sorceress queen, was her chief enemy, and when her spies brought her word that Aastrid had borne a son, the wicked old woman sought to destroy the child.

The summer through Aastrid remained on the little isle, hiding in the weedy bushes by day and venturing abroad only at night. Everywhere Gunhild's spies sought her, and when autumn came with its long nights, she left the isle and journeyed with her attendants through the land, still hiding by day and travelling only under the shades of night. In this way she reached the estate of her father, Erik Ofrestad.

The poor mother was not left in peace here, the evil-minded sorceress still pursuing her. A body of murderers was sent to seek for her and her son on her father's estate, but

Ofrestad heard of their mission in time to send the fugitives away. Dressed as beggars, Aastrid and her child and Thorolf, her foster-father, travelled on foot from the farm, stopping at evening to beg food and shelter from a peasant named Björn. The surly fellow drove them away, but they were given shelter farther on by a peasant named Thorstein.

Meanwhile the murderers were hot on their track. Not finding Aastrid at her father's house, they traced her to Björn's farm, where they were told that a handsome but poorly dressed woman, carrying a young child, had asked for help that evening. It chanced that a servant of Thorstein overheard this and when he reached home he told it to his master. Suspecting the rank and peril of his guests, Thorstein roused them from sleep with a great show of anger and drove them out into the night. This was done to deceive the servants, but Thorstein followed the weary fugitives and told them the reason of his act. He had driven them out to save them, he said, and he gave them a trusty guide who could show them the best hiding places in the forest. They found shelter for that night amid the tall rushes by the side of a small lake.

When the troop of murderers reached Thorstein's house he set them astray on the wrong scent and he fed the fugitives in the forest until the murderous gang had given up the search. In the end he aided them to make their way to Sweden, where they took refuge with a friend of Prince Tryggve named Haakon the Old.

Still the wicked queen did not let them rest in peace. Learning where they were, she sent two embassies to King Erik of Sweden, demanding the surrender of the mother and child. Each time Erik gave them permission to capture the fugitives if they could, saying that he would not interfere. But Haakon the Old was not the man to surrender his guests. In vain Gunhild's ambassador came to him with promises and threats. The dispute at length grew so hot that a half-witted servant seized a dung-fork and rushed at the ambassador, who took to his heels, fearing

to have his fine clothes soiled. The angry thrall pursued him till he was driven off the estate, Haakon looking on with grim mirth.

Such were the early days of little Olaf, whose life began in a series of adventures which were the prologue to a most stirring and active life. Few men have had a more adventurous career than he, his whole life being one of romance, activity and peril. He became a leading hero of the saga writers, who have left us many striking stories of his young life and adventures.

Aastrid and her son remained with Haakon the Old until Earl Haakon came into power in Norway. As he was not of royal blood, she feared that he might seek to destroy all the descendants of old King Harold, and, in doubt if her present protector was strong enough to defend her, she decided to seek refuge in Russia, where her brother Sigurd had risen to a place of power.

With this voyage young Olaf's later series of adventures began. The merchant ship in which they set sail was taken by a viking pirate craft, some of the passengers being killed and others sold as slaves. Thorolf and his young son Thorgills, with the boy Olaf, were sold to a viking named Klerkon, who killed Thorolf because he was too old to bring any price as a slave, but kept the boys, whom he soon traded away in Esthonia for a big ram. As for Aastrid, she was offered for sale at the slave-market, and here, despite her ragged and miserable plight, she was recognized by a rich merchant named Lodin. He offered to pay her ransom if she would become his wife. The poor woman, not knowing what had become of her son, was glad to accept his offer and returned with him to his home in Norway.

To return to the story of the boy slaves, the man who had bought them for a ram, soon sold them for a coat and cape to a man named Reas. The new master put Thorgills to hard labor, but took a fancy to Olaf and treated him much more kindly, the young prince remaining with him for six years and growing up to be a handsome and sturdy youth.

Sigurd Eriksson, Aastrid's brother, and the uncle of Olaf, was a man of prominence in Esthonia, and one day rode on business of King Vladimir through the town in which Reas lived. Here he saw some boys playing, one of whom attracted him by his manly and handsome face. Calling him to his horse's side, he asked his name.

"Olaf," said the boy.

Olaf! The name was significant to Sigurd, and a few words more taught him that the lad was his lost nephew. Seeking Reas, he offered him a good price for his two young slaves and took them home with him, bidding Olaf not to tell any one else who he was.

The boy was now well-grown, active, and strong for his years. Walking one day about the town he saw before him the viking Klerkon who had killed old Thorolf, his foster-father. He had at the moment an axe in his hand and, with no thought but that of revenge on the murderer, he struck him a blow that split his skull and stretched him dead on the ground.

The boy was in peril of his life for this impulsive deed. Death was its legal penalty, and a crowd quickly gathered who demanded that the boy murderer should be killed. His uncle heard of the act and ran in haste to his rescue, taking him to Olga, the queen, and telling her who he was, what he had done, and why he had done it.

The queen looked at the beautiful and bright-faced lad and took a great fancy to him at sight. She took him under her protection, and gave him a training in the use of arms and warlike sports, such as becomed the scion of a royal race. When twelve years of age King Vladimir, who esteemed the boy highly, gave him some armed ships and sent him out to try his hand in real war, and for some years he roved abroad as a viking. He also served the king well by conquering for him a rebel province.

Olaf might have won high rank in Russia but for the enemies who envied him and who made the king fear that he would yet find a rival for the throne in the ambitious boy. Fearing trouble for her protege, Queen Olga advised him to leave the kingdom and he sailed for the land of the Wends, on the Baltic shores, where King Burislav received him as a distinguished young warrior. He did not tell who he really was, but went under the name of Ole the Russian, and as such married the daughter of the king, who fell in love with him for his valor and beauty. Many were the valiant deeds he did for King Burislav, with whom he stayed until the death of his wife, he being then twenty-one years of age.

The young warrior now grew eager for new adventures, and in response to a dream determined to go to Greece and become a Christian. His dream served the cause of Christianity better than this, if the story is true that he sent a missionary bishop to Russia who converted both King Vladimir and Queen Olga to the Christian faith.

From Greece Olaf wandered to many countries, including France, Denmark, Scotland, and Northumberland, and his adventures were very numerous. He was twenty-five years of age when he reached England and here he met with an adventure of a new type. The Princess Gyda, sister of an Irish king, was a widow, but was still young and beautiful and had so many suitors that it was hard for her to choose between them. Among the most importunate was a warrior named Alfvine, a great slayer of men.

So many were they and so much did they annoy the fair widow that at last she fixed a day when she would choose a husband from among them, and numbers of them came before her, all in their most splendid attire. It was a championship that attracted many lookers on and among them came Olaf with some of his companions. He was plainly dressed, and wore a fur hood and cape. Gyda stood forth and looked over her throng of lovers with listless eyes until at length she saw among the spectators the tall stranger with the hood of fur. She walked up to him,

lifted the hood, and gazed long into his eyes. What she saw there riveted her fancy.



A NORDFJORD BRIDE AND GROOM WITH GUESTS AND PARENTS.
BRIGSDAL, NORWAY.

"I do not know you," she said; "but if you will have me for a wife, then you are my choice."

Olaf must have seen as much in her eyes as she had in his, for he warmly replied:

"I know no woman who equals you, and gladly will I accept you."

At once their betrothal was published, but Alfvine, burning with wrath, challenged the fortunate stranger to mortal combat. Fierce and long was the fight, but Norse blood and valor conquered and Gyda was enraptured with the courage and skill of her spouse. They were duly wedded and Olaf spent several years in England and Ireland, winning fame there as a doughty champion and growing ever more earnest in the Christian faith.

In the chronicles of the time we are told much of the doings of the doughty Olaf, who won fame as the chieftain of a viking fleet, which in 994 made many descents upon the English coast. In the end he landed in Southampton and fixed his winter quarters there, living upon the country. He was finally bought off by King Ethelred with £10,000, which he divided among his men. He received confirmation in the Christian faith the same year, King Ethelred being present, and took a solemn vow, which he never broke, that he would never again molest England and her people.

Olaf's name was no longer concealed and the fame of his deeds reached Norway, where they gave no small trouble of mind to Earl Haakon, who dreaded this young adventurer of royal descent, knowing well how much the people loved King Harold and his race. Haakon went so far as to try to compass his death, sending his friend Thore Klakka to Dublin, where Olaf then was, to kill him if he could, otherwise to entice him to Norway when he would himself destroy him.

The latter Thore did, finding Olaf ready for any new adventure, and under Thore's treacherous advice he sailed with five ships and landed in Hordaland, where Haakon's power was the greatest, and thence sailed northward to Trondelag where the earl was and where he hoped to take him by surprise.

Thore had represented that Olaf would find friends in plenty there, and much to his own surprise found that he had told more truth than he knew; for, as told in the last tale, the peasants were then in arms and in pursuit of the recreant earl. They gladly accepted Olaf as their leader, on learning who he was, and helped him in the quick and sudden downfall and death of Haakon, as already described.

All the chiefs and peasants of the district were now summoned to meet in assembly and with one voice they chose Olaf Tryggvesson, great-grandson of the renowned Harold, as their king. All Norway confirmed their action and thus easily did the adventurer prince, who had once been a slave-boy, sold for half a fat ram, rise to the throne of Norway.

CHAPTER X

OLAF DETHRONES ODIN AND DIES A HERO

Earl Haakon was the last heathen king of Norway. Olaf, the new king, was a zealous Christian and was determined to introduce the new faith. And this was done not in the mild and gentle way in which Haakon the Good had attempted it, but with all the fierce fury of the viking spirit. Christ the White the Northmen called the new deity, but it was rather Christ the Red in Olaf's hands, for, while Christian in faith, he was a son of the old gods, Odin and Thor, in spirit.

It is not the Christianizing of Norway that we have set out to tell, but as this is a matter of great importance some space must be given to it. Olaf, high spirited and impetuous, did by storm what he might not have been able to do by milder measures. He had little trouble in the south of Norway, where the Christian faith had been making its way for years, but in the north the old heathen spirit was strong, sacrifices to the gods were common, and the rude and cruel barbarism which the old doctrines favored everywhere prevailed. Here it was that Olaf had a strong fortress of heathenism to take by storm.

In Trøndelag was the temple of Hlade, ancient and grand, the stronghold of the Norse gods. Fierce and impulsive in his zeal, Olaf broke into this old temple, destroyed the altar, burned the idols, and carried away the treasure. At once the people were in arms, but the resolute king began to build a Christian church where the temple had stood and also a fortress-like residence for himself.

In the end the peasants grew so fierce and warlike and were so backed up by a lusty chieftain named Ironbeard, that Olaf found himself obliged to promise to take part with them in the feast and sacrifices of the coming Yuletide.

But before this time arrived he appeared again at Hlade and he now brought with him a strong fleet and numerous armed warriors. Many guests had been invited to meet him, and these were entertained until they were all royally drunk. Then the king said to them:

"I have promised to sacrifice with you, and am here to keep my word. I propose to make a royal sacrifice, not of thralls and criminals, but of lords and chieftains, for thus we can best do honor to Odin."

He then selected six of his most powerful opponents and said that he intended to sacrifice them to Odin and Frey, that the people might have good crops. The dismayed chiefs were instantly seized and were offered the alternative of being sacrificed or baptized. Taken by surprise, they were not long in deciding upon the latter, the king making them give hostages for their good faith.

Soon after came the Yuletide and Olaf was present with a strong force at Möre, where the sacrifices were to be made. The peasants also came in force, all armed, with the burly Ironbeard as their leader. They were rude and noisy and it was some time before the king could make himself heard. Then he called on them all to accept baptism and acknowledge Christ the White in place of their bloodthirsty gods. Ironbeard haughtily replied that they were supporters of the old laws and that the king must make the sacrifices as all the kings before him had done.

Olaf heard him through and said that he was there to keep his promise. Then, with many men, he entered the temple, leaving his arms outside as the law required. All he carried was a stout, gold-headed stick. Stopping before the statue of the god Thor, around which were rings of gold and iron, he raised the stick and gave the idol a blow so fierce and strong that it tumbled in pieces from its pedestal. At the same moment his followers struck down the other idols. The peasants, thunderstruck at the sacrilege, looked for support to Ironbeard, but the doughty warrior lay dead. He had shared the fate of the

idols he worshipped, being struck down at the same moment with them. What to do the peasants knew not, and when Olaf told them they must either be baptized or fight they chose the former as the safest. The province of Haalogaland, still farther north, was dealt with in the same arbitrary fashion, those of the chiefs who refused baptism being put to death with torture. And in this fierce and bloody way the dominion of Christ the White was established in the land of the vikings. It was but a substitute for the heathen gods that was given them in such a fashion, and years had to pass before they would become true Christians.

Much more might be said about King Olaf, his kindness and winning manners in peace, his love of show and splendor, his prowess in battle and his wonderful skill with weapons. He could use both hands with equal effect in fighting, could handle three spears at once, keeping one always in the air, and when his men were rowing could run from prow to stern of the ship on their oars. But what we have chiefly to tell is the last adventure of the viking king and how death came to him in the heat of the fray.

What became of his wife Gyda, the Irish princess, we are not told, but he had now a new wife, Thyra, sister of King Sweyn Forkbeard of Denmark, and it was to this queen he owed his death. She had large estates in Wendland and Denmark, from which she now received no revenues, and she fretted Olaf so by appeals, prayers, and tears to win back for her this property that he had no peace in his palace. The annoyance went on until the hot-tempered king could bear it no longer and he began to prepare for war abroad that he might gain peace at home.

Word was sent out to the chiefs of the land, bidding them to join the king with the ships required by the laws of the kingdom. Among his own ships was one called the Short Serpent, and he had just finished another of great size and beauty which he named the Long Serpent. Never had so noble a ship been seen in the north. It was 112 feet long and had 104 oars, while it could carry six hundred warriors, none being over sixty or under twenty years of age except the great bowman

Thambarkskelver, who was but eighteen, yet was so skilful with the bow that he could shoot a blunt arrow through a hanging raw ox-hide.

With sixty ships and as many transports Olaf sailed south to Wendland, where he was well received by his old friend King Burislav, whose daughter Geira had been his first wife. The Wend king royally entertained him and made a just settlement of Queen Thyra's estates, and Olaf prepared to sail homeward again. But dark clouds of war were gathering on his path.

Sweyn Forkbeard of Denmark was hostile both to Burislav and Olaf and the king of Sweden was leagued with the Danish king. To detain Olaf while they gathered their fleets, these kings employed Sigvalde, the cowardly chief of the Jomsvikings, who had fled from the battle with Earl Haakon, to visit and lure him into blind confidence.

The treacherous viking succeeded. His smooth, soft ways won Olaf's heart and the open-minded king put complete trust in him. Sigvalde finally, after bringing about much delay by his false arts, engaged to pilot Olaf with his own fleet through the dangerous waters of the coast, and even induced him to divide his ships by sending part of them in advance.

The traitor meanwhile kept in communication with King Sweyn and promised to lure Olaf away from his main force and lead him into the snare they were laying for him. Chief among the enemies of the Norse king was Earl Erik, the son of Earl Haakon, whom he was eager to avenge, and King Olaf the Swede, who was present with a fleet.

With sixty or seventy ships of war these foes of Norway's king lay hidden behind the little island of Svolder, in Olaf's track. For a number of days they awaited him with impatience. At last Olaf's transports appeared within view of the leaders of the hostile fleet, who were posted at an elevated point on the land.

The day was fair, the wind gentle and favorable, and the foremost ships sailed onward, seeing nothing of the foes. When King Sweyn saw among them a large and handsome ship he was sure it must be the Long Serpent, and said:

"Olaf of Norway is afraid to-day, for he carries no dragon-head on his ship."

"That is not the king's ship," said Earl Erik, "but that of Erling of Sole. I know it by its striped sails. Let it pass, for it will be better for us to have Erling out of the fray."

On, one by one, came the Norse ships, sweeping proudly by, and at length Sigvalde's eleven ships came in sight. These, signalled from the shore, suddenly turned inward round the island, to the surprise of Thorkill Dyrdrill, captain of the Crane, which followed in their wake. Seeing this fine ship, Sweyn grew eager for the fight and ordered his men on board in spite of Erik's warning that the time had not yet arrived.

"Are you afraid of them?" sneered the Dane. "Have you lost all desire to avenge your father?"

"Wait and you will see," retorted Erik. "Before the sun sets you will find who is most eager for battle, I, or you and your men."

When Thorkill saw the treacherous act of Sigvalde and caught sight of the ambushed fleet, he let fall the sails of the Crane and awaited the coming of the king. Soon the Short Serpent came up, its gilded dragon-head shining brightly in the sunlight. Not long after the Long Serpent appeared, its golden prow glittering brilliantly as the sunbeams fell upon it. Those who saw it marvelled at its size and beauty and many beheld with dread the glittering array of swords and shields as it came sweeping onward.

But the great body of King Olaf's ships had gone on without thought of a foeman and were now out of sight. Only eleven of them remained, and some of his captains advised him not to fight against such odds.

"Down with the sails," he cried cheerily. "Bind the ships together. Never yet have I fled from battle and I will not do so now. God is my shield and I will flee from no foe. He is no king who lets fear put him to flight before his enemies."

Yet his peril was deadly, as was evident when the fleet of more than sixty ships rowed out from its ambush against Olaf's eleven.

"Who is the leader here before us?" he asked.

"That is King Sweyn with his Danes," said one of the men.

"Let them come on. Danes have never yet beaten Norsemen, and they will not to-day. But whose standards are those on the right?"

"They are those of Olaf of Sweden."

"The heathen Swedes had better have stayed at home to lick their sacrificial bowls. We need not fear these horse-eaters. Yonder to the left; whose ships are those?"

"They belong to Earl Erik, the son of Earl Haakon."

"Then we may look for hard blows from them. Erik and his men are Norsemen like ourselves, and he has reason not to love me and mine."

While he spoke Queen Thyra, who was with him, came on deck. When she saw the desperate odds she burst into tears.

"Do not weep," said Olaf. "You have got what was due in Wendland; and to-day I will do my best to win your rights from your brother Sweyn."

King Sweyn came first into the fray, but after a stubborn fight was driven off with great carnage. Then the Swedes swarmed to the rescue, and a second hard battle ensued, in which the Norsemen were outnumbered ten to one. Yet Olaf, with shining helmet and shield and a tunic of scarlet silk over his armor, directed the defence, and gave his men such courage by

his fierce valor that the victory would have been his but for Earl Erik.

When Erik's great galley, the Iron Ram, came into the fight and Norse met Norse, the onset was terrific. Greatly outnumbered, worn out with their exertions, and many of them bleeding from wounds, the men in ship after ship were overpowered and these cut adrift, their defenders being slain. At length only the Long Serpent remained, and against it was driven the Iron Ram.

There was little wind and the damage was not great, and soon the storm of spears and arrows was resumed. Einer Thambarskelver, the famous bowman, saw Earl Erik in the prow of his ship screened by the shields of his men, and soon Einer's arrows were hurtling around him.

"Shoot that tall bowman," said Erik to one of his own archers.

An arrow sped and hit Einer's bow in the middle, breaking it in twain.

"What is broke?" asked Olaf, hearing the sound.

"Norway broke then from your hands, my king," said Einer.

"Not so bad as that; take my bow and try what it is worth."

Einer caught the bow, bent it double, and threw it back.

"It is too weak," he said.

Desperate was now the strait and no escape was possible. Olaf sent his spears hurtling on Erik's crowded deck, but he saw that his men were scarce able to hold their own.

"Your swords bite poorly," he said. "Have your arms lost their strength?"

"No," was the reply, "but our blades are dull and notched."

The king ran forward, opened a chest, and flung out armfuls of bright, sharp swords.

"Here is what will bite deeply," he said.

But victory was now hopeless; the earl's men swept back the tired warriors; blood flowed from under the king's armor; all hands were bent against him, for he loomed above his men. Kolbjörn, a man who resembled the king, sprang to his side and helped him shrewdly in the fray.

Still the stern combat went on, still the weapons flew, still men fell groaning, and as the king looked along his deck he saw that only eight men kept their feet besides himself and his companion. All was lost. Raising the shield above his head, he leaped over the ship's side. Kolbjörn followed and was picked up by the earl's men, who took him to be the king. As for Olaf, the hungry sea swallowed his form.

Legend tells us, indeed, that he was rescued by a ship sent to his aid by Aastrid, Earl Sigvalde's wife, and that he made a pilgrimage to Rome and long afterwards lived as a hermit in the Holy Land. But that is one of the stories based on good wishes rather than sound facts.

It was in the year 1000, when King Olaf was thirty-six years old, that this famous sea-fight took place. Queen Thyra felt that she had caused his death and could not be consoled. Erik treated her kindly and promised her the honors due to her high estate, but her heart was broken by her loss, and nine days afterwards she died.

CHAPTER XI

OLAF THE SAINT AND HIS WORK FOR CHRIST

The story of Olaf the Saint, the Norse king who comes next into our view, illustrates the barbarous character of the heathen people with whom we are dealing. Few warriors in those days died in their beds, death coming to them in some more violent form. Olaf's grandfather, a son of Harold the Fair-Haired, was killed by his brother, Erik Blood-Axe, and his father was burned alive by a royal widow whom he sought to marry. Many wooers came to seek her hand and she got rid of them by setting on fire the hall in which they slept.

"I'll teach these little kings the risk of proposing to me," said this viking widow.

A proud little fellow was Olaf, hot of temper and bearing no opposition. He knew that he was of kingly birth, and despised his step-father Sigurd Syr, also a descendant of King Harold, but caring more for his crops than for the dreams of ambition. Once, when Olaf was ten years old, Sigurd sent him to the stable to saddle and bring out his horse. When he came out he led a big goat, on which he had placed the saddle.

"Why do you do that?" he was asked.

"Oh, the goat is good enough for him, for he is as much like a king as a goat is like a war-horse."

The boy was only twelve when he began to take part in the cruises of the vikings, and in these quickly showed himself brave and daring. When he grew to a ripe age and found that the rule of Norway was divided between two young men, successors of the Olaf whose story we have last told, he determined to strike for the throne.

The story of how he won the throne is interesting, but must be dealt with here very briefly, as we have rather to do with the story of how he lost it. Olaf was fortunate at the start, for he captured a ship on which Earl Erik, one of these boy kings, was sailing along the coast.

A beautiful youth he was, tall and shapely, with silky golden hair which fell in long curls over his shoulders. Proud he was too, and answered his captor's questions with manly resolution.

"Your luck has left you and you are in my power," said Olaf; "what shall I do with you?"

"That depends on you," answered the fearless young earl.

"What will you do if I let you go unharmed?"

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Only this, that you leave your country and renounce your claim of kingship, and that you swear never to make war on me."

To this young Erik agreed and sailed away to England to join his uncle, Canute the Dane, who was then king of both Denmark and England.

With the other young king, Earl Sweyn, Olaf did not find his task so easy, since Sweyn fought for his rights in a naval battle in which he had forty-five ships and three thousand men, while Olaf had less than half that number of men and ships. Olaf won the battle by a shrewd stratagem. He told his men to act at first only on the defensive, holding back their weapons until the enemy had thrown away theirs.

On came Earl Sweyn's fleet, fiercely attacking that of Olaf, a cloud of spears and arrows filling the air. As none came back from Olaf's men, their opponents fancied they were afraid, and rushed on them eagerly. But by this time their spears and arrows had grown scarce, and when a storm of these came from the opposite side they were taken by surprise and many of them

killed. Wild with fear, they now sought to escape, and in the end their whole fleet broke and fled, leaving victory to the new king.

Sweyn fled to Sweden, whose king promised him help to regain his kingdom. But he died before his plans were ripe and Olaf was left without a rival except the king of Sweden, who had won a part of Norway in a former battle and now held it. This source of trouble was settled by the Swedes themselves, who had no fancy for fighting to help their king's ambition, and forced him to agree to yield his claim and give his daughter Ingegerd to Olaf for wife. So by a marriage Olaf won the remainder of his kingdom and became ruler over all Norway; but not by marrying Ingegerd, for he chose instead her sister Aastrid.

There is a pretty story told just here in the sagas, or historical tales of the Icelanders. Thus it reads: Sigurd Syr, who had married Olaf's mother Aasta, died in 1018, and Olaf came to her house to help in settling her affairs. She had three boys, Guttorm, Halfdan, and Harold, whom she brought into the hall to introduce to their half-brother, the king. Olaf put the two older ones on his knees and made so fierce a face at them that they ran away sadly scared. Then he took up little Harold and stared at him in the same way. The brave youngster was not so easily frightened as his brothers and stared back at the king. Then Olaf pulled his hair, but the daring youngster pulled his beard in exchange.

"He will do," said Olaf, setting him down with a laugh.

The next day the king and his mother watched the boys at their play. The older two amused themselves by building barns, in which they put toy cows and sheep; but Harold launched mock boats on a pond and watched them drift away.

"What do you call them?" asked Olaf.

"Ships of war," said the boy.

"Good lad," answered the king; "the day will come when you will command real ships."

Calling the boys to him, he asked Guttorm, the oldest, what he most wished for.

"Land," said the boy.

"How much?"

"Enough to sow as much grain every summer as would cover the headland yonder."

Ten large farms covered the headland in question.

"And what do you most desire?" the king asked Halfdan.

"Enough cows to cover the shores of the headland when they went to the water to drink."

"So; one wants land and the other cattle; and what do you want, Harold?"

"Men," said the boy.

"How many?"

"Enough to eat up in a single dinner all brother Halfdan's cows."

"Come, mother," said Olaf, laughing; "you have here a chap in training to make himself a king."

So it proved, for in later days Harold rose to be king of Norway.

But now we have to tell from what the king gained his title of Olaf the Saint. It came from his warm endeavors to make Norway a Christian land. The former King Olaf had forced his people to be baptized, but the most of them were heathens at heart still and after his death many began to worship the old gods again. It was the second Olaf that made the Christian secure in the land, and this still more by his death than by his life.

When he was still an infant the former King Olaf had baptized him and given him his own name, and the time came when his little namesake took up and finished his work. What

most troubled the kings of Norway in that age was the power held by the tribal chiefs, who were difficult to control and ready to rebel; and this power came from the fact that they were not only chiefs, but were the priests of the old religion. As priest-kings their people followed them blindly, and no king could be sure of his crown while this system prevailed.

Olaf, who had been brought up in the new faith, set himself earnestly to spread the true principles of Christ's teachings through the land and for years he worked at it earnestly. But he had hard metal to deal with. It is said that one chief, when about to be baptized, turned to the priest and asked him where were his brave forefathers who had died without being baptized.

"They are in hell," said the priest.

"Then hell is the place for me," answered the chief. "I would rather be there with Odin and my hard fighting and noble fathers than in heaven with cowardly Christians and shaven monks."

This was the spirit of the chiefs. A heaven in which there would be no fighting and mead-drinking had no charms for them, and to live forever with the souls of men who had never drawn sword and struck blow was too dreary a prospect for their turbulent tastes.

But Olaf was ardent in the new faith and persistent in his endeavors, travelling from end to end of the land in his efforts to break up the old idolatry. Here is one of the stories told of this missionary work of the king.

He was then in Nidaros, whose peasantry, called Trönders, were said to be celebrating in secret the old pagan festivals and offering sacrifices to Odin and Frey for bountiful crops. When King Olaf came among them they took arms against him, but afterwards agreed to hold a public assembly and deal in that way with the religious question that was troubling the kingdom.

On the day they met it was raining hard. When the king asked them to believe in the God of the Christians and be baptized, Dale Guldbrand, their leader, replied:

"We know nothing of the being you speak of; a god whom neither you nor any one else can see. Now we have a god whom you can see every day, except a rainy day like this. If your god is so powerful, then let him arrange that to-morrow we shall have clouds but no rain."



NORWEGIAN PEASANTS

When they met again the next day the weather was what they had asked for, clouds but no rain. Bishop Sigurd now celebrated mass and preached to the people about the miracles which Christ had wrought when on earth. On the third day it was still cloudy. The people had brought with them a great wooden image of the god Thor, and their chief spoke as follows:

"Where is your god now, King Olaf? You do not look so bold as you did yesterday, for our god, who rules over all things, is here now and scaring you with his fierce eyes. You scarce dare look at him, but you would be wiser to believe in the god that holds in his hand your destiny."

"Your god does not frighten me," answered the king. "He is blind and deaf and cannot move from the spot where you have set him without he is carried. He will soon meet his fate. Look yonder to the east. There in the flood of light comes our God."

To the east all eyes were turned, and at that moment the sunlight burst from the clouds and spread over the scene. As it did so a sturdy warrior, at a signal from the king, sprang forwards and struck the idol so fierce a blow with his club that it was shattered to pieces. Out from its hollow interior sprang great rats, snakes, and lizards, which had grown fat on the food with which the idol had been fed daily.

On seeing these loathsome things squirm from the interior of their god the peasants fled from the spot in a panic of fear, rushing to the river where their boats lay. But King Olaf, forecasting this, had sent men to bore holes in the boats so that they would not float. Unable to escape, the frightened peasants came back, quite downcast in spirit.

"You see what your god is worth," said the king. "Has he eaten the bread and meat you fed him, or has it gone to fatten rats and snakes? As for the gold and silver you gave him, there it lies scattered. Take up your golden ornaments and hang them no more on worthless logs. Now I give you your choice: you shall accept the faith I bring you, or you shall fight for your own. He will win to whom his god gives the victory."

The peasants were not prepared to fight, and therefore were obliged to accept baptism. Priests were sent to teach them the tenets of the new faith they had accepted, and Dale Guldbrand signified his honesty by building a church to the Christian deity. Other provinces were also won over to Christ, but there was one great and bold chieftain, Erling by name, and a sturdy heathen in his faith, who remained hostile to the king and a war between them became inevitable.

While the king and the earl were making busy preparations to fight for their faiths, a warrior king and conqueror stepped in to take advantage for himself of the

quarrel. This was King Canute, monarch of Denmark and England, who was eager to add Norway and Sweden to his dominions and make himself one of the most powerful of kings. He secretly sent presents to the discontented Norse chiefs and took other means to win them to his cause. It was not long before Olaf learned of these underhand doings, and he at once made an alliance with King Anund of Sweden, whose sister he had married, and whom he told that Canute would attack him if he should win Norway. In his turn, Canute sent ambassadors to King Anund, with splendid presents, hoping to win him over.

Two candlesticks of gold were placed before him by the ambassadors.

"Pretty toys those," said Anund, "but not worth enough to break me from my good friend Olaf."

Then they brought forth a golden platter, of artistic finish and adorned with jewels. King Anund gazed at it with covetous eyes.

"A handsome bit of work," he said; "but I will not sell King Olaf for a dish."

Finally two magnificent rings were offered. King Anund laughed when he saw them.

"Keen and shrewd is King Canute," he remarked. "He knows I love golden toys, but he does not know that I love honor better. I have known King Olaf since he was a boy; he is my friend and my sister is his queen. I will not forsake him to please your king."

On hearing this, King Canute laid aside his plots and made a pilgrimage to Rome. During his absence his brother-in-law, Earl Ulf, rebelled against him and allied himself with Kings Olaf and Anund, who sent fleets to his aid. As it proved, King Canute was not the man to be caught napping. Back from his pilgrimage he travelled in haste and came near to capturing both the kings. They fled with all speed, pursued by him with a more powerful fleet, and went up a little river in southern Sweden,

which they closed by a dam against their strong foe. Canute came soon after and found the harbor deserted and the river closed against him.

That night orders were given by the kings to break the dam and the heaped-up water ran down in an immense flood on the Danish ships, doing them great damage and drowning many of the people on board. But no attack was made on the disabled fleet, for Earl Ulf now turned traitor to his allies and joined Canute with his ships, making him too strong to attack.

This ended the war for the time, Canute returning to England. But he had won over many of the Norse chiefs by his bribes and the next year came again, sailing north to Nidaros, where the assembled chiefs, whom he had gained to his side, proclaimed him king of Norway. He appointed Earl Haakon, grandson of the famous Earl Haakon of a former tale, regent in his stead, and sailed away again.

In this manner Olaf lost his kingdom, for with all the powerful chiefs sold to the great King Canute and supported by him, little hope remained. He kept up the struggle for a short time, but was soon forced to flee to Sweden, whence he made his way to Russia and to the court of King Jaroslov, who was his brother-in-law, for he had married Princess Ingegerd of Sweden, once affianced to Olaf.

Thus easily had Norway been conquered by Canute, but it was not long to remain under Danish rule at this time. Olaf, it is true, never won the throne again, though he made a strong effort to regain it. In Russia he grew more and more given to religious thoughts, until he became looked upon as a holy man. This made him open to believe in visions, and when in a dream he saw the former King Olaf, who bade him to go back to Norway and conquer it or die, he did not hesitate.

Word had been brought him that Earl Haakon was dead and Norway with no immediate ruler, and against the advice of Jaroslov he set out for his late kingdom, leaving his son Magnus at the Russian court.

In Sweden the king gave him permission to gather recruits, but now his religious fanaticism stood in the way of his success. He would have none but baptized men in his army, and thus rejected many brave warriors while taking some known to be outlaws and thieves. On reaching Norway he showed the same unwisdom. He had but four thousand men under his command, while the army he was soon to meet numbered ten thousand. Yet Olaf rejected five hundred of his men because they were heathens and, thus weakened, marched to the unequal fray.

"Forward, Christ's men, king's men!" was the battle-cry of Olaf's army as it rushed upon the foe. "Forward, peasant men!" cried the opposite army, charging under its chiefs.

The king's men had the best of it at the opening, but the peasants held their ground stubbornly, and as the battle went on Olaf's ranks thinned and wavered. Finding the day going against him, he dashed forward with a small band of devoted men. One by one they fell. The standard changed hands again and again as its bearer was struck down. Olaf, severely wounded, stood leaning against a rock, when he was cut down by spear and sword. And strangely, at that moment, the sun began to grow blood-red and a dusky hue fell over the field. Darker and darker it grew till the sun was blotted out and terror filled the souls of the peasants, who saw in this strange darkness a token of the wrath of Olaf's God. But the eclipse came too late to save the king, who lay dead where he had fallen.

Olaf was gone but tradition built a halo around his name. It was reported that miracles were wrought by his blood and by the touch of his lifeless hand. Tales of marvel and magic grew up about him, and he became a wonder-worker for the superstitious people. In time he grew to be the national hero and the national saint, and lives in history as Olaf the Saint, while his tragic death and his enthusiasm for the cause of Christ gave him a strong hold on the people's hearts and aided greatly in making Norway truly a Christian land.

CHAPTER XII

CANUTE THE GREAT, KING OF SIX NATIONS

A famous old king of Denmark, known as Harald Blaataand or Bluetooth, had many sons, of whom only one, Svend or Sweyn, outlived him. While Harald was a Christian, Sweyn was a pagan, having been brought up in the old faith by a noble warrior Palnatoke, to whom his father had sent the boy to teach him the use of arms.

When the king found that the boy was being made a pagan he tried to withdraw him from Palnatoke, but Sweyn would not leave his friend, whereupon the crafty king sought to destroy the warrior. We speak of this, for there is a very interesting story connected with it. Every one has read of how the Austrian governor Gessler condemned the Swiss peasant William Tell to shoot with an arrow an apple from his son's head, but few know that a like story is told of a Danish king and warrior four hundred years earlier. This is the story, as told for us by an old historian.

One day, while Palnatoke was boasting in the king's presence of his skill as an archer, Harald told him that, in spite of his boasts, there was one shot he would not dare to try. He replied that there was no shot he was afraid to attempt, and the king then challenged him to shoot an apple from the head of his son. Palnatoke obeyed, and the apple fell, pierced by the arrow. This cruel act made Palnatoke the bitter foe of King Harald, and gathering around him a band of fierce vikings he founded a brotherhood of sea-rovers at Jomsborg, and for long years afterwards the Jomsborgers, or Jomsborg vikings, were a frightful scourge to all Christian lands on the Baltic Sea. In former tales we have told some of their exploits.

It is said that Sweyn himself, in a later war, killed his father on the battlefield, while Palnatoke stood by approving,

though in after years the two were bitter foes. All we need say further of these personages is that Sweyn invaded England with a powerful force in the time of Ethelred the Unready and drove this weak king from the island, making himself master of great part of the kingdom. He died at Gainsborough, England, in 1014, leaving his son Knud, then a boy of fourteen, to complete the conquest. It is this son, known in England as Canute the Great, and the mightiest of all the Danish kings, with whose career we have to deal.

England did not fall lightly into Canute's hands; he had to win it by force of arms. Encouraged by the death of Sweyn and the youth of Canute, the English recalled Ethelred and for a time the Danes lost the kingdom which their king Sweyn had won. Canute did not find a throne awaiting him in Denmark. His younger brother Harald had been chosen king by the Danes and when Canute asked him for a share in the government, Harald told him that if he wished to be a king he could go back and win England for himself. He would give him a few ships and men, but the throne of Denmark he proposed to keep.

Nothing loth, Canute accepted the offer and the next year returned to England with a large and well appointed force, whose work of conquest was rapidly performed. Ethelred died and great part of England was surrendered without resistance to the Danes. But Edmond, Ethelred's son, took the field with an army and in three months won three victories over the invaders.

A fourth battle was attempted and lost and Edmond retreated to the Severn, swiftly followed by Canute. The two armies here faced each other, with the fate of England in the balance, when a proposal in close accord with the spirit of the times was made. This was to settle the matter by single combat between the kings. Both were willing. While Edmond had the advantage in strength, Canute was his superior in shrewdness. For when the champions met in deadly fray and Canute was disarmed by his opponent, the wily Dane proposed a parley, and succeeded in persuading Edmond to divide the kingdom between them. The agreement was accepted by the armies and the two

kings parted as friends—but the death of Edmond soon after had in it a suspicious appearance of murder by poison.

On the death of Edmond, Canute called a meeting of the popular assembly of the nation and was acknowledged king of all England. Not long afterwards Harald of Denmark died and the Danes chose him, under his home name of Knud, as their king also. But he stayed in Denmark only long enough to settle the affairs of the Church in that realm. He ordered that Christianity should be made the religion of the kingdom and the worship of Odin should cease; and put English bishops over the Danish clergy. He also brought in English workmen to teach the uncivilized Danes. Thus, Dane as Canute was, he preferred the religion and conditions of his conquered to those of his native kingdom, feeling that it was superior in all the arts and customs of civilization.

