THE

CABINET CYCLOPÆDIA.

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CONDUCTED BY THE

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History.

DENMARK, SWEDEN, AND NORWAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

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PREFACE.

SCANDINAVIA prior to the tenth century is the region of romance, — of the wildest legends. These are admissible into the severe domain of history in so far only as they illustrate national opinions and manners, — the noblest part of the study. For this reason, chiefly, more have been retained in the present volume than are to be found in any preceding work on the subject. Indeed, were they rejected, nine tenths of northern history must be rejected with them.

Another reason for dwelling on the earlier and more obscure events has been the wish to deviate as much as possible from a recent popular work in the "Edinburgh Cabinet Cyclopedia." Two publications on the same subject, and designed for the same class of readers, would scarcely be required, unless they were distinguished from each other in their manner of treating it.

If the present volume be one of entertainment chiefly, the next will be one of instruction. The religion and laws, the manners and opinions, of the Northmen, will receive their due notice.

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CHAP. III.

NORWAY.

ABOUT 70 B. C.—A. D. 1030.

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CHAP. IV.

MARITIME EXPEDITIONS OF THE NORTHMEN DURING THE PAGAN AGE.

SECTION I.

IN ENGLAND, FRANCE, AND IRELAND.

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THE

HISTORY

OF

SCANDINAVIA.

INTRODUCTION.

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INQUIRIES into the origin of nations have never been productive of much good. Over that of all, with the

single exception of the Jews — an exception which we owe to inspiration—a cloud hangs, that no learning, no criticism can penetrate. It is easy to be speculative — it is easy to be ingenious — it is easy to make a considerable parade of learning by citing the opinions of various writers, and by attempting to show how little dependence is to be placed on any one of them; but, though the vanity of an author may be thus gratified, his labour must be useless. If he has not authority or legitimate inference for what he advances, he is worse than uselessly, he is perniciously employed: he is wasting his own time and that of his readers, and he is involving the subject, which he ought to elucidate, in greater confusion than it was before. Thus every age and every writer adds to the mass of fable, or at least of uncertainty, until the truth is for ever hidden beneath it.

These observations especially apply to northern history. Yet, dark and uncertain as this subject is, and monstrous as are the hypotheses which native ingenuity has framed respecting it, curiosity will be gratified with a mere glimpse at them. Thus, in regard to the SWEDES, we shall find their origin wrapt in an obscurity deep as that which covers the cradle of most other people. Many are the fables which grave historians, listening only to tradition, or wresting to a certain purpose the words of some obscure writer, or confounding the actions of many people, or misled by a fancied analogy and similarity of names, have perpetuated on this subject. That sage authority, the archbishop of Upsal, has no doubt that Noah was king of the whole earth; that he settled in Scythia, which was inhabited a century before Italy; that his son Japhet, to whom Europe fell, spread his colonies still farther to the west; that Magog, the son of Japhet, was the first chief that colonised Sweden and Finland; that from Sweno, the son of Magog, sprung the Swedes, and from Gothar or Gog, another son, the Goths; that Thor, German, and Ubbo, brothers of Sweno, and his great

vassals, were successful propagators of mankind; that Ubbo, who succeeded his brother Gothar, founded the city of Upsal, the most ancient metropolis of the north; that Siggo, successor of Ubbo, and the fifth king of the Goths, called Sigtuna into existence; that Eric, grandson of Gothar, and the sixth king of the Goths, began to reign about four hundred years after the universal deluge, and conferred great splendour on those northern regions; that, after his death, idolatry began in the north, the magnificent temple of Upsal being erected in honour of Thor, Odin, Frigga, and other divinities; that the Swiones or Swedes, and the Gothi or Goths, as being sprung from different roots, were frequently under different sceptres, though both regarding themselves as kindred, and for many generations living in harmony with each other; that, after the introduction of idolatry, this peaceful disposition began to be impaired, and in the course of a few reigns it wholly disappeared; that the Finns, Jutes, Gothones, Swiones, and other neighbouring people, became at length so numerous and so powerful, as to pillage the coasts of Sweden; that, to oppose them, no less than to procure the necessaries of life, which long-continued intestine wars had rendered very scarce, a large army was raised and a powerful fleet equipped, in about nine hundred years after the deluge; that the expedition, which extended along the southern no less than the northern shores of the Baltic, from Holstein to the confines of Lithuania, gave rise to a new kingdom; that at this period the empire of the Goths, comprising so many people beyond the bounds of Scandinavia, was one of the most powerful in the world, notwithstanding the fact that the conquered provinces on the European continent were subject to their own king (to him who had led the expedition from Sweden, and to his successors), while Sweden obeyed another king who had been left at home with the necessary authority; that the new empire, the seat of which was in Poland or Hungary, sent off its conquering swarms into Asia and Egypt;

that, the regions of the Goths being too extensive for the government of one man, they at length elected rulers independent of one another, and thus broke this vast empire into numerous fragments; that the origin of the Hungarian dynasty, which was purely Gothic, added to the weakness of the race; that, while these events were passing in Europe and Asia, the Swedish monarchy subsisted, though weakened by the emigration of its chief warriors; that this diminution, alike of population and strength, emboldened the Danes, who had hitherto been tributary to the more northern kingdom, to assume the offensive, but being themselves assailed by the Saxons, and unable to resist that martial people, they eagerly submitted to the Swedes, and chose Dan, a Swedish prince, the son of Humel, or Humble, the sixteenth native king of the Goths, to rule over them; that this prince gave his name to the Danish kingdom, while his brother Angul, the first king of the *English*, left his name to that people; that Dan was succeeded by Lother his son, and Lother by Skiold, — while, in Sweden, Humble was followed by Gothilas and Sigtrug; that Gro, the daughter of Sigtrug, became the wife of Gram, son of Skiold, king of Denmark, but contrary to the wishes alike of her father Sigtrug and of the Swedes; that her abduction by Gram led to a war between the Danes and the Swedes, in which the latter were vanquished; that Scarin, the successor of Sigtrug, was slain in battle by Gram; that, on his death, Swibdager, king of Norway, was elected king of the Goths and the Swedes, who detested their conqueror and the whole Danish nation, — a detestation which was heartily returned; that, in revenge for the rape of Gro, a daughter of Gram was carried away into Norway; that Gram, arming to revenge the injury, was defeated and slain by Swibdager, who, however, had the generosity to place Guthrum, son of Gram, over the Danes; that they remained subject to the Swedes and Goths until Hadding rose against Asmund, the twenty-first king of the latter, and delivered his country

from subjection. For these more recent events, for all subsequent to Skiold, the good archbishop has scarcely any other authority than Saxo, the Danish historian, whose facts, however, he does not scruple to alter whenever the honour of his country is concerned. *

* Joannis Magni Gothorum Suenonumque Historia, lib. i. and ii. p. 18. to 74. edit. Romæ, fol. 1554.

Native kings of Sweden who, according to the archbishop, Joannes Magnus, flourished before Christ.

Noah.
Japhet.
1. Magog.
2. Sweno.
3. Gothar, or Gog.
4. Ubbo.
5. Siggo.
6. Eric.
7. Uddo.
8. Alo.
9. Othen (Query Odin).
10. Charles.
11. Biorno.
12. Gothar.
13. Siggo.
14. Berico; in whose reign began the mighty Gothic or Scythian empire, independent of the northern one.
15. Humulf.
16. Humble.
17. Gothilas.
18. Sigtrug.
19. Scarin.
20. Swibdager.
21. Asmund.
22. Uffo.
23. Hunning.
24. Regner.
25. Hodebrod.
26. Attil.
27. Hoder.
28. Roder, or Roderic, or Rurie, surnamed *Slingebond*, or the Slinger.
29. Attil.
30. Botwild.
31. Charles.
32. Grimer.
33. Tordo.
34. Gothar.
35. Adolf.
36. Algoth.
37. Eric.
38. Alaric.
39. Gestil.
40. Eric.

"In the reign of this prince, says the archbishop, — who even fixes the year, the thirty-fourth of his reign, — our Saviour was born!"

Swedish kings subsequent to our Saviour's birth, *yet prior to the introduction of Christianity*, according to the same archbishop.

41. Godric.
42. Haldan.
43. Wilmer.
44. Nordian.
45. Siward.
46. Charles.
47. Eric.
48. Haldan.
49. Eugin.
50. Ragnald.
51. Asmund.
52. Hako.
53. Siward.
54. Ingo.
55. Neark.
56. Frode.
57. Urbar.
58. Ostin.
59. Fliolm.
60. Swerker.
61. Walander.
62. Wisbur.
63. Domalder.
64. Domar.
65. Attil.
66. Digner.
67. Dager.
68. Alaric.
69. Ingemar.
70. Ingell.
71. Germund.
72. Haquin Ringo.
73. Egill.
74. Gothar.
75. Fasto.
76. Gudmund.
77. Adel.
78. Ostan.
79. Ingermar.
80. Holstan.
81. Biorno.
82. Rawald.
83. Swartman.
84. Tordo.
85. Rodolf.
86. Hathin.
87. Attil.

So much for fable, — at least in regard to the greater portion of this rapid condensation of the archbishop's history. If we had not already had enough of this ingenious trifling, the *Atlantica* of Olaus Rudbeck would supply us with enough to fill many such volumes as the present. This writer far outdoes the prelate, whom he exceeds alike in imagination and knowledge of tradition. To him the reader who may be fond of the marvellous, who may delight in traditionary lore, and who may wish to see on how slight a foundation the most gigantic theories can be erected, may have recourse. *

In claims to a remote origin NORWAY is by no means behind the former kingdom. According to Torfœus, one of the most learned, and, considering that he lived in recent times, least critical of mankind, the population of the whole country has been derived from four distinct sources. 1. Of these the giants were the most

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88. Tordo.
89. Algoth.
90. Gostag, or Ostan.
91. Arthus.
92. Haquin.
93. Charles.
94. Charles.
95. Birger.
96. Eric.
97. Torill.
98. Biorn.
99. Alaric.
100. Biorn.
101. Bratmund.
102. Siward.
103. Herot.
104. Charles.
105. Biorn.
106. Ingenal, or Ingel.
107. Olaf Tretella.
108. Ingo.
109. Eric.
110. Eric.

In both lists, many of these names the reader will perceive to be identical with the Danish kings given by Saxo Grammaticus. That the two lists have been confounded there can be no doubt. And it is equally certain that many of these kings are unnecessarily multiplied, — those allowed to have reigned before, as well as after, the Christian era. Perhaps, however, none of these princes reigned before Odin; probably all are more recent still; and as so many were contemporary with each other, ample lists have easily been formed.

The compilers of our Universal History begin their list with the following: —

1. Eric.
2. Gylfo.
3. Odin.
4. Niord.
5. Frode.
6. Sigtrug.
7. Swibdager.
8. Asmund.
9. Uffo.
10. Hunding.
11. Regner.
12. Holward.
13. Attil I.
14. Hoder.
15. Roderic, or Ruric.
16. Attil II.
17. Hogmor and Hogrin.

* See the work, part i.

ancient. These, this historiographer contends to have been really what they are called, viz., much superior in bulk to the rest of mankind; and not that evil spirits, by magical rites, were permitted to effect such appearances. Though he rejects, as pure romance, the stories of many giants alleged to have been seen in comparatively modern times, he is sure that such a race did once inhabit the north; and he is inclined to derive them from Shem, the son of Noah. That they once lived, that their bones are still to be found in several regions of the world, that they may now live in Patagonia or some other country, cannot, he thinks, be disputed. We read of giants in Scripture; who, therefore, can doubt of their existence? As we have already intimated, he represents, as old women's fables, all the stories, however rife in his time, of giants being produced by the prince of evil spirits; nor will he allow that they are the offspring of men and huge beasts. If they did not spring from either of these causes, they must, necessarily, have derived their origin from one of Noah's sons. Nor can we be surprised at their appearance in the north of Europe, seeing that we have so many proofs of their existence in Canaan, Egypt, Greece, Spain, Britain, and, indeed, all the world over. Their arrival in the north, however, was no voluntary act; being expelled from Canaan in the time of Joshua, they were glad to seek other settlements; and while some spread themselves throughout northern Africa, northern and central Europe, and, perhaps, found their way to America, others directed their steps towards Sweden and Norway: yet, before the arrival of these exiles, others of the same race might, for ages, have been in that peninsula. 2. After the giants, and, indeed, immediately after them, came the *Goths;* but the period cannot be fixed. Joannes Magnus and Rudbeck contend that it was immediately after the flood; but Torfœus dares not ascend to so high an antiquity, and he is satisfied with deriving the Goths from the Trojans, and

with referring their arrival in the north to the age in which Troy was taken. 3. After the Goths came the *Asae*, or *Scythians*, whom he holds to be the third distinct race of men that helped to people the north. These were the followers of Odin, whose empire, at once spiritual and temporal, attested *his* policy and *their* prowess. 4. Yet it may be doubted whether these were the sole, or even the original, colonisers of Norway. The people of this as of every other country must have their indigenous families, or families, at least, who were here long before any strangers arrived. Thus, a certain man, Forniot by name, had three sons: Hler, ruler of the winds; Logi, lord of fire; Karl, sovereign of the sea. Snaer was the grandsire of this last-named monarch, and a celebrated prince he was. He had one son, Thor, and three daughters, Faunna, Drifa, and Miollis. Thor was more powerful than the father, since he reigned over the whole of the northern part of the Scandinavian peninsula, including Finland; and divine honours were paid to him by at least one great tribe of his subjects. Thor had three children, Nor and Gor, who were males, and Goe, a daughter. This princess being stolen away, her two brothers went in pursuit of her. Nor went westward, subduing and killing many native kings, among whom were Hemming and Hunding: in short, he conquered the whole of Norway, to which he gave his name. The ravisher of Goe was Rolf, or Rollo, the son of a great prince, who submitted to Thor, and whose sister, Hodda, had the honour to become that monarch's bride. While he was performing these feats, his brother Gor was subduing all the islands of the Baltic and of the Icy Ocean, which constituted his dominion. The sons of Nor divided the vast region among themselves; hence the many separate principalities which were so long the bane of Norway.*

No reader will be at a loss to perceive that this fourth race of men is a mythologic creation. These

* Torfœus Historia Norvegiæ, tom. i. p. 111—150.

rulers of the elements, fire, water, wind, — *Snaer*, or snow; *Jokul*, or frost; *Faunn*, or frozen snow; *Snifa*, or sleet, — with many others, sufficiently attest this curious fact. Whether the Norwegians invented these elemental gods first, and called their mortal heroes after them; or whether they elevated those heroes after death to the dignity of local gods, we shall not attempt to discuss. The probability is, that in this country, the march of the human mind was the same as in other countries, viz., that men celebrated for their great qualities were believed to have originally sprung from a divine source, and after this life to return to that source; to be invested in another state with a superiority akin to that which they enjoyed in this. As to a northern inhabitant, the sea and the winds were the most important elements, so the deities that they obeyed were the most powerful, the most dreaded, the most worshipped. Every page of the earliest Norwegian history (or fable, if the reader pleases) bears evidence to this inference, that long prior to the arrival of the Goths in that region there was a religion quite distinct from that which followed it; one of truly primitive character, which admitted of no refinement, which dealt with sensible objects, which appealed to the fears and hopes of mankind. The honour in which Thor, the father of Nor, and the common ancestor of all the Norwegian princes, was held, sufficiently accounts for his superiority over Odin himself, in the religious creed of that people. The Danes and Swedes held the former, the Norwegians the latter, to be the supreme god, — supreme, at least, as far as the government of this world is concerned. Hence there must, at some period subsequent to Odin's arrival, have been an amalgamation of the two religions. If the successors of Odin in Denmark and Sweden forced the Norwegians to acknowledge him as a divinity, and to place his statue with that of Thor, it is manifest that they only paid him a secondary veneration; Thor sitting in state, surrounded by all the attributes of majesty, while the warrior god — the foreign Asiatic

god—was made to stand beside him. On this subject, however, more in the proper place.*

DENMARK is, in no respect, behind either Sweden or Norway in its claims to antiquity. In the valuable collection of Langebek, we find a list of monarchs in Icelandic† as old, at least, as the tenth century, sufficiently ample for the vanity of any nation. It begins with Noah; passes down through the intervening generations to Odin, "that king of the Turks whom the Romans forced towards the north;" and ends with Hardecanute. Another branch of the same list deduces the regal genealogy from Odin to Harald Harfagre, the well-known monarch of Norway.‡ In both cases, the names must be considered as strictly belonging

* Wheaton, History of the Northmen. Mallet, Histoire de Dannemarc, tom. i.

† Vetustissima Regum Septentrionis Series Langfedgatal dicta. According to this "Series," the list of Danish kings prior to Odin is as follows:—NOAH, Japhet, Zechim, Ciprus, Celius, Saturn of Crete, Jupiter, Darius, Erichthon, Troes, Ilus, Laomedon, Priam of Troy, Memnon (the son-in-law of Priam), Tror or Thor, Lorith, Einrith, Vingethar, Vingener, Moda, Magus, Seskef, Bedoig, Athra, Iterman, Heremotr, Scealdna, Beaf, Eat, Godulf, Finn, Frealaf—ODIN.

Here is a precious list, and we should vainly inquire where it was originally procured. One thing, however, is remarkable,—that of the immediate predecessors of Odin, most are the same as those contained in the Saxon Chronicle, in the genealogy of the Anglo-Saxon kings. Let us now transcribe that of Saxo Grammaticus, who flourished in the twelfth century, and is content with making Dan the ancestor of the Danes, about a thousand years before Christ.

DAN I., Humble, Lother, Skiold, Gram, Swibdager, Guthrum, Hadding, Frode I., Haldan, Roe and Helgo, Rolf or Rollo, Hoder, Ruric, Wiglet, Guitlach, Wermund, Olaf I., Dan II., Hugleth, Frode II., Dan III., Fridleif, Frode III. According to Saxo it was in the reign of Hadding that Odin first appeared in the north. In this case the reader may say Odin must have flourished long before the period usually assigned, viz., A. C. 70. But most of these princes, doubtless, reigned *after* the birth of Christ, notwithstanding the positive assertion of Saxo (who is supported by some other chroniclers), that the Redeemer of mankind assumed our nature in the reign of Frode III. Sweyn Aggo is more rational than his contemporary Saxo; he rejects all the sovereigns prior to Odin, and commences his list with Skiold, a son of that deified hero. Undoubtedly Denmark, like the other states, had its kings before that period; but they were mere regull, perpetually at war with each other in struggling for the ascendancy; and small reliance is to be placed on their alleged actions, or even their names. Saxo, in taking as authorities the popular songs of his country, followed the worst of all guides.

‡ The list of Norwegian sovereigns prior to Odin is, according to the Landfedgatal, the same as for Denmark. These sovereigns, however, in neither case reigned in the north; they were regarded as Asiatic: it was Odin who first left the country of his ancestors, and established his empire in Scandinavia. In this view there is no inconsistency between that record and Saxo, who does not enumerate the Asiatic monarchs, and who confines himself to the native princes that held the country for ages before Odin

to the Asiatic potentates, who were never alleged to have set foot in the north of Europe. During *their* reigns, fabulous or true, Scandinavia was not without its petty kings, or, if the reader pleases, hereditary chieftains, whose authority was similar to the patriarchal. Their names are given by Saxo Grammaticus and other native writers, who, following their own traditionary songs, knew little of the Asiatic predecessors of Odin, and were therefore unable to enumerate them. Thus, too, with the Swedes, who, as we have seen, had their internal, no less than their external, kings, — their domestic, no less than their foreign, potentates. Hence, in all these states, two distinct races of rulers, — the native and the foreign, — the former indigenous, the latter wholly strangers, to the regions of northern Europe. *

That the Goths were resident in the north of Europe before the times which we denominate historic, — that they had for ages, perhaps, been there when the Romans came into contact with them, is very probable. "Many vestiges," says Gibbon, "which cannot be ascribed to popular vanity, attest the residence of the Goths in the countries beyond the Baltic." Still no man in the least conversant with antiquity — unless, indeed, like Joannes Magnus and Rudbeck, he has prejudices which no information can remove — will contend that they were the *first* settlers: it may even be doubted whether they constituted the second immigration into those regions. The Cimmerians, or Cimbri, were in Jutland, at least, before them; but whether even these were the first people that forsook their Asiatic abodes for western Europe is very doubtful: probably they were preceded by some other swarms whose very name time has destroyed, just as *they* were the predecessors of the Celts,

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was known. These, we have strong reason to infer, were *not* Gothic, but Finnish, or Jutish, or Lapponic, or whatever else was the denomination of the people who originally possessed the north. Sweyn Aggesen, therefore, by rejecting them, evidently confines himself to the foreign or Gothic dynasty — the dynasty of the conquerors.

* Langebek, Scriptores, tom. i., passim.

a race sprung from themselves. The Finns and the Lapps, whose manners, language, and character are so different from those of the other European nations, are probably tribes of some race which arrived in more southern regions at a period lost in the depth of antiquity; and which the hostile incursions of Cimmerians, Celts, Goths, and other barbarians, exiled into the snows of the north.*

Such are the conclusions of reason. They are not opposed to authority. What ancient history really informs us concerning the people of the north may be comprised in a few lines. They were split into tribes; and of these the *Swiones* — the Swiar of the middle ages — were the most conspicuous. They were a rich and powerful maritime nation; and, if Tacitus is to be credited, their kings were despotic. Lest they should turn against one another, or, what was worse, against their rulers, their arms were taken from them, and kept by the royal slaves. They were, no doubt, a tribe which inhabited Sweden. In the same region were the *Guttones*, or Goths, another tribe, probably, of more ancient arrival. As the lands of the two were conterminous, the Swiones must have often called on their king for weapons, unless, indeed, their enemies, too, had been disarmed. But this alleged disarming is pure fable, and we know not how Tacitus could be so thoughtless as to relate it. The *Dankiones* — probably the Danskir or Danes — bordered on the Guttones. Whether they were confined merely to the islands now forming the Danish monarchy, or were also spread over, at least, part of Jutland, may be disputed. If, by Cadononia, Tacitus really means the peninsula, the Teutones were also there. There can be no doubt that all these tribes were kindred: they all came from Asiatic Scythia, however different the periods of their arrival. But, in regard to the *Fenni*, who are manifestly the Finns, he doubts whether he should call them a Teutonic or a Sarmatian tribe. Ptolemy locates them in western Lithuania; Tacitus, more to the north; and from

* Pinkerton, Dissertation on the Goths. Turner, History of the Anglo-Saxons, vol. i.

the close affinity which a modern Polish professor has established between the Letts and the Finns, we may safely infer that they are of the same origin. Probably the stream of colonisation passed from Livonia across the gulf.*

The distinction of tribes inhabiting northern Europe being granted, and authentic history assuring us that the Scythian Goths were the last people that reached western Europe, — the Slavi, their hereditary enemies, scarcely penetrating to the centre, — we naturally inquire, "At what period did they arrive?" Most antiquaries of the north, as we have already shown, have not hesitated to affirm that it was immediately after the deluge, and, consequently, that the Goths were the original inhabitants. Other writers, however, are satisfied with a more recent origin, and place this arrival about two thousand years before Christ. Others, again, are willing to deduct a full millenium from this latter antiquity; but it may be doubted whether a single tribe of Goths had set foot in the north five centuries before Odin's arrival. Few tribes of them were probably there when he introduced a new faith. The opposition which his followers encountered in their political, no less than their religious character, — in their conquests no less than their preaching, — confirms this supposition; and the fact that nearly all the kings of the north boasted of their descent from some one of Odin's royal sons, almost elevates this hypothesis to the dignity of an historic fact. As the Goths — both those who accompanied Odin and those who had preceded him — were the conquering and, therefore, the dominant caste, the sceptre was generally held by princes of that nation; the conquerors were comparatively few in number; and the original inhabitants, though they constituted the bulk of the population, were constrained to bend in sullen acquiescence before the power of the strangers. By degrees, the amalgamation of these strangers with the former race (or,

* Tacitus, Germania, cap. 34.—40. Wheaton, History of the Northmen, chap. i.

perhaps, races) produced that form of society peculiar to the north. The more we reflect on this subject the more we incline to the opinion that prior to the Odinic times the Goths were not very numerous in Scandinavia. They might have kings four or five centuries before Christ; probably there were immigrations of Goths from Asia before even that period; still there is more safety, because more reason, in the conclusion that, from remote antiquity to the arrival of Odin, the bulk of the population in those countries were of native, that is, of Finnish or Jutish stock, and that the sons of the Asiatic conqueror were the first Gothic *monarchs* of the north.*

That the original inhabitants, whether Finns, or Jutes, or Laplanders, or a combination of all the three, differed widely from the Gothic conquerors, in language, manners, religion, and character, is certain. The earliest poems of the latter — those traditionary relics of a far more ancient age — are filled with allusions to this distinction. They represent the Finns and Lapps as magicians, as invested with uncontrollable authority over the elements; and the Jutes as at once giants and magicians. But the warriors of Odin arrogated to themselves no such powers, though their priests might. Legend, indeed, records some instances in which these powers were communicated to fortunate Gothic heroes; but the old inhabitants were the teachers, and what knowledge they imparted — which was always grudgingly imparted — was little in comparison with that which they retained. In the old Sagas, in the collection of Snorro Sturleson, in Saxo Grammaticus, and even in later authorities, we everywhere discover a marked antipathy between the victors and the vanquished. It originated in a two-fold cause, — in the difference of religion no less than that of race; and it was embittered in the same degree that it was perpetuated by mutual hostilities. The Finn, indeed, was unable to cope with the powerful Goth; but this sense of inferiority sharpened his inven-

* Mallet, Histoire de Dannemarc, tom. i. Pinkerton, Dissertation on the Goths, passim.

tion, and made his hostility to be dreaded in proportion to its secrecy. The blow was struck in darkness; and the Goth, who had a sovereign contempt for the valour of his foe, was led to attribute it to supernatural rather than to human agency.*

We have already seen the meagre sum of information which Tacitus has bequeathed to us respecting the state of the north in his time. For many centuries afterwards, no great additions were made to it. In the fifth we learn that between the Elbe and the Baltic — no doubt, too, on both sides of that river, to some extent — were Angles, Jutes, and Saxons. Of these the first had no other seat. The second were doubtless a bastard colony from the more northern parts of the peninsula; and the last were an offset from the great Saxon confederation. The Jutes were the fewest in number; yet they were the progenitors of the men of Kent and the Isle of Wight, and of a tribe among the West Saxons. The rest of the Saxons — West, East, and South — were derived from the Saxon division of the colonists. The Angles gave their name to the people who bore it (the East Angles and Middle Angles) and likewise to the Mercians and Northumbrians. Such, according to that venerable authority the Saxon Chronicle, was the connection between these people and our island. But, reverting to the state of northern Europe after the time of Tacitus, yet before geography made us well acquainted with it, king Alfred, in his epitome of Orosius, adds some particulars which he had learned from his own inquiries. These particulars he derived from Otter, a Norwegian, and Wulfstan, a Danish seaman. The former said that he lived north of all the Northmen, in Halgoland, opposite to the west sea; that north of him there was an immense waste land, some parts of it, however, being visited by the Finns for hunting in summer and fishing in winter; that he had once sailed round the North

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica; necnon, Heimskringla Snorronis, passim.

Cape to the White Sea, and on the coast had found a people called Beormas, who spoke a kindred language with the Finns. "This Otter," says the king, "was a rich man, according to the opinion of his own country: he had 600 tame deer, and six decoy ones, whose value in catching the wild deer was incalculable: hence these decoy deer were much esteemed by the Finns." But this Norwegian captain had not above twenty head of horned cattle, and as many sheep and swine. The Finns paid rent in skin, feathers, whalebone, and ropes for shipping. (The proprietors of these lands were evidently Goths, the conquering tribe.) Otter further said, that the country of the Northmen (Norway) was long and narrow, cultivated on the sea coast, but to the east overlooked by wild barren mountains. Yet Finns inhabited them even in the ninth century,—a proof that they were tributary to these Goths, especially as we may infer from this Norwegian's account that they were the only people that paid rent: the dominant race were freeholders. Opposite to this country of the Northmen, in the south, was *Swevland*, or Sweden; and to the north, the country opposite was *Cwenaland*, or that portion of the region between the Gulf of Bothnia and Mount Sevo. "These Cwenas," says Otter, "frequently asailed the Northmen, and the Northmen were no less inclined to pass the mountains against the Cwenas. From Halgoland, where Otter dwelt, to the north of the land inhabited by the Northmen, is a great distance, — so great that no one could reach it by sea in a month." To be brief, the whole course of the navigation from the extremity of Norway to the south of Jutland, is so minutely described, as to render it impossible for any one to mistake the localities intended, or to refuse credit to the relation of this old Norwegian navigator. *

The distinction, for which we have given some reasons, between the various tribes of the north, is now acknowledged by all the native writers, and by all

* Apud Langebek, Scriptores Rerum Danicarum, tom. ii.

foreigners, who have paid much attention to the subject. "The followers of the historic Odin," says a living writer, "were the Sviar, known unto Tacitus under the name of Suiones; and the inhabitants whom they found in the country were another tribe of Goths, who had emigrated thither at a remote period, veiled from the eye of history. The primitive people by whom it was occupied, were the Jotnar and Dwarfs; the Feuni of Tacitus; the Skrithfiuni of Procopius, and the Cwenas and Finnas mentioned by the Norwegian navigator to king Alfred. They were gradually expelled, and driven further north, towards the arctic circle, by the Goths and Sviar, with whom they maintained perpetual war, embittered by religious rancour, often represented, in the fictions of the northern age, under the allegory of a contest between the celestial deities and the giants or evil genii." But of this subject more hereafter, when we come to the exploits and policy of Odin.*

Of the Scandinavians, prior to the arrival of Odin, and, indeed, for centuries after that event, little, as far as regards their domestic history, is known. Rejecting wholly, as fabulous, the boast of native writers, that they had *monarchs* centuries before the foundation of Rome; we may, however, admit that they had kings — or, if the reader pleases, local judges — in time of peace, and military chieftains in war. There is reason to think that their chieftains, who assumed the regal title, were at one period, and, indeed, generally, exceedingly numerous. "At this time," says a chronicler, speaking of the age following our Saviour's birth, "there were *many* kings in the north." Sweden had a dozen of them; Norway no fewer than eighteen; Jutland had usually two; and the various islands composing the rest of the Danish monarchy, had each one. As in the heroic age of Greece, so in that of Scandinavia, the same condition of society produced the same form of government. Of these reguli, some were probably hereditary, some elective; some were certainly prin-

* Wheaton, History, p. 119.

cipal, others tributary. This distinction was the result, first, of some fancied superiority in the family of certain princes, but in a greater degree of their superior success. In Norway, for instance, the Finnish family of Fornjoter (Forniot) was esteemed the most ancient, and was that to which all the princes of that country referred their origin. But let us not forget that little dependence is to be placed on the alleged progenitors of these reguli, or the names of the reguli themselves, or their respective order of succession, or on the deeds attributed to them. All is darkness, uncertainty, contradiction. In the history of Norway, for instance, we are referred to Swedish kings as contemporary, whom the history of the latter kingdom places many generations before or after the alleged period. This is more strikingly the case in regard to the Danish and Swedish kings. In the history of the one we are referred to that of the other; yet the latter, in a majority of cases, have not one syllable on the subject. Names and events, on which the destinies of each country seems to turn, are mentioned by one class of historians, and passed over by another as having had no existence. But if so little reliance is to be placed on these regal successions, we must not lose sight of the fact, that were they and the events ascribed to them wholly fabulous (yet wholly fabulous they are not, since tradition does not so much create as amplify and distort), they would still demand our attention. Reject them, and nine tenths of northern history must be rejected with them. And these traditionary songs, which form the entire history of the north, deserve our notice in another respect—they supply us with the best, the only picture of national manners. For this reason, we shall cast a hasty glance at the more remarkable events which Saxo represents as prior to the Odinic times, but which, in fact, were subsequent.

Of the Swedish and Norwegian history, during this fabulous or mythologic, or, at best, doubtful period, we

* Depping, Histoire des Expeditions Maritimes des Normands, tom. i. Wheaton, History of the Northmen.

have little information beyond what is afforded us by the historian of Denmark, and he only mentions them incidentally. Not so in regard to the Danish themselves, which, thanks to his romantic bias and untiring industry, are sufficiently well known to us.

Prior to the reign of *Dan*, the son of Humble, Denmark, like the whole of the north, was subject to chiefs — whether hereditary or elective we need not inquire. But such a form of government had its evils. A hundred tyrants were more galling than one; and Dan, who gave his name to the nation, was invested with an authority superior to the other chiefs, and with the regal title. On his death, the sceptre passed by election, and not by inheritance, into the hands of his son *Humble;* but the people found that monarchy, too, has its curses, though they are neither so numerous nor so great as those inseparable from an aristocracy. *Lother*, the brother of Humble, revolted, was victorious, and enabled to usurp the regal dignity. As he had been a rebellious subject, so he made a tyrannical king. The most illustrious of the Danes he deprived of property or life, until a conspiracy served him as he had served so many others. *Skiold*, the son of Lother, was raised to the vacant dignity, a proof (always supposing the traditionary guides of Saxo to be worthy of credit) that the hereditary principle has great force even in the most ancient forms of society; indeed, the application of this principle to the chief magistracy of the state, is the natural and almost inevitable result of the patriarchal system — a system which we all know to be coëval with the existence of the world. Skiold was the Hercules of his age; and at a time when wild beasts disputed with man the empire of the forest, he was a greater benefactor than if he were merely a warrior. Even in his youth he was a prodigy; he would seize and fetter the most savage bear, leaving to his followers the less noble task of despatching the monster. Yet he frequently struggled with the bravest of his own species; no wrestler of Scandinavia could

withstand him; in a single combat, he overthrew the duke of the Alemanni or Swabians, his army and that of his enemy being spectators; reduced that people to the condition of tributaries, and returned home in triumph, accompanied by the daughter of the duke, the beautiful Awilda, whom he made the partner of his throne. Nor was he less distinguished for wisdom than for valour. He was a legislator: bad laws he abolished, and enacted such as were required by an improved state of society. He was a great friend to the poor and the afflicted; the debts of others he often paid from his own treasury; the spoils taken in battle he uniformly abandoned to his followers; and it was one of his noble sayings, that, while money was the reward of the soldier, glory was enough for the general. So much esteemed, indeed, was this prince, that his posterity were glad to derive additional distinction from his name; and the Skioldungs, or the descendants of Skiold, were long dear to Denmark.*

Gram, the son of Skiold, and the fifth king, was endowed with equal strength and equal enterprise, and his life was more romantic. His first consort was the daughter of his tutor or governor, a grim old chief; but thinking this lady beneath him, or, more probably, anxious to reward his brother in arms, Bessus, he soon bestowed her upon that hero. The dearer the gift, the greater the merit of the action; nor are similar instances of liberality wanting in other pagan heroes of the north. Probably Gram undervalued a conquest so easy as the wife he thus presented to his friend; and his ambition was roused by the hope of obtaining a lady whom nothing short of the highest courage could win. Gro, the daughter of Sigtrug, king of the Swedes, had been affianced to a giant, viz., a Jute or a Finn. Indignant at this prostitution of royal blood and virgin modesty, the Danish monarch, attended by his never-failing companion, Bessus, passed into Sweden, killed the relatives of Gro, subdued the country, and brought away

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. i.

the princess in triumph.* But, with all his valour, Gram was inconstant. Leading his army against the king of the Finns, he was so struck with the beauty of that monarch's daughter, that he was speedily converted from an enemy into a suitor ; and he obtained a promise of her hand on the condition of repudiating Gro. Scarcely, however, had he left the Finnish territory, when a Saxon duke arrived, courted the lady, and the nuptial day was appointed. But he was not of a temper to bear this insult. Leaving his troops, he repaired silently and quickly into Finland, assumed a mean disguise, entered the royal palace, and took a humble seat. Being asked what brought him there, he replied, his profession as leech — a character held sacred in all ancient communities, and sure of access to every house. As he had expected, the assembled guests were soon steeped in drunkenness. According to the manner of the times, he sung his own exploits, beheaded the unsuspecting bridegroom, prostrated many of the attendants to the earth, and bore away the princess to his vessel, which awaited him on the coast. But his end was fatal. By Swibdager, king of Norway, he was deprived of empire and of life ; his dominions became the prize of the victor ; and his two infant sons, Guthrum and Hadding, were secretly carried to Sweden, and confided to the charge of two giants.†

Here Saxo is careful to explain what he means by the word *giant*. There were, he assures us, three species. First, there were the vulgar giants ; those who excelled all mankind in bodily stature. Next, were the wise men, who were as much inferior to the former in bulk, as they were superior in knowledge : these penetrated into the secret workings of nature, and were enemies of the monster giants, whom they subdued. Like the Persian magi, they struggled for, and

* The poetical dialogues of Gro with Bessus and Gram — dialogues in which Saxo (lib. i. p. 7, &c.) has put forth all his imagination and all his knowledge of Latin versification—may amuse the learned reader. We have no disposition to translate them.

† Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. i.

obtained, the chief power of the state wherever they settled, and arrogated to themselves a divine, no less than a regal, authority; in short, they were expert magicians, able to delude all mankind by their prestiges. Next, we have the third class of giants, who were the offspring of the two preceding, and were inferior to one parent in magnitude of body, to the other in knowledge; yet, in both respects, they were above the ordinary standard of our nature, and were thought, by their deluded admirers, to inherit some portion of divinity. After this sage distinction, the Danish ecclesiastic observes, that we ought not to be surprised at the credulity of the northmen, for were not the Romans, though the wisest of men, equally credulous? Whatever may be thought of that distinction, or of the personages whom he has drawn from everlasting obscurity, of the existence of this credulity we have abundant evidence; and it furnishes one of the best comments on the manners and opinions of the times. *

Swibdager, the conqueror of Gram, and the sixth king of Denmark, found the weight of three crowns too much for one brow. At the entreaty, therefore, of Gro, the divorced queen of Gram, he recalled her son Guthrum from exile, and placed him, as a vassal, on the throne. This prince was naturally despised as the slave of a foreign prince. Not so his brother *Hadding*, who, preferring liberty to a dependent court, and the hope of avenging his father's death to the smiles of that father's murderer, remained in exile, and with him were the hearts of Denmark. Of all the ancient heroes of the monarchy, this is, perhaps, the most celebrated. Wondrous, indeed, were his actions. While a youth, he inflamed the heart of Hardgrip, the giant daughter of his giant foster-father, who urged him to make a corresponding return. How could he love a giantess? Was he — whom she could, almost, inclose in one of her hands — a fit match for her? The thing was impossible. "By no means," was the reply,

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. i.

"We of the superhuman breed can change, at pleasure, our forms, and even our substances; in short, we can reach the clouds, or reduce ourselves to your size." The royal youth consented; and never had man a more useful or more faithful companion. Her magical knowledge was of more avail to him than her valour, for in that he could equal her; but she could furnish him with superior weapons, defend him from unseen danger, and cure his wounds where human aid would have been useless. At length, perceiving that he yearned to revisit his native country, she resolved to accompany him. On their journey, they one night arrived at a house where a corpse was duly laid out, until the mournful funeral rites were celebrated. Here was an opportunity of consulting the will of the gods, and the magic giantess availed herself of it. Producing a piece of wood on which certain verses of might, in Runic characters, were inscribed*, she caused it to be placed under the tongue of the deceased by Hadding. The effect was instantaneous: the corpse began to speak, and to utter the direst anathemas on her who had disturbed the repose of the dead. It predicted her immediate destruction in a neighbouring wood. No sooner, indeed, had they reached the wood, and erected their tent for the night, than a huge hand was seen to move around them. The terrified Hadding called on his companion for help; and she, dilating her body to a great extent, was able to seize the hand, and present it for amputation to the prince. From the wound issued more venom than blood. But the victory was dearly purchased; the gigantic witch was torn to pieces by the irritated powers of darkness. "Neither her supernatural condition," says Saxo, "nor her vast bulk, availed her." Hadding, however, did not much

* In the Scandinavian superstition every rune was consecrated to some deity. Nearly all the magic of the north consisted in runes. They could raise or allay tempests; they could change times, and they could bring the most distant objects together. They could produce good or bad seasons; they could raise the dead: in short, they were omnipotent over all nature, — the invisible no less than the visible world.

suffer by the event: a wise old man with one eye, pitying his disconsolate situation, provided him with a brother in arms, a celebrated pirate, and both entered into what was considered the holiest of compacts in the manner of the times, viz., each besmeared the footsteps of the other with his own blood. The two heroes being conquered by a chief on whom they made war, the same old man took Hadding on horseback to his own mysterious seat, and both renovated and prodigiously fortified him by a magic drink. At the same time a metrical prophecy told him how he was to escape from the captivity which impended over him. Who was this unknown benefactor? On his return to the place whence he was taken, he could perceive, through the folds of his mantle, that he was conveyed over the sea. The horse which bore him was evidently a demon, obedient to Odin, the god of the north. *

After some great exploits in the east, to which his ardour, no less than his fear of Swibdager, bore him, Hadding returned to Scandinavia. In a sea-fight he defeated and slew his enemy, and thus became sovereign of Denmark, or, we should say, of the Danish islands, — for Jutland and Scania obeyed different princes. Asmund, the son of Swibdager, he thus transformed into a foe, and a foe, too, greatly to be dreaded. In a battle which ensued, finding that the tide of success was against him, he silently invoked the aid of the wizard giant Wagnoft, the father of his deceased mistress, Hardgrip. Wagnoft obeyed the spell, and was immediately by his side. Asmund lost the battle, and fell; but in his last moments he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had rendered Hadding lame for life. And he had another kind of joy, dear enough to a pagan: his wife Gunhilda, disdaining to survive him, slew herself with his sword, and was laid in the same grave with him. An invasion of his own country by Uffo, the son of Asmund, prevented Hadding from

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. i. p. 10, &c., edit. Stephanii, Sorœ, 1644.

pursuing his advantage; but the following spring he again invaded Sweden; but his ranks were thinned, alike, by famine and disease. His men were obliged to feed on their horses; next, on their dogs; and, lastly, on each other. To increase their consternation, a nocturnal voice assured them of great evils. The following night, even, another unknown voice threatened the Swedes with destruction. Both armies, therefore, were alarmed; each had a supernatural enemy, while each was perhaps unconscious that it had, also, a supernatural friend. That same night the two armies engaged; when, behold! two aged men, of a form larger than the human, were seen by the light of the stars in the battle, — one for the Swedes, the other for the Danes. The latter were subdued, and their king glad to flee to his own country. But misfortune pursued him. One day, as he was cooling his limbs in the waters of the sea, he perceived a fish different from any that he had ever seen; as it was near the shore, he killed it, and it was taken to his camp. But what was his consternation when a sea-nymph appeared, and denounced direct vengeance on his head! He had killed one of the gods under the form of a fish. Henceforth the elements should be hostile to him; if he ventured on the deep, his vessel should be wrecked by the fury of the tempest; on land, the house which received him should, by a tempest, also be levelled with the ground; his flocks should perish in the fields; every place which he visited should be cursed for his sake: and this dreadful doom was to remain in force until he had propitiated the divine wrath by frequent sacrifices. The mandate was not to be despised; during the course of a year altars perpetually smoked with oxen immolated to Fro, the awful deity of the winds. *

The life of Hadding was full of portents and marvels. Scarcely had he rescued the princess Regnilda of Norway from the obligation of marrying a giant, by

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. i. p. 10, &c., edit. Stephanii, Soræ, 1644.

killing the monster, and making her his bride, than a most wonderful adventure befell him. One winter evening, as he was supping with his bride, a woman like a culler of simples was seen to raise her head from the ground close by the hearth, and inquired whether the king did not wish to know where such herbs grew at that season of the year. He replied, that he should very much wish to know. Hearing this, she enveloped him in his own mantle, and sank with him into the ground. What they saw in this subterranean journey bears some resemblance to the descriptions which have been given us of the Scandinavian world of spirits. They first entered a dark path, worn out by the feet of many travellers, and here they perceived some great ones of the earth, — some in purple and gold, — whose doom appeared to consist in their indefinite windings. Passing them, they entered a region of some fertility, whence the woman had derived her simples. Farther still, they reached a river of precipitate course and black waters, which rolled along the weapons of many heroes, and over which a bridge conducted them to a different region. One of the first objects that met their eyes was two armies engaged in deadly strife. "Who are these?" demanded Hadding. "These," replied the sorceress, "are they who fell in battle; and it is their delight in this world continually to imitate their martial deeds in the other." At length they reached a high wall, totally impassable. The woman, indeed, made no attempt to scale it; but, twisting off the head of a cock which she had brought with her, she threw it over; when, behold! the cock began to crow as if nothing had been done to it! Unable to proceed further, the adventurous travellers returned to the palace.*

The rest of this monarch's life must be hastily despatched. He triumphed over Uffo, who fell in battle, and bestowed the vacant throne of Sweden on Hunding, brother of the deceased monarch. His last days were embittered by the unnatural conduct of his

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. i.

daughter Ulwilda, who, with her husband, planned his destruction. Though he escaped all the snares of his enemies, at length he laid violent hands upon himself, leaving the throne of Denmark, and the superiority over that of Sweden, to his eldest son, Frode I.*

Frode I. was also a great warrior, and he carried his depredations from Russia to the British islands, on which, unfortunately for the natives, he made a longer stay than kings, whose sole object was plunder, were accustomed to make. If there were any truth in the Danish account of this period, Scotland and South Britain were in frequent intercourse with the northern kingdom, — sometimes for war and sometimes for peace. But these accounts are all to be distrusted. Events which happened at a much later period have been removed to the one before us; and the basis has been so much overlaid by fable, that no ingenuity can separate the true from the false. — When Frode commenced his reign, he found the treasury empty. How replenish it? By an expedient frequently to be found in Scandinavian legends. On a solitary island, a dragon, formidable alike for size and venom, brooded over immense riches. The youthful monarch hastened to the spot, entered the cave, fought and killed the serpent, and brought away the golden hoard. Whether there be any meaning in this and similar fables has been much disputed: probably, however, it had a foundation, and the dragon may have been some terrible pirate whom Frode destroyed, and whose subterraneous riches he seized. This unexpected supply, we are told, enabled him to pursue his expeditions on various coasts of Europe. But we have no inclination to follow him. We may, however, allude to the way in which he gained possession of London; because the same expedient is often to be found in northern writers. Despairing of the reduction of a place so well defended, he caused a report to be spread that he had suddenly died in his tent. Permission was asked to bury him in one

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. i.

of the temples of the city, and was granted. On the day appointed, the pretended corpse was borne through the gates; a great number of Danes attended to do honour to their monarch; but, under the garb of mourning, they hid their weapons of war; and, on a signal being given, they threw off the mockery of woe, assailed the Britons, and took the city by surprise.*

Of the immediate successors of this monarch little is known. *Haldan*, his son, was a great warrior, who put his own brother to death, and was hated by the people. *Roe*, the son of Haldan, was a quiet prince, mean in stature, but with a mind whose care it was to make his subjects happy. *Helge*†, his brother and successor, with whom, during his own life, he had shared the throne, was also a prince of great qualities; but his vices were still greater. "Whether his lust or his tyranny were more intolerable," says the historian, "is very doubtful." His amours are too disgusting to be recorded. At length, seeing the execration in which he was held, he bade adieu to his country; and it proved a final adieu. According to report, he fell on his own sword. In the reigns of these princes, we have no mention of the Norwegian sovereigns; but those of Sweden — let us not forget that it is a Dane who writes — are represented as still dependent on Denmark.‡ *Rolf* (or Rollo) succeeded his father, and was much beloved by his subjects.§ He fell through the treachery of a brother-in-law, who was excited to the deed by the sister of Rolf. Daughters conspiring against fathers, sisters against brothers, wives against husbands, are among the common events of Scandinavian history. As this prince died without issue, the Danish states elected for their monarch *Hoder*, a descendant of the famous Hadding, who had

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. ii. p. 20, &c.

† Both Roe and Helge reigned some centuries after the time fixed by Saxo, — as recently as the fifth century of the Christian era.

‡ Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. ii.

§ Whether there was any other Rolf than the celebrated Rolf Krake, who is thought to have reigned in the sixth century after Christ, is doubtful. The best northern writers admit of no other.

been educated by Gewar, a king of Norway. As it is in the reign of this latter monarch that Odin is again introduced on the stage of northern history, — his first appearance being referred by Saxo to the time of Hadding, — we can no longer refuse to notice what antiquity records with respect to him. In this, as in other parts of this introduction, the reader may admit or reject what he pleases.*

According to Saxo, this personage was a mortal, king of the Hellespont, who laid claim to the honours of divinity, and was actually worshipped by most of Europe. His profound knowledge of magic procured him the character. His ordinary residence was Byzantium; but he held Upsal, which he frequently visited, in much esteem. Anxious to testify their respect for this new deity, the kings of the north cast a golden statue in his honour, adorned it with bracelets and other costly ornaments, and sent it to Byzantium. It was received by Odin with great joy, and placed in the temple of the gods. But Frigga, the wife of Odin, whom Saxo judges to be quite worthy of such a husband, stript the statue of its ornaments to adorn herself. The incensed deity hung the mechanics who acted by her orders; and, for greater security, placed the image on a high pedestal, and, by his wonderful art, rendered it vocal to human touch. But when was female vanity cured? To secure the aid of a domestic of the temple, Frigga did not hesitate to grant him the last favour; and, by his aid, the gold being again abstracted, again adorned her person. This two-fold injury was too much for a god to withstand; and Odin left the country for a season, until the public discourse, like a nine days' wonder, had evaporated itself into empty air. During his absence, several persons — probably priests of his own temple — arrogated to themselves the attributes of divinity. These, on his return, he forced not only to lay down their borrowed honours, but to flee from the country. Among them, one is

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. ii.

mentioned whose case affords a curious illustration of popular superstition. Mitothin was a great magician, and had long enjoyed the favour of the gods. But they were incensed with his impiety, while he no longer paid them the slightest homage. On the return of Odin he fled to Fionia, and was killed by the inhabitants. In his tomb, however, he was amply revenged: he introduced into the whole region various kinds of plague; he destroyed multitudes of the inhabitants; until they, one day, opened his sepulchre, exhumed his body, cut off his head, and drove a stake through the corpse: then the mysterious visitation was at an end. He is, probably, the first vampire on record.*

The account of Snorro Sturleson, who followed Norwegian, not Danish authorities, differs in many respects from the preceding. He informs us that the seat of Odin's power, both temporal and spiritual, was Asgard, a place of extraordinary sanctity east of the Tanais. Over the temple were twelve pontiffs, whose duty was the twofold one of sacrificing and administering the laws: they were called *driar* or *drottnar*, — lords, — and were held in much veneration. At the head of this theocratic state was Odin, who was at perpetual war with his neighbours, and on whose arms success always shone. So great, indeed, was this success, that he was called the father of victory. When he sent out his generals on any expedition, he was accustomed to lay his hands on their heads and predict a fortunate issue to the undertaking. Hence the peculiar veneration attached to his character. His followers regarded him as a god; in dangers and perils of any kind — on land, on deep — whether he were present or absent — they invoked his name, and ascribed all their prosperity to him. His expeditions, even to remote countries, were frequent; and during his absence the sovereignty was

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. i. p. 12., edit. Stephanii, Soræ, 1644. The diffusion of this superstitious notion is a curious subject of speculation. In Hungary, Russia, Wallachia, Greece, Crete, &c. it is rife

administered by his two brothers. The Vanir, who are said to have been his neighbours, he so harassed, that they sued for peace: the conditions were framed, and hostages given for their punctual observance. Niord the Rich, and Freyr his son, were surrendered by the Vanir; Haenir and Mimir by the Aser. In a short time, however, the former perceiving that their confidence was abused by the hostages of Odin, cut off the head of Mimir and sent it to Asgard. By his magic art, Odin so enchanted the head that it became his oracle: it conversed with him whenever he pleased, and acquainted him with many hidden things, both of nature and of fate. Niord and Freyr, he won over to his own interests by investing them with the dignity of the priesthood, and, consequently, with some portion of divinity. The same honours were conferred on Freya, the sister of Freyr, who taught the Aser the magic which she had learned among her countrymen, the Vanir.—At length, the victorious arms of the Romans approached the kingdom of Asheim; and Odin, learning from the fates that settlements were provided for him in the north of Europe, left his two brothers with the sovereignty of Asheim, and, attended by a great multitude of followers, advanced into the west. In his progress through Germany he placed his sons over the states which his arms reduced. He then passed northward, and fixed his seat at Odensey (Odin's Island). From thence he despatched Gefio, one of his prophetesses, to make proselytes in the neighbouring regions; and she was well received by both Gylfe, king of Sweden, and by the Jutes. They did not, indeed, embrace her religious faith; but they gave her lands and revered her as one of the chief supports of magic. In the sequel she married Skiold, the son of Odin, who reigned over the Danish islands. Odin, himself, advanced into Sweden, and forced Gylfe to cede to him the eastern part of that kingdom. He established his seat at Sigtuna, where he caused temples to be erected and sacrifices to be offered. Thence his

authority and his worship were diffused throughout Germany and Scandinavia.*

The qualities of this extraordinary man are the favourite theme of the Swedish and Norwegian chroniclers. He was the father, says Snorro, of all the arts in northern Europe. He could change his looks at pleasure. To his friends he was exceedingly beautiful, and their hilarity he was always desirous to promote. To his enemies, especially in battle, he seemed a demon: the countenance which before was so exquisitely attractive, now inspired terror and death. Such was his eloquence that he captivated all who heard him, and he always spoke in verse: hence he was called the artificer of song; and from him northern poetry had its origin. In imitation of him all the magicians of Scandinavia couched their incantations in metrical numbers: indeed, he had so warranted the example, that the most potent runes would, in popular opinion, have lost their efficiency had they been in prose. By these verses Odin could, in the hour of battle, strike his enemies with blindness, with deafness, or with panic fear, and render their sharpest weapons blunt as twigs. By the same means he could render his own men as furious wolves, strong as bears or bulls, and invulnerable to steel or fire. Often, while his body lay supine, he would assume another form, — that of fish, serpent, or wild beast, — and in a moment hasten to the remotest parts. At his mere command, fire ceased to burn, the wind to blow, and the sea to rage; and the elements moved in what direction he pleased. He had a wonderful ship, called Skidbladner, which he could fold up like a handkerchief, yet which carried him through the most dangerous seas. — According to the latter Edda, this ship was built by the dwarfs, — probably the Lapps, so called to distinguish them from the Jutish giants, — who were rather the allies than the enemies of the gods. Small

* Ynglinga Saga, cap. i.—v. (apud Heimskringlam, tom. i. p. 1—10., edit. Hafn., 1777).

as this vessel was, — since it could be easily carried in a pocket or in the palm of the hand, — yet, when expanded, all the gods, completely armed, could sit in it." And it had another wonderful property: the moment the sails were unfurled, a favourable wind was sure to rise, and bear the passengers wherever they wished to go. Then there was the embalmed head of Mimir, which acquainted him with whatever he wished to know. And he had two ravens which he endowed with the gift of speech, and which, continually flying over the earth, brought him intelligence of everything that happened. Sometimes he summoned the dead from their graves: hence he was called the Lord of the Tombs. He was profoundly versed in the art called *seid*, — the art which foretold events, which induced or removed death, sickness, pain, and all the ills of mankind. He knew all the treasures concealed in the bowels of the earth, the incantations which could open them, the laws which governed the fairy inhabitants of the mountains, the stream, and the rock: their motions were regulated by his mere word. Hence his wide-spread fame; hence the confidence of his followers, and the terror of his enemies. Many were the arts which he taught his pontiffs, by which they were rendered nearly as wise and powerful as himself. He and his twelve pontiffs were worshipped as gods. The laws which he introduced were those anciently adopted by the Aser. He commanded the corpses of the dead to be consumed on the funeral pile, and with them the most valuable things of the deceased, affirming that whatever was thus consumed would accompany the hero to Valhalla, and still administer to his wants. The ashes of men in general were to be cast into the sea, or buried in the earth: only some of eminent dignity or merit were to have tombs erected in their honour. The first great sacrifice he ordered to be solemnised on the approach of winter, as a thanksgiving for the gifts of the year; the second, in midwinter, for another propitious season; the third, in

summer, for victory over all enemies. On every head a tax was laid, and the produce was expended in the defence of the kingdom, in the sustentation of the temples, and in public sacrifices.*

Whether Odin ever existed, — whether himself and his alleged Asiatics are not mere creatures of the imagination, — whether they are not purely mythologic, and referrible to an Asiatic source, at a period lost in the depths of antiquity, have long exercised the ingenuity of writers. In matters of pure history it is certainly better to err on the side of scepticism than of credulity; but in the present instance we cannot discover sufficient grounds for the former opinion. That he existed, and at no distant period antecedent to the invasion of England by the Saxons, is affirmed, alike, by written testimony and tradition. According to that venerable and most inestimable relic of antiquity, the "Saxon Chronicle," all the princes of the nation derived their origin from the deified hero; and the number of generations between him and the reigning king are minutely recorded. Thus, from Odin to Cerdic, A.D. 495, are ten generations; from Odin to Ida, A.D. 547. the same number; from Odin to Ella, A.D. 560, twelve; from Odin to Ceolwulf, A.D. 597, thirteen; from Odin to Penda, A.D. 626, twelve; from Odin to Offa, A.D. 755, sixteen; from Odin to Ethelwolf, A.D. 854, twenty-three generations. In all these lists the intervening chain, from the wizard king to his Saxon descendant, are carefully specified. In the same manner the series of northern kings, from the sons of Odin, who were placed by him over the thrones of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, is progressively detailed. Thus, in Denmark, the generations from Skiold, the son of Odin, to Ragnar Lodbrok, A.D. 794, are twenty-five. In Sweden, from Niord (the *adopted* son, perhaps, of Odin) to Olaf, A.D. 630, are twenty-three generations. In Norway, the succession of kings from the same Niord, to Harald Harfager, the first *monarch* of that country, A.D. 934, are

* Ynglinga Saga, cap. v.—vii.

twenty-eight. We think that these genealogical series, so carefully, so minutely particularised, afford a presumption, at least, that the pontiff king of the north both lived and reigned at a period not very far distant from our Saviour's birth. Not that the subject is without its difficulties. The events ascribed to Odin's times have, by many writers, been deemed inapplicable to any century within the known history of the world. Hence, some have removed him to the age immediately following the flood; some, to the seventh century after that event; some, to the age of Darius Hystaspes; others, to that of Philip, king of Macedon; others, to less than two centuries before Christ; while another party contends that he was more recent still, and that Ariovistus, whom Cæsar conquered, was one of his sons. Where so much contradiction, so much absurdity abound, our only guide, in the absence of positive evidence, is reason; and this confirms the generally received opinion, that this personage is of far less antiquity than was formerly supposed. Not that many of his rites, many of his notions, many, perhaps, of his alleged actions, are not more ancient. There is, indeed, some reason to infer that they were known in Asiatic Scythia, a thousand years before his time. But this fate is not peculiar to Odin; it has been that of all celebrated men. Whoever has entered profoundly into the history of tradition, must be aware that legends which were formerly applicable to the most ancient characters, were applied to comparatively modern ones, when the latter had been dead long enough to permit the imagination to invest them with new attributes. Thus, many which have been related of Charlemagne's heroes,—of Charlemagne himself,— of the crusaders, especially of our Cœur de Lion's age, were once the glory of pagans, and were derived from a northern or an oriental source, before Normans, Franks, or Angles were known.*

So much for direct and positive evidence, which is

* Langebek, Scriptores Rerum Danicarum, tom. i. pp. 7, 8. Torfœus, Historia Norvegica, tom. i. p. 138, &c.

strongly confirmed by inference. The Goths, like all the Scythians, were accustomed to deify their deceased heroes. This is expressly affirmed by several writers, especially by Adam of Bremen; and heroes are mentioned, who, we find, were deified. Thus, Armin, or Ermin, the courageous supporter of Germanic independence against the Romans, was worshipped as a god; and his famous idol, which was called, after his name, Irminsul, drew multitudes of pagans to the Isle of Rugen: it was, indeed, regarded as the palladium of Germanic liberty. The facility with which kings and heroes were deified is still more strikingly illustrated in the life of St. Anscar, the apostle of the Scandinavians. Alarmed at the success which attended the preaching of that admirable missionary (this was about the middle of the ninth century), the priests of the Odinian worship had recourse to a bold imposture. By their contrivance a man suddenly appeared in the Swedish capital, who affirmed that he had just attended a general meeting of the gods, and that he was bearer of a communication from them to king Olaf and his people. The substance of it was, that the ancient deities had always been most indulgent to the Swedes; that, hitherto, they had found no reason to complain of an ungrateful return from their worshippers; that now, however, there was a sad decline in the sacrifices and other proofs of devotion; and that their wrath was erpecially excited by the introduction of a new deity,—of one peculiarly hostile to the gods of the kingdom. "If," added they, "you Swedes really wish to increase the number of gods, we will readily admit your departed king, Eric, to the honours of deification." That the proposal was accepted — that a temple was immediately erected to Eric — that his altars perpetually smoked with sacrifices,— are among the most indubitable facts of history. Hence, there is nothing unreasonable in the deification of Odin; indeed, he could not have avoided the honour. One so celebrated as he was, — a great warrior, a great legislator, the founder of a new empire,

and of a new religion, — assuredly could not fail to be invested with the same honours as an Armin or an Eric. Indeed, as it was the obvious policy of the Asiatic followers of Odin to represent the authority of their pontiff king and his successors as founded on divine, not on human, sanction,—as that authority was avowedly theocratic, — he must, of necessity, have been regarded as a god, if not in his lifetime, immediately after his decease. *

The temporal no less than the spiritual government of Odin, and the social superiority of his immediate followers over the inhabitants he found in Sweden, drew our attention in the early pages of this Introduction. Our opinions on this subject are strongly confirmed by a judicious living writer. "Odin founded the empire of the Sviar, which was originally confined to a small territory around the Mœlar Sea, in the present Swedish province of Upland, called the lesser Svíthójd, in contrast to the greater Svíthjód, or Scythia, whence they migrated, and Mannaheim, or the Home of Man, in contrast to the celestial abode of As-gard. By degrees the Sviar, as the leading tribe governed by the pontiff kings, the immediate descendants of Odin, and having the custody of the great temple at Sigtun, the principal seat of the new superstition, acquired an ascendancy over the Goths, who possessed the more southern tract of country called Gautland, Götland, or Göta-rike. This precedence of the Sviar over the Goths is established by the express terms of the ancient fundamental law of their joint empire, according to which the 'king was elected by the national assembly of all the Swedes (*â Ting allra Svia*), at the Mora-Stone, in the plain near Upsal, and the assembly of all the Goths (*Ting allra Göta*), shall re-elect or confirm him.' † This distinction between the two tribes is constantly preserved in the traditions

* S. Rembertus, Vita S. Anscarii (apud Bollandistas, Acta S. S. die Feb. iii. Adamus Bremensis, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. i. cap. 12. &c. Konung Olaf Trygvason's Saga, apud Snorronem Sturlonem Heimskringla tom. ii.).

† Ihre, Dissert. de Institutione Regum Suio-Gothorum, ed. Upsala, 1752. — Geijr, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 432.

and annals of the middle ages, and the division between the Svia and Göta-rike is strongly marked by a chain of mountains running between Södermanland and East Gothland. It is also recognised at this day in the constitution of the supreme judicial tribunals called the Svea and Götha Hofrät, established during the reign of Gustavus Adolphus, and to which a third has been recently added for the provinces of Scania and Bleking.

"One of the ancient documents which throws the most light upon the history of the heroic age in the north, is the most recently published of the Eddaic poems, called *Rigs-mál*. The prince of that name is said to have been the son of Skjold, and, according to the chronology of Suhm, reigned in Scania about the end of the second century of the Christian era.* This poem contains a minute classification of the different orders of society, personified as the children of king Rig, who is supposed to have divided them into distinct castes, assigning to each its respective rank in the social scale. As a literary composition, it resembles the Anglo-Saxon poem of Bjówulf, and all other genuine traditionary poems or romances of uncivilised nations, in its unpretending and Homeric simplicity of style and incidents. In this respect it has been justly called one of the most curious and interesting 'manners-painting strains' that have been preserved and handed down to posterity.† The effects of the original Gothic migration and conquest in Scandinavia are here distinctly marked in the features of the slave caste, descended from the aboriginal Finns, and distinguished from their conquerors by black hair and complexion, as well as the squalid poverty and misery in which they were compelled to live. The caste of freemen and freeholders, lords of the soil which they cultivated, and descended from the Gothic conquerors, with their reddish hair, fair complexion, and all the traits which peculiarly

* Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. i. p. 81. Critiske, Historie, tom. vii. p. 474.

† Jameison's Illustrations of Northern Antiquities, p. 444.

mark that famous race, — is in like manner personified in a vivid description of a single family. Then comes the caste of the illustrious Jarls and the Herser, earls and barons, who are distinguished from the others by their still fairer hair and skin, by their noble employments and manners, from whom descend the kingly race, skilled in Runic science, in manly exercises, and the military art.

"We have, here, the early history of the Scandinavians traced in a few lines; but these are strongly marked, and confirmed by all the traditions of the ancient north, respecting the different races of men by which the country was successively occupied.* The first Gothic emigrants subdued the Celto-Finnish tribes, who were the primitive inhabitants of the country, and reduced them to servitude, or drove them, first, to the mountains, and then to the desert wilds and fastnesses of Norrland, Lapland, and Finland. Here the Jötnar, as they were called by their Gothic invaders, continued to adhere to the grovelling superstition of their fathers, which was that form of polytheism which has been called Fetichism, or the adoration of beasts and birds, of stocks and stones, all the animate and inanimate works of creation. The antipathy between these two races, so continually alluded to in the songs and sagas of the mythic and heroic age, is significantly expressed in the legend of Njördr, who dwelt by the sea-side, and Skade, a mountain-nymph of the rival race of the Jötnar, whom he had espoused. She very naturally prefers her native abode on the Alpine heights, whilst he insists on dwelling where he can hear the roar of the ocean billows. At last, they compromise this matrimonial dissension by agreeing to pass nine nights alternately among the mountains, and three on the sea-shore. But Njördr soon tires of this compact, and vents his dissatisfaction in a lay to this effect: — 'How do I hate the mountain wilds! I have only passed nine

* F. Magnussen, Edda Sæmundi, tom. iii. Rigis-Mál, Intro., pp. 147—159 Geijr, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. pp. 486—495.

nights there; but how long and tedious did they seem! There one hears nothing but the howling of wolves, instead of the sweet notes of the swan.' To which Skade extemporises this response: — 'How can I rest on the sandy sea-shore, where my slumbers are every morning broken by the hideous screaming of the sea-gulls?' The result is, that she deserts her husband, and returns to the mountains, where her father dwells: there, snatching up her bow, and fastening on her snow-skates, she bounds over the hills in pursuit of the wild beasts. *

"The Sviar, who migrated with the historic Odin, achieved no forcible conquest over their national brethren of the Gothic tribe, by whom they had been preceded. The ascendancy of Odin and his followers over their predecessors was acquired and maintained by superstition, and their supposed superiority in magic and the other arts which win the confidence or influence the fears of a barbarous nation. The older worship of the primitive inhabitants, and of their conquerors, was modified by this new prophet, who, taking advantage of the pre-existing belief in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and the incarnation of divine spirits, so widely diffused among the ancient people of the earth, pretended to be the former Odin, who had again descended among his faithful Goths.† His worship thus soon supplanted that of the more ancient Odin, and the attributes and actions of both were gradually confounded together in the apprehension of the Scandinavians. But it did not supplant that of Thor, whom the primitive people of the north regarded as the elder and most beneficent of the deities. In him they worshipped the goodly elements of nature,—the light, the heat, and especially the thunder, shaking and purifying the atmosphere. This deity was principally revered in Norway; and, after its discovery and settlement, in Iceland: but

* See the prose Edda published by Prof. Rask, Stockholm, 1818, ch. xxiii. But Snorre, in his *Ynglinga Saga*, ch. ix., says that she married Odin afterwards, and that they had many children together.

