them, and the Danelaw was occupied by their own kith and kin; so the raids of the early 980s were almost all directed against the coastline from Hampshire round to Cheshire, and were carried out by bands of limited size. But a change was heralded by Svein's succession to the Danish throne in 985 or soon thereafter. At what point in time Svein began to think of subduing England, as distinct from plundering it, no one can say—whether the idea came to him slowly as he first heard tell of and then witnessed for himself the lack of will in England under Ethelred, or whether it was the destruction of Olaf Tryggvason in the year 1000 and the murder of his own sister in the St. Brice's day massacre of November 1002 which half led, half drove him to a course of action as gratifying to his ambitions as to his need for revenge. In any case the contrast between the calculating and purposeful Svein and the uncounselled and fitful Ethelred is as sharp as the differing fates of their peoples.

But first the young Olaf Tryggvason, trained in arms among the Rus of Novgorod and graduated to piracy in the Baltic, hung in the wings awaiting his tempestuous entrance upon the English scene. Trustworthy details of his early exploits there are lacking in both English and Norse sources. The battle of Maldon, where one version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (A) puts Olaf (Unlaf, Anlaf) in command of the invading Norsemen, passed unmentioned in northern verse and saga. Byrhtnoth's brave but as it turned out foolhardy stand against overwhelming odds, his promise to glut the host with spear and sword and hard battle-play instead of the gold they demanded, found no remembrancer among the victors—and few imitators among the vanquished. Olaf's campaign over, he and Ethelred made a treaty together which offers valuable information about trade and shipping customs of the time (see p. 163 above), stipulates that all past offences between the peoples should be dismissed from mind, and concludes with an unadorned statement that 22,000 pounds of gold and silver have been paid to the vikings in exchange for peace.[1] The *Chronicle* under the same year speaks of a payment of 10,000 pounds. If there was one thing that everyone had learned by this time, whether payers or paid, it was that the truce resultant upon a forced tribute would be brief. Olaf Tryggvason is not heard of in England for a couple of years, but he would be back in 994, and in the meantime part of the viking force campaigned on, and two main

[1] Liebermann: *Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, Halle, 1903–16, I, 220 ff.

attempts to defeat them foundered on the treachery or cowardice of English leaders in the field.

Olaf Tryggvason, we have said, reappeared to plague England in 994. He had warships, warriors, and as ally king Svein Forkbeard of Denmark. The pattern of *víking* was changing when great kings and kings-to-be rather than the old-style captains brought their wave-stallions over the ocean's back to England. There are indications that already there were English noblemen prepared to take Svein as their king—men who could see no other remedy for the ineptitude of Ethelred. The martial glory of Alfred's line was now tarnished; in high places there was malaise where there should be judgement and valour; and the commonalty lost heart when half-heartedly led. But the storm of 994 was weathered, though at heavy price, because the alliance of Olaf and Svein was between two destined enemies and in the nature of things could not persist. Also, the men of London defended their city so bravely that the vikings failed in their attempt to burn it and suffered heavy casualties. Fetched up hard, they followed their usual practice, abandoned the siege, harried in Essex, Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire, found themselves mounts, and rode far and wide on errands of plunder and destruction. The English paid 16,000 pounds as the price of peace, and provisioned the host from the whole kingdom of Wessex. Olaf and Svein parted at once. The Dane returned home by way of Wales and Man, pillaging as he went. He was not the man to forget England, and would return. Olaf was baptized and left England for good. After 995 his fate lay in Norway.

While these two fleeting allies settled into their more natural role of enemies back home, the exploitation of English weakness continued. In the three years 997–9 a Danish army ravaged the coasts of Wessex almost at will, and one of the unhappiest entries in the *Chronicle* expresses the exasperation and dismay of the inhabiants there:

> 999. In this year the host again came round into the Thames, and so up the Medway to Rochester. They were opposed by the Kentish levies, and a sharp encounter took place: but alas! all too quickly they turned and fled, because they did not get the support they should have had, and the Danes had possession of the place of slaughter, and got horses and rode far and wide as they pleased, destroying and laying waste almost the whole of West Kent. Then the king with his counsellors decided to advance against them with both naval and

and levies; but when the ships were ready there was delay from day to day, which was very galling for the unhappy sailors manning the vessels. Time after time the more urgent a thing was the greater was the delay from one hour to the next, and all the while they were allowing the strength of their enemies to increase; and as they kept retreating from the sea, so the enemy followed close on their heels. So in the end these naval and land preparations were a complete failure, and succeeded only in adding to the distress of the people, wasting money, and encouraging their enemy. (Trans. Garmonsway.)

In the summer of 1000 the host crossed over to 'Richard's realm' of Normandy. Till 991 Normandy had been an ever-open point of repair for viking crews operating against England. That year Ethelred and Duke Richard I at the Pope's urging agreed not to comfort or harbour each other's enemies, but whether the agreement had much force or duration is open to question. There is no evidence that Duke Richard II received the Danes other than amicably in 1000. In 1001 they returned to Wessex on a course of depredation which ended only when Ethelred in the following year paid 24,000 pounds for the customary Danish pledge of peace. Within weeks he had married Duke Richard's sister Emma, probably out of a desire to improve his political relations with Normandy, but we have a hint that little improvement took place.[1] Norman sympathy for their not-so-distant blood-brothers in Scandinavia was natural and strong. Still, if Ethelred's Norman marriage brought no immediate balm to his hurt and griefs, it would in the long run provide him with a refuge. His other main deed of 1002 brought unrelieved disaster. This was his order for 'all the Danish people who were in England to be slain on St. Brice's day [November 13]', because he had been informed, says the *Chronicle*, that they were planning to kill him and his counsellors by treachery, and then seize his kingdom. Whether the report was fantasy, or the belated excuse for a vile and stupid deed, we cannot say. In any case the Danes of the Danelaw were practically immune from the possibility of massacre, but a massacre of kinds there was (we have a reference to such at Oxford), and among the victims tradition places king Svein's sister, the lady Gunnhild.

Svein's onslaught on England in 1003–5 was not aimed at securing a kingdom. It was his gesture of revenge, typically enough com-

[1] In William of Jumièges, who gives credit to a tradition that an English army shortly afterwards attacked the Cotentin.

bining the blood-feud with monetary profit. Exeter, Wilton, Salisbury, Norwich, and Thetford were among the towns sacked, and the only effective resistance came from the Anglo-Dane Ulfkell [Ulfcytel] Snilling, who fell upon the invaders after the sack of Thetford. Only English slackness in not carrying out Ulfkell's orders to cut to pieces the ships of the Danes saved the day for them, and 'they themselves admitted that they had never met with harder hand-play in England than Ulfcytel gave them'. So easily might the conquering course of Danish Svein have ended in death or ignominy. The Danes withdrew from England in the famine year of 1005, but were back in 1006 on a mission of challenge and bravado. The language of the *Chronicle* is ironic as it tells of the vikings' safe base in Wight, their well-stocked food-depot at Reading, of the great deeds threatened by the English if the host ever got as far as Cuckhamsley Knob on the Wiltshire downs, and how the host called their bluff not only by getting there but by insolently inviting attack, how they quickly put the levies to flight, and defying all prophecy rode back to the sea past the gates of Winchester, whose citizens beheld them, arrogant and confident, bringing provisions and treasures from more than fifty miles inland. This happened at midwinter, while Ethelred was meditating his Christmas fare in Shropshire. But he bestirred himself, and in 1007 paid the Danes a tribute of 36,000 pounds in return for peace, along with provisions and supplies gathered from all parts of the kingdom. With this prodigious addition to the booty they had already seized, the Danes were pleased to leave England.

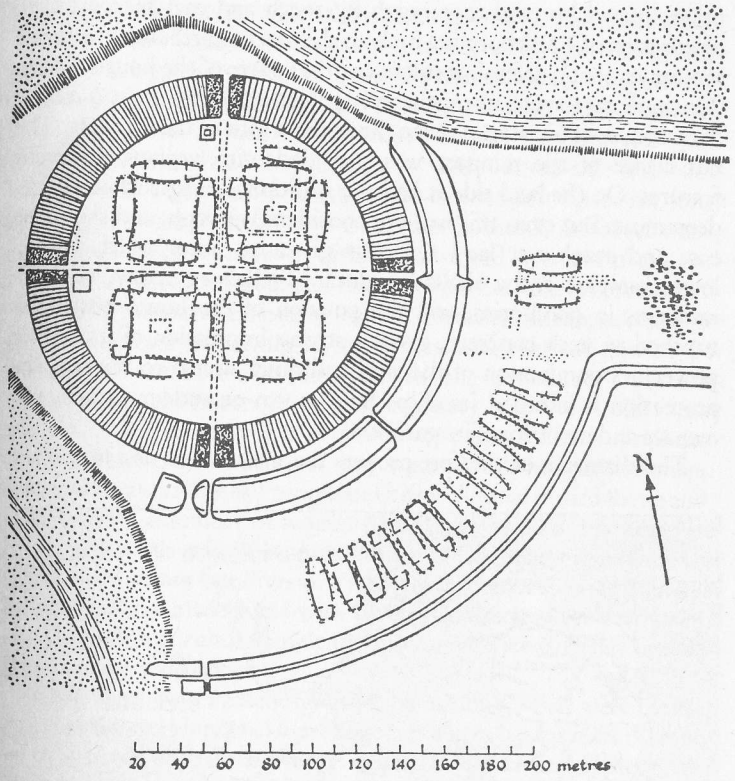
The peace lasted two years. Ethelred took two steps to prepare for the next invasion, but as so often they went awry. He sought to stiffen his defences by appointing an ealdorman for Mercia, but chose the most notorious double-dealer of the age, Eadric Streona. And he tried to build a fleet strong enough to defeat anything the Danes could sail against him. According to the *Chronicle* every unit of 300 hides throughout the kingdom was to furnish the king with a warship,[1] and every unit of eight hides provide a helm and corslet. The fleet was ready early in 1009, assembled off Sandwich, and was quickly made ineffective by a grotesque combination of accusation, flight, selfishness, indiscipline, rivalry and self-mutilation. With

[1] For a discussion of what Earle called 'a tantalizing annal' see Earle and Plummer, *Two Saxon Chronicles*, II, 185–6. The variants are offered there, I, 138, and by Garmonsway, p. 138.

eighty ships burned and twenty defected, Ethelred, his ealdormen and counsellors, in the words of the *Chronicle*, 'went home'. The remaining ships were fetched to London, and the facilities off Sandwich abandoned to the Danes, who dropped anchor there on 1 August.