A great king was Canute, well deserving the title long given him of Canute the Great. Having won England by valor and policy, he held it by justice and clemency. He patronized the poets and minstrels and wrote verses in Anglo-Saxon himself, which were sung by the people and added greatly to his popularity. Of the poems written by him one was long a favorite in England, though only one verse of it now remains. This was preserved by the monks of Ely, since they were its theme. Thus it runs, in literal translation:

"Merrily sung the monks within Ely
When Canute King rowed by;
Row, knights, near the land,
And hear we these monks' song."

It is said that the verse was suggested to the king when rowing with his chiefs one day in the river Nene, near Ely Minster, by the sweet and solemn music of the monastery choir that floated out to them over the tranquil water. The monks of Ely, to whom we owe much of our knowledge of King Canute, tell us that he had a strong affection for the fen country and for

their church, and gave the following story in that connection. It is at once picturesque and humorous.

One year, at the festival of the Purification, when King Canute proposed to pay his usual visit to Ely, the weather was very severe and all the streams and other waters were frozen. The courtiers advised the king to keep the holy festival in some other godly house, which he might reach without danger of drowning under broken ice, but such was his love for the abbot and monks of Ely that he would not take this advice.

Canute proposed to cross the ice by way of Soham Mere, then an immense body of water, saying that if any one would go before and show him the way he would be the first to follow. The soldiers and courtiers hesitated at this suggestion, and looked at one another with doubt and dread. But standing among the crowd was one Brithmar, a churl or serf, who was nicknamed Budde, or Pudding, from his stoutness. He was a native of the island of Ely and doubtless familiar with its waters, and when the courtiers held back he stepped forward and said he would go before and show the way.

"Go on then, in the name of our Lady," said Canute, "and I will follow; for if the ice on Soham Mere can bear a man so large and fat as thou art, it will not break under the weight of a small thin man like me."

So the churl went forward, and Canute the Great followed him, and after the king came the courtiers, one by one, with spaces between; and they all got safely over the frozen mere, with no mishaps other than a few slips and falls on the smooth ice; and Canute, as he had proposed, kept the festival of the Purification with the monks of Ely.

As a reward to the fat churl Brithmar for his service, he was made a freeman and his little property was also made free. "And so," the chronicle concludes, "Brithmar's posterity continued in our days to be freemen and to enjoy their possessions as free by virtue of the grant made by the king to their forefather."

There is another and more famous story told of King Canute, one showing that his great Danish majesty had an abundant share of sound sense. Often as this story has been told it will bear retelling. The incident occurred after his pilgrimage to Rome in the year 1030; made, it is said, to obtain pardon for the crimes and bloodshed which paved his way to the English throne.

After his return and when his power was at its height, the courtiers wearied him by their fulsome flatteries. Disgusted with their extravagant adulations he determined to teach them a lesson. They had spoken of him as a ruler before whom all the powers of nature must bend in obedience, and one day he caused his golden throne to be set on the verge of the sea-shore sands as the tide was rolling in with its resistless might. Seating himself on the throne, with his jewelled crown on his head, he thus addressed the ocean:

"O thou Ocean! Know that the land on which I sit is mine and that thou art a part of my dominion; therefore rise not, but obey my commands, and do not presume to wet the edge of my royal robe."

He sat as if awaiting the sea to obey his commands, while the courtiers stood by in stupefaction. Onward rolled the advancing breakers, each moment coming nearer to his feet, until the spray flew into his face, and finally the waters bathed his knees and wet the skirts of his robe. Then, rising and turning to the dismayed flatterers, he sternly said:

"Confess now how vain and frivolous is the might of an earthly king compared with that Great Power who rules the elements and says unto the ocean, 'Thus far shalt thou go and no farther!'"

The monks who tell this story, conclude it by saying that Canute thereupon took off his crown and deposited it within the cathedral of Winchester, never wearing it again.

After his visit to Rome, Canute ruled with greater mildness and justice than ever before, while his armies kept the turbulent Scotch and Welsh and the unquiet peoples of the north in order. In the latter part of his reign he could boast that the English, the Scotch, the Welsh, the Danes, the Swedes, and the Norwegians were his subjects, and he was called in consequence "The King of the Six Nations," and looked upon throughout Europe as the greatest of sovereigns; none of the kings and emperors of that continent being equal in power, wealth and width of dominion to King Canute, a descendant of the vikings of Denmark.

Canute spent the most of his life in England, but now and then visited his northern realm, and there are some interesting anecdotes of his life there. Though a devout Christian and usually a self-controlled man, the wild passions of his viking ancestry would at times break out, and at such times he spared neither friend nor foe and would take counsel from no man, churchman or layman. But when his anger died out his remorse was apt to be great and he would submit to any penance laid upon him by the Church. Thus when he had killed one of his house servants for some slight offense, he made public confession of his crime and paid the same blood-fine as would have been claimed from a man of lower rank.

The most notable instance of these outbursts of uncontrollable anger was that in which he murdered his old friend and brother-in-law Ulf, who, after rebelling against him, had saved him from complete defeat by the Swedes, by coming to his rescue just as the royal fleet was nearly swamped by the opening of the sluices which held back the waters of the Swedish river Helge-aae. Ulf took Canute on board his own ship and brought him in safety to a Danish island, while leaving his men to aid those of Canute in their escape from the Swedes. Yet the king bore a grudge against the earl, and this was its cause.

At one time Ulf ruled over Denmark as Canute's regent and made himself greatly beloved by the people from his just rule. Queen Emma, Canute's wife, wished to have her little son

Harthaknud—or Hardicanute, as he was afterwards called in England—made king of Denmark, but could not persuade her husband King Canute to accede to her wishes. She therefore sent letters privately to Ulf, saying that the king wished to see the young prince on the throne, but did not wish to do anything the people might not like. Ulf, deceived by her story, had the boy crowned king, and thereby won Canute's ill-will.

The king, however, showed no signs of this, nor of resentment against Ulf for his rebellion, but, after his escape from the Swedes, asked the earl to go with him to his palace at Roeskilde, and on the evening of their arrival offered to play chess with him. During the game Canute made a false move so that Ulf was able to take one of his knights, and when the king refused to let this move count and wanted his man back again the earl jumped up and said he would not go on with the game. Canute, in a burst of anger, cried out:

"The coward Norwegian Ulf Jarl is running away."

"You and your coward Danes would have run away still faster at the Helge-aae if I and my Nowegians had not saved you from the Swedes, who were making ready to beat you all like a pack of craven hounds!" ejaculated the angry earl.

Those hasty words cost Ulf his life. Canute, furious at the insult, brooded over it all night, and the next morning, still in a rage, called to one of the guards at the door of his bed-chamber:

"Go and kill Ulf Jarl."

"My Lord King, I dare not," answered the man. "Ulf Jarl is at prayer before the altar of the church of St. Lucius."

The king, after a moment's pause, turned to a young man-at-arms who had been in his service since his boyhood and cried angrily:

"I command you, Olaf, to go to the church and thrust your sword through the Jarl's body."

Olaf obeyed, and Ulf was slain while kneeling before the altar rails of St. Lucius' church.

Then, as usual with King Canute, his passion cooled and he deeply lamented his crime, showing signs of bitter remorse. In way of expiation he paid to his sister Estrid, Ulf's widow, a large sum as blood-fine, and gave her two villages which she left at her death to the church in which her husband had been slain. He also brought up Ulf's eldest son as one of his own children. The widowed Estrid afterwards married Robert, Duke of Normandy, father of William the Conqueror, who in 1066 became master of England.

King Canute died in 1035, at thirty-six years of age, and his son Harald reigned after him in England for four years, and afterwards his son Harthaknud, or Hardicanute, for three years, when England again came under an Anglo-Saxon king—to fall under the power of William of Normandy, a conqueror of Norwegian descent, twenty-four years later.

CHAPTER XIII

MAGNUS THE GOOD AND HAROLD HARDRULER

After the death of King Olaf the Saint, and after the Danes had for some years ruled over Norway, Olaf's son Magnus, who had been left in Russia, was brought to Norway and proclaimed king. The Danes had oppressed the people, and had put over them a woman and her son, and it was this that made the chiefs drive out the tyrants and put young Magnus, then a boy of ten years of age, on the throne.

A curious thing then took place, one of those strange political somersaults which at times come in the history of nations. For as the Danes had lately ruled over Norway, now a Norseman came to rule over Denmark. Thus it was that this odd change came about.

The great King Canute was dead and his son Hardicanute had succeeded him on the throne. This new king claimed Norway as his and prepared to fight for it. But the chief men in the two countries succeeded in making peace, with the agreement that if either of the kings should die without heirs the other should take his throne. A few years later Hardicanute died and Magnus was proclaimed king of Denmark. Thus, in the year 1042, the two kingdoms became united under a Norse king, a descendant of Harold the Fair-Haired.

Magnus, as he grew up, showed an ugly and revengeful temper. Very likely some of those around him told the boy that he should avenge his father upon those who had rebelled against and killed him. One of these men was slain by his orders, others fled from the country, and many were made poor by the loss of their cattle. This made the people very angry, and they were ready to fight for just treatment when peace was brought about

in another way, the hot-tempered Magnus being subdued by the power of song.

One of the poets of the land—scalds they were called—made a song called the Lay of Candor, which he sang before the king. In it he warned him of the evil results of a revengeful spirit and told him of the duties he owed the people who had brought him to Norway and made him king. Magnus, who had now nearly reached the years of manhood, listened quietly to this song and afterwards sat long in deep thought. It had a wonderful effect on him, for it opened his eyes to the injustice of his course, and from that day he was a new man. All his plans of vengeance fled, he became kind and gentle and so mild and sweet in manner that he grew to be one of the best loved of kings. This may be seen in the name the people gave him, which was that of Magnus the Good.

Now we must tell the rest of his story very rapidly. As the heir of Hardicanute he claimed to be king of England as well as of Norway and Denmark, and he might have tried to win the crown of England, then worn by Edward the Confessor, had he not been kept busy at home. In fact, he had to fight hard to keep the crown of Denmark, for Sweyn, a nephew of the great Canute, claimed it and a fierce war followed. Magnus was victorious in this war, and in one great battle, in which ten thousand soldiers were slain, it was his skill and courage that won the field. This display of personal bravery gave him a great name in the north.

Now we must leave the story of Magnus for a time to take up that of another hero of the north. Those who have read the tale of Olaf the Saint will remember his amusing talk with his three little half-brothers, and how while the two elder had an ambition only for land and cows, Harold, the youngest, wanted men and ships, and Olaf prophesied that the boy would one day be a king.

When Harold grew up the spirit of the boy was shown in the man. When only fifteen years old he fought in the battle in

which King Olaf was killed, and received a severe wound. Then he became a wanderer, going first to Russia and then to Constantinople, where he became the captain of the Varangians, the body-guard of Norsemen kept by the Greek emperors. A large, bold, strong, and reckless champion, Harold gained a great name in the south. He fought against the Saracens and won much treasure; he fought in Sicily and captured many cities; he had adventures in love and war and many wonderful stories are told of his exploits. Then he came back to Russia and married Elizabeth, the daughter of King Jaroslov, love for whom had sent him abroad to win fame and riches.



NORWEGIAN FARM BUILDINGS

Not long after this King Magnus, as he was sailing one day along the coast of Denmark, saw gliding along the most magnificent ship he had ever beheld. He at once sent men aboard to learn to whom the beautiful galley belonged, and they were met by a tall and handsome man, who said that he had been sent by Harold Sigurdsson, the uncle of King Magnus, to learn how the king would receive him. Magnus, who was then nineteen years old, sent word that he would gladly welcome his uncle and hoped to find in him a good friend. When they met the tall man

proved to be Harold himself and Magnus was highly pleased with him.

He was not so well pleased when Harold asked to be made king also, laying claim to half the kingdom. And Harold himself was not well pleased when one of the Norse chiefs said that if Magnus was to share the kingdom with him, he should divide his great treasure with Magnus.

Harold replied hastily and haughtily that he had not dared death and won wealth that he might make his nephew's men rich. The chief answered that he and his friends had not won Norway from the Danes for the purpose of giving half of it to a stranger, and all the other earls and warriors agreed with him, so that Harold found that the apple which he wished to divide was not so easily to be cut.

After that there was war and plundering and the cruel deeds that take place when the sword is drawn, and a year or two later Harold called an assembly of the people of one district of Norway and had himself proclaimed king. Magnus, who did not want to fight his father's brother, finally yielded to Harold's claim and agreed that they should both be kings; not to divide the realm, but both to rule over the whole country together. Thus it was that Harold won the prize which he had craved as a young child.

Every one would say that a compact of this kind could not work well. A gentle, kindly, generous-hearted man like King Magnus was ill matched with a haughty, wealth-loving, tyrannical man like Harold. No doubt many bitter words passed between them, and the peasants were so incensed by Harold's oppression and extortion of money from them that they would have broken into open rebellion only for the love they bore King Magnus. The latter was often so incensed that he was tempted to put an end to the double kingship even if he had to remove his troublesome partner by violence.

But this was not to be. One day, while out riding, his horse took fright and threw him, his head striking a stump. He

was at first stunned, but seemed to recover. Soon afterwards he was taken sick with a violent fever and gradually sank, so that it became apparent that he would die. On his death-bed he decided that Sweyn, who had fought so hard to win from him the crown of Denmark, had a better right to that kingdom than Harold, and men were sent to inform him of his succession to the Danish throne. But he had barely closed his eyes in death when Harold sent other men to intercept these messengers. He proposed to keep Denmark for himself.

The death of King Magnus without an heir left Harold the undisputed successor to the throne, as the only living descendant in the male line of Harold the Fair-Haired. Yet the people were far from pleased, for he had already shown a disposition to treat them harshly and they feared that a tyrant had succeeded to the throne. By his stern rule he gained several uncomplimentary titles, the English calling him Harold the Haughty, the Germans Harold the Inflexible, and the Northmen Harold the Hardruler. Yet he was able to hold his own over his people, for he was strong and daring, skilled in the art of war, and a man of unusual intellect. He was also a poet and won fame by his verses. He would sit up half the night with the blind scald Stuf Katson, to hear him recite his stirring songs.

But if absolute ruler over Norway, Harold found Denmark slipping away from him. Sweyn had in him the blood of the race of Canute, and was no weakling to be swept aside at a king's will. Magnus had left him the kingdom and he was bent on having it, if his good sword could win and hold it. In this he was supported by the Danes, and Harold found that the most he could do was to make descents on the Danish coast and plunder and murder the innocent people.

After this idle kind of warfare had gone on for a number of years and Harold found that all he had gained by it was the hatred of the Danes, he made an agreement with Sweyn to fight it out between them. They were to meet at the mouth of the Götha Elv and whoever won in the battle was to be the king of Denmark. It was a kind of duel for a crown.

But Sweyn tried to gain his end by stratagem. When Harold appeared with his fleet at the appointed place Sweyn and his ships were not to be seen. Harold waited a while, fuming and fretting, and then sailed south to Jutland, where he ravaged the coast, took and burned the city of Heidaby, carried away a number of women of high rank, and filled his ships with plunder. Then he turned homeward, with so little fear of the Danes that he let his ships widely scatter.

The winds were adverse, the weather was foggy, and one morning while they lay at anchor by an island shore, the lookout saw a bright flash through the fog. The king was hastily called, and on seeing it cried:

"What you see is the flash of the morning sun on the golden dragon-heads of warships. The Danish fleet is upon us!"

The peril was imminent. It was hopeless to fight with the few ships at command. Only flight remained and that was almost as hopeless. The oars were got out in haste, but the ships, soaked and heavy from their long cruise, were hard to move, and as the fog lifted under the sun rays, the Danish fleet, several hundred strong, bore down swiftly upon them. The emergency was one that needed all the wit and skill of the king to meet.

To distract the enemy Harold bade his men nail bright garments and other showy spoil to logs and cast them overboard. As these floated through the Danish ships many of them stopped to pick up the alluring prizes. He also was obliged to throw overboard casks of beer and pork to lighten his ships and these also were picked up. Yet in spite of all he could do the Danes gained on him, and his own ship, which brought up the rear, was in danger of capture.

As a last resort the shrewd king had rafts made of boards and barrels and put on these the high-born women he held as captives. These rafts were set afloat one after another, and the pursuers, on seeing these hapless fair ones and hearing their wild appeals for rescue, were obliged to stop and take them up. This

final stratagem succeeded and Harold escaped, leaving Sweyn, who had felt sure of capturing his enemy, furious at his failure.

At another time, ten years and more later, Harold again fell into peril and again escaped through his fertility in resources. Having beaten his rival in a naval battle, he entered the long and narrow Lim fiord to plunder the land, fancying that Sweyn was in no condition to disturb him. He reckoned too hastily. Sweyn, learning where his foe was, gathered what ships he could and took post at Hals, the fiord being there so narrow that a few ships could fight with advantage against a much greater number.

Though caught in a trap Harold was not dismayed, but gave orders to sail to the inner end of the fiord. He knew that it ended near the North Sea, only a narrow isthmus dividing them. Then, with great trouble and labor, he managed to have his ships dragged across the isthmus and launched on the sea waters, and away he sailed in triumph, leaving Sweyn awaiting him in vain.

Finally, with the desire to bring this useless strife to an end, if possible, a new compact was made to meet with their fleets in the Götha Elv and fight once more for the kingdom of Denmark. It was now 1062, thirteen years after the former battle. As before, on reaching the place designated, no Danish ship was visible. But it is difficult to credit what we are told, that Harold, after a vain wait, made the same error as before, dividing his fleet and sending the greater part of it home. With the remainder, one hundred and eighty ships strong, he sailed along the coast, and suddenly found himself in the presence of the Danes, with two ships to his one.

This time Harold did not flee, but joined battle bravely with his enemy, the contest lasting through a whole night and ending in a complete victory over the Danes. It was a great victory, yet it brought Harold no advantage, for Sweyn did not keep to his compact—if he had made one—to surrender his throne, and the Danes hated Harold so thoroughly for his cruel raids on their land that they had no idea of submitting to him. Two years more passed on, and then Harold, finding that the

conquest of Denmark was hopeless, consented against his will to make peace. In this way Sweyn, after many years of battling for his throne, forced his powerful antagonist to give up the contest and promise never to disturb him again.

Two years after this peace was made, in the year 1066, King Harold took part in another adventure which brought his tyranny and his life to an end. It is worth telling for another reason, for it was connected with a great historical event, the conquest of England by William the Conqueror. For these two reasons it is very fitting that it should be told.

King Harold of England, who was soon to fall on the fatal field of Hastings, had a brother, Earl Tostig, who, fired by ambition, set out to conquer that kingdom for himself. He went first to Denmark and tried to get King Sweyn to join him in the enterprise, but the prudent Sweyn told him that he had no desire to follow in the footsteps of his uncle Canute, but was quite content to dwell at home and rule his own kingdom.

Then Tostig sought Norway, where he found King Harold far more ready to listen to him. So in September of that year, Harold sailed from Norway with the most powerful fleet and army that had ever left its shores. Counting what was added in the Orkneys and the force under Earl Tostig, it numbered about three hundred and fifty ships and thirty thousand men. Landing in Northumberland, a victory was won and the city of York taken. Then, leaving about one-third of the army to guard the ships, Harold and Tostig encamped at Stamford Bridge, seven miles from York.

It was a warm day, there was no reason to fear danger, and the men lounged about without their arms. In this unwary state they found themselves suddenly face to face with a large army, led by the English King Harold, who had marched north in furious haste. Tostig, finding that they had been taken by surprise, advised a retreat to the ships, but Harold was not the man to turn his back to his foe, and decided to stand and fight, ordering the men to arm and prepare for battle. While they were

gathering in ranks for the fray, a party of English horsemen rode up and asked if Earl Tostig was there.

"You see him before you," said Tostig.

"Your brother Harold sends you greeting and offers you peace and the rule of Northumberland. If he cannot gain your friendship for less, he will grant you one-third his kingdom."

"Last year he had only scorn and disdain to offer me," replied Tostig. "But if I should accept his proposal, what has he to offer my ally, the king of Norway?"

"He will grant him seven feet of English soil; or more if his length of body needs it."

"If that is your best offer," said Tostig, "ride back and bid Harold to begin the battle."

Harold of Norway had heard this brief colloquy, and as the English horsemen rode away asked Tostig who was the speaker.

"That was my brother, Harold himself," answered Tostig.

"I learn that too late," said Harold grimly.

The battle that followed was hotly contested. It began with a charge of the English cavalry, which was repulsed, and was followed up fiercely by the Norsemen, who fancied the flight of the English to mean a general rout. In this way they broke their ranks, which the king wished to preserve until reinforcements could reach him from the ships. Forward rushed the impatient Norsemen, King Harold throwing himself into their midst and fighting with savage fury. His men seconded him, the English ranks wavered and broke before the fierce onset, and victory seemed within the grasp of the invaders, when an arrow pierced King Harold's throat and he fell in a dying state from his horse.

His fall checked the onset, and the English king, hearing of his death, offered his brother an armistice. Tostig refused this and led his men back to the fray, which was resumed with all its

old fury. But Tostig, too, was slain, and the king's brother-in-law, who arrived with reinforcements from the ships, met with the same fate. By this time the battlefield was covered with the bodies of the dead, and the Norsemen, dispirited by the loss of their leaders, gave way and retreated towards the ships, hotly pursued by their victorious foes. Of their great host only a small remnant succeeded in reaching the ships.

Thus ended the great fight at Stamford Bridge, and with it the reign and life of Harold Hardruler, who fell a victim to his ambition and love of strife. For years thereafter the bones of men lay scattered widely over that field, for none stayed to bury the dead, the Norsemen fleeing in their ships, while news of the landing of William of Normandy called Harold hastily to the south—where he fell in the midst of the fighting at Hastings as Harold of Norway had fallen on Stamford Field. Harold's invasion of England was the last great exploit of the vikings of the north, and though Ireland was invaded later by a Norseland fleet, no foreign foe after the fatal days at Stamford and Hastings ever landed on England's shores.

CHAPTER XIV

SVERRE, THE COOK'S SON, AND THE BIRCHLEGS

In the year 1177 those people in Norway who loved a joke must have laughed to their hearts' content, when the tidings reached them that the son of a cook, followed by seventy ragged and half armed men, had set out to win the throne of the kingdom. Surely a more extraordinary and laughable enterprise was never undertaken, and the most remarkable thing about it was that it succeeded. A few years of desperate adventures and hard fighting raised the cook's son to the throne, and those who had laughed at his temerity were now glad to hail him as their king. How Sverre the adventurer won the crown is a tale full of adventure and amply worth the telling.

No common man was Sverre and no common woman was his mother Gunhild, a cook in the kitchen of King Sigurd Mouth. Not handsome was she, but quick of wit and bright of brain. If the king had had his way the boy would have had a very short life, for he bade the mother to kill her child as soon as it should be born. Instead of consenting to this cruel mandate, she fled from the palace to a ship, which took her to the Faroe Islands, and here her son was born. She was then serving as milkmaid to Bishop Mathias.

The little Sverre began his life with an adventure. When he was a few months old a man named Unas came from Norway to the islands, a smith or comb-maker by profession. But Gunhild suspected him of being a spy sent by King Sigurd to kill her son, and she hid the boy in a cavern, which is still called Sverre's Cave. He acted like a spy, for he followed her to the cave, found where she had hidden the child, and threatened to kill it unless she would marry him. Gunhild had no love for this dangerous stranger, but she dearly loved her little son, and with

much reluctance she consented to marry Unas to save the babe's life.

Such was the first event in the life of the later King Sverre. The new-married pair went back to Norway, for King Sigurd had died, but when the boy was five years old they returned to the Faroes, for Bishop Mathias was now dead, and Roe, the brother of Unas, had been made bishop in his stead.

The little fellow was made to believe that he was the son of Unas, and as he grew up Bishop Roe took a great fancy to him, for he showed himself to be very bright and intelligent. There was no boy in the island his equal, so the good bishop had him educated for the priesthood and when he was old enough had him ordained in the lowest priestly grade.

This was much against the wish of Gunhild, his mother, who had higher hopes for his future, and when he proudly told her that he was now a priest, and hoped some day to become a bishop, or even a cardinal, she burst into tears.

"Why do you weep, mother?" he asked in surprise. "I do not know why you should hear of my honor with sorrow."

"Oh, my son," she cried, "this is but a small honor compared to that to which you were born. I have not told you of the great station that is yours by right, but must now say that you are not the son of my husband Unas, but of King Sigurd of Norway, and you have as good a claim as any man living to the throne."

This surprising revelation destroyed Sverre's peace of mind. All his ambition to rise in the priesthood was gone, the crown of a kingdom seemed to float in the air before him, and his thoughts by day and his dreams by night were fixed on that shining goal. The great hopes in his mind kept sleep from his eyes and after days of mental unrest he felt that life was worthless to him if his high ambition were not fulfilled.

"Since I am born heir to the crown," he said to his mother, "I have as much right to it as any man, and I will strive

at any cost to win it. I stake my life on this cast, for without it life to me has lost all its joy."

Magnus, the king then on the throne, was not of royal birth. He was the son of Erling Skakke, a great and ambitious nobleman, who had killed every descendant of the royal house he could find to make his own son king. Of the boy who was destined to dispute his claim, the cook's son on the Faroes, he knew nothing, and when the bright youth landed in Norway, whether he had gone in spite of the protests of Bishop Roe, not a soul in the kingdom dreamed that a new claimant for the throne was in the realm.

No one was likely to learn from Sverre until his plans were ripe. He was too shrewd and cautious for that. He wanted to feel the sentiment of the people, and was disappointed to find them all well satisfied with their king. Full of humor and a good talker, everybody he met was pleased with him, and when he talked with the men-at-arms of Erling Skakke they told him all they knew about the state of affairs. They were quite won over by this lively priest from the Faroes. He even made the acquaintance of Erling Skakke himself and got a thorough idea of his character.

The cunning adventurer was feeling his way and found things not at all to his liking. To attempt, alone and with an empty pocket, to drive a favorite monarch from the throne, seemed the act of madness. But the ambitious youth had dreamed his dream of royal state and had no fancy for returning to a humble priesthood on the bleak Faroes.

In Sweden, across the border, dwelt Earl Birger, who had married a sister of King Sigurd Mouth. To him Sverre went, told who he was, and begged for aid. The earl looked on him as an imposter and would have nothing to do with him. Then he sought Folkvid the Lawman, with whom lived his half-sister Cecilia, and told him the same story. Folkvid received him more graciously, but he had no power to make him king. But the rumor that a son of the late King Sigurd was in the land got

abroad, and soon made its way to the ears of a band of rebels who hated the king.

Here we must go back a step. All the people of Norway were not content with the new king. From time to time pretenders to the throne arose, hornets whom Magnus and his father Erling had some trouble in destroying. They had their following, and the malcontents gathered at last around Eystein Meyla (Little Girl), who professed to be the grandson of a former king. But all this last of the pretenders was able to do was to roam about in the wilderness, keeping himself and his followers from starving by robbing the people. They were in so desperate a state that they had to use birch-bark for shoes, and the peasants in derision called them Birkebeiner, or Birchlegs. Though little better than highwaymen, they were sturdy and daring and had some success, but finally were badly beaten by the king and their leader slain. They might have never been heard of again had not the greatest of the pretenders just then came to Norway.

The rumor that a son of King Sigurd Mouth was in the land reached the ears of the handful of Birchlegs remaining and, learning where Sverre was, they sought him and begged him to be their chief. He looked at them, and seeing what dirty and ragged vagabonds they were, he told them that he had no fancy for being their leader, that there was no link of connection between them and him but poverty, and advised them, if they wanted a chief, to seek one of Earl Birger's sons, who, like himself, were of royal descent.

The beggarly troop took his advice, but the earl's son would have nothing to do with them. By way of a joke he told them to go back to Sverre and threaten to kill him if he would not be their leader. They did so, using persuasions and possibly threats, and Sverre, seeing no hope of success among the great, finally consented to become the leader of this ragged band of brigands. Such was his first definite step on the road to the throne.

In this humble fashion, the ambitious young prince, then about twenty-four years old, with empty hands and pockets and seventy ragged followers, began his desperate strife for the throne of Norway.

From Vermeland, where his enterprise began, he led his forlorn seventy southward toward Viken, his party rolling on like a snowball and growing in size on its way, until it swelled to four hundred and twenty men. In spite of his protest, these vagabonds proclaimed him king and touched his sword to indicate their allegiance. But their devotion to his cause was not great, for when he forbade them to rob and plunder the peasants most of them left him. To test the remainder, he ordered them back to Vermeland and before they reached that region only the original seventy remained.

Desperate was now the position of the youthful adventurer. He had declared himself a claimant for the throne and any one had the right to kill him. The peasants hated his robber band and he could get none to join him. They would rather have killed them all and thus earned the king's favor.

Had young Sverre been a man of common mind his enterprise must now have reached its end. But he was a man of wonderful mental resources, daring, indefatigable, capable of bearing the most extreme reverses and rescuing himself from the most perilous situations. Followed by his faithful seventy, he wandered through the pathless mountain wilderness, hopeful and resourceful. His courage was unfailing. Often they had to live on bark and frozen berries, which were dug up from under the snow. At times some of his men, worn out with hunger and exposure, would drop lifeless on their barren paths; at times he had to sleep under his shield, as his only protection from the falling snow; but his heart kept stout through it all, and he chided those who talked of ending their misfortunes by suicide.

As an example of his courage and endurance and his care of his men, we may tell the following anecdote. Once in his wanderings he came to a large mountain lake which had to be

crossed. It could only be done on rafts, and the men were so exhausted that it proved desperate work to fell trees and build the necessary rafts. In time they were all despatched, Sverre boarding the last, which was so heavily laden that the water rose above his ankles.

One man was still on the shore, so utterly worn out that he had to crawl to the water's edge and beg to be taken on, lest he should perish. The others grumbled, but Sverre would not listen to their complaints but bade them to take the man on. With his extra weight the raft sank till the water reached their knees. Though the raft threatened to go to the bottom Sverre kept a resolute face. A great fallen pine on the other side made a bridge up which the men clambered to safety, Sverre being the last to leave the raft. Scarcely had he done so when the watersoaked logs sank. The men looked on this as a miracle and believed more fully than ever that he would win.

Now came the first success in his marvellous career. He had one hundred and twenty men on reaching the goal of his terrible journey, but here eighty men more joined him and with these two hundred followers he successfully faced a force of fourteen hundred which had been sent against him. With a native genius for warfare he baffled his enemies at every point, avoiding their onset, falling upon them at unexpected points, forcing them to scatter into separate detachments in the pursuit, then falling on and beating these detachments in succession. While he kept aware of their plans and movements, they never knew where to look for him, and in a short time the peasant army was beaten and dispersed.

This striking success gave new courage and hope to the Birchlegs and they came in numbers to the place to which Sverre had summoned a body of twelve representatives from the province of Tröndelag. These met and proclaimed him king of Norway. It was now the summer of 1177.

The Birchlegs were hasty in supposing the beating of fourteen hundred peasants would bring success to their cause.

Erling Skakke was still alive and active, and on hearing of the exploits of this new leader of rebels in the north, he got together a large fleet and sailed northward to deal with him.

The new-proclaimed king was too wary to meet this powerful force and he sought refuge in the mountains again, leaving to Erling the dominion of the coast. And now, for two years, Sverre and his men led a precarious life, wandering hither and thither through the mountain wilderness and suffering the severest privations. He was like a Robin Hood of the Norwegian mountains, loving to play practical jokes on the peasants, such as appearing with his hungry horde at their Yuletide feasts and making way with the good cheer they had provided for themselves. He was obliged to forage in the valleys, but he took pity on the poor and more than once made the great suffer for acts of oppression.

Everywhere he was hated as a desperate brigand; some believed him to be the devil himself. Naughty children were scared with the threat that the terrible Sverre would take them, and laundresses, beating their clothes at the river's brink, devoutly wished that Sverre's head was under the stone. Yet his undaunted resolution, his fights with the king's soldiers, his skirmishes with the peasants, and his boldness and daring in all situations, won him a degree of admiration even among those who feared and hated him.

Thus for two years his adventurous career went on. Then came an event that turned the tide in his favor. Erling was still pursuing him and in June, 1179, was in the coast town of Nidaros, his son, Magnus, with him. In the harbor lay the fleet. The earl and the king were feasting with their followers when word was brought them that the Birchlegs were approaching.

"I wish it was true," said the earl. "I should like nothing better than to meet that hound Sverre. But there will be no such good luck to-night, for I am told that the rascals have gone back to the mountains. You can go to bed in safety, for Sverre will not dare to trouble us when we are on the watch for him."

To bed they went, sleeping heavily from their potations, and down on them came Sverre, who, as usual, was well informed about their situation.

"Now is your time to fight bravely, and repay yourselves for your sufferings," he said to his men. "A fine victory lies before us. I shall promise you this. Any one of you who can prove that he has slain a liegeman shall be made a liegeman himself, and each of you shall be given the title and dignity of the man you have slain."

Thus encouraged, the poorly-armed adventurers rushed down the hills into the town. One sturdy fellow who carried only a club was asked where his weapons were.

"They are down in the town," he said. "The earl's men have them now. We are going there to get them."

This they did. As they came on the warriors, hastily alarmed and heavy with their drunken sleep, flocked staggering into the streets, to be met with sword and lance. The confusion was great and the king had much trouble in rallying his men. Many chieftains advised flight to the ships, but the stout-hearted Erling was not ready for that.

"It might be best," he said, "but I can't bear the thought of that brigand priest putting himself in my son's place."

Leading his men outside the city, he awaited the attack. It came in haste, the Birchlegs falling furiously upon the much greater force before them. In the onset the earl was killed and his men were put to flight. The king, as he fled by, saw the bloody face of his father lying under the stars. He stooped and kissed him, saying:

"We shall meet again, father, in the day of joy." Then he was borne away in the stream of flight.

This decisive victory turned the tide of the war. The death of Erling removed Sverre's greatest opponent. King Magnus was no match for the priest-king, and the rebel force

grew until the contest assumed the shape of civil war. Sverre no longer led a band of wanderers, but was the leader of an army.

This was not the ordinary army recruited from the settled classes of society, but an army made up of the lower stratum of the people, now first demanding their share of the good things of life. Fierce and unruly as they were, Sverre knew how to control and discipline them. He kept his promise, as far as was possible, to reward his men with the honors of those they had slain, but charged them with the maintenance of law and order, punishing all who disobeyed his commands. This he could safely do, for they worshipped him. They had shared peril and suffering together, had lived as comrades, but through it all he had kept his authority intact and demanded obedience. Birchlegs they still called themselves, for they had grown proud of the title, and they named their opponents Heklungs, from the story that some of them had robbed a beggar woman whose money was wrapped in a cloak (*hekl*).

For six years afterwards the war for dominion in Norway continued, the star of King Sverre steadily rising. In 1180 Magnus attacked his opponent with an army much larger than that of Sverre, but was utterly routed; and an army of peasants that came on afterwards, to kill the "devil's priest," met with the same ill success.

Magnus now took refuge in Denmark, abandoning Norway to his rival, and from there he came year after year to continue the contest. In a naval battle in 1181, in which Sverre had less than half the number of ships of his opponent, his star seemed likely to set. The Birchlegs were not good at sea fighting and the Heklungs were pressing them steadily back, when Sverre sprang into the hottest of the fight, without a shield and with darts and javelins hurtling around him, and in stirring tones sang the Latin hymn, "Alma chorus domini."

This hymn seemed to turn the tide of victory. Magnus, storming furiously forward at that moment, was wounded in the wrist as he was boarding a hostile ship. The pain caused him to

pause and, his feet slipping on the blood-stained deck, he fell headlong backward, a glad shout of victory coming from the Birchlegs who saw him fall.

Orm, one of King Magnus's captains, demanded what had happened.

"The king is killed," he was told.

"Then the fate of the realm is decided," he cried.

Cutting the ropes that held the ships together, he took to flight, followed by others and breaking the line of battle. Leaping to his feet, Magnus called out that he was not hurt and implored them not to flee from certain victory. But the terror and confusion were too great, and Sverre took quick advantage of the opportunity, capturing a number of ships and putting the others to flight.

The final battle in this contest for a throne came in 1184. It was one in which Sverre was in imminent danger of a fatal end to his career. Usually not easily surprised, he was now taken unawares. He had sailed up the Nore fiord with a few ships and a small force of men, to punish some parties who had killed his prefect. Magnus, afloat with twenty-six ships and over three thousand men, learned of this and pursued his enemy into the fiord.

Sverre was caught in a trap. Not until he saw the hostile ships bearing down upon him had he a suspicion of danger. Escape was impossible. Great cliffs bounded the watery cañon. He had but fourteen ships and not half his opponent's force of men. The Heklungs were sure that victory was in their hands. But when Sverre and his Birchlegs dashed forward and attacked them with berseker fury their confidence turned to doubt. Soon it began to appear that victory was to be on the other side. Before the furious onset the Heklungs fell in numbers. Many in panic leaped into the sea and were drowned, King Magnus among them. Till mid-night the hot contest continued, by which hour half the king's force were slain and all the ships captured. The

drowned corpse of King Magnus was not found until two days after the battle, when it was taken to Bergen and buried with royal ceremony. His death ended the contest and Sverre was unquestioned king of the whole land.

Shall we briefly conclude the story of King Sverre's reign? For twenty years it continued, the most of these years of war, for rebellion broke out in a dozen quarters and only the incessant vigilance and activity of a great king and great soldier enabled him to keep his throne and his life.

After all his wars and perils, he died in his bed, March 9, 1202, worn out by his long life of toil and strain. Never before had Norway so noble and able a king; never since has it seen his equal. A man was he of small frame but indomitable soul, of marvellous presence of mind and fertility in resources; a man firm but kindly and humane; a king with a clear-sighted policy and an admirable power of controlling men and winning their attachment. Never through all its history has Norway known another monarch so admirable in many ways as Sverre, the cook's son.

CHAPTER XV

THE FRIENDS AND FOES OF A BOY PRINCE

After the death of the great King Sverre tumult and trouble reigned in Norway. Several kings came to the throne, but none of them lived long, and there was constant fighting between the Birchlegs and the opposing party who called themselves Baglers. Year after year they kept their swords out and their spears in hand, killing one another, but neither party growing strong enough to put an end to the other. All this time the people were suffering and the country growing poorer, and a strong hand was needed at the helm of the ship-of-state.