† To this opinion we do not subscribe. We have no proof of the existence of two Odins.

he maintained his recognised equality with the other superior gods even in the great temple of Upsal, the principal seat of the northern superstition. His votaries formed a distinct sect, who were often engaged in deadly strife with the peculiar worshippers of Odin. The next deity in the Scandinavian hierarchy was Freyer, who represented the prolific powers of Nature, and, with his sister Freya, the Venus of this mythology, was principally revered in Sweden, Norway, and Iceland; whilst Odin and his son, Balder, were adored both at Upsal and Ledra as the peculiar national deities of the Gothic Danes and Sviar. The religion of the north, as it was at last modified by this new dispensation, in the conjoint adoration of Thor, Odin, and Freyer, bore a strong family likeness to the three principles of Schamanism, or the faith professed by the votaries of the Dalai Lama in central Asia. This correspondence points most significantly to its origin; and the filiation of religious creeds and forms of worship thus combines with that of language to trace the present people of the north to the remotest regions of the East." *

The temporal government established by Odin was perpetuated through his sons. Thus Heimdall was placed over Scania, the original seat of the Danes. Semming had Norway. From another son sprung the Ynglings, who reigned for many centuries in Sweden and Norway. Skiold, a fourth son, led a colony into Zealand, which became the seat of a different kingdom; hence the Skioldungs, or the regal family of Denmark. And as to Balder, he was the king of the Angles, if any faith is to be placed in the "Saxon Chronicle." Thus, according to tradition, as embodied in the Icelandic and Norwegian sagas, and in other monuments of antiquity, Odin was the progenitor of all the great dynasties of the north. But in regard to some parts of Norway, we must not forget the family of *Nor*,—the mythologic, or rather mythic, Nor, whose

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, &c., tom. i. pp. 63—95. Wheaton, History of the Northmen.

fame was so widely spread, and from whom the whole country derived its name. Doubtless the native chiefs, those who descended from ancestors long antecedent to Odin's arrival, were proud enough of their descent, and too much attached to their ancient religion — more ancient than Odin's — to care for either the Asiatic conqueror or his attendant Drottnar. But the kings of the Aser, or divine race, whose chief deity was this very Odin, boasted of a spiritual pre-eminence, superior, by far, to their temporal. *

But, reverting to the narrative of Saxo, and the alleged succession of the Danish kings, Hoder, whom (as we have before observed) Gewar, a king in Norway, had educated, won the heart of Nanna, the daughter of his benefactor. She had, however, the misfortune to influence a divine lover, Balder, the son of Odin, who, like David, had seen her in the bath. As he knew of her attachment to Hoder, he resolved to remove that person by violence; but the latter had friends powerful as those of his enemy. One day, while hunting in the mountains, Hoder entered a cloud, and suddenly beheld a number of virgins, who, though bearing some resemblance to the maids of Norway, were in reality the fatal sisters. They accosted him by name, told him that his beloved Nanna had smitten the heart of Balder, but warned him not to attempt the life of the demi-god. They informed him that they were present, unseen, in all battles — that they were the arbiters of good and evil — and that they often assisted their mortal friends when assistance was most required. Saying this, they disappeared so quickly, that his eye could not follow them. On his return, he related to Gewar what he had seen, and besought the hand of Nanna. The old king had no objection to the match; but he dreaded the wrath of Balder, on whose charmed body mortal weapon could have no effect. He added, however,—for he was a great magician, — that there was a sword kept by Mimring, a satyr of the woods, with virtue enough to

* Wheaton, History of the Northmen, ch. vi. Ynglinga Saga, passim.

slay the demi-god. The same being had bracelets, of efficacy so wonderful, as greatly to increase the bodily strength of the possessor. But how obtain these miraculous gifts? The abode of the satyr was amidst rocks and snows, and almost inaccessible to man. Hoder was, however, to take his sledge and rein-deer; to reach the alpine solitudes; to pitch his tent, so that the shadow of the satyr's grove might fall upon it; and to watch day and night, with untiring patience, for the appearance of the mysterious occupant. The prince did as he was commanded; he fasted and watched, until one night, feigning to be asleep, he perceived the satyr attentively observing his tent. In a moment, he struck the monster, bound it with fetters, and threatened to kill it if it did not surrender the sword and bracelets. His life was dearer than those treasures. Hoder gained his object, and returned in triumph to the court of Gewar. The value of the treasure, indeed, was too great not to raise up rivals for its possession; and one king (Gelder, who has left his name to a well-known Dutch province), sailed with a powerful armament against him; but if it excited envy, it also aided its owner, and Hoder was victorious.*

In the mean time, Balder, terrible in arms, entered the dominions to obtain the fair Nanna by force, should entreaties be ineffectual. But she was deaf to the most honied flattery. Without betraying her attachment for Hoder, which would only place him in greater jeopardy, she represented in strong colours the inequality of the proposed marriage. "The chain which bound a god to a mortal," she observed, "could not be a lasting chain. When the fervour of passion had subsided, the superior being, despising his ill-assorted choice, would at once dissolve it." Balder had recourse to arms; and he was joined by the army of the gods, at the head of which were Odin and Thor. Here were fearful odds; but Hoder was not discouraged. His magic bracelets rendered him impenetrable to steel; and

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danorum, lib. iii. p. 89, &c.

though the hammer of Thor crushed everything on which it fell, he had the courage to meet the Scandinavian thunderer. With his wonderful sword he cut off the handle of the all-destructive weapon; so as to render it useless; and the gods, deprived of their great support, took refuge in flight. The victory was complete; the allies of the gods were destroyed; their bodies cast by the waves on the shores; and the victor performed the last rites to their manes. "Strange," concludes Saxo, "that gods could be thus routed by mortals!" But he accounts for the circumstance by gravely observing that they were deities in human estimation only, and not in reality. He evidently regards them merely as magicians and priests; wise, indeed, far beyond human wisdom, but still mortal. His religion, his profession, compelled him thus to regard them; and often, when he employs the term god, he adds the saving clause which we have just noticed. — To proceed: as the reward of this victory, Hoder obtained the hand of Nanna, with the throne of one part of Sweden; but he was shortly afterwards vanquished by Balder, and he lost the crown of Denmark. He and Balder were dreadful rivals. Through his love for Nanna, the latter wasted gradually away. To procure a greater share of the divine favour, he offered human sacrifices to Fro, and the fatal precedent was but too well imitated by succeeding ages. In the next battle, he was again the victor, and his rival compelled to seek an asylum in an obscure village of Jutland. Here, unattended and discouraged, Hoder felt the more deeply the contrast of situations. From Jutland, he passed into Sweden, privately assembled his staunch adherents, and represented to them the hopelessness of his prospects — that he was alike weary of empire and life. Compelled, indeed, to consult his safety by wandering from forest to forest, from one cavern to another, he exhibited a remarkable example of the instability of fortune, in a region where such vicissitudes were more frequent than in any other part of the world. In this

emergency, while sojourning amidst woods never trod by man, he one day entered a cave, in which he found the weird sisters. Being asked what had brought him to their solitudes, he replied, "Misfortune in war." He bewailed his hard fate, and asserted that their predictions had not been verified, but had been contradicted by the event. They contended, however, that if he had been twice put to flight, he had inflicted as great an injury on the enemy as the enemy had inflicted on him. But Balder was on the throne of Denmark; what consolation, therefore, could he receive? He was, indeed, told, that if he could only discover and appropriate to himself a certain species of food, which was every day served to his rival, and which increased that rival's strength in a prodigious manner, he should become the victor. How discover it? But, whatever his fate, it could not be more disastrous than the present; and he again sought Balder in arms. The first day's fight was indecisive. At night, he lay in his tent; but sleep refusing to visit him, he arose and went towards the enemy's camp. There he saw three virgins (the purveyors of Balder's table) leave that prince's tent. He accosted them; and being asked who he was, replied, "A harper,"—a character always sacred in the north. As he was really expert in the use of the instrument, he was readily believed, and he was allowed to see what the mysterious substance was which had such miraculous effect on the body of his rival: it was the venom of three snakes which the virgins daily or nightly extracted from the mouths of the reptiles, and which they mixed with the more solid food of Balder. One of the maidens wished to give some of the food to Hoder, but the eldest forbade her. All, however, were so pleased with his minstrelsy, that they presented him with a belt, which would ensure him the victory over all his enemies. The prophecy was soon fulfilled. Possessed of this belt, in addition to his other magical treasures, he met his enemy and gave him a mortal wound. Like a true northern hero, Balder being

resolved to die on the field of battle, was carried in a litter into the heart of Hoder's army; but he soon breathed his last sigh. Over his body a huge mound was erected by his troops. That treasures of inestimable value were buried with him, was the unanimous opinion of posterity. In the time of Saxo, some youths one night hastened to the spot, and endeavoured to open it; but their ears being assailed by terrific noises, they desisted, and fled. All this, says the historian, was unreal; it was merely the illusion of magic.*

Respecting the death and interment of Balder, we have in the latter Edda many details wholly omitted by Saxo, and more which are entirely dissimilar from his. One night, this Balder had a dream, which was thought to be portentous of his fate. With the consent of the gods his mother, Freya or Frigga, called on fire, water, earth, stones, iron and other metals, trees, animals, birds, reptiles, poison, and all diseases, to renounce all power over him; and they took an oath to that effect. To try the efficacy of the engagement, some of the gods threw darts and stones at him, while some assailed him with other weapons: in vain; no one could injure him. Seeing this, Loke, the genius of evil, assumed the disguise of an old woman, went to the palace of Frigga, and informed her what the gods were doing. "Let them try as long as they please," was the reply; "all living things have promised to respect my son." "What!" rejoined Loke, whose purpose is evident enough, "have all substances, without exception, thus promised?" "All," was the reply, "except one insignificant plant, called mistletoe, which grows on the western side of Valhalla, and from which, such is its feebleness, I exacted no oath." This was enough for Loke: he went to the place where the misletoe grew, plucked it up by the roots, and returned to the assembly of the gods, who were still occupied in the same diversion. According to this account, Hoder was present; but he was not a deity, he was merely a blind old man. "Why dost thou not

* Saxonis Grammatici Historiæ Danorum, lib. iii. p. 41—43.

join in the exercise?" demanded Loke. "Because I am blind." "Take this trifling reed, and throw it; I will guide thine hand; meet it is for us all to honour Balder!" The missile flew, and the hero fell to rise no more. The gods were in sad consternation at this event; the more so as the evil was irreparable. All that the afflicted father could now do was, to pay due honours to his remains. His body was borne to the sea coast; it was placed in the famous ship of the deceased, which was one of the largest in the world; but neither Odin nor all the gods assembled could move the vessel into the waters. In this emergency, they had recourse to a famous sorceress of the giant, namely, of the Jutish race, and she obeyed the call. She arrived on the back of a wild beast, having serpents for reins. So dreadful was this animal, that it required four giants to hold it after she had dismounted. At one push, Gyges sent the ship into the sea; and so great was its velocity, that the earth trembled. The funeral pile was then erected by command of Odin, and the body of Balder's wife, whom grief brought to the grave, laid on it, close by his. Who was she? The Edda expressly calls her Nanna, but assigns her another father than Gewar. There can, however, be no doubt that the beautiful confusion so prevalent in everything connected with Scandinavian characters and events, is doubly apparent in this case,—that the wife of Hoder and Balder is one and the same Nanna, however the tradition in regard to her may have been distorted. Yet, there is no greater confusion respecting this lady than there is respecting Hoder himself in the different relations of Saxo and Snorro, the compiler of the prose Edda. In the one case, as we have seen, he was a vigorous young prince; in the other, a blind, feeble, and apparently old one. This diversity of narrative arises from the diversity of sources consulted by the two historians — the one confining himself to the national songs of Denmark, the other consulting the old Norwegian, or rather Icelandic traditions, which the

Scalds had transmitted to posterity. During the middle ages, especially anterior to the fourteenth century, there was a vast body of legendary lore respecting Odin, his family, and his sacerdotal companions — lore from which different Scalds took what they judged most interesting to their hearers. But reverting to the funeral of Balder, Thor furnished the consecrated fire: the horse of the deceased hero was placed on the pyre; and Odin added his golden ring, which had the miraculous virtue of producing eight other rings every ninth night. Thus, in the presence of all the gods, satyrs, nymphs, and cyclops, was the conflagration effected.*

According to the same venerable authority, namely, the Edda of Snorro, an attempt was made to recover the soul of Balder from the empire of Hela, or death. Who would undertake the perilous mission? It was Hermod, another son of Odin, that, at the entreaty of his mother, saddled Sleipner, the famous black steed, mounted him, and plunged into the subterraneous paths which led to the abodes of the dead. This Sleipner has a reputation never before enjoyed by quadruped. During the frequent contests between the gods and the giants — that is, between the Goths and the Jutes — the former were not always victorious; nor were they always sure of impunity within their fortress, well guarded as it was. One day an architect appeared before them and proposed to build them such a city that all the power of Jotunheim should fail against it. For this service, however, he must have his reward; and a splendid one it was, the goddess Freya to wife, with the sun and moon as her dowry. They agreed to his terms, provided he did what no doubt they believed impossible, viz., execute the work himself, within the space of a single winter; and they were liberal enough to allow him the use of his horse. In a short time the gods had reason to be alarmed; for the horse not only drew stones of vast magnitude, but did more of the architectural work than the master. Within

* Edda Snorronis, Hist. 28. Stephanii Notæ ad Saxonem, lib. iii.

three days of the completion of winter nothing remained but the hanging of the gates. In great consternation the gods assembled to consult by what means the ruin impending might be averted. As the covenant between them and the architect had been advised by Loke, they menaced him with death unless he discovered some expedient to save them. Loke, who has sometimes been called the Scandinavian devil, was fond of mischief; but he was fonder still of his life: and that very night he caused a mare to issue from a forest and neigh amorously. Sleipner, hearing the sound, left the work to pursue the mare, while the architect followed to recover his horse. Thus the whole night was lost. The architect now perceived that he must trust to himself. He resumed his natural size, and there he stood, a veritable giant — the everlasting enemy of the gods! They did not allow him to finish the work; but, regardless of their oaths, which in their opinion were not binding when made to a giant, they called on Thor to dash out his brains with the awful mallet. In the mean time the mysterious horse remained with the mare, and the issue of the connection was Sleipner with eight feet, — the most excellent of all the animals ever possessed by gods or men.*

Such was the animal on which Hermod descended to the regions of Hela. The description of his journey is highly poetical. During nine days and as many nights, he travelled down the precipitous way — often abrupt — along the sides of yawning gulfs — through rugged valleys; and everything was involved in so great a darkness that he was obliged to grope, or trust to the instinct of his wondrous beast. At length he reached a river, the bridge of which was kept by a virgin called Modguder. She inquired his name, his race, his family; and expressed her surprise at his weight. "But yesterday," she observed, "and three legions of dead rode over this bridge; yet all together did not shake it as much as thou alone. But thou

* Edda Snerronis, Fab. 21.

hast not the look of one dead. What brings thee here? He replied, "I am in search of my brother Balder; hast thou seen him pass?" — "I have: he rode over the bridge: the path to Hecate's dark abode is still downwards, towards the north!" On he rode until he came to the gates of hell, which were closed to all but the dead. But he was not discouraged; plunging his spurs into his wondrous horse, he cleared the gate, and proceeded into a hall of vast extent. Here he perceived his brother, who filled the most honourable place. But far less honourable was it than the meanest in Valhalla, which Balder could not enter because it had not been his good fortune to die in battle. It is, however, some consolation for us, poor mortals, to perceive that hospitality is not forgotten in the gloomy regions below. Hermod remained the whole night; and the next morning he acquainted Hela with the anxiety of the gods, of men, of all nature, for the return of Balder, and besought her to permit it. She seemed to doubt whether the mourning for the hero was so universal as he had represented; but, to place the matter beyond dispute, she replied, that if all objects, inanimate no less than animate, would weep for him, the request of the gods should be granted. Hermod accordingly rose to depart. By Nanna he was intrusted with several presents for Frigga, his mother: from Balder he was the bearer of a ring (no doubt the one which had been placed in the funeral pile!) to their father Odin. He was then escorted to the outer gate as if he had been a favoured guest just leaving the palace of an earthly sovereign. On reaching Asgard, where Odin then was, he acquainted the gods with the message of Hela. By their advice agents were sent through all creation, praying everything to weep for Balder. By everything was the mandate obeyed, except by one old sorceress, who refused to weep, and said that Hela must keep her prey.*

* Edda Snorronis, Historia, 29. Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. notæ in lib. iii.

But in the elder or poetical Edda — that of Sæmund the Wise, which in compilation is antecedent a full century to Snorro's — the journey to the shades is attributed to Odin himself. When it was undertaken, Balder was yet alive, but dreams and portents afflicted him; and, after consulting the fates, Odin mounted his steed, Sleipner, and descended in darkness towards the abode of Hela, where a celebrated prophetess had been long interred. He met the terrible dog which the Greeks preserved in their mythology, and which, with bloody jaws, barked loudly as he passed along. Downwards he went, the earth trembling beneath his steed, until he reached the lofty hall of Hela. From the eastern gate he proceeded to the spot where he knew the tomb of the prophetess was to be found. Turning himself towards the north, he then commenced the fatal incantation, and placed in order the mystic rhymes. Many were the words of might which he uttered, until he forced the unwilling prophetess to raise her head, and to speak in the language of men. "What unknown mortal is he who has thus disturbed my repose? Bleached by the snow, beaten by the winds, drenched by the rains, have I long remained, — long here I have been in the arms of death!"—"Vegtam is my name, the son of Valtam.* Tell me the secrets of hell, and I will tell thee what passes on earth. For whom are these costly benches, for whom these golden couches prepared?"— "This tempered mead, this liquid nectar awaits the arrival of Balder. Sorrowful are the sons of heaven. Unwillingly have I spoken; now my lips shall be closed." — "Listen, prophetess, for I must know the whole. Whose hand shall deprive Odin's son of life?" — "That of Hoder: he the bruiser shall be of Odin's son, the spoiler of Balder's life! Unwillingly have I spoken; now my lips shall be closed." — "Listen, prophetess, for I must know the whole. Who shall revenge on Hoder the death of the hero?

* The names are mythologic, or rather abstract: Vegtam, *the Spoiler*; Valtam, *Slaughter*.

who shall bear the smiter of Balder to the funeral pyre?" — "Rinda, a virgin of the west, shall bear a son by Odin; he, when only one night old, shall slay the murderer. His hands he shall not wash, nor his head shall he comb, until he bears to the funeral pyre the enemy of Balder. Unwillingly have I spoken; now my lips shall be closed." — "Listen, prophetess, for I must know the whole. Who are these damsels that weep at pleasure and raise their covered heads on high?* Say this only, and thou mayest sleep." — "Ah! no wandering spoiler art thou, as I have hitherto believed: well do I know thee for Odin, the preserver of nations!" — "And thou art not Vala; no prophetess art thou; but the mother of the three infernal furies!"—"Odin, ride back to thine house, and there command! Never again will I be consulted by the living until Loke shall break loose from his fetters, and the dreaded twilight of the gods arrive!"† Such is the dark poetical legend which the genius of our poet‡

* Hveriar ro maeyiar
Ær at muni grata
Ok a himin Verpa
Halsa Skautvm?

The passage is a dark one. It probably alludes to the custom of the northern women, who uncovered their heads to mourn. These damsels did not uncover; they could weep at *pleasure*, that is, they were not afflicted. Were they the fatal sisters, who cannot be expected to feel sympathy for mortals? And was Vala their mother?

† The meaning of these expressions will appear when we treat on the Scandinavian mythology.

‡ DESCENT OF ODIN.

Up rose the king of men with speed,
And saddled straight his coal-black steed;
Down the yawning steep he rode,
That leads to HELA's drear abode.
Him the Dog of Darkness spied,
His shaggy throat he open'd wide,
While from his jaws, with carnage fill'd,
Foam and human gore distill'd:
Hoarse he bays with hideous din,
Eyes that glow, and fangs that grin;
And long pursues, with fruitless yell,
The Father of the powerful spell.
Onward still his way he takes,
(The groaning earth beneath him shakes,)
Till full before his fearless eyes
The portals nine of hell arise.

Right against the eastern gate,
By the moss-grown pile he sate;

Gray has immortalised. It is among the most imaginative efforts of the Scandinavian muse.*

Where long of yore to sleep was laid
The dust of the prophetic Maid.
Facing to the northern clime,
Thrice he trac'd the Runic rhyme;
Thrice pronounc'd, in accents dread,
The thrilling verse that wakes the dead;
Till from out the hollow ground
Slowly breath'd a sullen sound.

Pr.—What call unknown, what charms presume
To break the quiet of the tomb?
Who thus afflicts my troubled sprite,
And drags me from the realms of night?
Long on these mould'ring bones have beat
The winter's snow, the summer's heat,
The drenching dews, and driving rain!
Let me, let me sleep again.
Who is he, with voice unblest,
That calls me from the bed of rest?

O.—A Traveller, to thee unknown,
Is he that calls, a Warrior's Son.
Thou the deeds of light shalt know;
Tell me what is done below,
For whom yon glitt'ring board is spread,
Drest for whom yon golden bed.

Pr.—Mantling in the goblet see
The pure bev'rage of the bee;
O'er it hangs the shield of gold;
'Tis the drink of Balder bold:
Balder's head to death is giv'n.
Pain can reach the Sons of Heav'n!
Unwilling I my lips unclose:
Leave me, leave me to repose.

O.—Once again my call obey!
Propheteſs, arise, and say,
What dangers Odin's Child await,
Who the Author of his fate.

Pr.—In Hoder's hand the Hero's doom:
His brother sends him to the tomb.
Now my weary lips I close:
Leave me, leave me to repose.

O.—Propheteſs, my spell obey!
Once again arise, and say,
Who th' Avenger of his guilt,
By whom shall Hoder's blood be spilt?

Pr.—In the caverns of the west,
By Odin's fierce embrace comprest,
A wond'rous Boy shall Rinda bear,
Who ne'er shall comb his raven hair,

* Vegtaams Quida (apud Edda Saemundar hinns Froda, tom. i. p. 234, &c. edit. Hafniæ, 1787).

According to Saxo, it was not the mystic Vala, but Rostiof, king of the Finns, who foretold that Odin's son, by Rinda, should avenge the death of Balder. That Odin, who was esteemed chief of the gods, should be less prescient than a Finnish king, may appear strange; but this term *god* frequently means no more than Goth, and the chief of the gods means only the head of the pontifical college established, first in Asia, and next in Sweden. And we must remember that the Finns were expressly declared to be unrivalled in magic, at least in that dark magic which sought the injury of mankind. Yet Odin was equally malignant. He could not rest until he had discovered the maiden whose offspring was thus predestined to accomplish his purpose. This Rinda was a princess, and, consequently, demanded more attention than one of humbler birth. The disguises which he successively assumed at her father's court; his frequent repulses

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Nor wash his visage in the stream,
Nor see the sun's departing beam;
Till he on Hoder's corse shall smile,
Flaming on the fun'ral pile.
Now my weary lips I close:
Leave me, leave me to repose.

O.—Yet awhile my call obey!
Prophetess, awake, and say,
What Virgins these, in speechless woe,
That bend to earth their solemn brow,
That their flaxen tresses tear,
And snowy veils, that float in air.
Tell me whence their sorrows rose:
Then I leave thee to repose.

Pr.—Ha! no Traveller art thou,
King of Men, I know the now,
Mightiest of a mighty line——

O.—No boding Maid of skill divine
Art thou, nor Prophetess of good;
But mother of the giant-brood!

Pr.—Hie thee hence, and boast at home,
That never shall Enquirer come
To break my iron-sleep again;
Till Lok has burst his tenfold chain.
Never, till substantial Night
Has reassum'd her ancient right;
Till wrapp'd in flames, in ruin hurl'd,
Sinks the fabric of the world.

by her; his numerous stratagems, and his ultimate triumph under the character of a physician; are gravely related by the venerable historian of Denmark. His conduct on these occasions was so unworthy of a god, that his colleagues at Byzantium (or we should rather suppose Asgard) removed him for a time from their society, deprived him of his supernatural powers, degraded him to the level of mortals, and sentenced him to exile,—a doom which he, therefore, suffered a second time, though on the former occasion it had been self-imposed.* All this, in plain English, means that he was expelled from the college of priests. This natural explanation is confirmed by the statement, that in ten years, the gods, pitying his sufferings, or, perhaps, bribed by flattery and costly gifts, restored him to all his former privileges. Lest the public worship should sustain any injury, his place had been supplied by one Oller, a priest so expert in magic that he could cross the seas on a bone; but this usurper was slain by the Swedes, just as Mitothin had been slain. In the mean time Bo, the issue of Odin's connection with Rinda, grew up, and was intrusted by the father with the sacred task of revenge. Accordingly he advanced against the Danish king. Hoder foresaw his doom; and, in an assembly of chiefs, he prevailed on them to elect his son, Runi, for his successor. In the battle which followed destiny was fulfilled: he fell by the hand of Bo; but the victor also received a mortal wound and died the following day. †

All that we have farther to say respecting Odin, in the present Introduction, may be despatched in a few words. Perceiving his end approach, he marked his body with a sword, probably to denote the advantage of dying by that weapon; and declared that he was going to Godheim or paradise, where he should joyfully receive his people. The Swedes were persuaded that he was returned to Asgard to enjoy eternal life; and in

* See before, page 29.
† Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. iii. p. 44—46.

this belief his worship was renewed and enlarged. In time of war, and before great battles, he often appeared to them, promising victory to some, inviting others to his hall, — in both respects the harbinger of good. After death he was placed on the funeral pyre, and burnt with exceeding pomp. His followers believed the higher the smoke ascended the higher would be his place among the gods; and that the more abundant the riches consumed with him the richer he would be in the other world.*

From the concurrent testimony of Snorro, Saxo Grammaticus, and the two Eddas, little doubt can be entertained in regard to the true character of Odin. He was evidently a conqueror, a king, a priest, a lawgiver, and an adept in the superstitious practices of his age. Endued with commanding talents and an unmeasured ambition, he was enabled to take advantage of circumstances in a degree seldom attained by mortals. Perceiving the success which attended his views, and the veneration in which his wisdom was held, he did not hesitate to ascribe both to the peculiar favour of the gods, from whom, like most of the Scythian princes, he boasted of his descent. As he was of divine race, why should he not participate in the privileges of divinity? Short, indeed, is the transition from veneration to actual worship; and there can be little doubt that, even in his lifetime, this artful pontiff king had altars smoking in his honour. But it is worthy of remark that he was often regarded as a mortal, not merely in his own age, but in subsequent ages; that the words giants and gods are to be understood of the Jutes and Goths, — the former, the original possessors of the soil, the latter, the victorious strangers from Asia — the dominant caste which arrogated to itself the sacerdotal and regal functions, and thus preserved its empire over the barbarous, enslaved population. It was some time after his death before his

* Ynglinga Saga, cap. 10. (apud Snorronem, Heimskringla, tom. i. p. 14.).

worship was general in the north; and never would it have been general had he not been esteemed the god of war, the deity above all others dear to the ferocious Northmen. Even as it is, he did not hold the highest rank in the worship of all the Scandinavian nations. The Norwegians held him inferior to Thor. Still he is by far the most remarkable person that ever took advantage of human credulity. Over a considerable portion of Europe his worship was extended; and it was not a transitory worship; for it prevailed, in Germany, far into the ninth century; in Denmark and Sweden, a century later; and in some parts of Norway it was not extinct in the twelfth. Of the religion, however which he founded, or which he incorporated with the superstition already subsisting on his arrival in the north, we shall speak in a future chapter.

On the death of Hoder, the sceptre of Denmark, or rather of a portion of Denmark, passed into the hands of his son *Ruric*. The name of this prince is interesting to an Englishman, from the fact that the alleged events on which the tragedy of *Hamlet* is founded happened in his reign. According to Saxo, Hamlet was not the son of a Danish king. His father was Horwendil, governor of Jutland, a famous pirate and vassal of Ruric; but the authority was not undivided: it was shared by Fengo, brother of Horwendil. Fengo did nothing to merit the favour of Ruric; but Horwendil was so valiant and able, that he was honoured with the hand of Gertrude, daughter of the Danish king. From this marriage sprung Hamlet, whose history is so famous in the traditions of Denmark. Fengo could not, without envy, behold the good fortune of his brother: envy led to hatred, and hatred to fratricide. After this deed he married the widowed Gertrude, and succeeded to the whole government of Jutland. Hamlet was no inattentive observer of these events. As a pagan, his first duty was to revenge his father's death: a duty, to the force of which his uncle was fully alive, and watchful to frustrate it. Spies being set on all his

actions, he feigned madness; he painted his face, put on a strange garb, and uttered the most ridiculous things. Frequently was he to be seen on the hearth, seated among the ashes, and making wooden hooks, which he hardened by the heat. His madness, however, had method in it; and some of his replies, ridiculous as they seemed, made the experienced doubt whether he should be classed among the wisest or the most foolish of mankind. "For what purpose are these hooks?" was one day demanded of him. "For the revenge of my father!" was the answer. As nobody could see how they could effect that purpose, he was ridiculed by all but the discerning, who supposed that beneath this ostentatious display of insanity, a profound object was concealed. Among these, was jarl Fengo, who, wishing to prove whether the suspicions were well or ill-founded, had recourse to an expedient. The disposition of the prince was exceedingly amatory; and it was thought that, if a young handsome female were sent to him, he would betray himself. The meeting was to be effected in a wood, and spies were to be placed near him. On the day appointed, he was commanded to ride into a forest. As usual, he mounted with his face to the tail, which he held in lieu of a bridle. There he found the woman; and would have immediately betrayed himself, had not his foster-brother obscurely hinted that he should beware. The way in which this intimation was communicated, like many other parts of Saxo's narrative, is too gross for translation. Enough to know, that Hamlet was made to understand the danger of his situation. Among his virtues, chastity was not to be reckoned; and though the instances of its violation cannot be recorded in these times, we may observe that, even on the occasion before us, he indulged his propensity, and was cunning enough to conceal it. Fengo, therefore, was disappointed; but by the advice of a friend, he had recourse to another expedient. Under the pretext of a long absence on affairs of moment, he

left the palace, and provided that Hamlet should be brought into the mother's presence, while a spy, unknown to both, should be near them, to hear every word that he should utter. If he had any reason left, it was not doubted he would be communicative with one whom he loved, and who he knew would never betray him. At the time appointed, the courtier hastened to the apartment, where mother and son were to meet, and hid himself under a heap of straw that accidentally lay there — a curious illustration of domestic economy in that age. Immediately afterwards, Hamlet and Gertrude arrived; but the former was too much aware of the dangers which involved him to indulge in rational conversation with his mother, until he had examined the locality. Imitating the crowing of a cock — an imitation in which he was singularly successful — and waving his arms as if they were wings, he leaped on the straw, and was immediately sensible that something lay beneath. With his sword he despatched the intruder. After this act, while his mother was bewailing his supposed insanity, he fiercely upbraided her for her incestuous marriage with the murderer of her first husband. This double crime he did not assail exactly in the manner represented in the drama, but in one more conformable with the barbarism of the age, that is, in one of exceeding coarseness.* His remonstrances are said to have kindled the sparks of virtue in her heart; but the sequel ill corresponded with this moral intention, or with the refined character which the dramatist has given him. The man whom he had killed he cut in pieces, boiled the members, and threw them into the sewer to be eaten by the swine. When Fengo returned, great was his surprise to find that his courtier had disappeared — that not the slightest trace of him could be discovered. One day

* Quod, inquit, mulierum turpissima, gravissime criminis dissimulationem falso lamenti genere expetis, quæ scorti more lasciviens nefariam ac dedestabilem tori conditionem secuta, viri tui interfectorem pleno incesti sinu amplecteris, et ei qui prolistuæ parentem extinxerat, obscenissimis blandamentorem illecebris adularis?

Hamlet, who was regarded as no more than a motley fool, and to whom questions were put for amusement only, being asked what had become of his uncle's friend, replied, "He fell into the common sewer, and being unable to extricate himself, was found, and eaten by the swine!" His reply furnished some amusement to the hearers, who regarded it as a good motley invention. They did not know that on all occasions, whether grave or trivial, Hamlet spoke the truth.*

But if the multitude were thus deluded, Fengo was not. For his own safety he felt that the youth must be removed; but to effect this some management was required. He would not exasperate his wife, still less the sovereign of Denmark, by openly executing the prince. The deed must be secret, and done by other than native hands, namely, by those of the English king, who, we are gravely assured, was a tributary of Denmark. Before Hamlet's departure, he privately desired his mother, in one year from that time, to celebrate his funeral obsequies; assuring her, however, that he would in one year return. Two creatures of Fengo were his companions. One night, while they were buried in sleep, he examined their baggage, and found, carved on wood, the mandate to the English king. With his usual cunning, he erased a portion of the characters; and so altered the rest, that the foreign king was to put his two companions to death, but to show every possible kindness towards *himself*, and even to give him the hand of an English princess. On their arrival in England, they presented their wooden mandate, which they were unable to read; and were invited, with much parade of hospitality, to the royal table. But while the two messengers were thus deluded, Hamlet was received with much respect. The more curious reader may consult the venerable authority before us for an account of what passed at the English court, — an account as minute as it is romantic. To be brief: the two messengers were executed; and Hamlet, whose

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. iii. p. 46—52.

wisdom was so much admired, obtained the hand of the monarch's daughter. He pretended, however, to be much affected by the death of his companions; and to pacify him, the king gave him a considerable quantity of gold, which he melted and inclosed in the hollow of two walking sticks. At the expiration of the year, he obtained leave to revisit his native country; but, of all his riches, he took only the staves which contained the gold. On reaching Jutland, he assumed his own motley garb, and reached the house of his uncle at the very time his funeral rites were performed. At first, his sudden appearance terrified the domestics and guests; but terror yielded to mirth when they saw him resume his motley character. "Where are your two companions?" demanded they. "Here they are!" was his reply, as he produced his two sticks. Soon he joined the cup-bearers; and as his long flowing garments interfered with his activity, he girt his sword round him, but it had no scabbard; and to impress all the guests with a stronger notion of his insanity, he frequently grasped the blade until the blood flowed from his fingers. Little did they suspect his object in thus descending to the meanest occupation: it was to make all of them beastly drunk, and then to exact his revenge. So well did he succeed in the first intention, that most of them, being unable to stagger from the apartment, were compelled to remain all night in the hall of entertainment. At length, all being buried in sleep, he cut off the cords which supported a huge curtain that occupied the whole room: as it fell on the drunken sleepers, by his wooden hooks he fastened it in many places to the ground; and drawing the cords over the curtain, so bound them by knots and hooks as to bid defiance to the efforts of drunken men. Startled by the weight no less than by the sudden difficulty of breathing, they strove to raise the curtain, but in vain; it was too well secured to be moved. In this state they were soon enveloped in flames, which consumed them and the palace. Fengo retired to his

bedroom, and fell asleep: he was awakened by Hamlet, who, after upbraiding him for his various crimes, put him to death. He then flew to a safe retreat to watch the progress of events. Great was the surprise of the Jutes at this disaster; but, as Fengo was a tyrant, the majority were not displeased. Hamlet, therefore, reappeared; surrounded himself with those whom he knew to be attached to the interests of his family; sought the public assembly; and, by his eloquence, so wrought on the people, that they unanimously declared him the successor of Fengo.*

Into the remaining adventures of Hamlet — all equally wonderful with the preceding — we cannot enter. Whoever may wish to read his subsequent visit to Britain; his marriage with a second wife, the queen of Scotland; his quarrel with the British king, the father of his first wife; his domestic life with both in his hereditary government of Jutland; his war with Wiglet, king of Denmark, the successor of his grandfather, Ruric; his death in battle; and the facility with which the idol of his heart, his second wife, passed into the arms of the victor, must consult the venerable Saxo.†

We have no wish to pursue farther the list of Danish kings, who, according to Saxo, reigned prior to our Saviour's birth. Some of them, probably, never reigned at all. Others, certainly, reigned *after* that event. Others, again, ruled at the same time, over different provinces of the kingdom. The reigns of many whom Saxo places before the Christian era are identical with those which the best Danish writers regard as posterior; and the actions attributed to both are substantially the same. All writers admit that Denmark had no monarch before Skiold, the son of Odin; indeed, it had none for some generations afterwards: for there is room to believe that even his authority was more of a sacerdotal than of a temporal character. In

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. iii. p. 52. et lib. iv. p. 54, &c.
† Idem, p. 56—59.

virtue of this character he might, and probably did, claim a twofold sovereignty over the peninsula and islands; but that sovereignty was never virtually exercised — it was one merely nominal. Several of the islands had their separate governors, whom Saxo calls kings; and Jutland, as we have seen in the sketch of Hamlet's life, had them also. The men whom personal qualities elevated above the rest, became chiefs; and when one chief had others subject to him, he assumed the regal title. There were kings of various kinds. We read of petty kings (sma-konungur, or fylke-konungur); of sea kings, island kings, and cape kings. The name of the last may require an explanation. They were neither more nor less than the pirate chiefs, who lived in caverns or in huts near the promontories, ready, at any moment, to sally forth and seize the unsuspecting mariner. Thus there were kings enough scattered over the seas, the forests, the mountains, the maritime coasts of the north. Probably all those in the Danish islands might yield a nominal homage, at least, to the one that reigned in Scania in Zealand. But no dependence whatever can be placed on the list of Danish kings prior to what we now call the historic times; that is, to about the eighth century of our era. It is astonishing to see how little judgment has been exercised by the historians of this country in regard to the old northern kings. Thus, the authors of the "Universal History," not satisfied with giving the names of the sovereigns from Dan to Frode III., have been so far misled by the Latin historians of Denmark, as to fix the precise year before Christ when each began his reign. *

* The list is worth transcribing.

	B. C.		B. C.
1. Dan	1038	9. Frode I.	761
2. Humble	998	10. Halden	685
3. Lother	—	11. Roe and Helge	—
4. Skiold	966	12. Helge *alone*	595
5. Gram	888	13. Rolf, or Rollo	566
6. Swibdager	856	14. Hoder	—
7. Guthrum	—	15. Ruric Slingeband	483
8. Hadding	816		

But later writers have made sad work with this list. They contend that some of the names are altogether fabulous; that Skiold reigned only forty years before Christ; Frode I., thirty-five years after Christ; Wermund, one hundred and fifty; Roe and Helge, in the fifth century of our era. The truth, however, is, that while no dependence is to be placed on the genealogical series of the former, very little is due to the latter. The whole, prior to the eighth century, is one mass of confusion. If the names of many princes are to be found, not merely in the earliest writers of the north, but on Runic inscriptions, no power of criticism can fix the period in which they reigned. All is pure conjecture; and one system is preferable to another, only so far as it is more reconcileable to common sense. Yet, while we thus reject some of the ancient sovereigns whom Saxo and the elder chroniclers have handed down to us, we are not so sceptical as to reject the majority. If, prior to Odin's arrival, the north had no monarchs, it had kings, or, if the reader pleases, chiefs, whose office was sometimes hereditary, sometimes elective. It would, perhaps, be more accurate to say that, while they succeeded by hereditary right to the domains of their predecessors, as *generals* and *judges*, they were elected by the free-born warriors. Of these some were, beyond all doubt, elevated into monarchs by tradition; from tradition they passed into the songs of the Scalds; and from these songs their memory was perpetuated by the old chroniclers. For this reason we have not consigned them to total oblivion. Nothing is more easy than scepticism; but if scepticism be, as it assuredly is, allowable in regard to many details, it is no less blame-

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Consequently Hamlet must have lived nearly four centuries before Christ. What thanks do we not owe to Saxo for his important account of Britain so many years before Cæsar! But to continue.

	B. C.		B. C.
16. Wiglet	—	21. Hungleth	—
17. Guitlach	—	22. Frode II.	172
18. Wermund	552	23. Dan III.	—
19. Olaf I.	292	24. Fridlef	—
20. Dan II.	—	25. Frode III.	—

able than credulity, when it rejects the whole substance of history. On the whole, the safest conclusion is, that, while some of Saxo's kings are imaginary — while many which he places before, doubtless reigned after, our Saviour — while he has confounded the whole order of succession, so as hopelessly to perplex the reader — a few, probably, lived and reigned before the establishment of the Gothic dynasty. *

* Scandinavia, Ancient and Modern (Edinburgh Cab. Lib.), vol. i. chap. ii.

BOOK I.

THE PAGAN AGE.

HALF FABULOUS, HALF HISTORIC.

CHAPTER I.

DENMARK.

B. C. 40—A. D. 1014.

ANCIENT KINGS OF DENMARK. — THEY WERE NUMEROUS. — FRODE I. — LEGEND OF SWAFURLAMI AND THE SWORD TYRFING. — INCANTATION OF HERVOR. — THE BERSERKS. — STERKODDER, THE HERCULES OF THE NORTH — HIS ROMANTIC ADVENTURES. — WONDERFUL VOYAGE OF GORM I. — ONE EQUALLY WONDERFUL OF THORKIL. — KINGS OF DENMARK, CONTINUED: GUDRIC AND GODFREY — RAGNAR LODBROG — SIGURD RING — HEMMING — GORM THE OLD. — HARALD BLAATAND. — SWEYN. — INVASION OF ENGLAND.

If, in regard to the kings who reigned prior to the Christian era, we have witnessed so much confusion, we shall not witness less in the series which followed that event. No two chroniclers, unless the one be immediately derived from the other, agree in this respect. Strange to say, this discrepancy as to names and dates is observable in regard to comparatively recent kings; to those, for instance, of the eighth and ninth centuries, — Snorro, Saxo, Sweyn, Aggesen, Torfœus, Suhm, — all differ, not only as to the order of succession, but as to the names themselves.* Whence this difference?

* List of kings after Christ, according to Saxo:—Frode III., Hiarn, Fridleif, Frode IV., Ingel, Olaf II., Frode V., Harald I., Halfdan II., Harald II.,

Doubtless from a variety of causes. In the first place, the title of Rex Danorum, or king of the Danes, was applied to the governors of Jutland, no less than to those whose seat was in Zealand and Scania. As either became the more powerful, he claimed a place among the descendants, or, at least, the successors, of Skiold. In the second place, it frequently happened that Jutland, or Zealand, or Scania was subdued by the neighbouring kings of Norway and Sweden, and they were, without hesitation, admitted as kings of Denmark. Add the number of revolutions inseparable from such a lawless state of society,—where king after king was driven into exile, or put to death, or forced to bend, for a while, before the torrent of invasion,—and we can scarcely be surprised at the difference, extreme as it is, between the lists of Scandinavian kings. Where, however, accuracy is not to be attained, or even an approximation to it, conjecture is useless. The personages whose names and presumed dates are to be found in the note below*, and

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Ungwin, Siwald I., Sigar, Siwald II., Halfdan III., Harald III., Olo (or Olof), Omund, Siward I., Bathul, Jarmeric, Broder, Siwald III., Snio, Biorn, Gormo I., Goderic, Olaf III., Hemming, Siward IV., Ringo, Ragnar Lodbrog, Siward II., Eric I., Canute I., Frode IV., Gormo II., Harold IV., Gormo III., Harald V., Sweno.

Our English Universal History, like Sunning and Torfœus, adopts these names, but incorporates three more.

According to the Langfedgatal, *which is derived from Norwegian authorities, while Saxo follows the metrical songs and traditions of Denmark:* —

Odin, Skiold, Fridleif I., Frode I., Havar, Frode II., Vermund, Olaf, Dan, Frode III., Fridleif II., Frode IV., Ingell (or Ingiald), Halfdan I., Helge and Roe, Rolf Krake, Eric I., Frode V., Halfdan II., Eric II., Harald, Sigurd I., Ragnar Lodbrog, Sigurd II., Harda Canute, Gormo the Aged, Harald II., Sweyn.

And thus, in about twenty different lists which we have examined, there is only diversity, or rather confusion. Those of modern date are not more uniform. Thus Mallet: —

Skiold, Fridleif I., Frode I, Fridleif II., Havar, Frode II., Wermund, Olaf I., Dan, Frode III., Halfdan I., Fridleif III, Olaf II., Frode IV., Ingel, Halfdan II., Frode V., Roe and Helge, Rolf, Ivar, Harald I., Sigurd I., Ragnar Lodbrog, Sigurd II., Harda Canute, Harald II.:

The dates of these reigns in the modern histories of Denmark — for the ancient ones do not condescend to such trifles — are beautifully confounded, sometimes a whole century being assigned to a single reign.

* The Skioldungs, or descendants of Odin: —

Names.	Died.	Names.	Died.
	B. C.		A. D.
Skiold - - -	40	Fridleif II. - -	47
Fridleif I. - -	23	Havar - - -	59
	A. D.	Frode II. - -	87
Frode I. - - -	35	Wermund the Sage -	140

who are received by modern historians, certainly ruled over some part of Denmark; but whether they were all that ruled in that country, — whether some of them did not reign in the more northern provinces, — whether they reigned in the order assigned to them, — may well be doubted.* It would be easy to construct a new list, as probable, at least, as any of those which we have transcribed in the notes; but where Torfœus, and Suhm, and other recent writers have failed, there would be something like presumption in the attempt. We are bound to declare that little dependence is to be placed on any one that northern erudition has yet formed; nearly as little on Suhm's as on any that preceded it. For this reason we have inserted the three most common lists, leaving the reader to admit or reject whatever names he pleases. Again, however, we must caution him not to reject any merely on the ground of their having been omitted by more recent writers. Denmark had, sometimes, — indeed, we might say frequently, — three or four sovereigns at the same time; and when their power was nearly balanced, nothing could be more difficult than to say which of them was the legitimate Rex Danorum. Nor can this confusion, at the present day, be surprising, when we find Adam of Bremen complaining of it. "Tanti autem reges, immo tyranni

Names.	Died. A. D.	Names.	Died. A. D.
Olaf the Mild	190	Halfdan III.	580
Dan Mykillate	270	Ruric Slyngebande	588
Frode III., surnamed the Pacific	310	Ivar Vidfadme	647
Halfdan I.	324	Harald Hildetand	735
Fridleif III.	348	Sigurd Ring	750
Frode IV.	407	Ragnar Lodbrog	794
Ingild (or Ingel)	436	Sigurd Snogoje	803
Halfdan II.	447	Harda Canute	850
Frode V.	460	Eric I.	854
Helge and Roe	494	Eric II.	883
Frode VI.	510	Gorm the Old	941
Rolf Krake	522	Harald Blaatand	991
Frode VII.	548	Sweyn	1014

This is the list of Suhm, the most critical of the Danish historians. Yet there can be no doubt that some of Saxo's kings ought to be incorporated with it.

* See the dates assigned to the above kings by our Universal History and by Mallet. The difference between them and those given by Suhm may amuse the reader.

Danorum, utrum simul aliqui regnaverunt, an alter post alterum brevi tempore vixit, incertum est." *

Of these kings, down to the ninth century, very little is known. The truth is, most of them were petty feudal chiefs, inconsiderable as those of the Scottish Highlands, during the middle ages. It is acknowledged by the most critical of the Danes themselves, that even the islands which now constitute so small a portion of the monarchy were not united under one sceptre until the middle of the fourth century. This honour is ascribed to Dan, surnamed Mykillati, or the Magnanimous, the sixth in descent from Skiold. There can, however, be no doubt that both a too early period has been assigned to this event, and that a dismemberment of these islands was frequently effected. Certainly we read of independent principalities in them as late as the eighth century. Jutland, which forms so considerable a portion of the monarchy, had its separate governors, or kings, who, though sometimes dependent on the kings of Zealand, were often at war with them, and rulers over them. Doubtless the peninsula and islands were frequently under the same sceptre; but the union was a violent one, and was preserved only as long as the victor had the necessary means to reward obedience. If we read of such unions as early as the fifth century, or even the fourth, we also read of separate kings in Jutland as late as the ninth. The truth is, when the author of the forced union paid the debt of nature, the monarchy was immediately dismembered, and its separate parts received their local rulers. Where, from time immemorial, island has been at war with island, district with district, nothing is so difficult as to effect a cordial union between them. Ages are required to destroy the hostility which ages have confirmed. Those isolated governments preserved no record of their transactions; the memory of them

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danorum, passim. Mallet, Histoire de Danemarc, tom. iii. Langebek, Scriptores Rerum Danicarum, tom. i. Adamus Bremensis, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. i.

was perpetuated by tradition alone, or by the metrical songs to which that tradition gave rise. Both *create* in a degree much greater than they perpetuate,—a fact illustrated by the whole course of northern history prior to the ninth century. Hence the confusion, the contradictions, the darkness which rest upon it, and the impossibility of yielding much credence to the relations of ancient or modern writers on the subject. As, however, all these relations have some foundation in truth, it would be unwise, and even unjust, to bury in utter oblivion the names and alleged deeds of the kings antecedent to the historic times.*

B. C. 4. to A. C. 35. Of *Skiold*, the reputed founder of the monarchy, who was probably king of Zealand only, though he might have a nominal superiority over the rest, we have little even in the way of fable. To his great bodily strength and indomitable courage, which are communicated by Saxo, we have before alluded†; and in the same manner we have alluded to the deeds, real or fabulous, of his more immediate successors. *Frode I.*, whom Saxo calls Frode III., was no less valiant than Skiold, since he conquered from Hungary to Iceland, and from Sweden to the south of Germany. The truth probably is, that he joined some one of the warlike confederations, then so common, against the power of Rome; and that the expedition into Germany, being undertaken rather for plunder than for glory, was successful. But this prince deserves greater praise, from the zeal with which he destroyed the numerous banditti, humbled the tyrannical nobles, protected the poor, and reformed the tribunals of his kingdom. Some of his edicts were severe. He who suffered a thief to escape should himself suffer the punishment of one. He who fled in battle should be accounted a public enemy. If one Dane robbed another, he was to return twofold, and at the same time suffer public chastisement. If a man gave refuge to a thief, with the stolen property about him, he was to be whipped in a public assembly of the

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist., passim.
† See Introduction, p. 19.

people, and regarded as *criminis particeps*. If any one banished for his crimes fought against his native country, he forfeited both property and life. In some of his other regulations there was more humanity. To females he gave the power of marrying whomsoever they wished, provided they chose a mate in an equal condition of life; for the free woman who married or sinned with a slave, became a slave herself. If a man forced a woman, he was compelled to marry her. In other respects the laws which he promulgated, or rather confirmed, were nearly identical with those of the Germanic tribes, that, in a former publication, occupied so much of our attention.* If there be any truth in history, they were eminently successful; for it is recorded of Frode I., as of a few other sovereigns, that when articles of value were left on the highway, no man presumed to touch them. He was the great patron of valour: slaves were not, as in other Germanic tribes, forbidden the use of arms; nor were they deprived of the hope of liberty, since a single act of valour would elevate them in the social grade. The real actions, however, of this prince are so mingled with fable, — fable at once grotesque and imaginative, — that we know not what to believe respecting him. That he once lived; that he was a great warrior; that he was generally victorious; that his internal administration was vigorous; that he was an unrivalled pirate, — his fleets committing depredations on all the coasts of the Baltic, — cannot be disputed with much reason. His was the heroic age. The north swarmed with kings. On one occasion, alone, thirty were assembled in the Baltic. Did they recognise a superior authority? Probably they did; for Frode was frequently accompanied by these tributaries. The truth seems to be, that when any sovereign of Jutland, or Scania, or Sigtun, or any other place in Denmark, Sweden, or Norway, obtained much celebrity as a warrior, the local chiefs — who always assumed the regal title — were always ready to

* History of the Germanic Empire (Cab. Cyc.), vol. i.

seek his protection, and to serve under his banner. Though this obedience was temporary, a preference was usually given to such of the more powerful kings as were of the divine race,—the race of Odin; but amidst the vicissitudes inseparable from such a state of society, a fortunate adventurer often dispossessed the legitimate claimant; and on ascending a throne illustrated by glorious recollections, his own personal qualities gave him an immediate ascendancy over most of his royal neighbours.*

The reign of Frode should not be dismissed without adverting to the hero who shed the most lustre on it, the renowned Arngrim, and to his magic sword, Tyrfing, the destroyer of men. According to Saxo, he was a Swedish champion, who, having triumphed over another hero, had the boldness to demand from Frode the hand of Osura, daughter of that monarch. Finding the royal Dane too proud to listen to him, he was advised by Eric of Sweden to achieve something more splendid than he had yet attempted, and then to renew his suit. Without loss of time he led his small but valiant band of warriors against two petty kings,—the one of Biarmia, the other of Finland, — who had despised the Danish power. "The Finns," says the historian, "are the last people towards the north, and their region is so barren as scarcely to be habitable. They are good marksmen: no people surpass them in throwing missiles. They fight with long and broad arrows, are skilful in magical incantations, and delight in hunting. Their abode is variable. They wander about and encamp wherever they can find wild beasts. Borne on sledges, they traverse with safety the snowy peaks of the mountains." Of their skill in magic, Arngrim had immediate proof. He defeated them, indeed; but then they cast three stones behind them, which, though very small stones, seemed to their pur-

* Saxo Grammatici, Hist. Dan. lib. v. Suenonis Aggonis Historia Rerum Danicarum, cap. i. (apud Langebek, i. 44.). Petri Olai Roskildensis Chronica Regum Danorum, p. 15. (apud eundem, tom. i.).

suers huge as mountains. The trick succeeded; for Arngrim, discouraged by the abrupt eminences and steep rocks before him, recalled his men. The next day, through the same power of song, a vast river seemed to interpose between the invaders and the natives, and the former again returned. The third day, however, the Swedes were not to be deluded; the Finns were defeated, and compelled to pay tribute. The king of Biarmia shared the same fate, and Arngrim, on his return, became the son-in-law of Frode. By the princess, Osura, he had, subsequently, twelve sons, all of whom became hardy pirates, the most honourable profession then known in the north. But their end was tragical. Landing one day in the isle of Samsoe, they destroyed the crews of two boats, — all pirates like themselves. But their joy was short. By the two chiefs, who had penetrated into the interior, they were suddenly assailed, and destroyed to the last of the number, one of the victors, Hialmar, dying of the wounds which he had received. *

This relation by the Danish historian, which, with the exception of the magical incidents, is probably true, is too simple for the Scalds, who have reared on this basis a long and most ingenious narrative, — one that may aspire to the dignity of an epic. We dwell upon it, however, not for the fancy that created it, but for the light which it throws upon the manners of the period. In ancient times there reigned a king called Swafurlam, whose grandfather had received the dominion from the awful hands of Odin himself. He was no less valiant than his ancestor. He had no sooner succeeded to the inheritance than he was called to revenge his father's death on a famous giant, the terror of the north. He killed the monster, and took to wife Frida, the beautiful daughter of the slain. Such adventures are of perpetual occurrence in the histories of the north. The life of no chief was secure; at

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. v.

any moment he might be surprised and slain, or defied to mortal combat, by one his superior in strength or skill. In the event of his fall, his wife, his children, all he had, became the property of the victor. In general, the Norwegian maiden — if she had no prior attachment — passed without much reluctance into the arms of her father's murderer. That father she could not by her tears recal to life; and she might be happy with one who had acted in conformity with the manners of the age, and who certainly might be able to protect her, in a state of society in which women stood most in need of protection. Frida was satisfied with her lot; so far, at least, as Swafurlam was concerned. She had, indeed, reason to lament that a daughter was the only issue of their union; that no Herculean boys were rising before her to protect both herself and her husband, when age should have bent his sinewy frame. That period she knew must come, though Time might do his work more slowly with him than with less vigorous men. But it was not his lot to fall into "the sear and yellow leaf." Before his strength had time to leave him, there arrived in those parts a champion, whose object was to defy and vanquish every hero of note. This was Arngrim, who had never yet fled before mortal man; who in every duel had been victorious. Swafurlam did not much relish the approaching struggle. Still less did Frida, who could not avoid remembering the death of her father, or fearing that her husband might share the same fate. Eyvor, too, their beautiful daughter, was apprehensive of the result; for this Arngrim, who was young and vigorous, while her father was past life's meridian, was a *berserk*, that is, shirtless, — one that wore no defensive armour, — that trusted only to his own strength, which, during certain fits of madness, was increased in a prodigious measure. When these fits were on him he despised steel, water, fire, as much as if they were harmless; nor did he care

whether the foe he had to oppose were one or one thousand. He, therefore, was not likely to prove an invincible husband, — to atone for the loss of a father. To conceal his uneasiness, or rather to divert that ominous feeling which men sometimes experience on the eve of a great crisis, Swafurlam went into the mountains to hunt.* A beautiful white stag soon appeared in sight, and was as soon pursued; but nothing could equal the creature's provoking coolness. It was not frightened; it was not hurried; it ran, then turned round as if waiting for its pursuers, and just when they believed they were on the point of seizing it, it bounded forward to delude them a second time. Never was the king so ardent in the sport. Night descended; still he rode on; and the beams of the full unclouded moon enabled him to see everything nearly as well as in the broad daylight. Midnight came; still the hunters were following the stag. But it suddenly disappeared through an opening in the rocks, leaving Swafurlam in a terrible rage at the loss of his prey. Two dwarfs — so the Icelanders call the *fairies* — issued from the opening, and these he drew his sword to destroy, when, remembering that the whole race were skilful in the manufacture of enchanted weapons, he promised to spare their lives on the condition that, within three days, they would make him one that should never miss its blow — that should never rust — that should cut the hardest steel as easily as leather — that should always bring victory to the owner. The covenant was made; and, at the end of three days, Swafurlam returned for the weapon. It was ready for him, and on one side of the blade was written, —

Draw me not, unless in fray;
Drawn, I pierce; and piercing, slay.

* According to the Hervarar Saga, this adventure of the sword took place long *before* the arrival of Arngrim, — in fact, before the union of Swafurlam with Eyvor, whom he won with the magic weapon. There are many variations, too, in the different MSS. of this Saga, so as to greatly alter the circumstances.

And he was at the same time cautioned, though in terms somewhat oracular, to beware of the weapon. On his return home he found that Arngrim had reached it. The latter was treated with the utmost hospitality. For him the sable hams were soaked and boiled, the wild fowl were placed on the spit, vegetables boiled, new bread made, the ale cask tapped, the table spread with the abundant feast, and the minstrel's song made to enliven an entertainment which the fine hands of mother and daughter had prepared, and which both honoured with their presence. This was, truly, more than Homeric: the most magnanimous of Grecian dames would not have thus welcomed the man who was about to engage in mortal conflict with husband or brother. The feelings of the wife, indeed, on beholding the sinewy frame of the guest, must have been painful: her heart failed her; and she was glad when the increasing power of the cup authorised her and her daughter to retire. The following day her worst fears were verified. Though Swafurlam, at the first onset, cleft in two the shield of his adversary, the very force of his blow was fatal to him: he struck his magic sword into the ground, and, before he could withdraw it, his right hand was amputated by the berserh, who snatched the weapon from the lifeless member and gave the king a mortal wound in the head. Eyvor became the wife of the victor, who bore her, no less than the spoils of her father's palace, to his Norwegian home. *

It was now Eyvor's turn to be anxious. Might not a warrior, still more valiant than her husband, arrive, and render her, like her mother, a forsaken widow? Might not the weapon which had cost her father his life prove equally fatal to one dearer? Often did she request him to bury it under ground; but he was in no

* Hervarar Saga, cap. i., ii. p. 1—13., edit. Hafniæ, 1785. Taylor, Historic Survey of German Poetry, vol. i. The account in the text is considerably more amplified than that in the original Saga. This amplification is the work of succeeding Scalds, whose language, from its graphic superiority, and its being more characteristic of northern manners, we have often preferred.

humour to part with his most valued treasure, especially as it enabled him to return invincible from all his expeditions. Her fears, however, for *him* were vain: they should have been excited for her twelve sons, whom she bore in twelve years after her marriage, and who were all warriors — all berserhs — all doomed to an early grave. One of them vowed to the god Braga that he would have to wife the princess Ingburga, or perish in the attempt. As all were brothers in arms no less than brothers in blood, all bound to assist each individual of the number, to make the cause of each a common cause, they took the same view. Arngrim, now waxen in years, took his leave of them with a heavy heart; he felt that he must see them no more; and his only consolation was, that when the nornies, or fatal sisters, call, they will be obeyed. They had to fight on the desert isle of Samsoe with two heroes, Hialmar and Oddur, each at the head of a hundred Swedes, and each renowned for prowess throughout the north. The former, too, was the accepted lover of Ingburga, accepted by her father no less than by herself. On their way to the island, the eldest of Arngrim's twelve sons, Angantyr, took to wife Swafa, the daughter of a celebrated jarl, and their course was much delayed by the festivities demanded on the occasion. This jarl had the same dark forebodings as their own father. Fain would he have persuaded them to remain with them; but their honour would not allow of this, and away they sailed. On their landing at the place appointed, their accustomed fit seized them, and they destroyed the 200 followers of Hialmar and Oddur, who were then absent in the interior of the island. Mighty was the destruction, by Tyrfing, which was wielded by the powerful Angantyr, and which, on this occasion, might truly be called the death of men. Hialmar and Oddur soon returned to find their companions drenched in gore; but, fortunately for the two heroes, the strength of the berserhs was now greatly diminished — in other words, the fit

was over, and they were become like other men. Still the magic sword and the superiority of numbers compensated to the sons of Arngrim for their somewhat exhausted spirits. They would have more than compensated had not Oddur worn a quilted coat, which magic rendered impenetrable to the keenest weapon. The conflict soon engaged. On the one hand, Hialmar was opposed to Angantyr with the magic sword; on the other, Oddur, with the magic quilt, encountered, one by one in succession, the eleven brothers of Angantyr. After a terrible struggle of some length, Hialmar fell, pierced by the dreaded Tyrfing, but Angantyr also received a mortal wound, and Oddur slew all his eleven antagonists. The dead were buried by the only survivor, the fatal sword being buried along with Angantyr, according to the last request of that hero.*

The widow of Angantyr bemoaned the death of her valiant husband. For a time she refused consolation; but finding herself pregnant, she began to hope that her issue would avenge the death of father and uncles. Though she gave birth to a female child, still hope did not forsake her. From infancy, indeed, Hervor delighted in masculine pursuits. Her stature was equal to that of the other sex; and her spirit was in no respect inferior. No sooner did she approach woman's estate than she exhibited all her natural ferocity. She put on armour; did no little mischief; and when upbraided for her excess, fled to the woods, to rob and murder passengers. In vain did her guardians endeavour to rescue her from such pursuits; in vain did they try to conceal from her the circumstances which preceded her birth, and even her parentage, pretending that she was the daughter of a mere shepherd, and the offspring of an incestuous connection. But she had seen or dreamt far other things; and, despising her present inaction, she resumed her masculine attire, and joined a band of pirates, of whom, in a short time, she

* Hervarar Saga, cap. iii.—v. p. 13—42.

became the chief. Her fame, under the name of Herward, was widely spread. Many were the coasts which she visted and laid waste. At length, coming to the isle of Samsoe, where she heard her father and kindred were buried, she announced to her followers her resolution to go on shore for the purpose of despoiling the tombs of the hidden treasure. They assured her that the whole island was infested by malignant genii, — that it was the most dangerous of all places. But nothing could deter her from her purpose. A shepherd, whom she met, wondered at her temerity; told her that she must be ignorant, indeed, of the terrors of the place, since no one could be there after sunset without extreme peril; and invited her to accept of such hospitality as his humble cottage afforded. After that time, he added, the tombs, and the very ground, emitted such flames that no one who remained could be safe. She could not be moved; asserted that if the whole island was on fire, she would not fear; and insisted on knowing the exact spot where the tombs might be found. Amazed at her audacity, and supposing her to be a fool, the shepherd ran home before the departure of the sun should permit the demons to injure him; while she penetrated into the island. She soon reached the dreadful scene. Fires issued from the sepulchres, the inmates of which wandered about; fires issued from the path itself, before, behind, around her. Still she proceeded, with spirit undaunted, until she came to the greatest of the tombs, that which contained the ashes of her father, Angantyr. There she commenced her incantation, which is abridged below.* The subsequent adventures of Hervor and this

* AWAKE, Angantyr! sire, awake!
Thy daughter, Hervor, bids thee break
The slumber of thy desert tomb!
Oh, give me, from its yawning womb,
The magic sword — the hardened blade,
By dwarfs for Swafurlami made!
What, silent? Then on you I call,
My sire, my kinsmen, warriors all!
Obey! let Hervor's voice prevail!
Yes, by the helmet and the mail,

wondrous sword must be briefly related. On her return to the sea shore, she found that her companions, terrified

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By the sharp sword, the spear, and shield
Ye wore on many a battle field,
Obey my spell! by each of these,
I call you from your tombs beneath the roots of trees.

What! can the sons of Arngrim, erst
In mischief's busy work the first,
In dust and ashes mouldering rot?
Are ye *all* mute? For Hervor's sake,
Herwarder, Herwarder, awake!

So may you, then, dishonoured lie,
Till rank corruption putrefy,
Unless ye give the belt and blade
By dwarfs for Swafurlami made.

[*Here the tomb opens, the inside of which is all fire, and the following dialogue is chaunted:* —]

Angantyr.

Daughter, of potent spells possest,
Why dost thou call us from our rest?
What mad ambition bids thee wake
The slumber of the dead?
Hervor, thy rash demand shall break
In ruin on thy head!
Me were the funeral rites denied,
Father nor friend was there.
Seek for the sword in air;
It decks some living warrior's side.

Hervor.

Thy words are false! deceiver, no!
May Odin on thy tomb bestow
Such safety, sire, as thou hast got
The fairy sword I seek, or not!
Thy child, thine only child, demands
This dowry at a father's hands.