It was a formidable host which began in its confident way to harry the near-by countryside that same autumn. Unlike the armies of the sons of Ragnar a century and a half before, it was not composed in substantial measure of part-time soldiers hankering after a farm of their own. These were professionals. Their leaders in the absence of Svein were two famous brothers, Thorkell the Tall and Hemming, and a more shadowy figure, Eilaf the brother of jarl Ulf, who later (Ulf, that is) married Svein's daughter Estrid and became the father of king Svein Estridsson or Ulfsson and the progenitor of the royal line of Denmark to our own day. Here too we must mention that formidable and puzzling demonstration of kingly power in Denmark which till recently was held to bear closely on the contemporary Viking assaults on England: the appearance of timber-and-earthwork fortresses of a scale and model hitherto unknown there. Four such are known, at Trelleborg near Slagelse in West Zealand, at Aggersborg on the Limfjord in North Jutland, at Fyrkat near Hobro in East Jutland, and at Nonnebakken in the town of Odense on Fyn. All four are built to a pattern, and consist of a symmetrical grouping of wooden houses within a rampart. At Trelleborg there were sixteen such houses, arranged in groups of four, each four forming a hollow square, with the full count of sixteen forming yet another and larger square. Fyrkat and Nonnebakken likewise had sixteen houses, Aggersborg had forty-eight. There are differences in the size of the houses from fort to fort (all are based on the roman foot of 29.57 cm. modified to 29.33: Aggersborg, 110 such feet, or *c.* 33 metres; Trelleborg, 100 such feet; and Fyrkat, 96), but within each fort they are uniform.[1]

[1] Literature: P. Norlund, *Trelleborg*, 1956; C. G. Schultz, 'Aggersborg, vikingeleiren ved Limfjorden', *Fra Nat. Mus. Arbbejdsmark*, 1949; Olaf Olsen, 'Trelleborg Problemer', in *Scandia* 28, 1962; *Fyrkat. En jysk vikingeborg*. I. *Borgen og Bebyggelsen*, by Olaf Olsen and Holger Schmidt, etc. II. *Oldsagerne og Gravpladsen*, by Else Roesdahl, etc. *Nordiske fortidsminder*, 1977. There is an exposition of the 'very complicated issues' involving Harald, Svein, Trelleborg, Fyrkat, etc., by Olaf Olsen in *Skalk*, 1980, Nr. 3, pp. 18–26, and a discussion in Roesdahl, *Viking Age Denmark*, 1982, pp. 147–55.



54. TRELLEBORG: A PLAN OF THE STRONGHOLD

Trelleborg, the first found and most extensively excavated of these forts, stands in a good defensive position on a piece of raised ground between two navigable streams, the Vaarbyå and Tudeå, which join here before flowing another two miles or so into the Great Belt between Zealand and Fyn. The site was improved by levelling and filling-in before building took place. The natural defences provided by the rivers and an expanse of swampy or flooded ground north, west, and south-west, were reinforced by a circular earth rampart, roughly 17 metres thick and almost 7 metres high, strengthened with palisades and traversed with stout timber. There were four gateways, set diametrically opposite each

other, joined by roadways north by south and east by west (the orientation of Trelleborg is a little to the east of north, but the terms are convenient); these intersected at the centre of the house-blocks. The gateways were strengthened against earth-slip by a 6-metre-deep course of big stones throughout the width of the rampart. The outer face of the rampart was provided with various deterrent features. On the land side it had the additional safeguard of a wide, deep moat. But even this was not considered enough, and this same east and south-east land side was given an outer ward, with a lower rampart and a shallower ditch. Trelleborg today, with its ramparts in good trim, and the position of the house post-holes touched in with concrete, gives a strong impression of its former power, its domination of the land and quick access to the sea, the protection it afforded its ships from storm or sudden attack, the menace and mobility of its garrison.

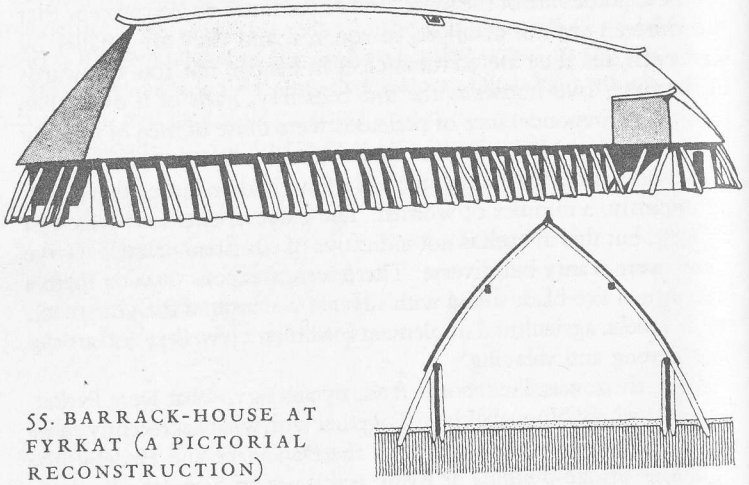
The diameter of the fort proper, the inner ward, is 136 metres.

MAP 15. DENMARK IN THE VIKING AGE

Most of this was occupied by the sixteen houses in their four hollow squares. A few smaller buildings, including what look like guard-rooms by the north and west gates, hardly affect the overall symmetry. The houses were stave-built of upright planks, and an outside row of slightly inward-leaning posts helped support the roof. The houses were boat-shaped, that is, with curved side-walls and straight end-walls, and internally were divided into three sections, the largest in the centre. There are further houses in the outer ward, thirteen of them set radially within the curved area (see plan), and two outside the inner moat and the eastern gate of the inner rampart. All these houses are of the same kind as the inner sixteen, except that the thirteen are not arranged in squares, and they are smaller by one-tenth, i.e. they are 90 roman feet in length, not 100. Outwards of the other two houses is the fort cemetery, parts of it older than the fort. A preponderance of skeletons were those of men of military age, which does not mean that they were all full-time military men. There were also a few old people and a few children buried there; and, significantly, a number of women. The grave orientations were east by west, but this in itself is not indicative of Christian practice. Grave goods were scanty but diverse. There were weapons (among them a longhorned axe-blade inlaid with silver, from around the year 1000), smith's tools, agricultural implements, women's jewellery and articles for spinning and weaving.

What, then, was Trelleborg? And, by analogy, what were Fyrkat, Aggersborg and Nonnebakken? Together with what has recently come to light about such great works as the Danevirke and Hedeby, the ambitious bridge-building at Risby and Ravning Enge, the Kanhave canal, and the anti-ship defences on Danish fjords and rivers, they invited a new assessment of Danish technical skills and the royal power necessary to exploit them *c.* 970–1020. Svein Forkbeard was an obvious candidate, and the four fortresses were seen as barracks and training-camps for soldiers bound for the English wars, and at the same time his guarantee against disorder, rebellion, even usurpation during his absence abroad (after all, had he not expelled his own father Harald Bluetooth from his throne and country no long time before?). Latterly the archaeological evidence has been re-assessed. There is no direct evidence of the fortresses' connection with the English wars, and they have been seen not as Svein's but as his father Harald's gesture of both benevolent and intimidatory power, controlling Denmark's interior lines of communication, housing the king's officers, moneyers,

craftsmen, safeguarding his possessions, and by the strategic placing of their garrisons showing a protective arm to the loyal and a mailed fist to the disaffected. Whoever the royal architect, serious problems remain—not the least of them the very short period during which the strongholds were in use—twenty or thirty years at most, and the biggest, Aggersborg, not so much as completed. If they were overtaken by events, we can only guess, unconvincingly, at what those events were.



55. BARRACK-HOUSE AT FYRKAT (A PICTORIAL RECONSTRUCTION)

But to proceed with king Svein and his policy of warfare and profit across the North Sea. The 'profit' will bear underlining. We have seen (p. 265 above) how supplies of kufic silver were diminishing in the second half of the tenth century, and practically dried up at the beginning of the eleventh. The north needed silver in quantities, and the brigand-like commonsense of Svein told him where and how to get it: in tribute from a disorganized, disheartened, and immensely wealthy England. The process had started in 980, and in person or through his approval of other captains Svein was continuously involved in it from 994 till the day of his death in 1013. To attack the unhappy country was to be paid to go away, and to be paid to go away kept your army in being till you attacked

again. The weight of tribute still astonishes: 16,000 pounds in 994, 24,000 in 1002, 36,000 in 1007, 48,000 in 1012: literally, England paid for her conquest with her own money. Not all the tribute took the form of minted coins. Brooches, arm-rings, torques, ingots—nothing came amiss so long as it was silver.[1] The men whose unrelenting arms levered away these vast and precious burthens were not all Danes; soldiers of fortune and mercenaries came in from every Scandinavian land. There are memorial stones in Sweden to warriors who campaigned and, some of them, died in England. There are five Swedish stones which tell of men who received tribute there, like that at Grinda in Södermanland raised to a brave father, Gudvi, who 'went west to England and received a share of the geld'; or that at Väsby informing us that 'Ali raised this stone in memory of himself. He received Knut's geld in England. God save his soul'; or the most famous and informative of all, the Borrestad stone from Orkestad in Uppland: 'Karsi and Gerbjorn had this stone raised after Ulf their father. God and God's Mother help his soul! But Ulf received danegeld three times in England. The first was that which Tosti paid. Then Thorkell paid. Then Knut paid.' Tosti has by some been assumed to be the Swedish father of that Sigrid the Haughty (Stórráða: see p. 136, n. 1, above) whom, if she existed, Olaf Tryggvason (we fear) spurned and Svein Forkbeard (we trust) married; Thorkell was Thorkell the Tall; and Knut was Knut the Great. The wealth thus extorted flowed back to all the Scandinavian lands, to the island of Gotland, mainland Sweden and Denmark, in smaller measure to Norway, and is not without trace in the Atlantic island dependencies.[2] The rapid increase of Anglo-Saxon coins in Scandin-

[1] It is not easy to restrict one's illustration to the English campaigns, because the island of Gotland is in every sense the most fruitful soil for such. Hoards discovered there up to 1946 contained more than 570 ornaments, many of them manufactured at home from foreign bullion; more than 2,300 pieces of silver in such forms as rods, bars, and rings; 93,000 whole coins and 16,600 fragments of coins, only three of which are not silver. All this came from abroad, most of it from the east, but it probably indicates the mixed nature of English and Frankish tribute, too. See P. H. Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings* (1971) for an extended treatment in Chapter Three, 'Treasure'. New hoards continue to be found in Scandinavia.