It was when King Inge, who was not of royal blood, and whose hand was not the strong hand needed, was on the throne, that new hope came to the people, for it was made known that they had among them a boy of kingly descent, a grandson of the noble Sverre. Men thought that King Sverre's line had died out, and there was great joy in their hearts when they learned that his son Haakon had left a son.

This boy was born in 1203, son of the beautiful Inga of Varteig, whom King Haakon had warmly loved though she was not his wife. The little prince was named Haakon, after his father, but he was born in the midst of the Baglers, his father's foes, and the priest who baptized him bade Inga to keep his birth a strict secret, letting none outside her own family know that a new prince had come to the land.

The secret was well kept for a time, but whispers got abroad, and Thrond, the priest, at length told the story to Erland of Huseby, whom he knew to be on the right side. Erland heard the news with joy, but feared peril for the little prince, thus born in the land of his enemies. Rumors were growing, danger might at any moment come, and though it was mid-winter, a season of deep snows and biting winds, he advised the priest to send the

boy and his mother to the court of King Inge, offering himself to take them across the pathless mountains.

The difficult journey was made in safety and the boy and his mother were kindly welcomed by the king, and joyfully greeted by the Birchlegs, who were strong in that district. Little Haakon was then less than two years old, and it is said that the old loyalists, who were eager to have a king of the royal blood, used in playfulness to pull him between them by the arms and legs, to make him grow faster.

The Birchlegs were in fear of Haakon Galen, the king's brother, who was ambitious to succeed to the throne. Yet Earl Haakon took a great fancy to the helpless little child and seemed to love him as much as any of them. Thus the child prince, though in the midst of plotters for the throne, who would naturally be likely to act as his enemies, seemed protected by the good angels and brought safely through all his perils.

Even when he was captured by the Baglers, when four years of age, they did not harm him, being possibly so taken by his infantile beauty and winning ways that they could not bring themselves to injure their little captive. In the end, after many fights and flights, in which neither party made any gains, the Birchlegs and Baglers grew tired of the useless strife and a treaty of peace was made between them, the king of the Baglers swearing allegiance to King Inge and becoming one of his earls. But new trouble was brewing for the youthful prince, for in 1212, when he was eight years old, a compact was made that none but those of legitimate birth should succeed to the throne. As his mother had not been a legal wife, this threatened to rob little Haakon of his royal rights.

In doing this the plotters were like some politicians of the present day, who lay plans without consulting the people. They did not know how strong the sentiment was in favor of the old royal line. One of the old Birchlegs, on hearing of this compact, was bitterly angry. He had made frequent visits to the young

prince, whom he loved and admired, but on his next visit he pushed away the playful lad, roughly bidding him begone.

Haakon reproachfully asked, "What have I done to make you so angry?"

"Go away from me," cried Helge, the veteran; "to-day you have been robbed of your right to the crown and I have ceased to love you."

"Who did that and where was it done?"

"It was done at the *Oere-thing* [the Assembly at Oere], and those who did it were King Inge and his brother Earl Haakon."

"Then you should not be angry with me, my kind Helge, nor be troubled about this. What they did cannot be lawful, for my guardian was not there to speak on my side."

"Your guardian! Who is he?" asked Helge.

"I have three guardians, God, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Olaf," said the boy solemnly. "To their keeping I give my cause, and they will guard me against all wrong."

The old man, at this declaration, caught the boy in his arms and kissed him.

"Thanks for your wise words, my prince," he said. "Words like those are better spoken than unspoken."

These words show that the little fellow was coming to think for himself and had an active and earnest mind. In fact, he was so precocious and said such droll things as greatly to amuse the king and those around him. Here is one of his sayings, spoken in a spell of cold weather when the butter could not be spread on the bread. The prince bent a piece of bread around the butter, saying:

"Let us tie the butter to the bread, Birchlegs." This was thought so smart that it became a proverb among the Birchlegs.

Soon after this Earl Haakon died and the little fellow, who had hitherto lived in his house, was taken to the king's court, where he was treated like a prince. The king was growing feeble from sickness and he loved to have the boy with him, finding his talk very amusing and entertaining. Soon after this he also died, Prince Haakon then being fourteen years old.

Though Earl Haakon, the king's brother, who had hoped to be king, died, as we have said, before him, there was another brother named Skule who was quite as ambitious and of whom the Birchlegs were much afraid. A body-guard of these faithful warriors took charge of the boy as soon as King Inge was dead, with orders to follow him day and night.

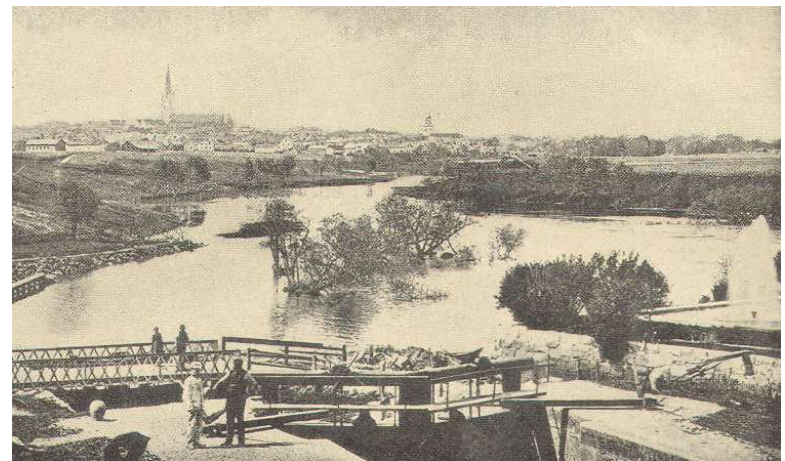
Earl Skule at once began to plan and plot to seize the throne, and in this he was supported by the archbishop, but in spite of them the Birchlegs proclaimed Haakon king and Skule had to yield to the strong sentiment in his favor. As for the noble then called king by the Baglers, he too died just at this time and left no children, so that the way was clear for the boy king, and Haakon soon sailed to the south with a large fleet and took possession of Viken and the Uplands, the chief dominions of the Baglers.

By the wise policy of the young king and his advisers the Baglers were made his friends and the next year they were fighting with the Birchlegs against the Slittings or Ragamuffins, who were made up of robbers, tramps, and wandering vagabonds of all kinds, thousands of whom had been set adrift by the civil war.

But Haakon's worst foe was Earl Skule, who continued his plots and intrigues, and who was supported by the clergy, these saying they had doubts if the boy was really the son of the elder Haakon and grandson of King Sverre. Such things were not in those days usually settled in courts of law, but by what was called the ordeal, one form of which was to walk barefoot over red-hot irons. If not burned the accused was thought to have proved the justice of his cause.

For a king already in possession of the throne to submit to such a demand and humble himself by thus trying to prove who he was, was a thing never done before and an old peasant gave vent to the general sentiment in these words:

"Who can show in history a case of the sons of peasants prescribing terms like these to an absolute king? It would be wiser and more manly to bear another kind of iron—cold steel—against the king's foes, and let God judge between them in that way."



LINKOPING FROM TANNEFORS

But Inga, the king's mother, declared that she was ready to endure the ordeal and Haakon consented to it. Earl Skule now felt sure of succeeding, not dreaming that the ordeal could be gone through without burning, but to make more sure, he bribed a man to approach Inga and offer her an herb which he said would heal burns.

The plot was discovered by the faithful Birchlegs and Inga warned of it; for to use such herbs would make the test invalid and subject Inga and her son to opprobrium. But all that Skule and his fellow-plotters could do proved of no avail, for Inga passed through the ordeal unhurt and triumphantly proved,

in the legal system of that day, the justice of her cause. How red-hot iron was prevented from burning is a matter which we cannot discuss, and can only say that this ordeal was common and many are said to have gone through it unscathed.

We set out in this story to tell how the child Haakon passed through all the perils that surrounded him and grew up to become Norway's king. Here then we should end, but for years new perils surrounded him and of these it is well to speak. They were due to the ambitious Earl Skule, who made plot after plot against the king's life, and was forgiven again and again by the noble-minded monarch.

King Haakon's friends sought to put an end to this secret plotting by arranging a marriage between the young monarch and Earl Skule's still younger daughter Margaret. But this did not check him in his plots, and he finally set sail for Denmark to try and get aid from King Valdemar. He was ready to agree if the kingdom were won to reign as a vassal of the Danish king; but when he got there no such king was to be found. He had been captured in battle five days before, and was now with his son in a prison at Mecklenburg. The disappointed plotter had to sail home and pretend to be the king's friend as before.

For years Skule's plots went on. He took the field against a new horde of rebels called the Ribbungs, but he took care never to press them too closely, and they long gave the king trouble. For more than twenty years Skule thus continued to plot and plan, the king discovering his schemes and pardoning him more than once, but nothing could cure him of his ambitious dream.

In the end, when he was nearly fifty years old, he succeeded in having himself proclaimed king and in sending out bands of warriors who killed many faithful friends of King Haakon. He tried to conceal his purpose until he had gathered a large force, but one man escaped the vigilance of his guards and brought word of the treachery to Haakon. The latter, seeing that he must check this rebellion if he wished to sit safely on his

throne, at once took to his fleet, sailed southward with the utmost speed, and rowed, under cover of a fog, up the Folden fiord to Oslo, where the rebel was. He had been carousing with his followers the night before and the wassailers were roused from their drunken sleep by the war-horns and ran out to see the king's ships driving in towards the piers.

The rebels were quickly scattered, but Skule escaped, and at length was traced to the woods, where he was wandering with a few friends. The friars of a monastery took pity on them and hid them in a tower, disguised with monkish cowls. Despite their disguise they were traced to their hiding place, and when the friars refused to give them up the pursuers set fire to the tower. Driven out by the smoke and heat, Skule stepped from the gate, holding his shield above his head and saying:

"Strike me not in the face; for it is not right to treat warriors thus."

In a minute more he lay dead, slain by Birchleg swords.

The next act in King Haakon's reign was to have himself crowned king, and thus to rid himself of the blot on his claim to the throne. After some negotiations with the Pope, a cardinal was sent from Rome, the ceremony being performed with much pomp and ceremony, and followed with the most magnificent feasts and festivities Norway had ever seen.

From this time on King Haakon ruled as a wise, noble and powerful monarch, making his strength felt by his great fleet and setting Norway high among the nations of the north. He died at length in 1263, loved by his people and respected by all outside his realm.

CHAPTER XVI

KING VALDEMAR I AND BISHOP ABSOLON

The most brilliant period in the history of Denmark was that of the reigns of the Valdemars, and especially of Valdemar I. and his sons, whose names and memories are still cherished in that kingdom, the Danes regarding them as the greatest and best monarchs they ever had.

There were wretched times in Denmark before 1157, when Valdemar came to the throne, and his early years were passed in the midst of civil wars and all kinds of sorrows and troubles. When the new king was crowned and began the business of governing, he found little to govern with. There were no money, no soldiers, no trade, no order in the kingdom, everything being at so low an ebb that he found it necessary, as some writers state, to secure support from Germany by recognizing the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa as his suzerain and doing homage to him as a vassal in 1162. But this ceremony did not entail upon him any of the usual duties of a vassal, and was more of an ordinary alliance than a formal act of submission.

Yet poor as was the state of Denmark when Valdemar came to it as king, when he died he left it a flourishing, busy and peaceful country, to which he had added great tracts of land on the pagan shores of the Baltic, whose people he forced to give up their heathen practices.

During his reign Valdemar made as many as twenty expeditions against these piratical peoples, gradually subduing them. At first, indeed, he showed very little courage, and found so many reasons for turning back before meeting the foe, that the sailors looked upon him as a coward, and once he overheard one of them say with a laugh, that the king was "a knight who wore his spurs upon his toes, only to help him to run away the faster."

This made him very angry, but on speaking of it to his foster-brother, Axel Hvide,—afterwards Bishop Absolon,—he found that the feeling that he lacked the courage of a warrior was general. This contempt made him so ashamed that from that time on he faced danger bravely and was never again known to turn back from any risk.

Though Axel became a bishop, he had begun life as a soldier and was throughout life bold and daring, a man who loved nothing better than to command a ship or to lead his men in an assault against some fierce band of sea robbers. From his castle Axelborg, on the site of the later city of Copenhagen, he kept a keen lookout for these pirates and sought manfully to put an end to their plundering raids.

The war against the Baltic heathens continued until 1168, when it ended in the capture of the town of Arcona, on the island of Rygen, and the destruction of the great temple of the Slavic god Svantevit, whose monstrous four-headed image was torn down from its pedestal and burned in the presence of its dismayed worshippers.

The taking of this temple is an event of much interest, for it was due to the shrewdness of a young Danish soldier, who circumvented the heathens by a clever stratagem.

While the army lay encamped on the island beach, below the town of Arcona, this man noticed that the high cliffs on which the temple was built were honeycombed by many deep holes, which could not be seen from the ramparts above, but were quite visible from the beach below. One day it occurred to him that by making use of these holes he could roast the pagan worshippers out of their nests, and he arranged with some of his fellows to carry out his plan.

Gathering such dry straw and small sticks as they could collect, the soldiers pretended to be playing at a game of pitch and toss, which if seen by the sentinels on the ramparts above would not seem suspicious to them. In this way they caused much of the straw and sticks to lodge in the holes in the steep

cliff. Then, by using spears and stones for a ladder, one of them climbed for a distance up the steep rock wall and set fire to some of the inflammable rubbish in the holes.

The effect was stupendous. The flames spread from hole to hole, creeping up the face of the rock until the wooden spikes and palings at its summit were in a blaze. This took place unseen by the pagans, who first took the alarm when they saw flames circling round the great mast from which floated the banner of their god.

Before they could take any steps to extinguish the flames, and while they stood in a panic of apprehension, the Danes, headed by Bishop Absolon, rushed to the assault and succeeded in taking the town.

There was nothing left for them but to accept baptism, on which their lives depended, and the worthy bishop and his monks were kept busy at this work for the next two days and nights, the bishop desisting only when, half blind from want of sleep, he dropped down before the altar that had been set up beside the fonts, where the converts were received and signed with the cross.

The work of baptism done, King Valdemar caused the huge wooden idol of the god to be dragged amid martial music to the open plain beyond the town, where the army servants chopped it up into firewood. In this work the new converts could not be induced to take part, for, Christians as yet only in name, they feared some dread revenge from the great Svanteveit, such as lightning from heaven to destroy the Danes.

The Christians of that age were quite as superstitious, for they declared that when the image was being carried out of the temple gates, a horrible monster, spitting fire and brimstone, burst from the roof and leaped with howls of wrath into the sea below, which opened to receive it, and closed over its head with billows of smoke and flame.

Valdemar died in 1182, after making such friends of his people and doing so much for them, that when the funeral procession, headed by Bishop Absolon, drew near the church of Ringsted, where the burial was to take place, it was met by a throng of peasants, weeping and lamenting, who begged the privilege of carrying the body of their beloved king to his last resting place.

When the bishop began to read the service for the dead his voice failed him and he wept and trembled so much that he had to be held up by some of the assistant monks. After all was over the people went away in deep grief, saying that Denmark's shield and the pagans' scourge had been taken from them and that the country would soon be overrun again by the heathen Wends.

But Absolon kept a firm hand upon the reins of state, and when the young Prince Knud, Valdemar's son, was proclaimed king at the age of twenty everything was in order. Knud proved as good and gallant as his father, holding Denmark bravely against all foes, and when the Emperor Barbarossa sent to him to appear before the imperial court at Ratisbon and do homage for his crown, he returned a defiant answer.

The position of Denmark had greatly changed since Valdemar had obeyed such a summons, and when the envoy of the emperor brought him the imperial command, he sent back the following proud reply:

"Tell your master that I am as much monarch in my own realm as the kaiser is in his, and if he has a fancy for giving away my throne, he had better first find the prince bold enough to come and take it from me."

This ended all question of the vassalage of Denmark, but the emperor never forgot nor forgave the insult and took every opportunity in after years to stir up strife against Denmark. In 1184 he incited the pagan princes of Pomerania to invade the Danish islands with a fleet of five hundred ships. But they had old Bishop Absolon to deal with, and they were so utterly routed

that when the fog, which had enabled the Danes to approach them unseen, cleared away, only thirty-five of their ships were able to keep the sea.

This victory made Knud ruler over all Pomerania and part of the kingdom later known as Prussia, and he added to his title that of "King of the Wends and other Slavs." He went on adding to his home kingdom until the dominion of Denmark grew very wide.

That is all we need say about King Knud, but it must be said of Bishop Absolon that he was a wise patron of knightly arts and historical learning and encouraged the great scholar Saxo Grammaticus to write his famous "History of Denmark," in which were gathered all the old Danish tales that could be learned from the skalds and poets and found in the monasteries of the age. Absolon, who had loved and cared for the princes Knud and Valdemar since their childhood, died in the year 1201 and King Knud followed him a few years later, leaving the throne to his brother Valdemar.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FORTUNES AND MISFORTUNES OF VALDEMAR II

Prosperous and glorious was the kingdom of Denmark under Valdemar II. in the early part of his reign, though misery was his lot during many years of his life. By his victories he won the title of "Sejr," or "the conqueror," and his skill and goodness as a ruler won him the love of his people, while the Danes of to-day look upon him as one of the best and noblest of their kings. He was long regarded by them as the perfect model of a noble knight and royal hero, and his first queen, Margrete of Bohemia, was called by the people "Dagmar," or "Day's Maiden," from their admiration of her gentleness and beauty. In many of their national songs she is represented as a fair, fragile, golden-haired princess, mild and pure as a saint, the only sin she could think of to confess on her death-bed being that she had put on her best dress and plaited her hair with bright ribbons before going to mass. While the Danes thus regard the memory of Queen Dagmar, they have no words too bad to use in speaking of Valdemar's second queen, the black-haired Berangaria, whose name became with them a by-word for a vile woman.

But Valdemar's tale is largely one of sorrow and suffering and rarely has monarch had to bear so cruel a fate as was his during many unhappy years of his life.

Valdemar was the son of Valdemar I., and brother of King Knud, for whom as a prince he fought bravely, putting down the Sleswick rebels, who had been stirred to rebellion by the German emperor, and conquering his enemy, Count Adolf of Holstein. Succeeding his brother Knud in 1202, his first exploit was the conquest of Pomerania, which Knud had won before him. This was now added to the Danish dominions, and in 1217 the German emperor of that date granted to him and the future

kings of Denmark all the territories north of the Elbe and the Elde. Thus Valdemar was made master of a great part of northern Germany and ruled over a wider dominion to the south than any Danish king before or after.

His success in the south led him to attempt the conquest of the north, and armies were sent to Norway and Sweden with the hope of winning these kingdoms for the Danish crown. In this effort he failed, but in 1219 his zeal for the Church and love of adventure led him to undertake a great expedition, a crusade against the heathens of Esthonia.

Gathering an army of sixty thousand men and a fleet of fourteen hundred ships, a mighty force even for the small craft of that day, he quickly made himself master of that stronghold of paganism, great numbers of the people consenting to be baptized. But here he found a new and unexpected enemy and had to fight fiercely for the privilege of carrying the cross of Christ to the heathen Esthonians.

His new enemies were the Knights of the Sword, of Livonia, who declared that the duty of converting the pagans in that region belonged to them, and that no other Christians had the right to interfere. And from this ensued a war in which fierce battles were fought and much blood was shed, for the purpose of deciding who should have the privilege of converting the heathen. It is doubtful if ever before or since a war has been fought for such a purpose, and the heathens themselves must have looked on with grim satisfaction to see their enemies cutting each other's throats to settle the question as to who had the best right to baptize them.

In one of the battles with the heathens, while Bishop Andreas, the successor to Bishop Absolon, was praying on a high hill with uplifted hands for victory, there suddenly fell down from heaven the Danneborg, the national standard of Denmark. At least, that is what legend tells us of its appearance.

It is held to be much more probable that this banner, bearing a white cross on a blood-red field, was sent by the Pope

to Valdemar as a token of his favor and support, and that its sudden appearance, when the Danes were beginning to waver before the pagan assaults, gave them the spirit that led to victory. The result, in those days of superstition, naturally gave rise to the legend.

When Valdemar returned a victor from Esthonia, having beaten alike the pagans and the Livonian knights, and bearing with him the victorious Danneborg, he was at the height of his glory, and none dreamed of the terrible disaster that awaited him. He had made enemies among the German princes, and they conspired against him, but they were forced to submit to his rule. Some of those whose lands he had seized did not hesitate to express openly their hatred for him; but others, while secretly plotting against him, pretended to be his friends, shared in his wars and his courtly ceremonies, and were glad to accept favors from his hands.

One of those who hated him most bitterly, yet who seemed most attached to him, was the Count-Duke of Schwerin, a man who, alike from his dark complexion and his evil disposition, was known in his own country as "Black Henry." The king had often been warned to beware of this man, but, frank and open by nature and slow to suspect guile, he disregarded these warnings and went on treating him as a trusty friend.

This enabled Count Henry to make himself familiar with Valdemar's habits and mode of life. He secretly aided certain traitors who cherished evil designs against the king; but when he found that all these plots failed he devised one of his own which the king's trust in him aided him in carrying out.

In the spring of the year 1233 Valdemar invited his seeming friend to a two days' hunt which he proposed to enjoy in the woods of Lyö, but the count sent word that he regretted his inability to join him, as he had been hurt by a fall and could not leave his bed.

His bed just then was his horse's saddle. The opportunity which he awaited had come, and he spent the night scouring the country in search of aid for the plot he had in view, which was no less than to seize and hold prisoner his trusting royal friend. He knew the island well, and when his spies told him that the king and his son Valdemar had landed at Lyö with a small following of huntsmen and servants, Black Henry prepared to carry out his plot.

The king's first day's hunt was a hard one and he and his son slept soundly that night in the rude hut that had been put up for their use. No one thought of any need of guarding it and the few attendants of the king were scattered about, sleeping under the shelter of rocks and trees.

Late that night Count Henry and his men landed and made their way silently and cautiously through the tired sleepers to the royal hut, which he well knew where to find. Quietly entering, they deftly gagged the king and prince before they could awake, and before either of them could raise a hand in resistance sacks of wool and straw were drawn over their heads, so closely as nearly to choke them, and strong bonds were tied round their legs and arms.

Thus thoroughly disabled, the strong king and his youthful son were carried through the midst of their own people to the strand and laid helplessly in the bottom of the waiting boat, which was rowed away with muffled oars, gliding across the narrow sound to the shore of Fyen. Here waited a fast-sailing yacht to which the captives were transferred, sail being set before a favoring wind for the German coast.

The next morning, when the king's attendants were searching for the missing king, he and his son, still bound and gagged, were landed on a lonely part of the sea-shore, placed on awaiting horses, and tightly secured to the saddles, after which they were hurried on at full gallop, stopping only at intervals to change the armed escort, until the castle of Danneberg, in Hanover, was reached.

This castle had been loaned by its owner to Count Henry, he having no stronghold of his own deemed secure enough to hold such important captives. So roughly had they been treated that when the bonds were removed from Prince Valdemar, who resembled his mother Dagmar alike in his beauty and her feebleness, the blood flowed from every part of his body. Yet, without regard to his youth and sufferings, the cruel captor shut up him and his royal father in a cold and dark dungeon, where they were left without a change of clothing and fed on the poorest and coarsest food.

This, many might say, was a just retribution on King Valdemar, for years before, when as a prince he had put down the rebellion in Sleswick, he had seized its chief leader, his namesake Bishop Valdemar, and kept him for many years in chains and close confinement in the dungeon of Söborg Castle, and had later subjected Count Adolf of Holstein to the same fate. Bishop Valdemar had been released after fourteen years' imprisonment at the entreaty of Queen Dagmar, and was ever after one of the most bitter enemies of the Danish king.

But though a bishop and count might be thus held captive, it is difficult to conceive of a powerful monarch being kept prisoner by a minor noble for three long years, despite all that could be done for his release. Nothing could give a clearer idea of the lawless state of those times. King Valdemar and his son lay wearing the bonds of felons and suffering from cold and hunger while the emperor and the Pope sought in vain for their release, threatening Black Henry with all the penalties decreed by empire and church for those who raised their hands against a prince.

The shrewd captor readily promised all that was asked of him. He would release his captives without delay. Yet he had no intention to keep his word, for he knew that Rome and Ratisbon were too far from Danneberg to give him serious cause for alarm, especially as the other nobles of northern Germany were prepared to help him in keeping their common enemy in prison.

As for Denmark itself, the people were infuriated and eagerly demanded to be led to the rescue of their beloved king; yet Valdemar's sons were still young, all the kinsmen of the royal family had been banished or were dead, and there was no one with the power and right to take control of public affairs.

For some time, indeed, the fate of the king remained unknown to the people. Valdemar's nephew Albert, Count of Orlamunde, was on his way to Rome when the news of the king's capture reached him. He immediately turned back, collected an army, and gave battle to the German princes who were helping Count Henry to defend Danneberg. But his hasty levies were defeated and he taken prisoner, to be thrown into the same dungeon as the royal captive.

Finally King Valdemar, seeing no other hope of release, agreed to the terms offered by Black Henry, which were that he should pay a ransom of 45,000 silver marks, give him all the jewels of the late Queen Berangaria not already bestowed on churches and monasteries, and send him a hundred men-at-arms, with horses and arms for their use. For assurance of this he was to send his three younger sons to Danneberg to be kept in prison with Count Albert until the money was paid.

These terms agreed to, the king and prince were set free. Valdemar at once hastened to Denmark, which he found in a fearful state from its having been three years without a head. Humbled and crushed in spirit, finding all his dominions in Germany set free from their allegiance and all the kingdoms won by his valor lost to Denmark, he scarcely knew what steps to take. The ransom demanded he was unable to pay and he grieved at the thought of subjecting his young sons to the fate from which he had escaped. In his misery he wrote to the Pope, asking to be released from the oath which had been exacted from him to let his children go into captivity.

The Pope, full of pity for him, sent a bishop to Count Henry, telling him that if he tried to enforce the demand exacted under duress from the king of Denmark, he should be deprived

of the services of religion and be heavily fined by the papal power for his cruel and unrighteous act. Thus called to account for his treachery and wickedness, Black Henry was forced to forego the final cruel exaction of his traitor soul.

Misfortune, however, pursued Valdemar. When in 1227 the peasants of Ditmarsh refused to pay the tribute they had long paid the Danish crown, the insult to his weakness was more than the king could endure. He marched an army into their lands, but only to find himself defeated and four thousand of his men killed by the rebels, who were strongly aided by the German princes of Holstein, and especially by Count Adolf, his former captive. He himself was wounded in the eye by an arrow which struck him to the ground, and would have been captured a second time but for the aid of a friendly German knight. This foeman had been formerly in Valdemar's service, and when he saw his old royal master helpless and bleeding, he lifted him to his saddle and carried him to Kiel, where his wounds were healed, means being then found to send him back to his kingdom.

Valdemar remained on the throne for fourteen years afterwards, but these were years of peace. War no longer had charms for him and he devoted himself to the duties of government and to preparing codes of law for the provinces of his kingdom. In that age there were no general laws for the whole country.

The laws of Valdemar continued in force for four hundred and fifty years, and in 1687, when Christian V. framed a new code of laws, some of the old ones of Valdemar were retained. In them the old custom of the ordeal was set aside, being replaced by the system of the jury, one form of which consisted of "eight good men and true" chosen by the king, and another of twelve men chosen by the people. The laws were lenient, for most crimes could be atoned for by money or other fines. Three days after the last of these codes was approved Valdemar died, at the age of seventy-one, leaving three sons all of whom in turn ruled after him. His son Valdemar, who shared his imprisonment, had died long before.

CHAPTER XVIII

BIRGER JARL AND THE CONQUEST OF FINLAND

Birger jarl, who became one of the great men of Sweden about 1250, rose to such importance in the early history of that kingdom that one cannot pass him by without saying something about his career. Sweden was then a Christian kingdom and had been for many years, for the religion of Christ had been preached there, as the sagas tell, four centuries earlier. But heathenism prevailed until long afterwards, and it was not until the days of King Stenkil, who came to the throne in 1061, that an earnest effort was made to introduce the Christian worship. Finally paganism completely died out, and when Birger came to the throne Sweden had long been a Christian realm.

But paganism still had a stronghold in Finland, and when Bishop Thomas, a zealous churchman, of English birth, proclaimed that the Christians should have no intercourse with the pagans in Finland or even sell them food, the Finlanders became so incensed that they invaded the Christian country and put the people to death with frightful tortures. Their cruelties created terror everywhere and Bishop Thomas fled to Gothland where, crazed with horror at the result of his proclamation, he soon died.

King Erik was then on the throne of Sweden, but Birger, the son of a great earl of Gothland, became a famous warrior, and as the king had no sons he made Birger a jarl, or earl, and chose him as his heir. One of the exploits by which Birger had won fame was the following. The town of Lübeck, in North Germany, was closely besieged by the king of Denmark, who had cut it off from the sea by stretching strong iron chains across the river Trave, on which the town is situated. He thus hoped to starve the people into surrender, and would have done so had not

Birger come to their rescue. He had the keels of some large ships plated with iron, loaded them with provisions, and sailed up the river towards the beleaguered city. Hoisting all sail before a strong wind, he steered squarely on to the great chains, and struck them with so mighty a force that they snapped asunder and the ships reached the town with their supplies, whereupon the Danish king abandoned the siege. This story is of interest, as these are the first iron-plated ships spoken of in history.

By this and other exploits Birger grew in esteem, and when the Finns began their terrible work in the north he and the king summoned the people to arms, and the old warlike spirit, which had long been at rest, was reawakened in the hearts of the Swedes. The Pope at Rome had proclaimed a crusade against the Finns, promising the same privileges to all who took part in it as were enjoyed by those then taking part in the crusades to the Holy Land, and on all sides the people grew eager to engage in this sacred war.

Then there was brushing and furbishing on all sides; ancestral swords, which had long hung rusting on the walls, were taken down and sharpened anew; helmets and cuirasses were burnished until they shone like silver or gold; tight-closed purses were opened by those who wished to aid the cause of Christ; and old ships were made ready for the waves and new ones launched. Rosy lips were kissed by lovers who would never kiss them again, and loud was the weeping of the maidens and mothers who saw those they loved setting out for the war, but they consoled themselves as best they could by the thought that it was all for the glory of God. Men of Sweden had gone to the crusades in Palestine, but here was a crusade of their own at home, and all were eager to take part in it.

A great fleet was got together and set sail under the command of Birger Jarl. Its course lay up the Gulf of Bothnia, and where it came to land Birger erected a great wooden cross as a sign that he had come for the spread of the Christian faith. From this the place was called Korsholm.

The heathen Finns knew of his coming and had gathered in great numbers to defend their country against its invaders, but nothing could stay the fury of the crusaders, who were incensed with the cruelties these barbarians had committed, and drove them back in dismay wherever they met them, Birger Jarl showing the greatest skill as a leader. He made public a law that all who became Christians should be protected in life and property, and within two years he succeeded in introducing Christianity into that country—perhaps more in appearance than reality. At any rate he built forts, and settled a colony of Swedes in East Bothnia, and thus did much towards making Finland a province of Sweden.

While this was going on King Erik the Lamé died (in 1250). As he left no heir there were many pretenders to the crown. The fact that Birger had been named by the king two years before was lost sight of, and it looked as if there would be civil war between the many claimants. To prevent any such result a powerful noble named Iwar hastily summoned an assembly and through his influence Valdemar, Birger Jarl's son, was chosen as king. This was all done so quickly that it was completed in fourteen days after Erik's death.

When the news of this hasty action reached Birger in Finland he was very angry, and hastened home with all speed, bringing with him the greater part of his army. He was highly displeased that he had not himself been named king, as had been promised, instead of a boy, even if the boy was his son. Calling together those who had made the choice of Valdemar, he hotly asked them:

"Who among you was so bold as to order an election during my absence, though you knew that King Erik named me Jarl and chose me for his heir? And why did you choose a child for your king?"

Iwar answered that it was he that ordered the election and said:

"Though you are indeed most worthy to wear the crown, you are advanced in years and cannot live to rule us as long as your son."

This answer brought another angry outbreak from Birger and Iwar again said:

"If you do not like this, do with your son what you please. There is no fear but we shall be able to find another king."



VILLAGE LIFE AND HOMES IN SWEDEN.

For a time Birger sat in moody silence, and then asked:

"Who then would you take for your king?"

"I also can shake out a king from under my cloak," was Iwar's haughty answer.

This threw the Jarl into a dilemma. The faces of the people present showed their approval of what Iwar had said, and at length, fearing that if he resisted their action the crown might be lost both to himself and his son, he gave in to their decision.

To give dignity to the occasion, he took steps to have his son crowned with much magnificence, and shortly after sent his

daughter Rikissa with great pomp and a rich dower to the frontier of Norway, where she was met by the king of that country and was married with stately ceremony to his son. The next year Birger's mother died, and as there was a prophecy that her family would remain in power as long as her head was up, he had her buried upright, being walled up in a pillar in Bjelbo Church so that her head should never droop.

Birger Jarl belonged to a great family called the Folkungers, who long held all the power in Sweden, and many of whom had been aspirants for the throne. These were so angry at being deprived of what they had hoped for that they determined to take the throne by force, and their leaders went to Denmark and Germany, where they collected a large army. When they landed in Sweden many of the people of that country joined them, and though Birger had also a large force he began to fear the result.

He therefore sent his chancellor, Bishop Kol, to ask for a personal interview with the leaders of the opposite force, with solemn promises of safety. Yielding to the bishop's persuasions, the chiefs accompanied him across the river that separated the two armies. Then Birger did a dastardly act. No sooner had the chiefs come within his power than he had them seized and beheaded on the spot as rebels.

Thus fell a number of the leading men of Sweden, and, the leaders fallen, Birger attacked and easily dispersed their army, sparing the Swedes, but cutting to pieces all the Germans that could be overtaken. Thus he added greatly to the power of his family, but by an act of treachery and perjury for which Archbishop Lars laid upon him a heavy penance. As for Bishop Kol, who had been made the innocent agent in this shameful deed, he never read mass again, and finally resigned his office and left his country, journeying as a pilgrim to the Holy Land in expiation for his involuntary crime. He never found peace and rest until he found them in the grave.

Birger Jarl by these means rose to be the mightiest man in the north. His son was king of Norway, his daughter was queen of Sweden, and his daughter-in-law was a princess of Denmark, for when Valdemar became twenty years of age he sought and won for his bride the beautiful Danish Princess Sophia. The marriage was one of great pomp, a great hall being built for the occasion, where the courtiers appeared in new-fashioned dresses of rich stuffs, and there were plenty of banquets, games, dances, and even tilts and tournaments, all conducted according to the noblest custom of the times.

Birger himself had a queen for his wife, having married the dowager Queen Mechthild of Denmark, and to increase his importance he assumed the title of duke, never before borne in Sweden. But many of the peasants called him king, since he governed the kingdom and was married to a queen. But meanwhile poor Bishop Kol was dying of grief for the deed of shame into which this proud lord had led him.

Shall we here tell an interesting and romantic story about one of Birger's brothers? He was a judge in East Gothland, his name being Bengt, and had fallen deeply in love with a damsel named Sigrid, whose family was not rich nor great, though she herself was so beautiful that she was widely known as Sigrid the Fair.

Duke Birger was not pleased with the idea of such a match, thinking the girl, though of noble birth, of far too lowly rank to mate with a member of his family. But in such things Judge Bengt had a will of his own and he married Sigrid without Birger's consent. This so displeased the proud jarl that he sent Bengt a cloak, half of which was made of gold brocade and the other of coarse and common baize. This was in token of the difference in rank of the families of Bengt and Sigrid and a significant hint that he should separate from his new wife.

But Bengt was equal to the situation. He covered the coarse half of the cloak with gold, pearls and precious stones so as to make it more valuable than the other, and this he sent to his

brother with no other answer. This only irritated Birger the more, and he sent back the message, "that he would speak with his brother face to face about this affair," adding some harsh words which were also repeated to Bengt.

Then, soon after this, the angry jarl saddled his horse and rode with a large company to Ulfasa, where Bengt lived. When the judge saw the jarl's train near at hand he fled from his house to the woods, leaving his wife, whom he had carefully instructed how to act, to meet his irritated brother.

When the angry jarl rode into the court, fully prepared to call his erring brother severely to account, he was surprised to see the fairest woman he had ever beheld come forward to meet him. She was adorned with the most costly robes and precious ornaments she could command and everything had been done to enhance the charm of her beauty. Stepping forth before the jarl, who gazed at her with astonishment, she bowed low and welcomed him with all honor and courtesy.

So astonished was Birger with the charming vision that he sprang from his horse and seized Sigrid in his arms, saying, "Had my brother not done this I should have done it myself."

Leading him to the house, she entertained him with the best cheer, and Bengt being sent for to the wood, the two brothers were fully reconciled. Such an effect have the charms of a fair woman over the pride and passion of men.

A few words must serve to finish the story of Birger Jarl. The greatest and most valuable service of his reign lay in the new laws he gave the country and his doing away with many of the old barbarian customs to replace them with the customs of civilization.

Before this time it was the common practice for the relatives of a murdered man to avenge him on the family of the murderer, thus giving rise to long and bloody feuds. This custom Birger forbade, ordering every one to seek redress for injury at

the courts of justice. He also passed four Laws of Peace, viz.: for the Peace of the Church, of Women, of House, and of Assize.

Every one was forbidden to assault another in the church or the churchyard or on the way to or from church. Whoever did so was declared out lawed, and if the assailed man killed his assailant he was held free from blame or revenge. This was the Peace of the Church.

Another ancient custom was to carry away a desired bride by force, without her consent or that of her parents, a fight often arising in which the bride's father and brothers were killed. Or on the way of an affianced pair to church the same outrage might take place, the bridegroom being often killed. This, too, was forbidden under penalty of outlawry, the new law being that of Peace for Women.

To promote general security he forbade, under the same penalty, the attacking of any man, his wife, children, or servants, within his house or on his property. This was the Law of Home-peace or House-peace. All violence was in like manner forbidden to any one going to or attending an assembly of the people, this being the Peace of Assize.

Birger Jarl improved the laws in many other ways and made Sweden a far more civilized country than it had been before his time. Another of his useful acts was the founding of the city of Stockholm, which before his day was a mere village on an island, but which he made a stronghold and city, inviting that commerce to which its situation so excellently adapted it. This was one of the most important acts of Birger Jarl, who died soon afterwards, not living to see the rapid growth in importance of his new city.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FIRST WAR BETWEEN SWEDEN AND RUSSIA

In the last tale it was told how Birger Jarl subdued the Finns and brought them to give up their heathen practices and accept Christianity. But this refers only to the section of Finland bordering on the Baltic Sea. Farther east the Finns were pagans still, worshipping idols and living a savage life in their vast forests, and bitterly hating the Christians. At times they would come in hordes out of their wild woodlands and attack the settled people, killing them in the most cruel way their distorted fancies could contrive.