Angantyr.

Listen, daughter! Hervor, hear
The voice of prophecy, and fear!
Let not a father's hand consign
A gift so fatal to thy line.
For, lo! I see before this sword
Thine offspring perish, till restored
To son of thine, who then shall prove
The Heidrek of his people's love.

Hervor.

I heed thee not; but by the sway
Of spells which spirits must obey,
I charge thee, by enchantments dread,
No rest shall know my kindred dead
Till I obtain the belt and blade
By dwarfs for Swafurlami made!

by the unusual fires and the sudden thunder, had fled. At length, however, a ship bore her to the court of Godmond, an aged king, with whom she remained a short time only, owing to the fatal Tyrfing. As she

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Angantyr.

Maiden, of more than warrior's might,
Who visitest the tombs by night,
Trusting to the belt and spear
Of magic power, wander not here.

Hervor.

I deemed thee brave before I came
To seek thee in thy house of flame.
Why do I wait? Give me the blade!
Nor longer be the gift delayed!

Angantyr.

The sword lies here, begirt with fire,
Which once — fit weapon for thy sire —
Hialmar slew: but weak the brand
If wielded by a woman's hand.

Hervor.

Yet I will wield, if I may gain
The fire-girt sword, Hialmar's bane.
No spectre-fire can Hervor dread
That idly plays around the dead.

Angantyr.

Then, proud and daring spirit, know,
To save thee from the fires below
I give the sword! Thy suit is won!

Hervor.

Offspring of heroes, wisely done!
Oh, dearer is this gift to me
Than Norway in her pride could be!

Angantyr.

O woman! mad and blind to fate!
Rejoicing *now*, but wise too late,
When thou shalt see thine offspring all,
Beneath that fatal weapon fall.

Hervor.

Too long in parting I delay;
My heroes call — I must obey.
Let my sons quarrel as they will,
My father's gift! I hold thee still.
Spirits whom I have roused, farewell!
I feel the fires in which ye dwell
Burning around me. Here I cease.
Spirits, retire, and rest in peace! *

* For this translation we are indebted to a literary friend who furnished us with it many years ago.

was one day watching the king and his son at play, she perceived a domestic of the palace draw the weapon which she had left on her seat. Knowing that the prophecy must be fulfilled by the death of some one present, she ran to the domestic, took the weapon from him, killed him, left the palace, and again betook herself to the piratical life. Her fame, both for valour and beauty, was so great, that Hafod, the son of Godmund, solicited and obtained her hand. Of this marriage the issue were Angantyr and Heidrek, — the former noted for his excellent, the latter for his mischievous qualities, both far surpassing the rest of mankind in stature and valour. Heidrek was the favourite of Hervor; Angantyr, of her husband; but such were the ill qualities of the younger prince, that by Hafod he was not allowed to remain at court, but was sent away to be educated by one of the heroes of the time. On reaching his eighteenth year, he visited the palace without the consent of his father; but his disposition leading him to embroil the guests in a fatal affray, he was exiled by Hafod, who had succeeded to the throne of Godmund. Hervor, being permitted to bid him adieu, presented him with the magic sword, — the best gift in the power of a fond mother to bestow. The prophecy of her father, Angantyr, when she so rashly took it from the tomb, was immediately fulfilled. Heidrek drew it, brandished it, and, whether intentionally or otherwise, slew his brother Angantyr. To escape his father's anger, which doomed him to death, he fled into the woods, living on the produce of the chase, and pursued by remorse. By his sword he freed king Harald of Sweden from the oppressive sway of two great chiefs. In return, he received the hand of the monarch's daughter, and by her had a son, whom he called, after his own brother, Angantyr. But the sword Tyrfing was doomed to make sad havock among his connections. In his hands it was soon fatal to Harald, his father-in-law; and this event led his royal bride to hang herself. Some years afterwards he undertook

the education of a Norwegian prince, whom he loved. One day, while hunting in the forest, his spear broke, and he immediately drew the formidable Tyrfing. As it could not be returned to the scabbard until it had tasted some blood, and as the prince, only, was with him, the beloved innocent fell beneath the weapon. But it was, at length, fatal to himself. One night, while he was asleep in his tent, his slaves rose, drew Tyrfing, and slew him. His son Angantyr pursued them, slew them by night, and thus recovered the weapon. In the hands of the new possessor it still vindicated its fated character. With it, in open battle, he slew his brother, whom a Swedish princess had born to Heidrek. At length, however, it seems to have been again buried in the tomb of its victim; and, fortunately for the north, no Hervor subsequently arose to charm it from the ghastly hand which held it.*

Angantyr, like all his race, was a hero by profession, a champion who fought as much for reputation as for plunder. This institution is one of the most singular features in northern history. Sometimes a champion fought alone, wandering, like the knight errants of a later age, from country to country, not, however, to relieve distressed captives, or to perform any other act of humanity, but to triumph, by strength or dexterity, over the most renowned warriors of the time. Generally, however, these men were members of some fraternity, the guards of some king, whose first duty was to defend his person, on land or sea; their second to humble his enemies, or assist his allies. "The sagas," observes a modern writer, who has devoted much of his time to northern antiquities, "are filled with duels, or single combats, between these champions and their adversaries, and the scene was generally some little island near the coast. These combats, in which one champion sometimes vanquished and slew many enemies, and which took place also between sea or land kings and champions, were so frequent, that he who

* Hervarar Saga, cap. vii.—xviii. pp. 57—221.

was just entering on the career of arms, or who desired to obtain a wider reputation, betook himself to this medium, and without the least motive of hatred or resentment, provoked other champions, other pirates, to fight him. These heroes entered into associations, or fraternities, which they sealed with their blood, and which death only could dissolve. Sometimes they were furnished by the kings or chiefs whom they served with statutes, fixing their number, their privileges, and duties." In general, the statutes excluded all warriors under eighteen or beyond sixty years of age. The number in each fraternity varied from half a dozen to fifty. Rolf, a prince of Norway, had a famous society of this kind. No man unable to lift a stone, or rather rock, which lay in the court-yard of the prince, and which twelve ordinary men could not raise, was admitted into the body. Lest they should become luxurious, they were forbidden to sleep under a roof; with the same view, they were to shun female society; to inspire them with contempt for pain and danger, they were not to have their wounds dressed before the end of the battle, or to seek a shelter during a storm at sea. But all fraternities were not thus rigorously excluded from intercourse with the fair sex. To most heroes, indeed, the opportunities which the profession afforded of capturing handsome women and rendering them their companions by sea and land, was the chief inducement to embrace it. In such an age, no handsome woman — at least, if high-born — could be safe. By night or day her dwelling might be assailed, her guardians slain, and herself borne to the swift vessel waiting for her. What, indeed, could resist a chief surrounded by so many champions, especially if they happened to be berserks? If there be any truth in history, the strength of these men when the fit came upon them was supernatural.* The mischief, however, was, that if they had

* Profane not, youth — it is not thine
To judge the spirit of our line —
The bold berserkars' rage divine,
Through whose inspiring, deeds are wrought

no enemy before them, they assailed inanimate objects, or even one another. On one occasion, twelve heroes (the sons of Arngrim) fell upon the masts and deck of two ships, which they rent into splinters; and when these were destroyed, they turned their rage against the trees and rocks. On another, a celebrated sea king put to death six out of the twelve champions who accompanied him. Sometimes, too, it happened that the berserks, when under the dominion of their strange frenzy, did not spare themselves. Thus the five sons of Siwald, king of Sweden, were seen to throw themselves into the fire, and to swallow burning pieces of wood.*

When these warriors, whether berserks or simple champions, fought for their chief and country, their services were useful. But sometimes it happened that they were as fond of turning their arms against their fellow-subjects as against their hereditary enemies. Others, again, openly embraced the career of bandits; and though pursued with great zeal by the neighbouring chiefs, were frequently able, from their mountain fastnesses, to defy all hostility. Such a band *Fridleif II.* resolved to destroy; and he succeeded in his object, but more through stratagem than force. He was, however,

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Past human strength and human thought.
When full upon his gloomy soul
The champion feels the influence roll,
He swims the lake, he leaps the wall,
Heeds not the depth nor plumbs the fall—
Unshielded, mailless, on he goes
Singly against a host of foes;
Their spears he holds as withered reeds,
Their mails like maidens' silken weeds:
One 'gainst a hundred will he strive,
Take countless wounds, and yet survive.
How rush the eagles to his cry
Of slaughter and of victory;
And blood he quaffs like Odin's bowl,
Deep drinks his sword—deep drinks his soul,
And all that meet him in his ire
He gives to ruin, rout, and fire.
Then, like gorged lion, seeks some den,
And couches till he's man agen.
Harold the Dauntless, Canto iii. st. 8.

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan., passim. Ihre, Glossarium Suio-Gothicum, sub voce *Berserker* Depping, Histoire des Expeditions Maritimes des Normands, tom. i. chap. 2.

a valiant chief. Like many other northern kings, he had to fight for his wife. Seeing that he could not obtain Frogerth, daughter of Asmund, a king of Norway, by the ordinary way of embassy, he invaded the country, subdued and slew the father, and seized upon the princess. But he was not faithful to her. By a concubine — or, perhaps, another wife, for these old pagans did not exactly understand the difference between the two — he had a son, whom he named Olaf. Probably he loved this son more than prince Frode, whom Frogerth bore to him: so, at least, we should infer from the anxiety with which he consulted the fates in reference to the child's fortunes. Having performed the usual rites, and said the usual prayers, he entered the temple of the Nornies. Each of the three sisters occupied her seat. Two were favourable to the child, whom they endowed with noble gifts; but the third lessened their value by associating them with avarice. This custom, Saxo assures us, prevailed among the ancients. Of Olaf, however, we read no more: the sceptre was not inherited by him, but by *Frode II.*, if Saxo be right, and by Havar, if any faith is to be placed on the Icelandic chroniclers. But as, for the reasons we have already detailed, there is little certainty in the royal lists of either, we gladly leave their disputed order of succession to be settled by the native historians of Denmark.*

The reigns of Frode and of *Ingel*, his son, have little interest beyond what they derive from their association with the name of Sterkodder, the Hercules of the north, whose exploits were in the mouths of all men, even in Saxo's time. The gigantic limbs, the indomitable spirit of this hero, were regarded as supernatural, — as the gifts of the gods to answer a certain purpose. According to some, it was Thor who knit together the sinews of his frame; others gave the honour to Odin. This deity, say the legends, being anxious to destroy Wikar, a king of Norway, yet un-

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. v.

willing to do so openly, destined Sterkodder to this service, from his cradle. Hence his enormous size and force of mind: hence, also, his skill in poetry, which was to assist him in the great enterprise before him. Grateful for their gifts, and for the protracted existence which had been decreed him, he soon devised the means of pleasing the god. He offered his services as a champion to Wikar, who, being justly proud of such a companion in arms, was inseparable from him. After same maritime expeditions, undertaken for the sole object of plunder, he found an opportunity of effecting Wikar's destruction. A tempest of unusual fury, was still more unusual from its duration. The gods were evidently offended, and must be appeased by human blood. Lots were cast into the urn, and the king's name was drawn as the victim. The crew, indeed, were horrified at the thought of sacrificing a king, — and they wished him to be executed in appearance only; but Sterkodder, preferring the reality, strangled Wikar, then opened his body and examined his entrails, as gravely as any aruspex of ancient Rome. He then betook himself to a piratical life, and obtained even more celebrity for his admirable continence than for his exploits, superhuman as they were. He never partook, even slightly, of intoxicating liquors: he never indulged in the remotest species of luxury. His services to different kings (for he was truly a wandering champion, a knight errant of those barbarous times) are the constant theme of admiration. Throughout the whole of northern Europe, from Russia and Hungary to Iceland, his fame was spread. Probably there were several heroes of this name, and the exploits of all ascribed to one. Frode was one of his favourite masters, and one whose bravery he admired. But on the accession of Ingel, the son of Frode, whose luxury and intemperance contrasted strongly with the sobriety of the late king, and still more with his own, he would no longer remain at the court of Denmark. Yet he always bore an affectionate

regard for the offspring of Frode. Thus, when he heard that Helga, the sister of Ingel, had so forgotten her royal dignity as to receive, without indignation, the addresses of a low mechanic (auri apifex obscuræ stinpis), full of zeal for the honour of her house, he hastened to her residence, killed the mechanic, and sharply upbraided her for the baseness of her inclinations. On another occasion, however, he gratified as much as he had now offended her. Her hand being sought by Helge, a king of Norway, Ingel replied that he should have it on the condition of his fighting with certain champions. He accepted the condition; but when he heard that his opponents, whom he was to fight all at once, were Angantyr and eight brothers, sons of a Zealand chief*, he was alarmed for the result. He consulted Helga, who seems to have had little difficulty in transferring her affections from a dead to a living suitor, what he should do; and she advised, to implore the aid of Sterkodder, then in Sweden. He hastened to the veteran warrior, who readily promised to serve the daughter of Frode. This promise he fulfilled by hastening to the court of Ingel, and killing all the nine champions. But the wounds of the victor were many and severe, being seventeen in number, and his bowels protruding from some of them. In this state he dragged himself to the banks of a river, to quench his thirst; but the water being corrupted by the blood of the combatants, he refused to drink of it; and with great difficulty he crept to a rock near at hand, and sat upon it. So huge was his bulk, that it left a deep impression on the stone. (Saxo, indeed, believes that this impression was made by human hands, and not by the body of Sterkodder.) While in this position, in the utmost need of help, the proud soul of the warrior refused to receive it from base hands. A herald, or rather spy, passed by, and offered aid. It was refused, and the man cursed for his presumption. Another passed, and being asked his condition, replied

* Son of the celebrated chief of this name. See before, page 77.

that, though he was free, he had married a slave, and to procure her enfranchisement, he laboured for her master. The hero upbraided him for his base inclination ; — why did he not take a free woman to his bed ? — and bade him begone. A female now approached, and being asked her condition, replied that she was a slave, and the mother of an infant child ; he bade her go home and give suck to her brat, for he would have none of her help. Next passed a free-born peasant, whose good offices he received, and whose honourable calling he praised. After the lapse of some time, he repaired to the palace of Ingel, whom he resolved to upbraid for two things ; — for unbecoming dissipation, and for neglecting the most important filial duties, — the revenge of Frode's death. In a mean disguise he entered the hall of feasting, and seated himself in an honourable place. He was immediately commanded, by the queen, to remove to one more becoming his fortunes. He arose, went to the other end of the hall, and seated himself on the bench with such force as to shake the building, and threaten the fall of the roof. At this moment king Ingel returned from the chace, recognised the veteran warrior, upbraided the queen for her neglect of so illustrious a guest, and endeavoured, by the best attentions, to dissipate his anger. But when he perceived at the royal table the sons of Swerting, the murderers of Frode, and the ostentatious luxury of the feast, he grew still darker. To appease him, the queen drew a coronet from her brow, and presented it to him ; yet he not only rejected it, but threw it in her face. To charm him, the lute was played : he sat like a statue, scorning alike the host, the guests, the costly viands. A trumpet next sounded : he threw a bone which he was picking at the head of the musician. But his chief wrath was turned against the king, whom he apostrophised in no measured terms. At length Ingel was affected by his reproaches ; he drew his sword ; Sterkodder did the same ; and the floor was soon covered with the blood of the murderers.

After this exploit, the champion, in great joy, took leave of the king, whom he saw no more. One of his remaining actions was little worthy of his fame. By twelve conspirators of Zealand, who detested the yoke of Olo, their king, he was bribed to murder that sovereign, and he did so in the bath. The reward which he received for this inglorious deed — one hundred and twenty pounds of gold— afforded him no pleasure: remorse took possession of his soul; he sighed whenever the name of Olo was mentioned; and his days were miserable. In addition to this calamity, age and blindness visited him; and he became so weary of life, that he resolved to leave it. To die in the ordinary coure of nature was not fitting a champion, still less one that aspired to the banquets of Odin.* Supporting himself on two crutches, with two swords at his side, he placed himself by the highway, having round his neck the gold which he had received for the murder of Olo, and which was to be the reward of the man who should do the same friendly office for him. But he scorned to die by an ignoble hand; and when a rustic, thinking two swords were too many for an old man, asked him for one, he bade the rustic approach for it, and killed him on the spot. Two companions of a prince whose father Sterkodder had killed, one day advanced against him; but he killed both with his crutches. The prince, struck with equal admiration and fear, approached, and a conversation of some length, in which the hero boasted of his past deeds, followed between them. At the conclusion, Sterkodder, aware of the youth's noble birth, and convinced that he could not die by a better hand, begged Hother to kill him, and held out his sword for the purpose. The prince hesitated; but being told that the act would be a pious duty towards the manes of his father, and being still more influenced by the view of the gold, he separated the head from the gigantic body of the hero.†

* See Introduction, sketch of Odin's life.

† Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. vi.—viii. pp. 102—149.

Whatever portion of the marvellous may exist in such stories as the preceding, no doubt can be entertained of their being founded in truth. But if they were not, they could not be wholly omitted, unless we were resolved to shut our eyes to the national manners. Of such manners — the best part of history — they are the best, we may add, the only, mirrors. Nor is the state of human opinion, as modified by education, climate, and habits, a less interesting object of contemplation. For this reason, and because of the dearth of genuine events during this ante-historic period, we have drawn, and for some pages must continue to draw, more largely on the traditionary lore of Scandinavia than we should do were those events more abundant and better established. Now for another legend, wilder than any of the preceding. *Gorm I.*, king of Denmark, a prince not mentioned in the list of Suhm, yet who undoubtedly reigned in Jutland, was exceedingly fond of exploring the secrets of nature, of visiting everything wonderful, of enlarging his knowledge. From the inhabitants of Thule he had heard of the wondrous seat of Geruth, one of the gigantic magicians who, in ancient times, had been opposed to the gods of Asheim; but the place was considered as all but inaccessible to mortals, as surrounded with dangers which would make the boldest quail. But dangers were just the things which most excited the enterprise of Gorm, and he resolved to sail in quest of the mysterious place. He was to follow the course of the mighty ocean, which, like a circle, surrounded the earth *; to leave the sun and the stars behind; to penetrate into ancient chaos, — into regions deprived of light, and beset with terrors of every kind. Three hundred men, in three vessels, agreed to accompany their king; and all were to be under the guidance of Thorkil, who had already performed the voyage.

Ynglinga Saga, cap. xxix. (apud Snorronis Heimskringlam, tom. i.). Eyrbiggia Saga, passim.

* According to the ancient geographers, the flat earth lay in the centre, while the sea, like a circle, surrounded it. This sea was believed to contain many wonders.

Thorkil lost no time in giving additional strength to the vessels, in covering them with thick hides of leather, so as to prevent the ingress of the waters, and in filling them with suitable provisions. The expedition, and after many, many days, arrived off the coast of Halogia *, or the country of the Lapps; on they then sailed, until their provisions began to fail, the storm to rage, the sea to dash its deafening billows against the rocks. A nimble youth was commanded to ascend the mast, and see whether land was nigh; he shouted out that an island, of abrupt, precipitous access, lay within sight. The delighted crew steered for the place, moored their vessels, and ascended the cliffs. Thorkil warned them not to seize, from the numerous herds of cattle now visible, more than was sufficient to satisfy their present hunger; if they did, the avenging deities of the place would prevent their return home. But when the famishing men perceived how easily the unsuspecting beasts were taken, they forgot the warning, and killed enough to load their ships. The night following, as they lay in their beds on board they were terrified with strange noises, and still more with the appearance of monstrous forms running along the shore. One of these, more gigantic than the rest, walked on the sea, with a huge club in his hand, and cried aloud that they could not sail until they had expiated the injury done to the sacred herd, by delivering one man from each vessel. Thorkil, perceiving that there was no escape, and preferring the safety of the many to that of the few, commanded the lots to be drawn, and the victims to be delivered. The wind now became favourable, and the vessels proceeded to the farther Biarmia. This was a region of eternal cold, covered with deep snows, and with pathless forests, destitute of fertility, and abounding with strange beasts; here were many rivers, pouring along their waters with ceaseless noise, owing to the rocky impediments in their course. To

* Saxo evidently alludes to that part of the coast situated on the Arctic Ocean, near the North Cape.

this coast Thorkil directed the prows of the vessels, assuring his companions that they were now come to the place which immediately led to the abode of Geruth. He warned them not to speak with the inhabitants, but to leave that office to him, who was acquainted with the customs of the place. Towards twilight, a mighty giant approached, and saluted the sailors by name; this was Guthmund, the brother of Geruth, the protector of strangers. They gazed, admired, and were silent. When asked by the giant the reason of their silence, Thorkil replied that they were unacquainted with his speech. Guthmund received them into his chariots, and proceeded with them towards his palace. A golden bridge lay within sight, and some were inclined to pass over it. "If you do," said Thorkil, "you will repent: this river, so full of monstrous beings, separates the human from other natures, and beyond it is no footing for man." They soon came to the house of their host, and here it was doubly necessary for Thorkil to repeat his warnings: he assured them, they were literally surrounded by destruction. They must not eat of the food placed before them, but eat what they had brought with them, and seat themselves at a distance from the natives. They must equally shun the embraces of the women; for Guthmund had twelve lovely daughters, all ministers of the table, and all frail enough. If they yielded to any of these temptations, they would instantly lose the remembrance of the past, and would pass the remainder of their days with herds of monstrous beasts. The terrified strangers observed his directions; but Guthmund was offended with them for despising his hospitality: he was particularly so with king Gorm. But Thorkil had a ready excuse. Strange food, the latter observed, did not agree with many persons, and was frequently the cause of disease; it was so with the king, who was obliged to live on certain kinds of food, which he could only be sure of finding in his own kitchen: hence the host should not be offended with that which implied no want of respect to himself, but

a prudent attention to one's own health. This temptation having failed, the giant offered his daughters to the king; and to the rest, other maidens of his household. This was indeed a temptation. Thorkil, in a low voice, repeated his warning; but four of the number yielded, and were immediately deprived of memory, and, in a great degree, of reason. Now for a third temptation. Guthmund had a delightful garden, the fruits of which were unequalled: Thorkil prevailed on his men to refuse the offer, and accompanied the refusal with much feigned politeness. Seeing that he could have no more than the four victims, the giant transported them over the river.*

Beyond this stream the adventurers perceived, at no great distance, a dark, unfrequented city, resembling a cloud of smoke. On high poles, grinned mortal heads, dissevered from their bodies; and below the entrance, which could only be reached by ladders, yelled hideous dogs, ready to devour the travellers. The entrails of a beast, cast before them by Thorkil, satisfied their howls, and the whole party ascended to the gate. Within, the whole town was possessed by dark larvæ, whose horrid noise, as they hovered about, were ended by the frightfulness of their shapes: all within was putrid, intolerable to the eye, and still more so to the breath. Onward the adventurers went, and entered a stony cavern which, according to tradition, had been the palace of Geruth. The horrible gloom within made them pause on the threshold, but Thorkil encouraged them to proceed; at the same time, he warned them to beware of taking or touching anything, however inviting to the eye; to restrain their minds from avarice as from fear; to desire nothing, to dread nothing; for if they laid a covetous hand on any desirable object, that hand would instantly become immoveable, and the whole body as if it were inextricably fettered. Their guide then directed them to enter in fours: Broder and Buchi led the way; Thorkil and the king followed; the rest, in the same

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. viii. p. 160—162.

order, formed the main body. The interior of the palace was old and unfrequented; a dark cloud filled it; and it abounded with everything offensive to the senses. The pillars were encrusted with ancient mould; the walls teemed with loathsome slime; the roof was formed of spears; the floor was covered with serpents, and filth of every kind; so that the strangers were not a little terrified. Above all, their noses were offended with the fœtid smell. Farther on were iron seats, filled with lifeless images of monstrous forms; and these were in the recesses of the hall, separated from it by leaden grates; and at the entrances were horrid porters, some howling, and shaking their maces; some, with their goat-like bodies, exhibiting an unseemly sport. Before the adventurers proceeded farther into the interior, Thorkil was careful to repeat his warning,—not to stretch forth their hands to the treasures they would see. Passing by a huge fragment of a rock, they perceived an aged man reclining, with wounded body, on the sharp rocky peaks above them. Beside him were three females, their bodies covered with tumors, and, as if unable to sit, reclined on the same couch. Who and what were these? Thorkil, who was well versed in such matters, informed his companions that the god Thor, offended by the insolence of Geruth, had driven his bolt through the heart of the giant; that the awful instrument had penetrated into and riven the mountain; that the females had been touched by it; and though their bodies were unbroken, they were suffering the punishment due to those who insulted the god. Proceeding forward, they perceived seven large vessels, surrounded with golden hoops, and filled with precious liquor. Near them was a tooth of an unknown sea monster, the extremities adorned with gold. Close by it was a large horn inlaid with shining gems, and of exquisite workmanship. Near this was a golden bracelet of great weight. The temptation to seize these valuable treasures was too great to be resisted. One man, ignorant that the shining metal concealed

destruction beneath it, stretched out his hand to the bracelet. Another, influenced, also, by avarice, laid his eager hands on the horn. A third, emboldened by their example, placed the huge tooth on his shoulders. They soon found how fatally they had been deluded. One of these treasures was immediately transformed into a serpent, which, with venomous tooth, fell upon the robber. The horn became a dragon, which, also, destroyed the spoiler. The tooth became a sword, which found its way to the heart of the bearer. Terrified at this spectacle, even the innocent began to fear that they should suffer with the guilty. Proceeding onwards, a door opened to a smaller recess, but rich in treasures. Here were weapons, too large indeed for the human body, but of inestimable value. Among them was a royal mantle or cloak, with a cap, and a belt of admirable workmanship. At the sight, Thorkil, who had so often advised others, forgot himself. He took the garment in his hand, and the rest, influenced by his example, seized the things which they most coveted. Suddenly the cavern, from its lowest foundations, shook; every thing began to reel; and the women cried aloud that these wicked robbers must no longer be spared. Lifeless as they had appeared, and more like statues than women, they suddenly found a voice, and, rising from their couch, advanced against the strangers. The rest of the monstrous shapes began to howl in a most hideous manner. Broder and Buchi were not unmindful of their former pursuits: with their lances, they resisted the advancing genii; from their bows and their slings they sent the sharp missiles into the dense ranks of the monsters, and dispersed or overthrew them. Yet twenty only of the royal party survived; the rest were torn to pieces by the monsters. In great consternation the survivors issued from the cavern, returned to the river, were ferried over by Guthmund, and entertained in the same manner as before. On this occasion all abstained from the viands and the ladies save Buchi, he who had hitherto been an

example of moderation, and to whose valour in the caverned palace so many were indebted for their lives. Having taken one of the ladies to his bed, he was seized with a sudden dizziness, and lost the memory of the past. He did not, however, forget his human feeling; for, anxious to show attention to the guests — now strangers to him — he followed them in one of the chariots of Guthmund, and was for ever engulfed in the waters of the river. The king, pitying the infatuation of his subjects, embarked and returned towards Halogia. But the voyage was again a troubled one: the men were exhausted by the fury of the tempests and by hunger; and Gorm resolved on sacrificing to the gods. While some of his crew called on this, some on that divinity, he invoked the awful Ugarthiloc, by whose favour he obtained a prosperous navigation homewards.*

On the return of Thorkil, great as had been his services to his companions in the enterprise, he could not escape the malice of evil tongues. They said that he had offended Ugarthiloc, whose vengeance must be averted by supplication, and that Thorkil should, for this purpose, be sent to the distant, mysterious shrine of that deity. He insisted that his accusers should be the companions of his voyage; and his request was granted by the king. The vessels were prepared as before, and the expedition sailed. At length they reached a region where was no sun, no moon, no stars, where eternal night spread her sceptre over this unknown deep. Fuel was the first thing of which they felt the want, and they were compelled to subsist on raw meat. Some of them caught the plague from food so indigestible; the disease began in the stomach, and soon descended to the vitals. To abstain was just as fatal as to eat; and languor crept on those whom sickness spared. At this moment, when despair had seized on all, a light was seen at a distance. This inspired all with hope, with new strength. They soon anchored;

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danorum, lib. viii. p. 162—164.

and before going on shore, Thorkil placed a shining carbuncle on the summit of the mast to direct them on their return to the vessels. A cavern, with a low narrow entrance, was before them. Leaving his companions outside, Thorkil went in, and perceived two gigantic eagles (or giants under the form of eagles*), with hard hooked beaks, placing wood on the fire. The rugged entrance, the stinking threshold, the black wall, the filthy roof, the floor covered with serpents, were not more offensive to the eye than to the mind. One of the giants, saluting him, told him that he had ventured on a bold and most difficult undertaking, — that of visiting the abode of a divinity little worshipped, and of exploring regions beyond the sphere of the world. "But," added the giant, "I am acquainted with the course which you will have to follow, and if you will give me three good proverbs in as many sentences, I will indicate it to you." Thorkil did so to the satisfaction of the giant. "You have yet a four days' sail before you," said the latter, "with hard rowing, before you can reach the place you seek; there you may find Ugarthiloc in his foul and gloomy cave." Thorkil was staggered at the labour before him; but he had gone too far to recede, and he advanced to the fire to take some of the flaming brands. He was compelled, before he could obtain them, to deliver three more proverbs.† With his companions he then returned to the ships; and a favourable breeze arising, they reached the destined port on the fourth day. Here they landed, and by means of a lurid twilight, were enabled to have some glimpse of the objects around them. Before them was a huge rock. With their flints they struck a light, and made a fire at the entrance of the cave, — a safeguard against the power of demons.

* These giants are famous in the Scandinavian mythology. "From the wings of one," says the lay of Vafthrudnis, "whose abode is in the extremity of the heavens, and who has the eagle's form, comes all the wind that blows on mankind." — *Edda Sæmundar hinns Froda*, 1—21.

† To us these proverbs seem to have no great merit: they are, however, somewhat obscure.

Then, with lighted torches borne before them, Thorkil and some of his companions entered the narrow opening, and perceived a great number of iron seats surrounded by serpents. Onward was a stream which gently flowed over a sandy bottom: this being crossed, the path declined a little, when a dark and obscure cave was before them. There sat Ugarthiloc, his hands and feet laden with a vast weight of fetters: and the hairs of his head and beard were long and hard as so many lances. That there might be some evidence of the wonders he had seen, Thorkil, with the assistance of his companions, plucked one hair from the chin of the divinity; when such a stench issued from the part, that had they not speedily applied their mantles to their noses, they would have been unable to breathe. As they issued from this awful cave, the snakes, flying about them, spued venom upon them. With great difficulty five only reached the ship, the rest falling victims to the venom; and of these five, who were pursued by the serpents, one lost his head, another his eye-sight, a third his hand, through a fatal curiosity to inspect these vengeful creatures. All would have perished had not the hatches been closed by the thick ox-skins, which bade defiance to the power of the venom. Seeing how vain the attempt to propitiate these divinities, Thorkil addressed his prayers to the God of all, by whose favour a prosperous navigation brought him to his own country.*

Legends like the foregoing, which illustrate the opinions of mankind, are not to be rejected as childish. Wild as they are, they had once their believers, — and believers, for anything we know, they may have at this day, among the remote Lapps and Finns. Whether the inventors, who were probably priests of Thor or Odin, took this method of unfolding to their disciples some physical theory, we shall not inquire. The darkness which, as all men knew, overhung the polar sea during half the year, favoured the diffusion of such stories.

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. vi. p. 164, &c.

But what will most have struck the reader, in the first of these legends, is, the similarity of some of its passages with those of the Odyssey and other classical productions. Many of the adventures in the second legend are to be found in the Edda, but ascribed to another individual. As Saxo could not borrow from the compilation of either Saemund or Snorro, all three must have drawn from some common source, and that source was tradition. But we have dwelt long enough on these fabulous times, and we must hasten to the historical.*

If any faith can be placed in Saxo's relation, which we see no reason to doubt, Gorm must have been contemporary with the first of the Carlovingian kings; for the historian expressly assures us that in this reign Denmark was christianised. And in that of *Godric* his son, who is also called *Godfrey*, we are told that Charlemagne was subduing the Saxons. On referring, indeed, to the list which we have given at the beginning of this chapter, and which the best Danish critics regard as approximating nearer to the truth than any other yet constructed†, the reader will perceive that there is no mention of Gorm or Godric. But here we must repeat what we have already frequently observed, that both might have reigned in Jutland, while Sigurd Ring and Ragnar Lodbrok and Sigurd Snogoje reigned in Zealand. And even if this were not so, we are by no means sure that the Icelandic authorities, which alone have weight with the modern historians of Denmark, ought to be followed to the utter exclusion of Saxo, who lived as near to the period as any of the former, and whose means of information must have been of easier access. Strange that in the eighth century — nay, even in the ninth — we should find so much darkness, so much contradiction in the history of a country which was now begin-

* Query, Had Scott this legend in view when, in his *Harold the Dauntless*, he takes the Durham witch to the place where Zernabek was to be invoked?

† See before, page 68.

ning to occupy the attention of the Frank historians! Yet such is the fact. "C'est un vrai labyrinthe," says Mallet, "ou l'on se perd dans les contradictions et les tenebres." The conjecture, however, which we have made, viz., that Godric or Godfrey might reign in one part of Denmark, while Sigurd Ring and Ragnar reigned in another, acquires some confirmation from the fact that the former, as rex Danorum in 803, is expressly mentioned by Ado of Vienne. And in the Saga of Olaf Trygveson, king of Norway, we read that this very Godfrey reigned in Jutland during the time of Charlemagne. Was he, the Jutish king, or Sigurd and Ragnar, who appear to have reigned in Zealand, the true sovereign of the Danes? Was one subject to the other, or were both independent? This question no man can answer. The passage, however, of Ado, confirmed as it is by that in Olaf Trygveson's Saga, explains the confusion which we find at every step in the Danish history prior to the latter part of the tenth century. We may add that, according to the same authority, Godfrey being slain by his own subjects on his return from a successful expedition to Frisia, Hemming, his brother or nephew, succeeded. Now these facts are confirmed by Saxo; and where both Icelandic and Danish authorities concur, and are confirmed by the Frank historians (and Hemming's accession, no less than Godfrey's death, is mentioned by several), we see no ground for scepticism. These princes, then, must be admitted; and for the reasons already given they may be admitted, without excluding Sigurd Ring, or Ragnar Lodbrog, or Sigurd Snogoje.*

The age of *Ragnar* ought to be an historic age; but his reign is so pervaded by fable, that we can make nothing of it. Many have been the attempts to reconcile his chronology, at least as found in northern writers,

* Mallet, Histoire de Dannemarc, tom. iii. Saga af Olaf Trygveson (apud Snorronem, Heimskringla, tom. i.). Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan., lib. viii., ix.

with that of the Frankish and Anglo-Saxon historians; but neither it, nor the actions recorded of him by both, can possibly be reconciled. Critics, therefore, have been driven to the inference that there were two Ragnars,— one of the eighth, the other of the ninth century; and, probably, this conjecture is the true one. In the latter century, indeed, we read of a Jutland chief named Ragenfred, or Regnier, who, being exiled by the reigning king of Denmark, became a pirate, and committed dreadful depredations on the coasts of Britain and Ireland. Very probably the actions of both — and both, no doubt, were extraordinary men — have been confounded together, and enabled Saxo to incorporate, into one relation, the romantic incidents which tradition had preserved of both. As we have indulged so largely in the romantic, we will not, on this occasion, translate that venerable authority. And it is scarcely necessary to allude to this hero's death, which, as everybody knows, happened in Northumberland. Defeated by Ella, the Saxon king of the province, and thrown into a dungeon full of serpents, he expired, insensible of his torments. It is said, indeed, that he composed a lay enumerating his former exploits, and his conviction that his sons would revenge his death; but the story, and the ode itself, are so improbable, that they must be consigned to the domain of poetic invention, and no longer be allowed to grow in that of history. Whether there be much truth in the subsequent part of this story, viz., that the sons of Ragnar did hasten to revenge him, that they disembarked on the Northumbrian coast, defeated the Anglo-Saxons near York, and transformed the province from a Saxon into a Danish state, we are unable to decide with anything approaching to confidence. The probability, however, is, that, notwithstanding the silence of the Saxon Chronicle on this subject, there is some foundation for the account. So constantly do the ancient writers — writers, too, at no great distance from the period — speak of Danish viceroys, often with the regal title, being sent to North-

umbria, that we are unwilling to consider the narrative as the pure invention of the Scalds.*

On the death of Ragnar, the sceptre of at least a portion of Denmark — perhaps Scania and the isles — passed into the hands of *Sigurd II.* (or *Siward* †), surnamed *Snogoje,* or Snake-eyed. At the same time, Jutland was possessed by other kings, whether as tributaries, or independent, there would be rashness in deciding. We read, indeed, that *Hemming* was contemporary with him ; that *Harald* succeeded Hemming in some part of Jutland ; that this latter prince was exiled through an insurrection of the sons of Godric, or Godfrey, who fought for the inheritance of their father ; that this Harald became a Christian, and sought the protection of Louis le Debonnaire ; that the Carlovingian monarch assisted him to return triumphant ; but that, about the year 828, being again deprived of his throne, he passed his days in religious contemplation. His name will always be memorable for his solemn baptism at Ingleheim, in presence of the emperor's court ; and for his efforts to introduce Christianity into Jutland. Under his auspices St. Anscar, the apostle of Scandinavia, penetrated into Jutland ; and though the labours of this pious missionary, owing to the troubles of the country, were attended with little success, the merit of this first Christian prince of Denmark is not the less. It was, indeed, his attachment to the new religion which, more than any other cause, led to his failure. Sigurd, the other Danish king, had no wish to imitate the example of Harald ; but he is celebrated as a peaceful, good, and enlightened ruler. For this reason, his reign affords no materials for history. On his death, in 803, he was succeeded, say the Icelandic chroniclers, by *Harda-Canute,* his son ; but, according to Saxo, by his son *Eric I.* How shall we decide? We can only conjecture that both princes reigned, at the same time, over different parts of the

794 to 935.

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. ix. Mallet, Histoire, tom. iii.

† Sigurd and Siward are frequently conversive.

monarchy; but that Eric died early, while Harda-Canute survived to the middle of the ninth century. By the same hypothesis only can we reconcile the names of the kings who succeeded Eric and Harda-Canute. By referring to the list at the head of this chapter *, the reader will perceive that it allows of only two sovereigns between Eric I. and Harold Blaatand, — king *Eric II.* and *Gorm the Old;* while Saxo admits five, viz., *Canute the Little, Frode VI., Gorm Anglicus* (so called from his birthplace), *Harold V.*, and *Gorm the Old;* thus rejecting Eric II., and adding four others. To us, the mode of reconciliation appears simple. While Eric II. and Gorm ruled over the islands and Scania, the other princes mentioned by Saxo reigned in another part of Jutland. This hypothesis is confirmed by one important fact,— that the life of Gorm was unusually protracted; and that, by conquest or negotiation, by open force or cunning, he obtained the government of all the states now comprising the Danish monarchy. Seeing the conduct of the Jutland princes, their civil wars, their consequent weakness and unpopularity, he fell on them, and put an end to their stormy independence. Over the reign of Gorm, indeed, there hangs much obscurity, which the researches of northern critics have by no means dissipated. That he performed many great actions; that, in a few years, he conquered Jutland; that he humbled the Saxons, and made some temporary accessions to his states on the side of Mecklenburg and Pomerania; appear to be undoubted facts. The Frankish writers, however, affirm that he was defeated by Henry the Fowler, his newly incorporated monarchy conquered as far as Sleswic, a margrave established in that place, and he himself compelled to admit the missionaries of Christianity into his states. Against this statement, which principally depends on the authority of Adam of Bremen, the native historians of Denmark make a stand; they will not allow that their country,

* See before, page 67.

or any portion of it, was ever thus subdued. But what counter authority can they oppose to this? Where are their native writers, if not contemporary, at least as near to the period as Adam, to contradict this relation? They have no such writers; they have nothing in the shape of authority before the close of the twelfth century: for the materials of their history, they must recur to the very writers whom they would thus undervalue. The statement of Adam, a canon of Bremen, who during so long a period collected materials for his ecclesiastical history, is too minute, too reasonable, too well confirmed by allusions, however incidental, in other writers (especially in the biographers of a few saints), to leave room for scepticism on the subject. Nor does this detract, in the least degree, from the merit of Gorm. By incorporating into one compact monarchy insignificant states, which had so often refused even a nominal obedience to the kings of Ledra, or Jutland, and by destroying so many piratical chiefs, whose arms were turned now against one another, now against their royal superiors, he effected more good than any preceding king of Denmark. This is his true glory. In another respect, he is less deserving of our praise; — he was hostile to the diffusion of Christianity. Yet he had married a Christian lady, whose beauty and virtues were the theme of admiration, and who certainly had considerable influence over him. While persecuting the missionaries in the rest of his states, he appears to have allowed her the exercise of her religion,— her chapel and priests. Some writers assert that, though he did not like, he never seriously opposed, the preaching of Christianity in any part of his states; and, in confirmation of this statement, they assert that he allowed his sons, Canute and Harald, to be baptized, and Jutland, at least, to make daily progress in the new faith. Yet Saxo assures us that he demolished the churches which had been erected in the preceding reign; that he restored the pagan temples; that he put to death, or exiled, the teachers of

Christianity. This testimony is too positive to be evade
But, though always a bigoted pagan, he might ha
been more intolerant at one period of life than anothe
probably he was a fierce persecutor until his marriag
and the virtues of his queen had mitigated his hatre
of Christianity, and, by degrees, induced him to tolera
it. Though he might have allowed his sons to be bap
tized, he took care that their habits should be paga
They were the most noted pirates of the age, and h
rejoiced in their success. One of them, however, w
killed near Dublin, and the blow is said to have prove
fatal to him. He died, says Adam of Bremen,
935; probably, however, he resigned his power in th
year, and survived six years longer.*

935 to 964. HARALD II. surnamed *Blaatand*, or Blue-toot
seems, during the last six years of his father's life,
have been either associated in the government with th
king, or to have ruled as his deputy. In 941, howeve
on the death of Gorm, he was the undisputed heir c
the monarchy. The early part of his reign was mo
brilliant; the latter disastrous. Soon after his acce
sion, his aid was implored by his countrymen in No
mandy. Most readers are aware that, in the latter ha
of the preceding century, Rollo, assisted by perpetu
reinforcements from the north, had wrested that pro
vince from the kings of France, and, in 912, on h
baptism, had been declared the lawful duke of his ne
conquest. In 927, the veteran warrior, exhausted b
age and fatigue, had resigned the dignity to his so
William Longsword. In 943, this duke was assas
sinated, and his son Richard, a child, was left expose
to the hostilities of Louis d'Outremer, who natural
wished to recover that fine province, and confide th
government to a French, not to a Norman, vassa

* S. Remberti Vita S. Anscharii (apud Langebek, Scriptores Reru
Danicarum, tom. ii.). Suenonis Aggonis Historia Regum Danicæ (apu
Langebek, tom. i. p. 48, &c.). Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, li
ix. Adamus Bremensis, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. i. Mallet, Histoi
tom. iii. liv. i.

Louis led an army into Normandy, defeated the troops which the regency opposed to him, and obtained possession of the young duke's person. In this emergency the Normans applied for aid to Harald, whose warlike actions were well known to them. In 944, that is, in a year after duke William's assassination, the Danish king appeared off Cherburg, with a considerable armament. Alarmed at the danger, Louis had recourse to negotiation; and at the personal interview which followed, the dispute would, in all probability, have been amicably arranged, had not some chiefs of both armies begun to quarrel. This quarrel led to a general engagement, in which Louis was vanquished, and made prisoner. To obtain his liberty, he was compelled to release the young duke, whose right to the fief he also recognised. This was a proud day for Harald, who returned to Denmark with a reputation unrivalled in the north. His next exploit was similar — to place on the throne of Norway (now a monarchy) the sons of Eric, whom Hako, the reigning king, had driven into exile. His arms were successful; and he restored to Harald Grafeld the sceptre of the father. Twelve years afterwards, this prince being assassinated (an event of very usual occurrence in the history of the north), the Danish king went a second time into Norway, subdued the country, and divided it into three kingdoms. One portion he confided, under the ordinary feudal obligations, to Harald Grenshi, a prince of the family; a second, subject to the same homage and service, was bestowed on jarl Hako; the third, which was the lion's share, was reserved to the Danish crown; and from all a large annual tribute was exacted. This policy was injurious enough to Norway, however useful it might be to Denmark. And it was scarcely less hurtful to England, since it augmented the power of the Danish kings, so as to render them formidable enemies to this island. In his next expedition, which was against no less a personage than the emperor

Otho I., he was less happy. Embracing the cause or a rebel whom Otho had placed under the ban of the empire, and learning that the monarch was absent in Italy, he made a fierce irruption into Saxony, and, we are told, put to death the ambassadors of Otho. He had little difficulty in driving the imperial garrison from Sleswic, and in destroying that important fortress. On the return of Otho, however, who lost no time in avenging the indignity offered to the empire, Holstein was speedily overrun, and he driven into the north of Jutland. He was compelled to treat with the victor; and his states were left him on the condition of his baptism, and that of his son Sweyn, and of helping, instead of impeding, the progress of Christianity in his dominions. That on this occasion he did homage for them to the emperor, is asserted by the German, and denied by most native, historians. The subject may occupy our attention for a few moments.*

964. That Harald did homage to Otho for the whole of Denmark, — that country being subdued and rendered tributary by the latter, — is expressly asserted by Sweyn Aggesen, a Danish writer of the twelfth century.† It is equally affirmed by Adam of Bremen, who wrote within half a century of Harald's death, and who is better acquainted with the transactions of Holstein and Jutland than all the writers of his age.‡ And it is inferred, from a privilege granted by Otho to the church of Hamburg, exempting the lands of three bishoprics just created in Denmark — Aarhuus, Sleswic, Rypen — from all contributions to the state, from all dependence on the secular government; and extending the same privilege to all the lands which those churches might

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. x. Suenonis Aggonis Historia Regum Danorum, cap. 3, 4. (apud Langebek, Scriptores Rerum Danicarum, tom. i p. 48, &c.). Gulielmus Gemmeticensis, De Ducibus Normanniæ, lib. iv. Ordericus Vitalis, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. viii. Sigebertus Gemblacensis, Chronicon, A. D. 949. Wace, Roman de Rem, tom. i. Mallet, Histoire de Dannemarc, tom iii. liv. 1. Depping, Histoire des Expeditions Maritimes des Normands, tom. ii. chap. 10.

† Illis temporibus Otto imperater Daciam sibi fecerat tributariam.

‡ Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. ii. cap. 11.

hereafter possess throughout Denmark. To weaken the effect of these testimonies has been the object of native writers. But what are their reasons? Too feeble to have any weight out of Denmark. They insist that Sweyn was misled by the authority of Adam of Bremen; that Adam, himself, was an ignorant ecclesiastic, who readily assented to whatever Otho assumed; and that the privilege in question, of which the authenticity cannot be denied, is of no weight,—a pure formula of the imperial chancellor, dictated, indeed, by an ambitious, all-grasping court, but founded on no real conquest, much less vassalage. To answer such objections would be an insult to the reader's understanding. There can be no doubt of the emperor's feudal supremacy over Denmark, any more than over Bohemia, or Poland, or Lombardy. It has, indeed, been contended that if Otho had a spiritual, he had no temporal jurisdiction; that he might be the protector, the superintendent, the head of the rising church, without having the least authority over the state. But this allegation is at variance with all reason and with all history. Would a sovereign have the insane effrontery to say what lands shall, and what shall not, pay taxes, unless he had some authority over them? Would he exempt them from contributing towards the support of the crown, unless that crown were in some degree dependent on him? And where is there any example of such unlicensed interference? But we all know that vassalitic obligations were of various kinds, some oppressive enough, others little more than nominal; and we may admit that though Harald was compelled to do homage, and even to pay a yearly tribute, he remained independent so far as his internal administration was concerned. It was the policy of Otho to christianise the kingdom — to transform restless barbarians into civilised creatures — to humanise the fiercest of pagans by the influence of a mild and powerful religion. Without such a change, he saw no security for his northern

frontier. But in striving to attain this object, great moderation was necessary: he did not wish to exasperate, where his interest was so obviously to induce the most friendly relations; still less would he, by severe exactions, — exactions, however, which his position as conqueror might have enabled him to enforce, — indispose the minds of a high-spirited prince and a warlike people, against the faith which he wished them to embrace.*

964. But miracles were no longer wrought in the time of the Othos. If Harald and some of his people outwardly conformed to the religion of Christ, they were still influenced by that of Odin. Besides, to both the national independence was dear; and we cannot be surprised at the hostile feeling with which the Danes regarded the Germans. During the life of the first Otho, indeed, there was outward harmony; but in about a year after the accession of the second (974), he joined the party of Henry duke of Bavaria, then a rebel, and made several irruptions into Saxony. On the defeat of that powerful vassal, Otho penetrated into Jutland, and advanced as far as the Sound which bears his name. With the result of this war we are not acquainted; but probably Harald submitted. The events, however, of both wars, which have been frequently confounded into one, are very doubtful. A more certain fact is, that the good fortune of Harald now forsook him. He failed in an expedition against Norway, which had thrown off its vassalage. Nor was this the worst: his son Sweyn, who had been baptized with him, rebelled against him. The motives which led the prince in this undutiful conduct are unknown. Probably the chief was the desire of power; and as his nature was ferocious, he scrupled not to bear arms against his father. There is also some reason to believe that he was the instrument of a great party, — the old pagans, who could not behold with much pleasure the gradual progress of

* Mallet, Histoire, tom. iii. p. 106, &c.

the new faith, and the consequent decline of their own. *His* conversion was not, like his father's, very sincere; or, perhaps, he cared not for either religion, so that his ambition was gratified. As the pagans were still the more numerous subjects of the state, he became at once their patron and their tool. The war was short, and Harald was compelled to flee. He sought a refuge in Normandy, and by duke Richard, we are told, was restored to at least a portion of his dominions. How far this relation is true, we cannot, in the absence of contemporary authority, decide. A more certain fact is, that, in 991, he was assassinated by the procurement of his own son. He was walking on the skirts of a wood, when an arrow from the bow of a Jomsberg pirate belonging to a band in the pay of Sweyn, laid him in the dust.*

Such was the fate of a monarch whose memory was dear to the early Christians of Denmark. He was the first monarch that openly professed the new religion; and the constancy with which he adhered to it affords indisputable proof of his sincerity. From Ledra, the ancient seat of the Odinic superstition, he removed his court to Roskild, where he erected a cathedral to the most holy Trinity. This was a politic step; connected with the new capital were no ancient recollections to remind the idolater of the faith of his fathers. The foundation of three other bishoprics attested his zeal. The reverence in which this monarch was held in the centuries immediately following his death, and a passage, of which the application was mistaken, in the History of Adam of Bremen, nearly led to his canonisation.†

On the tragical death of Harald, the sceptre devolved 991
to the unnatural *Sweyn*. As the majority of the people were still pagans, the accession of this prince was beheld with satisfaction; for though, perhaps, he did not

* Mallet, Histoire, tom. iii. liv. i.
† Adamus Bremensis, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. ii. cap. 19.

openly apostatise, he encouraged the old religion, and rebuilt many of the temples which had been destroyed. And he was the ally of the Jomsburg pirates, the leader of whom shot the arrow which had proved fatal to Harald. Yet Harald was the founder of that city, — one of the most famous in the annals of the world. It was situated near the great lake of Pomerania, on the site of the modern Wollin. It was avowedly built for a piratical fortress; yet the founders could not anticipate the greatness which it afterwards retained. Its first governor, who was also its legislator, was a pirate chief, Palnatoko, whose skill as an archer was never equalled in the north. He decreed that no man who had ever shown the slightest fear, even in the greatest dangers, should be a member of the new community. No Christian was admitted, because Christianity was supposed to enfeeble the mind; but people of all other religions and of all countries were received; and each of the great European nations had a street of its own. It was the last place of the north which was humanised by the religion of Christ; and probably it would longer have defied the general influence of that faith, had not its riches enervated the vigour of its inhabitants, and intestine dissensions still further weakened it, so as to render it a prey to its enemies. Palnatoko, the assassin of Harald, had been long resident at the Danish court, and had been the tutor of Sweyn; and to that barbarous deed he was, we are told, excited by a personal injury. His skill in archery was the quality on which he most prided himself, and he was accustomed to boast that he could hit an apple, however small, on the top of a pole. This boast, which was regarded as an arrogant display, made him some enemies. It reached Harald, who insisted that the archer's own child should supply the place of the pole; and threatened, that if the first arrow missed its aim, his own head should bear the penalty. As there was no hope of changing the royal determination, Palnatoko

warned his child to be steady — not to flinch hand or foot — not to move a muscle of his body, when the arrow approached. On the day appointed, the dreaded experiment was tried; and the apple was cloven, while the child remained uninjured. But the archer had three arrows, and being asked what he had intended to do with the remaining two, he replied, that had he been the death of innocence, the guilty contriver of the experiment should not have escaped. — Such is the story which Saxo has preserved. That it has given rise to the fabulous one of William Tell, must be apparent to the reader; for the Danish historian wrote a full century before the Swiss patriot flourished. Nor do we think that Saxo's account is the original one: the circumstance probably took place centuries before the reign of Harald Blaatand, and became a portion of the "legendary lore" the origin of which is so mysterious. Whether this incident be true or false in regard to Harald and this archer, the latter joined Sweyn, and, as we have already related, caused the death of the former.*

In the early part of this monarch's reign we meet 991.
with much obscurity, much contradiction. We are told that in return for his rebellion against his father, and for his restoration of paganism, he was doomed to great bitterness of suffering; that he was thrice a prisoner among the pirates, and thrice redeemed by his people. For the last act of redemption he is said to have been indebted to Danish ladies, who, seeing that the money of the state was wholly exhausted by the preceding ransoms, contributed their choicest ornaments for that purpose. For this generosity, adds Saxo, the grateful Sweyn passed a law, that, in future, females should, like males, succeed, by inheritance, to a portion of their father's property. Such a law certainly existed, and it may possibly be referred to Sweyn; but in regard to the circumstances which gave rise to it, there is room

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. x. Suenonis Aggonis Historia Regum Daniæ, cap. 4.

for scepticism. That a powerful monarch — for such Sweyn always was — should be *thrice* captured by pirates, — the pirates, too, of Jomsberg, — is surely unparalleled in the history of the world. Yet the relation alike of Saxo and Sweyn Aggesen must have had some foundation in truth. The probability is, that the king, *prior to his accession*, was *once* a captive, and that the monastic writers of the following age mistook the time and multiplied the circumstances.* Those venerable fathers, struck with horror at the filial no less than the religious impiety of this king, were ready to adopt, without examination, the most unfavourable reports concerning him. Another statement, that Sweyn was expelled from his kingdom by Eric of Sweden, and that he remained almost fifteen years in exile, fourteen of which he spent in Scotland, is entitled to just the same credit. His father, we are told, died in 991; yet in 994 he was powerful enough to begin the conquest of England; and from that year to the period of his death, in 1014, he was always in this country, or in Denmark. Where, then, are these sixteen years to be inserted? Assuredly no chasm can be found for them between 991 and 1014. Other circumstances demonstrate the falsehood of the relation, — a relation, however, adopted by the most recent historians. On his expulsion, we are told, he applied for the common rights of hospitality to Olaf Trygveson of Norway, but was spurned by that prince. This conduct of Olaf, says Saxo, was the less justifiable, as Sweyn had assisted him to regain the throne of Norway. Let us for a moment attend to dates. Sweyn's restoration to his country, after his fifteen years of exile, is placed in the year 994; and as Olaf was the first monarch to whom he applied, this application must have been made about 979. But Olaf did not return to Norway before 996. How much earlier than this year must he have been

* This is another illustration of the truth contained in the fable of "The Three Black Crows." Mallet pointed out the absurdity of the relation; yet modern historians have continued to adopt it.

assisted by Sweyn? Yet for this, as for the preceding relation, there was probably some basis. If Sweyn ever was in exile, — and there is some reason to infer that he was, during his hostility with his father, — that exile was before the death of Harald, and consequently before his accession to the monarchy. It may possibly be that he was at one time prior to that event king of some portion of the monarchy, — perhaps of Scania; and this conjecture would at once account for the facility with which Eric expelled him. However this be, there can be no doubt that if this banishment be a fact, it must be referred to a period long prior to 991. What confirms this conjecture is, the statement of Saxo, that the monarch to whom Sweyn next applied was Edward king of England. This was evidently Edward the Martyr, who ascended the throne in 975, and was assassinated in 978, — a period which will exactly agree with the duration assigned to his exile.*

All writers allow that Sweyn, soon after his accession, sent or led an armament against Hako, the usurper of Norway. Snorro assures us that this expedition was planned by the Jomsberg pirates, who were invited to celebrate the funeral solemnities of Harald (that is, to get drunk) at the court of Sweyn; and he adds that the same vow was taken in regard to England. The vows of drunken men are not usually remembered; but these pirates remembered theirs but too well. With sixty vessels, filled by the bravest heroes of the republic, they hastened to the Norwegian coast; there they separated, and were separately assailed by jarl Hako, his son, and other chiefs of the kingdom. But, desperate as was the valour of the pirates, their numbers were too few, in comparison with those of the enemy, to fulfil their oath of taking Harald alive, or expelling him from Norway. They were signally defeated, though not until prodigies of valour had been effected by them. The

991 to 993.

* Adamus Bremensis, Historia Ecclesiastica, cap. 72. Suenonis Aggonis Historia Regum Daniæ, cap. 4. Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. x.

contempt in which they beheld death is horribly illustrated by Snorro. Thirty of them being captured, their feet were tied by a rope, and they were carried on shore. They were placed on benches, in a right line, each near to the other, awaiting their death. Thorkil, a Norwegian jarl, advanced with a huge sword, and anticipated much pleasure from the exercise of killing them in detail. Accosting the chief of them, he said, "So, Vagne, thou madest a vow to put me to death; but it seems more likely that I shall have the honour of sending thee with my apology." The pirate looked at him with much contempt. Beginning at the end of the line, he struck off the heads of many in succession, who faithfully observed the condition of their order, — never to exhibit the shadow of a fear. One desired the jarl to strike him in the forehead, and to look whether he should so much as blink his eyes. The next victim held in his hand the backbone of a fish. "I will wager thee," he said to Thorkil, "that, after my head is off, I shall be able to plunge this bone into the ground!" But the boast was vain: when his head left his body, the bone fell from his hand. "Injure not my hair!"* cried another, as he stretched out his neck to receive the blow. An attendant held the long tresses with both hands, while the executioner struck; but, at the moment, the pirate threw back his head, and the sword amputated the two hands of the courtier, without injuring the pirate. Great was the triumph of the latter; and Eric, the son of Hako, admiring his intrepidity, procured his pardon. Another, Vagne, one of the chiefs, was pushed against the executioner by his next fellow; Thorkil fell, and, in so doing, his sword cut the rope which bound the pirate, who, seizing the weapon, beheaded the Norwegian jarl. Eric, too, procured *his* pardon. Eighteen being in this manner slain, the visitors began to feel some admiration for the rest. "Wilt thou accept the offer of thy life?" was demanded of the

* "My beard is no traitor!"—*Sir Thomas More.* Is there any thing new under the sun?

next. "That," replied the man, who would not receive even life from an ignoble hand, "depends on the dignity of the giver!" Jarl Eric, the son of Hako, was named, and the offer was accepted. "Wilt thou?" was addressed to another. "Not unless my companions are spared also!" was the reply; and they were spared.*

If the expedition against Norway thus failed, very different was the issue of that directed against England. During the greater part of a century, this island had been unmolested by the pirates. Alfred, towards the close of his reign, had humbled them; Edward the elder had signally triumphed over them; and the name of Athelstane had been dreaded by all the rovers of the sea. There had been battles, indeed, with the Danish state of Northumberland, which, prior to Athelstane's reign, had formed no part of the Saxon confederation; but the coasts of central and northern England had been undisturbed. On the accession of Ethelred, however, the scourge was resumed. In 991, a large force appeared before Ipswich, and marched to Malden, laying waste the country on every side. On this occasion Brithnoth, the Saxon governor of Essex, was slain; and his fate has been related in a poem, from which copious extracts may be found in a volume connected with the present.† These formidable invaders, as every child knows, were bribed to leave England; and, as every child knows, they soon returned in greater numbers than before. Even when steel, instead of gold, was to be the tribute, a cowardly and treacherous commander, Alfric of Mercia, was intrusted with the defence of England. In the following years, every province was desolated. In 994, Sweyn himself appeared in the Thames with a formidable fleet. He had an ally, Olaf, the son of Trygve, who, since infancy, had never been in Norway, and whose piratical exploits had been celebrated from

991 to 1001.

* Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 42—46. (apud Heimskringlam Snorronis, tom. i. p. 234, &c.). Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. x.
† Europe during the Middle Ages, vol. iv. p. 22, &c.

Russia to Ireland. * His attack on London was repelled; but Essex, Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire suffered dreadfully from his depredations, and those of his ally. As before, though the number of pirates did not exceed 10,000, money was offered by the despicable Ethelred. Olaf, on receiving it, visited the court of the Saxon king, received the rite of confirmation (he had previously been baptized in one of the Scilly islands), and promised never again to molest the English coast. We hear no more of his depredations: but whether his forbearance was owing to his promise, or to his departure for Norway, the throne of which he ascended in little more than a year from this period, may well be doubted.† But Sweyn had no such moderation. In about three years from the payment of the 16,000*l.*, he appeared in the south-west counties, advanced into Sussex and Hampshire, laying waste everything in his passage, and wintered as securely as if he had been naturalised: no opposition was made to his progress. Kent was next ravaged; and the whole of England would, no doubt, have become Danish, had not Sweyn been recalled to contend with a more formidable enemy, Olaf of Norway. One year after the death of that monarch‡, that is, in 1001, the Danes returned to a country where they had found no enemies, but abundance of prey. Another heavy ransom, and extensive estates in different parts of the kingdom, procured a temporary cessation of hostilities. §

1001 to 1003. If Ethelred could not oppose the enemy in the field, and if his coffers were exhausted, he had still one resource left, — that of a general massacre. The day before the festival of St. Brice, the authorities of every city and town received secret letters from the court, commanding them and the people everywhere to rise at

* See, in the third chapter of this book, the adventures of Olaf.

† These circumstances, so far as Olaf is concerned, will not be understood by the reader, unless he refers to that monarch's life, in the chapter devoted to the history of Norway.

‡ See his reign, in the history of Norway, in the present volume.

§ Saxon Chronicle, *sub annis.*

a certain hour, to fall on the unarmed, unsuspicious Danes, and not to spare one of them. The order was too well obeyed, and the English nation made itself equally guilty with its king. Many of the victims were naturalised; many had English husbands or wives; more were on terms of intimacy with the natives, and, at the moment this bloody mandate was executed, were sharing the hospitality of their huts. Nobody was spared: decrepit age and helpless infancy, youth and beauty, pleaded in vain. Even Gunhilda, sister of Sweyn, a convert to Christianity and the wife of an English earl, suffered with the rest; but not until she had seen her husband and son beheaded in her presence. This was not the mere act of the crown, nor that of a few courtiers, nor that of the municipal authorities: it was that of the English nation. Retribution, as Gunhilda had prophesied, was at hand; and every reader will rejoice that it was so. Sweyn no sooner heard of the massacre, than he swore never to rest until he had inflicted a terrible vengeance on the people. He no longer wished for booty, merely: he would also destroy. With a fleet of three hundred sail, he steered to the west of the island, landed in Cornwall, commenced his devastating career, reached Exeter, which he took by assault, set it on fire, and massacred the inhabitants. From thence he proceeded into Wiltshire, where fire and sword did their work, and passed by way of Salisbury to the sea coast, laden with plunder. No attempt was made to arrest his destructive progress: a Saxon force under Alfric had, indeed, assembled; but it would not fight, and it retired covered with the derision of the invaders.*

The winter of 1003 Sweyn passed in Denmark; in the following year he was again in England. His destructive career now commenced in the eastern counties; but this year they terminated sooner than could 1003 to 1009.

* Saxon Chronicle, *sub annis.* Matthæis Westmonasteriensis, Historia, p. 391. Wilhelmus Malmsburiensis, p. 64.

have been foreseen. A famine — the result of preceding depredations — afflicted the land; and as provisions in sufficient abundance could not be found, the pirates returned home for a season. The deplorable cowardice of the troops, the imbecility of the governors, from Ethelred down to the meanest thane, was never equalled in any other country. This condition is well described by Turketul in a letter to Sweyn: — "A country illustrious and powerful; a king asleep, caring only for women and wine, trembling at the very mention of war, hated by his own people, despised by foreigners; generals envious of one another; governors who fly at the first shout of battle." This weak and vicious king had the felicity to convert his friends into enemies at the very time he most needed their assistance. In 1002 he married the princess Emma of Normandy; but his behaviour to her was so grossly offensive, so brutal, that her father, duke Richard I., joined in making him still more contemptible by imprisoning or killing his subjects who happened to pass through Normandy. The pirates of Sweyn soon returned to consummate their work. In 1006 a heavy sum was paid them; the following year they demanded an equal sum, and declared that, in future, it must be annually paid by way of tribute. Some feeble efforts were made to defend the country; but the leaders of the fleet which had been raised turned their arms against one another. Thus fell the hopes of the nation, which prepared its neck for the most galling yoke that had ever afflicted it.*

1010. In the year 1010 the Danes were in possession of sixteen English counties, and they exacted forty-eight thousand pounds for sparing the rest. But such moderation was not in their policy; and no sooner was the money theirs, than their atrocities recommenced. The condition of Kent — which was that of half England — is more graphically described by the biographer of St. Elphege, archbishop of Canterbury,

* Saxon Chronicle, *sub annis.* Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. chap ix.

than by all the chronicles of the period. When that city was first besieged, there was some prospect of a defence; the walls were strong, and there were many strong arms eager to defend their cathedral, their bishop, their wives and children. But a traitor (and England was full of them) set fire to about twenty different houses: to extinguish the flames many of the defenders left their posts; one of the gates was broken open, and the pirates rushed into the city, while the flames spread on every side. The men were cut down in the streets, or they were thrown into the devouring fire; women were violated and speared; children were tossed like balls from the points of the lances. As a last resource, St. Elphege and his clergy had taken refuge in the cathedral; but he could not hear of these excesses without endeavouring to stop them. Rushing from the sacred pile into the midst of the pirates, he exclaimed, "Spare the city! at least, if you are men, spare the helplessness of infancy! Turn your weapons against me, only, who have always condemned your crimes!" They gagged him, bound him, and led him to witness the fate of his church, to which thousands of the people had now resorted in the vain hope that its sanctity would impress even pagans. It was soon on fire; the smoke ascended in clouds; the flames spread; and as the unfortunate people, forced by the burning liquid lead, issued from the building, they were cut down by the ferocious pirates. Of eight thousand inhabitants, about a tenth of the number were spared, in the hope of ransom; and such as were unable or unwilling to pay it were put to a cruel death. Among them was St. Elphege, who might have raised the sum demanded for him — three thousand pieces of gold — had he signed an order to the churches of his diocese to pay the money from their treasuries. But he refused to allow that which had been raised for the poor to be expended on him: he would not, he said, purchase life on terms so disgraceful. He who, throughout life, had begged for the indigent, would not be the

means of plundering them in his old age. After being detained for some time, kept in a loathsome dungeon, starved, tormented, beaten, in the view of subduing his inflexibility, he was martyred, his last ejaculations being for his flock, his country, his very enemies.*

1013 to 1014. In 1013 Sweyn arrived, with new reinforcements, to take possession of the whole island. On landing in the north, the earl of Northumberland and the whole province submitted. Proceeding to the south, Oxford, Winchester, Bath, with all the towns of the west, and all the great thanes, sent in their allegiance. For some time London held out, because Ethelred was in it; but that doughty hero, having ascertained that duke Richard of Normandy would receive him for the sake of his wife, precipitately fled to Rouen, leaving his capital and kingdom in the hands of the invaders. Sweyn was king of England; and he used the title, though, owing to the short residue of his life, he was not crowned. That he exercised all the rights of sovereignty, fully as the Saxon kings had ever done, is admitted by our own historians. His reign is said to have been one of severe exaction. He died at Gainsborough in one year after his elevation, under circumstances of suspicion. The northern annalists declare that he was killed by prince Edward, afterwards the Confessor; but no English authority confirms the report. This was not the work of Edward; but it might be that of Edmund Ironside.†

Many years before his death Sweyn probably reverted to Christianity, and persevered in it unto his death. But whether pagan or Christian, he was a ferocious warrior and a stern king. With natural talents of a high order, with indomitable courage, with unwearied activity, he obtained advantages which none of his predecessors had enjoyed. We have already alluded to the

* Osbernus, Vita S. Elphagi (apud Wharton, Anglia Sacra, tom. ii. p. 123—141.). Chronica Saxonicum, *sub annis.*

† Saxon Chronicle, *sub annis.* Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 321.

diversion which his son, with Olaf Trygveson, king of Norway, created in favour of England. After the death of that hero (1000), he seized a portion of Norway, while the Swedish king seized another; and this augmentation of his power no doubt rendered him more able to conquer England.*

* The Saxon Chronicle. Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni.