[2] It has been suggested (Sawyer, 1962, pp. 98–9, and 1971, pp. 100–1), that the scarcity in Scandinavian hoards of English coins of the ninth century may be due to the circumstance that the money may have been used in England to acquire land for intending settlers. The idea has been well received in some quarters, but there is no positive evidence for it. The

avian hoards dates from the beginning of Ethelred's reign. At first the bulk of it represents tribute; but after Knut's conquest of the realm it represents the money raised in England to pay his soldiers' wages. The danegeld of 1018 reached the unparalleled total of 72,000 pounds over all England, plus a sum variously stated to be 10,500 or 11,000 pounds from the citizens of London. From 1012 onwards there was an annual tax or danegeld raised in England, and under Knut the army-tax (*heregeld*) took precedence of all other taxes. The *Chronicle* under 1040 informs us that the rate of pay in the naval force maintained by the Danish king was eight marks to a rowlock. While allowance for the differing sizes of sixteen ships is difficult (Knut is said to have had one showpiece of 120 oars), this would hardly have come to less than 3,000 pounds a year, and there were Knut's housecarles to be paid in addition. The flow of Anglo-Saxon coins into Scandinavia continued till 1051, when Edward the Confessor at last paid off his mercenaries.

Even though we abandon the silent witness of the four homeland fortresses, we have means enough to see the invading armies of Svein and Knut in fair perspective. First, there is the remarkably personal and emotive account of Anglo-Danish affairs given by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* during the years of distress and mismanagement. Second are the large amounts of tribute and known rates of pay of the professional soldiers engaged in these impoverishing operations; and third, the contemporary influx of English money into Scandinavia revealed by the hoards discovered there.

Meantime the armies of 1009 were at work. Eastern Kent bought peace for 3,000 pounds, London showed its accustomed valour, repelling every attack, but thereafter the Danes cut swathes of destruction through the shires, burned Oxford, sacked Ipswich, and took heavy toll of the men of East Anglia and Cambridge at the pitched battle of Ringmere in 1010, where their old enemy Ulfkell Snilling stood firm, but the wretched Thurcytel with his 'mare's head' broke rank and saved life without honour by flight. Among the

Chronicle for 896 records how after the Danish defeats in 892–6 'the Danish host broke up, some to East Anglia, some to Northumbria, and those who were *feohlease* got themselves ships there and went south across the sea to the Seine'. It is unlikely that *feohlease* means 'moneyless', as Sawyer translates, with the implication that they sought money in order to settle; it is more likely to mean that they were without possessions or property in England, and so departed.

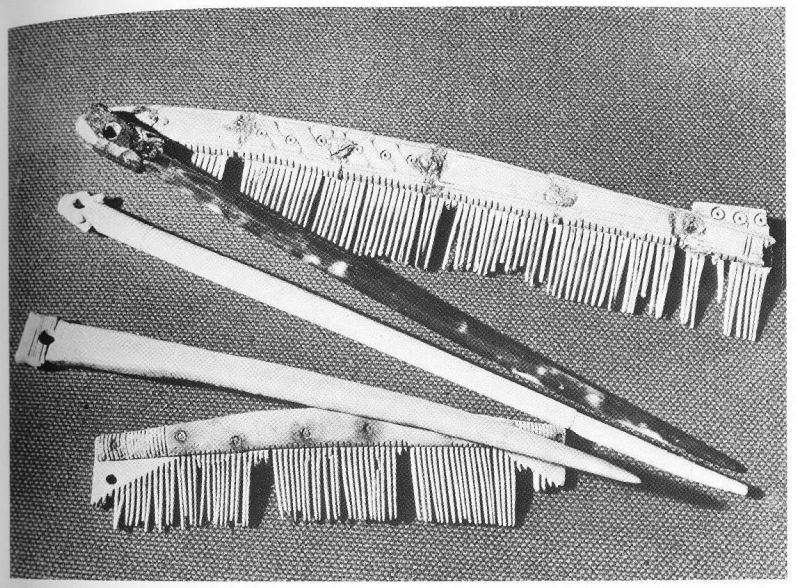
21. PICTURED TAPESTRY FROM OSEBERG. Apparently a procession. A depiction from not later than the mid-ninth century of costume, weapons, horses and their trappings, carts, birds and formal symbols.

22. FREY

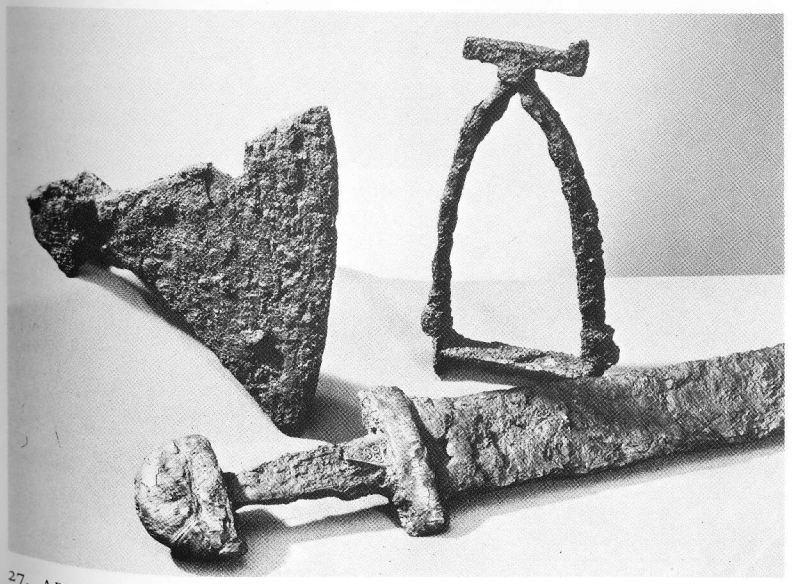
23. THOR

24. A NORWEGIAN VIKING

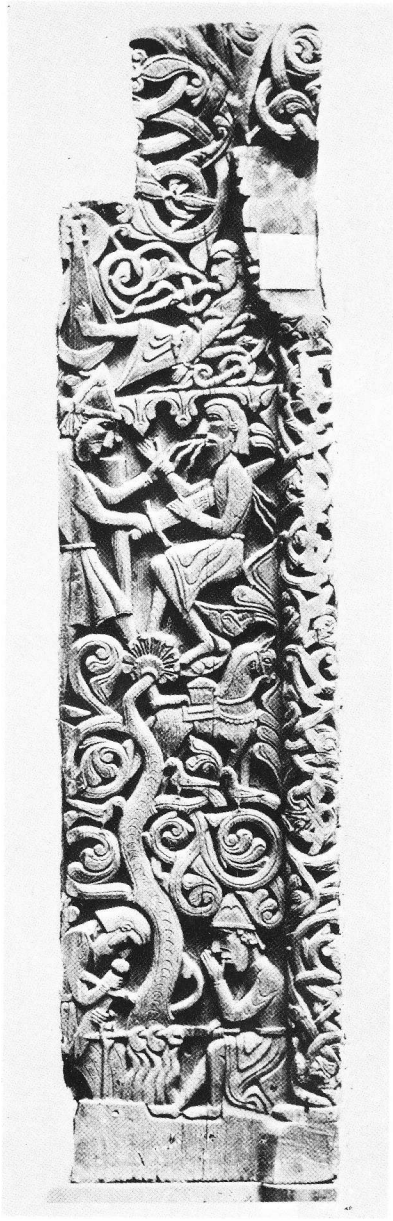
25. ANIMAL HEAD (A LION?) FROM SHETELIG'S SLEIGH, OSEBERG. It has been suggested that these alarming heads were intended to frighten off evil spirits and give protection to those seated inside the four posts that bore them.

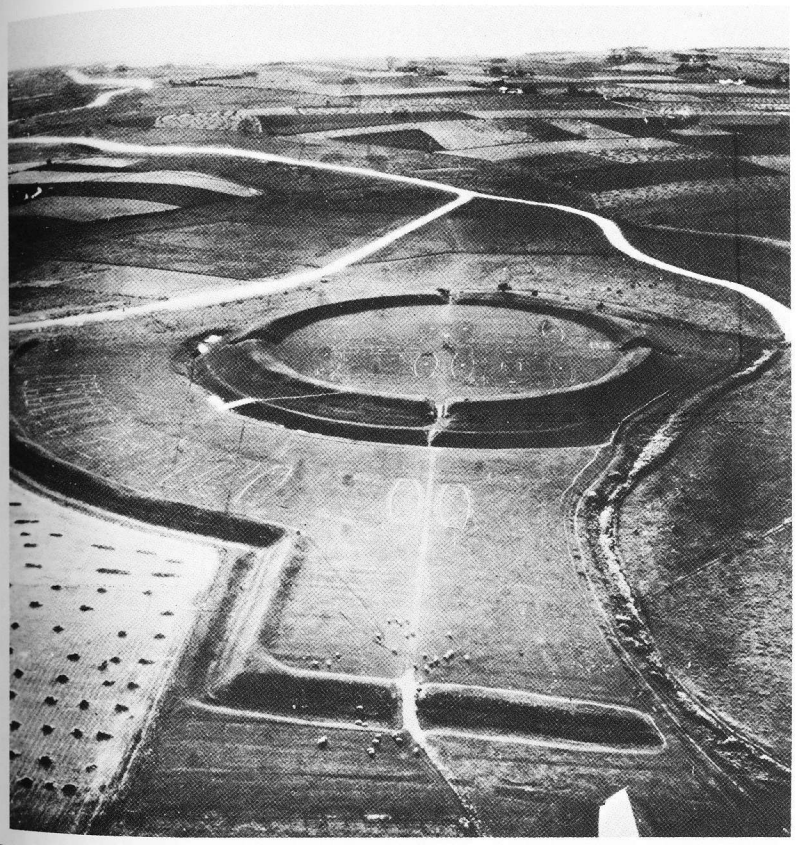


26. ARTICLES OF PEACE: PINS AND COMBS



27. ARTICLES OF WAR: AXE, STIRRUP, SWORD





29. TRELLEBORG TODAY. A view of the fort and its surroundings from the air. The Great Belt in the background.

◀ 28. THE STORY OF SIGURD CARVED IN WOOD AT HYLESTAD. Reading from the bottom right we see Sigurd and Reginn forging the sword Gram, the sword breaking when tested on the anvil, and thereafter Sigurd using it to kill the dragon. At the bottom left we see Sigurd roasting the dragon's heart while Reginn sleeps. He burns his thumb and puts it, fresh from the dragon's heart, into his mouth, and at once understands the language of the birds in the tree above him. Reginn is planning to deceive him and secure for himself the dragon's treasure which we see loaded on to Sigurd's horse Grani. He thrusts his sword through Reginn. After many disasters Gunnar dies in the snake-pit, playing the harp with his toes.