They had two chief deities, Jumal, the great good one, and Perkel, the great evil one, and these were supposed to meet in fierce encounters in which they would throw each other over high mountains. The people kept wooden images of these deities in their huts, and had also open places in the forest, with a stone on the centre of each, on which they made sacrifices to their divinities. When a Karelian, as these people were called, came to within a fixed distance of the sacrificial stone, he took off his cap and crawled up to it silently, making sacrifices there of the bones and horns of elk and reindeer. In case of danger they would sacrifice goats, cats and cocks, sprinkling their idols with the blood of these animals.

At that time, shortly before the year 1300, Birger, heir to the throne of Sweden, was very young, and the country was under the rule of Torkel Knutson, regent of the kingdom and a wise and energetic man. Exasperated by the cruelties committed by the Karelians on the Christians, he determined to put a stop to them and sailed to Finland with a strong army. Against this force the pagan foresters could not make head and they were soon obliged to submit. A fort with a strong garrison was built at

Wiborg to keep them in order, and the churchmen who went with the expedition strove to convert them.

It is not with these savage woodsmen, however, that we are concerned, but with the Russians, with which people the Swedes now first came into warlike contact. The forest Russians of that day were as savage as the Finns and as hard to deal with. They came to the help of the Karelians in this war, and to punish them the regent took Castle Kexholm, their chief stronghold, and left in it a garrison under Sigge Lake. It was this that brought on the first war between the Swedes and the Russians, some of the events of which are so interesting that it is worth telling about.

After the Swedes had held Kexholm for some time their food supply ran very low, and as no aid came from home many of them wished to abandon the fort. This Sigge Lake would not listen to. He had been left there to hold the place and did not intend to give it up. But only the bravest of his men remained with him, the others leaving under pretext of sending food and reinforcements from home.

Neither men nor supplies arrived and the Russians, learning of the state of affairs, gathered in multitudes around the fort, laying close siege to it. In the end, after a brave resistance lasting many days, food became so scarce that the Swedes dared not stay any longer and they determined to try and cut their way through the besiegers.

The gates were thrown open and Sigge rushed out at the head of his company, with such force and fury that for a time it seemed as if they would succeed. But they were weakened by semi-starvation and in the end the swarming Russians killed them all but two, who alone made their escape and carried the news of the disaster back to Sweden.

The regent was greatly distressed at the loss of the brave men whom he had left so long without support. It was too late to save their lives but he felt it his duty to avenge them. To do so he set sail with another army, making his way up the river Neva, the stream on which the city of St. Petersburg was afterwards

built. No enemy was seen and the regent landed on an island in the river, where he built a strong fort which he named Landscrona, furnishing it plentifully with provisions.

The Russians, when they found what was being done, were infuriated. A great multitude of them, thirty thousand in number, gathered on the Neva and made a vigorous effort to burn the Swedish fleet, sending rafts down the stream on which were great heaps of blazing wood. But the regent caught these by iron chains which he stretched across the stream, holding the fire-floats until they burned out.

This effort failing, the Russians made a fierce attack on the fortress, with such savage violence that though many of them fell the others would not give up the assault. But so strong and so well defended was the place that they failed in this also, and in the end were obliged to retreat, leaving great numbers of dead behind them. Then a young and brave knight in the garrison, named Matts Kettilmundson, made a sortie against the Russians and drove them back in panic flight, many more of them being killed.

Shortly after this a party of Russian cavalry, one thousand strong, appeared in the edge of a wood, not far from the fort, their armor gleaming brightly in the sunlight. While the garrison were looking at them from the walls, the brave knight Matts Kettilmundson asked permission of the regent to ride out against them, saying that "he would venture a brush with the bravest among them."

The regent having consented, the daring fellow put on his armor and had his horse led through the gate. Leaping on it he rode out, and when he had passed the moat, turned back to his friends who lined the wall.

"Strive to live happily," he said, "and do not be troubled about me, for it depends on God in heaven whether I shall return with a captive foe or fail to return at all."

He then rode boldly on and sent an interpreter to the Russian lines, challenging the bravest of the Russians to fight with him for life, goods and freedom. It must be borne in mind that those were the days of chivalry and knight-errantry, when such adventures and challenges were common things and good faith was kept with those who made them. So no force or treachery was attempted against the daring knight, although we should hardly have looked for knightly deeds and chivalrous ways in the Russia of that day.

However, as the story goes on to say, the Russian king appealed in vain for a knight to try conclusions with the Swedish champion. Not a man in the troop was ready to make the venture, and Sir Matts sat his horse there all day long waiting in vain for an antagonist. As evening approached he rode back to the fortress, where every one congratulated and praised him for his courage. The next morning the Russians had disappeared.

Soon after this, the army growing weary and longing for home, the regent set sail down stream, leaving three hundred men and abundant supplies in the fort, under a knight named Swen. But as contrary winds detained the fleet Sir Matts landed with a strong party of horsemen and made long raids into the country, gathering much booty, with which he returned to the ships. Then the army continued its way home, where it was received with much joy.

But the garrison in Landscrona did not find their lot much better than had the former garrison in Kexholm. The new walls were damp and the advancing summer brought hot weather, so that their provisions began to spoil. As a consequence scurvy and other diseases broke out and many of the men died. Some of those who remained wished to send home for help, but others objected to this, saying that "they preferred waiting for help from heaven and did not wish to trouble the regent, who had enough to attend to at home."

When the Russians gathered around the fort to attack it, as they soon did, only twenty men in the garrison were fit to bear

arms in defence. These could not properly guard the walls and the Russians steadily advanced, all losses being made up from their great numbers, until in no great time the walls were taken. The Swedes retired to their houses, continuing to fight, but as the Russians set fire to these, the governor and some others threw down their arms, offering to surrender. They were at once cut down by the assailants.

The few who remained alive now took refuge in a stone cellar, where they defended themselves manfully; and refused to submit until the enemy had offered them their lives. Then they yielded and were carried as captives into the country, the fortress being razed to the ground. Thus, in the year 1300, ended the first war between Russia and Sweden. The Swedes fought well and died nobly, but they lost their lives through the neglect of their countrymen and rulers.

CHAPTER XX

THE CRIME AND PUNISHMENT OF KING BIRGER

When the events narrated in the last tale took place, there were three young princes in the kingdom, Birger, Erik and Valdemar, Torkel, the regent, ruling in their name. But when the princes grew up Birger, the oldest, was crowned king, the other two becoming dukes. But very early in Birger's reign there arose many complaints about the conduct of his brothers, who showed themselves haughty and insubordinate. The ill-blood in time grew to such an extent that the king dismissed his brothers from his presence, giving them until sunset to leave.

"After that," he said, "if you shall fall into my hands, it will go ill with you."

This gave rise to bitter enmity and the two dukes gave King Birger no end of trouble, there being war between them three times in succession, bringing the country into a miserable state. During the second war King Birger was taken prisoner by his brothers, but he was afterwards set free under the promise that he would no more disturb Sweden, a third part of which was left under his rule.

He did not intend to keep his word, but was no sooner set free than he sought aid from his brother-in-law, the king of Denmark, and invaded the kingdom with a Danish army. This was the third war above spoken of. It ended without the king gaining anything but the third of the kingdom, which had already been promised to him. After each of these wars the brothers became reconciled, and lived for a time peacefully in their dominions, but they laid such heavy taxes on the people to support their extravagant courts that great misery prevailed.

After the last outbreak all remained quiet for nearly ten years, and the dukes thought that their brother was friendly towards them, not dreaming that his heart was full of hate and treachery.

In 1317, when Duke Valdemar made a journey to Stockholm, which was in his section of the kingdom, he stopped at Nyköping to visit his brother Birger, whom he had not seen for a long time. Birger met him with a great show of friendliness, making him welcome in every way. Queen Martha was equally kind, and Valdemar was highly pleased with these tokens of regard. Before he left the queen complained to him that it gave her great pain that Duke Erik avoided his brother, saying that God knew she loved him as much as if he were her own brother.

After spending the night with them Valdemar rode away very well pleased. His men were equally pleased, for they had been well entertained. On leaving Stockholm he went to Erik's home in Westmoreland, who told him that he had just been invited to visit Birger's court, and asked if he thought it safe to make such a visit.

Valdemar said he had no doubt of it, telling of what a pleasant visit he had made. Erik, however, had doubts, being distrustful of the queen and Chancellor Brunke, whom he looked upon as his enemies. But in the end the brothers decided to accept the invitation and rode away towards Nyköping. When six miles distant they met a knight who advised them to go no farther, saying:

"You will cause yourselves and your friends much sorrow if both of you trust yourselves in the king's hands at the same time."

Valdemar indignantly replied to this that "there are too many who seek to breed disunion between the king and his brothers."

The knight then rode off, saying no more, and the dukes rode into Swärta, where they proposed to spend the night. To their surprise no preparations had been made for them, but a knight met them and saluted them in the king's name, adding that he earnestly requested them not to repose until they reached Nyköping, as his longing to meet them was so great that he could not rest until they arrived.

On receiving this warm request they rode on, reaching Nyköping in the evening. The king advanced from the castle gate to meet them, greeting them in an affectionate manner, and taking each of them by the hands as he led them into the castle. They found a rich feast prepared for them, at which neither mead, wine, nor fair words were wanting. At length Duke Valdemar grew suspicious and said to his brother that they were drinking too much wine. But this was soon forgotten and the feast went on, Queen Martha showing herself very gay and lively and every one being full of the spirit of enjoyment.

It was late at night before the merrymaking ended and the dukes went to their rooms. The queen then said to their men, who had also been well taken care of:

"Lodging has been prepared for you in the town, as there is not room enough for you in the castle."

As they went out Chancellor Brunke stood at the gate, making sure that they had all gone, when he shut the castle gates behind them. Then he armed the servants and led them to the king. Birger, who seemed in some doubt, bade them to retire and turned to Sir Knut Johanson, asking if he would assist in making prisoners of the dukes.

"I will not, my lord," said Sir Knut. "Whoever has counselled you to do this is leading you into a great treachery. What, would you deceive and murder your brothers who came here trusting in your good faith? The devil himself must be your tempter. Let who will be angry on this account, I will never help you in it."

"Small care you have for my honor," said the king angrily.

"Little honor can accrue to you from such an act," answered Sir Knut sturdily. "If you should carry out this design your honor will be less here-after."

Two other knights warned the king against so treacherous a deed, but he was so displeased with their words that he ordered them to prison.

Then he led his armed servants to the sleeping apartment of the dukes and broke open the door, the noise awakening the sleepers. Valdemar sprang up, and seeing armed men entering the room, he seized one of them and threw him down, calling on his brother for help.

"There is no use in resisting, brother," said Erik, seeing the room filling with armed men.

The king now rushed in and called out savagely:

"Do you remember Hatuna? It will not be better for you here than it was for me there, for you shall have the same fate, though it has tarried so long."

Hatuna was the place where the king had previously been taken prisoner by his brothers, in somewhat the same treacherous manner. But they had not treated him with the same shameful cruelty with which he now treated them.

They were taken barefooted deep into the tower and fastened in a dungeon, with a great chain on their legs, while their servants in the town were taken prisoners and locked up in one ward to the number of twenty, all their possessions being divided among their captors. This being done, the king clapped his hands, saying:

"The Holy Ghost bless my queen! Now I have all Sweden in my hand!"

When he set out soon afterwards on an errand of conquest, he left his brothers in the charge of a Livonian knight,

who had evidently been bidden to treat them harshly, for he removed them to the lowest dungeon and placed a beam upon their legs. They were fastened to the wall by thick iron round the throat and chains weighing one hundred and forty pounds were riveted on their wrists, the other end being fastened to the beam. When the chain was fastened upon Erik it was done with such violence that a piece of iron broke out, cutting him on the eye so that blood ran down his cheek.

Their dungeon was at the bottom of the tower, where they lay on the bare rock, a pool of water lying between them. Their food was wretched, their clothing was wretched, and there was every indication that their wicked brother did not wish to have them leave that prison alive.

But the cruel and treacherous king did not find it so easy to bring all Sweden under his rule. The news of his wicked act got abroad and spread through the land, exciting general horror and detestation. When he rode up to Stockholm to take possession he found it closed against him and the burghers made a sally against him, putting his forces to flight. It was the same way everywhere, the whole country rising against him. The wicked king now began to learn that the way of the transgressor is hard, and in his fury of disappointment he locked the door of the dungeon in which his brothers lay and threw the key into the stream, leaving them to die of starvation.

But the poor victims were to be thoroughly avenged, for the people were implacable in their wrath, and in a short time had so environed the king that the fortresses of Nyköping and Stegeborg were alone left to him, and both of these were besieged.

Nyköping was soon so severely pressed that the garrison brought up the dead bodies of the dukes and laid them under a dais outside the castle, saying to the besiegers:

"Your siege will now answer no purpose, for the dukes are dead and King Birger is heir to all the kingdom."

"No one can hope to win an inheritance by murder," they replied. "We now serve as our ruler, Lord Magnus, Duke Erik's son."

The bodies of the murdered dukes were carried to Stockholm, where they were buried with much ceremony. But the siege of the castle was continued until the garrison was forced to surrender. On obtaining possession of it the enraged people razed it to the ground.



MORNING GREETINGS OF NEIGHBORS, SWEDEN.

Stegeborg, where Prince Magnus, King Birger's son, was in command, held out much longer. The king and queen, with Brunke, their confederate, were in Gothland, which province alone they held, and from which they sent a number of ships to Stegeborg with provisions and troops. These had no sooner appeared in the river Skares, however, than they were attacked and taken, leaving Prince Magnus as bad off as ever. When this news was brought to the king and queen they exclaimed in despair:

"Where shall we turn now, since God has sent us such a misfortune?"

Brunke, the cruel chancellor, volunteered to lead an expedition himself, saying that he would no more spare the dukes' people than they had spared the king's. Gathering some vessels, he had them strongly planked all around, and loading these with provisions and the remainder of the king's forces, he set out for Stegeborg.

On entering the Skares the people attacked him with stones and other missiles, but he and his men protected themselves behind the planks. Seeing this, fire-rafts were sent off from the shore against the ships, and despite all that could be done to keep them off they drifted upon the vessels, setting three of them on fire, from which the flames spread to the others.

Brunke and his men leaped overboard, hoping to escape by swimming, but they were all taken and Brunke and three of his chiefs sent to Stockholm, where they were soon afterwards beheaded. Stegeborg was now in a desperate state and was soon forced to surrender, on the condition that the life of Prince Magnus should be spared. This condition was not kept, notwithstanding the fact that he was innocent of his father's crime. The indignant people were not willing to leave any scion of their wicked king alive and the poor boy's head was cut off.

Thus the unholy treachery of King Birger met with retribution. Sir Matts Kettilmundson, the brave knight who had shown such courage in Russia, was made Administrator of the kingdom and soon defeated a Danish army which had been sent to King Birger's aid. Then Birger and his wicked queen were obliged to flee to Sweden, where grief soon brought him to his death-bed. Queen Martha lived long, but it was a life made bitter by memory of her crimes and Heaven's retribution.

CHAPTER XXI

QUEEN MARGARET AND THE CALMAR UNION

We have next to tell how the three kingdoms of Scandinavia, between which rivalry and hostility had often prevailed, became united into one great Scandinavian realm, under the rule of a woman, the great Queen Margaret. This was a very important event, as its results continued until our own day, the subjection of Norway, which was then achieved, not being broken until the early days of the present century. It is important to describe the various steps by which this union was brought about.

From 930, when Harold Fair-Haired, the maker of Norway, died, until 1319, when a king known by the odd title of Haakon Longlegs followed him to the grave, the throne of Norway had been nearly always filled by some one of Harold's many descendants. But with the death of Haakon the male line of King Harold's descendants was finally broken, and only a woman remained to represent that great royal stock, Princess Ingeborg, the daughter of King Haakon. This fair maiden was promised in marriage while still a child to Duke Erik, son of the late king of Sweden. They were married in 1312, and on the same day Duke Valdemar, Erik's brother, married another princess of Norway, also named Ingeborg. About four years later a son was born to each of these happy couples, and King Haakon was full of joy, for he now felt that the old royal line was restored.

One person was not pleased by the birth of these princes. This was King Birger of Sweden, who had long been at sword's point with his ambitious brothers and wanted the throne of Norway as well as that of Sweden to descend to his own son Magnus. He pretended to be pleased, however, for he had in mind a treacherous plot to destroy his brothers and their children

and thus leave the way clear for his ambitious schemes. The steps he took to bring this about and their fatal end to his brothers and his son we have told in the previous tale. After the indignant people had driven King Birger from the throne the kingdoms of Sweden and Norway were left in a strange plight. Magnus, the son of Duke Erik and Ingeborg, was only three years old when his grandfather, the king of Norway, died. This left him the successor to the Norse realm. But the deposition of King Birger and the execution of his son left this royal infant the king of Sweden also, so that these two kingdoms became for the first time united, and this under the rule of a three-year-old child, with regents to govern in his name. But the two countries remained separate in everything except that they had now but one king.

When King Magnus became old enough to act as monarch in reality, he took the government of both countries into his hands. But he proved unfit to govern either of them, being a weak and good-natured man, so anxious to please everybody that he pleased nobody. Born and brought up in Sweden, he knew little and cared less about affairs in Norway and the people of that country grew much incensed at his neglect of their interests. They made him promise, at a public meeting, to divide the two kingdoms between his two sons; Erik, the elder, to succeed him in Sweden, and Haakon, the younger, to be given the crown of Norway when he came of age. Events happened, as will be seen, to prevent this taking place and to combine all Scandinavia under one great queen.

This is how it came about. King Magnus made a visit to Denmark, where it was arranged to marry Prince Haakon to Margaret, daughter and heir of the Danish king, Valdemar. This marriage took place in due time, and not very long afterwards both King Magnus and Prince Haakon died and Prince Erik was poisoned by his mother, who was a wicked woman and was angry because he opposed her in one of her base schemes.

Thus as the death of King Birger had left the crowns of Sweden and Norway to a boy of three, the deaths here named

left these crowns and that of Denmark also to another child, the son of Haakon and Margaret. This little fellow, Olaf by name, too young to appreciate how great he had become, did not live to enjoy his greatness. He died at the age of seventeen, leaving his royal rights to his mother Margaret.

It is interesting to learn that the turbulent kingdoms named, the land of the sea-kings and the war-like barbarians of the north, each of which had needed the hand of a strong man to control them, all now fell under the sceptre of a woman, who at first reigned over Denmark and Norway and soon added Sweden to her dominion.

But Queen Margaret was no weakling. She was a woman born to command, strong in mind and body, and more like a man than a woman. In Sweden, to which she quickly turned her attention, she had a bitter enemy in Duke Albrecht of Mecklenburg, who had been declared king of that country after the death of King Magnus, and who also claimed the crown of Norway, being remotely related to its royal house.

He bitterly hated Margaret, whom he called "Queen Breechless," and by other satirical and insulting names. Finally he took the bold step to call himself king of Denmark and Norway, a baseless claim which he proposed to enforce. He made a vow never to use a hat until he had driven out Margaret, and sent her a whetstone several yards long, advising her to use it to sharpen her scissors and needles instead of using a sceptre. He was much too hasty, as he had only a weak hold upon Sweden even, whose nobles did not like his habit of bringing in Germans to fill the posts of honor and were anxious to get rid of him.

Therefore it came about that he found himself confronted by an army of Danes, Norsemen, and Swedes, and a battle followed in which Albrecht riding with his heavy cavalry upon a frozen marsh, broke through the ice and was taken prisoner. He was now in the power of Queen Margaret, who had at length the opportunity to repay him for his insults. To replace the crowns

of Norway and Denmark, which he had sought to wear, she put upon his head a fool's cap, with a tail twenty-eight feet long, and repaid him for his insults and jests in other ways. After she had done her best to make him an object of laughter and ridicule she locked him up in a strong prison cell, where he was given six years to reflect on his folly.

It took these six years for Margaret's army to subdue the city of Stockholm, which held out stoutly for Albrecht. She won it at last by setting him free with the proviso that he should pay a ransom of sixty thousand marks. In case he could not provide it within three years he was to return to prison or surrender Stockholm. He did the latter and Margaret became mistress of Sweden.

This able woman had now won a proud position, reached by none of the kings before her. She was ruler of the whole of Scandinavia, with its three ancient kingdoms. The triple crown was hers for the lifting, but she was not ambitious to wear it, and preferred to put it on the head of her grand-nephew, Erik of Pomerania, though she retained the power in her hands until her death in 1412. Representatives of the three kingdoms were summoned by her to a meeting at Calmar, where, in July, 1397, a compact uniting the three kingdoms under one ruler was drawn up and signed.

This was the famous Calmar Union, which held Norway captive for more than four hundred years. From that time until the present century Norway had no separate history, though her people vigorously resisted any measures of oppression. In 1536 this ancient kingdom was declared to be a province of Denmark, being treated like a conquered land; yet there was not a man to protest against the humiliation. The loss of national standing had come on so gradually that the people, widely scattered over their mountain land and absorbed in their occupations, scarcely noticed it, though they were quick enough to resent any encroachment upon their personal liberty and rights. There were outbreaks, indeed, from time to time, but these were soon put down and the Danish rule held good.

This was not the case with Sweden, a more thickly settled and civilized land. The struggle of the Swedes for freedom continued for some seventy-five years and was finally accomplished in 1523. How this was done will be told in other tales. As for Norway, it was ceded by Denmark to Sweden in 1814, and the people of that mountain land regained their national rights, with a free constitution, though ruled by the Swedish king. This union held good until 1905, when it was peacefully broken and Norway gained a king of its own again, after being kingless for more than five hundred years.

CHAPTER XXII

HOW SIR TORD FOUGHT FOR CHARLES OF SWEDEN

In the year 1450 and the succeeding period there was great disorder in the Scandinavian kingdoms. The Calmar Union was no longer satisfactory to the people of Sweden, who were bitterly opposed to being ruled by a Danish king. There were wars and intrigues and plots and plans, with plenty of murder and outrage, as there is sure to be in such troublous times. There was king after king, none of them pleasing to the people. King Erik behaved so badly that neither Sweden nor Denmark would have anything to do with him, and he became a pirate, living by plunder. Then Duke Christopher of Bavaria was elected king of Scandinavia, but he also acted in a way that made every one glad when he died. In those days there was a great nobleman in Sweden, named Karl Knutsson, who had a hand in everything that was going on. One thing especially made him very popular at that time, when a new king was to be elected. The spring had been very dry and there was danger of a complete failure of the crops, but on the day when Karl landed in Stockholm, May 23, 1450, there came plentiful rains and the people rejoiced, fancying that in some way he had brought about the change of weather. So, when the lords assembled to elect a new king, Karl received sixty-two out of seventy votes, while the people shouted that they would have no other king. He was then crowned king as Charles VIII. There had been only one Charles before him, but somehow the mistake was made of calling him Charles VIII., and in later years came Charles IX., X., etc., the mistake never being rectified.

All this is in introduction to a tale we have to tell, that of a bold champion of King Charles. For the new king had many troubles to contend with. The king of Denmark in especial gave

him much trouble, and the southern province of West Gothland was in danger of seceding from his rule. In this dilemma he chose his cousin, Sir Tord Bonde, a young but daring and experienced warrior, as the captain of his forces in that province. He could not have made a better choice, and the stirring career of Sir Tord was so full of strange and exciting events that we must devote this tale to his exploits.

Lödöse, a stronghold of Gothland, was still held by the Danes, and Sir Tord's first adventure had to do with this place. On a dark, rainy, and stormy night he led a party of shivering horsemen towards the town, galloping onward at headlong speed over the muddy road and reaching the place before day-dawn. Utterly unexpectant of such a coming, the Danes were taken by surprise and all made prisoners, Sir Tord's men feeding luxuriously on the enemy's meat and wine as some recompense for their wet night's journey.

Master of the place without a blow, Sir Tord 219 found there a bag of letters, containing some that had to do with plots against the king. These letters he sent to King Charles, but they put him upon a new adventure of his own. One of the traitors was Ture Bjelke, master of Axewalla Castle, and Sir Tord, fancying that the traitor would be as welcome a present to the king as his letters, set out for the castle with thirty men.

On arriving there Ture, not dreaming that his treason had been discovered, admitted his visitor without hesitation. The troopers were also permitted to enter, Sir Tord having told them to come in groups of five or six only, so as not to excite suspicion by their numbers.

That night, while they sat at table, and just as the cabbage was being carried in, Sir Tord sprang up and seized Ture firmly by the collar, calling out that he arrested him as a traitor to the king. The knight's men sprang up to defend him, but Sir Tord's men attacked them with sword and fist, the matter ending in the men as well as their master being taken prisoners, and the castle falling into Sir Tord's hands.

On receiving the letters, Charles laid them before the senate at Stockholm, but the traitors were men of such power and note, and there was so much envy and jealousy of Charles among the lords, that he dared not attempt to punish the plotters as they deserved, but was obliged to pardon them. As for Ture and his men, they managed to escape from the place where they had been left for safe keeping, and made their way to Denmark.



GRIPSHOLM CASTLE, MARI

Meanwhile Sir Tord Bonde was kept busy, for King Christian of Denmark several times invaded the land. On each occasion he was met by the valiant defender of West Gothland and driven out with loss. On his final retreat he built a fortress in Smaland, which he called Danaborg, or Danes' castle, leaving in it a Danish garrison; but it was quickly attacked by Sir Tord with his men-at-arms and a force of armed peasantry and the castle taken by storm, the Danes suffering so severe a defeat that the place was afterwards known as Danasorg, or Danes' sorrow.

Sir Tord, to complete his chain of defences, had built several fortresses in Norway, then claimed by King Christian as part of his dominions. He had with him in this work about four hundred men, so small a force that Kolbjörn Gast, one of Christian's generals, proceeded against him with an army three

thousand strong, proposing to drive the daring invader out of the kingdom.

Weak as he felt himself, Sir Tord determined to try conclusions with the Danes and Norsemen, proposing to use strategy to atone for his weakness. One hundred of his men were placed in ambush in a clump of woodland, and with the remaining three hundred the Swedish leader marched boldly on the enemy, who were entrenched behind a line of wagons. Finding that he could not break through their defences, Sir Tord and his men turned in a pretended flight and were hotly pursued by the enemy, who abandoned their lines to follow the flying Swedes. Suddenly Sir Tord turned and led his men in a fierce attack upon the disordered pursuers, falling upon them with such bold fury that he had two horses killed under him. At the same time the hundred men broke from their ambush, sounding their war-horns loudly, and fell on the flank of the foe, though they were so badly armed that they had no iron points on their lances.

Confused and frightened by the double attack and the blare of the trumpets, the Norsemen broke and fled, crying out that "all the might of Sweden was in arms against them"; but they were pursued so closely that the leader and all his men were taken by the brave four hundred.

Thus the bold and skilful Sir Tord defended the king's cause in those quarters, winning victories by stratagem where force was lacking and keeping off the attacks of the Danes by his watchfulness, bravery, and sound judgment; until men came to say, that his brave cousin was the king's chief support and that his secret enemies dared not undertake anything against him while he had so skilful and courageous a defender.

There are two ways of disposing of a troublesome foe, one by fair and open warfare, one by treachery. As Sir Tord could not be got rid of in the former manner, his enemies tried the latter. Jösse Bosson, one of his officers, though born a Dane, had proved so faithful and won his confidence to such an extent that the valiant Swede trusted him completely, and made him

governor of the fortress of Karlborg. He did not dream that he was nourishing a traitor and one capable of the basest deeds.

During the warfare in Norway Sir Tord reached Karlborg one afternoon, proposing to spend the night there. He was received with much show of joy by Jösse, who begged him to take the repose he needed, promising to keep strict watch in the fortress during his stay there. Without a thought of danger Sir Tord went to the chamber provided for him. Jösse said the same to the followers of his guest, and as they were weary they were glad to go to their beds.

Having thus disposed of his visitors, Jösse got his boats ready, loaded them with his most-prized effects, and then turned the key on the followers of his trusting guest, hid their swords, and even cut their bowstrings, so much was he afraid of the heroic soldier who had been his best friend.

Then, axe in hand, he entered the room of Sir Tord. The sleeper, awakened by his entrance, raised himself a little in the bed and asked what he wanted. For answer the murderous wretch brought down his axe with so heavy a blow that the head of Sir Tord was cleft in twain to the shoulders. Then, taking to his boats, the assassin made his escape to the Danes, by whom his bloody act was probably instigated.

With the death by treason and murder of the brave Sir Tord, the chief bulkwark of the realm of King Charles, this tale should end, but the later career of Charles VIII. is so curious a one that it will be of interest to make some brief mention of it.

Never has king had a more diversified career. With the death of his brave defender, enemies on all sides rose against him, his great wealth and proud ostentation having displeased nobles and people alike. Chief among his enemies was the archbishop of Upsala, who nailed a letter to the door of the cathedral in which he renounced all loyalty and obedience to King Charles, took off his episcopal robes before the shrine of St. Erik, and vowed that he would not wear that dress again until law and right were brought back to the land. It was a semi-

civilized age and land in which churchmen did not hesitate to appeal to the sword, and the archbishop clad himself in armor, and with helmet on head and sword by side, set out on a crusade of his own against the man he deemed an unworthy and oppressive king.

He found many to sustain him, and Charles, taken utterly by surprise, barely escaped to Stockholm, wounded, on a miserable old horse, and with a single servant. Besieged there and unable to defend the town, he hid part of his treasures, put the rest on board a vessel, and while going on board himself was accosted by one of the archbishop's friends, who asked him:

"Have you forgotten anything?"

"Nothing except to hang you and your comrades," was the bitter reply of the fugitive king.

King Christian of Denmark was called in by the archbishop to take the vacant throne, Charles was pronounced a traitor by his enemies, and for some years Christian ruled over Sweden. Then his avarice and the heavy taxes he laid on the people aroused such dissatisfaction that an insurrection broke out, Christian's army was thoroughly defeated, and he was forced to take ship for Denmark, while Charles was recalled to the throne and landed in Stockholm in 1464, a second time king of Sweden.

This reign was not a long one. Christian, who had imprisoned the archbishop because he opposed the heavy taxation of the peasants, now sought his aid again and sent him with an army to Sweden. As a result Charles found himself once more shut up in Stockholm and was again forced by his enemies to resign the crown, being given instead of his kingdom the government of Raseborg Castle in Finland. And instead of having treasures to take with him, as before, he was now so poor that he could not pay a debt of fifty marks he owed in Stockholm. He expressed his state of poverty in the following verse:

"While I was Lord of Fogelwich,

I was a mighty man and rich;
But since I'm King of Swedish ground
A poorer man was never found."

But his career was not yet ended. He was again to sit on the throne. Friends arose in his favor, the people again grew dissatisfied with Danish rule, and the archbishop, his greatest enemy, died. Charles was recalled and returned from Finland, a third time standing on Swedish ground as king.

He had still a hard fight before him. A Swedish nobleman, Erik Wase, sought to win the throne for himself, and Christian of Denmark sent a new army to Sweden; but by the aid of a brave young knight, Sten Sture, Nils Sture, his cousin, and some other valiant friends, all his enemies were overcome and thus, after years of struggle and a remarkably diversified career, he was at length firmly seated on the throne.

But the unfortunate monarch was not long to enjoy the quiet which he had so hardly won. He fell seriously ill in May, 1470, and feeling that death was near, he sent for Sten Sture and made him administrator of the kingdom, with control of the castle of Stockholm. But he earnestly warned him never to seek for the royal power, saying:

"That ambition has ruined my happiness and cost me my life."

CHAPTER XXIII

STEN STURE'S GREAT VICTORY OVER THE DANES

Historical tales have much to do with war and bloodshed, with rides and raids, with schemes and stratagems, with plunder and piracy, and with outrage and oppression. These are the things to which historians give the most space in their pages and which many readers find fullest of interest and excitement. In the present tale we have to do wholly with scenes of war, for we propose to tell the story of one of the most remarkable battles ever fought on Swedish soil.

This is what led to it. After the death of Charles VIII. and the appointment of Sten Sture as administrator of the kingdom, Christian I. of Denmark, whom the brave Sture had driven away with his army, fancied that the way was open to him again, and that Sweden, without a king, was a ripe plum ready to drop into his mouth. He was to find it a sour plum, for in Sten Sture he had to deal with a man of notable ability, just and upright in his dealings, wise and prudent in government, and brave and skilful in war. He was a man who did not swear to keep his word, but who never broke it. "I promise by my three water-lilies" (the arms of the Stures) was his form of affirmation, but this simple promise was more to be trusted than the solemn oaths of many kings and potentates. The people loved and trusted him, and on the 1st of May, 1471, the late king's appointment was confirmed at a general diet of the people, which accepted him by acclamation as the administrator and captain-general of the realm.

He soon had work cut out for him. Christian of Denmark equipped a great fleet and sailed to Stockholm, where he anchored in the harbor and opened negotiations with the Swedish senate, then the great source of power in the land. He

promised to govern the kingdom in the way they might decide upon and be to them a mild and merciful father. While some of them were seduced by his specious promises, the majority had no fancy to make him their "father." But they made a truce with him until the matter could be decided, the Danes being allowed to buy provisions in the town, and on their side selling salt to the citizens, this being at that time very scarce in Stockholm.

Thus matters went on for seven weeks, at the end of which time Christian concluded that the Swedes were playing with him, seeking to spin out the time until all his provisions would be consumed and winter with its storms would be at hand to destroy his fleet. As it began to appear that nothing was to be gained by peace, he resolved to try the effect of war, and on the 1st of September landed his army and laid his plans to besiege the city.

His camp was pitched on the hill of Brunkenberg, near the city, connection being made with the fleet by a strong bridge built from the shore to an island in the harbor. Bulwarks and ramparts of earth were thrown up on the side next the town, and were mounted with cannon, with which he soon opened a bombardment. He enticed some of the Swedish peasants into his camp by promise of an abundance of salt, but his main army consisted of the Danish nobles and their troops and of German and Scottish soldiers of fortune, brave, stout, able warriors who exercised themselves daily in military sports and led a merry and careless life in camp, heedless of everything except pay and plunder.

When the proud Danish king was told that Sture was collecting an army of peasants with which to fight him, he sneeringly said:

"Herr Sten sneaks along ditches and dikes, but I shall punish my little gentleman with the rod like a child, and teach him to keep himself quiet."

Threats were also made by the foreign mercenaries against the citizens, but these only served to rouse their anger and make them more resolute in the defence of the city.

As for Herr Sten, he went on raising troops and driving out the Danes whom he found infesting the seaboard lands, not marching towards the city until he had got rid of all hostility in his rear. On his march he was met by his brave cousin, Nils Sture, with an army of the bold Dalmen of the north, and the united armies marched on to Jerfva, in the vicinity of the beleaguered city.

From this point Sture wrote to King Christian, offering him safe passage home, if he would leave Sweden without the need of blows; but he only roused the wrath of the king, who loudly swore:

"By God's five wounds, I have not gone to so much trouble and expense to go home without finishing what I came for."

All that could be done in the cause of peace had been done without avail, and events had reached a point in which the affair could be settled only at sword's point and cannon's mouth.

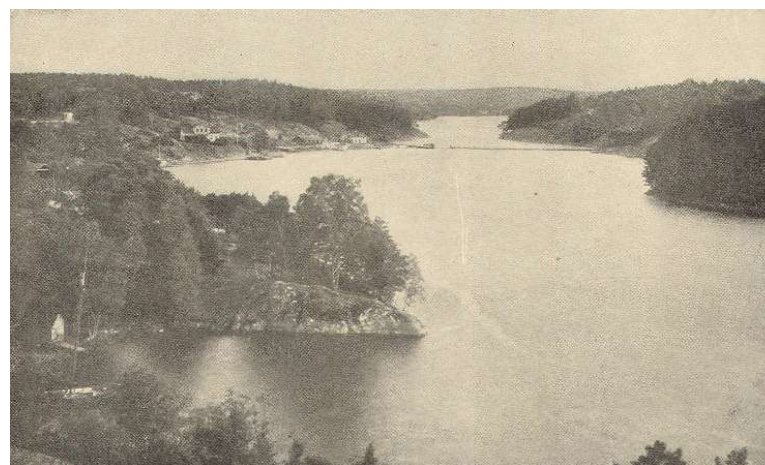
It was the 10th of October, 1470. Long before the sun rose on that memorable day the Swedes of Sture's army were awake and busy preparing their arms for the coming fray, in which the mastery of their kingdom was to be decided. At an early hour the whole army was called to the solemn service of the mass, after which holy and impressive ceremony they refreshed themselves with a hasty meal and returned to their ranks ready for battle.

Nils Sture was already on the march with a third of the army, secretly leading them around a clump of woodland with the purpose of attacking the Danish camp at Brunkenberg from the east. As the ranks of the main army formed for the attack, their brave leader was gratified to see a body of gallant horsemen, in shining armor, riding to join him. They were

thirteen hundred in number, and had been sent from the town of Kungsholm.

Advancing before his people, Sture spoke to them with few but telling words:

"If you ever desire to enjoy peace and security in Sweden stand by me this day and cling one to another. I shall do my part. I fear not the king nor his Danes and mercenaries, but gladly venture life and blood and all that I possess on the event of this battle. If you will do the same, lift up your hands."



SKURUSUND, STOCKHOLM

"That will we do with God's help," came the roar of response, followed by a great shout and wild clanging of arms. Immediately the advance began, the men singing the verse of a psalm written for the occasion. It was now the hour of eleven.

King Christian and his army boldly awaited the assault, looking down from their commanding position on the Swedes, who came on heedless of the roar of guns and flight of arrows. Reaching the foot of the hill, they began its ascent, met as they did so by the Danes, who rushed down upon them with lance and sword. In a moment more the hostile lines met and the bloody work of war began.

On the summit of the hill proudly waved the Danneborg, the sacred standard of Denmark. In the midst of the Swedes fluttered their country's flag, borne resolutely up the hill. Around these banners gathered the bravest of the champions, fighting with heroic fury—the Danes, under their ambitious king, fighting for glory and riches; the Swedes, under their patriot leader, striking for peace and freedom from foreign rule.