CHAP. II.

SWEDEN.

A.C. 70 to A.D. 1001.

UNCERTAINTY AND CONTRADICTION IN THE CHRONOLOGICAL SERIES OF KINGS EXPLAINED BY THE FACT THAT THE GOTHS AND SWIONES WERE UNDER DISTINCT RULERS — HENCE THEIR CONFUSION. — THE YNGLINGS, OR SACRED FAMILY OF ODIN, REIGN AT UPSAL. — KINGS OF THAT RACE: ODIN — NIORD — FREYR — FREYA — FIOLNER — SWEGDIR — VANLAND — VISBUR — DOMALD — DOMAR — DYGVE — DAG — AGNE, ETC. — FATE OF THE PRINCES OF THIS HOUSE, OF WHOM MOST DIE TRAGICALLY. — LEGEND OF AUN THE OLD. — INGIALD ILLRADA. — CONQUEST OF SWEDEN BY IVAR VIDFADME. — GOTHIC KINGS FROM GYLFO TO IVAR VIDFADME. — KINGS OF THE SWEDES AND THE GOTHS.

In the Introduction to the present volume we have added the tabular list of kings by archbishop Joannes Magnus, as illustrative of the difficulty which must accompany all researches into the ancient history of Sweden.* The exploits of those kings, their chronological order, their very names, rest under a deep cloud. Where, indeed, no two authors agree, — where the names, not merely of two or three sovereigns, but of nearly one half, are as different as the actions ascribed to them, — what can be inferred but this, that little dependence is to be placed on any one of them? Compare, for example, the list given by the archbishop with that which modern Swedish critics approve†; and

* See page 5.

† Kings of Sweden from the first century before our Saviour's birth to the introduction of Christianity into Sweden; compiled from the Landfedgatal and from the Heimskringla of Snorro Sturleson: —

what must be the reader's surprise to find — 110 in the former case, and 37 in the other; the names, too, for the most part, dissimilar as the number! If we take that given by the authors of our Universal History*,

1. *Dynasty of the Ynglings.*

	A. C.		A. D.
Odin	70	Alrek and Erik	280
Niord	20	Yngve and Alf	300
	A. D.	Hugleik	302
Freyer Yngve	10	Jorunder and Erik	312
Fiolner	14	Aun hinn Gamle the Old	448
Svegdir	34	Egill Tunnadolgi	456
Vanland or Valland	48	Ottar Vendilkraka	460
Visbur	98	Adils	505
Domald	130	Eystein	531
Domar	162	Yngvar	545
Dyggve	190	Braut-Onund	565
Dag-Spaka the Wise	220	Ingiald Illrada	623
Agne	260	Olaf Tractelia exiled about	630

2. *Dynasty of the Skioldungs.*

	A. D.		A. D.
Ivar Vidfadme, died	647	Erik Raefillson	820
Harald Hildetand	735	Emund and Biorn	859
Sigurd Ring	750	Erik Emundson	873
Ragnar Lodbrok	794	Biorn Erikson	923
Biorn Ironside	804	Erik the Victorious	993
Erik Biornson	808	Erik Arsael	1001

The figures, it must be observed, are in a majority of cases purely conjectural. They have been adopted after the most careful investigation, by native critics; and we will not be so presumptuous as to reject them, especially when some of them are known to be correct.

* Kings of Sweden, according to the Universal History: —

1. Gylfo.
2. Odin.
3. Niord.
4. Frode.
5. Sigtrug.
6. Swibdager.
7. Asmund.
8. Uffo.
9. Hunding.
10. Regner.
11. Holward.
12. Attil I.
13. Hoder.
14. Rodern.
15. Attil II.
16. Hogmor and Hogrin.
17. Alaric.
18. Eric.
19. Halden.
20. Siward.
21. Eric II.
22. Halden II.
23. Ungwin.
24. Regnald.
25. Asmund I.
26. Haquin.
27. Gothar.
28. Adel.
29. Ostan.
30. Ingvar.
31. Asmund II.
32. Siward II.
33. Hirot.
34. Ingel.
35. Olaus Traetelga I.
36. Charles.
37. Bero or Biorn III.

[Query, Why are the 1st and 2nd omitted?]

38. Olaf Tretelga.
39. Ingo.
40. Eric III., surnamed Waderhead.
41. Eric IV., surnamed Segersell, or the Victorious.
42. Eric V., surnamed Stenchil Milde, or Happy-born.

The authors admit that they have omitted several names, probably from

we shall, indeed, have some approximation in respect to the number, but little in regard to the names, of the kings. Other lists might be produced equally contrasting with the one contained in the Norwegian authorities. Whence this diversity, which modern historians have pronounced to be hopelessly irreconcileable? It arises from a very simple cause. When the Swiones, the attendants of Odin, — his companions from his Asiatic kingdom, — arrived in the north, they found a Gothic tribe, the Gothones, under Gylfo their king, seated along the maritime coast, and extending to the centre of Sweden. How long this tribe had been settled there when the Swiones arrived would be vain to inquire. By what means Odin and his followers obtained a portion of the country, and established the seat of his new empire at Upsal, has been already related. Here, then, were two distinct tribes, the Gothones or Goths, and the Swiones or Swedes, to say nothing of the original tribes, or, at least, fragments of those tribes, who had been located in these regions many centuries before the arrival of the Goths. Now the kings whom Joannes Magnus, Torfœus, Loccenius, the authors of our Universal History, and other writers enumerate, were the kings of the Goths and Swedes, while those contained in the Landfedgatal, the Heimskringla, and other Icelandic authorities, were sovereigns of the Swedes only. That the two people, and, consequently, the districts which they inhabited, were for many centuries under distinct rulers, is one of the best ascertained facts of history. The former called themselves kings of the Goths, or of Gothland, only; the latter, now kings of the Swedes, now of Upsal. This distinction was not only observed from the very dawn of their history, but is at this day preserved in the title of the monarch, who is styled "King of the Swedes and of the Goths."

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a doubt whether the kings in question ever reigned. Yet some of the names in both lists may be proved to be the same. How correct this? Doubtless the kings of Gothia sometimes reigned at Upsal, and vice versa. And with a proof for this conjecture

Hence the two lists of kings—the two kingdoms—the distinction of history in both; all which have hitherto been confounded, and so completely as to baffle the keenest criticism. Not that the king of the one people was not sometimes the king of both. This could not be otherwise, when two conterminous nations, jealous of each other's prosperity, were eager for the ascendancy. The superiority, no doubt, was assumed by the sovereigns of the divine race, the descendants of Odin; but those of Gothland were sometimes the rulers, and hailed as monarchs of the Swedes. On the other hand, the kings of the Swedes — those who reigned at Upsal — were still more frequently victors over their Gothic neighbours. Hence the confusion which, notwithstanding the important distinction we have been so careful to indicate, will often be found in the regal lists of this country.*

We commence with the hallowed race, the pontiff kings of the Swedes, who reigned at Upsal. On the death of Odin, *Niord* succeeded, as prophet, priest, and king, in the capital of Sigtuna. It was then, no doubt, the head of a very small state. Many were the kings which held Sweden at this time: besides Gothia, which was subject to chiefs, who, in the sequel, were generally at war with the Swiones, each province had its king. Several of the states were bound in alliance with Niord. Odinsey, in Fionia, was held by a chief of this nature; Skiold, the son of Odin, reigned at Ledra, in Zealand; Freyr was the pontiff chief of Upsal; Heimdal was over the temple at Hemenbiorg; Thor was at Thrudvang, and Balder at Breidablik.† And though Scania was a possession of the Goths, and not yet subject to the Danish chiefs, it appears to have been held by some one of the Aser. The reign of Niord was a happy one; the gifts of nature were extraordinarily abundant, and the benefit was referred to his influence with the gods. Before his death he wounded A. C. 40. to A.D. 14.

* Saxo Grammaticus. The Universal History. The Ynglinga Saga, &c.
† Ynglinga Saga, cap. 5.

himself as Odin had done. After it, his body was laid on the funeral pyre, and he was long worshipped as a deity. The sceptre was now transferred to *Freyr*, the son of Niord. His reign, too, was prosperous, and he was the idol of his people. He it was who built the great temple at Upsal, and made it the seat of his government, in preference to Sigtuna. Here he received the tribute furnished by his subjects; hence the progressive enrichment of that place. Universal peace distinguished his administration. He was held in greater esteem than his predecessors, and his surname of *Yngve* became the proudest distinction of his descendants, who were thenceforth called *Ynglings*. His death — we know not for what reason — was concealed for three years; the only reason assigned is, that a magnificent tomb was erecting for him during that period. His son did not immediately ascend the throne of the Swedes; there was *Freya*, the last of the divine personages who had accompanied Odin from Asia to the north. She was celebrated in her life, and still more after her death: her body was not burned on the funeral pyre, because it was believed she had returned to the gods; and her statue, as everybody knows, in conjunction with those of Thor and Odin, long adorned the temple at Upsal. *Fiolner* *, the son of Freyr, succeeded. He was contemporary with Frode I., king of Denmark. Both were equally inclined to peace, and they lived in perfect harmony. More than once did he visit king Frode at Ledra, whose hospitality was the admiration of that age. But one of his visits proved fatal. Whatever might be his other virtues, sobriety was not of the number; his potations were long and deep; and one night, having occasion to rise, he fell into a huge vessel of mead which was in the cellar, the trap door of which had been incautiously left open.† The throne now passed to *Swegdir*, his son. This prince, accompanied by twelve nobles, went into Asia for

* This was also the name of Thor's hammer or thunderbolt.
† The same accident is related by Saxo of a Danish king.

the purpose of inquiring into the family and exploits of Odin. He wandered over "Turkland" and Great "Swionia," the Asheim or Godheim of the Swedes. Here he found many of his own blood. While in the territory of the Vanir*, he married a lady of that nation, and by her had a son, whom he called Vanland. At the end of five years, he returned to Upsal; but if any reliance is to be placed on tradition, he afterwards took a second journey to those distant regions, and never returned. A wondrous legend has been invented to account for his death. "To the east of Great Fionia," says Snorro, "there is a large villa called *Stein*, a rock, from one being placed there so huge, as to equal a house. One evening, after sunset, as the king was about to pass from his cups to his bed, he saw a fairy sitting under that great rock. He and his companions, being excited by wine, ran towards the place, and the fairy desired Swegdir to enter if he wished to converse with Odin. He did enter, and was seen no more."†

By the death of Swegdir, *Vanland* became the acknowledged head of the Swiones. He was the first of Odin's descendants who exhibited a warlike character, or rather the first that actually went to war. In the infancy of this theocratic state, when, through weakness, it was compelled to cultivate the good will of its neighbours, of conquest there was no dream; but when the young lion had gained strength, its natural character was unfolded. His conquests, however, have not been recorded; and we can only conjecture that they were chiefly in the provinces bounding on Upland. Nor do we know that it was a warlike expedition that led him into Finland. That country, however, was to him a fatal as well as a romantic one. While there he married the daughter of an old Swede established among the Finns. Her he soon left, with the promise of returning in three years; but ten

34 to 220.

* See Introduction, page 31.
† Ynglinga Saga, cap. 11—15. (apud Snorronis Heimskringlam, tom. i.).

having elapsed without any tidings of him, she sent Visbur, their son, to his palace at Upsal. Still, as he showed no disposition to visit her, she took counsel with Hulda, a famous witch, — and Finland was full of them, — how she might compel him to return. The witch readily undertook to bring him, or, if she failed, to destroy him. Her secret charms were immediately exerted, and Vanland, though enthroned at Upsal with the attributes of a demi-god, felt their power. On a sudden his heart was drawn towards Finland; the impulse to return was scarcely resistible: but his friends and counsellors dissuaded him from the voyage, assuring him that he was merely under the temporary influence of magic. Sleep now overcame him; but scarcely was he laid on his couch than he cried out that he was oppressed by that mysterious demon, the nightmare. His attendants hastened to assist him, but in vain: the power of the demon was resistless; and, after violent distortions of his limbs, he was suffocated. His body was burned; on the banks of the Skuta his mighty cairn was erected; and *Visbur* became the monarch of the Swedes. This prince was not more faithful, as a husband, than his father had been. Having married a lady by whom he had two sons, he unceremoniously dismissed her and them to her father, and took another to his bed. The offspring of this second marriage was Domald, whom his nurse, foreseeing that dangers menaced him, endeavoured to protect by incantations. In the mean time, Gisle and Ondur, sons of the repudiated queen, applied to Visbur for the restoration of their mother's dowry, especially of a magnificent golden necklace; on his refusal, they prayed that the ornament might be his destruction, and that of his offspring. To effect this object, they had recourse to magic; and Hulda, who had destroyed the father, boasted that she would destroy him, and leave this doom to the whole of the Ynglings, — that either their arms should always be turned against one another, or they should perish tragically by some other means.

The operations of magic, however, were too slow for their impatience; and they burned their father with the house in which they found him. *Domald* succeeded; but the fates were not to be averted. During three years a grievous famine afflicted Sweden. The first autumn, oxen were offered to propitiate the gods; the second, human victims bled on the altar. When neither availed, the nobles and priests, assembled at Upsal, decreed that, as the famine was owing to king Domald, he should be the next sacrifice, and the decree was carried into effect. Of the two next kings, *Domar*, the son of Domald, and *Dygve*, the son of Domar, nothing is recorded except that they reigned and died; but *Dag the Wise*, the son of the last-named sovereign, is celebrated in northern history. Well might he enjoy the epithet, if, as tradition asserts, he understood the language of birds. He had a sparrow which performed the same office for him that the ravens did for Odin*; it flew over the earth and brought him intelligence of everything that passed. One day, however, as this bird was picking some grains in a field of Redgothia, a country clown killed it with a stone. Finding that his bird did not return, Dag consulted the gods, and learned its fate. To avenge himself, he led an army against the Goths, and laid waste the region in which the misfortune had happened. Having taken many prisoners, and left many dead on the field, he was returning to his vessels, when a dart from an obscure hand sent him to the halls of Odin.†

Agne, the son of Dag, mounted the vacant throne of the Swedes. Rich and warlike, he was held in high esteem; but the fate which hung over the sacred line of the Ynglings made him another of its victims. In a successful expedition against the Finns, in which he had slain the Finnish king, and, agreeably to the manners of the times, had made Skiolfa, the orphan daughter of the king, his mistress or wife, he had just returned 220 to 448.

* See Introduction, page 33.
† Ynglinga Saga, cap. 15—22.

to Stocksund, disembarked his troops, and pitched his tent on the margin of a wood. Here, to perform with passing splendour the last rites to the memory of Skiolfa's father, he assembled a great number of guests. The cup went round until the king became intoxicated. As he wore the chain which had belonged to Visbur, Skiolfa besought him to confide the precious ornament to her care; but he fastened it the more closely round his neck and fell asleep. The tent was at the foot of a tree, and Skiolfa, assisted by her Finnish connections, tied a strong cord to the ornament, threw one end over a branch of the tree, and pulling with all their might, the body of Agne was raised, and left to dangle in the nightly breeze. The following morning Skiolfa and her companions were on their voyage to Finland, and nothing remained to the Swedes but the performance of the last rites to the royal victim. *Alaric* or *Elrac* and *Eric*, his two sons, divided the supreme power between them. For a season they were prosperous; but they were doomed to share the fate which hung over the house of Yngve. They were fond of equestrian exercises, especially of taming the most spirited horses. One day they rode at full gallop over an extensive plain; but they were never again seen alive: their corpses were found with their sculls fractured; and, as neither had any arms, it was supposed that they had killed each other with the reins, or that some malignant demon had destroyed them both. *Yngve* and *Alf*, the sons of Alaric, shared the government of the Swedes; but they were dissimilar in character. The latter was studious of peace, a man of few words, and severe in manner; the former was fond of war, of his cups, and of conversation, and often protracted his orgies into the silence of night. Two such men, whose jealousy was further increased by the unwise division of power, could not long bear the society of each other. One evening Yngve stabbed his brother; but the victim had strength enough left to return the fatal blow. The supreme power was now

held by one, *Hugleik*, the son of Alf. His end, too, was tragical. Being assailed by Hako, a celebrated sea king and Danish jarl, who numbered among his captains the unrivalled Sterkodder*, he was vanquished and slain, — Snorro assures us by the hands of Hako; but it was, perhaps, by those of Sterkodder. The victor was not satisfied with the death of Hugleik: he subdued the Swiones, and forced them to acknowledge him as their king. Yet he is not ranked by the Icelandic writers among the lawful kings of the Swedes. He was a usurper whom *Jorund* and *Eric*, both sons, both sea kings, assailed and slew in the vicinity of Upsal. But Eric had received a mortal wound, and Jorund was hailed as the monarch of the Swedes. The new sovereign, who, during his exile, had obtained considerable reputation on the deep, retained his attachment for the profession, which he exercised in the summer. But it led to his ruin. During his exile he had slain Gudlaug, king of Halogia: by Gylaug, the son of that chief, he was met, in Limafiord, defeated, and hung. *Aun*, the son of Jorund, surnamed *hinn Gamle*, or the Old, now ascended the throne of the Swedes. He was a prudent man, a great worshipper of the gods, and not fond of war. During his reign, says Snorro, — and the information is valuable, — Dan Mykillati, Frode the Pacific, Halfdan, and Fredleif III. were, in succession, kings of the Danes. His peaceful habits, probably, led to the aggressions which were committed upon him. He was twice expelled from his kingdom, — the first time by Halfdan, who reigned twenty-five years in his capital, Upsal, and there died. This remarkable event is mentioned by Saxo; but, in his usual manner of confounding names and dates, the Danish historian calls the Swedish king Eric instead of Aun. He adds that Halfdan was held in great veneration by the Swedes, who, in their deplorable blindness, regarded him as the son of the great Thor. After his twenty-five years' reign in Gothia,

* See before, page 86.

Aun consulted the gods respecting the duration of his life, and, to render them more propitious, he offered his own son on the altar of Odin. The response was, that, though he was now sixty years of age, he should live sixty more. But, if he was to live, he was not to reign that time; for in twenty-five years from the date of this sacrifice, he was again expelled by Ali, the son of Fridleif. At the end of twenty-five years more, Ali, we are told, was slain by Sterkodder. Aun was again obeyed by the Goths. All this is sufficiently fabulous; but the following is more so:—After reigning another period of twenty-five years, he offered his second son to Odin; and the response was, that, if he sacrificed a son every ten years to that deity, he should live for ever; but his vigour was not to be commensurate with his life. After the seventh sacrifice, he was unable, during ten years, to walk, and was carried on a litter. After the eighth, during ten whole years, he was confined to his bed. After the ninth, he was fed like a child with milk from the horn. He had still a son, and would have offered him as the tenth victim had not the Swedes forbidden the sacrifice. So king Aun died; and his name was afterwards used proverbially to denote the diseases inseparable from old age.*

448 to 545. *Egil*, whose blood should have stained the altar of Odin, became, by his father's death, monarch of the Swedes. He now experienced an enemy in Tunne, who, though a slave, had been the treasurer of Aun. As Tunne had tasted the sweets of power, he had no wish to revert to his former condition; and when he perceived that no distinction was made between him and his fellows, he repaired to the spot where Aun had buried a large treasure, dug it up, and with it hired a numerous body of men to execute his purposes. At first the new chief betook himself to the less accessible parts of the country; by degrees, as his band increased,

* Ynglinga Saga, cap. 22—29. p. 25—35. Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, p. 122.

— and there can be no doubt, by proclaiming a servile war, it rapidly increased, — he issued from the mountain or the forest, and swept the neighbouring plains. He was a bandit on a large scale. Egil raised some force, and hastened to chastise the rebel; but, being surprised by night in his camp, he lost many of his followers, and was compelled to consult his safety by flight. This signal event increased the power of the rebel, and though forces were repeatedly brought into the field, victory declared for Tunne in eight consecutive engagements. In this emergency the king fled to the court of the Danish king, Frode V., in Zealand, and offered as the condition of aid an annual tribute. Frode accepted the offer; and, with a Danish reinforcement, Egil triumphed over the rebel. During the three years which intervened between this event and his own death, Egil sent large *presents* to the Danish king; but he would not allow them to be called tribute. Death was to him, like most of the Ynglings, tragical: it was occasioned by a wild bull, while hunting in the forest. *Ottar*, the son of Egil, succeeded. Being summoned by the Danish king to pay the tribute which had been promised, he returned a peremptory refusal. Frode invaded Swionia, laid waste the country; while Ottar, equipping a powerful armament, disembarked in Zealand, and committed equal depredations. But the latter was defeated and slain by the Danes, and his body exposed to the fury of wild beasts. *Adils*, the son of Ottar, was the next king. He was a noted pirate, who, in summer, visited and ravaged most of the coasts round the Baltic. On one occasion he descended on that of Saxony, laid waste the country, took much spoil, among which was Ursa, a lady of surpassing beauty. Of her the victor became enamoured, and he married her: but, being expelled from his kingdom by Helge, the son of Halfdan, who reigned at Ledra, this queen fell into the power of the victor, who, also, married her, and the issue of this union was Rolfe Krake. But Ursa, who was discovered to be the

daughter of Helge, returned to the court of Adils, with whom she remained during the rest of her life. On the death of Helge, in one of his piratical expeditions, Rolf, or Rollo, young as he was, was acknowledged king of Ledra. Adils did not long survive his enemy; he was killed by the fall of his horse.* *Eystein*, the son of Adils, next swayed the sceptre of the Swedes. His reign was a troubled one, his kingdom being continually infested by the royal ships of Denmark and Norway, or, what was worse, by the fierce sea kings. "In those days," says Snorro, "were many sea kings, who levied large forces, though they had no countries to rule. He was esteemed worthy to be a sea king who never slept under a tent, and never emptied his horn by the hearth side." The most powerful enemy of Eystein was Solvi, a chief of the Jutes, whose piratical expeditions were known on many coasts. One night this marauder advanced to the tent where Eystein was entertaining his friends; and setting fire to the place, all within were consumed. To obtain the royal title, Solvi hastened to Sigtuna; and for a moment he enjoyed it: but the inhabitants rising to avenge their late king, and to free themselves from the new yoke, this adventurer soon bade farewell to empire and to life. The lawful successor of Eystein was his son *Yngvar*, who, being of a martial disposition, visited many coasts. But in 545 he was slain on that of Esthonia.†

545 to 623. The next person who filled the throne of the Ynglings, *Braut-Onund*, was a much wiser man than his predecessors. His great object was, to clear the forests, to drain the marshes of Swionia, and thus to convert desert and useless into arable and pasture land. His efforts were crowned with success. Where the stagnant pool had stood, golden harvests waved; forests were replaced by huts full of industrious labourers; and highways were made to pass over mountain and

* The reader who may wish to see how beautifully Saxo has confounded these simple events, may turn to the second book of his history.

† Ynglinga Saga, cap. 29—36. p. 35—45.

fen. "Many," says Snorro, "were the provincial kings subject to him." But this patriotic monarch, like so many of the Ynglinga, came to an untimely end: as he and his retinue were one day in the mountains, they were overwhelmed by a huge avalanche. The sceptre now devolved to the unfortunate *Ingiald Illrada*, son of the deceased king. In his infancy this prince, we are told, was of too gentle, too mild a disposition, for the turbulent people with whom he had to deal. This defect, however, was cured by a peculiar diet, — that of roasted wolves' hearts; and Ingiald became as ferocious as he had formerly been the reverse. But this change of character was not for the happiness of the Swedes; and he was destined to be the last of the Ynglings that should rule at Upsal. His first object was, to exterminate the local kings, who, like mushrooms, had sprung up in the country, and who, though subject to the descendants of Odin, frequently acted as if they were independent. In the entertainment which he gave at Upsal, alike to celebrate the obsequies of his father, and his own inauguration, his character was fully displayed. Here were six kings, — all who owed obedience to Ingiald, except the one of Sudermania, — with a great number of jarls, and other nobles. On these occasions, the king, or jarl, previous to receiving the homage of all present, — a homage expressed by a general shout, — seated himself on a low seat at the foot of the one which his predecessor had filled. The Braga-cup was then brought, filled with wine to the brim; and this the new heir, after giving some pledge, was expected to quaff before he ascended the high seat. When the cup — a huge horn — was brought to Ingiald, before emptying it, he vowed to Braga, the god, that he would, in every direction, double his dominions, or perish in the attempt. They who applauded the vow little foresaw the fate which awaited them. That very night the six kings and the jarls were burnt, together with the house of feasting. By this atrocious act Ingiald was absolute master of all Swionia, except that

district of Sudermania which owed obedience to the absent king, Grammar. This king soon heard of the deed; and knowing that his own life was menaced, he entered into an alliance with a famous sea king, Hiorvardar by name, to whom he gave his daughter Hildegund. The entertainment at which this marriage was first projected is characteristic of the manners of the times. On one high seat was king Granmer; on another, the pirate king; and by the side of each sat his chiefs and friends. To honour the guest, Granmer called for his daughter Hildegund to present the cup. She appeared, beautiful as the day, filled the cup, and approaching Hiorvardar, said, "Hail to the Ilsings! I drink to the memory of Rolf Krake!"* She then emptied the half of the cup, and presented it to Hiorvardar, who, seizing it and her hand, prayed her to sit beside him. "Such," replied the damsel, "is not the custom of pirates; they do not allow females to sit and drink with them." "Never mind that custom," pursued the chief; "but be persuaded to share my seat and cup." Hildegund yielded; she drank and talked with the chief until the night was far advanced; and the next day she was affianced to him. By this alliance Granmer acquired a valiant ally; and in the battle which both had soon to wage against Ingiald they were the victors. The monarch of the Swedes was compelled to flee; but, through the intervention of friends, peace was concluded, on this condition, — that, so long as the three lived, not one of them should molest the others. Granmer could now go to Upsal to join in the great sacrifice and to consult the oracles. The response was, that his days were numbered: and numbered they were. While he and his son-in-law were in one of their rural manors, Ingiald, with a select force, silently approached and consumed with fire both them and the house. He then subjugated the districts which the two kings had ruled, and those of their allies. His surname of *Illrada*, the Deceitful, sufficiently shows the estimation in which

* A hero of that race.

he was held. He had a daughter, Asa by name, who was the heiress of his bad qualities. Married to Gudred king of Scania, she persuaded her husband to murder his brother, Halfdan III., king of Zealand. She then joined in a plot for the destruction of her husband; but this object was no sooner effected than she was obliged to flee for protection to the court of Upsal. Yet here she was not safe. Ivar Vidfadme, the son of Halfdan, in the resolution of avenging his father's death, invaded Swionia, and wrapped it in blood and flames. When the news of this invasion reached Ingiald, he was at an entertainment, with his daughter and many nobles. He knew that he was hated; that resistance was impossible; that escape was hopeless; and by the advice of Asa he adopted an expedient which would, for ever, make his death as remarkable as his life. This was, to burn himself, his daughter, his guests, together with the house which contained them.*

By the death of Ingiald, his son, *Olaf Trætelia*, was the last of the Ynglings; but his claim to the throne, however sanctioned by custom or blood, was not likely to avail in opposition to so powerful an enemy as Ivar Vidfadme. At this moment, Ivar was at the head of the Danish, the Swedish, part of the Saxon and Anglian states (the Angles of Holstein); and his career was not to be resisted by a youth without army, without followers. Indeed, Olaf made no effort to resist; he saw that the people were resolved on the expulsion of the Ynglings; and, with the few friends who adhered to him, he hastened to the desert lands north and west of the Vener Lake. There he cleared off the forests, — hence his surname of Trætelia, or the Tree-feller, — drained them, and not only rendered them habitable, but in a short time made them the foundation of a new state, that of Vermeland. From him descended the famous Harald Harfager, monarch of Norway, the restorer of the ancient glory of the Ynglings.† 623 to 630.

* Ynglinga Saga, cap. 36—45. p. 45—54.
† Ibid. cap. 45, 46.

The crimes and misfortunes of this dynasty must, to every reader, contrast strangely with its pretended divine origin. Compared to it, the fate of our Stuarts was a happy one. If we except the companions of Odin, the ends of most were tragical. Fiolner was drowned in a butt of mead; Swegdir, whatever the manner of his death, did not leave this world in a natural way; Vanland perished, not by the hands of witches, but those of conspirators; Visbur was burnt to death by his own sons; Domald was sacrificed on Odin's altar by his subjects; Dag was killed by a slave; Agne was hung by his bride; Alaric and Eric were killed by each other's hands, or by conspirators; Alf and Yngve certainly slew each other; Hugleik was slain by Hako or Sterkodder; Eric died in battle; Jorund was ignominiously hung; Egil was gored to death by a wild bull; Ottar was killed by the Danes; Adils by the fall of his horse; Eystein perished by the hands of pirates; Ingvar by those of the Esthonians; Braut-Onund, by an avalanche; Ingiald Illrada was forced to destroy himself; and Olaf Trætelia was driven into everlasting exile. Thus, out of twenty-two sovereigns, from Fiolner to Olaf, three only died a natural death; for that of Olaf, as we shall soon perceive, was also tragical. Assuredly there was nothing in the pre-eminence, divine as it was, of the Ynglings, to render it an object of envy, either to their own times or to posterity.*

The fortunes of Olaf Trætelia and of his successors may be found in the chapter devoted to the early Norwegian history. Henceforth Sweden, or to speak more precisely, the Swedes, are under the sceptre of the Skioldungs, and not of the Ynglings, though the former, like the latter, were of Odin's race, being descended from Skiold, whose seat was established at Ledra in Zealand. They did not exercise the sacerdotal functions; they were not pontiff kings; consequently, they were not held in the same veneration as those who were privi-

* Ynglinga Saga, passim

leged to officiate at Odin's altar. — Before we proceed with this Swedish branch of the Skioldungian dynasty, we must revert to the Gothic dynasty established in another part of Sweden. At every step we take in the history of this obscure period, we are more fully convinced that the hypothesis we have framed is based on truth; viz., that while the Swiones or Swedes were located in the provinces bordering on Upsal, and were governed by their own kings, the Goths were in the more southern and western provinces, with a dynasty of their own. Where was the seat of this latter dynasty? Probably it was not always stationary. It appears to have been sometimes in West, sometimes in East, Gothland; just as those provinces obeyed one or two kings. Scania too, which, politically, was a province of Denmark, yet geographically a portion of Sweden, was inhabited by Goths, the seat of whose government was Lund. As the kings of Scania, or of East and West Gothia, obtained the preponderance, they were called kings of the Goths. In the same measure, when the Danish star was triumphant, Ledra, or Odensee, or Lund, or some town of Jutland, was regarded as the metropolis of the Goths. But in each of the Gothic provinces of Sweden there was a resident court, and consequently a capital, whose ruler was sometimes dependent on the king of Scania, sometimes on him of Upsal, but more frequently, perhaps, independent of them all. However this be, it is certain that the kings of all these provinces, except Jutland, have been confounded. Hence the uncertainty of regal lists, and, in many instances, their contradiction to one another. In general, the prince who happened to have the preponderance for the moment, whether his seat was in the Gothlands or in Scania, was called king of the Goths. All were, or professed to be, equally descended from Odin; nor is this improbable, when we perceive how frequently a conqueror divided, at his death, his dominions among his sons. This fatal example, as we have seen, was

set by Odin himself. Over Scania he placed his son Heimdal; over Zealand and the surrounding islands, his son Skiold; over Jutland and Holstein, his son Balder; over the Swedes at Upsal, his kinsman Freyr; and over the Norwegians, as we shall soon perceive, his son Semming. Such, at least, is the consistent voice of tradition, as perpetuated in the oldest records now extant.*

From the preceding observations, and from many others in this and the last chapter, the reader will be prepared for the amazing variations in the chronological lists of northern kings, as given by Saxo, Snorro Sturleson, and Joannes Magnus. Thus the king of Scania was sometimes the chief of all the Danes, sometimes of all the Goths, sometimes of both; but in general the kings of the two Gothlands were the acknowledged heads of their nation, whether they happened to be independent, or politically subject to the Danes on the one side, or the Swedes on the other. Besides, the intermarriages which constantly took place among these sovereigns would make them, eventually, of one great family, even if most of them had not derived their origin from the warrior god of the north. Still there were kings who had no such boast, who descended from a regal stem more ancient than theirs, whose ancestors were rulers in the Gothic provinces of Sweden, centuries, perhaps, before Odin was born. And for anything we can prove to the contrary, there might, in the interior of Sweden, be reguli who descended from the original, almost indigenous rulers—from the old Finnish stock; for though the Goths, who were there before the arrival of the kindred tribe of the Swiones, were the dominant caste, they would govern the inland provinces through native chiefs. At this distance of time, however, it is impossible to distinguish the two; nor is it often possible to distinguish the earlier from the subsequent Gothic princes, — those

* Saxo — Snorro — Johannes Magnus — Torfœus, in multis locis.

who sprung from ancestors prior to Odin's arrival, from those who descended from the Swionian branch. *

According to the Heimskringla, the oldest and best authority for Swedish history, when Odin arrived in the north he found a monarch named Gylfo in possession of the supreme power.† Was this Gylfo of the Gothic or of the anterior race? This question cannot be answered. From one circumstance, viz., his alleged proficiency in magic science, we should infer that he was a Finn, were it not doubtful whether the Goths did not also cultivate this pretended science, and whether, from the facility of his intercourse with Odin, and from the locality which he occupied, he was not of a race kindred with that of the Swiones, — one that had immigrated into these regions from Asiatic Scythia centuries, perhaps, before "this king of the Turks." Gylfo is said to have ceded to the strangers a portion of his territory, and that they settled to the north of him. This statement, again, confirms the inference of his Gothic descent. However, from that day down to the permanent union of the two nations — the Goths and the Swedes — under one head (temporary unions had been frequently effected), the more southern people had their own king, their own government and laws. By what degrees the Swiar obtained the ascendancy over the Goths may be easily conjectured. The latter were, at an early period, induced to embrace the religion of the former, or, we should rather say, a modification of that religion; for that they, like the Norwegians, combined a few more ancient tenets with the faith of Odin, may be inferred from many passages. And with all due allowance for this circumstance, we cannot but feel surprise at the facility with which both Norwegians and Goths were brought to the temples of the new faith. This could scarcely be the result of force, since the Swiar do not appear to have been very numerous in comparison with the rest of the population. Like the

* Saxo — Snorro — Johannes Magnus — Torfœus, in multis locis.
† See before, page 31.

Saxons in England, and the Scots in Ireland, and the Mohammedans in India, they were the dominant caste, and no doubt their individual valour was superior to that of the natives. Still, in the earliest Norwegian and Danish accounts of these remote transactions, we do not read of the physical so much as of the moral influence of Odin and his immediate successors. They might be numerous enough to obtain possession of any neighbouring province, or even to defeat the petty chiefs with which the country swarmed; but they would scarcely be sufficient to make both Goths and Norwegians embrace a new faith. Between temporal and religious domination there is a wide difference; and all history proves that men will fight more willingly, more perseveringly, for speculative opinions, than for the most substantial social advantages. The comparative ease with which Odin, or rather his immediate successors, thus forced the positive or modified observance of their religious system on a great population, has led some northern writers to assume that before his arrival another Odin had been there, the apostle of a kindred faith.* But this assumption is gratuitous; we have no good reason for it; and even if we had, the question would still occur, "By what means did this *former* prophet procure the ascendancy of *his* religion?" There is but one mode of solving this difficulty, and this is hypothetical. Probably, as both Goths and Swedes — perhaps, too, a considerable portion of the older race — had come from the same Asiatic Scythia, there was between *some* of their religious opinions an affinity, if not an identity; and this affinity would naturally facilitate the progress of the new faith. If to this consideration we add the pomp with which the sacrifices were conducted — the splendour of the temple — the crowd of officiating priests, with the king at their head — the imposing solemnity of the scene — the alleged godlike descent of the pontiff chief

* See the extract from Wheaton's History of the Northmen, p. 40.

— the reputation which all the Aser priests enjoyed for supernatural knowledge — we shall scarcely be surprised at the rapid progress of the Odinic worship. As a prophet, too, especially one so highly descended, Odin must have pretended to the gift of miracles, or, what is the same thing, to the power of effecting wonderful results by his knowledge of nature's mysteries. This combination of circumstances must have imposed on the Goths, as on the Norwegian and other ancient tribes. It may account for the facility with which both nations embraced the new faith, and ultimately acknowledged even the temporal superiority of the Swiar. It is certain that as early as even the time of Tacitus, the latter were the dominant tribe; yet, as they occupied the sea-coast, — the usual locality of the last comers, — we may doubt whether they had been there above two centuries. But this superiority being of a moral, not of a physical nature, was often resisted by the Gothic kings, who did not hesitate to march on Upsal, to put the half divine pontiff to death, and to ascend his throne.*

The names, succession, and chief exploits of these sacerdotal kings, from Odin to Ingiald Illrada, we have, thanks to the industry of Snorro, been able to lay before the reader. But over those of the royal Goths a cloud hangs which time can never remove. All that can now be done is, from Saxo Grammaticus and the Heimskringla itself, to reserve a few scattered names. Gylfo we have already mentioned; and from the alleged fact — which we have no reason to dispute — that Scania was previously ceded by Odin to his son Heimdal, the seat of Gylfo's empire must have been in one of the Gothlands. He was followed by *Frode* and *Sigtruc;* the former, remarkable for his liberal presents to the great temple of Sigtuner; the latter, for his misfortunes. Gram, a Danish king (probably the ruler of Scania), having carried off the daughter of Sigtruc, a war followed, which proved fatal to the Gothic king, who was dethroned and slain. That he reigned in

A. C. 70 to A. D. 260.

* Saxo — Snorro — Johannes Magnus — Tacitus.

Gothland is expressly affirmed by Saxo Grammaticus *, who relates a graphic incident illustrative of ancient manners. Gram, says the Danish historian, had heard that the princess was affianced to a giant, and he resolved to rescue her from the humiliation; he therefore went into Gothia, and found the royal maiden, with some of her female train, washing at one of the rural streams. Of course she became the prize of the victor, and so did the Gothic kingdom. But *Gram* did not use his success with moderation; and by *Swibdager*, a king of Norway, he was slain in his turn.† Swibdager was now the lord of three states, — of Scania, Gothia, and his hereditary one; but the first he resigned to Guthrum, son of Gram. It was the lot of Swibdager to fall, untimely, by the hands of Hadding, another son of Gram. † In his Gothic and Norwegian states he was succeeded by his son *Asmund*, who, desiring to avenge the death of the father, was also slain by Hadding. *Uffo*, the son of Asmund, succeeded to the quarrel, though not to the throne, of his two predecessors. That throne was in possession of Hadding; but he was able to raise forces and make a diversion, by landing on the coast of Scania (or, perhaps, Jutland), and forcing the Danish king to return to the defence of his dominions. As it was not Uffo's design to risk a battle in a foreign state, he sailed for Gothland, and took possession of his hereditary dignity. But with the returning spring Hadding resumed his desire of conquest, and, with a considerable force, landed on the Gothic continent. His followers, however, were soon exhausted by hunger and fatigue; and in the ensuing battle he was signally defeated, and compelled to retreat into Denmark. ‡ Unable to accomplish the destruction of his enemy by force, Hadding had recourse to treachery: he sought an interview with Uffo, and removed that prince by assassination; but, according to the Danish account, he placed *Hunding*, the brother of Uffo, on the vacant throne. The

* Initâ Gothiâ.
† See before, page 21.
‡ See before, page 24.

Swedes, however, assert that it was their nation, not the Danes, who thus acted; and their statement is far more credible. Probably there was, as the former assert, a fierce war between the two; and when both found that no advantage was to be expected from it, they eagerly made peace, and were thenceforward more distinguished for their friendship than they had been for their animosity. In the fabulous spirit of the times, it is said that, when one of them heard of the other's death, he killed himself through grief. We may, however, admit that they died within a short interval of each other. We may add, that this Hadding is not admitted into the list of Danish, that is, of Zealand kings, by the best critics; and that for his actions we are indebted to Saxo. Probably he did not reign at Ledra.*

Ragnar, the son of Uffo, succeeded to the throne of the Goths, but not until he had rescued it from the domination of his step-mother. His queen was Swanhita, sister of Frode, a king of Denmark; but this alliance did not preserve a good understanding between the two countries. Frode invaded Gothland, but perished in the expedition,—not, observes Saxo, by the hands of the enemy, but through a fever, occasioned alike by the heat and the weight of his armour. On the death of Ragnar, the sceptre of the Goths was seized by *Holward*, or *Hodbrod*, who was a warlike prince. In his expedition to Denmark, which was then governed by Helge and Roe, he left the latter sovereign dead on the field. But he himself, after his return to Gothland, was mortally wounded by Helge, and his kingdom became the prize of the victor. But *Attil I.*, the son of Hodbrod, by marrying the daughter of Helge, and, still more, by the bravery of the Goths, was raised to the throne. The issue of this marriage, *Hoder*, became, in the sequel, king of Scania, no less than of Gothland. This is the Hoder of whom Saxo — so absurd in his

About 260 to 448.

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. i. Johannes Magnus, Historia Gothorum, page 14, &c. Loccenius, Historia Suevica, lib. i. Erici Olai Historia Suevorum Gothorumque, lib. i.

chronology — makes the contemporary and rival of Balder, the son of Odin. * Ruric, the son of Hoder, was also monarch of both states. He, as we have before related, was the grandfather of Hamlet, through the marriage of his daughter with Horwendil, prince of Jutland. † He governed Denmark through his viceroys, and always remained in Gothland; for this reason, he has been often omitted in the list of Danish kings. Of *Attil II.* we merely know that he was assassinated by a Danish emissary; of *Hogmor* and *Hogrin*, who reigned conjointly, that they perished in a battle with the Danes. But *Alaric*, their successor, appears to have been identical with *Elrec*, prince of the Swedes, the brother of Eric ‡; and this conjecture is confirmed by the statement of the Swedish historians, — that the Goths and Swedes were at this time united. Probably Elrec ruled one nation, Eric another. In the Swedish annals, too, *Eric* ranks as the brother and successor of Alaric; — a confusion of chronology common enough in the historians of this period. *Halfdan* (or *Halden*) succeeded, who was, probably, the *Alf* of Snorro. § This conjecture, too, is strengthened by the statement of the same Norwegian authority, that Yngve and Alf shared the government of the Swedes. Both would scarcely reign at Upsal; and we have strong reason for inferring that, while Yngve held that throne, Alf, or Halfdan, reigned over the Goths. And there is another confirmation in the fact that, on the death of Alf, the two people obeyed different rulers. In the reigns of *Siward*, *Eric*, *Halfdan II.*, *Ragnald*, *Asmund*, and *Haquin* (or Hako), we observe few points of coincidence between the history of the Goths and the Swedes: probably they were kings of the former people only, with the occasional superiority over Scania. But the name of Hako must not be dismissed without adverting to an incident which the author of *Macbeth* has admitted into the greatest of his dramas. Hako, resolved to avenge the death of his brothers who

* See Introduction, page 42.
† Page 57.
‡ See before, page 132.
§ Page 132.

had been assassinated at the Danish court, descended with a strong armament on the coast of Zealand, and marched towards the residence of the Danish king. On his way, to avoid observation, he passed through the woods; and when the path diverged into the open plain, he ordered his men each to cut down a large branch, that the paucity of his followers might not be discovered. Great was the wonder of the sentinel, to see a forest approaching the royal fortress, and he immediately carried the information to the king. The latter inquired how far the moving wood was distant from the walls; and, being answered that it was near, he felt that his last hour was also at hand. Issuing from the fortress to meet the foe on the open plain, he met the fate which he had foreseen. *

We now approach historic ground. *Egil Auniff*, the next king of the Goths, is, beyond all doubt, Egil, the son of Aun, whose exploits we have recorded in a former page of this chapter. † Those exploits are the same, both in the narration of Snorro, and in that of later historians of the country: the cause and the result were the same. Egil, therefore, was king of the Goths and the Swedes. The *Gothar* of the Swedish writers, the successor of Egil, is also the *Ottar* of Snorro: the circumstances of their lives are identical. ‡ *Adel* is the *Adils*, *Ostan* the *Eystein*, of the Heimskringla: in both histories, as the former was killed by the fall of his horse, so the latter was burned to death. § The only difference in the relation is the circumstance that led to the death of Eystein; the Norwegian authority attributing it to Solve, a Jutish pirate; the Swedish, to the rebellion of a Gothland chief. The *Ingvar* of the Swedish writers is indisputably the *Yngvar* of Snorro; and the *Asmund* of the former is the *Onund*, or *Braut-Onund* of the latter. In this latter reign, we perceive the same encouragement of industry; but the death of the

448 to 623.

* Authorities: — Saxo Grammaticus, lib. vii. Snorro Sturleson, cap. 22—29. Joannes Magnus, lib. i. Loccenius, lib. i. Ericus Olaus, lib. i.
† See page 134. ‡ See page 135. § See page 136.

king is variously related. Snorro, as we have before related, attributes it to an avalanche *; but the Swedish writers make him fall in battle against a body of rebels. Of the two next rulers mentioned by the Swedish writers — *Siward* and *Hirvt* — we have no mention in the annals of the Ynglings. The reason is, that they were kings of Gothland only, and, probably, dependent on the monarchs of Upsal: the latter, indeed, is expressly called the king of the Goths. *Ingel,* the next sovereign in the Swedish annals, is, beyond all doubt, the Ingiald Illrada of Snorro Sturleson, who was king of the Goths and the Swedes: his exploits, and tragical death, are the same. †

We have thus brought down the contemporary monarchy of the Goths, from the century before Christ to the conquest of Sweden by Ivar Vidfadme, in or about the year 623. By regarding these dynasties as separate, and endeavouring to distinguish kings whom all preceding historians have confounded, we have made the subject intelligible to the reader. The path, in which we have been the first to venture, will, we have no doubt, be traversed by other writers, until it is as well known as any other part of ancient Scandinavian history. It is yet a dark one; and criticism, aided by an extensive use of manuscript authorities, can alone enlighten it.

623 to 794. The four next monarchs of the Swedes and the Goths were also kings of the Danes. Of these, *Ivar Vidfadme,* the conqueror of Ingiald Illrada, was one of the most celebrated. The saga relates of him that he subdued all Sweden, which he joined with Denmark; a great part of Saxland, all Estland, and a fifth part of England. There is, doubtless, some exaggeration in this statement; but this very exaggeration establishes the fact of his conquests. The part of England to which the saga alludes, is said to be Northumbria. No mention, indeed, of such a descent is to be found in the Saxon

* See before, page 137.

† Saxonis Grammatici, passim. Snorro Sturleson, Heimskringla, cap. 29—46. Loccenius, Historia Suevica, lib. i. and ii. Erici Olai Historia, lib. i.

chronicle, or in Bede; and the silence of this Northumbrian historian, especially, may be a strong argument against its truth. Still, in the troubled state of the times, while the Saxons were struggling with the native Britons for the possession of the territory, the arrival of a new chief might well be overlooked, especially if the conquests of Ivar were confined to that part of Northumbria which lies north of the Tweed. It could not well be south of that river in the time of St. Oswald. But, whether this prince was in England, or not, no doubt can be entertained of his courage. His hereditary domain comprehended Scania only; Jutland he soon added to the rest; but we have no proof that he ever sat on the throne of Ledra. As king of Gothland and Sweden, however, without including his conquests on the coasts of the Baltic, he was a powerful monarch. "From him," says Snorro, "henceforth descend the kings of the Danes and the Swedes." On his death, the sceptre of these states was inherited by *Harald*, his grandson, surnamed *Hildetand*, or the Golden-toothed. This monarch far exceeded the former in glory. He appears, from the relation of Saxo, to have had some trouble with the Goths, and also with the Swedes; and for his success over them he was, according to the same veracious authority, indebted to the councils of Odin, who honoured him with a personal interview. From several passages in this historian, and in the sagas of a later age, we may infer that the Goths, dissatisfied at once with the Danes and the Swedes, repeatedly proclaimed their independence. They belonged not to the divine race of Odin; and the freedom which their ancestors had enjoyed before the arrival of "that wizard king," was often the stimulant to bold deeds. As they had revolted from the Swedes, so they were equally troublesome to the Danes during the four reigns which are now before us. But Harald triumphed, and governed both nations through his royal kinsman. Other parts of the world witnessed his valour: but it was his fate to die in battle, and in his old age, against his

nephew Sigurd Ring, who wished to expel him from the throne of Denmark. In the north of Europe, the battle of Bravalla is celebrated as any in ancient or modern times. Saxo, with much care, enumerates the royal chiefs who fought on both sides; but their number, no less than that of the common men, exceeds all belief. The aged and blind Harald was carried about in a war chariot; and, from time to time, he inquired how the battle proceeded. Above all, he was struck with the admirable manner in which Sigurd Ring had drawn up the hostile ranks; and he expressed his conviction that this arrangement was not the result of mortal science, but of Odin's peculiar favour. The charioteer whom he addressed was no other than Odin, under the form of a Danish chief; and, by the hands of that deity, he received a deadly blow, and was thrown on the ground. According to Saxo, he was succeeded by *Olo* and *Omund*, in succession; but the Icelandic authorities, who make the conqueror *Sigurd*, or *Siward Ring*, his successor, are more entitled to credit. Probably Olo and Omund were viceroys only, though they might be of royal origin. Many, according to Saxo, were the kings who intervened between Harald Hildetand and *Ragnar Lodbrog;* while the more critical historians of modern times, supported by Icelandic authorities, pass at once from the one to the other. At this distance, and without the aid of documents clearer than any that have yet been published, it is impossible to say which of the lists is the true one: but the probabilities are in favour of the Icelanders; for, though the kings enumerated by Saxo may have ruled in some parts of Denmark, they were, it is believed, rather viceroys than monarchs. By means of local governors, indeed, the four princes whose names fill this paragraph must have reigned; their states were too numerous, too extensive, for personal superintendence, especially when, as was generally the case, they were absent on foreign expeditions. To the exploits of Ragnar we have scarcely alluded, even in the Danish portion of the history; the

reason is, that we can see in them little which is consentaneous with truth,—little which is not a monstrous outrage of probability.*

On the death of Ragnar, the throne of Sweden fell to one of his sons, *Biorn I.*, surnamed *Jarnasido*. Of him we know little more than that, in his reign, the first attempts were made to christianise the Swedes. Biorn was not averse from toleration; and he allowed St. Anscar to teach, baptize, and preach unmolested. But the good thus effected was transient: Anscar returned to Germany, to procure from pope and emperor some amplification of his authority; and, during his absence, the mission entirely failed. When Anscar paid a second visit to this kingdom, he found a king named *Olaf* in possession of the throne. Who was he? Olaf Trætelia had been dead near two centuries, and Olaf Scotkonung did not reign until above a century afterwards. Either, therefore, we have a sad confusion in chronology, or there must have reigned a king whom modern criticism does not acknowledge. The probability is, that Olaf was a king of Gothia, who, in the numerous insurrections of the period, had seized on the royal authority in Sweden, no less than in the more southern provinces. *Eric I.*, the son of Biorn, is next classed among the Swedish kings; and, after him, *Eric II.*, surnamed *Raefilson*, who was, probably, either a Gothic king, or an usurper. *Emund* and *Biorn II.*—the one ruler of the Gothlands, the other of Sweden—next ascended the throne, and were followed by *Eric III.*, the son of Emund; but the reigns of all were short, and they have left no records for posterity. Indeed, the number of kings during the ninth century is so considerable, that we are compelled to infer the existence of separate kingdoms amongst the Goths, while we are unable to distinguish the two dynasties of kings. *Biorn III.* (923) enjoyed a long reign; *Eric IV.*,

794 to 1001.

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. viii. and ix. Loccenius, Historia Suevica, lib. ii. Erici Olai Historia, lib. i. Mallet, Histoire de Dannemarc, tom. iii. liv. i.

surnamed the Victorious (993), one still longer; and *Eric V.*, surnamed *Arsaell* (1001), closes the list of pagan kings: — not that he was a pagan; on the contrary, as we shall perceive in the chapter devoted to the introduction of Christianity into the north, he died for the new faith. But he had been reared a pagan; at his death the greater part of the kingdom was pagan; and it was reserved for his son, Olaf Scotkonung, to render Christianity the established religion of Sweden and Gothland.*

The confusion at this period of Swedish history, viz., from the close of the eighth to that of the tenth century, is greater than at any former period. No fewer than sixteen kings are said, by different historians, to have swayed the Swedish sceptre in little more than two centuries. The cause of this confusion is very obvious. Not only were the kings of Gothland, when that province happened to have a separate king, enumerated with those of the Swedes, but the successors of Olaf Trætelia were equally confounded with them: in other words, the royal chiefs of *three* contemporary states have been classed as kings of the Swedes only, — as the sovereigns of Upsal. This confusion has rendered it scarcely possible to distinguish either the royal names of each state, or the actions attributed to them. We may, however, assert, with confidence, that Olaf Trætelia, and Ingel (or Ingiald), his son, were not kings of the Swedes; on the contrary, they were sovereigns of a state far to the west, — Vermeland and Raumarik. † If, as some historians assert, a king named *Charles* reigned at this time in Sweden, his seat could not have been Upsal; it must have been some town of East or West Gothland. The same may, we think, be asserted of *Emund*, who reigned in the south, while Biorn reigned at Upsal, or Birca. But Eric IV., surnamed the *Victorious*, was certainly king of both the Goths and the Swedes. The successful wars in which he engaged, and

* Authorities: — Saxo — Loccenius — Eric Olaus — Joannes Magnus.
† See the next chapter.

which procured him that epithet, are too obscure to be distinguished from the chaotic events of this period. *Eric V.*, surnamed *Arsaell*, or the Happy-born, the father of Olaf Skotkonung, was also king of the two provinces. He embraced Christianity, and was baptized in public at Upsal, together with many of his nobles. It was, probably, as much for this reason, as for the extraordinary abundance which Sweden enjoyed in his time, that he obtained the epithet that posterity has attached to his name. There is much obscurity over this monarch's reign. By some writers he is said to have been so alarmed at the murmurs of his people, for his abandonment of the old religion, that, to pacify them, he reverted to it. By others, again, it is asserted that he stedfastly adhered to the new faith; that he laboured, with some success, to withdraw his subjects from the errors of idolatry; that he went so far as to demolish the heathen temples; that at Sigtuna he met with little opposition; but that, when he ventured to lay hands on the magnificent temple of Upsal, the people arose and put him to death. To reconcile these contradictions would be a vain attempt. All that yet remains to be communicated respecting this, and one or two preceding reigns, may be found in the chapter devoted to the origin of Christianity in these regions. *

* Erici Olai Historia Suevorum, lib. i. p. 20, 21. Loccenii Historia Suecana, lib. ii. p. 49—51.

CHAP. III.

NORWAY.

ABOUT 70 A. C. TO A. D. 1030.

NEW KINGDOM OF THE YNGLINGS IN VERMELAND. — KINGS FROM OLAF TRÆTELIA TO HALFDAN THE BLACK. — HALFDAN THE TRUE FOUNDER OF THE NORWEGIAN MONARCHY. — HARALD HARFAGER. — ERIC OF THE BLOODY AXE. — HAKO THE GOOD. — HARALD GRAAFELD. — HAKO THE JARL. — SURPRISING ADVENTURES OF OLAF TRYGVESON. — HIS EARLY PIRATICAL EXPLOITS. — HIS ROMANTIC FORTUNES. — HE BECOMES KING OF NORWAY. — HIS DESTRUCTION OF THE IDOLS. — HIS INTOLERANT BIGOTRY AND CRUEL PERSECUTIONS. — HIS TRAGICAL DEATH, OR, ACCORDING TO SOME WRITERS, HIS MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE WORLD. — OLAF THE SAINT. — HIS ADVENTURES OF A PIRATE. — HIS ACCESSION TO THE CROWN OF NORWAY, — HIS PERSECUTING CHARACTER. — HIS QUARRELS AND SUBSEQUENT ALLIANCE WITH SWEDEN. — IS DRIVEN INTO EXILE BY CANUTE THE GREAT. — HE RETURNS, AND IS SLAIN. — HIS PRETENDED SANCTITY.

THAT Norway had its chiefs with the regal title, if not prior to our Saviour's birth, many centuries before the fall of the Ynglings in Sweden, is undoubted. We find allusions to them in Danish and Swedish history, and in chronicles which, though of a later period, were derived from sources now lost. The country was full of them. Most of them, as we have already observed*, boasted of their descent from an old Finnish race, which, though half mythologic, had, in primeval times, produced many chiefs of illustrious name. But of their

* See Introduction, page 8.

deeds we have no evidence beyond the little supplied by the uncertain voice of tradition; and that little is so exaggerated by fable as to be useless. We will not rescue their names from oblivion: our narrative must accompany the fates of the Ynglings from their first settlement in Vermeland in Sweden, to their conquest of Norway. In regard to the latter country, we shall only observe that when Olaf Trætelia laid the foundation of a new power, it had as many reguli as at any former period. To subjugate them in succession, and to incorporate their petty states into one great monarchy, was the constant aim of his successors.*

The province of Vermeland, to which Olaf Træ- 630 to 640. telia retired, and in which he laid the foundation of a new state, was, as we have before observed, situated to the north of the Vener Lake. Here the assiduity with which he and his followers cleared the ground of its forests procured him, at Upsal, the scornful application of *Trætelia,* or Wood-cutter. But he despised the ridicule, and persevered. By degrees, many thousands of the people, whom attachment to the Ynglings, or the hope of greater freedom in the woods, rendered discontented at Upsal, or Sigtuna, or Birca, hastened to join him. Some writers assert that he returned for a season to his capital, and ruled the Swedes as his ancestors had done. But this statement is unsupported by any ancient authority, and is hostile to reason. Vermeland might well be confounded with Upland, for both were and are Swedish provinces. But the very circumstance which should have fortified him against the power of his enemies occasioned his death. The number of new comers was so great that the region, which was yet imperfectly cultivated, was unable to support them; the colony became a prey to famine, and the visitation was, as usual, ascribed to the king. According to the religious notions of the Swiar, every public misfortune was a proof that the gods were

* Torfœus, Historia Rerum Norvegicarum, tom i. To this work we refer the more curious reader.

offended: but they could not be offended without a cause; and, as the monarch was the representative of the whole society, he was held responsible for the calamity. Besides, Olaf was not very zealous in the observances of religion; he seldom offered sacrifices; and his blood only could propitiate the deities. By a large body of his subjects his house was surrounded, set on fire, and consumed with him, — a meet sacrifice to Odin for an abundant year. This prince deserved a better fate. His name will be held in remembrance, not only as the founder of a new kingdom, but as one who laboured with much zeal for the welfare of his people. By his marriage with Solveig, the daughter of Halfdan, king of Soleyr, a state lying to the west of Vermeland, and founded about a century before his own, he left to his successors a claim on that province.*

* Ynglinga Saga, cap. 47. (apud Heimskringlam Snorronis, tom. i. p. 56.). Torfœus, Historia Norvegica, tom. i.

*Chronology to illustrate the reigns of the Ynglings in Sweden and Norway, by Schoning, editor of Snorro's Heimskringla.**

A. C.	Born A. D.
105. Birth of Odin.	262. Gudlaug.
90. ——— Niord.	265. Ynggve II.
75. ——— Skiold.	267. Alf.
65. ——— Freyr.	290. Jorund.
40. Odin's arrival in the north.	290. Halfdan I.
35. Birth of Semming.	292. Hugleik.
32. ——— Fiolner.	295. Hako. Gylaug.
17. ——— Frode.	300. Hagbard.
Born A. D.	300. Fridleif III.
1. Swegdir.	310. Starkater II.
34. Vanlaud.	316. Aune.
45. Drifa.	338. Ale.
67. Visbur.	370. Frode IV. Fraekne.
100. Domald.	386. Eigill.
127. Daup.	391. Augvalld, king of Rogeland.
133. Domar.	419. Ottar Vendilkraka.
148. Drotta.	438. Helge.
146. Dyggve.	446. Adils.
170. Dan Mikillati.	460. Ale, the Uplander.
191. Dag.	465. Godgiest.
216. Agne.	479. Hrolf Krake.
220. Froste.	485. Eystein.
235. Frode II.	510. Solve, from Niardey.
241. Alrek.	518. Yngvar.
245. Skialfa.	551. Braut-Aunund.

* Here are Danish and Gothic as well as Swedish princes and chiefs, who had not the regal title. Schoning's orthography, which we shall not alter, often differs from that which we have adopted in the text.

Olaf left two sons, Halfdan and Ingiald. The former, on the tragical death of his father, was with his 640 to 840.

A. D.
554. Halfdan.
565. Gudraud.
577. Hiordvard Ylfing.
580. Ingiald.
587. Ivar Vidfadme.
600. Asa.
613. Olaf Trætelja.
620. Solveiga or Solva.
630. Eystein Hardrade.
640. Ingiald.
658. Halfdan Huitbein.
663. Asa, daughter of Eystein.
677. Eirik, the son of Agnar.
691. Gudraud.
705. Eystein.
705. King Skiold.
710. Hilda, daughter of Eirik.
710. Dag, king of Westmaur.
738. Halfdan Millde.
738. King Alfarin.
743. Hlifa, daughter of Dag.
770. King Eystein.
771. Alfgeir.
771. King Gudreyd Mikillati.
774. Alfhilda, daughter of Alfarin.
804. Olaf, Alf of Gierstaden.
805. King Gandalf.
806. King Haugne.
823. Halfdan the Black.
824. King Gudreid died.
832. Ragnhilda, the mother of Harold Harfagre, born.
833. Rognvald born.
841. Halfdan the Black made king of Agder and Westfold.
847. King Sigurd the Stag died.
851. Halfdan made king of Sogne.
852. Takes to wife Ragnhilda, daughter of Sigurd the Stag.
853. Harald Harfagre born.
861. *Nadodd* discovers *Iceland*.
863. King Halfdan dies, and is succeeded by Harald.
864. Gardar visits Iceland.
865. Harald's war with king Gandolf and others.
866. Alfheim subdued by Harald.
867. He undertakes an expedition to Drontheim.
867. *Floke* sails to Iceland.
869. Harald subdues Naumdal; marries Asa.
870. Compels Vermeland to submit.
870. *Ingiolf* visits Iceland.
871. Harald leads an expedition to western Gothland, and overthrows the Goths in battle.
872. Takes Snæfrida to wife. Second expedition into Drontheim.