30. THE DEATH OF ST OLAF AT STIKLARSTADIR

invaders, fighting under Thorkell the Tall's banner, was a thick-set young Norwegian, Olaf Haraldsson by name, of whom more would be heard later. The bitter fruits of Ringmere were that the Danes overran East Anglia, ravaged Thetford and Cambridge, and fared out with sword and fire to the shires of Oxford, Buckingham, and Bedford. There was hardly the show much less the reality of opposition. The *Chronicle* for 1010 depicts a country grown ripe for the taking:

> Then they made their way back to the ships with their plunder; and when they were dispersing to the ships, then the levies should have been out, ready in case they should seek to go inland. Then, however, the levies were on their way home. And when the enemy was in the east, then our levies were mustered in the west; and when they were in the south, then our levies were in the north. Then all the councillors were summoned to the king, for a plan for the defence of the realm had to be devised then and there, but whatever course of action was decided upon it was not followed even for a single month. In the end there was no leader who was willing to raise levies, but each fled as quickly as he could; nor even in the end would one shire help another. (Trans. Garmonsway.)

The next year showed no improvement. When Canterbury and its archbishop fell into Danish hands in the autumn it was through treachery among the defenders. There had already been English overtures for a truce, but it was past Easter in 1012 before the full 48,000 pounds of tribute could be collected and paid over. For archbishop Ælfeah they demanded a separate ransom, which he would neither pay nor permit others to pay. The sequel was revolting. At an assembly of the army at Greenwich reminiscent or some drunken passage from the Fornaldarsögur of the north, they pelted him with bones and the heads of cattle till some more merciful ruffian crashed his axe against the old man's skull. Thorkell the Tall is said to have done his best to stop them, offering everything he possessed or might hope to lay hands on for Ælfeah's life—'save only my ship'.[1] His failure to do so is thought to explain why on the dispersal of the Danish host later in the year he transferred his allegiance from Svein to king Ethelred, taking forty-five ships and their crews with him.

It has likewise been thought that Thorkell's defection was the

[1] Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, ed. Holtzman, 1935, VII, 42–3.

spur which brought Svein to England the following summer. This does less than justice to Svein's cool-headedness. He had long shown himself a manipulator of men and events, and blest with a sense of timing. Danish pressure on England had been cumulative for more than twenty years, and between 1009 and 1012 it became intolerable. Given leadership, hope, and a cause, the English rank and file would have fought on doggedly, and maybe successfully; but all three were lacking. Despondency and defeat were in the air. The lesser Danish predators had completed their part of the 'Enterprise of England'; now it was the king's turn. The calculating Svein would be well satisfied to chastise Thorkell the Tall for desertion, or indeed ambition,[1] and bend him to his royal will, but this was not his main business, which was to make himself king of England. Nothing seems to have been left to chance. With a fleet reputed to have been as handsome as it was powerful, he set sail for Sandwich, proceeded from there to the Humber, then twenty miles up the Trent to Gainsborough in the heart of Danish England. It was his correct assumption that here he would be welcomed and safe. Earl Uhtred and all Northumbria submitted to him, likewise the people of Lindsey and the Five Boroughs, and soon afterwards all the Danes to the north of Watling Street. Leaving his ships and hostages in charge of his son Knut at Gainsborough, he took his mounted army through English Mercia, where for the first time they were allowed to harry, received the submission of Oxford and Winchester, and then attacked London. Here the ever-valiant citizens, strengthened by Ethelred's bodyguard and the crews of Thorkell the Tall, checked him heavily, but in the event to no purpose. Svein declined to batter his head against a fortified wall, and rode off to the submissive West Country. By the time he returned to Gainsborough the *Chronicle* records that the whole nation accepted him as full king. The Londoners' position had been rendered untenable; they sought terms and gave hostages, promised tribute and supplies. Ethelred, with no ally save Thorkell the Tall, sent his wife and sons

[1] A. Campbell, *Encomium Emmæ Reginæ*, Camden Third Series, 1949, p. lii, considers it highly improbable that Thorkell was ever in Svein's service or took any forces with him to England which could be considered part of Svein's army; but 'on the other hand, it is more than likely that his progress was regarded by Svein with disquiet, for the latter had himself long cherished designs upon England.' The *Encomium* is our most eloquent authority for the notion that Svein went to England at the persuasion of his warriors to chastise Thorkell's disloyalty (I, 2, pp. 10–11).

back to Normandy for safe keeping, and shortly after Christmas followed them there himself. Svein had arrived off Sandwich in late July, and now, five months later, he was master of all England.

Five weeks later he was dead. He was at most 55 years old when in the *Chronicle*'s impartial phrase he 'ended his days at Candlemas', 3 February 1014. He was one of the foremost viking kings. As a general and politician he had freed Hedeby from the Germans, increased Danish power in Wendland, gained authority over the Jomsvikings or whatever northern mercenaries gave rise to that contested name, disposed of Olaf Tryggvason and set jarl Eirik Hakonarson over those parts of Norway which he (and to a lesser extent the king of Sweden) did not rule directly; and finally he had conquered England. He favoured Christianity, but was tolerant of the heathen, and he brought wealth from abroad to enrich his dominions at home. Not least, he produced a son as able as himself, who would complete his work in England and Scandinavia, and it was not in Svein or any man of his time to know that this was a work which politically could not endure.

There was still a chance that England might be saved for Englishmen. Knut, to whom Svein's men now offered their allegiance, was at most 18 years old, his genius for management and opportunism immature, his experience of military command slight, and he had no lieutenant of stature at his side who could supply the unselfish support which the regent Guthorm gave to the 10-year-old Harald Fairhair or the tutelage which the 14-year-old Olaf Haraldsson received from Thorkell the Tall. And England, despite her twenty years' ravaging, was still strong and wealthy. For once the English acted quickly; they sent noblemen to Ethelred in Normandy inviting him to return and rule them again, more justly and wisely, and with a line drawn under the errors of the past. By April he was back and leading an army against the Danes and their allies in Lindsey. Knut, no doubt under advice, embarked his army and abandoned Lindsey to the resentful savagery of Ethelred. He sailed down the coast as far as Sandwich, where he mutilated his father's hostages before putting them ashore, and with this twofold legacy of horror and hatred behind him departed for Denmark. His elder brother Harald was king there, in succession to Svein, and friendship or self-interest induced him to help Knut win a kingdom of his own, elsewhere. An invasion force was assembled. It was Knut's good fortune to be joined by his brother-in-law jarl Eirik of Hladir,

who as we have seen ruled so much of Norway by Danish permission. He was among the most seasoned warriors of the north, had practised viking early in Baltic waters, with his father was the victor at Hjorungavag, was credited with the sack of Aldeigjuborg in Russia, and according to Icelandic and Norwegian tradition played a prominent role in the sea-fight at Svold. By 1014 he had amassed considerable experience of men and state affairs. Content with his ancient title of jarl, loyal to the bonds of a profitable allegiance and kinship, he was the ideal *eaxlgestealla*, shoulder-comrade, of an ambitious but inexperienced young king. The enlistment of a second famous captain was more surprising. This was none other than Thorkell the Tall, who had gone over to Ethelred late in 1012 and given him faithful service ever since. After Ethelred's punitive expedition against Lindsey in 1014 Thorkell and his mercenaries were given a payment of 21,000 pounds, and it is hard to account for his prompt abandonment of a restored patron. It has been suggested that he had a slain brother to avenge upon the English, but Thorkell's mainspring was self-interest; he could read the times, and he never read them better than when he sailed for Denmark with the nine ships prepared to follow him and secured employment with Knut.

In the summer of 1015 when Knut's glittering menagerie of ships sailed for England those who should oppose him there had reverted to their normal malpractice. The sinister Eadric Streona for reasons unknown procured the murder of the two foremost noblemen belonging to the 'Seven Boroughs', Siferth and Morcar; king Ethelred abetted him by seizing their property and arresting Siferth's widow; Ethelred's son Edmund rescued the lady, married her in his father's despite, departed for the Five Boroughs, possessed himself of the property, and by consent of the inhabitants, equally resentful of Knut's desertion and Ethelred's revenge, made himself master there. At a time when unity was imperative the country was divided by ill feeling between Ethelred and his son and a feud between Edmund and Eadric. This may be the kind of situation Thorkell the Tall foresaw. In any case he was now on service with a compact, disciplined, and well-led army, which in September took the field in earnest. With treachery and distrust in the English air, they quickly made the weight of their arm known in Wessex and Warwickshire. The infamous Eadric came over to the Danish side with forty ships, and half the country was Knut's. Briefly Edmund

combined with Uhtred of Northumbria to devastate Staffordshire, Shropshire, and Cheshire, but Knut carried the war northwards by way of Nottingham to York, and Uhtred had to submit. He was then murdered or executed and his earldom of Northumbria placed in the safe hands of jarl Eirik of Hladir. Knut next turned towards London, the hard knot of England, but before his ships came up the river Ethelred the Redeless died 'after a lifetime of much hardship and many difficulties', and the counsellors and citizens chose Edmund his son as their king.