While the battle was thus raging outside the town, Knut Posse, its governor, a skilful soldier, was not idle. He was not content to rest within the walls while his countrymen were fighting so vigorously for his relief. The heat of the fight had left the bridge leading from the shore to the ships without a guard, and he sent some men in boats to row towards it and with saws and axes to sever the supports beneath it. This was successfully done and the men returned unseen.

While this was being accomplished the warlike governor, seeing that the Swedes had been checked in their ascent of the hill, made a sally from the town with two thousand of the garrison, taking possession of the Danish fortifications in that quarter and setting them on fire. His position, however, could not long be held, for Sten Sture's troops had been driven down the hill and Christian was free to lead a heavy column against him, forcing him back with his handful of men. In the struggle, however, the bold governor advanced so vigorously upon the king, that he received a wound from Christian's own hand.

While Knut Posse was thus being driven back into the town Sten Sture was seeking to infuse new spirit into his defeated people, telling them that "it would be to their eternal shame if they suffered themselves thus to be repulsed."

Marshalling them into orderly ranks as quickly as possible he led them again towards the hill, and the battle recommenced with its old fire and vigor. Sture rode valiantly at their head, encouraging them with a display of heroic valor. While he fought on horseback, by his side ran a peasant named Björn the Strong, who kept pace with the horse and at times ran

before it, swinging his broad battle-axe with such strength that he opened a road for his leader to ride through. Though surrounded by enemies, the two held their own with the fiery energy of the berserkers of an earlier day, dispensing death while not receiving a wound.

King Christian, on the other hand, showed himself not wanting in valor, keeping well in the front rank of his men. In the midst of the fight a ball struck him in the mouth, knocking out three of his teeth and so disabling him that he was carried fainting from the field. In the end the Swedes, who had borne their banner to the summit of the hill, where they looked in vain for the expected aid from Nils Sture and his men, were driven back again and a second time forced down the hill, the victorious Danes driving them well into the plain at its foot.

Three hours of hard fighting had now passed and both armies were wearied. Trotte Karlsson, a Swedish renegade who had been fighting against his country in the ranks of its foes, seated himself on a stone to rest, taking off his helmet that he might breathe the fresh air. As he did so a ball from the Swedish ranks struck him between the eyes and he fell dead—a traitor fighting with strangers against his native land.

Though twice beaten Sten Sture had no thought of giving up the fight. For some reason Nils Sture, who with the large force under his command had been depended upon to make a diversion in their favor, had not appeared. Bad roads had detained him and he was still struggling onward towards his assigned position.

Looking around him, and satisfied that it was hopeless to dislodge the enemy from their post of vantage, Sten now attempted a diversion by sending a force to attack the troops stationed at the convent of St. Claire. The Danes on the hill, seeing the danger of this detachment, and thinking that they had thoroughly beaten off the Swedes, rushed down to the aid of those at the convent, and Sten, with the skill of an able

commander, took advantage of this movement and at once marshalled his men for a third attack.

They did not need much encouragement. Though twice beaten they were not dispirited, but rushed forward shouting: "Now the Danes come to us on equal ground! Let us at them and swing our swords freely!"

Some bright streaks appearing on the sky, the cry ran through the ranks:

"St. Erik is waving his sword over his people to aid them and point the way to victory."

On the enemy they rushed, with a valor not weakened by their previous repulses, and Knut Posse, who had been watching the fight with keen eyes, made a fresh sally from the town. Soon the battle was on again with all its former fury, the Danes fighting at first for victory, then, as they were forced to give way, striking resolutely to defend their standard, the Danneborg. Knut Posse made a fierce onset upon the proud banner, but was not able to reach it until five hundred noble Danes, who gathered around it as a guard of honor, had fallen under the swords of the Swedes.

When the Danes saw their great standard fall they gave way, but only with the intention to regain the height and defend themselves on its summit. It was at this critical juncture that Nils Sture appeared with his long-delayed troops and attacked the enemy from a fresh side. Before this unlooked-for and powerful force the Danes gave way in a panic, their ranks being broken and the fugitives rushing in wild flight down the hill to take refuge in their ships.

Now the stratagem of Knut Posse became effective, the weakened bridge swaying and sinking under the multitude of fugitives who crowded it, plunging them by hundreds into the water. Others leaped into boats to row to the vessels, but these were so crowded that many of them sank, their occupants being drowned. In all, nine hundred men were drowned in the flight,

while as many more who were not able to escape threw down their arms and surrendered. Christian succeeded in escaping with that portion of his army which had reached the ships, while Sten Sture marched in triumph into Stockholm with his victorious troops, there to be received with shouts of gladness, and with tears of joy by his wife Fra Ingeborg, who had been in the city and with the noble ladies of the place had prayed earnestly for victory while their friends and husbands fought.

For four hours the battle had lasted. It was one of vast importance for Sweden, since it brought to that country many years of peace and repose. King Christian dared not attack the Swedes again and the country got on prosperously without a king under the able government of Sten Sture.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOW THE DITMARSHERS KEPT THEIR FREEDOM

The name of Ditmarshers was given to the inhabitants of a broad, marshy region adjoining the district of Holstein on the Baltic shores of Germany. They were not pure Germans, however, but descendants of the ancient Frisian tribes who had long occupied the northwest parts of Germany and Holland and were known as far back as the times of the Romans for their courage and love of liberty.

For age after age this people had shown the same bold spirit and made many a gallant stand against the princes who sought to subdue them. Geert the Great and other princes of Sleswick and Holstein had suffered defeat at their hands, and the warlike Valdemar III. of Denmark had been sadly beaten by them. At a much later date the Emperor Frederick had formally given the lands of the Ditmarshers to Christian I. of Denmark, to be joined to Holstein, but the marshmen declared that they were not subjects of Denmark and would not be given and taken at its king's will.

It was in the year 1500 that the most striking event in the history of the Ditmarshers took place. King Hans, the son of Christian I., then ruled over Denmark and Norway and five years before had been crowned king of Sweden. It was due to his dealings with the bold sons of the marshes that he lost the latter throne. This is the story of this interesting event.

When Hans was made king of Denmark his ambitious brother Frederick, who had sought to obtain the throne, was made duke of Sleswick-Holstein, and called upon the Ditmarshers to pay him taxes and render homage to him for their lands. This they declined to do, not recognizing the right of the

Emperor Frederick to hand them over to Denmark and to decide that the country which had belonged to their fathers for so many centuries was part of Holstein.

Finding that he had tough metal to deal with in the brave marshmen, Frederick induced his brother Hans to invade their country and seek to bring them to terms. King Valdemar had done the same thing three centuries before, with the result of losing four thousand men and getting an arrow wound in his eye, but undeterred by this, if they knew anything about it, the nobles and knights, who were very numerous in the army led by Frederick and Hans, went to the war as lightly as if it were an excursion of pleasure.

Disdaining to wear their ordinary armor in dealing with peasant foes, they sought to show their contempt for such an enemy by going in their ordinary hunting costume and carrying only light arms. It was a piece of folly, as they were to learn. The marshmen fought like their fathers of old for their much-valued liberty, and the knights found they had no cravens to deal with.

It is true that the royal troops took and sacked Meldorf, the chief town of the Ditmarshers, cruelly killing its inhabitants, but it was their only victory. It proved a lighter thing to get to Meldorf than to get away from it, and of the Danes and Germans who had taken part in the assault few escaped with their lives.

It was the depth of winter, cold, bitter weather, and as the army was on its march from Meldorf to Hejde the advance guard suddenly found itself in face of a line of earthworks which the marshmen had thrown up in front of a dike. This was defended by five hundred Ditmarshers under their leader, Wolf Isebrand.

The German guards rushed to the attack, shouting:

"Back, churls, the guards are coming!"

Three times they forced the marshmen to retreat, but as often these bold fellows rallied and came back to their works. In the midst of the struggle the wind changed, bringing a thaw with it, and as the troops struggled on, blinded with the sleet and

snow that now fell heavily, and benumbed with the cold, the men of the marshes opened the sluices in the dike. Through the openings poured the waters of the rising tide, quickly flooding the marshes and sweeping everything before them.

The soldiers soon found themselves wading in mud and water, and at this critical juncture the Ditmarshers, accustomed to make their way through their watery habitat by the aid of poles and stilts, fell upon the dismayed invaders, cutting them down in their helpless dilemma or piercing them through with their long lances.

The victory of the peasants was utter and complete. Six thousand of the invaders, nobles and men-at-arms alike, perished on that fatal day, and the victors fell heir to an immense booty, including seven banners. Among these was the great Danish standard, the famous Danneborg, which was carried in triumph to Oldenwörden and hung up in the church as the proudest trophy of the victory.

As for King Hans and his brother Duke Frederick, they barely escaped falling into the hands of the marshmen, while the estimate of the losses in money, stores, and ammunition in that dread afternoon's work was 200,000 florins.

King Hans lost more than money by it, for he lost the kingship of Sweden. The nobles of that country, when the news of the disastrous defeat reached them, rose in revolt, under the leadership of Sten Sture, drove the Danes out of Stockholm, and kept his queen, Christina of Saxony, prisoner for three years. Hans had no more armies to send to Sweden and he was obliged to renounce its crown.

Norway also rose against him under a brave leader, and his power over that country was threatened also. It was finally saved for him by his son Prince Christian, who used his power so cruelly after order was restored that he nearly routed out all the old Norwegian nobles.

Thus, from his attempt to make the Ditmarshers pay taxes against their will, King Hans lost one kingdom and came near losing another. The only successful war of his reign was one against the traders of Lübeck, who had treated him with great insolence. In a war which followed, the fleet of the Lübeckers was so thoroughly beaten that the proud merchant princes were glad to pay 30,000 gulden to obtain peace. Then, having this one success to offset his defeat by the Ditmarshers, King Hans died.

CHAPTER XXV

THE BLOOD-BATH OF STOCKHOLM

The most cruel tyrant the northern lands ever knew was Christian II. of Denmark, grandson of Christian I., whose utter defeat at Stockholm has been told. For twenty-seven years Sweden remained without a king, under the wise rule of Sten Sture. Then Hans of Denmark, son of Christian I., was chosen as king, in the belief that he would keep his promises of good government. As he failed to keep them he was driven out after a four years' rule, as we have told in the last tale, and Sten Sture became practically king again.

How Christian, who succeeded Hans as king of Denmark, and had shown himself a master of ferocity and bloodthirsty cruelty in Norway and Denmark, overcame the Swedes and made himself king of Sweden, is a story of the type of others which we have told of that unhappy land. It must suffice to say here that by force, fraud, and treachery he succeeded in this ambitious effort and was crowned king of Sweden on the 4th of November, 1520.

He had reached the throne by dint of promises, confirmed by the most sacred oaths, not one of which he had any intention of keeping, and the Swedes might as well have set a wolf on their throne as given it to this human tiger. One thing he knew, which was that the mischief and disquiet in Sweden were due to the ambition of the great lords, and he mentally proposed to ensure for himself a quiet reign by murdering all those whom he feared.

Under what pretence of legality it could be done, and leave to him the appearance of innocence in the matter, was a difficult question. To attempt the bloody work with no ostensible motive might lose for him the crown which he had striven so

hard to win, and in the dilemma he consulted with his confidential advisers as to what should be done.

Some of them proposed that a quarrel and uproar between the Danes and Swedes in the town should be fomented, which the lords might be accused of bringing about. But there was danger that such a pretended quarrel might become a real one, and endanger his throne. Others advised that gun-powder should be laid under the castle and the lords be accused of seeking to blow up the king. But this was dismissed as too clumsy a device.



SKANSEN RIVER

Finally it was proposed to proceed against the lords as heretics, they having some years previously been excommunicated by the Pope for heretical practices. The king, indeed, had solemnly sworn to forget and forgive the past, but his cunning advisers told him that while he might speak for himself, he had no warrant to speak for the Church, the laws and rights of which had been violated. This pretext was seized upon by Christian with joy and he proceeded to make use of it in a way that every churchman in the land would have condemned with horror.

On the 7th of November, the day after the coronation festivities ended, the king proceeded to put his treacherous plot into effect. A number of noble Swedes who had attended the festivities were brought to the castle under various pretences, and were there ushered into a large and spacious hall. With alarm they saw that the doors were closed behind them so that none could leave, though others might enter.

When all were gathered Christian entered and took his seat on the throne, with his council and chief lords about him. Archbishop Trolle was also present as representative of the Church, but without knowledge or suspicion of the secret purpose of the king, who had brought him there to sanction by his presence the intended massacre.

The charge which it was proposed to bring against the senators and lords was that of trespass against the archiepiscopal dignity and to demand retribution for the same, and this charge was accordingly brought in the name of the Church. The king then turned to the archbishop and asked:

"My Lord Archbishop, do you intend to have this matter brought to peace and friendship according to the counsel of good men or will you have it judged by the law?"

Archbishop Trolle answered, "The offence being one against the Church, the cause of the accused should be judged by the Pope."

This was a mode of settling the matter which by no means conformed with the king's intention, and he answered:

"This is a matter not to be referred to the Pope, but to be terminated at home in the kingdom, without troubling his Holiness."

In this decision he was not to be shaken, knowing well that if the archbishop's proposal to refer the matter to the Pope were carried out his secret sanguinary purpose would be defeated. What he proposed was the murder of the lords, and he had no intention of letting the matter escape from his control.

Lord Sten Sture, against whom the accusation had been chiefly directed, was dead, but his widow, the Lady Christina, was present, and was asked what defence she had to offer for herself and her husband. She replied that the offences against the archbishop were not due to Lord Sten alone, but were done with the approbation of the senate and the kingdom and she produced a parchment in proof of her words, signed by many of the persons present. Christian eagerly seized upon the incriminating document, as giving him a warrant for his proceedings and evidence against those whom he most hated and feared.

All whose names were attached to it were brought up, one after another, there being among them several bishops, who had taken part in the matter on patriotic and political grounds, and a number of senators. Every one tried to excuse himself, but of the whole number Bishop Otto was the only one whose excuse was accepted. At the end of the examination all those accused were seized and taken from the hall, the whole number, senators, prelates, noblemen, priests and burghers, being locked up together in a tower, the two bishops among them being alone given a better prison. The true reason for proceeding against the churchmen was that they had been the friends of Sten Sture and might prefer their country to the king. The wicked tyrant, who in this illegal manner had sought to make the Church responsible for his bloodthirsty schemes, hesitated not to condemn clergy and laity alike, and ended the session by the arbitrary decision that all the accused were heretics and as such should die.

Irreligious, illegal, and ruthless as had been this whole proceeding, into which the artful king had dragged the archbishop and sought to make him a consenting party to his plot, Christian had gained his purpose of providing a pretext for ridding himself of his political enemies, actual or possible, and proceeded to put it into execution in the arbitrary manner in which it had been so far conducted, regardless of protests from any quarter.

The next day the city gates were closed, so that no one could enter or leave. Trumpeters rode round the streets in the

early morning, proclaiming that no citizen, on peril of life, must leave his house, unless granted permission to do so. On the chief squares Danish soldiers were marshalled in large numbers, and on the Great Square a battery of loaded cannon was placed, commanding the principal streets. A dread sense of terrible events to come pervaded the whole city.

At noon the castle gates were thrown open and a great body of armed soldiers marched out, placing themselves in two long lines which reached from the castle to the town hall. Between these lines the accused lords were led, until the Great Square was reached, where they were halted and surrounded by a strong force of Danish soldiers. Around these gathered a great body of the people, now permitted to leave their houses. Alarm and anguish filled their faces as they saw the preparations for a frightful event.

On the balcony of the town hall now appeared Sir Nils Lycke, a knight newly created by the king, who thus addressed the agitated multitude:

"You good people are not to wonder at what you now behold, for all these men have proved themselves to be base heretics, who have sought to destroy the holy Church; and moreover traitors to his Majesty the King, since they had laid powder under the castle to kill him."

At this point he was interrupted by Bishop Vincent from the square below, who called out indignantly to the people:

"Do not believe this man, for all he tells you is falsehood and nonsense. It is as Swedish patriots that we are brought here, and God will yet punish Christian's cruelty and treachery."

Two of the condemned lords also called out to the people, beseeching them "never in future to let themselves be deceived by false promises, but one day to avenge this day's terrible treachery and tyranny."

Fearing an outbreak by the indignant people, if this appeal should continue, the soldiers now made a great noise,

under order of their officers, and the king, who is said to have gloatingly witnessed the whole proceedings from a window in the town hall, ordered the execution to proceed, Klas Bille, an official, placing himself to receive the golden chain and ring of each knight before he was beheaded.

The prisoners implored that they might confess and receive the Holy Sacrament before they were slain, but even this was refused, and Bishop Matthew was led forth first. While he was kneeling, with clasped and uplifted hands, two horrified men, one of them his secretary, rushed impulsively towards him, but before they could reach the spot the fatal sword had descended and the good bishop's head rolled to their feet on the ground.

They cried out in horror that this was a frightful and inhuman act, and were at once seized and dragged within the circle, where they would have suffered the fate of the victimized bishop had they not been rescued by some German soldiers, who believed them to be Germans.

Bishop Vincent next fell beneath the encrimsoned sword, and after him the senators, seven in number, and thirteen nobles and knights of the senate. These were followed by the three burgomasters of Stockholm and thirteen members of the town council, with fifteen of the leading citizens, some of them having been dragged from their houses, without the least warning, and led to execution. One citizen, Lars Hausson by name, burst into tears as he beheld this terrible scene, and at once was seized by the soldiers, dragged within the fearful circle, and made to pay by death for his compassion.

With this final murder the executions for that day ended, the heads being set on poles and the dead bodies left lying where they had fallen. A violent rain that came on bore a bloody witness of the sanguinary scene into the streets, in the stream of red-dyed water which ran down on every side from the Great Square.

On the next day Christian said that many had hid themselves who deserved death, but that they might now freely show themselves for he did not intend to punish any more. Deceived by this trick some of the hidden leaders made their appearance and were immediately seized and haled to the square, where the work of execution was resumed. Six or eight of these were beheaded, many were hung, and the servants of the slaughtered lords, who happened to come to the town in ignorance of the frightful work, were dragged from their horses and, booted and spurred as they had come, were haled to the gallows.

The king's soldiers and followers, excited by the slaughter and given full license, now broke into many houses of the suspected, murdering the men, maltreating the women, and carrying away all the treasure they could find, and for some hours Stockholm seemed to be in the hands of an army that had taken the city by storm.

For a day and night the corpses lay festering in the street, their bodies torn by vagrant dogs, and not until a pestilent exhalation began to rise from them were they gathered up and hauled by cartloads to a place in the southern suburbs, where a great funeral pyre was erected and the bodies were burned to ashes.

As for the tyrant himself, his bloody work seemed to excite him to a sort of madness of fury. He ordered the body of Sten Sture the Younger to be dug from its grave in Riddarholm Church, and it is said that in his fury he bit at the half-consumed remains. The body of Sten's young son was also disinterred, and the two were carried to the great funeral pile to be burnt with the others. The quarter of the town where this took place is still named Sture, in memory of the dead, and on the spot where the great pyre was kindled stands St. Christopher's Church.

Such was the famous, or rather the infamous, "blood-bath of Stockholm," which still remains as a frightful memory to the land. It did not end here. The dreadful work he had done seemed

to fill the monster with an insatiable lust for blood. His next act was to call Christina, the widow of Sten Sture, to his presence. When, overwhelmed with grief and despair, she appeared, he sneeringly asked her whether she would choose to be burned, drowned, or buried alive. The noble lady fell fainting at his feet. Her beauty and suffering and the entreaties of those present at length softened the tyrant, but her mother was enclosed in a bag and thrown into the stream, though she was permitted to be drawn out by the people on their promise to the tyrant that he should have her great wealth. But she, with her daughter Christina and many other women of noble descent, were carried as hostages to Copenhagen and shut up in a dreadful prison called the Blue Tower, where numbers of them died of hunger, thirst and cold.

The massacre was not confined to Stockholm; from there the executions spread throughout the country, and the old law of 1153 was revived that no peasant should bear arms, Danish soldiers being sent through the country to rob the people of their weapons. The story is told that some of them, enraged by this act of tyranny, said:

"Swords shall not be wanting to punish the tyrant so long as we retain our feet to pursue and our hands to revenge."

To this the reply was that "a hand and a foot might well be cut from the Swedish peasant; for one hand and a wooden leg would be enough for him to guide his plough."

This report, improbable as it was, spread widely and caused a general panic, for so terrified were the people by the reports of Christian's cruelty that nothing seemed too monstrous for him to undertake.

In December the tyrant prepared to return to Denmark, leaving Sweden under chosen governors, with an army of Danes. But his outgoing from the country was marked by the same sanguinary scenes. He caused even his own favorite, Klas Hoist, to be hung, and two friends of Sten Sture being betrayed to him, he had them quartered and exposed upon the wheel. Sir Lindorm

Ribbing was seized and beheaded, together with his servants. And, most pitiable of all, Sir Lindorm's two little boys, six and eight years of age, were ordered by the tyrant to be slain, lest they should grow up to avenge their murdered father.

The scene, as related, is pathetic to the highest degree. The older boy was beheaded, and when the younger saw the streaming blood and the red stains on his brother's clothes, he said with childish innocence to the executioner: "Dear man, don't stain my shirt like my brother's, for then mamma will whip me."

At these words the executioner, his heart softened, threw down the sword, crying:

"I would rather blood my own shirt than yours."

But the pathos of the scene had no effect on the heart of the tyrant, who witnessed it unsoftened, and called for a more savage follower to complete the work, ending it by striking off the head of the compassionate executioner. With this and other deeds of blood Christian left the land where he had sown deeply the seeds of hate, and the terrible "blood-bath" ended.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ADVENTURES OF GUSTAVUS VASA

In the parish of Orkesta, in Upland, Sweden, there may be seen the remains of an old tower, now a mere heap of stones, but once the centre of the proud manor-seat of Lindholm. It was a noble and lordly castle, built of red bricks and grey granite, seated on a high hill between two lakes, and commanding a wide prospect over mountain, wood, and water. Here, in the year 1490, was born Gustavus Vasa, the son of Sir Erik and Lady Cecilia Vasa, and destined to win future fame as one of the greatest heroes of Sweden and the liberator of his native land.

At the age of six the boy was sent to be educated at the court of Sten Sture, then the administrator and virtual king of Sweden. Here he was not spoiled by indulgence, his mode of life and his food were alike simple and homely, and he grew up with a cheerful spirit and a strong body, his chief pleasure being that of hunting among the rocks and forests with his companions, all of whom grew to love and admire him.

King Hans, when monarch of Sweden in 1499, on a visit to Sten Sture noticed the boy playing about the hall and was much pleased by his fine and glowing countenance. Patting him on the head, he said:

"You will certainly be a man in your day, if you live to see it."

He afterwards, thinking of the high descent of the boy and that he might grow to be a future foe of Denmark, asked Sten Sture to let him take the lad to Copenhagen and bring him up in his court. The wise Lord Sten quickly fathomed the king's thoughts and answered that the boy was too young to be taken from his parents. He soon after sent him to his father, then in command at Aland.

"The young wolf has slipped out of my net," said King Hans in later years, when he was told of the splendid development of the boy as he grew to manhood.

At the age of twenty-four he left the academy at Upsala, where he had been educated in the arts and sciences, and repaired to the court of Sten Sture the Younger, where he was soon a general favorite, loved for his amiable character and admired for his wit and vivacity. At that time the war by which Christian II. made himself master of Denmark was going on and young Vasa aided by his courage in winning victory on more than one hard-fought field.

In 1518, during a negotiation between Sten Sture and Christian, then in sore straits in his fleet, the latter agreed to go ashore to confer with the Swedish leader if six gentlemen were sent on board his fleet as hostages. This was done, but before the conference took place a favorable change of wind changed the treacherous king's intention and he sailed off for Denmark with his hostages, all of whom were imprisoned and held to secure the neutrality of their relatives in Sweden.

Among these captives was young Gustavus Vasa, who, thus perfidiously taken, was cruelly confined. Finally, at the request of Herr Erik Baner, a distant relative of the Vasas, the young man was set free, Baner binding himself to pay a heavy penalty in money if he permitted him to escape. Thus it was that Vasa found a new home at Kallö Castle, in Jutland, where his deliverer lived, and where he was well treated and given much freedom.

"I shall not cause you to be strictly guarded nor put you in confinement," said good old Baner. "You shall eat at my table and go where you please, if you faithfully promise not to make your escape or journey anywhere without letting me know."

To this the young man bound himself verbally and by writing, and was given liberty by his generous warder to go where he pleased within six miles of Kallö. At first he was

always accompanied by an attendant, but as he won the old man's love and confidence he was suffered to go alone.

But he could not forget the perfidy by which he had been made prisoner, and in 1519, when King Christian was preparing a great expedition against Sweden, the boasts of the young Danish nobles of what they proposed to do chafed his proud soul. Day and night his bitterness of spirit grew, and finally, as the time came for the expedition to set sail, he could bear it no longer but resolved to break his parole and escape to his native land.

It was in the summer of 1579 that he set out, having dressed himself in peasant clothing. Starting in the early morning and avoiding the open roads, he made his way by by-paths, and at noon of the following day reached the town of Flensburg, where he fortunately met some Saxon traders driving a herd of cattle from Jutland to Germany. He joined these, and on September 30 reached the free town of Lübeck. Here the authorities gave him permission to remain, with a warrant for his personal safety while in the town.

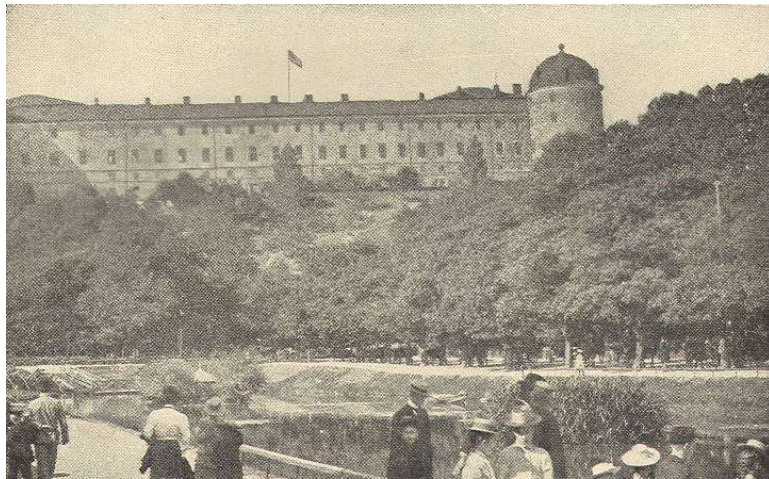
Meanwhile Sir Erik Baner had been wrathfully seeking him, and appeared in Lübeck shortly after he reached there, complaining of his ingratitude for the good treatment given him, and threatening the senate of Lübeck with Christian's enmity if they should protect one of his foes.

Gustavus boldly answered that he was no lawful prisoner, but a man seized by breaking a solemn compact, and therefore that he had the right to set himself free. As for the six thousand riks-thalers, which Sir Erik had bound himself to pay, he would return them with interest and gratitude when he got home.

"I trust to this," he concluded, "that I am in a free town, on whose word, when once given, I should be able to depend."

This appeal won his case with the senate, and Sir Erik was obliged to return without his ward.

But to make his way to Sweden, then torn and distracted by war, and the seas held by hostile craft, was no easy matter and he was forced to remain eight months in Lübeck while his country was being rapidly subdued by its invaders. They were not idle months, for Gustavus learned much while there of political and industrial economy and the commerce and institutions of the Hanseatic League and its free towns, knowledge which became of much service to him in later years. In the end he succeeded in making his way to Sweden in a small trading vessel, and on the 31st of May, 1520, landed secretly on its shores, with nothing but his sword and his courage to sustain him against an enemy who had, step by step, subjugated nearly the whole land.



THE FAMOUS SIXTEENTH CENTURY CASTLE AT UPSALA, SWEDEN

Of the cities, only Stockholm and Calmar remained in the hands of the Swedes, and the latter, in which he had landed, seemed full of cowards and traitors. The place was not safe for a declared patriot, and he left it, making his way up the country. Here he learned with indignation how envy, avarice, and private feuds had induced many Swedes to betray one another to the enemy, and his efforts to exhort the people to unity and

resistance proved vain. Most of them were weary of the war, and Christian had won over many of the peasants.

"He is a gracious master to us," they said, "and as long as we obey the king neither salt nor herring will fail us."

When Gustavus sought to win them over to more patriotic views they became angry and threatening, and in the end they assailed him with arrows and lances, so that he was obliged to make his escape. His position, indeed, became so critical that he was forced to disguise himself and proceed through forests and unsettled lands. Finally he reached the manor-house in which resided his sister Margaret and her husband, Sir Joachim Brahe.

They received him with the highest demonstrations of joy, as they had feared that they would never set eyes on him again; but their delight in his presence was turned into consternation when they learned that he was there with the purpose of seeking to foment an insurrection against Christian, who had then made himself complete master of Sweden and was on the point of being crowned king.

Joachim Brahe and his wife were at that time preparing to attend Christian's coronation at Stockholm, and were deeply disturbed by what seemed to them the mad purpose of the young patriot. Joachim offered to do his utmost to reconcile Gustavus to the king, and Margaret threw herself in tears and distress on his neck, beseeching him to desist from an undertaking which she felt sure would bring death to him and ruin to his whole family.

But Gustavus was not to be persuaded, and on the other hand he warned Joachim against trusting himself in Christian's hands, speaking of him as a base wretch whom no one could trust. Joachim proved equally hard to move, and the three soon parted, Joachim and his wife for Stockholm—where death awaited him at the hands of the traitor king—and Gustavus for a place of concealment where he could foment his plans. During this interval he met the old archbishop, Jacob Ulfsson, who

earnestly advised him to go to Stockholm and warmly promised to plead his cause with the king. But the fugitive knew Christian far better than the aged churchman and had no idea of putting his head within the wolf's jaws. Little did the good archbishop dream of the terrible tragedy that was even then taking place in Stockholm.

The news of it came to Gustavus in this way. One day while out hunting in the vicinity of his hiding-place, he unexpectedly met the faithful old steward of his brother-in-law Joachim, who was so choked with grief on seeing him that he found it impossible to speak and could answer the young lord's question only with tears and gestures. Finally he succeeded in telling the fearful tale of that bloody day at Stockholm, the death under the executioner's sword of the father and brother-in-law of the horror-stricken listener, the imprisonment of his mother and sisters, and the fact that he would soon become a hunted fugitive, a high price having been set upon his head.

Who can describe the bitter grief of the son and brother at these terrible tidings, the hot wrath of the patriot, the indignation of a true and honest heart! On that fatal day the young fugitive had lost all he loved and cherished and was made a hunted, homeless, and almost penniless outlaw. But his courage did not fail him, he could foresee the indignation of the people at the dastardly act, and he determined to venture liberty and life against the ruthless tyrant.

A series of striking adventures awaited him, which it needed his utmost resolution to endure. He was then concealed at Råfsnäs, one of his paternal estates, but felt it necessary at once to seek a safer refuge, and collecting what gold and silver he could, he set out with a single servant for Dalarna. They had not gone far before they reached the ferry at Kolsund, which he crossed, leaving his man to follow. But the fellow, who had no faith in his master's project, took the opportunity to mount his horse and flee, taking with him the gold and jewels which had been entrusted to his care.

Seeing the act of treachery, Gustavus in all haste recrossed the ferry, and pursued the runaway so hotly that he leaped from his horse in alarm and hid himself in the woods. Recovering the horse and its valuable burden, the fugitive pursued his course, paying no further heed to the treacherous servant.

It was late in November when Gustavus reached Dalarna. He was now completely disguised, having exchanged his ordinary dress for that of a peasant, cutting his hair round, wearing the round hat and short baize jacket of the countrymen, and carrying an axe on his shoulder in the fashion of peasant-lads seeking work. No one would have dreamed of his being the sole heir of the great house of the Vasas.

His first service was with a rich miner named Anders Persson, in whose barn he threshed grain for several days. But his fellow threshers soon saw that he was not accustomed to the work and his general manner did not seem that of a common farm-hand, while one of the women caught the glimpse of a silk collar under his coarse jacket. These suspicious circumstances were told to the miner, who sent for Gustavus and quickly recognized him, for he had often seen him in former days at Upsala.

Anders received him hospitably, but when he heard from him of the Stockholm massacre and his aid was requested in the liberation of the country, he grew alarmed. Fearing to entertain so dangerous a guest, he advised him to go farther north and to change his place of abode frequently.

Accepting this advice, Gustavus set out for Ornäs, but on his way, while crossing a newly frozen stream, the thin ice broke under him and he was plunged into the chilling water. Light and active, he soon got out again, drying his clothes and passing the night at the house of the ferryman.

Reaching Ornäs the next day, he went to the house of a former friend, but who now, unknown to him, had become connected by marriage with the Danes and was devoted to the

interests of the new king. It was a critical situation for the friendless fugitive. His treacherous host craftily welcomed him and pretended to approve his purpose, in which he offered to assist him and to seek adherents to his cause among his neighbors.

The guest was conducted to a garret at the top of the house and here, weary from his wanderings and gratified at having found a sympathizing friend, he lay confidently down and was soon lost in slumber. Meanwhile Arendt, the treacherous host, sought a neighbor, Mans Nilsson, whom he told of the rich prize he had found and asked his aid in capturing him and gaining the high reward offered for him by the king. He was mistaken in his man. Mans hated treachery. But Arendt found others who were less scrupulous and in the early morning returned to his home heading twenty men, collected to aid him in the capture of his unsuspecting guest. To his utter surprise and dismay, on entering the garret to which Gustavus had been led he was nowhere to be found. He had unaccountably disappeared, and search as they could no trace of the fugitive was forthcoming.

There was a woman concerned in this strange escape, which had happened thus. Barbara, Arendt's wife, though Danish in her sympathies, had a warm, romantic interest in Gustavus Vasa, and when she saw her husband, on his return from his visit to Mans Nilsson, drive past the house and in the direction of the house of the Danish steward, she suspected him of treachery and determined to save their too-confiding guest.

Ordering Jacob, one of her men, to harness a sledge with all haste and secrecy and keep it in waiting behind the building, she sought the garret, woke Gustavus, and told him of his peril and of her desire to save him. Not venturing to bring him down into the house, she opened the window, and though it was eighteen feet from the ground, she aided him in his descent with a long towel, such as were then in common use. Gustavus then sprang into the sledge and was driven briskly off.

Arendt, when he learned of how his expected victim had fled, was furiously angry with his wife, and, as we are told, never forgave her and refused ever to set eyes on her again.

This was the most extreme danger that the fugitive patriot ever passed through, and at that interval his hope of freeing his country from the yoke of the foreigner seemed the sheerest madness. But other perils lay before him and only vigilance and good fortune saved him more than once from death or capture. Surrounded by foes and with scarce a friend who dared aid him in the whole district, his final escape seemed impossible.

The friendly Barbara had advised him to seek Herr Jon, the priest of Svärdsjö, and his driver took the road over the frozen Lake Runn, they ascending its banks in the smoke coming down from the Fahun copper mines, and about sunrise reaching a village on the northeast end of the lake. Jacob was unacquainted with the country beyond this point and Gustavus went to a house to inquire the way. As he was on the point of entering he saw within a miner, Nils Haussen, whom he knew to be a Danish partisan and who would have recognized him at sight. Quickly and without being seen, he turned behind the door and went towards another village beyond. Here he met a friendly smelter who agreed to guide him on the way. When they parted Gustavus gave him a silver dagger, saying gratefully:

"If God helps me, seek me, and I will richly repay you for your aid."

As night came on he sought quarters in a road-side cottage, and as he sat before the fire in the evening the good-wife said to him:

"Young man, make me some pudding skewers, since you have nothing else to do."

Gustavus laughingly replied that he would be glad to do so if he only knew how. This adventure has an interesting resemblance to that of King Alfred, when, hidden from the

Danes in the swine-herd's hut, he let the good woman's cakes burn on the fire.

Reaching the parsonage of Herr Jon on the following day, he first went to the barn and helped the laborers to thresh, at the same time asking them what side their master took. Learning that he was no friend of the Danes, he made himself known to him and was graciously received, staying with him for three days.

But this place soon became unsafe. One day Herr Jon's housekeeper entered a room where Gustavus was washing, the priest standing by, towel in hand.

"Why are you holding the towel for this common fellow?" she asked.

"That is none of your affairs," said the priest.

But fearing that the woman would talk, he thought it best for his guest to seek a safer retreat, and sent him to Swen Elfsson, gamekeeper for the crown, who lived not far away.

Meanwhile the Danish steward, who had been told by the treacherous Arendt of the character of his guest, had his agents out in search of the fugitive and some of them entered the cottage of the gamekeeper. At that moment the good-wife was about putting her bread in the fire, and Gustavus was standing by the hearth in his peasant's dress, warming himself. The men who entered inquired for the fugitive, but before answering the woman raised her bread shovel and struck Gustavus hastily on the back, exclaiming:

"What are you doing here gaping at strangers? Have you never seen a man before? Pack yourself off to the barn and go on with your threshing."

Never dreaming that the man who had been so angrily treated by a peasant's wife could be the young lord they sought, the steward's messengers left the house to continue their search elsewhere.

But the incident warned the gamekeeper that his guest was not safe anywhere in that vicinity, and to get him away unobserved he hid him in a large load of hay and drove off towards the forest. On the way some of the Danish scouts were met, and these, having some suspicion of Swen, began poking their lances through the hay. One of these wounded Gustavus in the leg, but he lay silent and motionless and the scouts soon went their way.

But the cut on the concealed man's leg bled so freely that blood soon began to run from the cart and tinge the snow. Seeing this, Swen, fearing that the trail of blood might betray him, opened his knife and thrust it into the leg of his horse, so that if any one should perceive the blood stains he could assign this as their cause.

He finally delivered his charge to the care of some loyal gamekeepers on the edge of the forest; but these, not considering their houses safe as hiding-places, took him into the forest, where he lay hidden for three days under a great fallen fir tree, they bringing him food and drink. Finding even this place insecure, he went deeper into the woods and sought shelter under a lofty fir tree which stood on a hill in the midst of a marsh. The place has ever since been called "The King's Height."

Finally the effort of the Danish agents to find him relaxed and his faithful friends conducted him through the vast forests to Rättwik's Church, at the eastern end of the great Lake Silja.