A. D.
875. Ingulf first settles in Iceland.
880. Harald's nuptials with *Gyda*.
881. Nordmor and Raumadal submit to his arms.
882. Conquers Sunnmore.
883. Occupies the district of Fiord.
885. Is victor in the battle of Harfur's Bay; becomes master of all Norway.
886. Visits Halogaland.
888. Undertakes an expedition to the western sea.
890. Cuts his hair, and receives the surname of Harfagre.
890. Thorolf is killed in Halogaland.
891. *Quelduif* and Skalgrim, having killed the two sons of duke Guthrum, go to Iceland.
893. Rognvald, jarl of Mörio, killed.
894. King Harald marries Ragnhilda.
895. Harald's expedition to the Orkney Islands.
895. Hrolfus, or Rollo, compelled to leave Norway.
896. Enters Neustria or Normandy.
898. Eric called Blodöxe.
903. Harald divides his kingdom between his sons.
910. Eric of the Bloody-axe undertakes a piratical expedition.
918. Takes Gunnhilda to wife. Kills Biorn's brother.
923. Hako, afterwards Athelstane's godson, born.
931. Sent to England.
932. Harald's third expedition to the western sea.
933. Resigns the kingdom to his son Eric.
934. Harald, afterwards called Grafeld, born.
935. Halfdan the Black, king of Drontheim, dies.
936. Harald Harfagre dies.
937. King Erik Blodöxe kills his brothers Gudred and Olaf.
937. Hako, Athelstane's godson, received as king by the people of Drontheim.
938. King Erik Blodöxe, forced to abandom his kingdom and Norway.
938. Hako Jarl, the son of Sigurd, born.
939. Erik made king of Northumberland.
940. King Hako publishes the code of Gulathing.

grandfather in Soleyr, but he was followed by the Swedes, and demanded from the old king. The latter, however, having no desire to surrender his grandson to the murderers of the father, resisted, and a battle ensued, in which he lost his life. *Halfdan* was raised to the government of both states, and, with the aid of both, he subdued Raumarik, a country west of Soleyr. The three formed a compact and scarcely accessible

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A. D.
941. Publishes the code of Frosta.
941. Death of Athelstane.
943. Jamtland, and part of Helsing, added by king Hako to his dominions.
952. King Erik *Blodöxe* falls in battle.
953. Erik, the son of Harald, and his brothers, infest Norway.
955. Hako's expedition to Denmark
956. The Christian religion attempted to be introduced into Norway.
957. Part of Vikia occupied by the sons of Erik. King Hako defeats them and the Danes.
958. In another battle, in the island of *Fredey*, they are again vanquished.
958. King *Harald Gracnske*, father of St. Olaf, born.
963. King Hako dies of his wounds.
963. The sons of Erik made kings of Norway.
965. Jarl Sigurd killed.
968. The emperor Otho I.'s expedition into Denmark.
968. Sigmund, son of Breste, born.
969. The sons of Erik slay the kings Trygve and Gudred.
969. Olaf, son of Trygve, born.
969. *Jarl Erik*, the son of Hako, born.
970. *Jarl Hako* flees into Denmark.
971. Returns to Drontheim.
972. Olaf, son of Trygve, comes to Esthonia.
974. *Klype* sent to England by king Sigurd.
975. King Sigurd dies. A grievous famine in Norway.
976. Jarl Hako goes to Denmark.
976. The emperor Otho II.'s expedition to Denmark.
977. King Harald Graafeld dies.
978. *Harald*, the son of Gorm, received in the kingdom of Norway. Hako made jarl of Norway.
978. Olaf Trygveson comes to the palace of Valdemar, king of Holmgard.
979. King *Ragenfred* recovers part of Norway.
980. Overthrown in battle, and forced to leave Norway.
981. Erik kills *Skopte*.
982. Harald son of Gorm's expedition into Norway.
986. Olaf Trygveson marries Gyra.
988. Otho III.'s expedition into Denmark.
989. *Gyra*, the wife of Olaf Trygveson, dies.
990. Death of Harald, son of Gorm.
993. Olaf Trygveson baptized.
993. Saint Olaf born.
994. Jarl Hako's war with the Jomsberg pirates.
996. Jarl Hako killed; Olaf Trygveson made king of Norway.
998. Saint Olaf baptized.
1000. Battle in which king Olaf loses his life and kingdom.

The preceding list differs in some respects from that of Suhm. We give only the kings from the Tree-cutter to the Saint.

	Died A. D.
Olaf Trætelia	640
Halfdan Whitben	700
Eystein	730
Halfdan Millde	784
Gudred Mikillati	824
Olaf Geirstada	840
Halfdan Swart	863
Harald Haarfager	934
Erik Blodöxe	940
Hako the Good	963
Harald Graafeld	977
Hako Jarl	995
Olaf Trygveson	1000
Olaf the Saint	1030

kingdom, which, when governed by chiefs of enterprise and policy, could not fail to extend its limits to the west and north. Like his father, Halfdan studied how to promote the interest of his new state by a matrimonial alliance. North of Raumarik lies Hedmark, a small province subject to a king named Eystein. Its situation was so convenient in respect to Raumarik and Soleyr, that Halfdan eagerly sought and obtained the hand of Esa, daughter of Eystein. This union affording him a pretext for interfering in the affairs of that province, half of it, by force or policy, he soon added to his other states; and he afterwards subdued a considerable portion of Westfold, which he claimed in right of Hilda, princess of Westfold, the wife of his son. He died at Thotnia, one of his new acquisitions; but his body was carried to Westfold, and there interred. Over Vermeland was his brother Ingiald; and after the death of this chief the province was administered by jarls.

Eystein, the son of Halfdan, succeeded to the united crowns of Raumarik and Westfold. As the latter province was maritime, Eystein built vessels, and followed the ordinary as well as most honourable profession of his time, — that of piracy. According to the tradition which the poet Thiodulf perpetuated, he perished in one of his expeditions. He had the temerity to disembark on the coast of Varnia, — the king of which was a great magician, — to lay waste the region bordering on the sea; to carry to his ships everything upon which he could lay his hands, and to slaughter the cattle on the sea-shore. Scarcely had he embarked, when the wizard king arrived. The latter knew how to be avenged. Shaking his mantle in the air, and blowing from his mouth, another vessel suddenly appeared close to that of Eystein, and the spar which was used for distending the sails striking the king, who was sitting at the helm, he was thrown overboard. The sailors flew to his aid, but could not rescue him from the waves until the vital spark had fled. *Halfdan II.,* the 780 to 840.

son of Eystein, is noted for a strange inconsistency in his conduct. To his followers — and as a piratical chief he had many — he gave, in the shape of wages, as many golden as other kings gave silver pieces of money; yet he almost starved them for want of food.* The sceptre was now swayed by *Gudred*, the son of Halfdan, who, from his chief pursuit, was called the hunter king. He was also called Gudred the Magnificent, probably from the extent of his dominions, no less than from his wealth. None of his predecessors understood better the art of profiting by matrimonial alliances. His first wife was Alfhilda, daughter of the king of Alfheim; and with her he received, as dowry, a part of Vingulmark. As this province was bounded on the north by Raumarik, on the west by Westfold,— both on the southern confines of Norway and Sweden, — it was a valuable acquisition. On her death, in looking round where his dominions could be most conveniently extended, the maritime coast of Agder, which lay to the south of Westfold, and which, like that province, is now a portion of Christiana, as Raumarik is of Aggerhus, he demanded Asa, daughter of that king. On the refusal of Harald to bestow the princess on him, — probably from a knowledge of his ulterior policy, — he equipped a fleet, sailed to the coast of Agder, disembarked, hastened to the royal abode, and assailed king Harald, who fell in the battle, together with the heir of the province. Agder therefore became an easy prey to this ambitious monarch. But it was his doom to fall by the hand of a domestic, at the instigation of his second wife, Asa, many years after. His states were now divided between *Olaf* and *Halfdan;* the former his son by Alfhilda, the latter by Asa: the one reigned in the east (Vermeland), the other in the south. Vermeland, at this time, was tributary to the Swedish kings; its contiguity, indeed, to Upsal, rendered it too liable to conquest by the successors of Ivar

* Ynglinga Saga, cap. 48—52. p. 57—60.
† Torfæus, Historia Norvegica, tom. i.

Vidfadme ; and its geographical posture placed it within the limits of Sweden rather than those of Norway, into which the dominions of Gudred were now extending. It is to Halfdan, the son of Gudred, that our narrative must chiefly remain, especially as his glory was doomed to eclipse that of all his predecessors.*

Such was the state of the kingdom when *Halfdan the Black*, by the tragical death of his father, became sovereign of one portion. Probably, however, the superiority over the whole rested with his elder brother, Olaf. But when his father died he was only a year old ; and his brother Olaf, or his kinsmen, seized the administration of the whole kingdom, except his maternal inheritance of Agder. His position was, therefore, not enviable ; and no one, at this moment, could have predicted his future success. To his mother, who, during his minority, undertook the government of Agder, and who raised him under her own eye, he was probably indebted for many advantages. On reaching his eighteenth year he assumed the government of Agder, and hastened into Westfold to demand from his brother Olaf some portion of his inheritance. It was on this occasion that the partition of the province took place, probably to the dissatisfaction of Olaf; but Halfdan had a strong body of troops, and the provincial states, whose authority was superior to that of the crown, were not regardless of justice. But other provinces, the administration of which had been usurped, were yet to be recovered ; and events soon proved that he was likely to sustain the interests of his house. With the force at his command he hastened to Vingulmark, to claim the portion of that province formerly held by his father. Though he encountered resistance enough, he attained his object, namely, one half of the province. He next marched into Raumarik, which he recovered. This act brought him into hostility with Sigtrug, king of Hedmark, son of Eystein, who, like other monarchs of the time, had committed

840 to 850.

* Ynglinga Saga, cap. 53—55. p. 61—64.

the fugitives. In vain: before he could reach the lake which lay in the path, and which, as it was the yule season, was frozen over, they were far before him. In despair he fell upon his own sword, and was buried on the margin of the lake. Halfdan was on the other bank; and no sooner did he perceive the vehicle moving over the distant ice than he knew his commands had been successfully obeyed. He therefore ordered a banquet to be prepared, and guests to be invited from every part of his own country. That very day, in presence of his assembled guests, the nuptials were celebrated. The issue was the famous Harald, surnamed *Harfager*, or Fair-haired. We have no wish to record the dreams which, previous to the birth of the prince, raised the anxiety of the two parents. Such portents are always invented in regard to men whom fortune has elevated above their fellows.*

63. Halfdan the Black was, for his age, a superior prince. He made some laws, and, what is much better, he caused them to be observed. His legislation, of course, was truly Gothic; that is, crimes were visited with pecuniary mulcts, varied according to the rank of the culprit and of the person injured. He was not so fond of his youthful son Harald as was the mother, Ragnilda; yet the qualities of the boy were such as to excite the admiration of an heroic age. The death of this king was, in the superstitious opinion of the times, preceded by a wonderful circumstance. As he was sitting at table with a multitude of guests, to celebrate the yule festival, the meats and drinks suddenly disappeared. The latter, alarmed at the portent, quitted the table, and left the king alone. What could be the meaning? A Finnish magician was seized, put to the torture, and commanded to say what the portent indicated. But he could or would say nothing; and he besought prince Harald to procure his

† Saga Halfdanar Swarta, cap. 5—7. p. 68—72. (apud Heimskringlam Snorronis, tom. i.).

liberation. Harald applied to the king; but finding him inexorable, he allowed the poor Finn to escape, and was the companion of his flight. At this time, Harald was only ten years of age; and he was to see his father no more. Immediately after this event Halfdan returned, on a sledge, towards another part of his dominions. In his way was a lake, which was to be crossed over the ice. But holes had been made in it, for the cattle to be watered; a thaw had commenced, and the king had not proceeded far before the ice gave way, and he was engulfed in the cold abyss; most of his attendants perishing with him. Thus ended the short but memorable career of Halfdan the Black. His memory was always dear to Norway; and during his life he was always reverenced as one of the greatest benefactors of his people. A prodigious crowd arrived to honour his funeral; but they would not allow the body to be interred in Raumarik. During his reign the land had been so fertile that he was believed to be an especial favourite of the gods. Wherever he was, dead or alive, prosperity was expected; and the warriors from the different states of his kingdom demanded that he should be buried in their district. The dispute, we are told, was ended by the division of his body into four parts, corresponding with the four shires of Raumarik, Ringarik, Hedmark, and Westfold. The head was buried in Ringarik, the other members in each of the other districts. Hence, says the historian, the number of sepulchres which are still called the tombs of Halfdan.*

As *Harald Harfager* was but a child when his father 863.
was drowned, the neighbouring reguli, under the pretext of recovering what their predecessors had lost, hastened to divide his ample inheritance. One party invaded Hedmark, a second Westfold, a third advanced towards the residence of Harald, to make him prisoner. But he had a noble defender in his uncle, Guthrum †,

* Saga Halfdanar Swarta, cap. 7—9.
† The brother of Ragnilda; see page 165.

whom he made general of his troops, and his minister. This chief collected troops, and, with the young king, marched against the invader of Westfold, whom he defeated and left dead in the field. The place where this great victory was achieved was called *Hakadal*, or Hako's Dale, from the name of the chief who fell there. Another invader of that province, Gandulf, was defeated; but, more fortunate than Hako, he contrived to escape with life. Seeing the fate of these two battles, the remaining princes determined not to fight singly, but in concert; and a meeting was appointed in the rock mountains of the upland province of Hedmark. But the intention was soon known to the two heroes; and, proceeding, without loss of time, to the appointed place, they fell, at midnight, on the outposts of the camp, while two of the chiefs were sleeping, and in the skirmish which ensued, sent two other kings to join them in the hall of Odin. The fruits of this victory were not only the recovery of all which had been invaded, but the acquisition of several districts to the north and west of his hereditary possessions. When Gandulf returned to the charge, he was again defeated, and sent to drink mead, to feed on the grisly boar, and to fight with the dark shades of Odin's warrior ghosts: his dominions as far as the river Raum became the prize of the victor.*

865 to 868. After these unexpected successes, Harald thought that he might aspire to the favours of any princess in the north. Hearing of the charms of Gyda, daughter of Eric, jarl or king of Hordaland, he sent messengers to her, not with the offer of his hand, but of his heart. The reply of the lady, if any faith is to be reposed in tradition, was unequalled for its pride. So far from being the mistress, she would not be the wife, of one whose territory consisted in a few insignificant provinces; she would never marry any one beneath the dignity of a monarch,—who did not, like Eric of Swe-

* Haralld's Saga ens Harfagra, cap. 1, 2. (apud Heimskringlam Snorronis, tom. i. p. 75—77.).

den, and Gorm of Denmark, hold absolute sway over the whole country. The answer of the heroine being brought to the king, he admired her ambition, and vowed to the gods that he would never cut or comb his hair until he had subdued the whole of Norway — until its revenues and authority were his: and if he failed in his attempt, the penalty should be his life. All this is fable: Harald needed not a woman's advice to enter on a career which he had long meditated, and which his father had, probably, meditated before him. He might, however, make the vow. In pursuance of that vow, which was highly pleasing to Guthrum, he enlisted all the forces he could, and marched towards the north, through Godbrandsdalia, having the Dofrafeld mountains on his left. The inhabitants fled at his approach into the uplands; some into Orkadal, others into Ganlardal, others into the recesses of the mountains; but many — perhaps the greater number — preferred his yoke to exile and ruin: they did homage, and were unmolested. Pursuing his way into Orkadal, which lay beyond the Dofrafeld chain, in the modern province of Drontheim, he defeated an army, there assembled to oppose him, received the homage of the royal general, and annexed Orkadal, as he had done the intervening regions, to the other dependencies of his crown. Nor must it be forgotten that he was the great champion of the feudal system. Wherever he conquered, he abolished the allodial law of inheritance, and converted all lands into fiefs, to be held from him alone, on the usual obligations. But he did more: he insisted that all rents should be paid in kind; that one third of the portion accruing to the crown should be set apart for the support of the local government. Over each province he placed a jarl, whose duties were, to defend it against all enemies, to collect the revenues, to preside over the local administration. Associated with each jarl were four, at least two, herser or councillors, whose office was at once military and administrative; and to each was awarded a benefice of twenty

marks in yearly value. In time of war each jarl was to support sixty, each of the herser twenty, armed men, at his own expense. So ample were the revenues of each province, that the jarls were more wealthy and more powerful than many royal chiefs of the period. Hence the dignity was an object of ambition, and he who could bestow it did not want applicants for it: in the hope of obtaining it, most of the nobles hastened to join him whenever he entered a province.*

867 to 882. From Orkadal Harald transferred his arms to Ganlardal, which is now also a portion of Drontheim, immediately to the east of the Swedish province of Jamtland. In this expedition he is said to have been joined by Hako, a powerful jarl, by whose aid he subdued the whole province, and the adjoining one of Strinda. In reward for this timely service he placed Hako over the new conquest, with the dignity and rights of jarl. Proceeding still to the north, the conqueror subdued Stiordal, Veradal, Scaunia, and Sparbyggia, all situated in the modern government of Drontheim. The islands in the west were, at the same time, subjected to his sway. Still Harald proceeded to the north, and the two kings of Naumdal submitted, one of them being invested with the dignity of jarl. Thinking that he had now penetrated far enough into the north, since there was nothing beyond Naumdal but vast marshes and trackless forests, scarcely habitable by men†, Harald returned into Drontheim, where he resolved to await the return of spring, before pursuing his conquests in the south. In that province he fixed his abode, and built a town, which he resolved to make his usual seat of government. There he forgot Gyda, so far as to marry Asa, the daughter of jarl Hako; but perhaps he was merely tired of celibacy, and relied on his royal prerogative of obtaining another wife whenever he pleased. He did not, however, pass this season in mere indulgence; most of it was spent in constructing new vessels, and in the discipline of his

* Haralld's Saga ens Harfagra, cap. 3—6. p. 77—80.

followers. No one, says the historian, was allowed to enter his palace, except such as excelled in bodily strength or courage. To them he committed the building of his ships, and the command when built. The rewards which he held out to all champions were so ample that hundreds flocked to his standard. When spring arrived he had a formidable fleet, and a large army, — large, we mean, in comparison of those which northern kings usually brought into the field. The first people were the Möre Fylke, or the maritime inhabitants immediately south of Drontheim. Here he had to oppose two kings, and, as usual, victory shone on his banners, — both chiefs being sent to Odin's hall. With the two provinces over which they had presided he adopted the same policy as with those of the east and north; that is, he subjected them to feudal obligations. They were intrusted as fiefs to jarl Rognevald, and with them both ships and men to defend the coast no less than the interior. This Rognevald was celebrated alike for valour and wisdom, and was the father of Rollo, first duke of Normandy, to whose exploits we shall advert in a future chapter. The summer and autumn were passed in consolidating their conquests; the winter was spent in Drontheim in preparing for new wars; nor did Harald affect to conceal his intention of subduing Sunmore, a province immediately south of Raumadal, as Raumadal was south of Nordmore, — both subject to Rognevald. In one respect this announcement of his views — this manifest approach to universal empire — was imprudent, since it enabled the king of Sunmore to form alliances with the neighbouring reguli, whom the same common danger served to unite. But before the confederation could acquire much strength, he met and defeated the three chiefs who had brought their powers to oppose him. Sunmore was the reward of this victory. The king of the Fiords was next vanquished, and the two districts added to the two other conquests by jarl Rognevald. Not that these conquests were obtained without bloodshed.

They were sometimes dearly purchased by the loss of his valiant jarls and bravest followers. Sometimes, too, the ambition of those chiefs was injurious to the progress of the royal arms. Thus Hako, the father-in-law of Harald, and another jarl, contended with each other for the government of Sogne (Sygna-fylke); and one died in the field; the other received a mortal wound, and died soon afterwards.*

882 to 884. The success of Harald gave equal umbrage and alarm to Eric, the son of Emund, king of the Swedes.† Taking the field, the latter subdued Vermeland, and placed over it a jarl, whose jurisdiction should extend to Swinasund in the south. Nor was he satisfied with this acquisition: on the contrary, he asserted that he would not lay down his arms until he had incorporated with his dominions Westfold, Raumarik, and the whole of southern Norway as far as the ocean, — possessions which he claimed on the pretext that they had once belonged to his ancestors. This was an unexpected blow to Harald; but he hoped to arrest its consequences by negotiation; and for this purpose he solicited an interview with Eric, in Vermeland. As he had reason, far more than suspicion, that some of the chiefs in these provinces were in communication with Eric, he assembled the *Thing*, or provincial assembly, in each, and complained of the traitors. Some cleared themselves by the ordeal; some redeemed themselves by the ordinary pecuniary mulct; others were punished in various ways. From these states he hastened to Vermeland, to the house of Aki, a vassal of his, celebrated alike for his riches and dignity, who had readily undertaken to be the host of the two kings. On this occasion Aki is said to have adopted the strange expedient of lodging Eric in old apartments, and Harald in new ones; and of making the same distinction between the plate, the furniture, and drinking horns. The interview was not satisfactory to Eric, and, perhaps, brought no advantage to Harald; but the latter was grateful for the hospitality of Aki, while the former

* Harald's Saga ens Harfagra, cap. 6—13.

resented the manner in which he had been treated. Having seen Harald on horseback, and, as if he had a presentiment of his fate, confided to that king the interests of his son, he next attended Eric to the neighbouring wood. Being asked by this monarch the reason of the distinctions which he had made, he replied that he hoped king Eric had no reason to complain of ill-treatment; that, because Eric was an elderly and Harald a young man, he had thus acted. This reply did not lessen the anger of Eric, who reminded Aki that he had once been his vassal. "I have not forgotten that," replied Aki, "and I also remember that thou wast once mine."* The king immediately drew his sword, and killed the man whose hospitality he had so lately shared. Harald, being informed of the deed, rode in pursuit of Eric, whom, had he overtaken him, he would certainly have sacrificed to his vengeance. This unfortunate circumstance embittered the enmity already subsisting between the rivals. From year to year hostilities were renewed, chiefly in Gothland, or the confines of Vermeland; but they were not of importance enough to recal Harald from the east and centre of Norway, especially after he had placed his uncle Guthrum as jarl over all the regions which he held in Sweden.†

On his return to Drontheim, where he passed the 885.
following winter, Harald found that the reguli of the provinces were still unconquered; and even many of the chiefs who lay within his hereditary jurisdiction were confederating to crush, or, at least, to resist him. It was, indeed, a formidable confederacy. To crush it, Harald, with his usual celerity, collected his forces, both maritime and land, and proceeded towards the south. The armament which he encountered in the bay of Hafursfiord was very different from those which he had hitherto encountered: here were more kings, more

* These words are remarkable, and they confirm the observations which we made in the preceding chapter.

† Haralld's Saga ens Harfagra, cap. 13—18. p. 88—93.

vassals, more men, among whom were the greatest heroes of Norway. The fate of that country manifestly depended upon the fate of the ensuing battle. It was a struggle between monarchy and aristocracy,—between the sovereign power and a multitude of independent states,—between an established government and perpetual anarchy,—between society and domestic piracy. They whose ancestors had for ages been accustomed to the piratical life, and had considered it their proudest calling, were eager to fight for what they deemed their privileges. The struggle was worthy of the occasion; prodigies of valour were performed on both sides; but, in the end, victory declared for Harald. Long was this victory celebrated in the north. It was held equal to the most celebrated in ancient times. It was the subject of several poems, among which is one by Hornkloft, the Icelandic bard attached to the court of Harald, whose metrical history was of such service to Snorro, the compiler of Heimskringla.*

* Haralld's Saga ens Harfagra, cap. 18, 19. p. 93—95. The following is the ode of Hornkloft, as translated by the Hon. W. Herbert, and, in some trifling respects, improved by Mr. Wheaton:—

"Loud in Hafur's echoing bay,
Heard ye the din of battle bray,'
'Twixt Kiötve rich, and Harald bold?
Eastward sails the ships of war;
The graven bucklers gleam afar,
And dragons' heads adorn the prows of gold.

"Glittering shields of purest white,
And swords, and Celtic falchions bright,
And western chiefs the vessels bring:
Loudly roar the wolfish rout,
And maddening champions wildly shout.
And long and loud the twisted hauberks ring.

"Firm in fight they proudly vie
With Him whose might will make them fly,
Of Eastmen kings the warlike head.
Forth his gallant fleet he drew,
Soon as the hope of battle grew,
But many a buckler brake ere Haklang bled.

"Fled the lusty Kiötve then
Before the Fair-haired king of Men,
And bade the islands shield his flight.
Warriors wounded in the fray,
Beneath the thwarts all gasping lay,
Where, headlong cast, they mourn'd the loss of light.

"Gall'd by many a massive stone
(Their golden shields behind them thrown),

After this victory, Norway was unable to resist the 885.
conqueror. The reguli, and jarls, and native chiefs, who refused to submit, were driven into exile. Some, preferring liberty, or rather an unbridled licence, to an established government, voluntarily exiled themselves. From this year may be dated the colonisation, by Norwegian settlers, of the Orkneys, the Hebrides, the Shetlands, the Feroes, Iceland; the depredations on the coasts of Great Britain, and Ireland, and Spain; the invasion of Russia and Normandy by successful hordes of pirates. So great an emigration might, one would suppose, greatly weaken the physical resources of Harald; but this does not appear to have been the fact: on the contrary, he spared numerous families to people the wilds of Jamta, Helsingia, and other regions more to the north, which, prior to his time, are said to have been wholly or partially desert. But if Norway was thus his, he had no idle life. The pirates whom he had banished infested his coasts, until he, in person, must dislodge them from their strong holds in the islands of the western ocean. To *their* and *his* maritime transactions we shall advert on a future occasion. —Harald, being now the monarch of Norway, says the Saga, remembered that he had accomplished his vow, and that his hair might be cut and combed. It was surely high time, if, as we are told, he had resembled, previously, a wild beast rather than a man, and had been called Harald *Lufa*, or "Harald with the Horrid Hair." When this deformity was removed,—when the shears and the bath had done their work,—he obtained the epithet of Harfager, or Fair-hair. And he now remembered the saying of the maiden who had excited him to all his successes. Sending for her, he made her the partner of his throne; and by her had a daughter and four sons. —All this is fabulous, but unequal to

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Homeward the grieving warriors speed;
Swift from Hafur's bay they hie:
East-mountaineers o'er Jardar fly,
And thirst for goblets of the sparkling mead."

what follows, which appears to have occurred some years before this marriage. One winter, the king hastened to the uplands to hold the festivities of Yule; and he ordered the banquet to be prepared in the villa of Thopte. The evening before the opening of the feast, as he sat at table, a domestic advanced to say that a Finn, waiting at the door, wished to see him. At this bold message the anger of the king and the surprise of all present may be conceived, and an indignant answer was returned. But Swaso was resolute: he bade Harald be informed that he was the Finn whose hut was on the other side of the mountain, and whom he had promised to visit. The monarch went to the door, and immediately said that he would accompany him to the hut. On their entrance, the daughter of Swaso — a wondrous beauty — arose, and presented a horn of mead to the royal visitor. It was a magic drink, designed to make the king amorous, and it had its effect. He wished to take her as his mistress; but she had too much art for this; she would be the affianced bride, or nothing. That ceremony was promptly and easily performed, and the royal wish was gratified. So much was he captivated with the beautiful Snæfrida, that for years, though he visited, he forgot his country, capital, his subjects, his throne, his very existence. Four sons were the issue of this connection, — Sigurd, Halfdan, Gudred, Rognevald. She then died; but her corpse preserved the same spotless white as when living. Corruption could not take hold of it. During three whole years he sat by the corpse, thinking that every moment life would revisit it; and his subjects deeply bewailed his infatuation. To dissolve the spell was the work of Thorleif the Wise, one of his jarls. The corpse was removed from the bed on which it lay, when suddenly the most offensive odour was emitted by it. It was hastily borne to the funeral pile: serpents, and lizards, and toads, and every species of venomous reptile continued to issue from it; yet the king did not regain his sound mind until the corpse was consumed.

Ashamed of his weakness, he resumed his royal duties, and at once became the pride of his people. Magic drinks, we need scarcely observe, are of perpetual occurrence in the annals of the ancient north. Saxo alludes to many; but none surely was ever so potent as this,—none before or since, in the wildest dreams of fancy, could preserve the empire of love for three years after the death of its object.*

This fable has been noticed that the reader may be prepared for the dissensions which soon took place among the sons of Harald. The four whom Snæfrida had borne him he learned to detest, through hatred of the mother; and at length he dismissed them from his palace, with the resolution to see them no more. After some time, however, one of them, Gudred, went to Hiodulf, the jarl, who was in great power, and besought him to procure him an interview with the king. Both proceeded to the royal palace, which they reached late in the evening, and they sat on the benches outside the doors unknown to everybody. Harald happened to be walking on the pavement in the courtyard — probably to enjoy the nightly breeze — and his eyes carelessly wandered over the seats. But the two strangers attracted his notice, and he asked the elder what had brought him there? Uncovering his head, Hiodulf was immediately recognised and welcomed. The veteran now pleaded for the exiled sons. He observed that if the mother's race was bad, the father's was not; and that the excellency of the one might more than counterbalance the evil of the other. The king was persuaded; Gudred was received into the palace; the three brothers were sent into the provinces and occupied in military exercises, in which they excelled other men.†

The sons of Gyda and Snæfrida were not the only 869 to 900.

* Haralld's Saga ens Harfagra, cap. 19—25. p. 95—103. Snæfrida was, probably, a supernatural damsel—at least, on one side. So was Guendolen, in the bridal of Triermain; but the British Arthur broke the charm which bound *him* in three months, while Harald was spell-bound for as many years. The description in Scott is exquisite.

† Haralld's Saga ens Harfagra, cap. 26.

ones born to Harald. By his numerous wives — and he is said to have had nine at the same time — he had a numerous progeny, who were destined to trouble his declining years. By Gyda, as we have before related, he had one daughter, Alofa, and four sons, Sigtrug, Ruric, Frode, and Thorgils. By Ragnilda, a princess of Jutland, he had Harald Blodöxe. By Swanhilda, the daughter of a Norwegian jarl, he had three sons, Olaf, Biorn, and Ragnar. By Alfhilda, daughter of the jarl of Ringarik, he had three sons and one daughter, Dag, Ring, Gudred, and Ingierda. By the Finnish witch he had the four sons we have just enumerated. By Asa, the first of his mistresses, the daughter of jarl Hako, he had Guthrum, Halfdan the Black, Halfdan the White, and Sigfred. That he had other children by his numerous wives is undoubted. Of these, was Rognevald, and another that must be particularly mentioned, — Hako the Good, whom, in his old age, a Norwegian lady, named Thora, bore to him, and who eventually sat on the throne of Norway. All these, in conformity with the manners of the times, were educated by their maternal relatives. Few of these children survived the father. Their ambition was great, their crimes greater; and as the king descended into the vale of years, he lost all authority over them. The deaths of many were deservedly tragical. The four sons of the Finn excelled the rest in wickedness. Incensed that they were not admitted to a participation in the government, and hating the experienced jarls, whose advice was so useful to their father, they burnt Rognevald, the most obnoxious of all, in his own house, together with sixty of his followers. After this hellish deed — a deed, however, so common in northern history, as to excite little surprise — Halfdan fled to the Orkneys, but Gudred remained. The only chastisement which Harald inflicted on the latter, was to send him into Agder, probably to fill some honourable post; but Thorer, a son of Rognevald, was raised to the vacant dignity of jarl of Moria. Soon afterwards, Halfdan, who

had usurped the government of the Orkneys, was taken and put to death by Einar, the lawful jarl; Harald, at the instigation of Halfdan's brothers, sailed to revenge the death of his son; but on reaching these islands, he accepted a pecuniary mulct, and left Einar in possession of the government. Guthrum, the eldest of Harald's sons by Asa, was the next victim; he was slain in Gothia by the Swedish governor. Halfdan the White, while absent on a piratical expedition on the eastern coast of the Baltic, was killed by the inhabitants. But the worst evil that the king dreaded was their wars with one another. To avert this calamity, on reaching his fiftieth year, he divided his provinces among them, giving to each the regal title, yet reserving to himself the supreme title of monarch. Thus, to Olaf, Biorn, Sigtrug, Frode, and Thorgils, he ceded Vingulmark, Raumarik, Westfold, and Thelamark; to Dag, Ring, and Ragnar he resigned Hedmark and Gudbransdal; to the sons of Snæfrida he gave Ringarik, Hadaland, Thotnia, and the adjacent districts; Ruric and Godred had extensive domains in the central provinces, and were generally resident at the court of Harald; Eric had Halogaland, Nordmore, and Ramsdal; over Drontheim were Halfdan the Black and Sigurd, and the same dignity had been shared by Halfdan the White. To Thorgils and Frode he gave a certain number of vessels, with permission to raise kingdoms for themselves, if they could, in the British islands. They are said to have conquered Dublin; but both perished fatally,—Frode by poison, Thorgils by the hands of the natives. Nor did he forget the offspring of his daughters. While the eldest children of his sons were for ever to enjoy the regal title, those of his daughters were to possess the dignity of jarl, and their seat in the assemblies of the state to be just one step below that of the male descendants.*

* Haralld's Saga ens Harfagra, passim. Fragmentum Islandicum de Regibus Dano-Norvegicis (apud Langebek, Scriptores Rerum Danicarum, tom. ii.).

920. In the preceding paragraph, we have seen the tragical deaths of five among the sons of Harald. These were Halfdan, Haleg, Guthrum, Halfdan the White, Frode, and Thorgils. Others were to be soon added to the number. Rognevald being accused of magic, — a science which, ever since his adventure with Snæfrida, Harald held in the utmost abomination,—Eric Blodöxe, the favourite son of the monarch, was sent into Hadaland, where Rognevald was then residing. Finding, or, perhaps, pretending to find, the prince surrounded by eighty wizards, — poor wizards they, not to foresee their fate! — Eric set fire to the house, and consumed all within. This deed, which in our days would not be considered a merit, was held to be a great one in his. But another deed of his was not beheld with equal favour. Biorn, one of his brothers, who, as king of Westfold, generally resided at Tunsberg, was equally attached to piracy and commerce. By his frequent expeditions, he had amassed great riches; and his liberality, no less than his judicious administration, had won him the respect of his subjects. On these Eric cast a longing eye; nor was he less jealous of a brother, who, when his father should be no more, might dispute his claim to the monarchy, — a claim which he always advanced, and which his father had sanctioned. With the view of enveloping the merchant king in his toils, Eric demanded the tribute which was due to Harald for the kingdom of Westfold. Biorn replied that he had always delivered it into the hands of his sovereign, either personally, or through his agents; and that he should not, on this occasion, deviate from the custom. A dispute arose, and Eric, in great anger, left Tunsberg. At nightfall Biorn also left it for a marine residence not far from the city. With a chosen band Eric followed his steps, and assailed the house as the king sat at table. With all the domestics whom he could muster, the latter issued from the house, and a combat followed, which was fatal to many of his attendants, and to himself. A rich prey was the reward of this fratricide;

and Eric, exulting, returned to his northern kingdom. Seeing the odium in which the author of this deed, notwithstanding his influence over the now weak mind of Harald, was held by most of the Norwegians, Halfdan the Black made an attempt to assassinate the murderer, by setting fire to the country house in which he slept; but the dormitory was separated from the main building, and Eric escaped. To revenge this outrage on his darling son, Harald collected his troops, and marched against Halfdan; but the intervention of an aged jarl effected a reconciliation. That reconciliation, however, was not sincere, so far, at least, as Halfdan and Eric were concerned.*

For the doting attachment of Harald to the most bloody of his sons, no good reason has been or can be assigned. He was not the oldest son, nor was his mother, Ragnilda, the most beloved of the royal wives. Yet this paternal fondness did not screen the royal youth from the dangers of his profession. As early as his twelfth year, he is said to have become a piratical chief, and, with the five vessels which he had received from his father, to have ravaged all the maritime coasts of Europe from Russia to Ireland. On that of Finland he had, says the legend, a marvellous adventure, which, as it has been made the foundation of some tales popular in the middle ages, we shall abridge. While he and his companions were in the remotest part of that magic region, on the very borders of the still more wondrous Biarmia, they one day reached a cottage the mistress of which was a supernatural beauty. She told them that they were in great danger; that she had two lovers, the most able magicians of the country, who were also her instructors; that they could hunt the footsteps of man on snow or ice, with as much instinct as the blood-hound; that their arrows never missed aim; that they put all strangers to death; that, when

910 to 913.

* Haralld's Saga ens Harfagra, passim. Fragmentum Islandicum de Regibus Dano-Norvegicis (apud Langebek, Scriptores Rerum Danicarum, tom. ii.).

angry, every living thing died beneath their glance, and the earth itself was affected. As they came daily to the hut, there seemed no hope of escape until she promised to conceal them, and to aid them in the destruction of her odious suitors. Having concealed them, she took a linen bag full of what they conceived to be ashes, and scattered the contents around the hut, both within and without. The Finns soon entered, and inquired what strangers had arrived; and on her replying that she had seen nobody, they expressed no little surprise: they had traced footsteps in the snow to the very door. However, they lighted a fire, cooked their provisions, and when satiated, Gunhilda prepared her own bed. There she lay down, but they would not. As they were rivals, both passionately in love, and each afraid that, while he slept, the other might obtain some advantage over the lady, they resolved to remain awake. During three successive nights this sleeping on her part, and watching on theirs, continued, until nature was exhausted. Gunhilda saw her time; she invited both to lie beside her; they joyfully obeyed her, and she put one arm around the neck of each. The effect — that of magic (for she had been trained in a good school), was instantaneous; both fell into a deep sleep, from which it was impossible to awake them. There she fettered them, and called on Eric and his companions to despatch them. The deed was easily perpetrated, and the corpses were cast outside of the hut: but it was followed by incessant thunder, which, during a whole night, prevented them from leaving the place. When serenity was restored, all left, Gunhilda with the rest; and before the day closed, the magic beauty became the bride of Eric.*

930 to 934. Fate had not yet done its worst on the offspring of the Norwegian monarch. His son Gudred perished at sea. And when he resigned his imperial dignity in favour of his beloved Eric, other tragedies might have been foreseen — if not in his lifetime, immediately after

* Harald's Saga ens Harfagra, cap. 34.

his death. The elevation of Eric was opposed, among others, by Halfdan the Black, who, also, assumed the title of monarch. Olaf, brother of the murdered Biorn, who had succeeded that prince in the government of Westfold, did the same. In two years Halfdan was removed by poison, — the deed, as was commonly reported, of Gunhilda. Harald was little moved by these atrocities. So long as his favourite son enjoyed life and empire, he cared little for the rest. But his own days were hastening to an end. When he resigned his sceptre to his son Eric, he was eighty years of age. In two or three years after that event, — in the year 934, or, according to others, 936 — he paid the debt of nature. The place of his interment was one of his manors in Drontheim. Near the spot, a magnificent heathen temple was erected, which was standing in the days of Snorro.*

To dwell on the character of this monarch, after the ample relation which we have given of his deeds, would be useless. With the exception of his martial prowess, of his enterprising spirit, of his unwearied activity, we see little to praise in him. His numerous adulteries — his feebleness soon after he had passed the meridian of life — his blind policy — have not often been exceeded. Much praise has been lavished on him for his extirpation of piracy; but he is entitled to little. So long as his own shores were not visited by the marauders, he cared not what depredations were committed on others. His chiefs, his very sons, followed piracy as a profession, not merely with his sanction, but at his express command. He has been called the friend of the peasants, or rather of the humble allodial proprietors; but did not policy make him so? If they were plundered by those in authority, could they furnish the new contributions which, as the first of Norway's feudal sovereigns, he exacted from them? Then, as to his boasted administration of the laws, nothing is more certain than their perpetual neglect: after he had passed

* Haralld's Saga ens Harfagre, cap. 45.

his fortieth year, they were inoperative, — despised by his own sons, evaded by the jarls. Nor, however brilliant his conquests, can he be called the founder of the Norwegian monarchy. If he destroyed many tyrants, he replaced them by greater: if he united many independent states into one empire, by his own deliberate act he broke that empire into fragments, and restored the anarchy which he had laboured to destroy. Widely different is his character before and after he had attained the meridian of life. It seemed as if he were led by some evil spirit to undo, in the latter period, all that he had done in the former. But he had no comprehensive views, no sound policy: during the first half of his life he fought for ambition; during the latter, he was the tool of his wives, his sons, and his other favourites. On the whole, we are disposed to consider him as inferior to his father, Halfdan the Black.

934 to 936. Scarcely was *Eric*, who, from his sanguinary actions, was surnamed the Bloody Axe (Blodöxe), the nominal sovereign of Norway, when he called on his brothers to recognise his title, and pay him the tributes which they had paid to his father. Instead of complying, Olaf and Sigurd exacted the usual tributes in their respective kingdoms, — an undoubted act of sovereignty. To chastise their presumption, the indignant Eric equipped an armament, and hastened to Tunsberg, the seat of their domination: he was met by the two kings on the declivity of a hill near the city; but, his forces being much superior in number, they were defeated and slain. The same fate would have befallen Trygve, the son of Olaf, and Godred the son of the murdered Biorn, — both nephews of Eric, — had they not consulted their safety by repairing to the inaccessible fastnesses of the uplands. The tyrant was now hated more intensely than before, and a majority of the people began to look for a deliverer of the race of the Ynglings. But where could one be found, seeing that all Eric's brothers had either paid the debt of nature, or perished untimely? There was one exception to this fate: Hako, the last of

Harald's sons, was still alive, and in England. From our own historians, no less than from Snorro, it is evident that friendly relations had always subsisted between Athelstane of England and Harald, and that presents had passed between them. One of them was a magnificent sword, which Athelstane sent to Harald; and Harald, in return, sent a magnificent ship, with his infant son Hako to be educated in the polite court of the Saxon. This simple narrative has been much embellished by Snorro. He informs us that when the ambassador delivered the splendid sword to Harald, and the monarch had seized the handle, the ambassador exclaimed, "Now art thou the liege man of our lord the king, in that thou hast received his sword!"—alluding to the most ordinary symbol of investiture. The proud Norwegian was exasperated; but, on reflection, he retaliated in a manner equally ingenious. Causing a magnificent ship to be prepared, he despatched in it his son Hako, under the care of a trusty chief. On reaching the court of Athelstane, he entered the palace, and laying the young child — then about seven years of age — on the knees of the king, said, "King Harald commands thee to educate his bastard!" The facts are as we have represented them on the authority of English contemporary writers, — facts which an ancient chronicler of Norway, Theodric, also admits. The writers of both countries agree that Athelstane nobly discharged the duty which he had undertaken. Hako was educated well, was of course baptized, and taught the truths of Christianity; and in the English king he found a counsellor, a friend, a father. He was about fourteen when he heard of Harald's death, and of his brother Eric's accession. The following year brought him so many reports of Eric's cruelty, and of the desire of many Norwegians to rid themselves of the tyrant, that he began to regard the throne as his future inheritance. He had ambition; but in a virtuous mind, ambition, like every other feeling, may become an instrument of good. Hako longed to be a king, — not

merely from the desire of power, but from a wish to benefit his countrymen, especially by diffusing among them the blessings of Christianity. When, therefore, many emissaries from Norway arrived at the English court, and besought him to rescue the country from the yoke, he readily obeyed the call. Being supplied with ships, men, money, by his generous friend, about two years after his father's death, he sailed towards Norway.*

937 to 946. Hako landed at Drontheim, and the inhabitants here assembled in a *Thing*, or general meeting, when every free-born head of a family, who had land, was permitted to vote, or at least to sanction, by outward expressions of applause, the opinions of the chiefs. Though most of them were friendly to the royal youth, they dreaded the vindictive character of Eric. But in that meeting the cause of Hako was eloquently advocated by Sigurd, one of the most powerful jarls. And when Hako himself arose, so like his father was he, that a murmur of applause ran through the multitude. When he spoke, all were attentive; when he promised, on the condition of their making him king, to abolish the oppressive obligations of feudality, and restore the lands to their ancient allodial tenure, one universal shout proclaimed him king of Norway. The report spread through the kingdom that Harald was restored in his son, but that the son had not the worst quality of his father, — that of oppressing the people by feudal exactions. The joyful news that the allodial tenure was to be restored, spread, quick as lightning, over the country. From Drontheim, Hako proceeded into the uplands, where a Thing was assembled, and he was received in the same manner. Here he was joined by many chiefs; among others, by Drygve and Sigurd, on whom he conferred the regal title, with the government of Westfold to the

* Wallingford, Chronicon, p. 540. Theodoric, Historia Norwegica, cap. 2. Snorro, Haralld's Saga ens Harfagra, cap. 42, 43.; necnon Saga Hakonar Goda, cap. 1.

latter, and Raumarik with Vingulmark to the former. This condition accompanied the investiture, — that half of their revenues should be paid into the treasury of Hako, the other half be retained by themselves. Those revenues, it was manifest, would be much less than they had been while every estate was a fief belonging to the crown: allodial property has always been lightly taxed. Hako now returned to Drontheim, to raise troops and prepare ships for a contest with his brother Eric, who was then in the province of Vikia. The case of the latter was evidently hopeless; though he called the people to his aid, few obeyed him; and the men who were with him at the time of Hako's embarkation, left him, one by one, to swell the ranks of his rival. He had no hope of security, but in flight; and he repaired to the Orkneys. There collecting all the ships and all the men he could, he proceeded to the south, ravaging the Scottish coast as he passed along, until he arrived in Northumbria. This province had never been well affected to the Anglo-Saxon yoke, which, indeed, was a very recent one. It had been held for some time by Danish chiefs; half its population was Danish or Norwegian; and it had been the prey of the sea kings from the eighth to the tenth century. Athelstane thought that if Eric would become his vassal, embrace Christianity, and defend Northumbria against the pirates of the north, he would be a far more useful subject than any of the Saxon thanes. A messenger from the English king met the exiled monarch: the proposals of the former were eagerly embraced; Eric and his whole family were baptized; homage was done for the province; and York was chosen as the seat of the new government. But on the part of Athelstane this was an impolitic step. From common report he must surely have known something of Eric's character, — that neither peace nor obedience could be expected from a turbulent, ambitious, cruel, and ungrateful man. During the reign of Athelstane, indeed, he committed no depredations on the

English coast, but he ravaged those of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, without intermission. The fame which he acquired in these expeditions brought many Norwegians, many Swedes, many Danes to his standard. During the reign of Edmund the Elder, he appears to have been absent from Northumbria; and so he was during the first year of Edred's reign. He then returned, and laid waste the English coast. Edred marched against him, and compelled the Northumbrians to do homage to him instead of Eric. The latter collected new forces, and again contended for the kingdom; but he contended in vain; he was signally defeated, and, if Snorro be correct, slain on the battle field. But Matthew of Westminster asserts that, after his defeat, he was betrayed by one of his chiefs, and slain in the wilds of Yorkshire. However this be, from this time Northumbria became an English province: Eric, as the chronicler of Mailros observes, was its last king. The widow and sons of this exile being driven from Northumbria, took refuge in the Orkneys and Shetlands, where the latter resumed their piratical depredations wherever prey was to be found. Subsequently, as we shall perceive, they were entertained at the court of the Danish king. The character of Eric of the Bloody Axe needs no comment. He was a favourite with all pirates, and, for this very reason, with Odin himself.*

939 to 940. By the departure of Eric, *Hako* was the sole monarch of Norway, though, as we have before related, he imprudently left the regal title to two princes of his family. His first hostilities were against the Danes, who infested his dominions, but whom he pursued into Jutland, and defeated a second time. But they came from Zealand and other islands of Denmark; and in Zealand he sought and extirpated them. Those of Gothland were next chastised by him. Harald Blaatand,

* Matthæi Westmonasteriensis Historia, p. 369. Simeonis Dunelmensis Hist. 204. Arembs de Mailros, p. 148. Saga Hakonar Goda, cap. 3, 4. p. 127—129.

the Danish king, offended with the presumption of Hako in thus entering his bays and destroying the vessels of his people, threatened revenge. To annoy his brother sovereign and fellow Christian, he received, with much ceremony, Gunhilda, the widow of Eric Blodöxe, and her children, and furnished them with ample means of support. The sons of Eric had been taught the profession of piracy; and on their settlement in Denmark, they built vessels, and committed frequent depredations on Vikia, one of the southern provinces of Norway. In return, the chiefs of Hako, especially king Trygve, desolated the coasts of Denmark. The Norwegian monarch was no less a warrior than his pagan ancestors; but though he thus violated the spirit, he was not insensible to the forms, of Christianity. One of his objects, as we have before observed, in striving for the Norwegian throne, was the diffusion of the Christian religion. He did not, however, for some years, openly interfere with that of his subjects. He had need of their aid; and he had no wish to estrange them by an ostentatious display of his own worship. For some years, therefore, he worshipped in silence. By degrees he drew his friends, his courtiers, to embrace the new faith. He next extended his favour to all who consented to be baptized. The number of converts increasing, he thought that he might now act more openly: he accordingly sent to England for a bishop and priests to become the harbingers of the new faith throughout Norway. On their arrival, he destroyed some of the heathen temples in Drontheim and the neighbouring districts. Many of the pagans showed a philosophical indifference to both religions: some, south of Drontheim, would do what the people of that city should do themselves; the majority were anxious to be guided by the decrees of a Thing. An assembly was therefore convoked in Drontheim; but the members being alarmed at the magnitude of the change proposed by the king, devolved the decision on a more general one, which should be

convoked at Froste. It was evident that the zeal of Hako was impelling him too rapidly in the career of reformation.*

Amidst these transactions, Snorro gives us some interesting facts respecting the religious customs of the Northmen. When the public sacrifices were to be offered, — which, as we have before related, was obligatory three times in the year †, — the whole of the neighbouring population hastened to the nearest temple, bearing provisions and mead. On these occasions, cattle of all kinds, and numerous horses, were sacrificed. The blood of the victims was called *klot;* the basins in which the blood was received, *klot-bollar;* and *klot-teinar* were the names of the instruments with which the blood was sprinkled over the altars, the pedestals, the walls of the temple within and without, the assembled multitude, and the provisions which were about to be eaten. In the centre of the temple was an open space where the fires were burning; and over them were suspended the cauldrons and pots destined to cook the sacrificial meats. The entertainment which followed was under the care of the sovereign; and it was his duty to consecrate the meats and cups before they were used by the people. The first cup was emptied to Odin for victory and prosperity in war; the second, to Niord and Freyr, for an abundant season and for peace; and when these were drunk, it was customary, in many places, to pour a libation from an overflowing horn, in memory of deceased heroes and kings. Then horns were emptied in memory of inferior personages, — of relatives and friends, — and these were called the *minne,* or smaller cups. To these sacrifices, and to the pagan rites in general, jarl Sigurd, who had done so much to procure the election of Hago, was much addicted. He was as zealous, says the historian, as Harald Harfager had ever been. And he was exceedingly liberal: in the absence of the king,

* Saga Hakonar Goda, cap. 4—15., passim.
† See Introduction, page 53.

when it was his duty to consecrate the food and drink, he often bore the whole of the expense,—no slight one, where so many hundreds of cattle had to be sacrificed, and so many thousands of people entertained. Hence his fame was much diffused; and as he was Hako's uncle by the mother's side, he had considerable weight in the royal councils.*

On the day appointed, the national Thing was as- 941.
sembled; and Hako, after proposing a body of laws which were readily adopted, and to which we shall advert in a future chapter†, openly adverted to the all-important subject. He besought the whole multitude, rich and poor, noble and serf, young and old, the happy and the wretched, to embrace Christianity, — to acknowledge one only God, and Jesus, the son of Mary, as his son and equal. He implored them to abandon the rites of heathenism, — to refrain from labour every seventh day, and observe it as a festival, — and to fast another day in the seven. At these words a murmur went through the multitude, — all freemen, be it remembered, all proprietors of slaves, all landowners. Were two days out of the seven to be thus lost? — for who could work on a *fast*-day? If this novelty were adopted, assuredly the ground could not be cultivated, nor could there be a sufficiency of food for the people. A rich and popular landowner of Gaulandal, the oracle of the assembled multitude, then arose. "When thou, O king, wast first elected by us in the public assembly of Drontheim, and didst restore to us the lands of our forefathers, we all thought that the highest happiness was to be our lot. But now we are in the greatest uncertainty whether thou hast really made us free, or art preparing for us a new slavery, by this strange proposal that we should abandon the religion of all our fathers — men far more excellent than we — a religion which has always been advantageous to Norway. Through the great love which

* Saga Hakonar Goda, p. 139.

† That on the constitution and laws of the ancient Scandinavians, in the next volume of this compendium.

we bore thee, we conferred on thee the privilege of introducing new laws. The code of laws which thou hast this day proposed, and which we have promised to maintain, we shall all of us inviolably maintain. All of us will follow thee as our leader, and honour thee as our king, — while any one of us shall live, — so that thou wilt proceed moderately, and ask not from our love what we cannot lawfully grant. But if, as now seems to be the case, thou not only requirest this change from us, but art preparing to force our inclinations to it, know that we have all determined to abandon thee, and to choose another king, under whose sway we may be permitted to observe a religion so dear to our hearts." The good sense of this reply might have been despised by Hako; but the menace was to be regarded, when it was received with applause by the assembled multitude. This was a critical moment, and Sigurd, whose authority, alike from his dignity and character, was so great, now came forward. As soon as the tumult had subsided, he assured them that the king wished what they wished, and that the good understanding between them would never be destroyed. The people replied, — "Then let king Hako do as his father did, — offer sacrifices to the gods for abundance and peace!" When the assembly was dissolved, Sigurd besought the king to reserve his intention of proselyting for more suitable times, and, above all, not to incense nobles and people by refusing some show of compliance with what all had demanded.*

942 to 956. The proceedings which we are now relating doubtless occupied many years, though, by most historians, they have been crowded into three or four. We are told that the above assembly, in which the laws of Hako were passed, was held in 941; and we know that, in 956, he was still labouring for the introduction of the new faith. Hako, though he saw the prudence of complying with Sigurd's advice, was loth to follow it; probably he hoped to discover some way of evading even

* Saga Hakonar Goda, cap. 17.

the slightest homage to the old faith. At the sacrificial time, however, he was compelled to go to the temple; nor could he avoid sitting on the throne, as president of the ceremonies. The office of high-priest was performed by Sigurd, who, after filling the cup, delivered it to the king for consecration to Odin. As Hako received it, he drew upon it the sign of the cross,—a thing never seen before, and highly disagreeable to all present. "How is this?" cried a chief; "does the king refuse to consecrate, and sacrifice to the gods?" A tumult arose; but it was allayed by the philosophic Sigurd, who observed that Hako had consecrated to Thor, by making on the cup the sign of that deity's mallet. The following day he was present at the festival. The people insisted that he should taste of the horse-flesh, — he refused; that he should drink from the consecrated cup, — still he refused; that, at least, he should taste the gravy which flowed from the roasted meats, — he hesitated. The temple was in an uproar; and violent hands were about to be laid on him, when Sigurd interfered, and said that the king would do what was amply sufficient to satisfy the gods,— he would hold his head over the caldron, the handle of which he would touch with his lips, and inhale the fumes arising from it. Accordingly, the monarch approached the caldron, and was observed to cover the handle with linen before the application of his lips; he then inhaled the odour, and returned to his seat gloomy and discontented, but not more so than many of the spectators. The following year, when the yule festival, the most important of all, was to be celebrated, and the people of Drontheim were assembled together, with eight of the princely pontiffs, Hako could not avoid attending. These had agreed, not only that they would pluck up by the roots what little Christianity had yet been planted in Norway, but that they would force the monarch to sacrifice with them. In conformity with this resolution, they had destroyed three Christian churches, and killed three priests. On the first day of the sacrifices, which were

celebrated in the great temple of Moria, Hako was peremptorily required to join in the rites. By the authority of Sigurd, the demand was so far modified that, if he would eat of the horse-flesh, and consecrate all the horns presented to him, he would satisfy the audience. He did so; nor did he, as before, make the hated sign of the cross, in offering the mead to the gods. This was guilty condescension, and he felt it: he felt, too, that he had done wrong to be present; and his anger was excited against both Sigurd and the whole pagan population of Drontheim. He vowed to be revenged,—to fall on the inhabitants with an armed force, as soon as spring appeared.*

956 to 958. When Hako was preparing to put his menace into execution, intelligence reached him that the sons of his brother Eric had descended on the coast of Vikia, defeated king Trygve, and were laying waste the whole province, which they were likely to subdue. To oppose the common enemy was now his object, and that of his chiefs. Even the eight pontiffs, who had been so deeply offended with his contempt of their religion, joined him: they preferred the yoke of a mild Christian to that of cruel pagans, as the sons of Eric were known to be. All hastened to the southern coast, disembarked, and joined in the battle. It was hardly contested; but, in the end, victory declared for Hako: with Guthrum, the eldest of those princes, he fought hand to hand, and killed his antagonist. Many fell; the rest hastened to their ships, and took refuge in Denmark, where they were sure of a favourable reception from Harald Blaatand. They were pursued, indeed, by the victor; but they had the advantage in celerity. In consequence of this invasion, which would, probably, be repeated, Hako revived an ancient law for the protection of his coasts, — a law once general in the north, and adopted by our Saxon kings. It divided the kingdom into maritime districts, each extending from the sea shore as far as the rivers could boast of salmon; and each compelled to

* Saga Hakonar Goda, cap. 17—19.

furnish a certain number of vessels and men in proportion to its extent. In each district, these ships were always to be so far ready, that, when an enemy appeared within sight, they should, before he could reach the coast, be prepared to receive him. That the alarm might be communicated from one district to another, huge trunks of trees were placed on the summits of the mountains, and formed into piles, so as to be converted into huge watch-fires whenever the occasion demanded. They extended from the extreme angle of the south, to the remotest elevation of the north. Yet these wise precautions were of no avail when the sons of Eric, at the head of a powerful Danish armament, and of such piratical vessels as they had been able to engage, next appeared off the southern coast. The watch-fires were not lighted; and the progress of the hostile fleet was unknown to the king until it was near at hand. The cause of this negligence is very imperfectly explained. Snorro says that the signal fires were always to begin in the east, — as if pirates could not land in the west or north! — and run in a line to the extreme south, then northwards, to the extremity of Norway. He adds that, as the watchmen who should give a false alarm would be severely punished, they were loth to light these beacons until they were sure of an enemy's presence. Probably the ships stood out too far from the coast to be descried by the naked eye; perhaps some of the pagan sentinels were more inclined to the restoration of Eric's sons than to the sway of a Christian prince; perhaps, too, there was bribery. Great was the astonishment, greater still the dread, of king and people, when the armament anchored in Ulfasund. Both were unprepared; and the first idea of Hako was to retire into the north until he could be joined by vessels and men sufficient to resist the invaders: but one of his officers, who had often fought with king Harald, dissuaded him from this prudent step. The king's father, he observed, had never considered the number of the enemy; he had fought with many and with few, yet,

on all occasions, had won the battle. This was imprudent advice; for though, in the present case, Hako, being unexpectedly joined by a considerable force, defeated the enemy, and slew one of Eric's sons, the adventure was a rash one, was purchased with much loss, and might have ended fatally. That similar negligence did lead to a fatal result, will soon be apparent to the reader. *

958 to 963. That, on two successive occasions, the same negligence should be shown by the watchmen, and the same imprudent advice followed by the king, may induce, in the reader's mind, a suspicion that Snorro has confounded the two. Hako was quietly seated at table, in one of his manor houses in the little island of Stord, off the coast of Hardaland, when a domestic entered to say that many vessels, which had a suspicious look, were in sight. The king and his guests, rushing out of the house, were satisfied that a hostile armament was actually approaching. It was led by Harald, who, since the death of his brother, was the eldest of Eric's surviving sons. Hako, and the chiefs who happened to be with him, hastily collected all the men in the neighbourhood, and advanced to repel the invaders. The battle engaged, and was, as before, desperately disputed. Hako performed his duty nobly: two champions of the enemy were soon laid at his feet; and the pirates were again put to flight, but not until Hako had received a mortal wound. He was carried on board a vessel, because he wished to be taken to one of his manors in the north; but the blood, which no art could stop, flowed so plentifully, that his cure was not expected. On reaching the manor he loved,— that in which he had been born, — he called his friends around him, and acquainted them with his last wishes. As he had only a daughter, Thora, he declared the sons of Eric his heirs; and despatched a messenger, both to acquaint them with this news, and to request that they would be merciful to his adherents,—to all, especially, who were bound to

* Saga Hakonar Goda, cap. 20–25.

him by the ties of consanguinity. "Should my life be spared," he added, "I will leave my throne and country, embrace the monastic life, and endeavour to atone for my numerous offences against God. If, as I feel, I shall die among pagans, bury me in whatever manner you please." Soon afterwards, he breathed his last.*

From the tranquillity which Hako enjoyed in regard to his subjects during the last years of his life, we may infer that he had abandoned the hope of converting his people. It has been affirmed that he became at least half a pagan. This statement is abundantly confirmed by his dying words; by the fact that he was buried according to heathen rites; and by the universal belief that his soul ascended to the hall of Odin. On this subject we have the confirmation of a pagan bard, who describes the joy of the warrior god and his chiefs at the arrival of the Norwegian monarch.† It was, probably, as much for his religious indifference in the last years of his life, as from any other reason, that he was thus honoured. Yet all Norway bewailed him; whatever his faith, his virtues could not be mistaken; and the epithet which he so well deserved — that of Hako the Good — rendered his memory dear to his country. During his reign it enjoyed extraordinary abundance; robberies and violence were suppressed; the laws which he found in use he caused to be administered with vigour; and the new ones which he promulgated, and to which we shall advert in the proper place‡, show that he was far superior to his predecessors in his care of the internal tranquillity.§

Harald, surnamed *Graefeld* or Grey-mantle, the eldest son of Eric and Gunhilda, was now declared monarch of Norway. But the title had in it more of pomp than of real power. In the first place, his two 963 to 969.

* Saga Hakonar Goda, cap. 25–32.

† This Song of Hako — Hakonar Mal — has been rendered into English verse by the Hon. W. Herbert.

‡ See the chapter on the subject in Vol. II. of this compendium.

§ Saga Hakonar Goda, cap. 33.

brothers had also the regal title, and were placed over the central provinces of Norway. Then the eastern provinces were subject to the kings whom Hako the Good had placed over them; namely, Trygve, the son of Olaf; and Gudred, the son of Biorn. Nor was this all; for so popular was jarl Sigurd with the inhabitants of Drontheim, that they awarded him the privileges, though not the title, of king. Here, then, were five chiefs invested with the regal functions, and independent of one another; and, with the exception of occasional tributes, of Harald himself. This division of power could not be pleasing to Harald, who hoped one day to unite the scattered fragments of the monarchy; but for some time he was compelled to act with great caution. He acknowledged the authority of the three kings who were not his brothers, on the condition of their holding from him as they had formerly held from Hako the Good. But if even he had been sincere in these steps, the ambition of his mother, who shared in the councils of all her sons, would have led him to retrace it. She often represented to them that they had the title but not the power of kings; that if Trygve and Olaf enjoyed their kingdoms by hereditary claim, surely Sigurd, who was only a jarl, had none, and that to remove him would be an act of good policy. Harald replied that to remove so popular a chief "was not quite so easy as to kill a calf or a kid." There were other ways, she rejoined, of effecting this object, than by open force. Sigurd had a brother who had not been raised to either wealth or consideration, — probably because he was unworthy of either, — and he was easily induced, by the promises of the king and of Gunhilda, to enter into a plot against the life of Sigurd. To throw the intended victim off his guard, extraordinary professions of friendship and splendid presents were transmitted to him by Harald. His motions were closely watched; and one night, while at one of his rural manors, with fewer attendants

than ordinary, he perished in the flames of his own house. But the royal assassins reaped no advantage from this crime; for the inhabitants of Drontheim elected Hako, son of the deceased jarl, to the vacant dignity; and Harald, himself, was compelled to sanction the election. To fortify himself against the vengeance of the reigning family, Hako entered into a secret alliance with the two kings of the south, Trygve and Gudred. It did not escape the penetration of Gunhilda, who again entered into a secret conclave with her sons. The result was soon apparent. The royal brothers proclaimed their intention of undertaking a piratical cruise in the Baltic; and for this purpose, hastening towards the southern boundary of Norway, one of them invited king Trygve to join him. The latter accepted the proposal; but in hastening to an interview appointed by one of the brothers, he and twelve of his companions fell beneath the hands of a much superior band. While this deed was perpetrating, Harald, himself, disembarked; and hearing that Gudred was holding a feast at a house not far from the city, he hastened thither, surrounded the house, and destroyed both Gudred and his companions. The fruit of both deeds was the annexation of these provinces to the domains of the sons of Eric. But their vengeance was not complete; for Harald, surnamed Grenske, the son of Gudred, escaped first to the uplands, and when his life was not safe there, into Sweden, where he became a famous pirate.*

No sooner were these crimes perpetrated, than the sons of Eric proceeded towards the north, with the avowed purpose of destroying Hako. Knowing the inferiority of his numbers, he betook himself to the piratical life, but not until he had devastated the central provinces subject to the sons of Eric. After his departure Drontheim submitted to them; but small was the advantage which they derived from this event. 969 to 977

* Saga af Haralldi Grafelld Konungi de Hakoni Jarli Sigurdar-Syni, cap. 1—10. (apud Heimskringlam Snorronis, tom. i. p. 165—179.).

The next summer Hako returned; and though he was frequently absent on piratical expeditions into the Baltic, in winter he always commanded at Drontheim. Many were his conflicts with the forces of Harald; and, though sometimes defeated, he had always a sure resource either in the support of the inhabitants of Drontheim, or in his own ships. The sons of Eric were not popular: one of them, soon after the departure of Hako, dishonoured the bed of a noble chief, and was killed for the crime. Throughout the annals of this bloody period, we perceive the hand of retributive justice: the man who had exercised violence became its victim. Thus the treacherous brother of Sigurd, the man who had betrayed that respected chief into the hands of his murderers, was slain in battle by the hands of Hako his nephew. Thus died Erling, another of Eric's sons. He was followed by his lustful brother: the inhabitants of Drontheim, which during one of the frequent expeditions of Hako he had seized, being unable to support his rapacity, rose against him, and sacrificed him to their just resentment. The fate of Harald, himself, was not distant. Though, by the destruction of two kings, the expulsion of Hako, and the death of most of his brothers, he was, nominally, monarch of Norway, he was unpopular. Nor was the absent Hako negligent in creating him many troubles from without. On Norway, ever since the days of Ragnar Lodbrog, the Danish kings had cast a longing eye; they considered it, no less than Sweden, as a portion of their vast inheritance; and Hako had little difficulty in persuading Harald Blaatand to aspire to the throne of that kingdom. As the equipment of a naval force would be expensive, and might be useless, it was resolved to entice Harald of Norway into Jutland, under the pretext of doing homage to Blaatand for the fiefs which he had formerly possessed in Denmark, and which were now to be restored to him. Harald, credulous enough to believe the invitation sincere, repaired to Jutland, and was soon compelled to fight

with the superior numbers of a chief who had been secretly instigated to assail him. In that battle he fell, fifteen years after the death of Hako the Good, and thirteen from that of jarl Sigurd.*

After this event, Hako and the Danish king, who knew the advantages which they expected could be gained only by celerity, sailed with a powerful armament for Norway. Many were the exiles who accompanied them, and whom the cruelty of Gunhilda and her sons had forced to abandon their homes. Among them was Harald Grenske, the son of king Gudred who had been so treacherously slain by the Norwegian brothers. On reaching Tunsberg, the Danish king was joined by multitudes of the inhabitants, of whom all were dissatisfied with the sons of Eric. The first care of Harald was to reward his counsellor and friend, Hako, whom he placed over seven provinces in the west and centre of the kingdom, all to be held feudally, as they had been held by the jarls of Harald Harfager. There was, however, this distinction in favour of Hako, that if the necessities of the public service should require it, — if, for instance, the territory should be invaded by an enemy, — he was at liberty to employ all its revenues for its defence. Harald Grenske, being of the royal blood of Norway, then eighteen years of age, received the title of king, and with it Westfold, Vingulmark, and part of Ayder. The rest of the kingdom was confided to Sweyn, son of the Danish monarch, as the viceroy of his father, who was hailed as the lord paramount of the whole. Gunhilda, with her two surviving sons, fled to the Orkneys, and Harald of Denmark retired to his own capital.† 977 to 978.