A month later the Danes were besieging the city. It was an elaborate operation against a determined enemy, and though the city was invested on all sides, even to the extent that a channel was dug on the south bank of the Thames to permit the Danish ships to get up river, it failed. Edmund had already got away; he collected an army and waged what must have been a sensationally successful campaign to free Wessex, all of whose inhabitants, says the *Chronicle*, submitted to him. He then launched a vigorous and unexpected attack upon the army besieging London, driving it smartly back, but in doing so suffered such heavy casualties that he had to withdraw and allow them to renew the siege. London still held out in the face of the worst Knut could do; suddenly he abandoned the siege and having provisioned the host in East Anglia and Mercia sent his ships and the captured livestock to the Medway. The remounted host had arrived in Kent when Edmund caught up with it at Otford, put it to flight, and slew all he could overtake. The outlook for the Danes had so deteriorated that Eadric Streona changed sides again and joined Edmund, who took him back into favour. 'No greater error of judgement', says the *Chronicle*, 'was ever made than this'. And so it proved. For when the augmented army of Edmund encountered Knut's host at Ashingdon in Essex, 'the ealdorman Eadric did as he had so often done before; he and his men were the first to set the example of flight, and thus he betrayed his royal lord and the whole nation'. Knut won all England by his victory. Among the irreparable harms of the day were the death of Ulfkell Snilling, the defender of East Anglia, and the destruction of 'all the flower of the English nation'. Edmund Ironside survived and took refuge in Gloucestershire. Knut moved after him, but without more fighting a compromise was reached whereby Edmund should have Wessex and Knut the rest of the country. Among the honest brokers was Eadric Streona. It was a settlement loaded with the

promise of future dissension. Neither Knut nor Edmund could leave matters so. But the death-struggle between them never took place. On St. Andrew's day (30 November) of this same year Edmund died at the age of 22, and in sorrow, necessity, and some relief, the whole realm of England chose Knut for its king. He was even younger than his rival.

With Knut as an English king we are not primarily concerned. But two events of 1017 invite attention. In that year Knut divided England into four parts, for administrative and military convenience. Wessex he kept under his own control, and he left jarl Eirik in charge of Northumbria. Thorkell the Tall received East Anglia, and no one could say that in one way or another he had not worked hard for it. To Eadric Streona went the whole of Mercia. But for a short while only. Within a matter of months Knut had him executed. Jarl Eirik held his earldom with honour till his death in *c.* 1023. Thorkell's course was more troubled. From 1017 till 1020 he appears to have been the foremost of Knut's lay subjects; we meet his name on charters, and he is named as accompanying the king on various important occasions. The most impressive witness to his standing during these first years is that he is the only magnate named in the statement of legal policy issued by Knut after his return from Scandinavia in 1020.[1] Then in 1021 he was outlawed; a reconciliation took place in Denmark in 1023 on terms which suggest that Thorkell was still a man of immense power: he was made Knut's regent in Denmark and the guardian of his son Hordaknut, but thereafter disappears from history. Knut's other action of 1017 was to marry Ethelred's widow Emma. In the *Chronicle*'s arresting sentence, he 'commanded the widow of the late king Ethelred, Richard's daughter, to be brought to him so that she might become his wife'. This was an admirable stroke of policy. It could hardly displease the English, promised well dynastically, and ensured the friendship of duke Richard II of Normandy. Knut already had an English consort, Ælgifu of Northampton, to whom he would remain warmly attached, and for whom (and her son Svein) he would make handsome provision in Norway as late as 1030; but Emma was his queen, and it was agreed that her children by Knut should take precedence over her sons by Ethelred and exclude the children of Ælgifu from the royal succession. It was a

[1] A. Campbell, *Encomium Emmae*, p. 75; Liebermann, *Gesetze*, I, 273–5.

'sensible arrangement', and for everyone except the Norwegians it worked out well. And unintentionally even for them.

In 1018–19 Knut's brother Harald, king of Denmark, died, and Knut crossed the North Sea to make sure of the succession. Thorkell the Tall remained in England, and perhaps it was now that certain earlier ambitions were reborn in him and led to his banishment in 1021. There is a complete lack of direct evidence, but one reading of Thorkell's shifts and vicissitudes is that he never quite gave up hope of some gigantic prize of his own, in England or Scandinavia, as opportunity offered. In other words he was a craggy and cunning survival of the old-style viking who looked after himself well until kings came in and spoiled the business. One explanation of Knut's placing his fleet off the Isle of Wight in 1022 is that he was safeguarding the realm against some heavy stroke by the outlawed Thorkell.[1] At the reconciliation in Denmark of 1023 Knut seems to have brought one of Thorkell's sons back to England with him before trusting him with Denmark and Hordaknut. That Thorkell died within a year or two would be no grief to his royal master.

These were king Knut's first expeditions from England to Denmark and the north. Before he undertook his last he had given proof of himself not only as a good king of England but as a monarch of European stature. As a man he is hard to define, because we know so little about him,[2] but as a peace-bringer, legislator, administrator, statesman and politician, and as a patron of the Church we see him more clearly. In law he was less an innovator than a re-worker, and was as English as the English in the moral and improving ingredients with which he flavoured his law-making. Stenton justly describes Knut's legal code as one 'which in its length and varied detail gives him a high place among the legislators of the Dark Ages';[3] for the value of law lies very little in originality or ingenuity, but in its fair dealing between men, its assurance of rights, its practicality of

[1] It is difficult to get a clear picture of this year. During the course of it Knut is reported to have made a considerable naval demonstration in the Baltic, for the benefit of Jomsborg-Wollin, the restless Wends, and the inhabitants of Estland. It was after his return to Denmark from this show of strength that he was reconciled to Thorkell.

[2] *Knýtlinga Saga*, 20, tells us that he was tall, strong, fair-haired, keen-eyed, bountiful, valiant, and all-conquering. His nose, which was long, narrow, and slightly bent, somewhat marred his good looks. 'He was a man of great good luck in everything to do with power.'

[3] *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 404.

enforcement, its power to settle argument, and forestall or compose strife. Further, for Knut law was a prop of kings, as was religion. We need not doubt his devotion to the Church, because he made use of the Church—as the Church made use of him. The links between Church and monarchy in England were close and strong; each had its duty to the other, for the glory of God and the good of the nation, and there is something magnificent about the way this young and alien conqueror accepted an English king's obligations in matters religious and ecclesiastical. His gains, properly, were enormous—nothing did so much to bring him within the comity of Christian Europe; he gained the blessing of the pope and the favour of the emperor;[1] he was seen by his royal peers to be a great monarch; he secured the support of the most powerful institution in England—but these were gains he well deserved, and behind the pomp and circumstance, the ceremonies of honour to St. Edmund and St. Alphege (Ælfeah), the restoring of monasteries and consecration of churches, the ostentation of the pilgrimage to Rome, he appears a man not untouched by humility before the Church in both her worldly and her sacred roles. He would be the last man to object to the worldly, he was so pragmatic a man himself.

In 1026 it was necessary for him to leave England and look to his Scandinavian interests again. Denmark had come under threat from Norway and Sweden, and to understand how this could be we must revert to the years 1014–16, when Knut so hurriedly withdrew from England that he might assemble a new army from Denmark and Norway and complete Svein's conquest. When again he sailed from Denmark jarl Eirik of Hladir sailed with him, and Norway was left in charge of Eirik's brother jarl Svein and maybe Eirik's son Hakon. This was the moment when a new Olaf, like Olaf Tryggvason a scion of the royal Yngling line, chose to make his bid for the partitioned kingdom. He was the thick-set young man we noted as fighting under Thorkell the Tall's banner at Ringmere in 1010, the

[1] To the pope he owed a reduction in the charges levied on an English archbishop when he went to Rome for his pallium. To the emperor and various rulers he owed a reduction in the tolls exacted from northern and English traders and pilgrims who passed through their dominions on the way to Rome. To the emperor Conrad he owed, as part of the wedding settlement between the emperor's son Henry and his own daughter Gunnhild, the return of Slesvig to Denmark and the recognition of the Eider as the German-Danish boundary.

son of a petty ruler in eastern Norway, and stepson of Sigurd Sow, the farmer-king of Ringerike, but destined to be the most famous Norwegian of his century, and of many centuries to come.

Olaf had been born *c.* 995 and set to viking at the age of 12 in charge of a tried ship's captain named Hrani. He harried in Denmark, Sweden, Gotland, Osel off the coast of Estland, and in Finland, too, where his good luck prevailed against the wiles of the local wind-brewers. Sometimes he raided, sometimes fought battles. By the time he met Thorkell the Tall, in the language of the skalds he had reddened nesses, sated the wolf's brood, roused the steel-storm, convened the Thing of arrows. In the language of plain men he had made an unmitigated nuisance of himself in northern waters.[1] As a member of Thorkell's company he made a warlike voyage past Jutland and Frisia to England, and in England fought at London, Ringmere, and Canterbury. When Thorkell entered Ethelred's service Olaf transferred his talents for destruction to France and maybe Spain. William of Jumièges knows him as *Olavus rex Noricorum* and puts him in the service of duke Richard II of Normandy. While in Normandy, *c.* 1013, he was baptized at Rouen. In Normandy, too, he appears to have taken service with Ethelred and followed him back to England. The sources agree that he fought further battles in England, but are divided as to which side he fought on. Chronology alone forbids us to think that he ever fought for Knut, for the absence of Knut from Denmark implied the absence of jarl Eirik from Norway, which gave Olaf the opportunity we know he was quick to lay hold of. In any case he arrived in Norway not later than 1015, and in all probability one year earlier. Concerning his thoughts, motives, plans at this time, save that he hoped to win Norway, we stand in the dark.

Nor are we much more enlightened in respect of the moves which brought him to power there. This is not the fault of Snorri

[1] Our most valuable sources for Olaf's life as a viking are the 'Viking Verses' (*Víkingavísur*) of Sighvat Thordarson and the 'Head Ransom' (*Höfuðlausn*) of Ottar the Black, both court poets of his in later life. Sighvat was Olaf's friend as well as his retainer and poet. He tells of thirteen set battles from Lake Mälar to the Guadalquiver, but exaggerates Olaf's importance in those of them we can identify from foreign sources. But cautiously interpreted the Viking Verses give a good generalized picture of a gifted young viking working his way up in his profession. See O. A. Johnsen, *Olav Haraldssons ungdom indtil slaget ved Nesjar*, Oslo, 1922, and G. Turville-Petre, *The Heroic Age of Scandinavia*, 1951, pp. 140–6.