His perils were yet by no means at an end. He spoke of his purpose at this place to an assembly of the peasants and was pleased to find that they listened to him with willing ears. Having thus sown his first seed in favorable soil, he proceeded to Mora on the northern end of the lake, where the priest received him in a friendly manner. But he was being sought by the Danes in that district and the priest did not dare to hide him in his own house, but committed him to the care of a peasant

named Tomte Mattes. As the search was becoming active he was concealed in a vaulted cellar, reached by a trap-door in the floor.

He had not been long there when the Danish scouts, who were searching the whole district, reached the peasant's house, where they found his wife in the midst of her brewing of Christmas ale. As they entered, the shrewd woman turned a great tub over the trap-door, so that they did not perceive it, and thus for the third time the future king of Sweden owed his liberty and life to a woman's wit.

Shortly after that, at one of the Christmas festivals, as the men of Mora were leaving the church, Gustavus called them to him where he stood on a low mound beside the churchyard and addressed them in earnest tones, while they gazed with deep sympathy on the manly form of the young noble of whose sufferings and those of his family they were well aware.

He spoke of the risk to his life that he ran in venturing to speak to them at all, but said that his unhappy country was dearer to him than life. He pointed out the persecution which Sweden had formerly endured from Danish kings, and of how they had robbed the country of its wealth.

"The same times and the same misfortunes have now returned," he said. "Our land swims, so to say, in our own blood. Many hundred Swedish men have been made to suffer a disgraceful and unmerited death. Our bishops and senators have been cruelly murdered. I myself have lost father and brother-in-law," he continued, his eyes streaming with tears, "and the blood of all these martyrs cries for redress and retribution on the tyrant."

The men of Dalarna, he said, had long been noted for their courage when their land was in danger. They were renowned for this in history, and all Sweden looked upon them as the firmest defenders of its liberties.

"I will willingly join with you for our land's deliverance," he concluded, "and spare neither my blood nor my sword, for these are all the tyrant has left me to use in your cause."

Many of the Dalmen heard him with cries of vengeance, but the most of them stood in doubt. They did not know Gustavus personally and had heard that Christian was cruel only to the great, but was kind and generous to the peasantry. They could not yet make up their minds what to do, and begged him to seek safer quarters for himself, since he was being everywhere diligently sought by his pursuers.

In fact, his peril continued extreme and for some days he was forced to lie hidden under Morkarlely Bridge, near Mora Church, though it was in the dead of a Swedish winter. He was able at length to resume his journey, but it was with an almost despairing heart, for he could see no hope either for himself or for his country. His led way over mountains and through desolate valleys, his nights being spent in wayside sheds which had been built for the shelter of travellers. On he went, through forests filled with snow and along the side of mountain torrents, and finally came within view of the lofty mountains beyond which lay the sister kingdom of Norway.

Never had patriot more reason to be disheartened than the unhappy and hunted fugitive, never had the hope of liberating an oppressed country seemed darker, and the fugitive would have been justified in abandoning his native land and seeking a refuge in the bleak hills of Norway. Yet the adage has often held good that it is the darkest hour before the dawn of day, and so it was to prove in his case. While he waited in that desolate quarter to which he had been driven, events were shaping themselves in his favor and the first rising took place against the Danes.

The stirring speech of the young noble at Mora Church had not been made in vain. Many of those who heard it had been strongly taken by his manliness and his powerful language, and,

strangely, the most deeply impressed of all was Rasmus Jute, a Dane who had served the Stures and was now settled in Dalarna.

Hearing that a Danish steward had come to that quarter to seek the fugitive and was now at the house of the sergeant of Mora parish, he armed himself and his servants and fell on the steward unawares, the first to take arms for Gustavus being thus a man of Danish birth. Soon afterwards a troop of Danish horsemen, a full hundred in number, was seen marching over the frozen surface of Lake Silja. So numerous a body of soldiers was unusual in those parts, and suspecting that they were in search of Gustavus, and might do something to their own injury, the peasants began ringing the church bells, the usual summons to arms.

The wind carried the sound far to the northward, and on hearing the warning peal the peasantry seized their arms and bodies of them were soon visible hasting down the hills towards Mora. The Danish troopers, on seeing this multitude of armed men, shut themselves in the priest's house. Here they were attacked by the furious Dalmen, who broke open the doors and rushed in. The terrified Danes now fled to the church and took refuge in its steeple, whither they were quickly followed. Only by dejected appeals and a promise not to injure Gustavus Vasa did they succeed in escaping from the tower, and the Dalmen, thinking that some of them might remain concealed in the narrow spire, shot their arrows at it from every side. For more than a hundred years after some of these arrows remained sticking in the old wooden spire.

Dalarna being looked upon as a centre of Swedish patriotism, a number of the persecuted noblemen took refuge there, and those confirmed all that Gustavus had told the people. And when Lars Olssen, an old warrior well known to them, arrived and told them of the gallows which Christian had erected, of the new taxes he had laid on the peasantry, and of the report that he had threatened to cut a hand and a foot off each peasant, with other tales true and false, they were deeply stirred.

When Lars learned that Gustavus had been there and what had passed, he reproached them for their folly in not supporting him.

"Good men," he said, "I know that gentleman well, and tell you that if yourselves and all the people of the country are not to be oppressed and even exterminated Gustavus Vasa is the only one who has sense and knowledge enough to lead us and lay hand to so great a work."

While they were talking another fugitive came from the forest, who confirmed all that Lars had said and gave them a full account of the blood-bath at Stockholm and of how the body of Sten Sture, their beloved leader, had been torn from the grave and dishonored.

These stories filled their hearers with horror, terror, and fury; war and bloody retribution was their only cry; their hearts were filled with remorse that they had let Gustavus, their country's chief hope, depart unaided. Two of them, the fleetest snow-skaters of the region, were chosen to follow him and bring him back, and off they went through the forests, following his track, and at length finding him at Sälen, the last village in that section, and immediately at the foot of the lofty Norwegian mountains. A few words sufficed to tell him of the great change of feeling that had taken place, and with heart-felt joy Gustavus accompanied them back, to begin at length the great work of freeing his native land.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FALL OF CHRISTIAN II, THE TYRANT

It was in November, 1520, that Christian II. of Denmark was crowned king of Sweden. Norway was his as well and he was monarch of the whole Scandinavian world. He had reached the highest point in his career, but so great had been his cruelty and treachery that all men feared and no man trusted him and he was on the brink of a sudden and complete overthrow. The man who had worn the crowns of three kingdoms was to spend years within the narrow walls of a dungeon, with none to pity him in his misery, but all to think that he deserved it all and more. Barely has tyranny met with such retribution on earth, and the "Fall of the Tyrant" will serve as a fitting title to an impressive tale.

So sudden and successful was the rebellion of the Swedes under Gustavus Vasa, that in the summer of the year after the massacre in the Great Square of Stockholm the Danes held only that city and a few other strongholds in Sweden. One after another these fell, Calmar and Stockholm in 1523, and in June of that year Gustavus was chosen king of the land which his hand had freed. A young man still, he was at the beginning of a great and glorious reign.

Before he became king, Christian, his great enemy, had ceased to reign. He had shown the same inhuman spirit in Denmark and Norway as in Sweden and had sown his whole dominion thick with enemies.

This is the way his fall was brought about. In 1522 he issued a code of laws for Denmark of a wise and progressive character, especially in freeing the peasantry from the slavish condition in which they had been held, they before being open to purchase and sale like so many brute animals. Christian declared that every man should be his own master and took steps to limit

the power and wealth of the clergy and to improve the commerce of the kingdom.

These changes, while wise and important, were difficult to introduce against the opposition of the lords and the clergy and needed the hand of a prudent and judicious administrator. Such Christian was not. He undertook them rashly and endeavored to enforce them by violence. Even the people, whom the new laws so favored, were incensed by a great increase in their taxes. No one trusted him; every one hated and feared him. Even the monarchs of other countries detested him and would not aid him in his extremity.

The details of the blood-bath in Stockholm had reached the ears of the Pope and he sent a legate to inquire into the atrocities committed under the implied sanction of the Church. As they were not to be concealed, Christian attempted to excuse them, and, driven to extremity, accused one of his chief favorites, Didrik Slaghök, as the originator of the massacre.

Slaghök had just been named archbishop of Lund, but was brought to Copenhagen, examined under torture, condemned to death, and carried to the gallows and thence to a funeral pile on which he was burned alive, Christian leaving the town that he might not witness the cruel death of his late favorite.

This cowardly sacrifice of his devoted friend and servant, instead of winning the favor of the people, redoubled their abhorrence of the bloodthirsty tyrant. Shortly afterwards the Lübeckers invaded the kingdom, and Christian, not trusting his people, called in foreign soldiers to repel them. Needing money for their pay, he called a diet to meet on December 10, 1522. Few attended it, and in anger he called a new meeting for the following January.

Before the date arrived rumors were set afloat that he intended to butcher the Danish nobles as he had done those of Sweden, that chains were being provided to secure them, and

that he would have disguised executioners among his guards; also that new and heavier taxes were to be laid on the peasants.

These rumors, widely circulated, incensed and frightened the nobility and a meeting was held by the nobles of Jutland in which they determined to renounce their allegiance to Christian and offer the crown to his uncle, Frederick, duke of Holstein.

Magnus Munk, one of these lords, was chosen to deliver their decision to Christian and sought him for this purpose. But it was far from safe to offer King Christian such a document openly, and Munk pretended to be making a friendly visit, conversing and drinking with the king until a late hour of the night. On rising to retire, he thrust into Christian's glove, which had been left on the table, the letter of renouncement of the Jutland nobles.

Instead of going to bed, Munk hastened to the vessel in which he had come and sailed to Holstein, where he made to Frederick the offer of the crown. As may be imagined, there was little hesitation in accepting it.

The next morning a page of the palace found the king's glove on the table and took it to him. On reading the letter which he found in it the tyrant was filled with fear and fury. He sent guards to seize Munk, but when told that he was not to be found, his terror grew intense. He knew not where to turn nor what to do. He might have gathered an army of the peasants, to whom he had just given freedom, to fight the nobles, but instead he wrote to the lords, abjectly acknowledging his faults and promising to act differently in the future.

They were not to be won, no one trusting him. Then the terrified tyrant hurried to Copenhagen and rode round the streets, imploring the citizens with tears to aid him, confessing his errors and vowing to change his ways. Many of the people, unused to see a king in tears, were moved by his petitions, but no wise man trusted him, few came to his assistance, and the sedition rapidly gained strength.

At length he took a desperate step. In the harbor lay twenty large warships, which he might have used for defence, but in his terror he thought only of flight. All the treasure he could lay hands on was carried to these vessels, even the gilt balls on top of the church spires being taken. Sigbrit, a detestable favorite, who had given him much evil counsel and dared not show herself to the enraged people, was carried on board in a chest and placed among his valuables. He, his wife and children, and a few faithful servants, followed, and on the 20th of April, 1523, he set sail from his native land in a passion of grief and despair. A violent storm scattered his ships, but the one that bore him reached Antwerp in safety. Sigbrit, who had crept from her trunk, sought to console him by saying that if he could no longer be king of Denmark he might at least become burgomaster of Amsterdam.

Thus did this cruel and contemptible coward, who less than three years before had been unquestioned monarch of all Scandinavia, lose the crown he was so unfit to wear, and land, a despised fugitive, in a Dutch city, with but a handful of followers. His fall was thoroughly well deserved, for it was an immediate consequence of the detestation he had aroused by his deed of blood in Stockholm, and there was scarce a man in Europe to pity him in his degradation.

It was a sad thing that the salutary laws he had promulgated in the last year of his reign came from so evil a source. Frederick was forced by the nobles to whom he owed his throne to abrogate them, and the code was even burned as "a dangerous book contrary to good morals." The peasants fell back into their former state of semi-slavery and for centuries afterwards failed to enjoy the freedom accorded to the people of their sister states of Norway and Sweden.

In the years that followed the deposed king went from court to court of the German princes, seeking help to regain his throne, but meeting with scorn and contempt from some of them and refusal from all. He still retained much of the wealth of which he had robbed Copenhagen, and now, in despair of

obtaining assistance, he took into his service a number of soldiers of fortune whom a treaty of peace had lately thrown out of employment.

With these sons of adventure, twelve thousand in all, he ravaged Holland, which had recently afforded him refuge, doing so much mischief that he was at length bought off. The emperor, Charles V., then ruler over Holland and brother-in-law to the adventurer, paid him the fifty thousand gulden still due on his wife's dower and gave him twelve battle-ships in addition. The Dutch whom he was plundering helped in this as the easiest way to be quit of him, and, with a body of experienced troops, with funds and a fleet, the hope of winning back his old dominions arose in his soul.

There were many malcontents then in Sweden, ready to aid him in an invasion, and the clergy and nobility of Norway, dissatisfied with Frederick's rule, subscribed large sums in money and plate for his aid. Finally, thus strengthened and encouraged, Christian set sail for the Northland with twenty-five ships and an army of eight thousand men.

Unfortunately for him the elements proved adverse, a violent storm scattering the fleet and sending nearly half of it to the bottom. He had only fifteen ships and a reduced number of men when, in November, 1531, he landed at Obslo, Norway.

The nobles and people, however, discontented with Frederick's government and eager for a king of their own choice, declared for him and at a diet held at Obslo proclaimed him king, only a few nobles dissenting. These, however, held the strongest fortresses in the kingdom. One of these was Magnus Gyllenstierna, governor of Aggerhus. Against this stronghold Christian led all his force and might easily have taken it, for it was lacking in provisions, but for a stratagem by which Magnus saved himself and his fortress.

He sent word to Christian that the place was too weak for him to attempt to hold and that he had seen the king's success with pleasure; but, to save himself from the imputation of

cowardice, he begged leave for time to ask King Frederick for assistance. If none came before the 1st of May he would willingly surrender the place.

Adept in deceit as Christian was, he this time suffered himself to be tricked. At the suggestion of Magnus a thousand men were sent from Denmark, and led by secret paths over mountains and through forests in all haste, throwing themselves into Aggerhus while Christian was watching the seas to intercept them. In a rage he hurried back to renew the siege, but the shrewd commandant was now strong enough to defy him.

Ture Jönsson, one of the Swedish nobles who had joined Christian, led a portion of his forces against the fortress of Bohus, writing to its commandant, Klass Bille, a letter in which he set forth the great change for good which had come upon King Christian and begging him to side with his Grace. He closed in the manner customary in those days: "Commending you, with your dear wife, children, and friends, hereby to God's protection."

On the next day he received the following answer:

"Greeting suited to the season.

"Learn, Ture Jönsson, that I yesterday received your writing with some of your loose words with which you sought to seduce me from my honor, soil my integrity and oath, and make me like yourself, which God, who preserves the consciences of all honest men, forbid. To the long and false talk which your letter contains, I confess myself, by God's providence to be too good to give you any other answer than this which my letter conveys. You have so often turned and worn your coat, and it is now so miserably thread-bare on both sides, that it is no longer fit to appear among the apparel of

any honest man. No more this time, I
commend you to him to whom God the
Father commended that man who betrayed
His only Son,

Ex <BOHUS.< I>

Sunday next before Lady-day, 1531."

Klass Bille proved as good with an answer by balls and
blows as by pen, and the Castle of Bohus defied all attempts to
take it.

Meanwhile the Swedish exiles were writing to their
friends at home, and, elated by the capture of a Swedish fort,
Christian marched his army towards the frontier, and made ready
to invade the kingdom from which he had been driven two years
before.

But Gustavus and Frederick were not idle. They
recognized the danger of this invasion and prepared to meet it,
renewing their treaties that they might work loyally together.
Gustavus wrote to his officers not to fight with Christian unless
they were from four to six times as strong, as he wished to give
him a reception that would cure him of all future desire to return
to Sweden.

The forces of Christian and Gustavus first met at
Kungelf, where Christian looked with disturbed eyes on his
antagonists as he saw them marching across a frozen river,
among them three thousand men in armor of polished steel.
Turning to Ture Jönsson, who stood beside him, he said
wrathfully:

"You said that there was not a man-at-arms in Sweden.
What see you yonder? Do you think those old women?"

The next morning Ture Jönsson's body was found lying
headless in the street, whether thus punished by Christian for his
lies or by some Swede for his treason, is not known.

The war began with equal fortune at first to each side,
but later fortune turned in favor of the Swedes, while food grew

scarce in Christian's army, his foragers being beaten back
wherever they appeared. Soon, with an army dwindled to two
thousand men, he was forced to march back to Obslo.

So far Gustavus's army had been fighting alone, and it
was not until March, 1532, that some Danish ships of war
arrived. But their coming soon ended the war. They burned
Christian's vessels and reinforced Aggerhus, and in May sailed
towards Obslo.

Christian's hopes of success were now at an end. He had
made his final effort and had failed. His men were forsaking him
in troops and resistance to his foes became impossible. As a last
resort he tried a crafty expedient, contriving to get some forged
letters distributed in the Danish camp to the effect that twenty
Dutch men-of-war, with five thousand troops, were coming to
his aid.

The Danish commander, alarmed at this report, hastened
to conclude peace with him, on condition that all who had taken
part in the rebellion should be pardoned. Christian was to cross
to Denmark, and if he could not agree with Frederick was to be
free to go to Germany, on giving a solemn oath never again to
make any attempt on the three Scandinavian kingdoms.

Before this treaty was confirmed messengers arrived
from Frederick who discovered the condition of Christian to be
hopeless and insisted on an unconditional surrender. But Knut,
the Danish admiral, who had been given full power to act, took
Christian on his ships and sailed with him to Denmark, where he
insisted that the conditions he had made should be observed.

Frederick and his council were in a strait. To let this tiger
loose again was too dangerous, and finally some pretext for
breaking the treaty was made and Christian was sentenced to a
life imprisonment in the Castle of Sanderberg on the island of
Femern. Frederick and his son were obliged to confirm this
sentence by a written promise to the Danish nobles that they
would never release the detested prisoner.

When Christian learned that the convention had been broken he wept bitterly, lamenting that "he had fallen into the hands of men who cared neither for oaths, promises, nor seals."

These complaints no one heeded. He was taken deep into the dungeons of Sanderberg Castle, and locked up in a dark and narrow prison vault destitute of every convenience, his only companion being a half-witted dwarf who had long been in his service. With the harshness common in those days, and which in his case was well deserved, the door of the cell was walled up, only one small opening being left through which he could receive the scanty allowance of food brought him, and a little barred window through which some sparse light could make its way.

In this dreadful prison the captive remained twelve years without the slightest amelioration of its conditions. Then the door was opened and fresh air and other conveniences were allowed him, but a strict watch was kept up. Finally in 1549, five years later, it being believed that no harm could possibly come from an old man sixty-eight years of age, he was taken to Kallendborg Castle, where he was permitted to entertain himself by hunting or in any other manner he pleased. He lived ten years later, ending in 1559 a life whose misfortunes were a just reward for his faithlessness and cruelty in his day of power.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE WEST GOTHLAND INSURRECTION

Sweden never had a wiser or more judicious ruler than King Gustavus Vasa, but in that land of turbulent lords and ambitious mischief-makers the noblest and most generous of kings could not reign without secret plotting and rebellious sentiments. So it fell out in Sweden in 1529, after Gustavus had been six years on the throne.

The leader in this movement was one Ture Jönsson, a hoary old conspirator of great influence in West Gothland, where he and his ancestors had long been judges and where he was looked upon by the people as their lord and chief. By a decision of the court he was obliged to restore to the king certain property which he unjustly held, and he vented his feelings bitterly against the heretic and tyrant, as he called him. In fact, he hatched a conspiracy, which spread widely, through his influence, among the nobles of West Gothland.

In Smaland there was much discontent with the teaching of the Lutheran doctrines and an outbreak took place, the king's sister and her husband being taken prisoners by the insurgents. These sent letters to Ture Jönsson in West Gothland, asking him to be their captain, and also wrote to East Gothland, inciting the people to rise and expel their monarch.

Ture Jönsson had three sons, one of them a distinguished soldier in the king's service, while the second was a man high in the king's favor. The old rebel had high hopes of aid from these two, and wrote them letters inciting them to rebellion. But they were not to be drawn from their allegiance, and took the letters with unbroken seals to the king, promising to devote their lives to his cause.

The third son, Herr Göran, dean in Upsala, was of different mold and sentiment. Opposed to the king on religious grounds, he gathered a body of peasant runaways, a hundred in number, and, afraid to stay in his house, he took them to a wood in the neighborhood, felled trees for barricades, and laid up a supply of provisions in his impromptu fort.

From there he proceeded to Bollnäs, gathering more men and growing bolder, and fancying in his small soul that he was the destined leader of a great rebellion. But his valor vanished when a priest of the vicinity, named Erik, a man faithful to the king, called together a body of his parishioners and marched against the would-be insurgent.



NORWEGIAN CARRIAGE CALLED STOLKJEAM.

Dean Göran was standing at a garret window when he saw these men approaching. At once, with a most unsoldierlike panic, he rushed in terror down stairs and fled through a back door into the forest, without a word to his men of the coming danger. The house was surrounded and the men made prisoners, the king's steward, whom they held captive, being released. Erik spoke to them so severely of their disloyalty that they fell on their knees in prayer and petition, and when he told them that the

best way to gain pardon for their act was to seek and deliver their fugitive leader, they gladly undertook the task.

The scared leader of rebels meanwhile was wandering in anguish and alarm through the wide wood, not knowing what to do. Coming at length to a large forest lake, he entered a little boat that he found and pushed off from land, thinking thus to be in greater safety.

As he thus sat, lost in his unquiet thoughts, some of his late followers reached the lake and saw him. So absorbed was he in his bitter reflections that he failed to see other boats gliding out towards him, and they were close upon him before he perceived them. Then, leaping up in wild fright, he sought in his despair to jump into the water, but before he could do so some of the peasants had rowed up and seized him. In his bitterness of spirit he tore the gold chain from his neck and the rings from his fingers and flung them into the lake, resolved that they should not become the spoil of the king he hated.

But Gustavus was not the man to trouble himself about such small fry of conspirators as this. The dean was taken to Upsala and thence to Stockholm, where he was kept in confinement, though with every comfort, until the rebellion incited by his father was quelled. Then the king, taking into account his brothers' loyalty and his own insignificance, freed him and restored him his property. He could well afford to be lenient to a rebel of his calibre.

If this was all we had to tell, it would not be worth the telling, but the conspiracy in West Gothland went on and led to events of far greater interest. A born plotter, old Jönsson kept at his work, and to prevent any news of what was taking place from reaching the king, a guard of a thousand men was placed to watch the highway and stop all messengers. At the head of this guard was a priest called Nils of Hvalstad, a thorough hater of the king. To him the insurgents sent their letters, to be forwarded to those for whom they were intended. Such was the state of

affairs, the designs of the plotters ripening while the king was in this way kept in ignorance of matters of such importance to him.

Now we come to the dramatic means by which the king was advised of the plot. A scout was needed to pass the guards set by the rebels and bring word to Gustavus of what was going on in West Gothland, and for this purpose was chosen a young town-sergeant of Stockholm, so famed for boldness that the people called him Hans Hardy. He had been born in West Gothland and was familiar with the people and the roads of that province and was therefore well adapted for the work. He accomplished it in a manner much better than was expected.

Making his way through forest paths and along little-frequented by-ways, he succeeded in crossing the river that bordered the province and passing the rebel outposts, making his way to his old home, where he spent several weeks with his relations, meanwhile secretly gathering the information needed.

On his return he pursued a different course. Buying a quantity of West Gothland cheese, he went directly towards the ford of the Tiweden and so managed as to let himself fall into the hands of the guard, who brought him to their leader, Nils of Hvalstad.

The rebel priest charged the seeming peasant roundly with being a spy, but the cunning fellow pretended to be very simple and bucolic, saying that it had been four years since he had been in Upland and he now wanted to go there and sell his cheese.

Nils was not so easily to be hoodwinked, but bade his men take the supposed spy to the sergeant's house at Hofwa, where four men were set over him as guards. The pretended simpleton seemed well-enough pleased, eating and drinking freely, talking cheerfully of country affairs with his guards, and spending his money freely, so that the sergeant grew to like the jovial country lad.

After a few days, however, Hans pretended to be sick, sighing and groaning as if in severe pain. Finally he took to his bed and seemed in such a sad state that they all pitied the poor cheese monger and his guards often left him for hours alone, thinking his sickness was all the security that was needed.

Hans Hardy had a purpose in this. He had discovered that Nils kept a box in a dark corner of the room and imagined that it might contain something of importance to him in his mission. In fact he had thrown himself in his hands for the purpose of fathoming his plots. One day, while left alone, he got up and examined the box, and to his joy found in it a number of letters from the chief conspirators, containing full evidence of their complication. Having read enough of them to gain an idea of their character, he put them back, shut the box, and pushed it again into its dark corner.

Then he took to his bed once more and when his guards returned they found him moaning more sorely than before and seeming in such sad case that they thought him at the point of death. Pitying the poor fellow, they deemed it idle to watch him and went contentedly to their beds. The next morning, when they rose, the sick man had vanished and with him the box and its contents. Hans had got off with the precious burden into the forest, with whose paths he was thoroughly familiar, leaving his late guards his cheese for consolation.

He reached Stockholm in safety with his budget of letters and took them to the king, who rewarded him liberally for his valuable service and bade him to keep it secret. This he did, and it was long before any one knew where Hans Hardy had been or what had become of the lost letters. King Gustavus kept his counsel and bided his time.

Meanwhile the work of the conspirators went on, they going so far as to nominate a new king, their choice falling upon Mans Bryntesson, Ture Jönsson's brother-in-law, a handsome and eloquent young man, far more suitable in person than in mind for a king. He was soft, irresolute, and somewhat foolish,

and when treated with royal honors by the conspirators, he began holding court with princely pomp, borrowing money from his friends for this purpose when his own was exhausted.

Having gone so far with his plans, Ture called a convention of the people of the province to meet on Larfva Heath, saying that he had matters of the highest importance to lay before them. Here was a great plain, where the Gothlanders for ages had held their public meetings, and where Ture's summons brought together a goodly number.

With the insurgent lords around him, and proud of his power and authority, Sir Ture now addressed the peasants, in full confidence of their support. His principal charge against the king was that he had accepted the Lutheran doctrines and wished to introduce a new faith into the country to the ruin of the common people.

"Now," he continued, "I have always understood that the good West Gothlanders have no mind to become Lutherans, but prefer to retain the old faith which their fathers and forefathers have had before them. If you will from this day renounce King Gustavus I will give you a mild and gracious sovereign, who will preserve for you your good old customs."

Bishop Magnus followed with a brief address, after which Sir Ture, convinced from the intent silence of the peasants that they were with him, said:

"Let him who gives his consent to take a new king stretch up his hands."

To his consternation not a hand was lifted, while a threatening murmur was heard among the peasants. Neither the lords nor the bishop knew what to make of this. They had gone on with their plots without a dream that the people would not be with them. As for the newly chosen king, who had been eagerly waiting to receive their homage, he fell back white and trembling. At length two young peasants stood forth to speak for the people, one of them loudly declaring:

"We have nothing to charge against King Gustavus, but owe him deep gratitude for having freed us from the cruel and tyrannical rule of King Christian, and kept the land in law and right as well as in peace and quiet. What you, good sirs, say of the new faith, we peasants can neither judge nor understand; perhaps it may not be so bad as fame reports. Change of rulers generally costs the peasants and the land dear, and we might by these means draw upon ourselves and our children long disquiet and disorder. It seems, therefore, best for us to remain in the faith and allegiance which we have sworn and promised to our lawful lord and master Gustaf Eriksson."

These words had evidently the full approval of the people, to judge from their upstretched hands and their loud acclamations, and at once the courage of the conspirators fell to the ground. What to say or to do they knew not. They had foolishly gone forward with their plots without consulting the people and now found themselves in a sore dilemma. Instead of coming to their aid, as they had expected, there was reason to fear that the peasants would seize them and hand them over to the king. In his utter dismay Ture Jönsson faltered out:

"My very good friends, I only wished by this trial to test your fidelity. None of the lords have a thought of deserting the king. A fortnight hence we hope to meet you here again, to consult further on our mutual interests."

This ended the meeting on Larfva Heath. The peasants returned to their homes and the lords in dismay sought their castles. The bottom had suddenly dropped out from the rebellion and the conspirators were in a perilous position. War against the king was impossible, and in haste they sent a message to Nils of Hvalstad ordering him to break up the camp on the Tiweden and bidding him to come to them without delay.

When he came they asked him what he had done with the letters which had been put in his care. Not daring to tell that they had been stolen, he said that he had burnt them on hearing of the result of the Larfva meeting. Another custodian of letters was

also sent for and asked the same question. He had really sent his letters to the king, but he produced a budget of papers which he now threw into the fire, telling them that they might be at rest about these perilous papers, which could now never appear against them.

Somewhat relieved in their minds by this act, Mans Bryntesson, Ture Bjelke, and Nils Winge, three of the leading conspirators, decided to remain at home. To become wandering outlaws was too bitter a fate; they had not spoken at Larfva Heath, their letters were burnt, there was no evidence against them. But as for Ture Jönsson and Bishop Magnus, they had put themselves openly on record. The pretence that the meeting had been called to test the loyalty of the people would have no weight with a man like King Gustavus. To remain would be to risk their lives, and collecting their money and valuables they made all haste to set foot on Danish territory, Ture Jönsson finally to meet a tragical death in the invasion of Norway by the deposed King Christian, as described in the preceding tale.

The embers of the rebellion were easily extinguished and the nation returned to its peaceful and satisfied condition, the officers of the king holding meetings with the malcontents and promising full pardon to those who would confess and renounce their disloyal acts. This offer of pardon was accepted by nearly the whole of the conspirators, the only ones who held out being Mans Bryntesson, the mock king, Nils Winge, and Ture Bjelke. Trusting to their letters having been destroyed they wrote to the king, saying that, as they felt entirely guiltless, they could not plead guilt and implore pardon, and thus put themselves under suspicion. They begged him to appoint a meeting at which their conduct could be investigated. This he agreed to, the 17th of June being fixed as the date.

When the time came the three lords appeared before the appointed tribunal and were exhorted to confess their share in Ture Jönsson's rebellion. Mans Bryntesson answered for the three, boldly declaring:

"We did not venture to set ourselves against Ture Jönsson on account of his great influence in the province; we often heard him speak disrespectfully of the king, but we bore with him in this for the sake of amusement, attributing it to his old age and childishness. But it can never be shown that we bore any share in his treason."

"What will you venture that this cannot be proved against you?" asked the king.

"Our neck to the sword and our bodies to the wheel, as the law exacts," they confidently replied.

"Take care," said one of the counsellors. "Do not venture so much. Perhaps you may yet be found guilty."

They replied by a haughty "No," and insisted on their innocence. Gustavus then spoke again, his gaze now stern and threatening:

"Choose one of these two. Either to confess yourselves guilty and accept pardon, or to be tried and condemned according to law."

"We choose to be judged according to the law," they replied; "and if we be found partakers in this rebellion we will willingly suffer and pay for it, as may be adjudged against us."

These words, and the stern dignity of the king, impressed all in the hall. Complete silence reigned and all eyes were fixed on his face. He gave a signal to his servants and two boxes were carried in. These were opened and a number of letters were produced. The king asked the culprits if they recognized these letters. This they stoutly denied. Then a number of them were read aloud and complete proof of their complicity in the rebellion was shown, the judges recognizing the hand and seal of the defendants.

Pale and thunderstruck, they listened tremblingly to the reading of the fatal letters; then fell upon their knees, weeping and imploring mercy. Their repentance came too late. The king bade the council to examine into the matter at once and

pronounce sentence. This was that the three criminals should suffer the fate which they had declared themselves ready to bear; they were condemned as traitors and sentenced to loss of life and estate.

The trembling culprits were taken to a room above the school-house, locked in and a strong guard set before the door. Here they were left to the contemplation of their coming fate. Despairingly they looked around for some means of escape, and a shade of hope returned when they fancied they had discovered one. There were no bars to their window, but it was far above the ground. But beneath it stood a pear tree, so near the building that they thought they might leap into its branches and climb down its trunk to the ground.

Waiting until night had fallen, they prepared to make the effort, Mans Bryntesson being the first to try. He missed the tree and fell to the ground, breaking his leg in the fall. The others, seeing his ill fortune, did not venture to follow. In great pain he crept from the garden into an adjoining field. Here his strength gave out and he lay hidden in the half-grown rye.

Missed the next morning, his trail through the grass was easily followed and he was found and carried back to prison. Soon after the prisoners were taken to Stockholm, where Mans Bryntesson and Nils Winge were beheaded and their bodies exposed on the wheel. Their estates, however, were restored to their widows and children. The third, Ture Bjelke, being less guilty, was pardoned, but was obliged to pay heavy penalties for his treasonable acts. And thus, with the death of these two criminals and the exile of two others, ended the West Gothland insurrection.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF KING ERIK

We have written much of war and bloodshed; a chapter devoted to the lighter themes of courtship and marriage may here be of interest, especially as it has to do with the love affairs of princes and princesses, kings and queens, personages whose every movement are deemed by many worthy the world's attention.

Prince Erik, the eldest son of King Gustavus, grew in due course of time to marriageable age and, as young men will, began to look about for a wife. His thoughts first turned towards the Princess Elizabeth, of England, then in the height of her youthful charms, of which exaggerated accounts were brought to the ardent young Swede.

When Erik sought his father's consent to the suit, saying that it might bring him not only a lovely bride but the throne of two kingdoms, the prudent old monarch threw cold water on the project, saying:

"Even if Erik should gain Elizabeth, which I do not think likely, in view of her many suitors, it would be more to the harm than the profit of both kingdoms."

But Erik, a high-tempered and passionate youth, with a tendency to something like madness, became so violent and determined that his father at length gave way and a lover's embassy was sent to England to ask for the fair lady's hand. But Princess Elizabeth was too much beset with lovers to accept any of them easily, and the embassy returned with the answer that the royal English maiden was in no haste to marry and considered an unmarried life the happier.

In 1558 Queen Mary died and Elizabeth mounted to the throne which she was long to adorn. This added to Erik's

passionate desire to win her. One of his agents, Dionysius Beurreus, remained in London, where he lived in great display, keeping open table at Erik's expense, and sending in all haste to the ardent prince every kind word which the crafty Elizabeth let fall. Credulous in his ardent passion, Erik now felt sure of winning the queenly maiden's hand, and sent a second embassy to England, his brother John going with it.

Prince John was sumptuously equipped for the journey, the expenses of the courtship eating deeply into the king's revenues, and being added to by Erik's lavishness, for he was now so sure of the success of his suit that he ordered a hundred dresses of the most expensive and splendid kind to be made for him at Antwerp.

When John reached London he was courteously received by the queen, but he found it impossible to bring her to a definite answer. If she ever married, of course she would be happy to win so charming a spouse as Prince Erik, but it was hard to marry a man she had never seen, and the idea of marriage was not to her taste. In the end Elizabeth wrote to Gustavus begging him to seek another bride for his son, as she had decided to live unmarried.

This should have ended the matter, but it did not. One of the lover's agents had said that the queen of England would never consent unless Erik in person were able to win her heart, and Prince John reported her as saying that, "though she had no desire for marriage, she could not answer what she might do if she saw Erik himself."

Fired by the baits held out to his eager heart, Erik determined to go himself to England, but incognito, disguised as the servant of some foreign lord. Thus he would see and conquer the coy maiden queen. The warnings and expostulations of his friends failed to move him from this romantic project, but at length it reached the king's ears, and he strictly forbade the wild-goose project as hazardous and undignified. Erik, however, finally got his father's permission to visit England and make his

suit to the queen in his own person. But there were many postponements of the journey, and when finally he left Stockholm to begin the voyage to England the shock of his departure threw the old king into a serious illness. That afternoon Gustavus went to bed, never to rise again, and before Erik had left the kingdom word was brought him that his father was dead. This definitely changed the situation and thus it came about that Erik never saw Elizabeth.

The fact of his being king, indeed, did not put an end to his desire to possess the English queen. In 1561 he determined to visit her as a king, and on the 1st of September set sail. But the elements were not propitious to this love errand, a violent storm arising which forced the captains to run back to harbor. Then he decided to go overland, through Denmark, Holland, and France, but while he was laying his plans for this journey, an effort was made by certain love emissaries to turn his thoughts towards Mary Stuart, the widow of a French king and heiress of the throne of Scotland. He listened to these representatives and was so pleased with their description of Mary's charms that his single-minded devotion to Elizabeth was shaken.

The loveliness of Mary Stuart was a strong inducement to the young king, but the high estate of Elizabeth was a greater one, and he did not cease his efforts to win her hand. Being told that the chief obstacle in his way was the handsome Earl of Leicester, he grew violently jealous of this favored courtier. He at first challenged him to mortal combat, but as this could not conveniently be carried out, he secretly bade his agent in London to hire an assassin to deal with the earl, promising protection and a rich reward to the murderer. This villainy the agent refused to perform, and Erik now, hoping to frighten Elizabeth to give him a favorable answer, spread a report in England that he was courting the Scottish queen. The effect was different from what he anticipated, for Elizabeth at once positively rejected his suit and all seemed at an end.

About this time a third lady fair came into the game. Erik was told of the charms and rare character of the Princess Renata

of Lotringen, granddaughter of the late Christian of Denmark, and at once opened negotiations for the hand of this princess. At the same time the crafty Elizabeth pretended to relent and Erik was again on fire for her hand. Thus he had now three love projects under way, from two of which, those for Mary Stuart and Princess Renata, favorable answers were returned.



ARMORY AND COSTUME HALL OF THE ROYAL MUSEUM, SWEDEN

But the volatile lover, before receiving these answers, had added a fourth string to his bow of courtships, having decided to propose for the Princess Christina of Hesse. By this time he had spent on his threefold courtship vast sums of money and had gone far towards making himself the laughing-stock of Europe.

Erik's new course of love did not run smooth. The fates seemed against him in his marriage projects. His first proposal for Christina, indeed, received a favorable reply and it was decided that the selected bride should arrive at Stockholm in the following May, some eight months later. But other emissaries whom he sent in February were detained in Denmark, and on some weak pretence were seized and imprisoned, the whole being a ruse of King Frederick to prevent a marriage between Erik and the Princess of Hesse, of which for political reasons he did not approve. There was peace at that time with Denmark, but these events presaged war.

May at length arrived and Erik equipped a fleet to meet the promised bride. There were twelve men-of-war, which were got ready for fighting if necessary, James Bagge, a famous seaman of those days, being admiral of the *Elephant*, with command of the fleet. The assigned purpose of the expedition was to bring the bride over from Lübeck, but it is said that Admiral Bagge had secret orders to seek and attack the Danish fleet, and thus punish King Frederick for his treachery.