In his very dreams Hako could scarcely have anticipated the prosperity which was now his lot. His father had been only the jarl of Drontheim; his own life had been perpetually hunted by the sons of Eric; he had been an exile for many years; yet he was now 978 to 988

* Saga af Haralldi Grafeld Konungi, &c., cap. 11—13.
† Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 1—16.

the ruler of seven provinces, not removeable at the pleasure of the Danish monarch, except by open force. But he was not, says the historian, happy. His nights were often sleepless; and when he did sleep, his dreams were disturbed. It was not remorse which thus rendered him anxious; it was ambition. That he aspired to the sovereignty of all Norway, may, from the time of Harald's departure, be inferred from every action. But many were his opponents or rivals, whom he hoped time or chance, intrigue or revolution, would remove. The first who troubled him in his government was Ragenfrid, one of the surviving sons of Eric. From the Orkneys, this chief, with a considerable fleet, sailed for Norway. Hearing that Hako was at Drontheim, he landed in the southern provinces, and spread his devastations on every side. On the approach of the jarl he hastened to his ships; in a naval action he was victorious; but as he was unable to contend with Hako on land, he proceeded to ravage the coast wherever it was inadequately defended; and in a short time he seized Sogne, Hardaland, Fiord, and some other districts. The following spring, jarl Hako, having collected troops on every side, renewed the war. This time fortune did not desert him: he vanquished Ragenfrid, whom he also expelled from Norway. His next wish was to remove Harald Grenske; but he was wily enough to wait for time and circumstances. The same time and circumstances, he trusted, would release him from all dependence on the Danish court. At first he forwarded the stipulated revenues to Harald; but he soon sent a portion only, or withheld them entirely, on the plea that the defence of the country required them all. But he had no wish prematurely to offend that monarch; and when required to assist in the war against the emperor Otho, he served personally in the war. The issue was not prosperous: Harald, as we have before related, was compelled to receive baptism, and Hako to follow the example. But he was still a pagan; and he resolved that the missionaries,

with whom he was to return into Norway, should never see that country. He therefore landed them on the Swedish coast, and after wasting Gothbed with fire and sword, proceeded to his favourite Drontheim. There, and wherever he had the power, he restored paganism to its ancient splendour; nor would he tolerate Christianity. This conduct was offensive to Harald; but that monarch had other wrongs to avenge. The jarl not only refused the accustomed tribute and proclaimed his independence, but ravaged the coasts of Jutland. Harald retaliated on those of Norway. His purpose was to subdue Iceland, with the sarcastic poets of which he was offended; but he had more solid reasons for the conquest than those assigned by the chronicler. That island, like the Orkneys, was the resort of pirates whenever they were defeated in Scandinavia. His desire to explore the state of Iceland before he invaded it has given rise to a legend which may be mentioned for its novelty. He persuaded a wizard — no doubt a Finn — to change his form, and repair to that island. No form seemed so judicious as that of a large fish; and under it the magician made the voyage, without the incumbrance of ships or men. But his ingenuity availed him little. On attempting to land at the first bay, a huge dragon forced him to seek the deep. At another, a large bird equally opposed his landing. If the east and north of the island were thus guarded, surely the west coast, which was then, as now, wholly unfrequented, would be more accessible. The hope was vain; a fierce bull advanced into the water to meet him. Nor was the southern coast more hospitable: as he attempted to land he perceived a huge giant, whose head was higher than the hills, and whose hand was graced with a ponderous bar of iron. To attempt the conquest of a region guarded by local deities, or by extraordinary magic, was hopeless; and the baffled Finn returned to Denmark.*

So long as Harald lived, Hako appears to have remained undisturbed; but, after the accession of Sweyn, 900 to 993.

* Saga af Olafi Konungi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 16—37.

a powerful fleet sailed from Denmark to chastise his rebellion. Yet it entirely failed; patriotism roused the Norwegians to unite, and repel the invaders. As yet, too, Hako had shown few proofs of that unbridled licence which distinguished him in the following years. He had many great qualities; he was active, enterprising, brave in a degree seldom equalled, even in an age of heroes. Great was his triumph over the formidable Sweyn; and he had no longer a rival, except in Harald Grenske: nor did this king long thwart his views. The way in which Grenske met his fate has in it much of romance, yet is in no respect contrary to probability, or inconsistent with the manners of the times. In a piratical expedition to the Baltic, he landed on the Swedish coast, of which kingdom Olaf, son of Eric the Victorious, was the head. In his youth Harald had been reared in Sweden; and his foster-sister was Sigfrida, mother of the king. Hearing that Harald was on the coast, not far from her manor, she sent him an invitation to visit her, and he readily accepted it. Never was hospitality more open or more agreeable. The widowed queen, who sat on a throne to honour Harald and his chiefs, presided over a sumptuous entertainment; and, after it, she encouraged the circulation of the horn, not merely by her invitation, but by her example. "All drank manfully," says the historian, which means deeply enough. But neither the lady nor Harald indulged so much as the rest; and when the latter was laid in the magnificent bed which had been prepared for him, the queen entered his apartment, horn in hand, and challenged him to drink more. At length both were intoxicated, until Harald was overpowered by sleep, when Sigfrida went to her own couch. The next day the entertainment was renewed; but this time both hostess and guest were moderate. Love had entered the heart of Harald, but he durst not declare it; and after some time he took his leave, and returned to Norway. But he could not rest; and when spring came, he revisited the Baltic. Affection had made him

timid; he durst not, unbidden, go to the house of Sigfrida, and he requested an interview on the sea-coast. She rode to the place, and Harald, dismissing his attendants, mentioned his passion. It found no response in her heart. He had, she observed, a good wife already. The king rejoined, that Asta, his queen, was no fit match for him; that she was much inferior in birth. "That may be true," replied Sigfrida, who was believed to possess some knowledge of futurity; "but at this very moment she is pregnant of a son, who will be a great honour to you both." She then departed as she had arrived, on horseback, leaving Harald in much despondency. Unable to desist from his hopeless suit, he again repaired to her palace, and found another royal suitor. As before, the entertainment was good; but, in the ensuing night, both kings were destroyed by their hostess. The fleet returned to Asta without its leader. She immediately repaired to her father's house in the uplands, and gave birth to a son, whom she named Olaf, destined to become the sainted king of Norway. *

Hako, now he sole ruler of all Norway, was, like many other princes, unable to resist prosperity. The love which his people — at least, the inhabitants of Drontheim — had long borne him, had changed into hatred, by the licentiousness of his conduct in his declining years. The daughters of his noblest chiefs he forcibly brought to his palace, and, after a few days, returned them to their families. Murmurs arose; but they were disregarded by the hoary idolater, who thought his power too well established to be shaken. But he was at length roused from this dream of security, by the report that there was a descendant of fair-haired Harald, unequalled for valour, who probably aspired to the throne of his ancestors. This was Olaf, the son of Trygve, whose adventures are the most romantic in the history of the North. † 993 to 995.

On the death of Trygve, Astrida, his widow, who 969 to 970.

* Saga af Olafi Konungi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 38—49. p. 229—245.
† The same authority.

was then pregnant, fearing the vengeance of Gunhilda and her sons, fled to an island in the solitary lake of the uplands, where, in 969, she brought forth a son, whom she named Olaf, after his grandfather of that name. There she remained the whole summer, accompanied only by her foster-father, and two or three domestics. But when the days began to shorten, the cold breezes from the lake were too much for Astridda and her child; and, accompanied by the same faithful domestics, she left her island home. To escape observation, she never came within sight of human habitation; and when, after many days, she approached her father's habitation, she was too cautious to enter. A messenger acquainted him with her arrival; and he met her at a solitary hut in the forest, where every domestic comfort was supplied her. Two maid servants only, with her foster-father, his child, and her infant son, formed her whole establishment. It was fortunate for her that, during this winter, Gunhilda and her sons were too closely occupied by Hako, the jarl, to have leisure for pursuing her. But that ambitious woman had heard of Olaf's birth; and when spring arrived, she sent her spies to inquire into the truth of the report, and where both mother and child might be found. Their inquiries were successful; and a chief, with thirty horsemen, was despatched to bring the infant to the court of Gunhilda. Eric, however, the father of Astridda, was told their purpose when they were only a few miles distant from the house. It was nightfall; and he led his daughter, with her precious charge and a few domestics, into the forest, where he acquainted her with her danger, with his inability to protect her, and with the necessity of her hastening, in the most secret manner, to the house of an aged friend in Sweden. No sooner had she departed, than he returned to his own house, to await the arrival of the horsemen. Fortunately, both for him and his daughter, they did not immediately call upon him, but passed the night at a neighbouring house. The following morning, when he was asked where his daugh-

ter and grandson were, he denied that they were with him; and, on their refusing to believe him, he allowed them to search every corner of his habitation. But the leader of the band was at length informed of their route, and, causing his men to mount, he pursued it. Darkness overtaking them, they passed the night with a rich landowner, whom they carelessly asked whether he had seen a woman with a child pass that way. He replied, that a woman and child, in very mean attire, with other persons equally humble, had besought his hospitality, and that he had refused to lodge them, — for, like worthies of recent times, he had a great dislike to beggars,— but he believed they were at some cottage in the neighbourhood. And so they were; — at the cottage of an honest farmer, and less distant than was suspected. But Providence watched over the safety of mother and son. While this conversation was passing, a peasant in the employment of that farmer accidentally called at the rich man's house, on his return from the forest to his master's. He heard all that had passed; and, ignorant of Astridda's arrival, communicated it to his master. The Norwegian, as prudent as he was humane, perceiving that the third part of the night was already past, went to his guests, who were fast asleep, and told them, in an angry voice, to rise and leave his house. They tremblingly obeyed; but no sooner were they beyond the inclosure, than he acquainted them with the cause of his seeming harshness. He sent them to a solitary lake, on which was an island covered with reeds, and bade them remain concealed until they saw him again. As the water of the lake was shallow, they easily waded to the island, and concealed themselves, while Thorsteim (his name shall not be buried in oblivion) returned to his own house. As he had foreseen, on the following morning the chief of the horsemen, after inquiring at many houses, called at his, and inquired after the fugitives. "They have been here," was the reply; "but, before the break of day, they both left

me, and went into the wood." Nor was he unprepared for the next question, — whether he would be their guide in searching for the mother. He readily consented; and, as may easily be conceived, led them in a direction exactly contrary to that which they had pursued. Nor was this all. On the pretext that they should probably be more successful if they separately continued the search, he left them, but only to delude them by new expedients. The day was thus wasted, and the horsemen returned to Gunhilda. That evening Thorsteim went to the island, provided the fugitives with a store of provisions, and, what was much better, with a faithful guide. Astrida pursued her journey, and, without any further interruption, reached the house of Hako the Old, by whom she and her infant were affectionately received, and with whom they remained about three years. *

964 to 966. But the fortunes of Olaf and of his mother were still to be singular. They had not long enjoyed the hospitality of Hako, when Gunhilda sent an embassy to Eric, king of Sweden, to obtain possession of the young prince. Under the specious promise of amply providing for one whose fortunes she pitied, and the fate of whose father she had long bewailed, her messenger easily prevailed on Eric to send an escort to the house of Hako for the prince. But, at the court of Eric, Hako had a son, who was present when the affair was mentioned to the king; and he gave his father timely warning of the Norwegian's approach. The Swedish noble was therefore prepared for his visiter. After the display of much ceremonious politeness, the ambassador mentioned the anxiety of Gunhilda to educate young Olaf in a manner becoming his birth; and begged that the royal child might be confided to his care, — a request in which the

* Saga af Olafi Konungi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 1—3. p. 187, &c. Historia Olavi Tryggvii-filii, tom. 1. cap. 44. p. 86—90. Hafniæ, 1828.
The latter work, for which we are indebted to the Icelandic Society of Copenhagen, has many interesting particulars omitted by Snorro. It was composed by Gunlaug, a monk of Iceland, in the thirteenth century.

Swedish king joined. "Astrida," replied the wary Hako, "is the mistress of her own actions, and if she consents to thy proposal, I can have no objection to it." On the refusal of Astrida, the disappointed ambassador returned to Eric's court, and obtained a stronger force, with the intention of removing the child by violence, should entreaties be unavailing. As before, Hako was prepared, and he was less complaisant than on the former occasion. "Astrida," was the substance of his reply to the renewed proposal, "has no great reason to confide in the promises of Gunhilda; she knows her wiles, her deceit; she is still averse from thy proposal; and the boy cannot go without the mother's consent, nor shall I allow her inclination to be forced, so long as she continues under my protection." High words arose; the ambassador threatened to employ force; Hako replied, that men more powerful than he would fail in such an attempt. The dispute reached the ears of a cowherd of Hako's—a huge herculean man—who, seizing a pitchfork, hastened to the scene, and said, "Is it thou who darest to insult my princely master in his own house? Choose one of these two things,—either speedily retire from this neighbourhood, or prepare for thy death by this pitchfork, which will be equally fatal to thy companions!" The ambassador and his suite hastily retreated, and on their return to Norway acquainted the disappointed Gunhilda with the ill success of his journey.*

Whether through fear lest king Eric should, in the end, force her son from her, or through the desire of seeing her brother Sigurd, who was then in high favour with Waldemar, a king of Gardarik †, Astrida left the hospitable roof of Hako. By him she was confided to the care of some merchants who traded with Gardarik, and supplied with every necessary for her voyage. In the Gulf of Finland they were taken by Esthonian

976 to 984.

* Saga af Olafi Konungi-iSyni, cap. 4. Historia Olavi Tryggvii-filii, tom. i. cap. 45.

† Now a part of Russia, to the east and south of the Gulf of Finland.

pirates, separated, and sold. Olaf, Thorolf, and the son of Thorolf, became the property of one who, seeing the old man past service, put him to death; the two boys were afterwards sold to different masters, and Astrida sent nobody knew where. Subsequently, the same master purchased Thorgils, the foster-brother of Olaf, and employed him in the meanest drudgery. But the prince was not thus treated; he was soon beloved by the old pagan, and beheld in the light of a son. It happened, one day, that Sigurd, the uncle of Olaf, came to the master's house, and saw the boy, then about ten years old, playing with others of his age. He saluted Sigurd; the latter returned the courtesy, and was immediately struck with the foreign countenance of the boy. In answer to his questions, the boy told him his name, and the names of his parents. Sigurd at once recognised his nephew, whom he redeemed; but the boy would not go with him unless he was accompanied by Thorgils, who was redeemed at a lower price. To the honour of the pagan master of Olaf, it must be added, that he would not have sold the boy, unless Sigurd had given a pledge that he should never be resold, and that he should be treated as well as he had been under his own roof. Both children were taken to the court of Sigurd's master, who reigned in the vicinity of Novogrod. The attachment which Olaf bore to his friends was equalled by his hatred to his enemies, and to the enemies of his friends. One day, as he stood in the public market, he perceived the merchant who had killed Thorolf: approaching with much deliberation, he drew his little sword, inflicted a mortal wound in the head of the merchant, and immediately ran to acquaint his uncle with the deed which he had performed. Apprehensive of the consequences, Sigurd led his nephew into the presence of the queen, and besought her protection; and through her influence, a pecuniary compensation was received by the relations of the deceased. He soon became a favourite at court; the king, learning his royal birth, placed him among his

nobles; and nine years passed away with rapidity. Every accomplishment becoming his descent and his future prospects was acquired by him. Among these was piracy, to which, from his twelfth year, he was habituated. In it he acquired considerable reputation during the following years; and was most useful to the king by destroying other piratical vessels which disturbed the peace of Gardarik, and by the rich treasures which he brought from his frequent expeditions. But his favour with the king had the ordinary effect,—it created rivals and enemies; and he left the court to do what so many of his ancestors had done before him,—to pursue his fortunes on the deep.*

On the shores of the Baltic the young chief obtained much celebrity, alike for his valour and success. He was consequently joined by many piratical vassals, until he had a considerable fleet under his command. Towards the close, he caused his vessels to anchor in a bay on the coast of Pomerania, which was then governed by a princess, the daughter of duke Borislaf, whose husband was lately deceased. The fame of his exploits, of his accomplishments, of his personal comeliness, reached her ears, and through her minister she sent him an invitation to pass the winter in her capital. It was readily accepted; and the natural consequence followed, —her marriage with the pirate chief. Invested by this union with the military government of the state, Olaf defended the rights of his consort much more eagerly than those of her subjects. Some territories and fortresses which had been dismembered from the duchy, he restored to it. But in one of these warlike expeditions, he was nearly a victim to the bad faith of the barbarians. Leading his troops against a fortified town which had thrown off its allegiance to the princess, he pressed the inhabitants so closely that they offered to submit to his discretion, and opened their gates to receive them. No sooner, however, had a few of his

985 to 994.

* Saga af Olafi Konungi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 4—21. Historia Olavi Tryggvil-filii, tom. i. cap. 46, &c.

men entered with him, than the ponderous barricades were closed, and he was assailed by a multitude. But a sea king never lost his presence of mind. Commanding his followers to imitate his example, he repaired to the walls, fighting as he retreated; and on reaching them, he leaped to the ground outside the fortifications. The place was now assailed with the vigour which exasperation always gives; it was soon carried by storm; the garrison were put to the sword, and the walls levelled with the earth. — But this humble sphere was too narrow for his ambition, which the events then passing in Norway served to inflame. In about a year after his marriage, he sailed with a small number of vessels to the coast of Sweden, ravaged Scania and Gothland, took one or two prizes, assisted the emperor Otho in the invasion of Denmark, and in the victory which the temporal head of Christendom obtained over the pagan Dane, and was present at the deliberations which preceded the restoration of peace.* That he was half a Christian — at least in disposition — is evident from the relation of his biographer; but where he had acquired the little knowledge he possessed of Christianity is not so clear. His biographer affirms that he had often heard of the Christian doctrines, — which may be true enough; but we cannot subscribe to the next assertion, that one reason of his esteem for the new faith was, a miracle which he had seen archbishop Poppo work in presence of Otho and Harald of Denmark. However this be, he had a great aversion to idolatry; and, even at the court of the pagan king in Gardarik, he had always refused to sacrifice to the gods. In the army of Otho he met with his father-in-law, duke Borislaf; and after the successful termination of the war, he returned into Pomerania. But his restless disposition would not long permit him to remain with his bride; and he led another expedition to various shores of the Baltic. After the death of his consort, which happened in three years after his marriage, he

* See before, page 108.

would no longer remain in Pomerania. Probably the event disposed him to humility, to reflection. However this be, he was now better instructed in the principles of Christianity, — whether in Greece, as his biographer assures us, or in some Slavonian province where Greek missionaries were labouring, is of little moment. But the baptismal rite was not administered to him for some years afterwards, — until he visited a hermit in the west. He is said to have been instrumental in the conversion, also, of his master, the king of Holmgard, and of the queen. Whatever his zeal might be at this period of life, at a subsequent one, as we shall soon perceive, it was great enough. But his religion was, like that of the period, a strange one: it did not deter him from ravaging the coasts of Christian countries, from burning the huts of the poor, and sacrificing the inmates. Years after his pretended change of belief, he was occupied in this dreadful profession, from the coasts of Russia to those of Brittany and Ireland. In Ireland or in England, — probably in the latter, — he is said to have married an Irish princess, named Gyda; but before the ceremony could take place, he was compelled to fight with a rival, whom he soon vanquished. After this event, he was sometimes in England, sometimes in Ireland, but every where his fame as a warrior extended. The sea kings of this period were accustomed to fight as much for others as for themselves, by hiring their services to any native prince who had need of them; nor did it unfrequently happen that the northmen were, at the same time, in opposite ranks. For such services the wages were always abundant; sometimes in land, more frequently in gold and rich merchandise. Nor must we forget that, when on the coast of a friendly power, the pirates exercised the profession of merchants, and traded from one port or one kingdom to another, with more regularity than we generally suppose. But this pursuit was much too quiet for the sea king, and he followed it from necessity only: his delight was in scenes of ex-

citement — in those of danger and carnage. Whether in peace or war, no scruple was felt in stealing cattle from any coast. While in Ireland, an adventure befell Olaf which illustrates both this statement and his own character. He and his men had disembarked on a certain part of the coast, seized a multitude of cattle, and were driving them towards their ships, when a poor farmer ran after them, and begged the chief to restore the animals which had been stolen from *him*. "Thou mayst have them," replied Olaf, "if, without impeding our march, thou canst distinguish them from such a multitude." The man had a dog, which singled out the animals, one by one, to the great amazement of the chief. "Wilt thou part with this dog?" demanded Olaf. "Readily!" was the answer; and Olaf, not satisfied with restoring the man's cattle, made him some valuable presents.*

967 to 993. In all his voyages, Olaf never despaired of being one day able to procure the rights of his birth in Norway, and his eyes were frequently turned to that country. Nor was he without anxiety as to the fate of his mother, of whom he had heard nothing since the day on which, while yet an infant, he had been separated from her. Her adventures may, for a moment, occupy the reader's attention. After remaining a slave for some time, she was seen in Pomerania by a Norwegian pirate of noble birth: at first he did not recognise her; where health and cheerfulness and beauty had once been, he observed paleness and melancholy; but there was, alike in her appearance and manner, something that inspired him with respect. A closer examination convinced him that he saw Astrida, the queen of Trygve, before him; he entered into conversation with her, and learned that she was now on sale. She besought him to ransom her, and return her to her friends; and he promised to do so on one condition,— that she would become his bride. Her situation was not one that admitted of either scruple

* Saga Olafi Konungi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 21—35. p. 211—227. Historia Olavi Regis, tom. i. cap. 73—82. p. 157—175.

or hesitation; she became his wife, and the mother of several children. Year after year rolled away, and the mother heard not of the son, or the son of the mother. The fame of his exploits, indeed, had reached Norway; but he had assumed another name, — that of Olo, a native of Gardarik, and by it he was known to all the princes of his time, from the imperial Otho to the humblest piratical chief. But Hako, the usurper of Norway, knew the truth; and as his favour with the people, from his new vices, was now departing *, he began to look with much anxiety towards Ireland, where Olaf had for some time been. To remove this aspiring rival was necessary to his safety; and he immediately devised the means of carrying his design into execution. †

Intimately connected with Hako was a piratical chief, Thorer by name, a man of enterprise, who had acquired reputation on the deep, and who would not hesitate to execute any commission with which he might be entrusted. This man was the fittest instrument for alluring Olaf into the power of Hako. By open force, no chief could hope to succeed; for Olaf was followed by some of the most noted heroes of his time, and was at the head of some ships. He must therefore, if possible, be brought to Norway; or, as a last resource, assassinated. As the deceitful representations which Thorer was enjoined to make might not have their due effect on Olaf, two of his kinsmen, whom he had never seen — the brothers of his mother — were to be associated with him, and, if need were, to confirm his statement. ‡ They revolted, we are told, at this meditated treachery, and refused to share in it until menaced with the loss of their own lives. However this be, Thorer hastened to Dublin to put his design into execution. To lull suspicion, he was provided with abundant merchandise, which he was to barter in Dub- 995 to 996.

* See before, page 205. † The same authorities.
‡ Of these associates no mention is made by Snorro, and we think his authority preferable to that of Gunlaug.

lin, a port then flourishing for its commerce. He had little difficulty in discovering the abode of Olo of Gardarik, the only name by which Olaf was known. By degrees, he cultivated the acquaintance of Olaf; and, as he was a man of great observation, eloquent, and specious, he was a welcome visitor. As usual, Olaf, without naming himself, inquired after his family connections; — how many were living, what their condition in life, what their influence with the public. When satisfied on these points, he inquired into the character, the power, the reputation of Hako. The jarl, replied Thorer, is a great prince, absolute in everything, and no man dare contradict him; but, if I must speak confidentially, he is tolerated only because of old Harold's race no scion remains whom the people might choose in lieu of him. Many are the nobles, the chiefs, the warriors, the people, who would rush to the standard of such a rival, if one were to appear in Norway. But why talk thus vainly? no prince of that house survives." Such was the manner in which Thorer fulfilled his commission; and we cannot be surprised that, after a few interviews, Olaf opened his heart to the traitor. He was not, by birth, Olo of Gardarik,—he was Olaf, the son of king Trygve; and might he, indeed, hope that the Norwegians would accept him, in preference to Hako? Thorer solemnly affirmed that, if he but showed himself to the people, the reign of Hako would be at an end. He did more; he professed the warmest interest in the fate of his new friend, whom he exhorted to sail, without delay, to his native country. With five ships only — for why engage many where none would be needed — the prince, accompanied by Thorer, left Dublin, passed the Hebrides, and at length reached the Orkneys. The jarl of these islands was Sigurd, who welcomed the strangers: but in Olaf he found a master. The prince, already assuming the rights of sovereignty, commanded the jarl to receive baptism, and, on his hesitation, threatened him with death if he refused. The choice was not difficult, and the Christian church had

one hypocrite more. Homage, too, was done to the new king; and, as a pledge of fidelity, Whelp, the son of Sigurd, accompanied Olaf to Norway. *

When Olaf reached the coast of Agder, he learned that the inhabitants of Drontheim were conspiring against the authority of Hako. This news was a thunderbolt to Thorer, who, from the gratitude which the Norwegians had evinced towards the jarl, for his recent victory over the Jomsberg pirates, had regarded his dynasty as secure. The present discontent, however, might pass away; and he determined to assassinate Olaf: but the men whom he had hired for that purpose betrayed him to the prince, and he fell the victim of his own wiles. Olaf, whose name had not yet been mentioned to the people, now hastened towards Drontheim, where every moment added to the critical situation of his enemy. Nothing can so well describe the character of Hako as his conduct just before and at this period. Though he knew that the inhabitants of that province were only waiting for an opportunity of banishing or destroying him, he persevered in his lustful course. Wives, daughters, sisters, widows, virgins, — all on whom he cast his eyes, were, however nobly allied, forcibly taken to his residence. But the following incident had happened before the arrival of Olaf: — Brinjolf, a noble of Ganlardal, had a beautiful and accomplished wife; one night, while both were in bed, the myrmidons of Hako arrived at his villa, and unceremoniously informed him that his wife was wanted by the jarl, and that she must accompany them. On his indignant refusal to suffer her departure, they returned for more assistants, and bore her away to the palace of Hako. The following day Brinjolf put on his armour, rode into the neighbouring country, assembled his connections and friends, laid before them the indignity which he had received, and prevailed on them to unite in his cause. They did not, however, break

995 to 996.

* Saga af Olafi Konungi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 51, 52. p. 246—248. Historia Olavi Tryggvii-filii, cap. 93, 94. 98.

out into open insurrection, but they entered into a conspiracy to assist one another when the convenient moment should arrive. This event was no warning to Hako. Soon afterwards, smitten with the charms of a married lady, Godruna, who from her beauty was surnamed the "Sun of Lunden," he sent his emissaries to her husband's house to bring her to him. Under the pretext of inviting them to supper, Orm, the husband, detained them until his servants had collected a force sufficient to set them at defiance. The lady herself then told the messengers, in a tone of insult, that she should not accompany them unless Thora, the favourite mistress of the jarl, sent for her. Threatening vengeance on the whole family, the men departed; and Orm lost no time in sending out the arrow, the symbol of war, to his kinsmen and dependents. * The well-known token was rapidly conveyed; the gathering commenced; and in a short time a formidable band was assembled, eager to destroy the tyrannical jarl. †

995. The motives of this rustic force were soon known to Hako. His first object was to conceal himself until he had collected troops enough to crush the insurrection. What follows is exceedingly romantic; and we give it as we find it in the authorities before us, leaving the reader to exercise his own judgment in what he may reject or admit. We may, however, observe that, if some of the incidents have been too strongly coloured by posterity, the substance of the relation is true.—Accompanied by his domestics, Hako fled from his villa into a deep valley, which has ever since borne his name. As it was supposed that he would hasten to his ships, which were at some distance along the coast, and were under the guidance of his son Erleng, the paths which led to the coast were more narrowly watched than those in the neighbourhood of the valley. At nightfall, he despatched some of his men to the station where his

* This symbol in Christian times was superseded by the *cross*. See the notes to Scott's "Lady of the Lake."

† Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 52, 53. Historia Olavi Tryggvilifilii, tom. i. cap. 99—102.

vessels lay, commanding his son to meet him off a more southern portion of the coast; the rest he sent to their own homes, keeping one serf only, Thermod Kark, who had been his companion from infancy. Feeling that his present retreat was not secure, he plunged further into the solitudes. On reaching the banks of a lake, which was frozen over, he dismounted, made a hole in the ice, thrust his horse into the aperture, and left his mantle beside it, so as to make his pursuers believe that he had perished in the waters. He then crossed the ice, and, with his slave, found refuge in a solitary cave in the mountains. Both being much fatigued, they soon fell asleep; but the slave started, and awoke his master to acquaint him with an awful dream which he had just experienced. He had seen a man of a dark, dreadful countenance, approach the cave, stand for a moment before it, and, after exclaiming, "One is dead!" ascend the hill. This mysterious denunciation was thought by Hako to allude to Erleng; for, after a moment's reflection, he said, "Thy dream appears to indicate the death of my son!" The interpretation, say the sagas, was a true one. Olaf had just arrived off the coast; Erleng, with three vessels only, could not make head against the superior fleet which he rightly judged to be that of an enemy; and, to escape captivity, he and a few of his companions, after approaching the shore as near as they could, quietly descended into the water, and began to swim. In this state they were overtaken by the vessel in which Olaf was. According to Snorro, it was Olaf himself who, with an oar, broke the head of the young jarl as he was buffeting the waters; according to Gunlang, it was one of his mariners. Both agree that Erleng perished within a few yards of the coast; that many of his companions perished with him; that the vessels became the prize of Olaf, who learned, for the first time, the flight of Hako, and the insurrection of the rustics. *

After this dream, proceeds the Saga, the slave had 995.

* The same authorities.

another, which frightened him so much that he made a distressing noise, like one afflicted with the nightmare. Being awoke by his master, he said that he had seen the same dark man approach the cave, stop at the entrance as before, and say, "Tell thy master that all the passages to the sea-coast, and the coast itself, are blocked up!" The jarl thought his days were numbered; but he said nothing. He would, however, no longer remain in the cave; and both proceeded towards the villa inhabited by Thora. When at a distance from it, he despatched Kark with a request that she would secretly meet him in the forest. She obeyed the summons, and showed, by her affectionate behaviour, that whatever are the crimes of men, women can be faithful to the last. Hako asked her if she could furnish him with some hiding place for a few nights. "That will be difficult," replied Thora; "my house will soon be searched; not a corner of it will escape scrutiny, for all people know I shall save thee if I can. Yet there is one place where nobody would expect to find a prince like thee—it is under the pig-sty." They went to the place; the slave enlarged the cave; provisions, lights, and other necessaries were brought; and Hako, accompanied by Kark, descended into the cavern. The earth which had been recently dug up was removed; wooden rafters were laid over the hole; over them straw and dung were spread, and the swine were turned in to tread down the covering, so as to confound the recent marks. In addition, the entrance to the sty was blocked up by a large stone. Having taken these precautions, Thora returned to the house, none of her domestics being aware that she had seen the jarl. The prisoners were, therefore, left to themselves; but how they were to breathe in such a place, we are not informed.—The enemies of Hako, with Olaf at their head, soon arrived. They had found the mantle on the ice of the lake, and had been induced to return, until suspicion of the stratagem arose, and induced them to continue the pursuit. On reaching the house of Thora

they broke open the doors, examined every part within and without, and desisted only when search was manifestly vain. If any faith is to be placed in either of the authorities before us, Olaf, on issuing from the house, sat on the very stone which blocked up the entrance to the sty, and stimulated his followers to search in other districts, by offering splendid rewards to any one that should take or kill the jarl. His loud voice penetrated to the cave where Hako and his slave sat; and, as the former looked at the latter, he saw his countenance change. "What means that look?" demanded the master; "dost thou wish to betray me?" — "No," replied the other, "but I tremble at that voice; it is the one I heard in my dream." — "Both of us," rejoined Hako, who was very superstitious, and had often consulted the oracles of the country, "were born on the same day, and the same day will close the life of both!" Towards nightfall Olaf departed, and the master and slave were left to their own reflections, or what was still worse, to their conversation. Hako durst not sleep, lest his slave should assassinate him; nor Kark, lest the same advantage should be taken by his master. At length, however, the slave closed his eyes, and dreamed that he and his master were in the same ship, of which he was the helmsman. This required no interpretation; as Hako observed, they were, indeed, in the same vessel, and the fate of both was in the hands of the slave. Again the latter dreamed: he was now at the court of Olaf, who fastened a golden chain around his neck. "That chain," observed Hako, "will be a bloody one to thee, if ever thou comest into the presence of Olaf; it portends thy doom: yet be faithful to me, and all will be well!" At length nature was too much for both, and they slept; but, towards the break of day, the slave was awoke by the horrid noise made by his master, who seemed as if in a cruel nightmare, as if struggling with some nightly demon, or with his own evil genius. Kark arose, drew a knife from his belt, and cut the throat of Hako. The head he then separated from the

body, and hastened with it to Olaf, who was now proclaimed king. "What led thee to this deed?" was the demand of the prince. "Chiefly," replied the slave, "the great reward which I heard thee offer, and partly the confusion of my senses at the condition of Hako."—"Thou shalt have the reward," rejoined the king; "but thou shalt also die. If Hako was a bad man, he was still thy master, and a benefactor to thee; and thy fate must be a warning to thy fellows, not to lift their hands against those whom they ought to defend." The slave was then beheaded; and the prophecy, that he and Hako should die within a day of each other, was literally fulfilled. *

Thus perished the son of Sigurd, — a man of great talents, great enterprise, and, until the last few years of his life, of great public utility. Previous to that period, his enemies could not deny him noble birth, great valour, consummate prudence in the art of government, and success in war. He was, besides, liberal to his dependents, and magnificent to his friends. His chief defects were dissimulation, treachery, falsehood; a superstitious regard for the pagan religion, and a hatred of Christianity. Formerly, he had been called Hako the Good; he was henceforth to be called Hako the Bad. He died in his fifty-eighth year, thirty-three of which he had exercised the sovereign power under the title of jarl. †

996. The death of Hako enabled *Olaf Trygveson* to take possession of the whole kingdom, as fully as had ever been done by fair-haired Harald. The people, indeed, would hear of no other king. One of his first objects was to introduce Christianity; and he commenced with Vikia, the province where his mother (the wife of Lodin) and all his family connections lived, and where he knew he should find the least resistance to his efforts. To his friends he expressed his resolution, either to

* Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 53—56. Historia Olavi Tryggvii-filii, tom. i. cap. 103, 104.

† The same authorities.

convert the whole kingdom, or to perish in the attempt. Having first prevailed on his numerous family connections to embrace Christianity, and to promise a cordial co-operation in his designs, he called an assembly of the province, and, like most royal missionaries, intimated his command, rather than his request, that all should receive the baptismal rite. The chiefs, whom he had previously secured, immediately signified their assent, and their example constrained the multitude. Here, as everywhere else, if any refused to forsake their old faith, he would not condescend to argue with them; some he exiled, some he mutilated, others he put to death. This was a sure method of producing outward obedience to the new religion; and, in one year, the whole of Vikia was — not christianised, but baptized. Accompanied by a strong force, the royal missionary next transferred his labours to Agder and Hardaland. Here, the same alternative was proposed, — conversion or death; and the smaller evil was naturally chosen. Rogaland was the next province to benefit by his apostolic efforts, and they had the usual success. It appears, however, that the inhabitants were less inclined to the novelty than their countrymen of Vikia; and three of the leading chiefs were besought to answer the monarch in full assembly. But who would venture to resist the king, especially when he denounced the severest vengeance on all who should refuse to obey him? One of the speakers was suddenly seized by a cough; another began to stammer; the third had conveniently a sore throat; so that no answer being returned to the most gracious message from the throne, silence was taken for consent, and all present were within a few days hurried to the baptismal font. In one province the assembled chiefs, who were all kinsmen, promised to embrace the new religion on this condition, — that one of their number should receive the hand of Astrida, sister of the monarch. At first the princess, who had forgotten the humble fortunes which had lately been the lot of all her family, refused the match, as beneath her dignity; she

wanted a prince. Olaf adorned her own hawk in magnificent plumes, and sent it to her, with an intimation that it was no less easy for him to ennoble the humblest peasant in Norway. The ambitious lady then consented; the province became Christian; and Erling, the brother-in-law of Olaf, became a powerful jarl. Proceeding northwards, the royal apostle assembled the inhabitants of the Fiords and of Raumdal. On this occasion, a whole army was with him; doubtless because he apprehended more opposition than he had yet encountered. But his mode of argument was too convincing to be resisted;—"Receive baptism, or fight me!" and the easier alternative was selected. From this meeting he repaired to Laden, where there was a magnificent temple of the gods: the idols he despoiled, threw them to the ground, and consumed the building by fire. *

997 to 999. But if this coercive mode of proselyting was, in many places, immediately effectual, it was not so in all. So enraged were the inhabitants of Raumdal at the destruction of the temple at Laden, that they sent forth the arrow, and an armed multitude rose at the summons. But Olaf proceeded to the south, where they could not follow him, and there he passed the winter. This opposition only rendered him the more ferocious against the pagans and all their superstitions. In the next assembly over which he presided, he denounced the magicians, and caused a decree of banishment to be pronounced against them: if they did not voluntarily leave the country, all were to be arrested, brought before him, and put to death. Eyvind Kella, a descendant of Harald Harfager, was at the head of a college of magicians. These the king invited to an entertainment, and set fire to the house in which they were assembled. Eyvind, however, was not there; but he was afterwards taken, with a considerable number of other proficients in the art, and were thrown from a high rock into the sea.—Olaf, like all the men of his time, was

* Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 57—65. Historia Olavi Tryggvilfilii, tom. i. cap 106. et seq.

a believer in these pretended arts; and he was sure that, unless they were repressed, religion must suffer. His people were not less superstitious than he; and they doubted not that he had personally to contend with Odin himself. One evening, as he was holding a festival in the retired manor of Augvald, an old man, with a high cap like one of the Persian magi, and only one eye, was admitted to the table. So eloquent was his discourse, so varied his knowledge, that Olaf was delighted with his guest. Many were the abstruse questions which he put to him; equally wise and ready were the answers. Thus the night wore away. At length Olaf asked the stranger who was that Augvald to whom the house in which they were had once belonged, but who had long been dead. Augvald, replied the guest, had a cow, to which he paid divine honours, which always accompanied him, and supplied him with milk. At length he fell in battle, and in the neighbourhood of this house was buried, in one tomb, while the cow was buried in another. — Still the night wore away, and the stranger showed no desire to go: at length the king pulled off his clothes, and laid down on the bed, the mysterious guest being seated before him. But the bishop entered, to inform the king that it was time to sleep; and at the sight of him the guest departed. The rest of the monarch, however, was short; he could not sleep; and to pass away the time he sent for the stranger, who was nowhere to be found. The morning following, he inquired of his cooks and butler whether they had seen him. They replied that a man answering the description had appeared amongst them while they were preparing the feast; had asserted that the meat they were cooking was of the worst kind, and unfit for the royal table; and had presented them with two noble barons of beef, which he had assisted them to prepare. In great consternation Olaf ordered what remained to be thrown away; the stranger, he was sure, was no other than Odin, who had some deep purpose in view; but never would he be the victim or the instrument of his

fiendish designs. The gravity with which such adventures are related by Snorro is the best illustration of the opinions and intellect of the times.*

998. But Olaf had seen more sturdy antagonists than wine-bibbing deities. Repairing to the north, he found that his attempts to convert the people were not always to be successful. To the states of Dronthеim, which he had convoked at Froste, they repaired, all armed, and evidently intent on some important measure. After the assembly had been legally opened by Olaf, he commanded this people to embrace the Christian religion. A great clamour arose; and the people did what they had never yet dared — assert their superiority over him, command him to be silent, and threaten that, if he refused to obey, they would drive him from the kingdom. They had overpowered Hako, the godson of Athelstane, and they did not think Olaf in any respect superior to that monarch. The tone of Olaf was soon altered; he saw that the formidable body, who had been raised by the fatal arrow, could not be resisted on this occasion; and he expressed his wish to live on the best terms with all his people. In reply to their next demand, that he should join in the sacrifices, he promised to be present on the next great solemn festival, and then choose which religion he would follow. By this promise, and by his unusually placid manner, the wrath of the people was disarmed; and it was agreed that they should meet him at Laden, in the province of Moria. In the interval he prepared for the struggle. With a stronger force than he had yet brought to such assemblies, he proceeded to Laden. Before the business of the meeting was opened, he gave to the assembled people a magnificent entertainment, and all drank deeply, so as to become intoxicated, — the usual result of all northern feasts. The next morning, after the legal opening of the Thing, he arose, and thus addressed them: — "Countrymen! you well know what passed in the last assembly at Froste, and that we are here met

* Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 66—71.

to restore the pagan sacrifices which you so much desire. You also know with what contumely I have treated the gods, — how often I have thrown them to the earth, and burned their temples, and defied them to their faces. Now, according to your own creed, such deeds can be only forgiven by extraordinary oblations. If I must sacrifice, I will, as the chief pontiff, select such victims as I may approve. They shall be *human* victims, — yea, and the noblest amongst you!" With much solemnity, and in a most emphatic manner, he then mentioned the names of twelve chiefs, — the noblest in Norway, who were all present, — that were to be immediately immolated; and he called on his followers to lead them into the temple. The result may be anticipated: the terrified chiefs who were thus doomed, and all who feared the same fate, left the matter of religion to the king — they would no longer oppose him: the multitude were constrained by their example; and both the high and the low, young and old, were led to the baptismal font.*

Encouraged by the success of this policy, Olaf now 998.
hastened into Drontheim, where the provincial states were assembled. Here, however, he experienced the same opposition. The people insisted, not only that he should leave them to the undisturbed exercise of their worship, but that he should, without delay, join in their sacrifices. Accordingly he entered the temple, accompanied by some of his own party, and of theirs. The chief idol, Thor, was seated in much barbaric grandeur, being covered with gold and precious stones. Olaf gazed for a moment; then, seizing a ponderous mallet, he struck the idol with such force that it reeled from the pedestal, and fell heavily on the floor of the temple. This was the signal for the rest of his followers, who, with the rapidity of lightning, hurled the remaining gods from their seats, with shouts of derision. At the same time, the leader of the opposition, a noble pontiff, was killed

* Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 72–74. Historia Olavi, tom ii. cap. 165.

outside the temple. Olaf then addressed the multitude, and left them the choice whether they would be baptized, or fight him. They were willing enough to choose the latter alternative; but having no chief who could lead them on, they yielded, and were immediately regenerated in the sacred font. For their good behaviour in future, they were compelled to give hostages. To conciliate the family of the deceased pontiff, Olaf, who was now a widower, married Gudruna, the daughter; but he had soon to separate from her, since, on the first night of their nuptials, she attempted his destruction.—Olaf was not yet satisfied; the districts north of Drontheim, especially Halogia, were yet pagan; and he longed to convert, that is to baptize, the natives. When any of them, by accident, or stress of weather, touched in the ports of Norway, he hurried them away to the miraculous font; or, if they refused to go, he punished them for their obstinacy. Eyvind, a native of Halogia, furnishes an illustration of the manner in which the royal missionary attempted the conversion of individuals. Being brought into the presence of Olaf, he was exhorted to embrace Christianity; but he refused. Mild, persuasive language, in which the bishop (and there was always one in the royal precincts) joined, was at first adopted; but without success. Olaf then offered him large domains, to be held by the feudal tenure; still no assent. "Then," added the enraged apostle, "thou shalt die!" A chafing dish of burning coals was brought, and laid on the belly of the pagan, whom death soon released from suffering. To avert the odium which must attach to the deed, a report was spread that, before his death, Eyvind had acknowledged that he was an evil spirit in the human form.*

When the favourable season arrived, Olaf, with a
999. large band of armed men, proceeded into Halogia to convert the people. In the south of that province they

* Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 72—74. Historia Olafi, tom. ii. cap. 165.

were unprepared for resistance, and the good work was unusually prosperous. But two chiefs in the north,— Raude and Thorer,— both zealously attached to paganism, both rich and powerful, equipped ships to oppose him. They were defeated; and Raude, who was a great magician, raised a wind by which he escaped. Not so Thorer, who was driven to the shore: though, from his swiftness, he was called *the Stag*, he could not outstrip the Irish dog, Vikia, which Olaf despatched after him.* Turning round, he wounded the animal; but a spear from Olaf entered his side. The victor now hastened after Raude, who had found a refuge in the island of Godey; but the magician raised such a tempest that there was no approaching the island. At the end of a week he proceeded farther to the north; and, after a successful course of preaching, again returned to the coast opposite to Godey. Still the elements raged. "What shall we do?" demanded the king, of Sigurd the bishop; "Defy the tempest," replied the other, "and the demon who has raised it!" Saying this, Sigurd arrayed himself pontifically, took his seat at the helm, held out his censor smoking with incense, raised a huge cross, recited the gospel with many prayers, and sprinkled the ship with holy water. The effect was miraculous: where the vessel was there was a calm; on each side of it, the billows rose furiously. During the passage, the same wondrous phenomenon was seen: before them the sea was smooth as glass; to the right and left the tempest remained unabated. On reaching the bay, a huge dragon, that is, a ship, stood on the sands. Olaf heeded it not; but, hastening to the house of Raude, he bound the magician with fetters, killed some of the domestics, and captured others; and the same fate was inflicted on the military companions of the chief. Raude was then invited to receive baptism; if he did so, he should not be despoiled of his substance. Not only was the invitation spurned, but heavy curses were uttered on the king and his faith. This was not to be endured; and the royal

* See before, page 214.

missionary determined that this wretch should leave the world by a novel death. Raude was fettered and gagged; a serpent was brought to his mouth, and attempts made to force the animal down his throat; but it recoiled in affright. A horn was then passed between the magician's teeth; the adder entered at one end, passed through the mouth into the stomach of Raude, and speedily ate for itself a way out again. Great was the spoil which awaited the victor: but his greatest pleasure was to execute such of the magician's dependents as refused baptism. After these notable exploits, he returned into Drontheim. *

998. Though Olaf was as much disposed to enforce the conversion of individuals as of large bodies of men, he was not equal to both tasks; and, in the former case, he sometimes devolved on others the important duty of a missionary. A story preserved by Gunlaug, the Icelandic monk, will illustrate the manner in which he exacted revenge when his efforts had been unsuccessful. Halfrod, the royal poet, was accused to Olaf of being still idolatrous in heart, and of worshipping a little image of Thor, which he carried in a bag. The accuser was Kalf, another domestic of the palace. The poet being summoned into the royal presence, indignantly denied the charge; and, in proof of his innocence, turned the bag in question inside out. "After this charge," said the king, "you cannot both remain in the same house; let Kalf return to his farm." Turning to the poet, whose sincerity he probably wished to test, he said, "Halfrod, thou must be my emissary to the uplands. There resides a man called Thorleif the Wise, who will not be converted. Formerly, I sent many persons to reason with him, but they had no influence over him. Now, I send thee, with an order either to kill or blind him: take with thee as many men as thou pleasest."—"This commission," replied the poet, "scarcely becomes a freeman; yet I will go wherever thou commandest. As my companion, I will take thy

* Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 84—87. Historia Olavi, tom. ii.

uncle Jostein, with twenty-two horsemen." Away they rode; and, on reaching the wood near to the dwelling of Thorleif, they dismounted. Halfrod, who knew that the number of his followers would be insufficient if force were required, said to them, "I will go alone to Thorleif's house; wait for me here three days; and if, at the expiration of that time, you see me not, return to your homes." He would not permit even Jostein to accompany him. His first care was to disguise himself so completely that no eye could recognise him. In a mendicant garb, his face discoloured with the appearance of squalid wretchedness, he took his staff, and, when near to the house, began to move slowly and wearily, as if consumed alike by age and misery. Thorleif was sitting on a bench, in front of his house; the poet dragged himself along, and saluted him. "Who art thou?" was the demand of Thorleif. Halfrod told a piteous tale of his wanderings, his misery, his ill luck, his dangers: he had been so unfortunate as to be seized by the domestics of king Olaf, and hurried into the royal presence. As usual, conversion or death had been set before him; but he had escaped, and had, ever since, been the sport of the elements. He thought, however, that if he had continued rest, and good living, he should be restored to a portion of his former vigour. "Fame says that thou art liberal, and I hope thou wilt be so towards me." — "Of the truth of thy story," replied Thorleif, "I cannot judge; but if thou art an old man, thou must have seen much and learned much: but thy tongue runs somewhat smoothly for one so decrepit." If the poet was not old, he had travelled enough to answer the questions of Thorleif. "There is a man," proceeded the latter, "at the court of Olaf, by name Halfrod, of whom I have heard much." Probably Thorleif began to suspect that the poet was before him; he knew that he should not long remain in peace; that his refusal to embrace the new religion must bring on his head the vengeance of Olaf; for, he added, "No doubt the emissaries of Olaf will soon be here." In

reply to his question concerning Halfrod, the pirate had a ready answer. He then, as if wholly exhausted, leaned on the bench, and the moment he saw Thorleif off his guard, he seized him with rapidity, and with a giant's strength; but Thorleif struggled, and they both tumbled on the ground, the poet uppermost. In another moment one of Thorleif's eyes was out of its socket. "What I have long foreseen," said the pagan, "has now happened. I doubt not that the king has commanded thee wholly to blind or to kill me; I pray thee, however, to leave me the use of the other eye, and I will give thee rich presents."—"I cannot accept thy gifts," replied the poet, who had more fits of generosity than less tuneful minds, "but I will leave thee that eye, and take the responsibility upon myself." He then arose, and returned to his men in the wood; nor did Thorleif display his misfortune until they were far enough from the neighbourhood to defy pursuit. But if Halfrod was sometimes generous, he was also vindictive. As they returned by the farm of Kalf, he said to Josteim, "Let us kill this man!" The other refused; but the poet rejoined, "It is not just that we should blind a good man, yet leave this wretch uninjured." Saying this, he went to Kalf, who was throwing the seed into the ground, seized him, and put out one eye. On reaching the palace, Olaf inquired what he had done. "I have made Thorleif blind."—"That is well," rejoined the king; "show me the eyes!" In the hurry of the moment, the poet produced the one of which he had deprived Kalf. "This is not Thorleif's eye," observed the king; "thou hast done more than I commanded thee." The other was produced. "This *is* Thorleif's eye," said the king; "now tell me all that thou hast done." Halfrod did so, and was pardoned.*

99. The success which through life had attended this extraordinary man did not continue to the close. On his separation from Gudruna, he sought the hand of Sigrida, surnamed the Imperious, — the Swedish prin-

* Historia Olavi, cap. 172.

cess who had destroyed Harald Grenske. She accepted him; many gifts passed between them; and an interview was appointed on the limits of the two kingdoms. Among the gifts was a huge ring of gold, which Olaf had taken from the temple of Laden. Two goldsmiths declaring to her that the metal was not pure, she caused the ring to be opened, and perceived that the interior was of brass. Indignant at the discovery, she declared that it was only one in many cases where she had been deceived by the king. Yet, at the appointed time, she met him, and the marriage was arranged. But Olaf insisted that she should renounce paganism, and receive the baptismal rite; but she refused to do either; and observed, with some wisdom, that as she should not interfere with his worship, she had a right to expect that he would not constrain her conscience. But the royal preacher was not fond of opposition; he called the queen by the most opprobrious epithet,—worse than an old heathen hag, — threw his glove in her face, and both separated for ever. Sigrida was not of a temper to bear this insult, and her future life was given to revenge. When, on the death of Gunhilda, daughter of Borislaf, a duke of Pomerania, Sweyn of Denmark, became a widower, she accepted the hand of that monarch, with the view of hastening her revenge. At the same time, Borislas sought the hand of Thyra, sister of Sweyn, a young and beautiful princess, who, however reluctant, was forced by her brother to marry him. By this union she became entitled to the domains which her sister-in-law, Gunhilda, had enjoyed in Pomerania. But she detested the old pagan and his court. During the first week of her nuptials she abstained from food; on the eighth evening, accompanied by her foster-father, she hastened to a ship which was lying off the coast, embarked, and was landed in Denmark. Knowing, however, that, if her brother saw her, she should be sent back to the court of Borislaf, she concealed herself until a vessel was found to convey her to Norway. By Olaf she was well received; and, in a few days, she became

his bride. By what casuistry he, who preached Christian morals to his subjects, reconciled to his conscience this double adultery, — he, the husband of Gudruna, marrying the wife of Borislaf, or how she, who also professed Christianity, consented to the match, — we need not inquire. History, which deals with facts rather than motives, has now to relate, that this scornful rejection of one princess, and this illegal marriage to another, led to the destruction of Olaf. *

999 to 1000. No sooner was Thyra the wife of Olaf, than she began to complain of her poverty. She had only what her husband was disposed to allow her, which, though equal to her wants, did not suit her dignity as queen of Norway. Yet, in Pomerania, she had ample possessions, which, if restored to her, would enrich her, and make her no longer burdensome to him: Borislaf, she was sure, would, if asked by Olaf, quietly surrender the domains. By degrees, she prevailed on him to equip a fleet for the coast of Pomerania. In the summer of the year 1000, he departed on this expedition. On the confines of Sweden, he married his sister, Ingeborg, to Rognevald, a prince of that nation; and then, proceeding on his voyage, soon reached the coast of Pomerania. In the mean time, the arts of Sigrida prevailed, and Sweyn resolved to join the enemies of Olaf. Actuated by ambition, no less than by the hope of revenge, he wished to obtain some portion of a kingdom which, before the time of Halfdan the Black, had frequently been subdued by his ancestors; and to punish Olaf for presuming to marry his sister without his consent. Nor had Sigrida much difficulty in prevailing on her near kinsman, Olaf of Sweden, to join her husband in the war. Eric, the exiled son of Hako the jarl, whom Olaf had succeeded, and who had always found a welcome home in Denmark and Sweden, acceded to the confederation. But a more formidable opponent still was Sigvald, a pirate chief of Jomsberg, whose close connection

* Saga af Olaf Tryggva-Syni, cap. 66. 98—100. Historia Olavi, tom. ii. cap. 195.

with the Danish court has been related.* Sigvald was the more dangerous from his treachery. So far from openly declaring war against the Norwegian, he met that monarch, for whom he professed the highest esteem, and whom it was his object to detain on the coast of Pomerania, until the united forces of Denmark and Sweden arrived to crush him. At length, when he knew the hostile fleets were in the Danish islands, he persuaded Olaf to return, the office of pilot being intrusted to him. With his own ships — which were eleven in number — in the van, he led the Norwegian fleet into the midst of the enemy, who lay concealed near the present Stralsund. Not all the ships, however, were there; some had taken to the open sea; so that Olaf, with only a portion of his armament, was suddenly assailed by overwhelming numbers of the enemy. With his usual gallantry he defended himself, and great was the carnage which he made among the hostile ranks. But the contest was too unequal; the valiant champions of Norway fell round their master; the Long Serpent, as the ship of Olaf was called, was boarded by the son of Hako; a desperate struggle on the deck followed; and when few of the Norwegians remained alive, Olaf, with three or four of them, plunged into the sea, and was seen no more. Such, at least, is the relation of Snorro, which is supported by reason; but the two Icelandic biographers of this king — Gunlaug and Oddur — insist that he saved himself by swimming, repaired to the coast of Vinland, in Pomerania, was cured of his numerous wounds by the sister of his first wife, went on a pilgrimage to Rome, and, after many years, died in the Holy Land. †

From the space which we have devoted to the exploits of Olaf, his character may be easily inferred. The sagas add, that he exceeded all men in two bodily qualities, which are very rarely combined, — strength and

* See before, page 115.

† Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni, cap. 100. ad finem. Historia Olavi, tom. iii. cap. 256, &c.

agility. On one occasion he is said to have climbed a steep precipice to extricate one of his courtiers, who had ascended to a great height, and could not move upwards or downwards: taking him under one arm, the king descended with him safely to the plain below. With both hands he was equally expert. One of his amusements was to toss three sharp swords into the air, and catch each by the handle as it descended, and, without intermission, again to throw them, singly, far above his head. This game is supposed to be of Indian origin; and, probably, Olaf is the only king that ever played it. He was fond of poetry, especially that which commemorated the deeds of heroes; he was liberal to all his dependents, accessible to all the world, jovial in temper. His attention to commerce was one of his most useful qualities; and whatever arts he had seen practised in other countries he introduced into his own. He founded, at the mouth of the river Nid, a city which was long called Nidross, but the name was afterwards superseded by that of Drontheim, from the province that contained it. In ship-building, navigation, and the arts dependent on them, he had no equal. But, to the close of life, he was a barbarian: he indulged in habitual drunkenness; and he shed blood so arbitrarily as to prove that at no time, except when an assembly was actually occupied in the public business, was he restrained by law. He was, in the truest sense of the word, a despot. Though a milder sovereign could not have so completely triumphed over heathenism, — and he was, therefore, of incalculable benefit to his country, in removing an insuperable barrier to civilisation and morals, — this fact does not in the least atone for his ferocity. In many points, he bears great resemblance to Peter the Great of Russia; though, in all good and great qualities, he was inferior to that monarch. In his reign many important voyages were undertaken; and to these we shall advert in the chapter on the maritime expeditions of the Northmen.

On the death of Olaf, the two allied kings hastened

to divide Norway, or, at least, the greater portion of it, between them. Their lieutenants were the two sons of Hako the jarl, who had assisted them so effectually in the defeat of Olaf. The administration of these princes is mentioned with respect by Norwegian and Icelandic writers. Though some of the local jarls were oppressive, *they* were no tyrants; and, though Christians by profession, they did not persecute, but left the progress of their faith to time and reason. Twelve years they exercised the government, when Eric received a summons from his liege superior, Sweyn, king of Denmark, to aid that monarch in the final conquest of England.* Leaving his son Hako, then about seventeen years of age, with the administration of the government, and confiding the youth to the mature counsels of Einar the Archer, he sailed, with all the force he had been able to collect, for the coast of England, never to return. But a rival was now to appear on the scene, before whom his own power and his brother Sweyn's was to dissolve into air.† 1000 to 1012.

In a former page‡, we have related the tragical fate of Harald Grenske, who did not live to see the birth of his son, Olaf the Saint. Fearing the vengeance of Hako the jarl, then ruler of Norway, Asta, the widow of Harald, no sooner heard of his death than she repaired to her father's house in the uplands, where she brought forth her son. Under her father's roof the child felt not the loss of a parent. Though she married a second time, his education was not neglected. Sigurd Syr, the second husband, was an easy, good-natured man, whose time was wholly occupied by his immense estates, and who left the instruction of his step-son to one better qualified for the task, — Rane, one of the favourite chiefs of the deceased Harald. As Olaf was destined to be a saint, miracles enough are recorded of his infancy, and of the period

* See before, page 122.

† Saga af Olafi hinns Helga, cap. 1 &c. Historia Regis Olavi Sancti tom. i.

‡ See before, page 204.

which preceded it. These, as we are arrived at the historic period, we shall omit. Great praise is bestowed on the precocious talents of young Olaf. To us they appear indicative of the spoiled child. One day, says Snorro, Sigurd, being desirous to ride into the country, commanded him to saddle one of his horses,—a menial office, but one that the noblest youths were accustomed to discharge. He brought a goat instead of a horse or mule, properly accoutred, and with provoking officiousness proposed to assist him in mounting. "Thus it always is!" observed Sigurd; "any command of mine becomes the subject of ridicule." In the military exercises of the age Olaf was a proficient. He could bend the bow, or dart the spear, or handle the sword, with as much dexterity and as much strength as any youth of the province; and in swimming he had few rivals. Nor was he less attentive to the manufacture and repair of armour,—a very necessary accomplishment to a warrior, and especially to a king, at a time when smiths were not numerous and were seldom at hand. Of Christianity he acquired as much knowledge as could be expected, when the priests, themselves, were ignorant of its leading doctrines, and when its purest rites were alloyed by superstition and heathenism. His godfather was no other than Olaf Trygveson, after whom he was named.*

1007 to 1014. When Olaf had reached his twelfth year, which was the seventh after the death of his godfather, he was sent on his first piratical expedition, under the care of Rane, his preceptor. On this occasion he assumed the title of *king*, which was given to all sea captains who were sprung from a royal family. The coast of Denmark and Sweden were the first to experience his ravages; yet why in time of peace—when in addition Norway was dependent on both kingdoms—this should be permitted, is not explained. We do not read that either Eric or his brother Sweyn attempted to throw off

* Saga af Olafi Konungs hinns Helga, cap. 1—4. Historia Regis Olavi Sancti, tom. i. cap. 18—25. p. 31—36.

the yoke. But at this lawless period, when pirates of all nations, from Ireland to Russia, swarmed on every coast, it would have been impossible to discern the author of the depredations, and, if they had been known, to punish them. Besides, the subjects of one power were as guilty as those of another; and where both kings were equally injured and equally aggressive, neither had a right to complain. To Sweden, in particular, Olaf bore a strong hatred. In that country his father had been murdered, and revenge was his first duty. On the southern coast he fought his first battle, —not against the Swedes, but against other pirates. These he subdued; and, emboldened by his success, he succeeded to the eastern shores, disembarked in the vicinity of lake Meler, and recommenced his depredations. To chastise his presumption, the Swedish king put an armament in motion; but he escaped, and returned home in triumph. When spring arrived, he renewed his piracy on the coast of Sweden, and extended it to that of Finland. In the latter country he experienced, say his biographers, what so many had experienced before him, — the influence of magic. Missiles from unseen hands were showered upon his little band: with his spoil he retreated to the shore, where, to prevent his embarkation, a furious tempest awaited him; but he sailed, and his perseverence triumphed. — As he grew in years, he naturally grew in enterprise. The following season witnessed his depredations in Jutland; the next, in Friesland; the next, in England. But he did not come, we are told, to fight against the Saxons; the Danes were the objects of his hostility; and, as the ally of Ethelred, he assailed them with vigour. It appears, however, that he was sometimes the ally of prince Canute, the son of Sweyn. Probably he was ready to transfer his services from one prince to another, as the tide of victory turned, or as he obtained a greater reward from one than from another. He appears to have been one of the ferocious monsters who, in 1012,

destroyed Canterbury, and its good archbishop St. E phege.* "He was a leader of the army," say Snorro, which consumed that city." From this explo few could have predicted his future saintship; bu saints then, as more recently, were easily made. I these troubled times, his object was to collect all th plunder he could — whether from pagans or Christian little concerned him. In France as in Finland, i Kent as in Jutland, in Ireland as in Pomerania, hi sword was equally active and equally pitiless. †

1014. After the death of jarl Eric, and Sweyn king o Denmark, Olaf ventured to Norway. As a prince, h could not be without ambition; as a piratical chief, h had based his trust in his own valour: and the presen conjuncture he justly considered as a favourable one fo his views. Eric was no more; Sweyn, his brother and Hako, his son, were not descendants of the reverec Harald Harfager; Erling, a brother-in-law of Sweyn, was a tyrant; and the Norwegians were dissatisfiec with a foreign yoke. Yet in this voyage, in which twc vessels only accompanied him, his motive must hav been, not conquest, but the desire of ascertaining the state of the popular mind. He landed on an island on the western coast, where, hearing that Hako was in his neighbourhood, with one vessel only, he resolved on the bold enterprise of making that chief captive. It was easily carried into effect, and Hako was brought into the presence of Olaf, who admired the unusual comeliness of his person. "All that I have heard of you bodily qualities," said Olaf, "is, I perceive, true; bu your family is again doomed to be the sport of fortune." "We have always been so," was the reply; "nor we nor our enemies have been her favourites; and so strange are the vicissitudes of this life, that, for anything I know, we may again be in the ascendant." If I pardon thee," added the king, "wilt thou engage never to bear arms

* See before, page 121.