Sturluson, who with an abundance of unverifiable detail brings him to Selje south of Stad with two merchant ships and 120 men, lets him dispose of jarl Eirik's son Hakon by a cunning but not unmerciful viking stratagem, celebrates his golden oratory and persuasiveness, places his decisive confrontation with his enemies at Nesjar off the western shore of the Oslofjord (this appears to have been Sighvat the Skald's first attendance on Olaf on battle), and conveys the victorious Olaf northwards to the Trondelag, which he saw was the key to Norway. Jarl Svein's flight and death and young Hakon's removal to England gave him the chance to establish himself at Nidaros and keep an eye on those of his subjects likeliest to cause him trouble. He rebuilt the town a second time, established a residence there, and laid the foundations of a new church. From the start it was his intention to attract traders to the town. There were still chieftains like Erling Skjalgsson and Einar Thambarskelfir who would do him no service, and large areas like the remote north and the interior stretches of the Trondelag which yielded him no tribute, but by the end of 1016 in fact as in name he was king over the immediately accessible provinces of Norway.

In most respects he was a good king, even a very good one.[1]

[1] He was not as good, of course, as hagiographical writing would make him. No other king of the Viking Age was written about so extensively. There is the anonymous 'First Saga', written in Iceland a little before 1180, of which only fragments survive, and the big 'Legendary Saga' preserved in a Norwegian manuscript of *c.* 1250; there are the numerous products of the saint's cult, in prose and verse, latin and the vernacular (for example, the lost *Translatio Sancti Olavi*, the *Acta S.O.*, and *Geisli*); there is much skaldic verse by a number of skalds, including Sighvat Thordarson, Ottar the Black, and Thormod Coalbrow's-skald; northern historians from Ari and Theodoricus downwards speak of him, and he is occasionally referred to in foreign sources; and clearly there was a rich oral tradition concerning him. Finally there is Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs Saga Helga*, written as a separate work, but later incorporated in his *Heimskringla*, where it is a third of the whole. The Olaf material consists of hagiographical and lay tradition and invention, king's life and saint's life, closely and troublesomely blended. Among many important studies are Sigurður Nordal, *Om Olaf den Helliges Saga*, Copenhagen, 1914; O. A. Johnsen and Jón Helgason (ed.), *Den store saga om Olav den hellige*, Oslo, 1941; and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla*, II, Íslenzk Fornrit, Reykjavík, 1945. There is an excellent brief survey in 'Kongekrøniker og kongesagær' by Th. D. Olsen in *Norrøn Fortællekunst*, Copenhagen, 1965. The English reader is well served by G. Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature*, 1953 (chapter VII, 'Historical Literature of the Late Twelfth Century', especially pp. 175–90).

Most remarkable of all for a man of his early training in rapine and slaughter he gave his subjects peace and security. That he could be hard and merciless goes without saying, but except in matters of religion he reserved this side of his nature for those who disturbed his peace or challenged his authority. Like Knut over in England, he had a strong feeling for law. The law-meets and assemblies, the Things, kept their former dignity and power, and may have been strengthened inasmuch as Olaf worked through farmer aristocrats of his own choosing rather than the old-style local kings. Like Knut he relied a good deal on the legal enactments of his predecessors. Snorri tells us that he often had recited in his presence the laws which Hakon the Good had prepared for the Trondheim region, and some of these, in consultation with the wisest men he could gather at court, he amended, 'taking away or adding as seemed best to him'. Neither rank nor riches could bend the law; Olaf was immune to threats or bribery; and we have said that he could be merciless. Not all the laws known in later days as 'king Olaf's Law' were his; members of the lordly families of old who bore justice on their sword-points did not disappear in a generation; but Olaf's reign saw an impressive development of the notion of law in a national context. Sighvat's poetic compliment, while excessive, was not entirely undeserved: 'King, you can establish the nation's law, which stands firm among all men.'

His most renowned work for Norway was to make her Christian. This had implications beyond a change of gods and forms of worship. It brought Norway out of the past into the present, lessened her isolation, and inducted her, partly at least, into the fuller European civilization of the time. Much progress had already been made; in places where Danish influence was strong, like the Vik, there had been proselytization since the conversion of Harald Bluetooth; Hakon the Good, Harald Greycloak, and Olaf Tryggvason had toiled for the faith in their different degrees; but the remoter areas of the interior and the northern coasts stayed benighted. Olaf's methods were uncompromising; he executed the recalcitrant, blinded or maimed them, drove them from their homes, cast down their images and marred their sacred places. However, baptism and the king's friendship were always on offer. But baptism was one thing: a state church for Norway was another and a harder undertaking. His success in organizing this was

remarkable. His right-hand man and counsellor was Grimkell, to judge by his name a Norwegian. It was with Grimkell and other priests that he worked out a framework of church law at Moster. He used priests and missionaries from England, too,[1] but because of Knut's rule there it was to Bremen that he sent Grimkell and other priests for their consecration. The Christian law formulated at Moster was of prime authority; it was read out at the different Things, and there are confirmatory references to it in the oldest Gulathing Law. Olaf had many churches built in Norway, and we assume that parts of the Moster law were concerned with their upkeep, administration, and their place within the Church as a whole. There is a shrouding overlay of pious propaganda in much medieval writing about Olaf, but one thing is clear: by the time he died Norway was a Christian country, and no relapse into heathendom was possible.

It helped in this respect that his downfall was followed by his sanctification. It helped, too, that his downfall was due to king Knut, another determined Christian.

For ten or twelve years Olaf's foreign policy had been favoured by Knut's preoccupation with his realm of England, while the rivalry of the jarls of Hladir had been providentially removed by Eirik's transfer to Northumbria, Hakon's capture and oaths, and the defeat and death of jarl Svein. This left Sweden and the Atlantic Islands. These last, Faroes, Orkney and Shetland, in their different

[1] The English share in the conversion of the Scandinavian lands was considerable, from Willibrord's mission in the first half of the eighth century to the time of Knut and Svein Estridsson in Denmark; under the two Olafs and Harald Hardradi in Norway; and so far as we can judge at various times in Sweden. England supplied missionaries, priests, bishops, saints, and martyrs, and influenced ecclesiastical terminology and epistolary usage. See A. D. Jørgensen, *Den nordiske Kirkes Grundlæggelse og første Udvikling*, Copenhagen, 1874–8; Ellen Jørgensen, *Fremmed Indflydelse under den Danske Kirkes tidligste Udvikling*, Copenhagen, 1908; K. Gjerset, *History of the Norwegian People*, I, 1915; H. G. Leach, *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia*, Harvard, 1921; Oluf Kolsrud, *Noregs kyrkjesoga*, Oslo, 1958; and for Iceland, Jón Helgason, *Islands Kirke fra dens Grundlæggelse til Reformationen*, Copenhagen, 1925. There is further bibliographical reference in F. E. Harmer, 'Epistolary Usages of Scandinavian Kings' in *Saga-Book*, XIII, pt. III, 1949–50. For a useful survey of the Christianization of the north, see Lucien Musset, 'La Pénétration chrétienne dans l'Europe du Nord et son Influence sur la Civilisation Scandinave', in *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, XIV, pp. 263–325, 527–35, Spoleto, 1967.

ways acknowledged his overlordship, though Olaf's court poet Ottar used the language of eulogy when he assured the king that before his day no warlike Yngling laid such a yoke on the isles in the west. Against Swedish encroachment he stood firm from the beginning. When the king of Sweden sent his tax-gatherers across the mountains into Gaulardal and Orkadal we are told that Olaf had twelve of them hanged on a ridge as sport for the raven, a warning to the Swede, and a joyful spectacle for Norwegian passers-by. It is easier to believe that in the disputed territory of Ranrike he had the Swedish king's two officers put to death and replaced them with a nominee of his own. Here, too, he built the town of Sarpsborg and fortified it with a moat and rampart to hold the Swedes at bay. As always, information about Sweden is hard to come by. There had been a Christian mission to Sweden after the death of Olaf Tryggvason whereby king Olaf Eiriksson, Skötkonung, was converted to the new faith, but only a small minority of his people followed his example. Eventually Olaf of Norway married his Swedish namesake's daughter Astrid. We are given to understand that Olaf of Norway was the prime mover in the settlement. It was he who sent embassies through the desolate interior, using for the purpose his court poet Sighvat. The *Austrfararvísur*, or 'Verses on an Eastern Journey', of this Icelandic emissary between the kings of Norway and Sweden, and more particularly those relating to his adventures in the horse-foundering, man-rejecting heathen hinterland, are as entertaining as they are informative. Time and again the poet and his comrades knock on a door for shelter; time and again they are sent packing. One house was hallowed and heathen, another hag-ridden and elf-ruled; three in a row were inhabited by farmers named Olvir, and all three drove them away; at the next all they got was a surly stare from the closing doorway. But this was grist to the poet's mill: he seems to have very much enjoyed it, and certainly we enjoy his wry humour and mock-complaints at the forestlands and Gautland. Whether this rough terrain and its rough inhabitants belonged to Swede or Dane we do not know; we presume it was to the former. In any case Sighvat and his comrades re-traversed it, a marriage was arranged, and its terms bargained for. Common interest and fear of the Danes brought about an alliance of Norway and Sweden. Somewhere about this time the Swedes grew so dissatisfied with Olaf Skötkonung, in part because of his newfangled religion, that they

compelled him to share his rule with his twice-named son Onund Jacob; Olaf died in 1022, and it was with Onund that Olaf of Norway made a compact at Konungahella to attack Denmark. Happy the king who has no foreign policy. This led to Knut's third expedition to Denmark in 1025–6, which in its turn led to the reversal of Norwegian Olaf's fortunes.