The two fleets met on May 30 off Bornholm, and the Danish ship *Hercules* immediately opened fire. This fire was at once returned and a fierce fight ensued that lasted five hours, and resulted in the capture of the *Hercules* and two other ships and the flight of the rest. The Swedes now sailed on to Lübeck, whence ambassadors were sent to Hesse to bring back the bride. They returned in two weeks without her, the excuse being that her trousseau was not ready. The truth was that the landgrave of Hesse was afraid to trust his daughter in the turbulent north, from which tidings of the naval battle had just come.

This delay was fatal to Erik's hopes, mainly through his own fault. The first succeeding step was a request from the landgrave for a safe conduct for his daughter through Denmark. Frederick, who dreaded ill results from the marriage, refused this, and also refused to let ambassadors to Hesse pass through his kingdom.

And now Erik spoiled all by his faithless versatility. On the 11th of October he sent an order to some agents of his in Germany to proceed to Hesse with a betrothal ring, worth six thousand thalers, for the princess. Four days later he wrote a letter to Queen Elizabeth, saying that his addresses at the court of Hesse had never been serious, and that he still loved and hoped to win her.

Before this was sent actual war with Denmark had broken out, and to prevent the discovery of the letter, he concealed it in a stick and sent it by a secret messenger. This messenger was captured by a privateer and carried to Copenhagen; in some way his mission was suspected and the letter found; and the Danish king, in ecstasies at his discovery, despatched the incriminating love-missive immediately to the landgrave of Hesse.

All was going well there when the letter arrived. The landgrave had favorably received Erik's emissaries and the prospects of their returning with the bride seemed fair, when the unlucky letter was put into his hands. It fell like a thunderbolt. In a rage at seeing himself and his daughter thus made sport of, the landgrave ordered the Swedes to leave the town before sunset, under peril of his high displeasure. This ended the suit for the fair maiden's hand, later ambassadors sent by Erik were dismissed with contempt, and through having too many irons in the fire at once the love-sick lord of Sweden found himself without a bride.

His brother, Duke John, was more fortunate, though his courtship also led to war and his marriage brought him into dismal misfortune. Before completing the story of Erik's love

affairs, the episode of John's matrimonial venture, with its dire results, may fitly be told.

A marriage had long been arranged between Duke John and Princess Catharine, sister of King Sigismund of Poland. But obstacles arose and once more the course of true love did not run smooth. Sigismund had an older sister Anna, whom he wished married first; but this impediment was removed by an agreement that John's brother Magnus should marry Anna.

Next the czar of Russia proposed for Catharine, but some dispute about the marriage contract brought about a refusal. The result was typical of the rudeness of the times. The Poles had always hated the Russians, and to show their contempt for them Sigismund had a white figure dressed in splendid garments and sent to the Russian court, in lieu of the looked-for bride. Mad with rage at this bitter insult, the czar invaded and cruelly ravaged Poland, the people, as is so often the case, being made to suffer for the quarrels and the folly of the kings. From that time forward the czar hated Sigismund and John, his fortunate rival.

John also had difficulty in getting his brother's consent to go to Sigismund's court, and after he had set out an envoy was sent after him ordering him to return. But in disregard of this he went on, and was favorably received at the Polish court, being a handsome, courteous and cultivated prince. Catharine was highly pleased with him, but King Sigismund now repeated his demand that he should marry the elder sister.

Finally, after many efforts to change the king's mind, he asked Catharine if she really desired to marry John. The princess blushed and was silent; but her sister spoke for her and implored their brother not to prevent her marriage with the man she loved.

At this appeal he gave way and the marriage was quickly solemnized, for there was imminent peril of war between Sweden and Poland unless the affair was consummated. A body of Polish troops escorted the newly wedded couple into Livonia,

lest the angry czar should seek to carry them off, and John reached Sweden with his bride.

He was very ill received, by Erik's orders, and hastened to his own duchy, whence he sent an invitation to the king to attend his wedding banquet. The king came in another fashion.

Angry at John for disobeying his orders, and fearing him as a possible aspirant for the throne, Erik cherished evil intentions against his brother. Suspicious and superstitious by nature, he had read in the stars the prediction that a light-haired man would deprive him of the throne, and this man he believed to be his newly married brother. He also fancied that John had secretly allied himself with Denmark and Poland, and there was soon open enmity between the brothers.

The whole story of what followed is too long to be told here, but seeming evidence against John was obtained by the torture of some of his friends and he was attacked in his castle and taken prisoner after a two months' defence. Erik ordered his incarceration in a dungeon, but his wife was offered a residence with her ladies in one of the king's castles. If she wished to accompany him to prison she could take only two of her maids with her.

When Catharine heard this she fervently exclaimed:

"I would rather die than be separated from my husband," and fainted away.

When she recovered she was asked what she intended to do. Taking her betrothal ring from her finger and holding it up, she said:

"Read what stands there."

They saw engraved on it, "*Nemo nisi mors*" (none but death).

"I will stand by it," said Catharine. And she did.

The imprisoned dependents of John, all of whom had shared in his resistance to the king, were nearly all condemned

to death and executed, more than a hundred bodies being exposed at once at the place of execution. That John would suffer the same fate was highly probable. His brothers, sisters, and other relatives implored Erik to let him live; his enemies advised his execution; the king hesitated, and postponed his decision, finally deciding that John might live, but in perpetual imprisonment. He was mildly and kindly treated, however, and four years later, during a spasm of fraternal feeling in Erik, was released.

We shall not tell the remaining story of King Erik, of his wars, his temporary madness, his violence and cruelty to some of the noblest of the sons of Denmark, his ruthless persecution and final murder of the Stures, descendants of one of the most famous families of Sweden and men who had played a great part in its history. It was the story of his love episodes with which we set out and these were not yet ended. Erik finally got a wife and a queen, though not a queen or a princess for a wife. Love instead of policy lay at the basis of his final courtship.

This is the story of the final and real love affair of this suitor of princesses and queens. A soldier named Magnus, of peasant birth, who rose to the rank of corporal in Erik's life-guard, had a daughter named Katrina or Catherine, shortened to Karin, who as a child sat selling nuts in the market-place at Stockholm. Here Erik one day saw her, then about thirteen, and was so struck by her great beauty that he had her placed among the maids-of-honor of his sister Elizabeth.

The pretty little Karin was quick to learn her duties, and in deportment was modest and very loveable. Her beauty also grew with her age, until she became looked upon as the fairest of the fair. Erik thought her such and grew greatly attached to her, showing her much attention and winning her regard by his handsome face and kindly manner. In fact she grew to love him dearly and gave herself up entirely to him, a warm affection existing between them.

Karin in time became everything to the king. He no longer sought for a bride in foreign courts, no other women had attraction for him, and at length, when the charming peasant girl had borne him a son, he determined to find a way to make her his queen. Those were days when it was not safe to meddle with the love affairs of a king. One unfortunate young man named Maximilian, who had loved Karin and sought her hand in marriage, one day intruded into the women's apartment of the palace, where he was seized. Erik, burning with jealousy, had him condemned on a false pretence, sewed up in a bag, and cast into the lake.

After that no one dared interfere with the love episode of Erik and Karin. Men said she had bewitched him by a love-philter. Some of the courtiers who feared her influence upon the king sought to disgrace her, with the result that her intercession alone saved their lives from the incensed monarch.

Erik's love for Karin never seemed to change. On beautiful summer afternoons, when he would sail with a merry party on Lake Malar, Karin was always of the party and the object of his tender attention. As they rowed home at night he would sit beside her, contemplating the beauty of the starry northern skies and listening to the songs from the shore or from distant boats. These were executed by his orders, the words and music often being his. One of these songs, in which he praises his "Shepherdess," promises to love her forever, and bids her a "thousand good-nights," is still extant.

The time at length came—this was after the period of his foreign wars and his insanity—that he asked permission of the legislative body to marry whom he pleased, at home or abroad. After this was given he privately married Karin, and subsequently determined upon a public celebration of his marriage and her coronation as queen. The chief families of the country were invited to the ceremony, but they neither came nor sent excuses. The coronation went on, notwithstanding, and the peasant's daughter Karin became queen of Sweden as Queen Catherine.

Not alone by this marriage, but in a dozen other ways King Erik had made enemies and he was now near the end of his career. A rebellion soon broke out against him, headed by Duke John, who had some time before been liberated, and by his younger brother Duke Charles. Though Erik fought with skill and courage, the insurrection was successful, he being taken prisoner and losing the throne. John was chosen to succeed him as king.

Erik spent the remainder of his life in prison, where he was far more harshly treated than John had been by him, his greatest consolation being when his wife and children were permitted to visit him. After eight years of this close confinement John, fearful of an attempt at the release of the captive, had him poisoned in his cell. Thus ended the career of the elder son of Gustavus Vasa. It was a fate which he had brought upon himself by the cruelties of his career.

A few well-deserved words may well be given to Queen Catherine. She had never interfered in Erik's government, except to restrain him from cruelty. Her mildness of disposition won her favor on all sides, which was increased by her loving devotion to him while in prison. After his death she was granted an estate in Finland, and there she lived, loved and esteemed by all who knew her and winning the warm devotion of her children and grandchildren. She survived to a good old age, withdrawn but happy, and the memory of her virtues and benevolence still lives among the peasantry of the neighborhood of her abode.

CHAPTER XXX

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS ON THE FIELD OF LEIPSIC

With the accession to the throne of Sweden in 1611 of Gustavus Adolphus, grandson of Gustavus Vasa, that country gained its ablest king, and the most famous with the exception of the firebrand of war, Charles XII., of later date. For courage, judgment, administrative ability, generous devotion to the good of his country, and military genius this great monarch was unequalled in his time and won a renown which has placed his name in the roll of the great rulers of mankind.

The son of Charles IX., the third and ablest son of Gustavus Vasa to fill the throne, he was carefully educated in all the lore of his time and when a boy of sixteen won a brilliant victory over a Danish invading army. During the same year he ascended the throne, his father dying on November 30, 1611.

During the preceding reigns Sweden had taken a prominent part in the affairs of northern Europe, having frequent wars with Russia, Poland, and Denmark, and the young king fell heir to these wars, all of which he prosecuted with striking ability. But a conflict soon broke out that threatened all Europe and brought Sweden into the field as the arbiter of continental destinies. This was the famous "Thirty Years' War," the greatest and most ferocious religious war known in history. Into it Sweden was drawn and the hand of Gustavus was potent in saving the Protestant cause from destruction. The final event in his career, in which he fell covered with glory on the fatal field of Lutzen, is dealt with in the German "Historical Tales." We shall here describe another equally famous battle of the war, that of Leipsic.

It was in 1629, when Denmark was in peril from the great armies of Ferdinand II. of Austria, and Sweden also was threatened, that Gustavus consented to become the champion of the Protestants of northern Europe, and in June, 1630, he landed in Pomerania at the head of eight thousand men. Here six Scottish regiments joined him, under the Duke of Hamilton, and he marched onward, taking towns and fortresses in rapid succession and gaining large reinforcements from the German states.

Three great leaders headed the Austrian armies, the famous Wallenstein, the able but ferocious Tilly, and the celebrated cavalry leader Pappenheim. All these skilled soldiers Gustavus had to face alone, but he did so with the support of the best-drilled army then in Europe, a body of soldiery which his able hands had formed into an almost irresistible engine of war.

What spurred Gustavus to the great battle to be described was the capture by Tilly on May 20, 1631, of the city of Magdeburg, and the massacre of its thirty thousand citizens, men, women, and children. From this scene of frightful outrage and destruction Tilly failed to call off his men until the city lay in ruins and its people in death. A tall, haggard, grim warrior, hollow-cheeked, and wild-looking, with large bright eyes under his shaggy brows, Tilly looked capable of the deeds of ferocity with which the world credited him.

While all Christendom shuddered with horror at the savage slaughter at Magdeburg, the triumphant Tilly marched upon and captured the city of Leipsic. Here he fixed his headquarters in the house of a grave-digger, where he grew pale at seeing the death's-head and cross-bones with which the owner had decorated his walls. These significant emblems may have had something to do with the unusual mildness with which he treated the citizens of that town.

The cause of Protestantism in Germany was now in serious jeopardy and Gustavus felt that the time had come to strike a hard blow in its behalf. The elector of Saxony, who had

hitherto stood aloof, now came to his aid with an army of eighteen thousand men, and it was resolved to attack Tilly at once, before the reinforcements on the way to join him could arrive. These statements are needful, to show the momentous import of the great battle of September 7, 1631.



STATUE OF GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS

In the early morning of that day the two armies came face to face, Tilly having taken a strong and advantageous position not far from Leipsic, where he hoped to avoid a battle. But he was obliged, when the enemy began to move upon him, to alter his plans and move towards the hills on his left. At the foot of these his army was drawn up in a long line, with the artillery on the heights beyond, where it would sweep the

extensive plain of Breitenfeld in his front. Over this plain the Swedes and Saxons advanced in two columns, towards a small stream named the Lober, which ran in Tilly's front.

To prevent this crossing Pappenheim had early moved at the head of two thousand cuirassiers, a movement which Tilly reluctantly permitted, though strictly ordering him not to fight. Disregarding this order Pappenheim charged the vanguard of the Swedes, only to find that he had met an impregnable line and to be driven back in disorder. To check pursuit he set fire to a village at the crossing-point, but this had no effect upon the movement of the advancing troops nor his own disorderly retreat.

The army of Gustavus was organized for the coming battle in the following manner. On the right the Swedes were drawn up in a double line; the infantry being in the centre, divided into small battalions that could be rapidly manoeuvred without breaking their order; the cavalry on the wings, similarly drawn up in small squadrons, with bodies of musketeers between; this being done to make a greater show of force and annoy the enemy's horse. On the left, at a considerable distance, were the Saxons.

It was the defeat of Pappenheim which obliged Tilly to abandon his first strong position and draw up his army under the western heights, where it formed a single extended line, long enough to outflank the Swedish army; the infantry in large battalions, the cavalry in equally large and unwieldy squadrons; the artillery, as stated, on the slopes above. The position was one for defence rather than attack, for Tilly's army could not advance far without being exposed to the fire of its own artillery. Each army numbered about thirty-five thousand men.

These forces were small in view of the momentous nature of the struggle before them and the fact that two great generals, both hitherto invincible, were now to be matched in a contest on which the fate of the whole war largely depended and to which the two parties battling for the mastery looked forward

with fear and trembling. But of the two, while Gustavus was cool and collected, Tilly seemed to have lost his usual intrepidity. He was anxious to avoid battle, and had formed no regular plan to fight the enemy when forced into it by Pappenheim's impetuous charge. "Doubts which he had never before felt struggled in his bosom; gloomy forebodings clouded his ever-open brow; the shade of Magdeburg seemed to hover over him."

The lines being ready for action, King Gustavus rode to the centre of his front, reined in his horse, took off his hat, and with the sword in his right hand lowered to the ground, offered in a loud voice the following prayer:

"Almighty God, Thou who holdest victory and defeat in the hollow of Thine hand, turn Thine eye unto us Thy servants, who have come from our distant homes to fight for freedom and truth and for Thy gospel. Give us victory for the honor of Thy holy name. Amen!"

Then, raising his sword and waving it over his head, he commanded:

"Forward in the name of the Lord!"

"God with us!" was the battle-cry as the Swedes, inspired by his words, prepared for the fatal fray.

The battle, which had lull'd after the defeat of Pappenheim, was now resumed with the thunder of the cannon, which continued for two hours, the west wind meanwhile blowing clouds of smoke and dust from ploughed and parched fields into the faces of the Swedes. To avoid this they were wheeled to face northwards, the movement being executed so rapidly and skilfully that the enemy had no time to prevent it.

The cannonading ending, Tilly left the shelter of the heights and advanced upon the Swedes. But so hot was their fire that he filed off towards the right and fell impetuously upon the Saxons, whose ranks quickly broke and fled before the fierce charge. Of the whole force of the elector only a few regiments

held their ground, but these did so in a noble manner that saved the honor of Saxony. So confident now was Tilly of victory that he sent off messengers in all haste to Munich and Vienna with word that the day was his.

He was too hasty. The unbroken army of Sweden, the most thoroughly drilled body of soldiers then in Europe, was still to be dealt with. Pappenheim, who commanded the imperial left, charged with his whole force of cavalry upon the Swedish right, but it stood against him firm as a rock. Here the king commanded in person, and repulsed seven successive charges of the impetuous Pappenheim, driving him at last from the field with broken and decimated ranks.

In the meantime Tilly, having routed the small remnant of the Saxons, turned upon the left wing of the Swedes with the prestige of victory to animate his troops. This wing Gustavus, on seeing the repulse of his allies, had reinforced with three regiments, covering the flank left exposed by the flight of the Saxons.

Gustav Horn commanded here, and met the attack with a spirited resistance, materially aided by the musketeers who were interspersed among the squadrons of horse. While the contest went on and the vigor of the attack was showing signs of weakening, King Gustavus, having put Pappenheim to rout, wheeled to the left and by a sharp attack captured the heights on which the enemy's artillery was planted. A short struggle gave him possession of the guns and soon Tilly's army was being rent with the fire of its own cannon.

This flank attack by artillery, coming in aid of the furious onset of the Swedes, quickly threw the imperial ranks into confusion. Hitherto deemed invincible, Tilly's whole army broke into wild disorder, a quick retreat being its only hope. The only portion of it yet standing firm was a battalion of four veteran regiments, which had never yet fled the field and were determined never to do so.

Closing their ranks, they forced their way by a fierce charge through the opposing army and gained a small thicket, where they held their own against the Swedes until night, when only six hundred of them remained. With the retreat of this brave remnant the battle was at an end, the remainder of Tilly's army being then in full flight, actively pursued by the Swedish cavalry, which kept close upon their tracks until the darkness of night spread over the field.

On all sides the bells of the villages pealed out the tidings of the victory, and the people poured forth in pursuit of the fleeing foe, giving short shrift to the unhappy fugitives who fell into their hands. Eleven thousand of Tilly's men had fallen and more than five thousand, including the wounded, were held as prisoners. On the other side the Saxons had lost about two thousand, but of the Swedes only about seven hundred had fallen. The camp and artillery of the enemy had fallen into the hands of Gustavus, and more than a hundred standards had been taken. The rout was so complete that Tilly had left with him only about six hundred men and Pappenheim less than fifteen hundred. Thus was destroyed that formidable army which had long been the terror of Germany.

As for Tilly himself, chance alone left him his life. Exhausted by his wounds and summoned to surrender by a Swedish captain of horse, he refused. In an instant more he would have been cut down, when a pistol shot laid low the Swede. But though saved in body, he was lost in spirit, utterly depressed and shaken by the defeat which had wiped out, as he thought, the memory of all his past exploits.

Though he recovered from his wounds, he never regained his former cheerfulness and good fortune seemed to desert him, and in a second battle with Gustavus on the Lech he was mortally wounded, dying a few days later.

As for Gustavus, he had won imperishable renown as a military leader. All Germany seemed to lie open before him and it appeared as if nothing could prevent a triumphant march upon

Vienna. He had proved himself the ablest captain and tactician of the age, his device of small, rapidly moving brigades and flexible squadrons being the death-blow of the solid and unwieldy columns of previous wars. And his victory formed an epoch in history as saving the cause of Protestantism in Germany.

The emperor, in despair, called again into his service the disgraced and disgruntled Wallenstein, granting him extraordinary powers. But this great captain also was beaten by Gustavus on the field of Lutzen, where the career of the Swedish hero came to an untimely end. His renown as a great soldier will live long in history.

CHAPTER XXXI

CHARLES X AND THE INVASION OF DENMARK

When Charles X., nephew of Gustavus Adolphus, succeeded Christina, the daughter of Gustavus, on the throne, the "Thirty Years' War" was at an end, but new wars awaited the new king. Sweden had won large possessions on the southern shores of the Baltic and had become one of the leading powers of Europe. But Charles found these southern provinces hard to hold, having to battle for them with Russia and Poland.

A worthy successor of his great uncle, Charles showed his warlike ability by a rapid march into Poland and the overthrow of its army by a three days' battle at Warsaw. But his progress was checked by a new and dark cloud which appeared upon the sky. Suddenly and unexpectedly, on the 2nd of May, 1657, Denmark declared war against Sweden, and at the same time an Austrian army invaded Poland with the purpose of aiding that kingdom and destroying the Swedish army.

This double attack left Charles in a quandary. An able and experienced soldier, who had learned the trade of war in Germany during Queen Christina's reign, he was well fitted to deal with one foe, but could not readily cope with two widely separated ones. He therefore determined to abandon Poland, though leaving garrisons in its more important cities, and devote his attention to Denmark. This Danish war had much in it of interest, and showed that the new Swedish king had been taught in the best school of the military art.

Frederick III. of Denmark had declared war without making preparations for it, fancying that Charles would be forced to remain with his army in Poland and that he would have abundant time to act. He quickly learned his mistake. With an army of eight thousand well-trained veterans Charles marched at

all speed from Poland, and a few months after war was declared stood with his compact little army on Denmark's shores.

Taken by surprise, the Danish general, Bilbe, retreated hastily northward and the whole peninsula of Jutland was quickly overrun by the Swedes. Bilbe had much the larger army, but they were mainly raw recruits, and he dared not face the veterans of the Thirty Years' War. The Danes had projected an invasion of Sweden, for which they had been deliberately preparing, and were overwhelmed to find their army in retreat and a force of six thousand men closely besieged in the Fredericia fortress. A night attack by General Vranghel won this stronghold for the Swedes, with its garrison and a large amount of arms and provisions.

So far the movement of Charles had been brilliantly successful, but his position was very dangerous. Enemies were advancing on him from various sides, a Polish army having invaded Pomerania, an Austrian army having advanced into Prussia, while the elector of Brandenburg had joined his enemies. His ally, England, had promised to aid him with a fleet, but it failed to appear, and the situation was growing daily more critical. From his awkward position he was rescued by a combination of daring and the favoring influences of nature.

The winter of 1658 proved extraordinarily cold. Never within the memory of man had such bitter weather been known. The sea that flowed between the Danish islands was tightly frozen, a natural bridge of ice connecting them with one another and the mainland. With bold resolution King Charles determined to cross to the island of Fyen.

The enterprise was full of risk. The ice swayed perilously beneath the marching hosts. At places it broke. But the island shore was safely reached, the troops guarding it were beaten, and soon the whole island was in Charles's possession.

But a more daring and perilous enterprise confronted the king. There was a broader arm of the sea to cross, the Great Belt, about twelve miles wide. The ice was examined and tested by

the quartermaster-general, who said that he would answer with his life for its being strong enough to bear the army.

King Charles heard this tidings with delight, clapping his hands energetically and exclaiming:

"Now, Brother Frederick, we will converse with each other in good Swedish."

Dahlberg, the quartermaster-general, testified to his confidence by riding at the head of the column over the wide field of ice, the army following in safety to the coast of Zealand. Meeting with no opposition, Charles and his army were soon near Copenhagen, whose fortifications were in bad condition, and the danger of losing his capital was so imminent that Frederick was glad to accept the severe terms of peace which Charles offered him. These included the surrender of half a dozen Danish provinces to Sweden and the independence of the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp from Danish control. Denmark had paid sorely for making a declaration of war with no preparation to carry it out.

But Charles X. was so eager for war that in the end he lost most of what he had gained. He was full of schemes of conquest in Germany, but feared that Denmark might take advantage of his absence with his army to take revenge for her losses. The fleets of Holland were threatening the coasts of the Baltic Sea, and Charles sought to make a treaty with Denmark which would close this sea to foreign ships. Denmark refused to enter such an alliance and Charles thereupon determined to make a complete conquest of that kingdom.

Breaking without warning the treaty of peace he had recently made, he suddenly landed with an army on the coast of Zealand. By this unwarranted and stealthy assault he filled the souls of the Danes with the courage of despair, changed Holland from a secret to an open enemy, and lost the most of his former gains.

The Danish people, threatened with the loss of their independence, flew to arms, determined to defend their country to the last extremity. Charles, his army being small, delayed his attack upon Copenhagen, which might easily have been taken by an immediate assault. When he appeared before it he found all its people converted into armed soldiers, while King Frederick declared that he was ready to die in his capital like a bird in its nest. Every soul in the city burned with patriotism, and nobles, burghers, and laborers alike manned the walls, while even women could be seen wielding spade and axe in the repair of the neglected defences. When the siege began the citizens made several successful sallies against their foes and hope arose in their breasts.

But their position soon grew critical, the Swedes seizing the castle of Cronberg and other points commanding the Sound and pushing forward their lines until they had possession of the outer works of the city. The great weakness of the citizens lay in the absence of provisions, which grew so scarce that they would have had to surrender from sheer stress of hunger but for the activity of their allies.

The Dutch had enlisted in their cause, and a fleet sent from Holland under Admirals Opdam and DeWitte passed Cronberg and other fortifications held by the Swedes, met the Swedish fleet under Admiral Vranghel in the Sound and fought a bloody battle for the mastery. For six hours the thunder of cannon echoed from the neighboring shores, then the Swedes were put to flight and a favoring wind bore the Dutch ships triumphantly to the beleagured city, bringing food and help to the half-starved defenders.

Their coming saved Copenhagen. Charles, baffled in his efforts, drew back, and threw up works of defence ten miles from the city. Suddenly the tide of fortune had turned and began to run strongly against him. Into Holstein pressed an invading army of Austrians, Poles, and Brandenburgers. The Swedes were forced to evacuate Jutland. The newly won provinces were ready to revolt. Part of those held in Norway were taken by the Danes,

and the Swedish garrison in the island of Bornholm was annihilated by a sudden revolt of the inhabitants.

When winter came and the waters were closed by ice against invading fleets, the Swedish king determined to make a vigorous effort to take the city by assault. The attack was made on the night of February 10, 1659, Generals Stenbock and Spane leading a storming party against the fortifications. Fortunately for the people, they had information of the coming assault and were fully prepared for defence, and a desperate struggle took place at the walls and in the frozen ditches. The fire of a multitude of cannon served to light up the scene, and the attacking Swedes found themselves met with the frantic courage of men and women fighting for their homes. A shower of bullets and stones burst upon them, many women taking part, throwing burning brands, and pouring boiling tar upon their heads. In the end the Swedes were forced to draw back, leaving two thousand dead and wounded in the hands of their foes.

Relinquishing his attack upon the city, Charles now turned furiously upon the small islands of Laaland, Falster, Moen, and Langeland, which had offended him by supplying provisions for the city, and subjected them to all the horrors of invasion by troops to whom every excess of outrage was allowed. Yet new misfortunes gathered round him, the peninsula of Fyen being taken by the allies of Denmark, while the Swedish troops near Nyberg were attacked and taken prisoners, their commander alone escaping in a small boat.

The intervention offered by the neighboring powers was refused by the proud Swedish king, who, surrounded by dangers on all sides, now issued a call for a meeting of the estates of the realm at Gothenburg, while at the same time preparing to invade Norway as a part of the Danish dominions. At this interval he was suddenly taken sick and died soon after reaching Gothenburg. A treaty followed with the widowed queen, regent of Sweden, and Frederick preserved his realm, though not without loss of territory.

CHAPTER XXXII

CHARLES XII, FIREBRAND OF SWEDEN

On the 27th of June, 1682, was born one of the most extraordinary of men, the Alexander of modern times, one of those meteors of conquest which have appeared at rare intervals in the history of the world. Grandson alike of Charles X. of Sweden and Frederick III. of Denmark, Charles XII. of Sweden united in himself all the soldierly qualities of his ancestors, his chief fault being that he possessed them in too intense a degree, being possessed by a sort of military madness, an overweening passion for great exploits and wide-spread conquests. In his career Sweden reached its greatest height of power, and with his death it fell back into its original peninsular status.

His daring activity began almost with his birth. At seven years of age he could manage a horse, and the violent exercises in which he delighted to indulge gave him the vigorous constitution necessary for the great fatigues of his later life, while he developed an obstinacy which made him a terror to his advisers in later years.

Charles was extraordinary in the fact that he performed the most remarkable of his exploits before he reached the age of manhood, and in a just sense may be given the name of the boy conqueror. His mother died when he was eleven years of age and his father when he was fifteen, his grandmother being appointed regent of the kingdom, with a council of five nobles for her advisers.

Sweden, when he came to the throne, had risen to a high rank among the powers of Europe. In addition to its original dominion, it possessed the whole of Finland, the finest part of Pomerania, on the southern shores of the Baltic, and also Livonia, Carelia, Ingria, Wismar, Viborg, the Duchies of Bremen and Verden, and other realms, all of long possession and

secured by conquest and treaty. But it had dangerous enemies with whom to deal, especially Peter the Great of Russia, then bent on bringing his barbarian dominions into line with the great powers of the continent.

Such was the inheritance of the fifteen-year-old king, who quickly showed the material of which he was composed. One day in the first year of his reign, after reviewing a number of regiments, he was seen by his special favorite, Charles Piper, in a spell of abstraction.

"May I ask your Majesty," said Piper, "of what you are thinking so deeply?"

"I am thinking," replied the boy monarch, "that I am capable of commanding those brave fellows; and I don't choose that either they or I shall receive orders from a woman."

He referred in this irreverent and boastful speech to his grandmother, the regent.

He was crowned on the 24th of December following his father's death, the ceremony being performed by the archbishop of Upsala. But when the prelate, having anointed the prince in the customary manner, held the crown in his hand ready to put it upon the new king's head, Charles took it from his hand and crowned himself, his eyes fixed sternly upon the dismayed churchman. This act of self-willed insubordination was applauded by the people, who also received him with loud acclamations when he rode into Stockholm on a horse shod with silver and with a sceptre in his hand and a crown on his head. The oath of fidelity to his people, usual on such occasions, was not taken, and in fact Charles had no thought of being faithful to anything but his own ambitious designs and his obstinate self-will.

He soon showed his unfitness for the duties of quiet government. The money collected by his father was quickly squandered by him, and with the eagerness of an untutored boy he plunged into every kind of daring amusement that presented

itself, risking his life in break-neck rides, mock fights, bear hunts, and other dangerous sports and exercises. He also gave much attention to military manoeuvres, his time being spent in all sorts of violent activities, with little thought to the duties of government, these being confided to his chief friend and confidant, Charles Piper.

The tidings of the manner in which the new king of Sweden occupied himself spread to the neighboring monarchs, who, fancying that they had nothing to fear from a frivolous and pleasure-loving boy, deemed this a good opportunity to recover some of the lands conquered from them by the preceding Swedish kings. A secret understanding to this effect was entered into by Frederick IV. of Denmark, King Augustus of Poland, and Peter the Great, czar of Russia, and the ball was opened early in 1700 by an invasion of Livonia on the part of the Polish king, while the Danes attacked Holstein-Gottorp, ruled by Charles's brother-in-law, taking Gottorp and laying siege to Tonnigen. Peter of Russia was the most dangerous of the three confederates, he being then full of the idea of introducing western civilization among his rude subjects and making Russia a sea power. To accomplish this he was eager to gain a foothold on the Baltic by the conquest of Finland.

The kingly conspirators, who had begun war against Sweden without a declaration, little dreamed of the hornet's nest they were arousing. Filled with consternation, some of the Swedish councillors of state proposed to avert the danger by negotiation. Charles, then a youth of eighteen and of whose real metal no one dreamed, listened to these words with a grave face, and then rose and spoke:

"Gentlemen, I am resolved never to begin an unjust war, nor ever to end a just one but by the destruction of my enemies. My resolution is fixed. I will attack the first that shall declare war against me, and having conquered him, I hope I shall be able to strike terror into the rest."

The old councillors were surprised by the resolute demeanor of the young king, who seemed suddenly transformed into a man before them. They little knew the boy. Familiar with the careers of Alexander and Cæsar, he was inspired with the ambition to attempt the rôle of a great conqueror and prove himself one of the world's ablest soldiers.

Forsaking his favorite sports, he set himself with intense energy to prepare for the war which had been precipitated upon him, and sent word to the Duke of Holstein that he would speedily come to his assistance, eight thousand men being at once despatched to Pomerania for this purpose. Instantly the natives were stirred up, Central Germany sending troops to reinforce the Danes, while England and Holland sent fleets to aid Sweden and seek to preserve the balance of power in the north.

Such were the preliminary steps to Charles's first great campaign, one of the most remarkable in the whole history of war. On the 8th of May, 1700, he left Stockholm, in which city he was never to set foot again. With a large fleet of Swedish, Dutch, and English vessels he proposed to attack Copenhagen, thus striking at the very citadel of Danish power. The assault began with a bombardment of the city, but, seeing that this was having little effect, Charles determined to attack it by land and sea, taking command of the land forces himself.

A landing was made at the village of Humlebek, Charles, in his impatience to land, leaping into the water, which came nearly to his waist, and wading ashore. Others followed his example, the march through the waves being made amid a shower of bullets from the enemy. Springing to land, the young king waved his sword joyously above his head and asked Major Stuart, who reached the shore beside him, what was the whistling sound he heard.

"It is the noise of the musket balls which they are firing at your Majesty," said the major.

"That is the very best music I ever heard," he replied, "and I shall never care for any other as long as I live."

As he spoke, a bullet struck the major in the shoulder and on his other side a lieutenant fell dead, but Charles escaped unscathed.

The Danes were soon put to flight and Charles made the arrangements for the encamping of his troops with the skill and celerity of one trained in the art of warfare, instead of a boy on his first campaign and to whom the whistle of a musket ball was a sound unknown. He showed his ability and judgment also by the strict discipline he maintained, winning the good will of the peasantry by paying for all supplies, instead of taking them by force in the ordinary fashion of the times.

While the camp was being made and redoubts thrown up towards the town, the fleet was sent back to Sweden and soon returned with a reinforcement of nine thousand men, who had marched in haste to the shore and were drawn up ready to embark. The Danish fleet looked on at this movement, but was not strong enough to interfere.

The rapidity with which this invasion had been made struck the people of Copenhagen with terror and they sent an embassy to Charles, begging him not to bombard the city. He received them at the head of his guards, while they fell upon their knees before him. His ultimatum to the petitioners was that he would spare the city on the payment of four hundred thousand rix-dollars. They were also commanded to supply his camp with provisions, for which he promised they would be honestly paid. They did not dare refuse, and were very agreeably surprised when Charles kept his word and paid good prices for all he got.

Charles now sent word to King Frederick that he had made war only to require him to make peace, and he must agree to act justly towards the Duke of Holstein or the city of Copenhagen would be destroyed and his dominions laid waste with fire and sword.

Frederick, utterly taken aback by the warlike vigor of King Charles, was very glad to accept this proposal and thus to escape from the dangerous position in which he had placed

himself, and the negotiations were driven through by Charles with the same abrupt energy he had shown in his military movements. In less than six weeks from the beginning of the war it was ended and the treaty made, a surprising achievement for the first campaign of an eighteen-year-old warrior. The treaty was favorable to Frederick, Charles exacting nothing for himself, but demanding that the Duke of Holstein should be repaid the expenses of the war.

The boy king had reason for haste, for the town of Riga, in his dominions, was being invested by a combined army of Russians, Poles, and Saxons. The treaty was no sooner signed than he sailed in all haste to its relief. It had made a gallant and nearly desperate defence under General Dahlberg, but the besiegers did not wait for the impact of Charles's army, hastily retreating and leaving the field open to him for a great feat of arms, the most famous one in his career.

The town of Narva, in Ingermanland, was then invested by a great Russian army, sixty thousand—some say eighty thousand—strong, the Czar Peter being in supreme command, the Duc de Croy commanding under him. But the unskilled Russians had not proved very successful in the art of besieging, having failed for six weeks to take a city that was very poorly fortified and whose governor, Baron Herre, had but a thousand regular troops in his garrison.

It was in mid-November, 1700, that the czar heard that the Swedish king had landed an army of about thirty-two thousand men, and was coming to the relief of Narva. Not content with his great force, Peter hurried forward a second army of thirty thousand men, proposing to enclose King Charles between these two hordes and hoping thus to annihilate him. He reckoned without his host. Charles landed at Pernow and made a forced march to Reval, followed by his cavalry, fourteen thousand strong, but with only four thousand foot soldiers.

Marching, in his usual ardent manner, in the van of his army, he did not wait for the rear, making his way onward by

nearly impassable roads and coming before the outposts of the supplementary Russian army with only eight thousand men. With apparently utter indifference to the vast disproportion in numbers, the Swedish firebrand rushed forward, the Russians, not dreaming of such mad temerity, being sure that he had his whole army behind him.

The advance guard of the Russians, five thousand strong, was posted in a rocky pass where a body of a hundred resolute men might have checked the progress of an army, yet it fled in dismay before the onset of the Swedes. The twenty thousand men behind them shared their panic and joined in their flight, terror and confusion pervading the whole army. In two days' time Charles carried all their posts, winning what might have been claimed as three distinct victories, yet not delaying an hour in his advance. Having thus disposed of the army sent to intercept him, Charles marched with all speed to Narva, leaving his main army still far in the rear. With his eight thousand men, exhausted with their long march and their hard fight, he suddenly appeared before the czar's great force of sixty or eighty thousand men and one hundred and fifty cannon.

Giving his weary men scarcely any time for rest, Charles advanced against the Russians with the impetuosity which had so far marked his career. A general warned him that the danger was very great.

"What!" he replied. "Do you not think that with my eight thousand brave Swedes I may easily beat eighty thousand Russians?"

Whether the general believed so or not, he did not venture any further remonstrances, and, at the signal of two musket shots and the war-cry of "With the aid of God!" the king and his handful of men marched forwards. It was now about mid-day on the 20th of November, 1700.

A breach being made with their cannon in the Russian works, Charles led his men on with fixed bayonets, a furious snow-fall behind them driving full in the face of the enemy and

making their position a very difficult one. After an engagement of three hours the entrenchments were stormed on all sides, the right wing of the Russians fleeing to the Narva and crowding the bridge with its retreating hosts. So dense was the mass that the bridge gave way beneath them, precipitating them into the stream, in which eighteen thousand of the panic-stricken wretches were drowned. The left wing then broke and fled in utter confusion, so many prisoners being taken that the best the captor could do was to disarm them and let them disperse where they would.