† Saga af Olafi hiuns Helga, cap. 4—26. Historia Regis Olavi Sancti, tom. i. cap. 25—42.

against me,—never to revisit Norway?" The jarl promised, and was suffered to depart, with such of his companions as chose to accompany him. By Canute of Denmark, then in England, he was well received, and intrusted with a share of the administration. Olaf, therefore, was rid of one rival; but Sweyn and Erling still remained. His next object was to visit his native region, where his kindred and friends were ready to receive him. As he passed along many individuals swore fidelity to him; but the majority waited the issue of events. The manner in which his mother received him may illustrate the domestic economy of the times. Hearing of his approach, she commanded her servants, male and female, to prepare everything as for a distinguished guest. Four women prepared the hall of entertainment with benches, chairs, and cushions; two strewed the floor with rushes; two laid out a large side-table with drinking cups and horns, and a two-handled jug filled with mead; two laid out the table; two brought in the dishes that would be required; two drew the beer; two were sent to fetch such things as were not in the house; and the rest of the servants, of both sexes, were occupied in the back court-yard. To Sigurd, who was occupied in farming, such garments were sent as became a king, and with them a horse magnificently caparisoned. Four domestics went to invite guests for the entertainment, such as should do the more honour to Olaf. The rest of the servants,—those, we suppose, whose duty it was to wait on the guests, were commanded to put on their gayest apparel, and "such as had none were to be supplied by those who had." The manners of the age and the character of the man are equally visible in the reply of Sigurd to the messengers of his wife, when urged to appear with becoming splendour. "Asta has before now received her friends with much pomp, but never has she showed much respect to mine. On all occasions she exhibits as much ambition as if the greatest advantage were to be derived from her display; and I suppose we shall

be required to pay the youth the same honours at his departure as at his arrival." He then alluded to the charge of the entertainment, — to the umbrage which the kings of Denmark and Sweden might take at it, — and concluded by hoping that all would end better than he feared. But Sigurd was a prudent man, and he exhibited no such spirit in the presence of his wife. Knowing that he must obey, he sat down while one servant pulled off his agricultural vestments; another helped him to draw on a costly pair of boots; a third fastened the spurs; another held his mantle and cloak: the addition of a helmet and sword transformed the honest farmer into a noble baron. But he must not alone approach the son of his wife. From his peasantry, hitherto busy in the labours of the harvest, he selected thirty as a kind of a body guard, and with them he rode in silent dignity towards his villa.*

1014. When Sigurd drew near his house, he perceived the ensign of Olaf advancing in the opposite direction. The prince, followed by a hundred companions, all in magnificent costume, he kindly saluted, and invited to share his hospitality. The mother received the royal guest with a kiss; and freely offered him and his followers all the worldly substance that she had, — her house, and lands, and servants. Thanking both parents, Olaf, with his chiefs, was led into the hall. The feast was prepared, and Sigurd, who was invested with the regal title, ascended the chief seat, which was at the head of the table, and was much higher than the rest. But Olaf did not visit his parents for idle parade; and in a day or two after his arrival, he invited Sigurd, his mother, Asta, and Rane, his preceptor, to counsel him as to his future proceedings. In a discourse of some length, he expatiated on his past dangers, on the rights of his family, on his own claims to both the inheritance of his father and of Olaf Trygveson; and expressed his resolution to obtain empire, or to die. Sigurd, like

* Saga af Olafi hinns Helga, cap. 26—32. Historia Regis Olavi Sancti, tom. i. p 69—78.

a prudent man, replied, that for one so young, and with so few resources, he had entered on a rash path; that to defy such men as the kings of Sweden and Denmark was not the part of wisdom; that little dependence was to be placed on popular applause; that the present attempt was above his abilities and his means. He concluded, however, by observing that, if the other chiefs of the uplands — kings as he called them — were favourably disposed to his cause, he would not be wanting in the support which his fortune might enable him to give; and he even proposed to accompany Olaf in a visit to those chiefs. Asta, whose turn it was next to advise, spoke like a true descendant of fair-haired Harald. She advised him to persevere in his undertaking; and added, that she would rather see him in possession of empire, were he to enjoy it briefly, as the son of Trygve, than that he should grow old, a powerless king, like Sigurd. When this council was over, Olaf and his father-in-law went to meet the upland kings. "There were many at this period," says Snorro, — a proof that the destruction of the supreme power by the death of Olaf Trygveson was hurrying the kingdom into all the anarchy from which it had been extricated by Harald Harfager. The sway of Eric and Sweyn, sons of Hako, had been so mild, or rather so loose, that the country was become again the prey of numerous independent chiefs.*

In the assembly of upland kings, Sigurd showed that 1014.
he was no enemy to the elevation of his step-son; on the contrary, he exalted the valour, the enterprise, the success of Olaf, in so many parts of Europe; and besought them to assist him alike by their arms and counsel. The first chief who replied was not favourable to the proposed enterprise; his motive was evident: he feared that if a monarch of vigour, such as Olaf promised to be, ascended the throne of Norway, there would soon be an end of the provincial kings. The

* Saga af Olafi hinns Helga, cap. 26—32. Historia Regis Olavi Sancti, tom. i, p. 69—78.

next voted for the insurrection. If they must have a chief ruler, better was one of their own country and of their own blood, than a Dane or a Swede. In the end, many of the assembled princes, but not the majority, offered him their aid on the condition of his respecting their existing privileges. The states of the upland province were next assembled: the claims of Olaf were laid before them; the chiefs recommended it to their support; and with one voice he was acknowledged monarch of Norway. With three hundred armed followers, he proceeded into the neighbouring districts; and he everywhere found the people willing to acknowledge him. He now hastened into Drontheim, the suffrage of which, as he well knew, would influence the rest of Norway. At his approach, the arrow was sent forth, and the rustics assembled in arms; but he had the address to draw them over to his own party. Though naturally furious and irritable, he had sufficient command over himself to control his bad passions; and every one that approached him left him with a full conviction of his exceeding good nature. As he drew near Nidaros, — the present city of Drontheim, — Sweyn, the son of Hako, prepared a vessel to leave the port. At this moment, two of Olaf's vessels were entering, and Sweyn, to avoid recognition, steered farther to the north, cut down some trees which were near the coast, placed them by the sides of his vessel in such a manner that he could not be seen, and boldly returned through the bay, on his way to the north. The men of Olaf saw the vessel, and, believing it to be a cargo of timber, made no effort to detain it. Landing at Froste, the seat of his government, which he preferred to Drontheim, he counselled with Eric about the steps which were now to be taken, — whether he should collect forces and risk the fate of a battle, or have recourse to policy. The result was, that he should, if possible, wait until the yule festival, when so many thousands would be gathered together, and made the umpires between him and Olaf. But the course of events hurried both par-

ties on; they collected troops, and with a body of two thousand proceeded towards Drontheim. About the middle of the night Olaf was awakened by the news that his outposts had discovered a strong hostile column approach. Hastily rising from bed, the king took all the provisions he could find, and, accompanied by a small body of followers, went on board the vessels which lay in the river. He had scarcely stood out to sea when the army of Sweyn entered the city and set it on fire.*

This, to Olaf, was an unexpected disaster, and it 1015.
was one that ordinary prudence might have avoided. He now was under the humiliating necessity of retiring to the uplands to acquaint his kindred that he had been driven from his capital by the son of Hako. But he was better received than he expected or deserved. Several of the chiefs supplied him with men and provisions; and Sigurd Syr, his step-father, showed as much zeal in his cause as any of his blood, and more effectually served him. When spring approached he repaired to Tunsberg, where new forces daily joined him. On his part, Sweyn, during the whole winter, was no less active in raising ships and men, and he was equally successful. The day before Palm Sunday, the two armaments were off the coast of Vikia, near to each other. One hundred vessels accompanied Olaf; those of his enemies were not inferior in number. Early on the morning of Sunday, Olaf, with the banner of the cross displayed from his own ship, led the attack. The battle was long and doubtfully contested: if Sweyn had a larger force, that of Olaf was better disciplined. At length victory declared for the king; many of the enemy submitted; the rest fled. Among the latter was Sweyn, who hastened to the court of his father-in-law, the king of Sweden, to solicit reinforcements; while Erling remained to harass the victor. From Sweden the jarl never returned. The king offered him troops; but he

* Saga af Olafi hinns Helga, cap. 36—42. Historia Olavi Regis Sancti, tom. i.

preferred a peaceful government in that country, until the course of events in Norway were more favourable to his views. After a piratical expedition to the coast of Gardarik, he fell sick and died. From this time, Olaf may be more truly called the monarch of Norway. The people of Drontheim, who had been much attached to the jarl, now transferred their allegiance to him. Erling, indeed, held out another year, and some of the smaller chiefs were tardy in the payment of tribute; but when he submitted, there remained only the two foreign powers who could trouble the king.*

1016. After these successes Olaf began the work of legal reformation. The laws which Hako the Good had introduced were often neglected; some of them were no longer applicable, and new ones were demanded by the necessities of the people. The manner in which he proceeded in this object evinces his good sense. At a certain hour he met the wisest of his people as well as the noblest,—the low as well as the high,—clergy and laity,—all in whose judgment he could place any confidence. He then caused one of Hako's laws to be recited, and asked their opinion of its justice no less than its fitness. Sometimes it was rejected; but generally some improvements were made in it by common consent. At other times he propounded new ones; but it may be doubted whether any of them were obligatory until they had received the formal sanction of the Thing. Ecclesiastical matters next occupied the royal attention. Such portions of the canon law as were applicable to the circumstances of a barbarous, half-pagan kingdom were gradually introduced. His great object was to abolish what yet remained of paganism — a religion which had been considerably observed since the death of Olaf Trygveson. He would not tolerate it; wherever his jurisdiction extended he caused the temples to be destroyed, and rude wooden churches to be built on their ruins. Nor was he regardless of the spiritual wants of the

* Saga af Olafi hinns Helga, cap. 36—42. Historia Olavi Regis Sancti, tom. i.

Orkneys, Iceland, and other dependencies of his kingdom. To them he despatched missionaries, and inculcated on all the necessity of zeal, of perseverance, of unwearied industry. His own conduct was, in this respect, a lesson to his people. He rose early, heard matins and mass before he entered on public business or broke his fast. It was his regular attendance on public worship which, more than any other cause, led to his subsequent canonisation. He was, indeed, the first of the Norwegian kings that punctually observed the ordinances of religion. Hako the Good was as well disposed; but Hako, as we have shown, was compelled to revert into idolatry. Olaf, the son of Trygve, was too fond of the mead cup, and of continuing his potations into the silence of night, to attend early prayers. The present Olaf was, therefore, the first whom the clergy could decently canonise. Not that he was without his faults. He was vindictive, hasty, intemperate, exacting the severest vengeance from those who disputed his commands, and not sparing of human blood. Yet he was affable, indulgent to his dependents, and liberal to such as he had reason to esteem.*

That the kings of Sweden and Denmark should make 1016.
no effort to recover their Norwegian possessions, was not to be expected. In about a year after Olaf's accession, two ambassadors, with a suitable retinue, arrived at Drontheim from the former kingdom. On their way, however, and immediately after passing the mountain barrier, between the two states, they had endeavoured to prevail on the rustic landholders to pay tribute, not to Olaf, but to the Swedish king. Little do the majority of any country care for the reigning sovereign; the rustics of Norway no more than any other people. They professed their willingness to pay the foreign king, provided Olaf would not require the same taxes a second time. This conduct was treason-

* Saga af Olafi hinns Helga (ad cap. 56.). Historia Regis Olavi Sancti, tom. i. (ad cap. 60.).

able. One of the ambassadors felt that it was so, and proposed that they should return into Sweden; but, constrained by the other, both proceeded to Olaf's court. Here the same man acted still more insolently: he advised the king to become the vassal of his Swedish namesake, for no inferior step could screen him from the vengeance of a monarch so much greater than he. The king so far restrained himself as to bid them depart and announce to their master his willingness to meet him on the frontiers of the two countries. They left the palace, but soon returned, demanding, with much insolence, to see the monarch, who was then at table. The porters were commanded to drive them from the door. This conduct, which could not have been borne even by a private individual, was deeply offensive to Olaf. When he heard that, instead of retiring into Sweden, one of them remained in the provinces to collect tribute, he sent a small armed band in pursuit of them; and the ambassador, with his suite, were suspended from a public gallows. To guard himself against the vengeance of his rival, Olaf now went through the whole of his kingdom, holding assemblies of the people in every province, receiving the homage of all, propounding new laws, and laying more solidly the foundations of the new church. Finding that the districts bordering on Sweden were claimed by that power, — that the limits of the two kingdoms were not observed by it,—he slew the governor of West Gothland, the lieutenant of the Swedish king, who had been long harassing the Norwegian subjects of the frontier. To prevent all future mistake as to that frontier, he caused a ditch to be dug, and a parallel mound to be raised along the disputed line; and, to protect the colonists, he remained there with a considerable force during the whole of the following winter. To avenge these insults, the Swedish king began to arm. He threatened to subdue the whole of Norway, and to drive the sea king into exile. *

* Saga af Olafi hinns Helga (ad cap. 56.). Historia Regis Olavi Sancti, tom. i. (ad cap. 60.).

The proposals for peace originated with Olaf of 101
Norway; but they were long destined to have no effect: the wrath of the Swedish Olaf was too great to be allayed by ordinary negotiations. In 1016, an ambassador departed on this mission; but so unfavourable were the accounts which he received of the Swedish monarch's disposition, that he proceeded no farther than the house of Rognevald, one of the most peaceful of the jarls, or provincial governors of the kingdom. But he had an Icelander with him, Hialt by name, who offered to undertake the embassy, and to brave the wrath of the Swede. Hialt was a poet, and his profession was esteemed at every court of the north. Accompanied by another poet, and also, like himself, a wit, he hastened to the Swedish capital. By Olaf they were well received, because he knew not the object of their journey. Their love of the cup was so tempered by discretion, that, while they were the boon companions of royalty, —in those days every poet was,—they never lost sight of the respect which it always exacts. After some days, such was his familiarity with the king that Hialt alluded to the subject,— not as one that *he* had undertaken, but as one in which the interests of Sweden were deeply involved. A peremptory command to be silent afforded little hope of success: he was told that the name of Olaf the Fat (such was the epithet of the Norwegian monarch) was not even whispered at the Swedish court. But Hialt persevered. Knowing that a matrimonial alliance with the royal family of Sweden was the highest ambition of the Norwegian Olaf, he solicited the interest of Ingigerda, daughter of the Swede. The princess readily accepted both the proffered hand of Olaf and the delicate task of turning her father's mind to the subject of peace. One day, when Olaf was in high spirits,—which, to do him justice, was frequent,—she alluded to the policy of leaving Norway to its own kings. The people were an obstinate people, much attached to their own regal line, and if the conquest were effected, it would not be enduring; while

on the opposite coast of Finland were regions which had formerly belonged to Sweden, and which might be easily subdued. The lady was rendered eloquent by the hope of a husband; but she was immediately silenced by the king. "So, Ingigerda, thou wouldst see me lose Norway that thou mightest become the bride of this Olaf the Fat? That day will never arrive; I will conquer Norway." Not daring to renew the subject, she retired to acquaint Hialt with the ill success of her interference. They could only await the course of events, in the hope that the states of the kingdom which had no private resentments to gratify would require the king to make peace with his rival. Rognevald, at the suit of Ingigerda, and from his attachment to Norway, where most of his kindred abode, undertook to mention the subject in the approaching assembly at Upsal; and he had the address to interest in his behalf the venerable Thorgnyr, the oracle of the law, the most influential of the Swedish chiefs. After the assembly had been legally opened, and some ordinary business transacted, the Norwegian ambassador rose, and besought the attention of king and states while he laid before them the mission with which he had been intrusted by his royal master. But before he could explain it, the angry monarch arose, and sternly commanded him to be silent. The free-born nobles of Sweden were not thus to lose their privilege of consulting on the affairs of the monarchy. Rognevald arose, and dwelt at large on the present state of their relations with Norway. So long as the frontier was disputed, West Gothland would be exposed to depredations; so long as the two kingdoms were thus hostile, there could be no prosperity for Sweden. Olaf the Fat was desirous of peace; he had sent ambassadors for that purpose; and, in proof of his sincerity, besought the hand of the princess Ingigerda. At the close of his speech, the monarch arose, and sharply upbraided Rognevald for his advocacy of the interests of an enemy. "To this," observed the king, "he has been instigated by his wife, a Norwegian lady,

and of the same family as Olaf the Fat. Rognevald, as the friend, perhaps the ally, of Sweden's enemy, was a traitor, and ought to suffer the punishment of one,—to be deprived alike of his dignity and possessions, and banished the realm." The irritated monarch then resumed his seat, but only to hear what would displease him the more. The venerable Thorgnyr, whose beard descended to his knees, whose wisdom was celebrated throughout the north, and whose presence was so majestic as to inspire every one with reverence, was the next speaker. The assembly were hushed as he rose; and such is the ascendancy of wisdom, when associated with virtue and rank, that every one felt that *his* opinion would decide the controversy. They rose at the same time,—an unconscious tribute of respect to this Nestor. His speech, illustrative as it is of the times, and of Swedish freedom, we give entire. "The kings of the Swedes are not what they once were. My grandfather could remember Eric the son of Emund, when in the vigour of manhood. That king, each summer, undertook some warlike expedition, adding to his empire Finland, Carelia, Esthonia, Courland, and other regions,—exploits of which the lofty mounds visible at this day are triumphant proofs; yet Eric was not too proud to be advised; nor did he refuse to hear every one that addressed him. My father was long the companion and friend of Biorn, whose character he thoroughly understood, whose reign was uninterruptedly flourishing,—no part of the kingdom escaping his salutary care; yet Biorn was indulgent to his friends, easy of access, and always inclined to good advice. And I remember Eric the Victorious, whose companion I was in so many expeditions; he enlarged the bounds of the kingdom, and nobly defended what he had thus acquired; yet *he* was always ready to follow good counsels. Now we have a king whose negligence has occasioned the loss of some tributary regions; yet he would leave to no one the freedom of speaking any other thing than what he is pleased to

hear; and to check the honest use of the tongue is his constant aim. More ambitious than his valiant predecessors, he really aspires to the conquest of all Norway, and thus disturbs the public tranquillity. "King Olaf! it is the wish of the country that thou shouldst make peace with Olaf the Fat, and give him thy daughter Ingigerda. If it be thy wish to recover the possessions which thine ancestors once held in the east, we are all ready to accompany thee in the expedition. If, on the other hand, in regard to Norway, thou art unwilling to follow the advice we have given thee, know that we will no longer tolerate thy frequent violations of the public tranquillity, and of the constitutional laws; with our swords we will fall upon thee, and give thee to destruction. Such was the custom of our forefathers, who were greater than we. In the assembly of Mula, did they not cast five kings into the deep pit, because those princes were, as thou art to us, insultingly proud to their people? Choose, therefore, and instantly choose, whether thou wilt follow our counsel!" This bold speech—so characteristic of the Swedish nobles in their best days—was received with tumultuous applause by the assembled multitude; sword and shield rang together, and every man was ready to follow the bidding of the venerable asserter of his rights. The humbled monarch rose; his will was that of his people; his predecessors had always left matters of grave import to their decision; and the present business should be left entirely to them. In a moment the tumult was hushed; the chiefs of the assembly, with the sanction of the rest, decreed peace with Norway, named the ambassadors who were to be sent, and declared that Ingigerda should be the wife of Olaf the Fat. Rognevald was intrusted with the care of betrothing; and the princess sent many gifts, as pledges of her affection, to her intended husband.*

1013. Omnipotent as was the authority of the states over

* Saga af Olafi hinns Helga, cap. 60—81. Historia Regis Olafi, tom. i. (pluribus capitibus).

the king of Sweden, when they were dissolved he was again supreme. He resolved to evade the performance of his pledge; and, instead of proceeding with his daughter to the confines of the two kingdoms, to deliver her into the arms of Olaf, he forebore even to mention the journey, nor would he allow others to mention it in his presence. He was, above all, indignant with the jarl Rognevald, to whom he attributed his humiliation at the recent meeting of the states,—for Thorgnyr was above his vengeance. At length the anxiety of Ingigerda could not be suppressed; and she resolved, whatever the cost, to learn from her father when he intended to commence his journey. One day, as he was returning from his favourite sport of hawking, and, from unusual success, was in high spirits, she advanced to meet him, and congratulated him. "Didst thou ever know a monarch," demanded he, "whom so much good fortune attended in so short a time?" "Truly," replied the maiden, "this morning's sport has been successful; thou hast taken five birds: but was not Olaf of Norway the better sportsman, seeing that, in one morning also, he took five kings, and annexed their possessions to his own?" * The father dismounted, then looking at her, said, "Listen, Ingigerda! Whatever thy affection for this fat king of Norway, he will never be mate of thine!"—In vain did Olaf advance to the frontiers to receive his bride; neither of her nor of her father could he obtain the least tidings; and, in great mortification, he returned to Drontheim. Rognevald, whom Ingigerda acquainted with the disposition of the Swede, laid her communication before the king of Norway, whose rage was equal to his disappointment. His first impulse was to lay waste the Gothlands; but from this step he was dissuaded by his counsellors, who justly observed, that this kind of vengeance was unworthy of a monarch; that he should wait for the assembly of his states, demand forces equal to the enterprise, and then march into Sweden to obtain satisfaction for his wrongs.

* This allusion will be hereafter explained.

When he heard that the princess had been promised by Olaf to Jarislaf, duke of Holmgard, he would assuredly have instantly marched, had not another consideration detained him. Olaf had another daughter, Astrida by name, who was then on a visit to the princely Rognevald. In his anxiety to preserve harmony between kings with whom he was so closely connected, the jarl one day asked a favourite poet and emissary of Olaf whether his master would be willing to receive the hand of that princess, in the place of Ingigerda. If he would, there was the lady, and the marriage might be celebrated without consulting her father. The poet immediately repaired to Olaf, praised the beauty, the wit, the accomplishments of Astrida, who was in no respect inferior to her sister, and informed him that the princess would be ready to marry him without the consent of her father. Olaf accepted the proposal; but his motive was the vexation he should cause the Swedish king, rather than attachment to the princess. The poet was sent for her; and in a short time, accompanied by Rognevald, she passed into Norway. The sponsal ceremony was immediately performed; and, in a few days, it was followed by their nuptials. This proceeding of Rognevald would have brought ruin on his head, had not circumstances befriended him. Olaf, anxious that his daughter Ingigerda should marry Jaroslaf, endeavoured to obtain her consent. As she had lost all hope of the Norwegian, now her brother-in-law, and was offended at the manner in which he had treated her, she no longer resisted, provided she might select, as her companion and friend, any Swedish chief she wished to reside with her at the court of Holmgard. The promise was given, and she selected Rognevald. Olaf was indignant, but he could not revoke his pledge; and he only added that, if the odious jarl did not appear in his sight, and embarked without his knowledge, he would not forbid the appointment. Thus Ingigerda sailed to Gardarik, and became the wife of Jaroslaf. Hitherto

she had not seen Olaf of Norway; but they were destined to meet many years after this event.*

The conduct of the Swedish Olaf was resented by the 101
states in their next assembly. He had not given his daughter to the Norwegian; he had not made peace with Norway; and, notwithstanding the recent marriage of Olaf with the Swedish princess, West Gothland was in hourly danger of war. In the next diet, the proceedings were stormy. A powerful body raised to the throne *Jacob Omund* or rather *Emund*, the son of Olaf, a child scarcely twelve years of age. In great consternation, the Swedish king proposed to meet his rival, and to make peace on a double basis. The two kings did meet; and the Swede, who had been taught a lesson, was not merely affable, but kind. To set at rest the dispute between them, in regard to the boundary, they agreed to leave it to the chance of the dice; and the Norwegian was the winner in the game. From this day to the death of Olaf, there was no war between the two kingdoms. The Swedish Olaf was too anxious to gratify his subjects to oppose their interests or wishes. They allowed him to retain the sceptre, but a portion of his kingdom was placed under the administration of his son. †

On his part, Olaf of Norway was no less desirous of peace. The internal state of his kingdom was far from satisfactory. Many of his subjects, however they might outwardly conform to Christianity, were still pagans, and practised their rites in secret. In a tour through the uplands, in the summer of 1018, he discovered many whom the severity of his predecessor and his own had rendered apostates; — many who had been forced to receive baptism, but who, on the departure of their tyrant, had insensibly relapsed to their ancient faith. Great was his wrath at the discovery, and he evinced it in a manner worthy of the age. Some of the delinquents — those, probably, who had any substance to fill his coffers — he banished for ever; the hands and feet

* Saga af Olafi hinns Helga. Historia Regis Olavi Sancti.

of some he mutilated; others he blinded; some he beheaded; others he suspended from lofty gibbets. In short, says the historian, "he did not spare one that refused to serve God." These enormities were not to be borne. Even those who had conscientiously embraced Christianity revolted at them; and, as many had relations and friends whom no argument could induce to forsake their hereditary errors, a spirit of discontent, a smothered cry for vengeance, was soon heard in the lonely defiles of the mountains. Five upland kings,—for the royal title had been left to them by Olaf, and, we may infer, so also had their religion,—Ruric of Raumarik, Gudred of the Dales, Ring of Hedmark, with the kings of Hadaland and Ringarik, entered into a secret conspiracy against his authority and life. *They* had not been injured by him; but their friends and kindred had been his victims: and who could say how long they should be spared? It was, at length, agreed to fall upon him in his passage through Hedmark. Sending spies to watch his motions, they hastened to a point on the road through which he had to pass, and named its vicinity as the place where their own followers should join them. However safe this secret might have been, so long as it was confined to the kings alone, when communicated to the inferior chiefs, whose co-operation was necessary, it could scarcely remain undivulged. Ketil, one of the chiefs whom Olaf had befriended, proceeded to meet the king, and acquaint him with the danger before him. At a solitary house near the lake Miors, in the higher regions of Raumarik, Olaf was acquainted with the meditated deed. With about 400 men, he instantly departed for the villa where the five kings were, and arrived there long before their followers. Approaching it at midnight, he caused it to be surrounded by his little band, so as to prevent ingress or egress; and, at the early dawn, all were in his power. Ruric, the soul of the conspiracy, was doomed to the loss of both eyes; Gudred, to the loss of his tongue; the remaining three were exiled, on their promise never

to revisit Norway. The inferior actors did not escape punishment; some being mutilated, others exiled; but the majority, who had only acted in obedience to their chiefs, were pardoned. The domains which all had held since the days of Olaf Trygveson, were next invaded, and annexed to the crown. If this was a cruel, it was a politic step; it rendered Olaf not merely the nominal, but the only, king of Norway.*

Of the two kings who were thus retained in the 101.
country, Olaf feared Ruric only, whom he always took with him. Ruric had his servants, his regal apparel, and his high seat at the table. He was noted for his revengeful disposition, and for his taciturnity. His domestics were so ill-treated that they refused to remain with him, until Sweyn, one of his own kindred, and formerly his vassal, was placed near him. It was now his constant object to prevail on Sweyn to join him in the murder of Olaf, and the man at length consented. One evening, as the king was going to vespers, Sweyn took his station at the gate, with a sword concealed beneath his cloak. But he had not courage to strike; and his agitation was such as to attract the notice of his intended victim. "Why that troubled countenance, Sweyn? Hast thou a design on my life?" Throwing away his sword, and letting his cloak fall behind him, the domestic knelt, and could only say, "To God and thee, O king, I resign myself!" He was immediately fettered; but was soon released and exiled. The only punishment inflicted on Ruric was, that his chair was taken from the royal table, and placed in another apartment; that his bed was removed to a less honourable place, and two domestics ordered to attend him night and day. After this event, he grew moody and capricious: sometimes he talked with amazing volubility, and, what was more important (for his talents were great), with wit or judgment, as the humour predominated; at other times a sullen taciturnity for days

* Saga af Olafi hins Helga, cap. 72—74. p. 89—95. Historia Olavi Regis, tom. i. p. 141, &c.

together, rendered him as disagreeable as he had before been captivating. When in these moody fits, he was evidently devising the means of revenge, or at least of escape. One night, when Ruric had retired to rest, somewhat intoxicated, a man called the Little Finn, who had been his domestic in his prosperous days, entered the apartment, with a large vessel of mead. This he presented to all the domestics who slept in the same apartment as his master, and it was so potent that it immediately sent them to sleep, — the more easily as they were previously half drunk. In a short time, Ruric awoke his two guards, under the pretext that he wanted to go outside the house. Rubbing their eyes, and gaping, they accompanied him, but were immediately slain by twelve men whom the Little Finn had brought to the spot, and who hurried the king on board a vessel which lay near the shore. One of the royal party, having occasion to visit the court-yard, found the two corpses yet bleeding and warm. In great alarm, he awoke Thord, the bearer of the royal banner, and acquainted him with the tragedy which had just been perpetrated. Both wished to awake the king; but who durst presume to do so? It was at length agreed to ring the bells of the neighbouring chapel; and Olaf, thinking that the time of matins was come, suddenly rose, and was made acquainted with the disappearance of Ruric, and the murder of the two guards. The household was soon in motion, and the fugitives pursued. Accompanied by thirty men, one of Olaf's captains leaped into a vessel, and stood out to sea. Dawn soon appeared, and the vessel which carried Ruric, and which was manned by an equal number of men, was descried. The pursuit was vigorously maintained; when an arrow from the bow of the Little Finn, the best marksman of his age, found its way to the leader's heart. Still the pursuit was continued; until the companions of Ruric, apprehensive of being taken, drew close to the shore, and plunged into the neighbouring woods, leaving him to his fate. The blind chief was conveyed back

to Tunsberg, and consigned to closer custody than before. But even now he indulged in the dream of revenge, and fortune seemed to furnish him with an opportunity of realising it. Easter was at hand, and Olaf, with his whole household, attended divine service in the church. His seat was in a kind of crypt at the north end of the choir. Here, such was his thoughtlessness, he was accompanied by Ruric, for whose conversion he was singularly anxious, and to whose crimes he was unusually indulgent. On the conclusion of the service, when the congregation were departing, Ruric drew a concealed dagger, and aimed it at the king. The blow entered his garments, but did not touch his skin. Leaping from his seat, a second blow was aimed at him, but without effect; and in another moment, the ferocious chief was taken and fettered, and led out of the church. Olaf was exhorted to put the rebel to death; but he refused, and substituted banishment into the dreary wastes of Iceland. There, in a few years, Ruric paid the debt of nature.—Strange that Olaf should pardon the murderer, yet execute the pagan! That he should deem the most horrible of crimes less heinous than conscientious, however mistaken, belief! But such has always been the policy of the Roman Catholic church.*

The uplands were not the only parts of Norway in which idolatry was to be found. While at Nidaros one winter, he learned that in Halogaland, Naumdal, and the interior of Drontheim, even the outward forms of Christianity were disregarded. To judge for himself in so important a matter, Olaf, when spring arrived, proceeded into Naumdal, where he held assemblies of the people. He soon found that there were delinquents enough, and he resolved not to spare them. He afflicted them, says the historian, with grievous penalties, not sparing the powerful any more than the humble; and he made all the inhabitants promise that in future they 1020 to 1021.

* The same authorities.

would preserve the holy faith incorrupt. By passing through the most sequestered districts, he discovered what would otherwise have escaped him. On his return to Nidaros, he learned that in the interior of the province, at the yule festival, the horns and cups were, as of yore, consecrated to the gods; that oxen were still sacrificed, and the altars sprinkled with their blood. In great anger, yet eager to examine into the truth of the charge, Olaf sent for many of the farmers, to interrogate them on the subject. But they asserted that their convivial meetings had nothing to do with religion; that, like their fathers, they indulged over their cups, but were not so foolish as to be the slaves of heathenism. Though he was forced to dismiss them, he was not satisfied; and about the middle of winter he sent for them a second time, laying before them the information which he had subsequently received. Again was the charge denied; and they were again dismissed, but not without the assurance that Olaf would soon judge for himself. After the Easter festivities, he accordingly repaired into that district; and sending for Thorold, one of his vassals, questioned him closely as to the existence of idolatry in his neighbourhood. At first the man was unwilling to speak; he dreaded the vengeance of the Pagans; but being assured of the royal protection, he said that most of the people had not yet been baptized; that those who had, had certainly reverted to the worship of Thor and the other deities; that there were scarcely any Christians in heart; that sacrifices were still offered, at the ancient seasons; and that at their meetings, which they asserted were purely convivial, twelve men officiated as priests. Hearing these charges, for the truth of which he had no guarantee, — nothing beyond the bare word of Thorold, — Olaf summoned his vassals, hastened to the place of entertainment, put the leaders to death, imprisoned others, and plundered all. But the most arbitrary and most unjust part of his conduct was that which authorised his followers to visit the houses of the suspected, and kill or bind or plunder them at

pleasure. That the innocent, if they had any substance, or any enemies, suffered with the guilty, is undoubted. Of both, many escaped before their persecutors arrived. Of the prisoners, some were put to death, some mutilated, others fined, and many banished.*

Having left many priests, and caused many churches 1021
to be erected, in Naumdal, Olaf proceeded into the uplands, for the purpose of rooting out the remains of paganism. Here, too, he found many who had not been baptized, — and many who, if they had been, were more than suspected of being addicted to the ancient religion. From the more considerable persons he demanded hostages, as pledges of their fidelity in future; the rest were more summarily dealt with. But the force he had with him was inadequate to the chastisement of all the delinquents, — for whole districts had neglected the new religion. He therefore sent out the arrow, and being joined by his vassals, issued an edict that those who refused to embrace Christianity with all their hearts must either fight him or see their lands devastated and themselves punished. As before, hypocrites enough hastened to him to profess obedience to his command, while the more conscientious, or the more indigent, fled into other districts. Hearing of these transactions, Godbrand of the Dales, a powerful man and a pagan, having sent forth the arrow, addressed his warriors at some length: — "There has arrived on the margin of the Loar a man called Olaf, commanding us to follow a religion different from that which we have hitherto followed, breaking all the images of our gods, and asserting that his God is greater and more powerful than they. To me it seems marvellous that the earth does not swallow him, — that our gods suffer him to live. Of this I am quite sure, — that, if we take the statue of Thor from the temple near us, and bear him towards the enemy, he will destroy their God, Olaf himself, and all his companions." These words

* Saga af Olafi hins Helga, cap. 110—116. Historia Regis Olavi Sancti, tom. i.

will show that there were parts of Norway which paid only a nominal obedience to the monarchs of Drontheim, which had preserved their stormy independence from a remote age to the eleventh century. These were the mountainous parts, especially the dales, which were scarcely accessible to an army, where defence was more easy, where a great number of invaders could not find subsistence. The speech of Godbrand was received by the hearers with acclamation. All cried that they would not forsake their gods; that if Olaf came into their peaceful valleys, he should not leave them alive. Seven hundred men were immediately placed under the command of Godbrand's son, and with them he proceeded to the entrance of the Dales. His example was followed by other rustics; so that the opposition which awaited Olaf in these defiles threatened to be more formidable than any which he had yet encountered. On reaching the ground where they were encamped, he caused a trumpet to be sounded, and a herald to bear his command that they would instantly receive Christianity. They rejected it with contempt; but they were soon defeated and compelled to flee. Some were taken prisoners, among whom was the son of Godbrand. Olaf could sometimes act with policy as well as humanity; and on this occasion he dismissed the humbled chief, bidding him tell the father that the victor would soon be in the centre of the dales. Touched with this generosity, the young man besought his father not to contend with Olaf. How, indeed, could he, with only 200 men remaining? By the old pagan he was sharply reproved for this pusillanimity, and told that, for his sins, he had been accompanied by some evil genius. The question of peace or war was again proposed to the Thing, or assembly of the people; and they resolved that twelve men should be sent to Olaf, to obtain the most favourable conditions that could be granted, and to invite him to meet them. The two parties did meet in those solitary wilds; and Olaf, amidst a heavy shower of rain, which continued the whole day,

proceeded to explain the leading doctrines of Christianity. His explanation, however, was not very clear to the assembled pagans. "We know nothing of the God thou preachest," said Godbrand, "and how can we, since neither thou nor anybody else has ever seen him? But we have a god whom we can all see whenever we please. To-day he does not appear on account of the rain; but if he should come to this meeting, you could not withstand his looks: he would frighten you all,—for he is a terrible god." The old man concluded by saying that, if the Christian God should work a palpable miracle, he would then believe in his power. After the assembly had been dismissed, and Olaf, with the son of Godbrand, had retired to his temporary abode, the former had the curiosity to ask what was the construction of the image to which Godbrand had alluded. He was informed that it was a vast statue of Thor, with crown and mallet and costly ornaments, and hollow within. Every day, four loaves of bread, and a corresponding portion of flesh, was presented to this idol. That night, says the historian, the king could not sleep, such was his anxiety to convince the people of God's power and of Christ's divinity. The truth is that he was more anxious for his own safety; for the countrymen were resorting, in greater numbers than before, to the scene of action. To be secure in case of attack, he despatched one of his chiefs for a reinforcement. The following day, Thor was wheeled to the place where the assembly deliberated. As it approached, the people rose and saluted it. It was placed in the midst of the place,—having the pagans on one side and the Christians on the other. Godbrand, rising, said,—"Here, king, is our god; but where is thine? He is, I suppose, in some obscure corner, with downcast looks. Thou art not so confident as thou wast; no more is that horned* man who sits beside thee, and is called your bishop. This our god, who rules all things, looks upon you with angry eyes; you are evidently afraid; you

* Alluding, we suppose, to his pointed mitre.

dare not lift up your eyes. Wherefore, lay aside your vain superstition, and believe in the present god, who has your fate in his hands." Telling one of his attendants to have a huge club in readiness, Olaf arose, and replied to the speech of Godbrand. "Their god was blind and dumb, who could do nothing for himself or others; he could not even move from his place without being carried." "Our God," added he, "is in the east," alluding to the sun as the brightest emblem of the Deity. Hearing this, the people unconsciously turned their looks in that direction. This was the signal for the chief who held the mace. One ponderous blow broke the deity to pieces; and from the fragments, as they fell, crept serpents, rats, and spiders, in great numbers. Seeing this, most of the people fled; but they were soon recalled by the king, who wished to converse amicably with them. Having ridiculed their prostrate deity, he left them the usual option,—of fighting him or embracing Christianity. Godbrand was the first to set the example. As his god could not help or revenge itself, it had manifestly no power, and he would now believe in the Christians' God. He was followed by the rest; and, in a short time, a church arose in each valley. From this place Olaf repaired into Hedmark, Raumerik, and Hadaland, where such districts as were not already Christians were speedily made so, in the Roman Catholic sense of the word,—that is, the people were *baptized*. Of *instruction* nobody thought; or, if they did, it was left to time. But if Olaf had been as enlightened as he was ignorant, he could not, with the few priests at his disposal, have effected much good. Until England and Germany sent more eclesiastics, and some provision was made for their education in Norway itself, little good was or could be effected.*

1022 to 1023. When Olaf found that the old religion maintained its sway among the inhabitants generally, he had

* Saga af Olafi hins Helga, cap. 117—120. Historia Regis Olavi Sancti, tom. i.

always recourse to the same policy: he collected troops, marched to the place, sent forth his staff, which was the signal for the people to meet in the public Thing, just as the arrow was the signal of war; and proposed the alternative of a battle or conversion. But it sometimes happened that the arrow had been sent out before his arrival, and that the people were assembled in numbers too great for him to attack with safety. Thus, in the diet of Valders, when the proceedings were opened, and the king began to talk of conversion, he was immediately enjoined silence; nor would this have been the worst result, had he not been cunning enough to call upon the legal disputants to lay their cases before him for adjudication. In a moment the tumult was hushed; each party who was or fancied himself aggrieved began to complain, and the king was occupied the whole of the day in giving his decisions. The following days he laid waste their territory with fire and sword — fine occupation for their monarch! To protect their property the men assembled in arms; but as Olaf transferred his hostilities from place to place, no large body could be collected together; or, if it were, it soon dissolved itself. Hence he was able to assail them in succession, and force them to submission. The use which he made of his victory was the same as on other occasions; he baptized, hung, maimed, banished, fined, and returned to his capital in the belief that he had done Heaven much service.*

But from these conversions — these persecutions — Olaf was at length diverted by the report that Canute the Great, king of England and Denmark, was preparing to assert his rights to Norway. Why so ambitious a monarch as the Dane had so long delayed the vindication of his claim is not easily explained: England had been long tranquil, and from Denmark no commotion was to be dreaded. Whatever the motives of his inactivity, he never forgot that Norway had been 1026 to 1027.

* The same authorities.

subdued by his father. In 1025 he asserted his claim through his ambassadors, who saw king Olaf at Tunsberg. Norway, he said, was his by the right of conquest, and that right he should not renounce; but, as he was averse to the shedding of blood, he would acknowledge Olaf as king if the latter would do him homage, and pay him the same tribute as the jarls had paid. The reply of Olaf was, that he would pay no tribute, but defend Norway to the last extremity. Knowing that the cloud of invasion must burst upon him, he selected and obtained the alliance of Sweden. Olaf was no more; but Omund (or Emund) was not inattentive to the connection which bound the royal families of the two kingdoms. To arrange the means of defence the two kings met in Gothland, and lost no time in preparing their vessels for service. As Canute delayed the threatened expedition much longer than was expected, they were unwilling to keep their armaments idle, and they assumed the aggressive, — Olaf choosing the Danish islands, especially Zealand, as the scene of his depredations; Omund preferring the nearer province of Scania. In a short time, however, they joined their fleets, and continued their ravages. The summer being past and no enemy appearing, Omund returned to Sweden, — leaving, however, a portion of his fleet under the orders of Olaf. When Canute heard of these ravages, he hastened his preparations. Another subject, too, made him anxious to revisit Denmark. The Danes were dissatisfied with the absence of their monarch. From the foundation of the state, never had they been without a present chief — often with many — to defend their coasts against the piratical kings of the north. Now that Olaf and Omund were assailing them with impunity, their complaints became the louder. To appease them, Ulf, the brother-in-law of Canute, and the most powerful of the Danish nobles, had recourse to a bold imposture; he produced forged letters, which he alleged came from Canute, commanding the states to recognise his son

Harda Canute as king of Denmark. The motive which led him to this step is obvious. The prince was only ten years of age, and the regency must necessarily rest with him. How he expected to escape the vengeance of his monarch is surprising: probably he looked for impunity to the unanimous voice of Denmark, and to the interference of Emma, the queen, who had sanctioned the plot, and transmitted her husband's signet to him. Seeing the royal seal, the people immediately proclaimed the young prince. Both Ulf and Harda Canute soon repented of the step. Two kings were ravaging their coasts: Canute only could defend them; and his arrival might soon be expected. To avert his anger, they supplicated the queen to employ her influence in their behalf; and, after some entreaty, the monarch agreed that if Harda Canute and the jarl would apply to him for pardon, and lay the usurped crown at his feet, he would exact no vengeance for the past. Accordingly, both proceeded to England, knelt before him, and humbly entreated his forgiveness. The royal child was heartily, Ulf reluctantly pardoned, — if that can be called pardon, when a secret determination is made to destroy the object whenever a new occasion shall be presented. To extinguish the last spark of this rebellion, no less than to chastise the presumption of the two northern kings, he sailed for the north.*

When Canute arrived in the Baltic, he found that 1027
Scania was ravaged by the combined fleets of Norway and Sweden. In a naval battle off that coast he had a hard struggle, but, in the end, had so far the advantage that he compelled the enemy to retire. After this partial success, he did not forget Ulf the jarl. Inviting that noble to a feast at Roskilda, the latter endeavoured, by mirthful conversation, to dissipate the gloom which hung on the countenance of the monarch. The chessboard was introduced, and, in the game which followed,

* Saga af Olafi hins Helga, cap. 154—159. Saxonis Grammatici, lib. x. p. 194. Mallet, Histoire de Dannemarc, tom. iii. liv. ii. p. 139, &c.

the anger of Canute was still further increased. The jarl took one of the king's knights; but the king took it back again, and, in a hasty tone, bid Ulf not play in that manner. One of this chief's worst characteristics was an irritable temper, which he could not always control, even in the presence of his lord. He not only struck the table with much anger, but rose to leave the apartment. "Coward! dost thou flee?" cried the insulted king. "Thou wouldst have fled farther," replied the jarl, "but for me. Was I a coward in the late action at the mouth of the Helge, when I bore aid to thee, whom the Swedes were beating like a dog?" These rash words sealed his fate. Though he took refuge in the cathedral, the next morning the monarch ordered him to be slain; and the deed was perpetrated in the choir. For this action, the royal assassin had thenceforth no peace; remorse was his daily companion: to allay it he became a benefactor to the church, and undertook a pilgrimage to Rome.*

1027 to 1028. Winter approaching, Omund of Sweden returned home with his armament. For some time longer, Olaf remained to watch the motions of the Danes; but he had some reason to know that a spirit of discontent prevailed among his followers. When summoned to the council their opinions were divided, in cases where unanimity was most required. It was evident that some of them were bought by Canute's gold, or by the hope of his favour. Many, too, of the Norwegians even—the bravest of that nation—were in the armament of the Dane. As so little dependence was, after Omund's departure, to be placed in his fleet, Olaf sent it to the Swedish ports, and returned, by way of West Gothland, into Vikia. At Sarfsburg he determined to pass the winter; and he endeavoured, by presents, to secure the attachment of his chief nobles; but he found that his own partisans were fewer, and those of his enemy more numerous, than he had anticipated. In some districts he could not

* Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. x. p. 194. Snorronis Heimskringla, tom. ii. p. 271.

venture without a strong armed force. As he dared not venture into the north, and was unsafe in the uplands, he proceeded to Tunsberg; from thence he despatched messengers into all the provinces, to hasten the levy of ships and men. Those in his immediate neighbourhood obeyed his mandate, rather through fear than love; by the more distant provinces it was derided. That the hearts of the people were not with him was manifest; the great preparations of Canute, which resounded throughout the kingdom, were either beheld with indifference, or openly desired. To what causes must this almost universal defection be ascribed? Undoubtedly to many. By the admirers of this king—that is, by the Roman Catholics—it has been contended, that the chief was the attachment of the Norwegians to their ancient idolatry. That this was a great cause cannot be disputed; but we may hesitate before we admit it as the principal. Olaf Tryveson was no less zealous than he; yet that monarch was in no danger from a foreign invader, and, to the very last, was supported by a loyal people. The truth is, Olaf the Saint had turned his friends into enemies, by the capriciousness of his conduct. If his predecessor was a furious bigot, he was, at least, beloved by his immediate attendants, and feared by his people. To his domestics the saint was often austere, not very liberal, and frequently tyrannical. In proof of this, we may adduce the confession of his greatest favourites, that, whatever the urgency of the occasion, they dared not awake him when asleep.* The man who thus inspired fear, even in his own palace, could not be loved. Then he was rigid, imprudently rigid, in the administration of justice. It was, indeed, better to err on this side than on that of laxity; still he should have made some allowance for times and circumstances, and have been satisfied with pecuniary mulcts where he exacted mutilation or death. Add, that he had not the commanding talents of the son of Trygve; that he was fre-

* This has a parallel in the Mohammedan governor of Calcutta, whom no one durst awake when the English were dying in the Black Hole.

quently fickle alike in his attachments and designs; that he was oppressive in his exactions; that he violated the pledges which he had given to respect the privileges of the native chiefs; and we have the key to the universal disaffection of which he was soon to become the victim. *

1028 to 1029. In the spring of 1028, Canute, with a powerful armament, sailed for Norway. Disembarking on the coast of Agder, he commanded the people to assemble in a provincial Thing, — a command which was promptly obeyed. Here he was acknowledged king of Norway, and no voice was raised against his election. On his way to Nidaros, — the modern Drontheim, — wherever he landed the people flocked in multitudes to receive him, and to pay him homage. On reaching that city, where Olaf had so much resided, and where he was so much detested, Canute was joyfully acknowledged the sole monarch of the country. During all this time, Olaf remained at Tunsberg, in the vain expectation of succour from some portion of his subjects. At length he sailed round the southern coast, rather as a spy than a monarch; and he had the satisfaction of vanquishing one of his rebellious jarls: but this was no advantage, for it exasperated the kindred of the fallen chief, who forced him precipitately to retire. Proceeding northward, he found that his own subjects (Canute had returned to Denmark in the full confidence that the new conquest was secure) were on the deep to intercept him. As their force was so much superior to his, he hastily disembarked, in the resolution to pass overland into Sweden. But the project was not without danger; every moment the countrymen might rise and deliver him into the hands of his enemies. To escape this evil he traversed the most solitary paths, with a celerity to which his fear gave additional wings. Continuing his way into the dales and Hedmark, he had some reason to fear for his life. Though he had many kinsmen in

* Saga af Olafi hinom Helga, cap. 166—180. Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. x.

the uplands, the majority of the people were his enemies, and were ready to seize him. As yet, however, he had a considerable guard,—about 300 men,—and open force, in a rural, secluded district, might be resisted. But when he perceived that his followers were daily diminishing, he had no alternative but to flee into Sweden. Hako the jarl, Canute's lieutenant for the whole of Norway, would soon pursue him; and expedition was therefore doubly necessary. Accompanied by his queen, Astrida, and a few companions whose fidelity no misfortunes could shake, he passed into Vermeland, and was thus free from the apprehension of pursuit. His expedition saved him; for had he remained any longer in Norway he must have fallen into the hands of the jarl Hako, who was pursuing him with a force which he could not have resisted. There he passed the winter. When summer arrived, leaving his queen and his daughter in Sweden, he proceeded to Holmgard in Gardarik, to solicit the aid of the king, or rather of Ingigerda the queen.*

By the king and queen of Holmgard the regal fugitive 1029.
was received with much hospitality. Seeing the distraction of Norway, they endeavoured, by the offer of a considerable province, to prevail on him to remain in the country. This would have been his wisest policy; but his heart yearned to the country of his birth, and he indulged the hope of being recalled by his subjects. His was not a strong mind; but in devotion—or we should rather say in the external offices of his church—he sought for consolation. But ambition was his prevailing quality. Night and day he meditated the means of returning; and, with a mind so impressed, we cannot be surprised that his dreams assumed the colour of his waking thoughts. A royal shade accosted him, exhorted him to return, and promised him success. Had Olaf been an enlightened man, or known much of that religion which he so

* Saga af Olafi hinom Helga, cap 180—191. Historia Regis Olavi Sancti tom. ii.

zealously professed, he would have understood that a vision recommending all the horrors of civil war could not be from heaven. In about a year he left Gardarik, and sailed to Sweden. Here he learned that Hako the jarl was dead, and no successor yet nominated by Canute. This he thought a favourable opportunity for the vindication of his rights, and he proceeded to the Swedish court to solicit aid. By Emund he was nobly received; but the information which reached him from Norway did not induce him to hasten his departure. When the local governors heard of his arrival in Sweden, they sent forth the arrow of war, in the determination of resisting his entrance. The spies whom he sent into the country were unanimous in their report that the popular mind was indisposed to him,—that he should abandon the intention of returning. These representations, however, were counterbalanced by his hopes: in a few months after his arrival in Sweden, he procured 400 men from Emund, with permission to raise as many more as chose to join him, and proceeded through the centre of Sweden towards Norway.*

030. On the confines of that kingdom, being joined by his kindred and their vassals, he found that his whole force amounted to 1200 men. With this force, had there existed any attachment to his cause, he might have triumphed; but as he proceeded through the northern districts of Drontheim, nobody joined him. In some places, indeed, he forced the inhabitants to assemble, and compelled those who were still pagan to receive baptism. Thus the time which he should have turned to his advantage he lost by his injudicious zeal, and thereby afforded his enemies leisure to organise the means of resistance. In another respect he was less imprudent. Seeing the refusal of the countrymen to join him, he was exhorted by his followers, of whom many were Swedish banditti, to burn their houses, to

* The same authorities.

lay waste their fields, to cut them down wherever they could be found. He had the humanity to refuse his sanction to this atrocious proposal. He had, he said, one regal prerogative left,—the power of forgiving. On entering the district of Sticklestadt, he perceived a large force drawn up to oppose him. Arranging his own followers in order of battle, he exhorted them to fight manfully for their religion, their king, their families. On the other, Sigurd, the bishop, who was in the army of Canute, no less strongly exhorted his party to drive this invader from the kingdom. The character which the prelate drew of that monarch was not an enviable one. From his youth he had been remarkable for his robberies and executions; he had exiled or put to death the noblest of his chiefs; he had acted with singular treachery towards the upland kings,—whose privileges, contrary to his solemn pledges, he had violated, and whose persons he had afterwards mutilated; to all men, high or low, he had been tyrannical; he had lost all his friends; and he was now followed only by the enemies of Norway, or by professed bandits. This description was not overcharged, and it may be admitted as a fair estimate of his character. The battle now engaged, and Olaf fought with much courage; but in the end he fell, and most of his kinsmen with him.*

That the moral portrait of Olaf may be finished, and his claims to sanctity appreciated, we have yet to add that he had a concubine, and by her a bastard,—Magnus the Good,—four years after his marriage with Astrida. The circumstances connected with the birth of this prince are worthy of relation. Alfhilda, the royal concubine, was observed to be pregnant; and everybody knew that this was the result of her intercourse with Olaf. One night she was seized by the pains of labour, which were unusually severe; both her life and that of her infant were despaired of before it was brought into the world. Even after that event,

* Saga af Olafi hinom Helga, cap. 211, &c. Historia Regis Olavi Sancti, tom. iii. (pluribus capitibus).

so precarious was its existence, that the priest who was present insisted on its immediate baptism, and desired Sigvat the poet to awake the king for the purpose of knowing what name was to be given it. Nothing can better illustrate the tyranny of Olaf than the fact that Sigvat, favourite as he had long been, durst not fulfil this commission, at a time when mother and child were apparently on the brink of the grave. "Who dares awake him?" replied Sigvat. "But the infant must be baptized," rejoined the priest. "I would rather incur the responsibility of naming the child," said the poet, "than of awaking the king." The name was Magnus. The next morning Olaf was in a great rage with Sigvat, whom he summoned before him, and asked how he could have the presumption to impose a name on his royal son. "Was it not better," replied the poet, "to give the child to God rather than to the devil? Had he died without baptism, he must have been the devil's. For my boldness I can but lose my head; and, if I do so, I must trust to God's mercy!" But why didst thou call the child Magnus?" demanded Olaf: "I have no kindred of that name." "Because it was the name of Charlemagne." "Thou art a fortunate man," said the king. "Nor is this strange, as fortune is the companion of wisdom. Yet it *is* strange when the imprudent man turns his very rashness into the source of advantage." In the sequel this Magnus became king of Norway.*

As nobody can be admitted into the calendar of saints without the operation of miracles, which the church requires as evidence of sanctity, we may be prepared for those of Olaf. That he healed incurable diseases, restored sight to the blind, assisted the warriors who invoked his aid, is asserted by the gravest Icelandic writers. One which we give in the Appendix, and which is by far the most imaginative of the number† may enable the reader to judge of what materials they consist. The

* Saga af Olafi, cap. 131. Historia Regis Olavi, tom. ii. cap. 120.
† See Appendix A.

sanctity of Olaf rests on a foundation of equal solidity with his miracles. Yet all the Roman catholics in Europe are taught, from their infancy, to believe in both. How far his character, as given in the text, agrees with that which Alban Butler has drawn from that immense heap of rubbish, the Acta Sanctorum, may also be seen in the Appendix.*

* See Appendix B.

CHAP. IV.

MARITIME EXPEDITIONS OF THE NORTHMEN DURING THE PAGAN TIMES.

SECTION I.

IN ENGLAND, FRANCE, AND IRELAND.

EARLY EXPEDITIONS OF THE NORTHMEN TO THE COASTS OF THE ROMAN PROVINCES.—CAUSES WHICH LED TO THEM.—POVERTY OF THE SOIL, FAMINE, COURAGE.—DOMESTIC PIRACY.—TRIBES OF PIRATES.—INVASION OF ENGLAND BY THE SAXONS AND DANES.—AUTHORITY OF SAXO GRAMMAT.CUS.—DEPREDATIONS IN ENGLAND PRIOR TO THE REIGN OF ATHELSTANE.—VICTORY OF THAT MONARCH.—RAVAGES OF THE NORTHMEN IN FRANCE.—HASTINGS.—ROLLO THE GREATEST OF THE SCANDINAVIAN PIRATES.—HIS CONQUEST OF NORMANDY, OF WHICH HE WAS THE FIRST DUKE.—THE NORTHMEN IN IRELAND.—EARLY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE IRISH AND THE NORTH OF EUROPE.—FIRST RAVAGES OF THE NORTHMEN.—THEIR ALARMING PROGRESS IN THAT ISLAND.—VICTORY OBTAINED OVER THEM BY KING BRIAN.—THEIR SUBSEQUENT DEPREDATIONS AND DECLINE.

THAT the expeditions of the Northmen were not confined to the shores of the Baltic, long before the period which is usually assigned to them, is evident from the whole course of the later Roman history. During the domination of the empire in Gaul and Britain, the local governors, whatever their zeal, were unable to prevent the depredations which the maritime inhabitants of Friesland and Jutland made on the more southern coasts. The Saxons and Franks were among the earliest pirates of the north. In the third century we find them on the coast of Gaul; in the fourth and fifth, they were no less troublesome on that of Britain. Even from the time of Cæsar, the tribes on the maritime coast, from the mouths of the Rhine to the Baltic Sea,

were beginning to learn the piratical life. Their position was highly favourable to such pursuits. Located in the vicinity of rivers, friths, and bays, where the soil is unproductive, their wants must have led them to regions where Nature was more lavish of her gifts. This was more especially the case of the people on the sandy shores of Friesland and the Baltic; and, in those regions, they become pirates, just as the Arabs become robbers, — from necessity. But other causes were also at work, and probably at a period still earlier. Amidst the endless migrations of the barbarous tribes who occupied central and northern Europe, the impulse must have been extended to more distant shores. When, for instance, Asiatic Scythia sent forth her swarms to conquer and to colonise, the original inhabitants either bent their necks to the new yoke, or escaped from it by retiring farther to the west. Those of Scandinavia were compelled to look for settlements in the south; and this object could only be obtained by means of ships. There is reason to believe that these emigrations, or maritime expeditions, came to our own islands before the birth of Christ; this, indeed, is expressly affirmed by Bede, who mentions the first arrival of the Picts in these islands. They came, he informs us, from Scythia; and, sailing round the southern coast of Britain, landed on that of Ireland, where the Scots were then settled. As there was not room for both people, the new comers, in conformity with the advice of the Scots, proceeded to the opposite shores, viz., those of Galloway and Argyle. This could not have been a solitary immigration into these islands; the Scots themselves were a conquering and a new tribe when the Picts arrived. If this is true of the western, it is still more so of the eastern, coasts of England and Scotland, especially of the latter. Danish expeditions, before our Saviour's birth, are frequently mentioned by Saxo; and, absurd as his chronology often is, we think that there is some foundation for his statement, corroborated as it is by that of Bede. But we must not lose sight of the fact, that the two

writers are speaking of events in themselves dissimilar. Bede alludes to the emigration of whole tribes, Saxo to piratical expeditions.*

That at a barbarous period, when agriculture was little understood, and in barren countries, where the greatest industry was unavailing, there must have been many seasons of famine, would be admitted, if it were not supported by the positive testimony of history. When they arrived, the younger and more vigorous class of the people naturally betook themselves to more southern regions. He that once visited those regions, would be in no hurry to return. The long duration of winter, the uncertainty of an early spring, the coldness and humidity of the atmosphere, which often prevented the fruits of the earth from arriving at maturity, must have appeared to striking disadvantage when contrasted with the greater regularity of seasons in the south. Nor was this the worst. The north was covered with endless forests, or with extensive fens, or with bleak mountains, where industry might labour in vain; in the south, nature produced, with small labour, what was necessary for the support of man. Since, in the former, wars between one tribe and another were of so frequent occurrence, the condition of the people must have been dreadful; they must have been often thinned by famine. Hence the expatriations, whether voluntary or compulsory, of which we read so much in the ancient history of the north. One of the earliest on record is that which took place under Snio, a prince of Jutland. A sore famine arriving, he published an edict, that, to economise the grain, none should be used in the brewing of beer. But this law was ineffectual; the people were too fond of indulging in the beverage to be thus forced; and a national Thing was convoked to devise the means of public safety. That a law was passed for the destruction of the old, the very young, and those unable to carry arms, or to cultivate the ground, is affirmed by

* Eutropius, Epitome. Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. i. cap. 1. Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. i. et ii.

several writers; but the statement is incredible. There is greater truth in another,— that banishment was substituted, and lots were cast to determine the individuals. Sweden furnishes us with a second instance, though not so ancient as the preceding. We have already seen that, during the pressure of a famine, Olaf Trætelia was sacrificed to the gods.* The remedy, however, was unavailing; the scourge became still greater, and the people removed into Norway. Two centuries after this period, one third of the Danes, says Peter Olaf, were thus driven into exile; and they selected Prussia, Carelia, Samogitia, and other shores of the Baltic, as their future abodes. This evil was more ancient than we usually suppose. We find laws, permitting the exposure of infants where the parents were unable to support them, before Christianity was known to the Franks, or Bavarians, or Swabians, or any other of the Germanic tribes. Where no temporary law was made for the expatriation of a certain number of the people, the more adventurous would often retire of their own accord. The Scandinavians were no strangers to the sea; from their childhood they were accustomed to fish in their bays, gulfs, mouths of rivers, and other parts of their coasts. This exercise made them familiar with the management of small vessels, and led them to regard the watery element as no less friendly than land. As they became inured to the business, and extended their voyages, they learned where particular species of fish were most abundant. It is probable that at a very early period all the coasts of the Baltic were thus visited. †

These circumstances combined will explain the superior dexterity of the Scandinavians and other Baltic nations in the management of vessels. If want of subsistence led them to the deep, whether through expatriation, or the hope of successful fishing, other

* See before, page 158.

† Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica, lib. viii. Depping, Histoire des Expeditions Maritimes des Normands, tom. i. chap. 1.

causes made them pirates. It was easier to take a vessel well laden with that useful commodity than to catch it; and when, in these practices, the crew of one hostile tribe met the crew of another, a battle was sure to follow. By degrees, vessels for piracy alone were equipped; nor were the objects of plunder confined to fish: the houses near the sea-coasts had other articles of food, other commodities, which would enrich the pirate's home. The dangers attending a profession where the crews were necessarily armed, were not likely to damp the spirit of adventure. Courage was a part of the Northman's religion; death in battle was a good, since it introduced him at once to the enjoyments of Odin's hall, — enjoyments far exceeding whatever this world could furnish. Piracy, then, was the necessary result of the Scandinavian's position; and it must have been practised more anciently than most historians admit. Tacitus tells us that in his time the Suiones were formidable by their fleets. Navigation, indeed, could not be in its infancy, when such colonies as that of the Picts undertook voyages so long and hazardous. It could not be in its infancy during the third century, when Caransius was nominated by the Roman authorities of Gaul to protect, at the head of a powerful fleet, the coasts daily menaced by the barbarians.*

That domestic piracy — viz., piracy confined to their own coast — distinguished the Scandinavians long before their expeditions into the south, is undoubted. First, they had to struggle with the hostile races who had preceded them in the north, — whom on their arrival they had to dislodge, and who for so many ages preserved a vindictive remembrance of the outrage. The Goth and the Finn must have been enemies from the beginning; and both must have been equally hostile to the Vends, a Slavonic tribe of Pomerania, much addicted to piracy. Position, no less than race, made tribes hereditary enemies. The Frisons and the Saxons were rivals, and therefore ene-

* Eutropius, Epitome, lib. ix. cap. 13. Tacitus, de Moribus Germanorum, cap. 44.

mies; so were the Swedes and the Danes; so were the Scanians and Norwegians. Their fleets watched the coasts of each other, ready to fight it whenever the opportunity was presented. Thus, while the Norwegians were delighted in making predatory irruptions into Quenaland, which was inhabited by Finns, the Vends were harassing the Danes, and the Jutes the Saxons. In the fifth century — how long before we have not individual instances to select — the Vends were powerful enough to infuse terror into the whole of Denmark. Ismar, their king, ravaged Fionia, defeated king Sivar, and took prince Jarmeric captive. In the sixth century, a Slavonian fleet was defeated by Halfdan, king of Scania. Saxo is full of maritime contests between the two people; and though his chronology is wrong, the facts themselves are indisputable. In general, the Vends exceeded the Scandinavians in ferocity. Both had great advantages for maritime adventures. Lithuania, Esthonia, and Livonia were as well provided with timber as Norway or Sweden; and each country had a multitude of natural bays and creeks, where refuge could be sought when the tempest was severe, or when an enemy appeared too formidable to be resisted.*

But the coasts of the Roman provinces offered the greatest inducements to piracy. They were Saxons and Franks whom Caransius had chiefly to oppose. In the following century, they were more formidable to the local governors. "In the beginning of the fourth century," says Turner, in his valuable history of the Anglo-Saxons, "the Saxons were not alone on the ocean; other states, both to the south and north of their own locality, were moving in concert with them, whose nominal distinctions were lost in the Saxon name. This addition of strength multiplied the Saxon fleets, gave new terror to their hostility, and recruited their losses with perpetual population. The league extended. Their depre-

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan., passim. Depping, Histoire, tom. i. chap. 3.

dations increased their population, affluence, and celebrity; and these results extended their power. What emulation, policy, or rapacity may have first prompted, success and fear made more universal. They who would not have been tempted to unite, dreaded the wrath of those whose proffered alliance they refused: and at length most of the nations north of the Rhine assumed the name, strengthened the association, and fought to augment the predominance of the Saxons. Towards the south, between the Elb and the Rhine, the Chauci seem to have led the way. The Frisii, urged by kindred passion and a convenient position, willingly followed. The precise date of the accession of others is not so clear; but in some period of their power, the Chamavi, and at last the Batavi, the Toxandri, and Morini, were in their alliance. North of their territorial position the Cimbri, the Jutes, the Angles, and others not so discernible, added their numbers to the formidable league; which lasted until their expedition to Britain, and then began to dissolve. Without detaining the reader by a detail of the modern chorography answering to the position of these tribes, it may be sufficient to state, concisely, that the progress and leagues of the Saxon states enlarged gradually from the Elbe to the Weser; from the Weser they reached to the Ems; and, still augmenting, they diffused themselves to the Rhine with varying latitude, as the Franks, many of whose allies they seduced, quitting that region, and abandoning their exploits on the ocean, marched upon Gaul. The extension of this new confederation was favoured by the change of policy and position adopted by the Franks. As this people stood foremost to the Roman vengeance, they experienced its effects. They had many distressing wars to maintain, which in time compelled them to abandon maritime expeditions, and to consolidate their strength for their continental conflicts. Their ultimate successes made this warfare the most popular among them. Hence, the nearer we approach the period of the invasion of England, we

find the Franks less and less united with the Saxons on the ocean, and even wars begin to be frequent between the rival friends. As the former moved onward, to the conquests of Belgium and Gaul, the Saxons appear to have been the only nation, under whose name the vessels of piracy were navigated. Saxons were the enemies every where execrated, though under this title several nations fought. Some of the tribes on the maritime coast, who had composed the league of the Franks, abandoned it, to share the easier warfare and ampler booty of the Saxons. At last this successful people diffused themselves into the interior of Germany so victoriously, that the vast tracts of country embraced by the Elbe, the Sala, and the Rhine, became subjected to their power, in addition to their ancient territory from the Elbe to the Eyder. An old Belgic chronicle, in rhyme, makes Neder Sassen, Lower Saxony, to have been confined by the Scheld and the Meuse; but this is a larger extent than others admit." *

In contemplating the piratical expeditions or maritime conquests of the Northmen, during the pagan age, greater clearness will be attained by classing them under the head of each country visited by those people.

1. *Britain.* The Jutes and the Angles were the most prominent allies of the Saxons. The league was joined by other people of the north, — by adventurous Danes no less than Slavonic Pomeranians. At the head of maritime forces so numerous and so powerful, the Saxons became dreadful scourges to Gaul and Britain. "In the latter country, their depredations were rendered more secure by the frequent irruptions of the Picts and Scots into the northern counties, who, like them, were joined in a confederation. Had the Saxons or the Picts been left to their own efforts, the Roman governors would not have been so much pressed by the pirates as they were from the fourth century downwards. In a similar combination of hostilities, Nectaridus, the commander of the Saxon shore, was slain, and the

* Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. i. p. 147.

general of the island, Fullo-faudes, perished in an ambush. Several officers were sent by the Roman emperors to succeed them; but their exertions being inadequate to the necessity, Theodosius, an experienced and successful leader, was appointed by Valentinian in their room. The Picts and the co-operating tribes attacked from the north, while the Saxons and their allies assaulted the maritime coasts. Theodosius, from Richborough, marched towards London, and dividing his army into battalions, correspondent to the positions of the enemies, he attacked the robbers encumbered with their plunder. The bands that were carrying away the manacled inhabitants and their cattle, he destroyed, and regained the spoil; of this he distributed a small share among his wearied soldiers; the residue he restored to its owners, and entered the city, wondering at its sudden deliverance, with the glories of an ovation. Lessoned by experience, and instructed by the confessions of the captives and deserters, he combated this mixture of enemies, with well-combined artifice and unexpected attacks. To recal those who in the confusion, from fear or from cowardice, had abandoned their ranks or their allegiance, he proclaimed an amnesty; and to complete the benefit he had begun, he prosecuted the war with vigour in the north of Britain. He prevented, by judicious movements, the meditated attack; and hence the Orkneys became the scene of his triumphs. The Saxons, strong in their numbers and intrepidity, sustained several naval encounters before they yielded to his genius. They ceased at last to molest the tranquillity of Britain; and the addition of a deserved surname, Saxonicus, proclaimed the service of Theodosius. He added the province of Valentia to Roman Britain, restored the deserted garrisons, and coerced the unruly borderers by judicious stations, and a vigilant defence. The Saxon confederation might be defeated, but was not subdued. Such was its power, that they were now bold enough to defy the Roman armies by land, and invaded the regions on the Rhine with a

formidable force. The imperial general was unable to repulse them; a reinforcement encouraged him. The Saxons declined a battle, and sued for an amicable accommodation. It was granted. A number of the youth fit for war were given to the Romans to augment their armies; the rest were to retire unmolested. The Romans were not ashamed to confess their dread of the invaders, by a perfidious violation of the treaty. They attacked the retreating Saxons from an ambush; and, after a brave resistance, the unguarded barbarians were slain or made prisoners. It is to the disgrace of literature that the national historian of the day has presumed, while he records, to apologise for the ignominious fraud. Such an action might dishonourably gain a temporary advantage, but it could only exasperate the Saxon nation. The loss was soon repaired in the natural progress of population, and before many years elapsed, they renewed their depredations, and defeated Maximus. At the close of the fourth century they exercised the activity and resources of Stilicho. The unequal struggle is commemorated by the encomiastical poet, whose genius gilds, with a departing ray, the darkening hemisphere of Rome. After his death the Saxons commenced new irruptions. They supported the Armorici in their rebellion, awed the Gothic Euric, began to war with the Franks, and, extending the theatre of their spoil, made Belgium, Gaul, Italy, and Germany tremble at their presence." It must be remembered that under the word Saxons many tribes were included, — those of Denmark as well as those of Holstein.*

The settlement of the Saxons, the Angles, and the Jutes — all comprehended within the geographical limits of Denmark — in Great Britain, has been recorded in two historical volumes of the Cyclopædia.† Thus, in 446, Hengest laid the foundation of the king- 408.

* Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. i. p. 152, &c.
† See England, by Sir James Mackintosh, vol. i.; and Europe during the Middle Ages, vol. iii.

dom of Kent, which, under eighteen successive kings, subsisted to the close of the eighth century. In 477, Ella, another Saxon chief, called a smaller one, that of Sussex, into existence. Of this state the names of the two first princes only have descended to posterity. In 519, the more powerful kingdom of Wessex was founded by Cerdic, and its princes were destined to unite the other states into one monarchy within three centuries after its establishment. By Ida, the kingdom of Bernicia was founded in 547; By Ella, that of Deira, in 560. These states, being united in 644, formed the important kingdom of Northumberland, which subsisted, with some interruptions, until it was finally annexed, by Athelstane, to the Saxon monarchy. Mercia, founded, in 586, by Crida; East Anglia, by Uffa; and Essex, by Eswin; were all ultimately absorbed in the rising sphere of Wessex. All these royal chiefs boasted of their descent from Odin; all were of Scandinavian origin; all spoke the same language, and followed the same piratical profession. That hordes of obscure adventurers—mere sea kings—should thus subdue a great country, has been matter of surprise to many writers. But we should remember that, at the period in question, England was not a monarchy,—that, like the north, it was subject to many kings, and that the conquest occupied a century and a half. *

That during this period the Danes, if not the Norwegians, were brought into relation with the kings of Scotland, is asserted by Saxo. Frode III., according to that historian, gave his daughter Ulvilda in marriage to Thubar king of the Scots. Frode reigned in the fourth century, not, as Saxo assures us, early in the first. Whether Hamlet of Jutland, and other Danish princes, were really in Scotland, cannot be proved; but there is nothing improbable in the relation. That country, like England and the north, was divided among many chiefs, who assumed the regal title; and that their domains should escape the depredations which so

* The Saxon Chronicle (sub annis).

afflicted the southern part of the island, is not to be credited. Beyond all doubt, Scotland was visited by piratical bands as early, at least, as England. Nor must we forget that the Saxon kingdom of Bernicia comprehended, besides the north of England from the Tees to the Tweed, all the east and centre of Scotland from the latter river to the Frith of Forth. At what period the inhabitants north of that Frith were first molested by the Danes and Norwegians would be a vain inquiry; we may only infer that it was much earlier than is generally supposed.*

As the inhabitants of the Danish islands and of Norway had no share in the spoils of England, they were not bound to respect the coasts after their kindred had established the kingdoms of the polyarchy. Their ravages, indeed, were experienced by the English chiefs before Northumbria became a kingdom. Offa of Mercia, whose domains were invaded by them, had the valour to defeat, and the generosity to pardon, his foes. It has, however, been contended that we find no satisfactory account of the Danes being here in such numbers as to command the notice of history, before the eighth century. In this case, the authority of Saxo is rejected as unworthy of credit. "Some documents for his history Saxo may have derived from poems of the ancient Scalds, from inscriptions on stones and rocks, from an inspection (yet how imperfect!) of the Icelandic authors, and from the narrations of his friend. We may even grant to him, that such men as he enumerates, such actions as he so eloquently describes, and such poems as he so diffusely translates, once appeared; but the chronology and succession into which he arranges them are unquestionably false. The boasted fountains of the history of the ancient Scandinavians, their memorial stones and funeral runæ, the inscribed rings of their shields, the woven figures of their tapestry, their storied walls, their lettered seats and beds, their narrative wood, their re-

* Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. lib. v.

collected poetry, and their inherited traditions, may have given to history the names of many warriors, and have transmitted to posterity the fame of many battles: but no dates accompanied the memorials; even the geography of the incidents was very rarely noted. Hence, however numerous may have been the preserved memoranda, their arrangement and appropriation were left to the mercy of literary fancy or of national conceit. Saxo unfortunately emulated the fame of Livy, instead of becoming the Pausanias of Scandinavia; and instead of patiently compiling and recording his materials in the humble style or form in which he found them, which would have been an invaluable present to us, he has shaped them into a most confused, unwarranted, and fabulous chronology. The whole of his first eight books, all his history anteceding Ragnar Lodbrog, can as little claim the attention of the historian, as the British history of Jeffry, or the Swedish history of Johannes Magnus. It is indeed superfluous, if we recollect the Roman history, to argue against a work which pretends to give to Denmark a throned existence, a regular government, and a tissue of orderly and splendid history for twenty-four royal accessions before the birth of Christ. Saxo, on whose history many others were formerly built, refers to the Icelandic writers; but this only increases our depreciation of his narratives, for they are at irreconcileable variance with all his history before the ninth century."* Yet we are far from subscribing, in its most rigorous sense, to this unfavourable character. Saxo's chronology we condemn as much as any writer; but we do not think that his facts, however distorted by tradition, are not, for the most part, founded in truth. That the authority of Snorro is superior to Saxo's we readily admit,—superior, we mean, as to chronology; for that the latter must have been better acquainted with the actions of the Danes themselves few will be so rash as to deny. Yet even Snorro assures us that Ivar Vidfadme, a prince of the seventh century, conquered a fifth part of Eng-

* Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. i.

land.* By this expression Northumbria is usually understood; and there is nothing improbable in the opinion that the kingdom of Bernicia—that portion of Northumbria north of the Tweed—was overrun by this prince.†

The alleged depredations of Ragnar Lodbrog in Northumbria, to which we have slightly alluded in the first chapter of this volume‡ have in them so much of the romantic that we can place little dependence on them. There is but one circumstance that can be made to lend them even the appearance of probability. About the period of Ragnar's death, a formidable body of Danes descended on the island of Lindisfarne, plundered the church which contained the shrine of St. Cuthbert, massacred the ecclesiastics, defiled the altars, and consumed the building by fire. The lay inhabitants of the island were not more fortunate; the men were massacred, the women were forced, the children tossed on the points of the Danish lances. In the following year (794) the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow were visited with the same fate. During full seventy years,—that is, to the period when the weak brother of Alfred allowed the centre of England to be overrun, and when Alfred himself, by his flight, left the whole kingdom to their mercy,—their depredations on the eastern coast, from the Frith of Forth to the Humber, were, however desultory, however interrupted, most harassing and most destructive. The Saxon kings of Northumbria, we are told, were too much occupied in private feuds to have either time or means for defending the country against the invaders,—if, indeed, there were any Saxon kings at this time,—if the Danes were not the actual sovereigns of the province. It is certain that all the historians of Denmark (who are confirmed by the Icelandic chronicles) speak of such a dynasty, and assure us that the sons of Ragnar Lod- 793 to 868.

* See before, page 150.
† Saxonis Grammatici Hist. Dan. Ynlinga Saga, cap. 46.
‡ See page 120.

brog were its kings. We see no reason to dispute this statement. There is, however, a sad confusion in the chronology. If Ragnar died in 794, and his sons avenged him in little more than a year afterwards, they could not be at the head of the armament which, in 866, appeared off the coast. Probably they and their successors reigned from the close of the eighth to the tenth century, and the confederated armament of 866 was one on a larger scale, and headed by other leaders. What confirms this inference is the fact that at this time Harald Harfager was subduing the petty kings of Norway; and that many of them, preferring freedom to the despotism of a master, left the country with their bravest warriors. During this period, all the churches and monasteries of the province were destroyed. In 828, the Danish power in Northumberland must have been great, or they would not have been powerful enough to defeat Egbert, the conqueror of so many Saxon kingdoms, and the founder of the English monarchy. After the year 866, when, as we believe, there were many Norwegians in England, new atrocities were committed,—atrocities which threw all former ones into the shade. The monastery of Tynemouth, which had been restored, was soon in flames; that of Lindisfarne shared the same fate; yet the monks were so fortunate as to escape with the relics of St. Cuthbert. From the smoking ruins of Lindisfarne, Halfdan, one of the chiefs, hastened to the monastery of Coldingham. "According to Matthew of Westminster and succeeding writers, the nuns of Coldingham nobly redeemed the reputation of their establishment from the stain which had covered it in the time of St. Cuthbert. The monastery was now, as in the former case, governed by an abbess, named Ebba; who, if the historian be credible, deserves the honours of canonisation somewhat better than her predecessor. Hearing that it was the custom of the barbarians first to violate, and then to destroy, virgins consecrated to God, she assembled the sisterhood in the chapter house, and exhorted them to save

their chastity at the expense of their beauty. With a knife she dreadfully disfigured her countenance; and her example was followed on the spot by all the nuns. The Danes soon forced their gates; but, turned with horror from their embraces, and quickly consumed both them and their nunnery. Though the monk of Westminster lived so long after the time, he might follow some better guide than tradition—some record now lost; nor is the fact itself either improbable or unparalleled. The same noble conduct is related of the nuns of Ecija, during the Mohammedan invasion of Spain. During seven years similar depredations followed throughout most of Northumbria. Wherever the Danes penetrated, ecclesiastics were massacred, churches and monasteries were levelled with the ground; the whole country, in fact, became a Danish province, governed by princes of the royal house of that kingdom. Great as was the evil produced by these merciless pagans; though the monks, as an order, were almost wholly annihilated, and civilisation was destroyed, yet the invasion itself led to the conversion of the invaders. Resolved to remain in the country which they had conquered, to cultivate the lands which they had divided among themselves, they were compelled to enter into relations of amity with the inhabitants, from whose example, or by whose persuasion, they soon embraced the faith of Christ. That the Danish princes were soon no less devout than their Saxon brothers appears from the splendid donation of all the country between the Wear and the Tyne, made by Guthred to the cathedral of St. Cuthbert, now transferred to Chester-le-Street." Out of evil comes good,—a proof of God's particular providence.*

But the atrocities of the Northmen at this period are most graphically described by the abbot Ingulf. After the destruction of Bardney, the pirates hastened to the monastery of Croyland. "It was midnight: the abbot

86. to 87

* Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. i. Europe during the Middle Ages, vol. iii.

Theodore and his monks had risen to matins when the enemy drew near: the younger brethren the abbot immediately commanded to seek a place of refuge, with their papers, relics, and jewels; while he himself, accompanied by the more aged monks, and some children, awaited whatever fate might be reserved for them. Perhaps he hoped that the grey locks of some, and the infancy of others, might awaken pity even in pagans. But they forgot, says Ingulf, the old verse,

"Nulla fides pietasque viris qui castra sequuntur."

But he was prepared for any event,—to live or fall with his establishment. Having taken an affectionate leave of about thirty junior monks, he and his devoted companions returned to the church, finished the matins, and celebrated mass. They had just communicated when the pagans arrived, forced the gates, and rushed into the cloisters. The silence which they found might have induced them to believe the monastery was utterly forsaken, had not the distant chaunting of the monks fallen on their ears. They hastened to the church and burst into the choir; one chieftain instantly seized the abbot by the hair with his left hand, while the right severed the head from the body. The officiating clergy shared the same fate at nearly the same moment: the children and the aged monks were tortured for the purpose of discovering whither the treasures had been conveyed; but as the former were unable, and the latter unwilling, to disclose the secret, their sufferings were soon terminated by death. Of all these helpless inmates, one only was saved,—a boy ten years old, whose innocence made an impression on one of the chieftains. He had fled to the refectory with the subprior, whom he saw murdered, and whose fate he begged to share; but the chieftain tore the cowl from his head, threw a Danish cloak over him, and commanded him to follow him. The three succeeding days were passed in plunder,—in minutely examining every corner or crevice where treasure might be buried. The shrine of St.

Guthlake was overthrown; the marble monuments around it, containing the mortal remains of saints and benefactors to the house, were opened, in search of rings, chalices, and other precious effects which the Saxons entombed with the bodies of the great; the bones were thrown on the ground, and the sculpture defaced. On the fourth day the extensive pile was on fire. Medeshamstede, or Peterborough, also an abbey of royal foundation, was next visited. Its noble library, its numerous treasures, which there had not been time to remove, its magnificent architecture, rendered it one of the proudest monastic establishments in the island. Within its gates many of the neighbouring inhabitants had placed their most valuable effects, and thither many had fled for protection. For a while the edifice made a noble stand; but a stone thrown by an unknown hand having mortally wounded the brother of Ubbo, the Danish king, the barbarian and his followers made a more desperate attack, forced the gates, and commenced the massacre. With his own hand Ubbo sacrificed the hoary abbot and eighty-three monks to the shade of his brother; while the strangers fell under the hands of his followers. The booty was immense; but the value was trifling compared with that of the MS. treasures which were consumed with the monastery. The conflagration continued a fortnight. While it raged, the monks who had fled from Croyland returned to their former abode, sat themselves down amidst the smoking ruins, and wept. So overcome were they by the melancholy sight, that some time elapsed before they proceeded to bury the scorched bodies of their brethren. Having performed this sad office, and elected another abbot, they were solicited to perform the last duties to the monks of Medeshamstede. With sorrowful hearts they deposited the bones of the abbot and the eighty-three monks in the same grave, over which Godric, their superior, raised a monument, engraven with the history of this sad tragedy. From Medeshamstede the pirates, exulting in their success, hastened to the Isle

of Ely, to inflict the same fate on the flourishing cor vent which had been founded by the piety of St. Edi thryda. Its cloisters were inhabited by the noble ladies of England. Some fled; but the greater numb preferred the death which they knew awaited ther The place was taken; the nuns were ravished ar slaughtered; and the holy pile was reduced to ashes. That such atrocities could be committed would be ir credible were they not too well attested to admit scepticism.*

870 to 924. The struggles of Alfred with the ferocious Northme have been detailed in more than one volume connecte with the present.† During this period, there was Danish monarchy in Northumbria, which, as we ha already observed, had been probably founded by th sons of Ragnar Lodbrog. That monarchy subsisted i the reign of Edmund, the son of Alfred; and it was full vigour on the accession of Athelstane. So powerfu indeed, was Sigtrug, king of that province, that Athe stane, to insure his friendship, conferred on him th hand of his sister. The condition of this marriage w that Sigtrug should embrace Christianity, and becom the vassal of Athelstane. In five years, however, th restless barbarian put away his wife, and relapsed in idolatry. To punish the insult, Athelstane invade Northumbria; but Sigtrug died before his arrival; ar the two sons of Sigtrug, Anlaf and Godfrey, fled,— th former into Ireland, the latter into Scotland; ar Athelstane annexed Northumbria to his English crown.

924 to 934. That Athelstane should so immediately raise th power of the Saxon kingdom, as not only to defeat th Danes and Northmen, but to subjugate a province whic had always been hostile to it, shows what may b effected by the energies of a single mind. Not satisfie with expelling the enemy from Northumbria, he pur sued them into Scotland, far north of the boundar

* Europe during the Middle Ages, vol. iii.
† See Mackintosh's England, vol. i.; and Europe during the Midd Ages, vol. iii.
‡ Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. i.

which had hitherto arrested the progress of English victory: his fleets penetrated into Caithness, ravaging the coast as they proceeded. And he is believed, at this period, to have located a multitude of English colonists in the southern provinces of Scotland, and thus to have laid the foundation of the present lowland population. But Northumbria was too recent a conquest, and too dissimilar from the rest of the monarchy, to remain secure. The chiefs of Denmark and Norway, who had so long regarded England as a kind of inheritance, armed in greater numbers than before, to check the rising power of Athelstane. They were joined by all the noted sea kings of the age; by many of the jarls or kings who had settlements in Ireland and Scotland; by the king of the Scots, and by several Welsh chiefs. Never, we are told, had so formidable an armament menaced England as that which, in 934, entered the Humber. It consisted of 615 ships, headed by Anlaf, whom Constantine of Scotland had induced to make the attempt. Anlaf, who, on his father's death, had obtained for himself a principality in Ireland, had a reputation for skill and valour equalled by none of his countrymen. Of the two thanes whom Athelstane had placed over Northumbria, one was defeated and slain; the other, after the battle, fled to acquaint the English monarch with the defeat. He prepared for the contest with courage; and, to gain time until his forces were collected, entered into negotiations. When his army was completed, he hastened into the north, and was in presence of the pirates before they knew he had left the Saxon provinces. If any faith is to be placed in either Saxon or Norwegian writers, Anlaf, assuming the disguise of a harper, penetrated to the tent of Athelstane, and entertained that monarch with his art. His object, we are told, was to ascertain the position of the tent previous to a nocturnal attack, which had been determined by the confederate chiefs. But this incident, no less than the recognition of Anlaf by one of the Saxon outposts, is too romantic to be easily credited.

What appears to be certain is, that Athelstane removed his tent to another part of the field; and that the bishop of Sherburn, who encamped in the place which he had abandoned, was slain before the morning's dawn. In the night there was a skirmish, which caused much effusion of blood, and was advantageous to neither party. When day arrived, the celebrated battle of Brunanburgh was fought. That town has escaped the researches of antiquaries; and all that can be conjectured is, that it was in some place north of the Humber. That the struggle was a desperate one might be inferred alike from the character of the combatants, and from the magnitude of the interests involved. Victory declared for Athelstane; Constantine of Scotland was nearly taken, and his son killed; the Cumbrians and Britons and Irish were destroyed, or put to flight, and the bravest warriors of the north remained on the field. This splendid advantage raised England in the esteem of all Europe, and impressed the Northmen with a salutary terror.*

934. The intercourse between Athelstane and Eric of the Bloody Axe we have before mentioned.† We have also related in what manner Sweyn of Denmark‡ defeated Ethelred II., and eventually became king of England. The history of that monarch brings down that of the Scandinavian expeditions to the year 1014.

400 to 840. 2. *France.* The devastations of the Saxons and the Jutes on the coasts of Gaul commenced as early as those on the coast of Britain. We read of them in the third and every succeeding century, until France was too strong to be assailed with impunity, — until piracy was extinguished in the north of Europe. In the fifth century, the pirates besieged Orleans, and formed many settlements on the western coast. About the middle of the sixth, Hamlet of Jutland is said to have fought the Franks in person, and to have been defeated. The

* The Saxon Chronicle, A. D. 937. Johnstone, Antiquitates Celto-Scandicæ, p. 31. See Europe during the Middle Ages, vols. iii. and iv.

† See page 187. ‡ See page 117.

period, however, of Hamlet, is purely conjectural; and his descent on the coast is equally so. But that the Normans were there is affirmed by the contemporary Gregory of Tours, who describes their ravages with much interest. Under the Carlovingians, the piratical armaments were more powerful than at any preceding time. In 795, the Danes ravaged Friesland; from 800, the coasts of Flanders and France were infested; nor could the genius and vast resources of Charlemagne punish their audacity. On witnessing their fugitive depredations, he is said to have predicted the trouble which they would cause his successors. Such a prediction required no supernatural discernment; but it proves that the monarch had formed a correct estimate of northern piracy. For the greater part of a century, however, they did not appear in any overwhelming numbers on the French coast. The forces of the Northmen were too much scattered over the deep, in England, Ireland, the Orkneys, and the Baltic, to admit of any considerable concentration at a given point. Their efforts, however destructive, were desultory, and might have been easily repelled, had there been any wisdom or any vigour in the government. But the sons of the emperor Louis were too eager to destroy each other, to have time for the chastisement of obscure pirates; and every year added to the severity of the scourge. In 840, Rouen was burnt; and many great monasteries of that province, defended as they were by numerous vassals, shared the same fate. The banks of two rivers — the Seine and the Loire — were ravaged from their mouths to the interior of France. Amboise was next burnt, and Tours was besieged; but St. Martin saved his city.*

The man whose ravages were to eclipse all former 840.
pirates was Hastings, who headed the expedition into Touraine. Of him we have no mention in the annals of the north; our only information respecting him is from the French writers,— Dudo of St. Quentin, Wil-

* The French historians in the collection of Bouquet.

liam of Jumvieges, William of Poictiers, Orderic Vital, Robert Wace, and Benedict of St. Maur. In this absence of Scandinavian authority, the critics of the north have endeavoured to identify him with such of the Swedish, Danish, or Norwegian chiefs, as bore a name kindred with his own. But the account of Wace, however inaccurate in its details, is the only one that can be followed. There was a king of Denmark, says this ecclesiastic, Lotroc, an old man, who had a son called Biorn, surnamed Ironside, from his defensive armour. Finding that his kingdom was too populous, he revived an ancient law, which forced all the sons of a family except one, to seek their fortunes on the deep. A considerable number of vessels being prepared, Biorn was placed over the fleet; but, as his years were yet tender, he was subjected to the councils of Hadding, or Hasting, a veteran chief of the pirates. Who was this king? Modern writers unanimously affirm that he was the celebrated Ragnar Lodbrog. In this case, Biorn could be no other than Biorn Ironside, who, on the death of his father in 794, ascended the throne of the Swedes. Yet how will this chronology agree with the facts? The expedition of Hastings must be referred to the middle of the ninth century; when, if any dependence is to be placed on the critical historians of the north, Biorn had been dead forty years. But wherever the name of this Lodbrog occurs, there is the same chronological confusion; nor can we be surprised that Suhm makes two heroes of that name,—one of the eighth, the other of the ninth century.*

842 to 844. When Hastings arrived off the coast, he divided his fleet into two squadrons. One ascended the Somme, set fire to the towns which lay on its banks, and murdered the inhabitants. The other proceeded to the mouth of the Loire, and committed the same depredations on its banks. Nantes was taken, and all who had sought refuge in the cathedral were put to death. Churches,

* See his reign, in the chapter on Denmark, page 102. Wace, Roman de Rou, tom. i. part i.

monasteries, towns, hamlets,— everything which lay in the passage of the invaders, was destroyed. Proceeding to the south, they ravaged the coasts of Galicia, but were defeated by the king of Leon. This check forced them from Spain; but they spread their wild hordes over the south of France, from Thoulouse to the Pyrenees. As they had established a kind of wooden fortress on the Loire, they now erected one on the Garonne. But they were not satisfied with the failure of their arms against Spain; they were determined, by future successes, to blot out the memory of this disgrace; and, with a larger fleet, they returned to that peninsula. Lisbon, then an inconsiderable town, was plundered; passing to the south and east, the armament ascended the Guadalquivir, and assailed the important city of Seville, then in the power of the Mohammedans. Strange was the chance which thus brought the robbers of Scandinavia and those of the Arabian deserts into collision with each other. But the followers of Odin had the advantage over those of Mohammed; doubtless because the latter were few in number, and unprepared for the attack. From this city they made some predatory excursions into the neighbouring country; but the Arabs, by surprising a part of their fleet, counterbalanced the advantage they had just gained.*

Whether Hastings was present in the expedition to Spain may be doubted. There were several chiefs of the pirates, from all parts of Scandinavia; and while one was laying waste the maritime coasts of the South, others were equally active on those of France. Hastings, however, was at the head of the party which, proceeding by way of Fescamp and Rouen, extended its ravages over most of Neustria and Bretagne, and even to the gates of Paris. All France was in consternation. The monks especially were surprised that their holy relics had no power

845 to 859.

* Wace, Roman de Rou, tom. i. Pontoppidan, Gesta et Vestigia Danorum extra Daniam, tom. i. p. 225, &c. Depping, Histoire des Expeditions Maritimes des Normands, tom. i. chap. 4.

to arrest the progress of the barbarians. St. Martin had saved Tours; but there was no saint to defend the magnificent religious houses which were now destroyed by the Northmen. When the enemy approached, the monks retired with the relics, heaping curses loud and deep on these "men of hell," these "spawn of the devil." But their curses were ineffectual as their relics, and the tide of destruction flowed on. Many were the presents which the Carlovingian kings made to the invaders to remove the scourge. As in England, the money was received, but the depredations were only transferred to some other part of the kingdom. But, so many were the armaments which every year arrived from the North, and so many the chiefs to be bribed, that the resources of the country were insufficient for the purpose. It was probably this circumstance which led Hastings into the Mediterranean. He had heard of Rome; and the glory no less than the advantage of sacking that celebrated city, led him to the shores of Italy. On his way, he plundered the coasts of Spain, of Africa, and those of the islands which he passed. Disembarking in Tuscany, he assailed Luna, which he is absurdly said to have mistaken for Rome; and failing in his attempt to carry it by storm, he recurred to an experiment which we have more than once read in the history of the north. He caused the inhabitants to be informed that he was disgusted with his manner of life; that he would repent; that he was the victim of an incurable disease; that he wished to be baptized before his death. The credulous ecclesiastics obtained a suspension of hostilities, and prepared for the ceremony which was "to wash this Ethiop white." On the day appointed, he was carried in a litter to the cathedral; and he acted his part to admiration. He received the holy rite with much appearance of devotion; all must see that his days were drawing to their close; and he begged that his bones might be deposited in one of the vaults beneath the church. That was sacred ground; and when surrounded by the ashes of

saints and martyrs, he might hope to escape the pursuits of the evil one. Who could refuse so humble a request? He was borne to his ship, which he was scarcely expected to see alive. No sooner was he on board, than he cast away his disease, and mentioned to his followers the plan which he had devised for the capture of the city. In a short time, a loud cry of grief was heard on board his vessel; the neophyte was dead, and preparations were made for the funeral. When the day appointed by the clergy arrived, the coffin, attended by all the chiefs, and a great number of warriors, was slowly borne from the ship to the cathedral. It was placed on a bier, near the choir of the church, and the funeral service was commenced. The congregation to witness the ceremony was great; it comprised the bishop, the clergy, the governor, the military, and the principal inhabitants. Mass was sung; the funeral hymns were chaunted; prayers for the requiem of the new-born soul were humbly offered; and the attendants advanced to the bier to lower the corpse into its last resting-place. At this moment, Hastings arose; his warriors drew their swords from beneath their long cloaks, which were at once thrown on the pavement; the doors were fastened; the work of carnage commenced, and every one present was laid dead in the place. The city was easily won; the inhabitants were massacred; the most precious effects borne to the ships, and the city consumed by fire. This may seem to be romance rather than history; but it is attested by so many writers, and is so conformable with the character of the pagan Scandinavians — at once violent and treacherous — that we dare not wholly reject it. The circumstances may be embellished; but the foundation of the story is probably true.*

While Hastings was in Italy, Biorn was pursuing the 85
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* Pontoppidan, Gesta et Vestigia Danorum, tom. i. p. 117—119. Wace, 86
Roman de Rou, tom. i. part i. For a parallel incident in Danish history,
see before, page 27.

work of destruction in France. In vain did Charles the Bald endeavour to expel him from the kingdom. Arms being ineffectual, negotiation was tried, and for a large sum Biorn consented to leave France. On his return, feeling that he was indisposed, he landed on the coast, and there died. While the French were congratulating themselves on this unexpected deliverance, they were thrown into consternation by the news that Hastings was just returned from Italy, and renewing his ravages. A misfortune which he had sustained on the passage — that of being compelled through the violence of the storm to throw overboard his numerous captives and most precious effects — made him the more eager to repair his fortunes. Entering the Rhone, and forming another entrenchment, he sent or headed detachments, which plundered Arles, Nismes, and most of the towns between the Alps and the Pyrenees. While thus occupied, another formidable body in the Seine, which had not shared in the treaty made by Biorn, ravaged the country to the gates of Paris. A third soon landed from the north, and commenced its career by the destruction of Amiens; while a fourth was equally mischievous in Flanders. Charles had, as before, recourse to negotiation. To the party which had destroyed Amiens he engaged to pay three thousand pounds weight of fine gold — an immense sum, and surely an exaggeration. It is, however, certain that a heavy tax was levied on the whole kingdom, and that in twelve months it was not wholly collected. But while the negotiation was pending, other armaments arrived, and even the king began to perceive that to purchase the retreat of one while so many others were left to pursue their depredations, was great folly. The negotiation, consequently, assumed a new character: and the pirates were now to be paid, not for leaving the kingdom, but for assisting to expel other bodies of their countrymen from it. Accordingly, there followed some desultory hostilities between these kindred robbers: but while they were thus occupied, other bands were carry-

ing their depredations into the heart of France. In the end, however, two of the armaments were persuaded to leave the shores — probably to join in the conquest of England, now governed by the feeble brothers of Alfred. But two yet remained — that of Hastings, and one stationed in the Loire. As the former was so dreaded, his neutrality, at least, was to be purchased on any terms. The abbot of St. Denis repaired to the head quarters of the chief, and with some difficulty prevailed on him to accept the royal offers. These were, a large sum of money, and the fief of Chartres with the title of count, on the condition of his embracing Christianity, and, as a French vassal, of aiding his liege superior against all enemies. The conditions were accepted, and the fierce pirate of the Baltic became one of the noblest peers of France.*

There now remained one piratical band only, — that on the Loire. As Paris had been more than once menaced, king Charles caused to be constructed on the Seine, below that city, a bridge, which was intended to arrest the progress of the hostile vessels, by its inability to admit the high masts. The writers of that period are minute in describing the excesses of these men, whom they accompany step by step. But the detail is tedious: in general they have more sympathy for churches and abbeys, than for the peasantry; and much louder is their cry when a solitary priest is massacred at the altar, or a sacred relic borne away, than when a town is put to the sword. No church, no monastery, no village or town was spared, — nothing which had not the means of self-defence. In 867 the robbers appeared in the vicinity of Paris: the bridge prevented their arriving under the walls; and they established their head quarters at the abbey of St. Denis. From thence they spread into the neighbouring country, and acquired immense booty. But a contagious disease appearing

863 to 876.

* Wace, Roman de Rou, tom. i. part i. Benoit de St. Maur, Chronique des Ducs de Normandie, liv. i. Pontoppidan, Gesta et Vestigia Danorum, tom. i. p. 214.

among them, and reducing their numbers, they slowly descended the river to wait for reinforcements, which were constantly arriving on the coast. But these reinforcements were now smaller than they had lately been: three fourths of all the pirates that swept the seas were in England, preparing to drive Alfred from the throne; and though those who remained in France effected great mischief, they would have been unable to resist any considerable body. They were not, however, inured to open campaigns: their hostilities were undertaken on a smaller scale, — were generally directed against some town or religious edifice where there was less danger of resistance; and when assailed (as was sometimes the case) by a much superior force, they retired into their fortified places. Angers, which they captured in 873, was one of these. On this occasion Charles the Bald exhibited an energy to which he was usually a stranger. He raised an army, marched to Angers, compelled the Northmen to evacuate it, and retire to their island entrenchments on the Loire. From this place their predatory excursions were resumed. But they are beneath the notice of history: they were undertaken, not for conquest, but for booty. The period, however, is arrived when we must accompany the exploits of one who did conquer, and who laid the foundation of a state powerful enough to effect the greatest revolutions in Europe.*

Rognevald was one of the jarls of Harald the Fairhaired. After serving his monarch in many difficult and dangerous enterprises, he fell in battle. Of his sons, one, Einar, became jarl of the Orkneys. Einar was an ambitious man. When Halfdan, a son of Harald, expelled him from their island, he obtained reinforcements in Scotland, returned to the charge, and deprived Halfdan of authority and life. Harald sailed to avenge the death of his son; but Einar was left in possession of the government. Not inferior

* Wace — Dudo de St. Quentin — Benoit de St. Maur — Pontoppidan.

to Einar in ambition or valour, was *Hrolf*, or *Rollo*,— the *Rou* of the Norman writers, — another son of Rognevald. According to the Icelandic sagas, he was so tall and so robust that no horse could carry him: hence his appellation of Hrolf *Gangr*, or the Walker Like his ancestors, he passed his time on the deep, and enriched himself by his depredations on the shores of the Baltic. The death of his father, and the rebellion of his elder brother, made him probably less attached to the interests of Harald, or less obedient to his commands. It is certain that he ventured to do what had been so rigorously forbidden, — to make a piratical descent on the Norwegian coast. The monarch was in the town which Rollo endeavoured to sack; and his indignation at the attempt led him to banish the pirate for ever. Whether this could be much punishment to one whose life had been passed far from Norway may be doubted. Collecting as great a number of vessels as were willing to join him, — and the dignity of his family no less than his own prowess made him a popular chief, — he sailed for France. In his way he appears to have made some piratical descents on the Scottish and English coasts; and though he could not make much impression on either, he did what, in his present circumstances, was quite as advantageous — he loaded his ships with booty. Dudo of St. Quentin, and Wace, determined that the founder of the Norman dynasty shall be a favourite of heaven, introduce some visions and other miscellaneous appearances, which the historian must leave to the monastic chronicler. These are harmless, and may be despised; but when, to dignify the chief of some great family, history is perverted, a severer censure is necessary. Thus, Dudo (who is followed by many Norman writers) informs us that Rollo was powerful enough to become the ally and friend of Alfred; that by the Saxon monarch he was provided with a fleet to make war on the French king; that in gratitude for this aid he afterwards assisted Alfred — whom his subjects or the

Danes had dethroned — to reascend the throne. How living writers could fall into the absurdity of receiving such statements, which are contrary to the unanimous voices of contemporary history, is surprising.*

876 to 888. The year in which Rollo arrived in the south is not very clearly established. Schoning has 995; but this will not bear the test of scrutiny, for the French and Norman writers assert that he was occupied above thirty years in his subjugation of Normandy, and we know that he was recognised its duke in 912. Asser of St. David's — a contemporary — has the year 876, and he is confirmed by the writers nearest to the period; yet there are some chronological difficulties which we cannot remove. Harald of Norway did not undertake the voyage to the Orkneys before the year 895; and the banishment of Rollo is assigned to the year following. The only way to reconcile this anachronism is by the conjecture that Rollo, being exiled for piracy in 876, joined his countrymen and the Danes, who were ravaging England and France; that he established himself at Rouen, but frequently extended his devastations to the north and east of that city; that he was more than once in England, and perhaps in the north, before his recognition as duke of Normandy. But let us follow his footsteps. Landing at Walcheren, he defeated the count of Hainault, whom he captured, and exacted a heavy sum by way of ransom. Repairing to Rouen, he was not so ruthless as to destroy it: he accepted from the archbishop a sum of money, fortified it, and made it the basis of his operations against the French king. His arrival threw France into consternation; and Hastings was sent to learn his object, which he coolly replied was — conquest. But whether at this period he proceeded far in his operations may well be doubted. His name does not appear in the siege of Paris, which took place in 886, nor in many other enterprises which from 876 to 896—that is, twenty years—afflicted France.

* Wace, Roman de Rou, tom. i. part ii. Pontoppidan, Gesta et Vestigia, tom. i. (sub annis).

Yet the names of other chiefs are specified. As we have already conjectured, he was probably for some years in England, or in the north. Certainly he could not have entered on that splendid career which led to his elevation, before the year 890, or later still. Yet it is possible that he might be joined with the other chiefs in the devastations which, from 876,—during full thirty years,—afflicted the whole of France. However this be, in ten years after his first disembarkation, siege was laid to Paris. It is described by a contemporary poet, — by an eye-witness, Abbo, monk of Fleury. It was of considerable duration, and many were the desperate assaults which were made upon the city; but they were as bravely repelled; and the siege was raised. Yet the Northmen did not retire further than the abbey of St. Germain's, where they continued for some time to despatch their destructive hordes. As no great enemy was before them, they split into two bodies; and while one was collecting booty and burning villages, another laid siege to Chartres. In this attempt, however, they failed, — a result which Wace ascribes to the virtue of a certain relic.* A new attack was made on Paris, but with as little effect. At this juncture arrived the emperor Charles the Fat, to succour the capital; and the expulsion of the pirates seemed inevitable. But far different was the result: without striking a blow, he negotiated, and agreed to give the pirates seven hundred pounds of gold, with permission to ravage the two sides of the Seine into Burgundy, provided they would then leave—not France, but the central provinces. They received the money, and ravaged Burgundy; but they had no intention to forsake the fertile plains of the interior for the dreary maritime coast.†

* De la sainte *Kemise* ke la dame vesti,
Ki mere e vierge fu quant de lie dex naski,
Out Rou si grant poun et tant s'en, esbahi,
N'i osa arester; vers als nes tost s'enfui.

† Abbonis Floriacensis Poema de Obsidione Parisiensi, lib. i. et ii. Pon-

888 to 896. Though Eudes defeated the pirates, this was merely a temporary check, — so temporary as scarcely to arrest their progress. Meaux was besieged and taken; Champagne, Lorraine, and Burgundy were ravaged; Troyes, Chalons, Toul, Verdun were occupied; Picardy and Artois, to the borders of the sea, were laid waste. Contemporaneously with these rapid successes were the depredations of the pirates who were still entrenched on the Loire. There was no rest for France; no hope of expelling her daring intruders. Though Eudes had triumphed over the pirates, the next time they assailed that capital he was glad to purchase their retreat. Descending the river to its mouth, they next assailed the fortress of St. Loo. It was compelled to capitulate; but no conditions were binding on these wretches, who regarded oaths as vain formalities: instead of security for their lives, the inhabitants found a grave. Bretagne was now ravaged; but duke Alan was braver and more fortunate than Eudes. Though the invaders were 15,000 in number, he assailed them, at a moment, too, when they were flushed with victory over a rival duke. His success was splendid; thousands were left dead on the field; the rest were put to flight. But even this success was scarcely a check to these wild sons of the deep. Driven from England by the genius of Alfred, they came in fearful numbers to France. They occupied both the coasts and the centre; and they traversed every part of the kingdom with an impunity surprising to posterity.*

896 to 909. In how many of these embassies Rollo was an actor, we shall not venture to decide. Whether he was not much in England, as well as in France; whether he was not alternately engaged in both kingdoms, must be left to the reader's own inference. This, at least, is certain, that from the year 896 his name and exploits

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toppidan, Gesta et Vestigia, tom. i. p. 244—264. Wace, Roman de Rou, part ii. Depping, Histoire des Expeditions, tom. ii. chap. 7.

* The same authorities.

fill the page of French history, to the exclusion of many other names which had before occupied it. From that year, too, must be dated those rapid and decisive successes which insured his future greatness. The banishment of so many pirates from the north by Harald Harfager now sent larger swarms to the south. The first care of Rollo was to strengthen the fortifications of Rouen, which had been destroyed in his absence (whether that absence were in England, or the interior of France, we will not decide), and which he now made formidable. Next, both sides of the Seine felt the vigour of his genius. The forces which were sent to oppose him he defeated. But we cannot follow his steps. Let it be sufficient to observe, that he was almost uniformly successful; that in several battles he was the victor; that Bayeux, Evreux, Nantes, and many places of inferior note were taken by him; that he partitioned the lands which he subdued among his warriors, to be held of him as the liege head, under the usual feudal conditions. From this policy and this success, we should infer that he was in one respect the counterpart of his countrymen — that he protected, instead of destroying, the peasantry — that he encouraged, instead of abolishing, Christianity. Probably much of his moderation was owing to the councils of Franco, archbishop of Rouen, his chief vassal. Alarmed at the progress of his arms, Charles the Simple applied through Franco for a truce, which was readily granted. There can, indeed, be little doubt that the success of Hastings was before the eyes of Rollo, and that he aspired to a lordship much more ample than Chartres, —one which he should compel the French king to cede to him, and thereby give him a proud seat amongst the princes of Europe. Hence the readiness with which he listened to Franco, especially when assured that Charles had already contemplated his investiture with some portion of his new conquests. The truce, indeed, was not agreeable to some of the French peers, and hostilities were recommenced, much to the injury of

France. There was not a province which some of his bands did not traverse; there was scarcely one which he did not plunder; and though frequently repulsed, they always returned to the charge. The French began to murmur, and Charles to apply himself still more seriously to a permanent understanding with Rollo. Hostilities had availed nothing; France had lost many thousands of her bravest defenders, and hundreds of thousands of her peaceful inhabitants; and if the invaders had also lost many considerable detachments, their ranks were speedily replenished by new immigrations from the north.*

910 to 912. About the year 910, or perhaps the year following, Franco, at the command of Charles, opened the important negotiation with this adventurer. The offers were — Neuctria with the ducal title, and the hand of Gisele, a natural daughter of the king, provided he would embrace Christianity, and become the liege vassal of the French crown. This prelate was an eloquent, persuasive man, and had already considerable influence over the mind of Rollo. But that chief objected to one of the conditions as not sufficiently liberal. Neuctria he had already; and there was no great generosity in recognising his title to that which nobody could wrest from him. Besides, it was, he alleged, barren and half-peopled; but he forgot that this result was his own work and that of his countrymen. Franco then offered a portion of Bretagne — perhaps the whole — as an arriere-fief; and Rollo no longer hesitated. He had a wife already, Popa, the daughter of a French count; and her he repudiated, — on what ground is matter of dispute; but surely there need be none. Rollo was not yet a Christian; he had not been married in any Christian church; how then could the church recognise the union? Gisele, therefore, was to become the bride of the chief. A meeting of Rollo and of Charles was

* Authorities: — Dudo of St. Quentin, Wace, Benoit of St. Maur, Pontoppidan, and Depping. The last-named writer makes a sad confusion of the chronology.

appointed at St. Clair-sur-Epte, a place on the frontier of Normandy. In 912, both repaired to that town,—Charles with a splendid retinue of nobles and prelates, by whose advice he had entered into a treaty with the new vassal. Here the investiture took place; Rollo did homage to the sovereign, and both acts were witnessed by the French nobles. To kneel before the monarch, hold up his hands between those of the superior, and repeat a certain formula called an oath, were no great acts of degradation; and to these Rollo had no objection. But the homage was not complete until the regal foot was kissed. To this humiliation he would not stoop, and he was allowed to perform it by deputy. A warrior of his suite was accordingly brought forward; but he was no less proud than his master; and on the royal foot being somewhat raised, he raised it still higher, and threw the poor monarch on his back, amidst the suppressed laughter of the assembly.*

Thus was a fierce, an obscure pirate invested with 912.
one of the most important fiefs in Europe. His successors were, like him, valiant and politic; and by their means the duchy was raised to a height of power that rendered it a rival at once to the French and English kings. By what degrees, however, this progressive greatness was achieved, must be left to the historian of France. It is sufficient for us to observe that the new state became a successful barrier against the pagans of Scandinavia. Not that, both in Bretagne and Gascony, new armaments did not arrive and do some mischief; but it was transient, and no fear was entertained that the most powerful cities of France would ever again be assailed by them. When they did appear in any district, they were soon repulsed. The policy, therefore, of erecting Neustria into a state, and confiding it to the government of a race of heroes, was a wise one. A successor of Charles the Simple endeavoured to dethrone a grandson of Rollo; but, as we have already seen, Harald of Denmark sailed to the aid of the

* The same authorities.

young duke, took the French king prisoner, and restored the relation between duke and monarch to the state in which it was on the death of Rollo.*

3. *Ireland.* At what period the Northmen first commenced their depredations in Ireland is, like many other points of northern history, impossible to be established. The Irish annals themselves contain no record of such transactions prior to the eighth century; yet they must have happened before. If little reliance is to be placed on the statement of Saxo, that Fridleif I. and Frode III. conquered and plundered Dublin, it would be rash to affirm that there was not a very ancient intercourse between that island and Scandinavia. Whether the Lochlans, or Dwellers of the Lakes, were Scandinavians, or the Scottish Highlanders, has been matter of great dispute. We know, however, that, in the ninth century, the Danes were expressly called Lochlans by the Irish, and that the term was used at an earlier period to designate some maritime people with whom the natives had a frequent intercourse. The term, however, might be applied to both the Gael and the Northmen, — to all maritime nations. On this subject let us hear the last and most eloquent of Irish historians: —

In proof of the Danes having been the people with whom this early intercourse was maintained, the authority of a number of modern historians has been adduced, according to whose accounts it would seem that, from a period preceding the birth of Christ, a succession of invasions of this island from Denmark had been commenced; and that, for some centuries after, a course of alternate hostility and friendship marked the relations between the two countries. Imposing, however, as is the array of northern authorities for this statement, the entire value of their united evidence may be reduced to that of the single testimony of that of Saxo Grammaticus, from whose pages they have all copied; and it is well known, for all the earlier portion of this eloquent writer's history, the foundation is as unsound and unreal as Scaldic fable and fallacious chronology could make it. The only circumstance that lends any semblance of credit to the accounts given by northern histo-

* Authorities: — Dudo of St. Quentin, Wace, Pontoppidan, Depping.

torians of the early fortunes of Ireland, is the known fact that the chief materials of their own history were derived from records preserved in Iceland: to which island inaccessible as it might seem to have been to the rude navigation of those days, it is certain that a number of Irish missionaries of the seventh and eighth centuries contrived to find their way. We learn, from more than one authentic source, that, when the Norwegians first arrived in Iceland, they found there traces of its having been previously inhabited by a Christian people; and the Irish books, bells, and holy staves, left behind by the former dwellers, sufficiently denoted the religious island from whence they had migrated. The title of Papas, which it appears was borne by them, has led to the conclusion that they must have been Irish priests who had adventurously fixed themselves in this desolate region; and, under the same name, they were found in the Orkneys when the Norwegians conquered those islands. Unless we were to suppose, however, that among the books left by those missionaries in Iceland, there were any relating to Irish history of which the chroniclers consulted by Saxo might have availed themselves, the incident, though curious and well attested, affords but slight grounds for placing reliance on these early northern annals, whose sources of information are known to have been spurious, and to whose general character for extravagant fiction, the few brief notices which they contain respecting Irish affairs, can hardly be expected to furnish an exception. Nor is any more serious credit due to them when they represent Dublin to have been in possession of the Danes a short time before the birth of Christ, than when they assert that London was built by these northern people about the very same period. Fabulous, however, as are these accounts, yet that, long before either the Danish or even the Saxon invasions, the coasts of the Baltic had sent forth colonies to the British Isles, is a fact to which foreign as well as domestic tradition bears testimony. The conjecture of Tacitus, that the people called Picts were a Germanic or northern race, is confirmed by the traditional accounts of this people, preserved in the chronicles of Britain; and all the early Scandinavian legends concur with the annals of Ireland in intimating, at some remote period, relations of intercourse between the two countries. We have seen, in a preceding part of this work, what almost certain grounds there are for believing that those Scyths, or Scots, who, at the time when Ireland first became known to modern Europe, formed the dominant part of her people, were a colony from some region bordering on the Baltic Sea which had, a few centuries before, gained possession of this island. From whatever part

these Scythian adventurers may have arrived, whether from the Cimbric peninsula, the islands of the Baltic, or the Scandinavian shores, it may be concluded that with that region the occasional intercourse was afterwards maintained, and those alliances and royal intermarriages formed of which, in our ancient traditions and records, some scattered remembrances still remain. With respect to those swarms of sea-rovers who, throughout the dark and troubled period we are now approaching, carried on their long career of havoc and blood, though known most popularly in English history by the general name of Danes, they are but rarely, and not till a late period, thus designated in our annals. By Tigernach, the earliest existing annalist, they are invariably called Gâll, or Strangers; while, in the Annals of Inisfallen, of Ulster, and of the Four Masters, they are styled indifferently either Galls, Gentiles, Dwellers on the Lakes, or Pirates; but in not more than two or three instances are they called Normans, and as seldom Danes.*

795 to 820. We must be satisfied with the general inference that Ireland was visited by the Northmen as soon, or nearly as soon, as Scotland, and the Scottish islands. The first visit of which we have any record was in 795, in the reign of Aidan, monarch of the country. Leaving Iona, the monastery of which they had laid in ashes, the sea kings proceeded to the north-western coast, landed, and ravaged the country as far as Roscommon. This was, probably, the work of years: here, as everywhere else, they would form intrenchments at the mouths of the great rivers, the banks of which, for twenty leagues round, they would lay waste as far as boats could ascend. They appear to have been twelve years in the country before any serious resistance was made. In 812 they were defeated; but defeat, so long as the sea was open, and communication with it maintained by navigable rivers, was speedily repaired. In 815, a Norwegian chief named Turges, or Thorgils, arrived with a more powerful armament, and, during thirty years, was a dreadful scourge not only to the northern, but to the eastern and southern districts of the island. Their fury was peculiarly directed against the holy places, especially

* Moore's History of Ireland, vol. ii.

the monastery of Banchor and the cathedral of Armagh, which they revisited and destroyed every time they heard of their restoration. Every cell, every chapel, every holy place to which the superstitious piety of the age resorted, naturally attracted their notice. But in the atrocities which they committed, and which the unanimous voice of every kingdom they visited — from Greece to Ireland — has immortalised, they must have been actuated by other motives than the hope of gain. If they were savage to the laity, they were demoniacal to the ecclesiastics. Probably their superior ferocity in the latter case may be explained by the deep hatred which the persecutions of Charlemagne had produced (as we have before intimated, under the term *Saxons* must also be included the Scandinavians, and perhaps some tribes of the great Slavonic family). But against that great man, we are not disposed to join in the hostility of some modern writers. The men with whom the emperor had to deal were without honour, without virtue of any kind, — men who regarded the most solemn oaths as empty sounds, who loved war as much for the plunder which it brought as for the gratification of shedding blood. But were not the Saxons and Danes fighting for their liberties? True, and the greatest of them was the liberty to plunder the rest of the world, — to trample under foot all humanity, all moral virtue, — to be the tyrants of Europe. Charlemagne triumphed over them, and we rejoice at his success; nor, had he exterminated the whole people, should he be censured by posterity.*

The desolation which, at this period more than any other, afflicted Ireland, might easily have been averted, had there been a central government strong enough to rally around it the hearts and arms of the people. But the monarch was merely a titular one, and less powerful than his vassals. Instead of harmony there was

820 to 848.

* Saxonis Grammatici, Hist. Dan. lib. i. tom. v. Waræus, De Antiquitatibus Hiberniæ, cap. 24. Pontoppidan, Gesta et Vestigia, tom. ii. p. 299, &c. Moore, History of Ireland, vol. ii. chap. xv. and xvi.

dissension only among the members of the body politic; and this evil was aggravated a hundred fold by the mischievous practice of hiring the aid of strangers. When, in 837, another powerful reinforcement arrived from the north, and commenced its depredations on the banks of the Liffey and the Boyne, the evil which, since 795, had afflicted the country, was increased a thousand fold. There was not, says the eloquent historian of Ireland, "a single spot of renown in the ecclesiastical history of our country, not one of those numerous religious foundations, the seats and monuments of the early piety of her sons, that was not frequently, during this period, made the scene of the most fearful and brutal excesses." Let it not be forgotten that this frequency of destruction evinces the zeal of the Irish in rebuilding their holy places, and the intrepidity with which they repaired to them, even when assured that they should be there met by incarnate demons, and sent to aggrandise the "noble army of martyrs." In general the higher dignitaries were spared for the sake of the ransom. The mischief was, that the head quarters of Turges always presented a rallying-point for the defeated Northmen, and for such new comers as arrived on the coast. The way in which this veteran chief at last met his fate, is romantically told by Giraldus de Barri. He had fallen in love, says that amusing Welchman, with the daughter of the king of Meath, and he made known his love to the father. Pretending to comply with his suit, a day was appointed on which Turges, attended by fifteen followers, was to meet his bride, accompanied by as many maidens, on a small island of Loch-Var. To the place of meeting, however, the Irish lady was escorted by fifteen young men in the female garb, and they destroyed the tyrant. Probably the relation of the native annalists, that he was drowned in that lake by the king of Meath, is the true one. However this be, his death was a fatal blow to the Scandinavian power in Ireland. From this period (844) we read, indeed, of their depredations, of their formidable combin-

ations, even of their victories; but there was no longer the same hope, the same confidence in their invincibility.*

In 849, another powerful armament arrived from the north. Their policy was not merely to plunder, but to take advantage of the civil wars which desolated Ireland, by hiring their services to the highest bidder. In 850, they were employed by the monarch in his contest with a native king, and the example was speedily followed by his royal subjects. In this year, too, we perceive that Dublin was in the power of the Northmen, and one of their chief seats: probably it had been so for half a century, or longer still. It was fortunate for the Irish that the different Scandinavian people who thus harassed them were often the enemies of each other. Sometimes they fought under the banners of Christian princes; at other times they contended alone. Thus, in 850, the Dubh-Gals, or black strangers, assailed the Fin-Gals, or white strangers, of Dublin. Who were they? Were they Scottish Highlanders? or were the former Slavonic, the latter Scandinavian, pirates? This question can never be answered to our entire satisfaction; but we cannot easily believe that any chief of the Highlands could equip so powerful an armament as that which assailed the establishment of Dublin. Three years afterwards, Anlaf, Ivar, and Sitric, all brothers, and princes from Scandinavia, arrived with a great armament, and seated themselves in three great stations, — Dublin, Limerick, and Waterford. Probably the last-named city was founded by Sitric. His two brothers considerably extended their frontiers. They appear, too, so far to have acted in concert as to compel the Irish princes to pay them an annual tribute, — something like the Danegelt, which was so oppressive to the English. Anlaf, indeed, was a remarkable character; but if the chronology be correct, which places his arrival in the year 853, he must not be confounded with the prince whom, in 924, Athelstane defeated.

849 to 872.

* The same authorities.

His kingdom of Dublin, which comprehended the county and much of its neighbourhood, was amplified no less than defended by him, with success. Not that advantages were not sometimes won from him. On one occasion he was pursued into his capital, and his territory wasted to its very gates. But this, at such a period, when everything depended on a surprise, was a very ordinary result; and that very month he might be able to extend his ravages to the centre of the island. That he frequently did so, we know,—sometimes alone, sometimes in conjunction with his brothers, at other times as the ally of the native princes. But that they were always in the country does not appear probable. If this Ivar be the man who was also king of Northumberland, his territories in England must have frequently required his presence. Anlaf, too, had a principality on this side the channel; for he is styled king of all the Northmen in Ireland and Britain. But connected with him, with his royal brothers, and their reputed father, Ragnar Lodbrog, are so many chronological difficulties, that we can never reconcile them. One of these princes, according to the Annals of Ulster, died in 874; as all came in the middle of the century, none could long survive that period; even then, if they were the sons of the Ragnar who was killed in 794, and who immediatiately afterwards descended on the Northumbrian coast, they must have reached an age nearly centennial. That there has been a sad confusion of names —for all were common in the Scandinavian annals — is undoubted. Then the confusion in the orthography of proper words — Anlaf, for example, being written Alaf, Olaf, Amlain, Amlaiph, &c. — must add to the hopelessness of the historian's task. Three kings of this name, all celebrated during the first half of the ninth century, could not be the princes who, under the same names, obtained so much celebrity during the first half of the tenth. Either, therefore, the chronology is wrong, or the events are for ever confounded. In this, as in every other case, historians have adopted th e same

mode of solution, — that there were two individuals of the name existing at periods considerably removed from each other.*

For many years after this period, we read that the Northmen were in possession of Dublin, Limerick, and Waterford, the chiefs of which had the regal title. Early in the tenth, indeed, they were expelled from the first of these cities by the people of Leinster; but the misfortune must have been soon repaired: for in a few years afterwards, we find Godfrey, grandson of Ivar, reigning there, and forcing tribute from most of the princes in the south. In 926, however, the pirates were signally defeated in Ulster, and eighty of their chiefs slain. The moral effect of these victories could be no other than to inspire the natives with new hope, and to procure them new successes. In 936, a greater loss was inflicted on the Scandinavians of Dublin. Five years afterwards, a similar advantage was gained over them; but either they must have had speedy means of reinforcing themselves, or their losses must have been grossly exaggerated. Nor could they be very unfortunate, if it be true that after their partial conversion to Christianity, in 948, they erected the great abbey of St. Mary, in the vicinity of Dublin. Yet they were sometimes tributary to Murkertach, one of the native kings, and the most celebrated hero of his age; and Dublin was frequently in the hands of the Irish; but it was as frequently retaken. These alternations of success and disaster comprehend the history of the Northmen in Ireland. But after the accession of Brian, surnamed Born, or the exacter of tributes,, the decline which had for above half a century been visible in the affairs of the pirates, became signally rapid. Many were the successive engagements in which that heroic chief had the advantage. In 969, he took and destroyed Limerick; in 972, he recovered the island of Iniscathy, to which the natives

872 to 1000

* Authorities: — Saxo Grammaticus, Pontoppidan, and the Irish Chronicles, as quoted by Usher and Moore.

attached no ordinary sanctity; in 980, a great confederation of the pirates who had penetrated into the heart of the country, were defeated by Malachi, the monarch of Ireland. This last victory deserves more than ordinary remembrance, from the fact that it gave freedom to some thousands of Irish captives. In 989, Dublin was beseiged during twenty days by the monarch of Ireland; and being forced to capitulate, it agreed that every house should annually pay one ounce of gold to the native hero. Probably this convention was ill kept: for in 994, he was again before that city. The success over the common enemy would have been more signal, had not Brian and the titular monarch been frequently at war with each other. But in 997, they united their forces, and marched on Dublin. Three years afterwards, we find the Danes as vassals in the armies of Brian.*

1000 to 1014. But we must hasten over the obscure battles of the period, and come at once to that which for ever broke the Danish sceptre in Ireland. In 1014, the Danes, having collected reinforcements from all parts of Europe, and concentrated their strength on the plain of Clontorf, fought a battle memorable in the Irish annals. Fortunately for the natives, the same necessity of combination made them for a moment suspend their private feuds, and march to resist the common enemy. Splendid was the victory which awaited Brian; but he fell, being treacherously assassinated in his tent in the hour of success. From this moment may be dated the destruction of the gigantic enemy. Dying struggles it exhibited, and struggles such as became a giant; but the blow was struck; and, however lingering the disease, the end was sure to be fatal.†

* The same authorities.

† Depping, Histoire, tom. ii. Moore, History, vol. ii. Pontoppidan, Gesta et Vestigia, tom. ii.

APPENDIX.

A.

KING OLUF THE SAINT.

(*Foreign Quarterly Review, No. XI.*)

1.

"King Oluf and his brother bold,
'Bout Norroway's rocks a parley hold.

2.

"'The one of the two who best can sail,
Shall rule o'er Norroway's hill and dale.

3.

"'Who first of us reaches our native ground,
O'er all the region shall king be crown'd.'

4.

"Then Harald Haardrode answer made:
'Ay, let it be done as thou hast said;

5.

"'But if I to-day must sail with thee,
Thou shalt change thy vessel, I swear, with me:

6.

"'For thou hast got the Dragon of speed,
I shall make with the Ox a poor figure indeed.

7.

"The Dragon is swift as the clouds in chace,
The Ox, he moveth in lazy pace.'

8.

"'Hear, Harald, what I have to say to thee:
What thou hast proposed well pleaseth me.

9.

" ' If my ship in aught be better than thine,
I 'll readily, cheerfully lend thee mine.

10.

" ' Do thou the Dragon so sprightly take,
And I with the Ox will the journey make.

11.

" ' But first, to the church we 'll bend our way.
Ere our hand on sail or on oar we lay.'

12.

" And into the church Saint Oluf trode,
His beautiful hair like the bright gold glow'd.

13.

" But soon, out of breath, there came a man : —
' Thy brother is sailing off as fast as he can.'

14.

" ' Let them sail, my friend, who to sail may choose,
The word of our Lord we will not lose ; —

15.

" ' The mass is the word of our blessed Lord.
Take water, ye swains, for our table board.

16.

" ' We will sit at board, and the meat we will taste,
Then unto the sea-shore quietly haste.'

17.

" Now down they all sped to the ocean-strand,
Where the Ox lay rocking before the land :

18.

" And speedily they to the ocean bore
The anchor, and cable, and sail, and oar.

19.

" Saint Oluf he stood on the prow when on board :
' Now forward, thou Ox, in the name of the Lord.'

20.

" He grappled the Ox by the horn so white :
' Hie now, as if thou went clover to bite.'

21.

" Then forward the Ox began to hie,
In his wake stood the billows boisterously.

22.

" He hallooed to the lad on the yard so high:
' Do we the Dragon of Harald draw nigh?'

23.

" ' No more of the pomps of the world I see,
Than the uppermost top of the good oak tree. —

24.

" ' I see near the land of Norroway skim
Bright silken sails with a golded rim. —

25.

" ' I see 'neath Norroway's mountains proud,
The Dragon bearing of sail a cloud. —

26.

" ' I see, I see, by Norroway's side,
The Dragon gallantly forward stride.'

27.

" On the Ox's ribs a blow he gave:
' Now faster, now faster, over the wave.'

28.

" He struck the Ox on the eye with force:
' To the haven much speedier thou must course.'

29.

" Then forward the Ox began to leap,
No sailor on deck his stand could keep.

30.

" Then cords he took, and his mariners fast
He tied to the vessel's rigging and mast.

31.

" 'Twas then — 't was then — the steersman cried:
' But who shall now the vessel guide?'

32.

" His little gloves off Saint Oluf throws,
And to stand himself by the rudder goes.

33.

" 'Oh! we will sail o'er cliff and height,
The nearest way, like a line of light.'

34.

" So o'er the hills and dales they career,
To them they became like water clear.

35.

" So they sail'd along o'er the mountains blue,
Then out came running the Elfin crew.

36.

" 'Who sail's o'er the gold in which we joy?
Our ancient father who dares annoy?'

37.

" 'Elf! turn to stone, and a stone remain
Till I by this path return again.'

38.

" So they sail'd o'er Skaaney's mountains tall,
And stones became the little Elves all.

39.

" Out came a Carline with spindle and rok:
'Saint Oluf! why sailest thou us to mock?

40.

" Saint Oluf, thou who the red beard hast,
Through my chamber wall thy ship hath pass'd.'

41.

" With a glance of scorn did Saint Oluf say:
'Stand there a flint-rock for ever and aye.'

42.

" Unhinder'd, unhinder'd they bravely sail'd on,
Before them yielded both stock and stone.

43.

" Still onward they sail'd in such gallant guise,
That no man upon them could fasten his eyes.

44.

'Saint Oluf a bow before his knee bent,
Behind the sail dropp'd the shaft that he sent.

45.

"From the stern Saint Oluf a bark shot free,
Behind the Ox fell the shaft in the sea.

46.

"Saint Oluf he trusted in Christ alone,
And therefore first home by three days he won.

47.

"And that made Harald with fury storm:
Of a laidly dragon he took the form.

48.

"But the Saint was a man of devotion full,
And the Saint got Norroway's land to rule.

49.

"Into the church Saint Oluf trode,
He thank'd the Saviour in fervent mood.

50.

"Saint Oluf walk'd the church about,
There shone a glory his ringlets out.

51.

"Whom God doth help makes bravely his way:
His enemies win both shame and dismay."

B.

SAINT OLAUS OR OLAVE, KING OF NORWAY, M.

(*From Alban Butler's Lives of the Saints.*)

He was son of Herald Grenscius, prince of Westfold in Norway, by his wife Asta, daughter of Gulbrand Kuta, governor of Gulbrand's Dale or Valley. He delivered his country from the tyranny under which the Swedes and Danes had for some time held it, whilst Norway was divided between Sweno, king of Denmark, Olave Scot-Konung, son of Eric king of Sweden, and Eric, son of Hacon, earl of Norway. In 1013, he sailed to England, and successfully assisted king Ethelred against the Danes after the death of Sueno, or Sweyn,

their king. He afterwards waged war against Olaus Scot-Konung, king of Sweden, till, making an advantageous peace, he took to wife the daughter of that king. These two princes about that time introduced the Romescot, a small annual tribute yearly to be paid to the apostolic see. St. Olave brought over from England several pious and learned priests and monks, one of whom, named Grimkele, was chosen bishop of Drontheim, his capital. The holy king did nothing without the advice of this prelate, and by his counsels published many wholesome laws, and abolished such ancient laws and customs as were contrary to the Gospel; which he did not only in Norway, but also in the isles of Orkney and of Iceland; though theentire conquest of Orkney was reserved to his son Magnus, who also subdued the isle of Man, as Cambden relates from the ancient Chronicle of Man.

Our religious king, having settled his dominions in peace, set himself to extirpate out of them the abominable superstitions of idolatry. He travelled in person from town to town, exhorting his subjects to open the eyes of ther souls to the bright light of faith. A company of zealous preachers attended him, and he demolished in many places the idolatrous temples. The heathens rebelled, and with the assistance of Canutus the Great, defeated and expelled him. St. Olave fled into Russia, whence he soon after returned, and raised an army in order to recover his kingdom, but was slain by his rebellious and infidel subjects in a battle fought at Stichstadt, north of Drontheim, on the 29th of July, 1030, having reigned sixteen years. These rebels seem to have been in the interest of Canute the Great, who arrived from England in Norway, took possession of that kingdom, and left his nephew Hackin viceroy; but he being soon after drowned at sea, Canute made his son Sweno viceroy of Norway. St. Olave's body was honourably buried at Drontheim, and the year following bishop Grimkele commanded him to be honoured in that church among the saints with the title of martyr. His son Magnus was called home from Russia in 1035, and restored to the throne. Sweno, who saw himself entirely abandoned, fled into Sweden. Magnus exceedingly promoted the devotion of the people to the memory of his father, the martyr, who was chosen titular saint of the cathedral of Drontheim. This church was rebuilt with such splendour and magnificence as to have been the glory and pride of all the north. Munster has given us a minute description of it, after Lutheranism was introduced; but it was soon after burnt by lightning. The body of St. Olave was

found incorrupt in 1098; and again when the Lutherans, in 1541, plundered the shrine, which was adorned with gold and jewels of an immense value, a treasure nowhere excelled in the north. The ship which carried the greatest part of this sacrilegious booty perished at sea in the road to Denmark; the rest was robbed at land, so that nothing of it came into the king of Denmark's hands. The Lutherans treated the saint's body with respect, and left it in the same place where the shrine had stood, in the inner wooden case, till, in 1568, they decently buried it in the same cathedral. A shirt or inner garment of St. Olave's is shown at St. Victor's in Paris. His shrine became famous by many miracles, and he was honoured with extraordinary devotion throughout all the northern kingdoms, and was titular saint of several churches in England and Scotland. He was called by our ancestors St. Olave, and more frequently St. Tooley; but in the Norway Chronicles Olaf Haraldson, and Olaf Helge, or the Holy.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE

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