One wonders why Knut had not moved before. The reasons seem to be that he had plenty to occupy him in England, and that England was a far richer prize than Norway; that his situation in both England and Denmark imposed caution on him; and that so long as Norway and Sweden stayed on bad terms he had little to fear from either. It is unlikely that Knut had a theory of empire impelling him to add Norway (and some say Sweden) to his realms of England and Denmark. But he would be sensitive to the threat to English and Danish trade and security posed by an unfriendly king in Norway and the Atlantic islands; if either opportunity or compulsion arose he was the man to act upon them, and the middle 1020s offered both. We postulate the death of Thorkell the Tall soon after 1023, but the succession of Knut's brother-in-law jarl Ulf as regent in Denmark led to fresh doubts and dangers. We are far from clear who jarl Ulf was—he has been furnished with Danish, Swedish, Gaulish, Jomsborg, and English antecedents—but on the most charitable count he showed less than full loyalty to king Knut. There was the dubious transaction when by means of a stolen seal and a forged instrument he sought to make Knut's young son Hordaknut king of Denmark (*Fagrskinna*, written by an Icelander in Norway shortly after 1220, implicates queen Emma in this); he provided no worthwhile opposition to the first hostile moves of Sweden and Norway, but retreated to Jutland; and there was Ulf's disputed role in the disputed battle at the Holy River in the disputed year of 1025–6–7.[1] Knut, it is clear, had much to see to, and was aware that some of it was happening behind his back. Not that he was entirely idle in respect of Norway. There must be some disaffection after an enforced change of religion and a paring down

[1] The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (E) puts the battle in 1025, but this is too upsetting to the chronology supplied by Scandinavian sources to be acceptable. The known facts of Olaf's last years point to 1027 (a date skilfully defended by Campbell, *Encomium Emmae*, pp. 82 ff.). But if we believe that Knut's pilgrimage to Rome took place in 1027, we are forced to assign the battle to 1026.

of the kingly families of old. His bribes and promises had already begun to move north.

When Olaf with sixty ships sailed to harry Zealand, and Onund with a much bigger fleet began to harry Skåne, Knut moved north in person with a fleet from England to Limfjord in Jutland, where he was joined by a second fleet recruited at home. The news of his coming gave heart to all Denmark, and when he stood out into the Kattegat with his combined force Olaf judged it prudent to leave Zealand. Swedes and Norwegians then harried the coasts of Skåne together, a feeble gesture in kings who had sworn to conquer Denmark, and even here their opportunities dwindled as the Danish fleet drew near. They retreated to a defensive position in the mouth of Holy River, Helga-á, on the east or Baltic coast of Skåne, and here Knut fought with them. Some early writers awarded the victory to Knut, others to the confederates. Jarl Ulf is reported as playing a decisive role on both sides. Details of the fight are more than usually unreliable. But something may be deduced from its immediate consequences. Onund headed off home with as whole a wagon as remained to him, and almost at once his alliance, though not his friendship, with Olaf broke down. Knut retired to Denmark and settled his score with jarl Ulf: he had him murdered in Roskilde church, then compounded the scandal with generous endowments of land. Olaf's position was more difficult. The first whiffs of treachery were reaching his nostrils; he had to get back home, but, remembering the fate of Olaf Tryggvason, dare not risk an ambush in the Øresund; there was nothing for it but to abandon his ships and take the overland route to Sarpsborg. There was a short period of peace during which Olaf could do little save grow increasingly uneasy, while Knut increased his chances of a bloodless conquest of Norway by enhancing his prestige throughout the north by the spiritual and temporal benefits of his pilgrimage to Rome. Meantime, because a wolf in its lair never wins a ham, nor a sleeping man a victory, his agents were suborning Norwegians great and small. 'I have never', says the *Hávamál* poet, 'found a man so generous and hospitable that he would not take a present, nor one so free with his money that he would be displeased with an award if he could get one.' Some held their hands out for money; others of the ancient hersar aristocracy craved esteem. Knut dispensed both. Before the year's end he was sure of Harek Thjotta, Thorir Hound, Einar Thambarskelfir, and Erling Skjalgsson. When Knut arrived off

Norway with a powerful fleet in 1028 he was unopposed. Olaf tried to rally men to his drooping banner, to no avail.[1] His one small victory ended in the murder of Erling Skjalgsson, to whom he had promised quarter, and lost him more than he gained. Kalf Arnason deserted him, and with a few trusted companions he crossed the mountains to Gudbrandsdal and passed by way of Sweden to find sanctuary with his kinsman Yaroslav in Russia. But the all-conquering Knut made a triumphal progress up the Norwegian coast. Wherever he put ashore he was hailed, or maybe tolerated, as a deliverer, and when he reached Nidaros was accepted as Norway's lord and king. Yet again a king who had lost command of the sea had lost his kingdom as a consequence, and Knut, who held that command, inherited. He proclaimed his son Hordaknut king of Denmark, and having set Hakon Eiriksson of the Hladir line of jarls to govern Norway on his behalf, sailed by way of Sarpsborg, where he was acclaimed king over Vik, to Denmark and so to England. There had been many inflated claims to glory on behalf of earlier Scandinavian kings, but with the description of Knut as *Rex totius Angliae et Dennemarchiae et Norregiae et partis Suavorum* there can be little quarrel.[2] Even if we accept that *Suavorum* should read *Slavorum*, the ruler of Skåne, and maybe of Blekinge, suffers no very crippling diminution.

The following summer the situation in Norway changed. Jarl Hakon drowned in the Pentland Firth; he was the last effective representative of a family comparable in dignity and esteem to the Ynglings, and there was no Norwegian with a pre-emptive claim to succeed him. Knut seems to have made promises to both Kalf

[1] A number of scholars have held that Snorri was misled by his knowledge of thirteenth-century Norway when he portrayed its eleventh-century chieftains in rebellion against king Olaf. It is arguable that he had more support in parts of the country, in Uppland and the Vik for example, than Snorri allows for, and that his opponents were not so much politically allied against their sovereign as disaffected for more personal reasons, including loss of land or status, change of religion, family grievances, and private quarrels with the king.

[2] It is found in his letter of 1027 to the English people, a translation of which will be found in D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 1955, pp. 416–18. A number of coins bear the inscription *Cnut rex sv*, and that *sv* can refer only to Sweden is proved by the attribution on the coin's reverse: *Thormod on Sibt*, 'Thormod in Sigtuna'. Thormod was a moneyer of the Swedish king Onund-Jacob. The inscription may be taken at its face value or, more convincingly, as evidence of a Knytling aspiration.

Arnason and Einar Thambarskelfir; he continued to handle them skilfully if trickily, but announced that Norway would be ruled by his son Svein. With his English mother Ælfgifu, who would be known to Norse historians as Alfifa (*Álfífa*), Svein set off for Norway, probably from Denmark, and mother and son arrived in the Vik from the south at much the same time as an overlooked but natural contender, the recently expelled king Olaf Haraldsson, crossed into Trondheim province from the east. As in the year 1000 the pieces were on the board for a further famed encounter of the Viking Age.

We assume that it was news of Hakon's death which quickened Olaf's resolve to win back Norway, but he would have made the attempt sooner or later. Early in 1030 he began his preparations, travelled the frozen Russian rivers to the coast, and when the sea-ice broke up sailed with 240 men to Gotland. Here he had confirmation of Hakon's death, and with rising hope went on to Sweden, where Onund was not slack in well-doing, but with an eye to Knut, not overzealous neither. He supplied his former ally with 480 men and leave to recruit what others he could. With these he headed into the forestlands of Dalarna, where he was met by his half-brother Harald (Hardradi) and other of his kinsmen with their following. But if his friends in Norway were aware of his movements so, too, were his foes. While Olaf pressed on through the forests and mountains of the interior, the war-arrow was borne through northern and western Norway. Harek of Thjotta and Thorir Hound came down from the north with their men; the lords of Agdir, Rogaland, and Hordaland fared from the south, and the sons of Erling Skjalgsson moved a covering force east from the Jaeder. In Trondheim at the centre of preparations stood Kalf Arnason. Those great chieftains who had accepted bribes and office at Knut's hand had everything to lose if Olaf returned to power; but strikingly enough the farmers great and small were equally opposed to him. The army that eventually defeated him at Stiklarstadir was reckoned the biggest ever assembled in Norway, of one hundred hundreds, or 14,400 men. As a figure it looks suspiciously large and round. Olaf could muster not more than 3,600, made up of Norwegians from his own south-eastern part of Norway, Swedes, and an assortment of unidentifiable riff-raff, many of them heathens. He also had three Icelandic poets in train, including Thormod Coalbrow's-skald, who would die of his battle-wound at Stiklarstadir, but his faithful

Sighvat was on pilgrimage to Rome. These poets Olaf is said to have brought within his shield-wall, bidding them mark the event well and immortalize it later.

From their verses and such other traditions and legends as were associated with the battle Snorri composed one of his consummate narrative pieces. For once his natural pragmatism is tempered by sympathy with Olaf. To a cold eye it might appear that Olaf set death or victory on a desperate throw, and it is interesting to find that tradition, in general so favourable to him, shows him returning to his kingdom with everything he had formerly reprobated, a part-alien and part-heathen army of mercenaries. Against him, we read, were none but Norwegians. But in all likelihood the battle reflected the permanent realities of Scandinavian politics: pressure and interference from Denmark and Sweden, and the Norwegians divided in factions. The traditional date of the battle is 29 July 1030, but there was an eclipse of the sun visible at Stiklarstadir on 31 August, and the two dates were not unnaturally confounded. Details of the battle are lacking,[1] but when the day ended Olaf was dead, and once more Norway had broken from a Norwegian's hand to the hand of a foreigner.