Thus ended this extraordinary battle, almost without a parallel in history and spreading the fame of the victor widely over Europe. For a boy little over eighteen years of age to achieve such a feat, defeating with eight thousand men an army of nearly a hundred thousand, raised him in men's minds to the level of the most famous conquerors. Unfortunately for himself, it redoubled his self-will and vanity, the adulation given him leading him into a course of wild and aimless invasion that brought upon him eventually misfortune and defeat and nearly ruined his kingdom.

Having disposed of two of the enemies who had plotted his destruction, in the following year Charles advanced against the third, King Augustus of Poland, led his victorious army into that kingdom, took Warsaw, its capital city, by storm, and in the battles of Klissov and Pultusk so thoroughly overthrew the forces of Augustus that he was forced to give up the throne of Poland and retire into his native dominion of Saxony, a Polish noble being proclaimed king in his place. The Swedish conqueror even pursued Augustus into Saxony, defeated his armies wherever met, and forced him at last to beg humbly for peace.

Such was the first era of the brilliant career of the young Swedish firebrand of war, who in four years had utterly overthrown his enemies and won a reputation for splendid military genius which placed him on a level, in the opinion of

the military critics of the age, with Alexander the Great, whom he had taken as the model of his career.

But Charles had two great enemies with whom to contend, and as a result his later history was one of decline and fall, in which he lost all that he had won and remained for years practically a prisoner in a foreign land.

One of these enemies was himself. His faults of character—inordinate ambition, inflexible obstinacy, reckless daring—were such as in the end to negative his military genius and lead to the destruction of the great power he had so rapidly built up. The other was Czar Peter of Russia. It was unfortunate for the youthful warrior that fate had pitted him against a greater man than himself, Peter the Great, who, while lacking his military ability, had the other elements of a great character which were wanting in him, prudence, cool judgment, persistence in a fixed course of action. While the career of Charles was one of glitter and coruscation, dazzling to men's imaginations, that of Peter was one of cool political judgment, backed by the resources of a great country and the staying qualities of a great mind. What would have been the outcome of Charles's career if pitted against almost any other monarch of Russia that one could name it is difficult to imagine. But pitted against Peter the Great he was like a foaming billow hurling itself against an impregnable rock.

While it is not our purpose to tell the whole story of the exploits of Charles XII., yet his life is so interesting from the point of view of military history that a brief epitome of its remainder may be given.

After his great victories Charles remained in Saxony, entertaining the throng of princes that sought his friendship and alliance and the crowd of flatterers who came to shine in his reflected glory. For six years in all he remained in Poland and Saxony, fighting and entertaining, while Peter the Great was actively engaged in carrying out the important purpose he had in mind, that of extending the dominion of Russia to the shores of

the Baltic and gaining an outlet on the northern seas. As an essential part of his purpose he began to build a new city on the banks of the Neva, to serve as a great port and centre of commerce.

It was long before Charles awakened to the fact that Peter was coming threateningly near to the Swedish territories, and when he finally realized the purpose of his great enemy and set out to circumvent it, he did so without any definite plan. He decided, as Napoleon did a century later, to plunge into the heart of the country and attack its capital city, Moscow, trusting by doing so to bring his enemy to terms. In this he failed as signally as Napoleon did in his later invasion.

In June, 1708, with an army of forty-three thousand men, Charles crossed the Beresina and soon after met and defeated the Russian army near Smolensko. He considered this his most brilliant victory, and, as we are told by Voltaire, Peter now made overtures for peace, to which Charles, with the arrogance of a victor, replied, "I will treat with the Czar at Moscow."

He never reached Moscow, but was constrained to turn southward to the Ukraine, where he hoped to gain the aid of the Cossacks, under their chief, Mazeppa, a bitter enemy of the czar. In this march his men suffered terribly, more than half of them dying from hunger and cold. He had met that same enemy which Napoleon afterwards met in Russia, a winter of bitter severity. In the spring he had only about eighteen thousand Swedes and about as many Cossacks under his command, but he persisted in his designs. During the wintry cold he had shared in the privations of his men, eating the same coarse food, while his only means of warming his tent was to have heated cannon balls rolled along the floor.

The crisis came in the summer of 1709. Peter, who was keenly on the alert, had succeeded in winning to his side the Cossack chiefs, leaving Mazeppa without any followers. Then he intercepted the Swedish general Levenhaupt, who was marching with a new army to the aid of his king, and

overwhelmed him with an immense force of Russians. Losing all his baggage and stores and more than half his men, Levenhaupt succeeded in reaching the king's camp with only six thousand battered and worn soldiers.

Charles had now only eighteen thousand men, and was in such sore need of food and clothing that he laid siege to the city of Pultowa, hoping to obtain supplies by its capture. Here he was met by Peter with an army three times his strength, and in the decisive battle that followed Charles was wounded and his army utterly defeated, only three thousand escaping death or capture. Charles himself narrowly escaped the latter, and only by a hazardous and adventurous flight over the steppes reached the town of Bender, in the Turkish realm.



THE RETURN OF CHARLES XII OF SWEDEN

Here the sultan, the bitter enemy of Russia, gave him refuge and treated him with much kindness, though he found the young Swede a very troublesome guest. In fact, at Charles's suggestion, the sultan went to war with Russia and got the czar into such a tight place that he only escaped by bribing the Turkish vizier.

Infuriated at his enemy's escape, Charles became so violent and unruly that the sultan tried to get rid of him, giving him large sums of money to pay his debts and make preparations to leave. When Charles spent all this and asked for more the sultan grew so angry that he ordered the arrest of his troublesome guest. It needed an army of men to take him, for he locked himself in his house and fought furiously with the few hundred of men under his command. Many Turkish soldiers were killed and he was only captured by setting fire to his house and seizing him as he fled from the flames.

The "Iron Head," as the Turks called him from his obstinacy, was guarded in a Turkish village for ten months by a force of Janizaries. Most of this time was spent in bed on pretence that he was dangerously ill. At the end of that time, finding that he could get no more help from the Turks, he resolved to escape. Accompanied by two persons only, he rode in the incredibly short period of fourteen days from Adrianople through Austria, Hungary, and Germany, reaching the Swedish post of Stralsund on November 7, 1713. Doubtless the sultan was glad to hear of his escape, since he had borne with his restless and unwelcome guest for more than four years.

When he came to the gates of Stralsund he presented himself to the guard under the name of Captain Peter Frisch. The guard was long in recognizing him, for he was haggard and worn in face and ragged and dirty in person, having never changed his clothes and rarely left the saddle, except to change horses, during his long and weary ride.

His long and needless absence in Turkey had left Sweden exposed to its enemies and it had severely suffered, the greater part of its territory south of the Baltic being seized, while Sweden itself had been attacked by the Danes and Saxons and only saved by an army of peasants, so poorly equipped and clothed that they were nicknamed the "Wooden Shoes."

As for Charles, his era of brilliant invasion was over and he was obliged to fight in self-defence. When he reached

Stralsund it was under siege by an army of Russians, Saxons, and Danes. Taking command here, he defended it obstinately until the walls were blown up and the outworks reduced to ashes, when he went on board a small yacht and crossed the Baltic safely to Sweden, though a Russian admiral was scouring that sea to prevent his passage.

A few words must suffice to complete the story of this remarkable man. He found Sweden largely depleted of men and money and in the new army which he sought to raise he was obliged to take boys of fifteen into the ranks. With these he proposed, in the cold winter of 1716, to invade Denmark by leading an army over the Sound to the Danish islands, but a thaw set in and put an end to this adventurous project.

Then he invaded Norway, as a part of the Danish realm, and after some unsuccessful efforts, laid siege to the fortress of Frederikshald. Here the end of his strange career was reached. On the morning of December 11, 1718, while leaning over the side of a breastwork and giving directions to the men in the trenches, he was seen to stagger, his head sinking on his breast. The officers who ran to his aid found him breathing his last breath. A bullet had struck him, passing through his head and ending his remarkable career at the early age of thirty-six.

With the death of this famous soldier ended the military glory and greatness of Sweden. As a result of his mad ambition and his obstinate persistence in Turkey, Sweden lost all the possessions won in previous reigns, losing them never to be regained. And with him also vanished the absolute rule of the Swedish kings. For with his death the nobles regained their lost influence and drew up a compact in which the crown was deprived of all its overruling control and the diet of the nobles became the dominant power in the state.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ENGLISH INVADERS AND THE DANISH FLEET

The Napoleonic wars filled all Europe with tumult and disorder, the far-northern realms of Norway and Sweden and the far-eastern one of Turkey alone escaping from being drawn into the maelstrom of conflict. Denmark, the Scandinavian kingdom nearest the region of conflict, did not escape, but was made the victim of wars with which it had no concern to a disastrous extent.

Christian VII. was then the Danish king, but he was so feeble, both in mind and body, that the Crown Prince Frederick was made regent or joint-ruler in 1784, and was practically king until his father's death in 1808, when he came to the throne as Frederick VI. Count Bernstorff was minister of foreign affairs and kept Denmark at peace until his death in 1799, when troubles at once broke out between Denmark and England.

It was a different state of affairs now from that far-off time of Canute and the vikings, when the Danes overran England and a Dane filled its throne. The tide had long turned and Denmark was an almost helpless victim in the hands of the great maritime island, which sought to control the politics of the whole continent during the terrible struggle with Napoleon.

For some years the English made complaints against Denmark, saying that it was carrying food and forage into French and German ports in defiance of the laws of neutrality. As these laws were of English origin the Danes did not feel inclined to submit to them, and after the death of Bernstorff Danish men-of-war were sent to sea to protect their merchant vessels.

Quarrels and hostile feeling arose from this, but the crisis did not come until the summer of 1800, when Russia, Sweden,

and Prussia formed a treaty for an "armed neutrality" and invited Denmark to join it. England at once took alarm. While the other nations were powerful enough to defy her, Denmark was poor and quite unprepared for warlike operations, and when, in the spring of 1801, a fleet under Admirals Parker and Nelson appeared on her waters she was by no means in readiness for such a demonstration.

Taken by surprise as they were, however, the Danes had no thought of weakly submitting to this hostile movement, and did their best to prevent the English from passing the Sound. Their chief defence was the fortress of Cronberg, near Elsinore, where heavy cannon were mounted to command the narrow strait here separating Sweden and Denmark. But by closely hugging the Swedish coast Parker kept beyond the range of these guns, and in April, 1801, cast anchor in the harbor of Copenhagen. His fleet consisted of fifty-one vessels, twenty of them being line-of-battle ships.

Alarmed by the coming of the fleet and taking advantage of the delays in its movement, the Danes had made every possible preparation for a vigorous resistance. Strong batteries defended the city and an imposing array of heavily armed ships, drawn up behind a shoal, presented a formidable line of defence.

Some delay took place, against the wish of the fiery Nelson, who was second in command of the fleet. Nelson was eager for an immediate attack, and finally Parker gave way and left the matter in his hands.

Nelson was in command of the Elephant, but finding that ship too large for the waters before him he removed his flag to the St. George and led the way to the attack with the smaller vessels of the fleet, Parker remaining at anchor some miles distant with the larger vessels.

A fierce and bloody conflict ensued, lasting from four to five hours. Nelson closed on his foe by getting within the shoal, but he met with a stout and vigorous resistance, the Danish seamen, under their able commander Olfert Fischer, fighting

with the daring for which their people had been noted in the far past. Three times the aged Fischer left one burning ship to hoist his flag on another, and several of the younger captains fought their ships against Nelson's larger vessels as long as the shattered hulks kept above water.

So protracted and obstinate was the defence that Parker grew alarmed and signalled Nelson to retreat. This was the last signal to be thought of by a man like Nelson and, clapping the glass to his blind eye, he said, "I really do not see the signal," and kept on fighting.

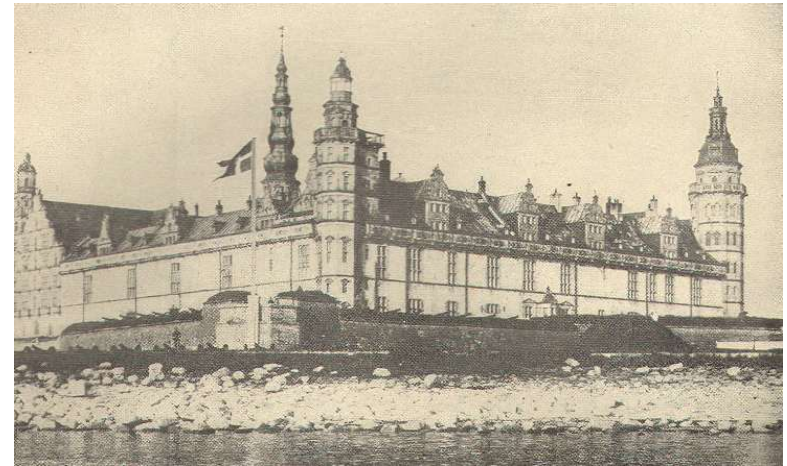
Nelson was between two fires, that from the shore batteries and that from the ships, and though he destroyed the first line of the Danish defence and threatened the capital with serious injury, the batteries were not silenced and the English ships were suffering severely.

He therefore sent an English officer on shore with a flag of truce, declaring that unless the Danes on shore ceased firing he would burn the ships in his hands without being able to save the crews, and pointing out that these crews were the worst sufferers, as they received a great part of the fire of both parties.

A suspension of hostilities was agreed upon to permit of the prisoners being removed, and in the end the crown prince, against the wishes of his commanders, stopped all firing and agreed to discuss terms of peace. Thus ended a battle which Nelson said was the fiercest and best contested of the many in which he had taken part.

The peace that followed lasted for several years, and Denmark, freed from connection with the hostilities existing in southern Europe, rapidly increased in trading activity. During these years, indeed, the Danes served as the commerce carriers for the other countries of Europe, and this prosperous state of affairs lasted till 1807, when new troubles arose and England repeated her violent act of 1801.

The English government either had, or fancied it had, good grounds for suspecting that Denmark had joined Alexander of Russia in a treaty with France, and on the plea that the fleet of Denmark might be used in the cause of the French emperor, an array of fifty-four ships of war was sent to demand its immediate delivery to England.



KRONBERG CASTLE ON THE SOUND, DENMARK

Denmark was taken more fully by surprise than before. Its army was absent in Holstein to guard against an attack which was feared from Germany, and Copenhagen was thus left without protection. General Peymann refused to comply with the preposterous demand of the English admiral, whereupon an army of thirty-three thousand men was landed and the city attacked by land and sea.

For three days a fierce bombardment continued, and not until a large portion of the almost unprotected city was laid in ashes and the remainder threatened with like destruction did the general consent to admit the English troops into the citadel of Frederikshavn.

The outcome of this brigand-like attack, which had nothing more definite than a suspicion to warrant it, and is

ranked in history as of the same type with the burning of Washington some years later, was the seizure of the entire Danish fleet by the assailants. The ships carried off included eighteen ships-of-the-line, twenty-one frigates, six brigs and twenty-five gunboats, with a large amount of naval stores of all kinds.

The act was no more warrantable than were the viking descents upon England centuries before. The latter were the acts of barbarian freebooters, and England, in an age of boasted civilization, put herself in the same position. The Danes were nearly crushed by the blow and many years passed away before their bitter resentment at the outrage decreased.

The political result of it was that Denmark allied herself with Napoleon, a measure which gave that unhappy land no small amount of trouble and distress and led in 1814 to the loss of Norway, which for four hundred years had been united with the Danish realm. Norway was handed over to Swedish rule, while England took for her share of the spoils the island of Heligoland, which she wanted to secure for the command of the Elbe. Thus the birds of prey gathered round and despoiled the weak realm of Denmark, which was to be further robbed in later years.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A FRENCH SOLDIER BECOMES KING OF SWEDEN AND NORWAY

The career of Napoleon, which passed over Europe like a tornado, made itself felt in the Scandinavian peninsula, where it gave rise to radical changes. In the preceding tale its effect upon Denmark was shown. While the wars which desolated Europe did not reach the soil of Sweden and Norway, yet these countries were deeply affected and their relations decidedly changed.

The work began in 1808 in the obstinate folly of Gustavus IV., who defiantly kept up an active trade with England when Russia and Prussia had closed their ports against British ships. As a result Russia declared war against Sweden, sent an immense army into Finland, and after a desperate struggle compelled the Swedes to evacuate that region. In this way Sweden lost a great province which it had held for six hundred years.

This was one result of a weak king's setting himself against the great powers of Europe. By his lack of political good sense and his obstinacy Sweden lost nearly half its territory and Gustavus lost his throne, for the bitter indignation of the Swedes against him was such that he was taken prisoner by conspirators and forced to sign a deed in which he renounced the throne of Sweden for himself and his descendants. Not a hand was raised to help him and he spent the remainder of his life as a wandering exile.

It was this series of events that in time brought a soldier of the French army to the Swedish throne. How this came about is well worth the telling. After the abdication of Gustavus, Duke Charles of Sodermanland was elected king as Charles XIII., and

as he had no children, a Danish prince was chosen to succeed him.

But this heir to the throne, Charles Augustus by name, died suddenly the next year. The people believed he had been poisoned, and on the day of the funeral, suspecting the haughty old Count Fersen of his death, they seized him and in their fury literally tore him to pieces.

It was now proposed to take the brother of the deceased prince as heir to the throne, but little could be done in those days without the Corsican emperor being consulted about it, and the young Baron Mörner was sent to Paris to inform Napoleon of what was proposed. The youthful envoy was an admirer of the conqueror, and thinking to please him he suggested that one of the French generals should be chosen to rule over Sweden.

Napoleon was highly gratified with the suggestion, but when the baron named Marshal Jean Bernadotte as his choice the emperor was much less pleased. He would much rather have chosen some one else, Bernadotte being too independent in character to please him. Difficulties were thrown in the way, but Mörner obtained Bernadotte's consent, and by his argument that Sweden needed an able and experienced soldier to regain its old power the Swedish Riksdag was brought over to his side.

In the end Napoleon gave his consent, and the marshal was elected Crown Prince of Sweden. But the French emperor evidently doubted him still, for on parting with him he used these significant farewell words: "Go, then, and let us fulfil our several destinies." He had reason for his distrust, as the events of later years showed.

This selection ranks with the remarkable instances of the mutations of fortune. The new crown prince had begun life as the son of a poor French lawyer and in 1780, at the age of sixteen, entered the army as a common soldier. When the wars of the Revolution began he had risen to the rank of a sergeant, which was as high as a man of common birth could rise in the old army of France.

But he made rapid progress in the army of the Revolution, being a man of great courage and unusual military genius. Under Napoleon, whose discerning eye no soldier of ability escaped, Bernadotte became one of the most successful of the French generals, was made governor of a province, ambassador, and minister of war, and had much to do with winning the great victories of Austerlitz, Jena, and Wagram. Finally he was made a marshal of France and prince of Ponte Corvo in Italy.

But Napoleon had doubts of him. He was too independent. He opposed the emperor's ambitious plans and defended the liberties of the people, and was distrusted by the conqueror for other causes. The astute Corsican feared that he would not be the man to reduce Sweden to a province of France, and the event proved that Napoleon was right.

It was in 1810 that Crown Prince Bernadotte, who adopted the name of Charles John as the title of his new rank, arrived in Sweden with his son Oscar. The people were delighted with his appearance. A handsome and imposing man, with black wavy hair, an eagle nose, keen, penetrating eyes and the manner of one accustomed to command, also a clear and eloquent speaker, polished in address and courteous in his dealings with all, they felt that in him they had a true king; while his reputation as one of the leading soldiers in Napoleon's great army gave them assurance that, if war should arise, their armies would be ably led.

Sweden, when Bernadotte set foot on its soil, was in a helpless state of decadence, having become little better than a dependency of France. If ever it needed a strong ruler then was the time, but Charles XIII. was incapable as a monarch, and from the time of his landing the new crown prince ruled the country as though there were no king on the throne.

He at once renounced Catholicism and was admitted into the Lutheran church, the state religion of Sweden. Proposing to consult the best interests of his new country and not to rule as a

vassal of Napoleon, he was indignant when the emperor ordered that Sweden should declare war against England. In the existing condition of the country he felt compelled to submit, but he secretly advised the British government that the declaration of war was a mere formality and not a gun was fired on either side.

He also made a secret alliance with Alexander of Russia. None of these movements could be made public, for the Swedes were then fervent admirers of Napoleon and hoped by his aid to gain the lost province of Finland and win revenge upon Russia, their old enemy. Bernadotte saw farther than they, feeling that the inordinate ambition of Napoleon must lead to his downfall and that it was best for Sweden to have an anchor out to leeward. But all these political deals had to be kept from the knowledge of the Swedes.

A change in public opinion came when Napoleon, suspecting the loyalty to him of his former marshal, heaped insults upon Sweden, and finally, in the beginning of 1812, invaded Swedish Pomerania, intending by this act to frighten the Swedes into submission. Instead, he exasperated them and lost their friendship, thus giving Bernadotte the opportunity he had awaited.

"Napoleon has himself thrown down the gauntlet, and I will take it up," he said, and at once began to prepare for the struggle which he foresaw.

With the incitement of the invasion of Pomerania the Crown Prince Charles John—Prince Karl Johan, as the Swedes called him—began active preparations for war. The army was largely increased, new levies being raised and arms and equipment purchased, while alliances were made with foreign powers. It came as a surprise to the Swedes when the fact leaked out that it was not against Russia, but against France, that these warlike movements were being made.

Napoleon now, seeing the state of affairs his injudicious act had brought about, sought to gain the friendship of Sweden, making alluring offers to his late marshal. His change of front

came too late. Bernadotte had no confidence in him and came into closer relations with his enemies, encouraging the perplexed Alexander to a firm resistance against the French emperor in the great invasion threatened.

Everyone knows the disastrous end of this invasion. When Napoleon was marching on Moscow Alexander and Charles John met at Abo and a treaty was formed in which Sweden was promised recompense for the loss of Finland in the acquisition of Norway, while a friendship sprang up between the two which lasted till the end of their lives.

Events now moved rapidly. The Corsican conqueror entered Moscow. It was burned and he was forced to retreat. A terrible winter and hostile forces destroyed the Grand Army, only a handful of which escaped. Then came the death struggle in Germany of the greatest soldier in modern history. On every side his enemies rose against him and in the spring of 1813 Bernadotte joined them with an army of thirty thousand Swedes.

This army took part in the several battles that followed, and made its mark especially at Dennewitz, where Marshal Ney commanded the French. Bernadotte thought that the Prussians should bear the brunt of this battle, since Berlin was threatened, and for this reason he held the Swedes in reserve. But when the right wing of the Prussians was broken, Ney cheering his soldiers by shouting, "My children, the victory is ours!" he deemed it time to take a hand, and ordered General Cardell, his artillery chief, to support the Prussians.

Cardell won the day by a brilliant stratagem. He ordered the caissons into line with the guns and deployed his regiments so that they bore the appearance of a division of cavalry, the mounted artillerists bearing down upon the French at a gallop, with drawn swords.

Failing to see the guns, and thinking that they had only cavalry to deal with, the French closed their lines and with fixed bayonets awaited the Swedes. Suddenly the line halted, the guns were rushed forward and reversed, the men sprang to their

pieces, and from a long line of frowning cannon poured a fiery hail of grape and canister that tore remorselessly through the solid ranks of the French. The results were awful: dead and dying strewn the ground; the survivors fled in confusion; that deadly volley turned the day in favor of the French, and Ney and his braves were forced to make a hasty retreat.

In the great battle of Leipsic no section of the Swedish army but the artillery took part. When the English agent, Sir C. Stewart, sought by threats to drive Bernadotte into action, he haughtily replied:

"Do you forget that I am Prince of Sweden and one of the greatest generals of the age?"

Bernadotte was considering the uplifting of his new kingdom rather than the overthrow of his old master. He was saving his army for the campaign he proposed against Denmark. Of this campaign we need only say that it ended in the acquisition of Norway. The Danes were beaten and their king disheartened, and in the peace of 1814 he ceded Norway to Sweden, receiving Swedish Pomerania in exchange.

For centuries Sweden had sought to absorb Norway, and now, by the action of this crown prince from a foreign land, the result seemed achieved. But the brave Norwegians themselves remained to be dealt with. They did not propose, if they could avoid it, to be forced into vassalage to the Swedes. A party arose in favor of the independence of Norway, a government was formed, and their Danish governor, Prince Christian Frederick, was elected king of Norway.

It was a hasty act, which could not be sustained against the trained army of Sweden. Norway was poor, her population small, her defences out of order, her army made up of raw recruits under untried officers, yet the old viking blood flowed in the veins of the people and they were bent on striking for their freedom.

Bernadotte returned to Sweden in the summer of 1814 and at once led his army into Norway. Little fighting took place, the Swedish crown prince showing himself favorably disposed, and peace and union finally came, Charles XIII. of Sweden being elected king of Norway. Yet it was not as a subject nation, but as an independent and equal kingdom that Norway entered this union. All her old rights and privileges were retained and the government remained free from any interference on the part of Sweden.

It was to the wisdom of Bernadotte that this result was due. An enforced union, he knew, would yield only hatred and bitterness, and to drive a brave people to the verge of despair was not the way to bring them into the position of satisfied subjects. Norway remained as free as ever in her history, dwelling side by side with Sweden, with one king over both countries.

In 1818 the weak Charles XIII. died and the strong Bernadotte, or Charles John, ascended the throne as Charles XIV. The remainder of his reign was one of peace and growing prosperity, and when he died in 1844, leaving the throne to his son Oscar, the grateful people of Sweden felt that they owed much to their soldier king.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE DISMEMBERMENT OF DENMARK

The time once was when, as we have seen, all Scandinavia, and England also, were governed by Danish kings, and Denmark was one of the great powers of Europe. Since that proud time the power of the Danish throne has steadily declined, until now it is but the shadow of its former self.

A great blow came in 1814, when it was forced to yield Norway to Sweden. All its possessions on the Baltic had vanished and its dominion was compressed into the Danish peninsula and its neighboring islands, with the exception of the duchies of Holstein and Lauenburg lying south of the peninsula. The time was near at hand when it was to lose these and more and be reduced to a mere fragment of its once great realm.

The new trouble began in 1848, when the French revolution of that date stirred up all the peoples of Europe to fresh demands. North of Holstein lay the duchy of Sleswick, occupying the southern half of the peninsula, its inhabitants, like those of Holstein, being nearly all Germans. These duchies had long chafed under Danish rule, though for centuries they had formed part of Denmark, and now they made an eager demand for union with what they termed their true "Fatherland."

A new king, Frederick VII., ascended the Danish throne in January, 1848. In February the French revolution broke out. Almost instantly the duchies were in a blaze of revolt, and on the 23rd of April a Danish army of eleven thousand men met one of nearly three times its strength, composed of the insurgents and German allies, and was defeated after a hard fight and forced to take refuge on the little island Als, where it was protected by Danish ships of war.

This was the beginning of a struggle that continued at intervals for nearly three years, the great powers occasionally intervening and bringing about a truce. In 1849, the Danes gained some important successes, followed by a second truce. The most severe battle was that of July 24, 1850, when a Danish army nearly forty thousand strong attacked the insurgents and battle went on amid mist and rain for two days, ending in the triumph of the Danes.

New successes were gained in September, Sleswick being fully occupied and Holstein invaded, when a strong Austrian army marched into the latter province and again the war was brought to an end. Sleswick was left under the Danish king, but a joint commission of Danes, Austrians, and Prussians was formed to govern Holstein until its relations to Denmark could be determined.

For the thirteen years following all remained at rest. But in that year King Frederick VII. of Denmark died and immediately the eldest son of the Duke of Augustenburg, who claimed the duchies, hastened into them and proclaimed himself as ruler, under the title of Duke Frederick VIII., of the united and independent province of Sleswick-Holstein.

This impulsive act led to most important results. All the German powers to the south, large and small alike, supported the pretensions of the self-styled Frederick VIII., and before the end of the year Austrian and Prussian armies entered the province, which they proposed to hold until the claims of the house of Augustenburg should be definitely settled.

This threw Denmark into a difficult position. If she wished to avoid dismemberment she must fight, and to fight against these two great powers seemed madness. Yet Prussia and Austria pressed one condition after another upon her, each more galling than the last. England, however, offered herself as umpire between the parties, strongly favoring Denmark. In consequence, fully expecting aid from England, a Danish army

of forty thousand men crossed the border and attacked the Prussians.

But England sent no aid and the Danes were forced to retreat and once more take refuge upon Als Island. As England showed no intention of helping them with armed assistance, despair followed the patriotic effort of the Danes, who were left single-handed to oppose their powerful foes. Yet in spite of their greatly inferior power they made a gallant defence, their courage and endurance winning the sympathy of those who looked on.



THE BOURSE, COPENHAGEN

Yet to struggle against such fearful odds was hopeless. The Prussians occupied one strong point after another until they had penetrated to the most northerly point of the peninsula. Then, to save his kingdom from utter destruction, Christian IX. gave way and accepted the terms offered him, agreeing to renounce all claims on the duchies of Sleswick-Holstein and Lauenburg and to abide by the decision of Prussia and Austria as to the future fate of these provinces.

Thus were the weak dealt with by the strong, in the rude old fashion, and of its once proud dominion Denmark was left only the northern half of the peninsula, consisting of Jutland and

its neighboring islands, a pocket kingdom of some 15,000 square miles extent in lieu of its once great and proud dominion.

Yet it was not without satisfaction that the despoiled Danes looked on when their two powerful enemies, quarreling over the division of the spoils, sprang at one another's throats like two dogs snarling over a bone, a great war arising between Austria and Prussia over this question, at a cost far greater than the value of the provinces fought for.

Prussia being the victor, the rights of Denmark and the claims of the Duke of Augustenburg alike were quietly laid aside and the matter settled by the absorption of the provinces into the German empire, Denmark being left to thank God that Bismarck did not decide to take the rest.

CHAPTER XXXVI

NORWAY AND SWEDEN

In the year 1388 the people of Norway chose the great Queen Margaret of Denmark for their ruler, and from that date until 1905, more than five hundred years later, the realm of the Norsemen continued out of existence as a separate kingdom, it remaining attached to Denmark until 1814, when it came under the rule of the king of Sweden. In 1905 Norway broke these bonds and for the first time for centuries stood out alone as a fully separate realm. With a description of this peaceful revolution we may fitly close our sketches of the Scandinavian countries.

During these centuries of union ill feeling frequently arose between the nations involved. Though the union with Denmark had been on terms of equality, the Danes in later years often acted towards Norway as though it were a subject country, at times creating great irritation in the proud sons of the seakings. It was the same with the Swedish union, the Swedes at times acting towards Norway as though it were a conquered country, won by the sword of Prince Bernadotte and subject to their will.

This was a false view of the relations of the two countries. The act of 1815 states that "The union is not a result of warfare but of free convention, and shall be maintained by a clear acknowledgment of the legal rights of the nations in protection of their mutual thrones." It further states that "Norway is a free, independent, indivisible, and inalienable kingdom, united with Sweden under one king."

This must be kept in mind in considering the recent events. Norway was in no sense subject to Sweden, but had simply accepted the king of Sweden as its monarch. They were not one nation, but two nations under one king, being otherwise

independent in every respect, each with its own constitution, its own parliament, and its own laws.

In fact, Norway has had a constitution since 1818, granted by Bernadotte when he came to the throne, while Sweden was not granted one until over forty years later. And while the constitution of Norway makes it the most democratic monarchy in Europe, that of Sweden gives much greater power to the throne. Thus the people of Norway for many years had reason to be well content with the situation, though they jealously kept watch over the preservation of their rights, and at times radical parties promoted an irritation that might have led to blows had it been sustained by the people at large.

The difficulty that led to their final separation was a commercial one. Norway has always been a country with the sea for its province, rugged and unproductive as compared with Sweden, but with a long sea-coast inviting maritime pursuits. As a result, during the century its commerce grew much more rapidly than that of Sweden and it ended the century with a shipping three times as great. Its commercial interests thus made free-trade the economic doctrine of Norway, while protection became that of Sweden, and this was the wedge that in time forced the two countries asunder.

In 1885 began the disagreement which led to separation twenty years later. In that year the king made the minister of foreign affairs responsible to the Swedish parliament, thus depriving Norway, as she claimed, of any important influence in foreign politics. Negotiations followed, but Sweden resisted, and irritation arose. Finally the question of a Norwegian minister of foreign affairs was dropped and only that of the right to a separate system of foreign consuls remained.

Let us now very briefly epitomize the course of events. In 1891 Norway established a consular commission and made a strong demand for separate consuls to represent her interests in foreign ports. Violent quarrels with Sweden followed, but no agreement was reached. In 1898 the question became serious

again, but still there was no agreement, and the same was the case when it came up once more in 1901.

A new consular commission was appointed in 1902, its report favoring the demands of Norway, and finally, in 1903, King Oscar gave his sanction to an agreement for separate consuls. But the king's voice did not settle the question; it came before parliament, and after long consideration a decision was reached which avoided the point in dispute and announced principles which were declared in Norway to be in violation of its constitution and at variance with the king's sanction of 1903.

This ended the negotiations. The incensed Norwegian legislators appointed a new cabinet to carry out the wishes of the people and a consular service law was passed. Events now proceeded rapidly. In February, 1905, King Oscar retired from active government on account of age and ill health, Crown Prince Gustavus being appointed temporary regent. On considering the subject he dissented from his father's opinion and offered the following proposition for a settlement of the question at issue: first, a common minister of foreign affairs; second, a separate consular service for each country, the consuls to be under the direction of the one foreign minister. This proposition was voted on favorably by the Swedish parliament and the main point in dispute seemed settled.

But on May 27 King Oscar returned to the throne and immediately repudiated this action of his son and the parliament, vetoed the law for separate consuls passed in Norway, and when the cabinet of that country resigned in a body refused to accept their resignation.

The crisis was now reached. A general wave of indignation swept through the realm of Norway. The feeling of the people was shared by their legislators. Norway's only connection with Sweden was that they had the same king—but the Norwegians had no use for a king that would place the interests of one country in precedence of those of another. The decisive move was made on June 7, when the Storting—the

parliament of Norway—announced itself as no longer in union with Sweden or under the rule of King Oscar, declaring that he had admitted that he was unable to govern Norway according to its constitution and therefore had ceased to rule as its king. The union flag was lowered from the government fortress in Christiania, where it had floated since 1814.

In its address to the king the Storting said that "the course of events has proved more powerful than the desire or will of individuals," but to show that good feeling existed towards Sweden, the king was requested to name a prince of his own house for the throne of Norway, who was to relinquish his right of succession to the Swedish throne.

The die was cast. Would war result? Would Oscar seek to force Norway back into the Union as Bernadotte had done in 1814, when it rebelled and chose a king of its own? The occasion seemed critical. Oscar refused to abdicate, there was much talk of war, the Swedish Riksdag—or parliament—disapproved of letting Norway depart in peace. If war had been declared the hope of Norway sustaining her independence was very doubtful, as her population was only half that of Sweden and her army and navy much weaker. Yet there was sufficient doubt of the outcome to make all men hesitate.

Many of the leading men of Sweden disapproved of the idea of war, thinking that hostilities were not called for and that Sweden's stake in the question was not sufficient to justify the attempt to hold Norway by force. A significant event at this juncture was the declaration of the powerful Socialist party in Sweden that they would not bear arms against their brethren in Norway. In this the Socialists made the first international declaration of their opposition to war.

As the weeks passed on the war feeling cooled. Oscar withdrew his refusal to abdicate, and said: "Of little use would the Union be if Norway had to be forced into it." As regards the feeling of the people of Norway regarding separation, it was decisively shown on August 13, when a vote was taken upon the

question. It resulted in 368,200 votes in favor of to 184 against dissolution of the union.

The chief question to be settled was that of the abolition of the frontier fortresses, of which Norway had a number on the border while Sweden had none. Norway held on to hers mainly from patriotic reasons, as several of them were of very ancient date and had great historic interest. The difficulty was finally settled by an agreement to dismantle the new portions and let the ancient ones remain.

The final treaty of separation, as approved on September 23, 1905, covered the following points: 1st. There was to be arbitration of all questions arising between the two countries. 2nd. A neutral zone was to be established and all forts within this zone to be destroyed or made useless for war purposes. 3rd. The grazing rights of Swedish Laplanders in Norway were to be maintained. 4th. The laws of each country were to apply to the portion of waterways crossing each. 5th. No obstacle was to be placed on the commerce between the two countries.

The question of the form of government of the new nation had before this arisen. The request to King Oscar for a descendant of his house had been at first refused. He subsequently reconsidered it and was willing to let his son Charles fill the vacant throne, but meanwhile it had been offered to Prince Charles of Denmark and accepted by him. The offer of the throne by the Storting needed in democratic Norway to be confirmed by a vote of the people, and one was taken in October. The sentiment for a republic in Norway was supposed to be very strong, but the election resulted in a vote of four to one for a kingdom against a republic, and Charles of Denmark, grandson of King Christian, was formally chosen for the reigning monarch of the new kingdom. In compliment to the nation he chose for himself the national title of Haakon VII. and conferred on his son and heir the Norwegian name of Olaf.

Formal offer of the throne was made to the new king at Copenhagen on November 20 by a deputation from the

Norwegian parliament, King Christian accepting it for his grandson, and saying:

"The young king does not come as a stranger to Norway, for he claims relationship to former Norwegian kings. Nor will the kingdom of Norway be strange to him, for everywhere in the land common recollections of the history of the kingdom and the history of his race will meet him."

On the 25th of November the new monarch, with his wife, daughter of King Edward of England, made his formal entrance to Christiania, the capital of his new realm, where he was received with the highest demonstrations of joy. On their voyage from Copenhagen the royal pair were escorted by Norwegian, Danish, British, and German warships, while in their new realm elaborate preparations had been made for their fitting reception.

At noon on November 27 Prince Charles was formally inaugurated king, as Haakon VII., before a distinguished assembly consisting of the highest state dignitaries, the diplomatic corps in full costume, and a brilliant concourse of men in uniform and women in court toilets. Entering the richly decorated Parliament house, surrounded by their suites, the king ascended the throne, the queen taking a seat by his side.

The ceremonies were brief, consisting of the king's taking the oath to support the constitution of Norway, and pledging himself in a brief speech "to exert all his will and strength to serve the Fatherland and promote its peace and happiness." An interesting feature of the ceremony was a despatch of congratulation from Oscar, late king of Norway, in which he said: "I beg that you be persuaded that every effort looking towards good relations between our two countries will be given a sympathetic reception on my part."

Thus, after for five hundred and seventeen years standing empty, the throne of Norway was filled with a king of its own, and that old land, once more single and separate, swung back into the tide of the nations.