Medieval historical works are eloquent that Norway at once had cause to regret it. But the partiality of their witness is patent. Understandably for skalds like Sighvat the hillsides which had smiled

[1] Snorri's account is deliberately heroic and highly fictitious. The day, he informs us, began in epic style. Olaf woke early and called on Thormod to recite a poem to rouse the host. This was the old *Bjarkamál*, which told of the doomed stand of Hrolf Kraki and his champions at Lejre. Their courage whetted, Olaf's men advanced to the place of slaughter. Olaf wondered whether his half-brother Harald was not too young and weak for what lay ahead: Harald replied that if nothing else would serve, his hand should be tethered to his sword-hilt. The armies were harangued by their leaders, and the leaders harangued each other. Then to a shout of '*Fram, fram, bóandmenn!*' ('On, on, farmer-men!') in the one army and '*Fram, fram, Kristsmenn, krossmen, konungsmenn!*' ('On, on, Christ's men, cross-men, king's men!') in the other, the unequal struggle began. The weather was bright and the sun shone from a clear sky, but as blows were struck and the dead men fell, sky and sun grew red, and before the battle ended it was dark as night. The king fought with exceeding valour and no thought of flight. Two of his poets, his standard-bearer, and his marshall fell near him. In turn the king was brought to bay by broad-axe and spear and died of three fearful strokes. Some say Kalf Arnason dealt him his last wound, some say a different Kalf. The king's sanctity was revealed forthwith by the miracles wrought by his blood.

in Olaf's reign grew dark and louring, but it is hard to believe that Ælgifu and Svein would promptly set out to punish their friends and supporters, crop the chieftains' power, and impose burdens on the free householder. Almost everything the synoptic historians say under this head sounds a note of national and hagiographical propaganda. Had Norwegians, they seem to ask, destroyed a king of their own blood to burden themselves with a bad Dane and a worse Englishwoman? Their mulctings are recounted, their acts of oppression noted in detail, taxes, legal disabilities, enforced services, but there is no good reason for believing in any of it. They are the secular counterpart of the carefully fostered legend of the dead Olaf. Men talked, or it was said that men talked, of the maimed or blind or dead made whole by his blood; and when permission was granted to exhume his body, foreseeably it was found to be uncorrupted. Foreseeably bishop Grimkell declared him a true saint, and had him translated to that St. Clement's Church in Nidaros which Olaf had founded twenty years before. The miracles increased in scope and number, legends grew, stories spread, and it was right and proper for good Norwegians to believe in them. They strengthened the Church and they enhanced the native monarchy. The cult of St. Olaf, so swiftly born, so straitly based, spread to many countries and proved long-lasting. King Olaf died against a rock at Stiklarstadir; St. Olaf continued his work long beyond the Viking Age as *perpetuus rex Norvegiae*, 'Norway's eternal king'. Some of the changes affecting Norway would become apparent only during the course of the century, but two were quickly made plain: that Norway had become a Christian country, and that the days of foreign kings and their regents were over.

When Olaf set out on his death-journey in the heart of winter from a frozen Russia he left behind him at Yaroslav's court his young son Magnus, borne to him by his *frilla* Alfhild, and named, we are told, after Charlemagne (Karla-Magnus) on the initiative of Sighvat the Skald. He was now the best hope of the Norwegian party, and thought was given to his return and restoration. There may have been another candidate, a self-styled son of Olaf Tryggvason who sailed to Norway from England in 1033. He sounds a creature of folk-tale, and is described as an impostor and son of a priest. In the battle which proved fatal to his hopes he hurled spears with both hands at once, crying, 'Thus my father taught me to say Mass!' If he ever lived he was thereupon killed. Norwegian

emissaries left for Russia, met Yaroslav and Magnus Olafsson there, and brought the boy back and had him made king. The Danish ascendancy was in heavy regression, and in the autumn Svein sought refuge with his brother Hordaknut in Denmark. A month or two later, on 12 November, king Knut died in England and was buried at Winchester. The death of this great king who had briefly controlled the North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, the Sound and the southern Baltic, and been lord of so many peoples, was a happy accident for Norway. The unpopular Svein likewise died, Hordaknut could not risk leaving Denmark in face of the threat to Danish interests in Norway, and this in turn led to the election of his half-brother Harald Harefoot first as regent then as king of England. The Anglo-Scandinavian empire, if it ever existed, had fallen apart, and by their muddled lives and early deaths the sons of Knut ensured that the Anglo-Danish monarchy would soon follow its example. The Viking Age was ending, though harsh throes were still to come. Meantime of the Scandinavian kingdoms Norway was the chief beneficiary of change.

3. The Viking Kingdoms to the Death of Harald Hardradi, 1066

THE VIKING AGE DID NOT END SUDDENLY, AND IT MAY appear an arbitrary fall of the axe which terminates its story in 1066–70. Many phenomena of the Age, particularly religion and kingship, had experienced change by 1030–5, which saw the death in battle at Stiklarstadir of Olaf Haraldsson, king and saint, *perpetuus rex Norvegiae*, and the death by sickness in England of king Knut the Great, the Mighty, the Old, *rex totius Angliae et Dennemarchiae et Norregiae et partis Suavorum*; but all such change is more clearly defined after 1066, the climacteric year which saw the death at Stamford Bridge of Harald Hardradi of Norway and the conquest of England by William of Normandy. The twenty years before 1050, and the twenty after, show an obvious shrinking back upon itself of the viking world, though much of the evidence has a clearer message for posterity than for men living at the time. Thus there was a heavy setback to Norse aspirations in Ireland in 1052, when Diarmaid of Leinster seized the Dublin kingdom—but the Norsemen there had suffered setbacks before and been returned to power. The death of Yaroslav in 1054 was the end of Norseness in the Kievan kingdom of Russia—but this only confirmed what thinking men had long known to be a political and economic fact. The greatest of the Orkney jarls in might, wisdom, and magnanimity, jarl Thorfinn, who had greatly extended his realm, died in 1065, to the comfort of Malcolm Canmore king of Scotland—but Orkney, Shetland, Man, the mainland and islands of Scotland were well used to permutations of local power. Jomsborg-Wollin was destroyed in the early 1040s—but it had burned before, and who could say it would not rise again out of its ashes? Hedeby was destroyed by pillage and fire *c.* 1050, but there would soon be a new mart north of

the Sliefjord. For every town that was falling away a new town was being built up. The Vinland venture had been concluded, unsuccessfully, thirty years since, but trade there had never amounted to much and land-taking to nothing at all. Besides, Greenland and Iceland were doing well, apart from an infrequency of drinking-parties in the one and an occasional famine in the other, and had not the 'well-informed prince of the Norwegians', Harald Hardradi, shown that the old spirit of exploration for gain was still alive by attempting the Frozen Sea? Not too successfully—'After he had explored the expanse of the Northern Ocean in his ships, there lay before their eyes at length the darksome bounds of a failing world, and by retracing his steps he barely escaped in safety the vast pit of the abyss.'[1] But it made for talk of the right kind.

In most of this there was nothing to convince the ordinary man of the mid-eleventh century that it was well an old age was out and time to begin a new. As in the legendary sixth century and the viking heyday he continued to go about his business, and it was the same business. The land was farmed with love and diligence. The long flat Danish landscape, the high Norwegian valleys, the clearings of the Swedish forests yielded corn or fragrant grass; sheep grazed the pastures of a thousand islands between the Ålands and the west Greenland archipelago, and on the mainlands went up to the seter and the heiði in spring and fattened there till the first cold nights of autumn. Northwards in Norway and Sweden the Norseman and his animals contended for grazing with the bright-clad nomads and their migratory herds; in Iceland the bondi widened his homefield, so that a greener grass encroached on the livid wilderness. There and in Greenland even more than at home he must select beasts to be brought through the winter and slaughter the rest in September. They were small animals by today's standards, the sheep springy, the cattle multi-coloured and unshapely, yielding less meat and milk, but easier to transport on voyages of colonization. In general horses were exempt from this autumnal slaughter; they were clever at finding food and survived all save the savagest weather.[2] Between 750 and 1100 life on the land changed comparatively little: peasant and franklin stayed deeply conservative. Great lords came and went; some were good, others were bad; you took up arms for or against them only if you had to. The Norwegian farmers who defeated and killed king Olaf were content to see him sanctified. The English, including the Danes of England, who had followed Knut followed Edward. The Danes of Denmark obeyed in turn their own Hordaknut, Magnus the Norwegian, and Svein Estridsson, and would not have jibbed at Harald Hardradi. True, there was a new religion to be observed, and soon wise men would be writing down the law, all very important, no doubt, especially for kings and jarls and bishops and zealots, but for the most part not bearing too hard on the farmer scything hay in Gudbrandsdal or Borgarfjord, the fisherman dropping his nets off the Lofotens or Jutland, and the cold-fingered fur-hunter spearing and trapping in wildernesses from the Gulf of Bothnia to the verges of Baffin Bay. Merchants whose interest was in profit continued to sail the trade-routes of Baltic, Sound, and Kattegat, lay-to by night in the leads of western Norway, or turned their laden ships south and south-west to Frisia, France, and the British Isles. Hucksters with a packhorse penetrated fjords and crossed mountain passes. Smiths and craftsmen were traffickers to dwellings great and small, with pots, lamps, and brooches for the womenfolk, tools, weapons, and drinking-vessels for the men. More of life's amenities were distributed over a wider territory.

Similarly in the towns there was no great outward change. Birka might die slowly and Hedeby be swiftly extinguished, but on the narrow roadways of Sigtuna, Nidaros, and Slesvig, amid the jostle of carts and animals, gadding women and gossiping men, or down at the waterfront watching the transfer of wares from ship to cart, and hearing the tap of the shipwright's hammer, a nordic Rip van Winkle from a century or two earlier would not feel significantly out of place. Certain outlandish additions to masculine costume, especially those long, full baggy trousers copied from Serkland, and too many women flaunting a linen petticoat instead of the good old woollens—but they still built the houses the same way, the ships looked the same, as did the carts and sleds and the beasts that drew them; there were the same-shaped saddles laid over the same-shaped horses, and much the same bridles and stirrups. And the weapons, in look and hoist, very much the same. And if you looked in through the opened doorways the same loom and wheel, spit and cooking pot, dish and spoon, the same unsilenced women contra-

[1] Adam of Bremen, IV, xxxix.

[2] One can still see these sturdy little *útigangshestar*, or out-grazers, in Iceland today, their wise and melancholy eyes surveying the prospect of spring through a veritable shako of forehead-hair and mane.

dicting their menfolk, the same children. Dogs, too—a cur was always a cur, all teeth and tail. If you were a religious man you would, of course, notice a degree of change, and probably regret it. If you were a Swede you would find it a novelty that a Norwegian now lorded it over the Danes. And if you were a wise Swede you would doubt that it could last.

Nor would it, and the Norwegian-Danish treaty of 1064 which recognized that each country was independent of the other is not the least pointer to the end of the Age. From its beginnings till the proclamation of Magnus Olafsson as king in 1035 Norway had been subjected to Danish influence, and the succession of events which made Magnus king of Denmark after Hordaknut's death in 1042 was without parallel in earlier Scandinavian history. But it led to a new imbalance, and it was not until the restoration of a Danish king to Denmark in 1047 and Norway's recognition of him in 1064 that the scales hung steady between the neighbours. The cancellation of the Norwegian claim to the throne of England in 1066 and Svein's virtual abandonment of the Danish in 1070 were likewise events of terminatory significance.

Before the death of Harald Hardradi in 1066 there had been further developments in the slowly changing social order of the Scandinavian homelands. They can be followed most clearly in Norway, where they affected all four classes, the king, the aristocracy, that ubiquitous body which included 'all husbandmen, those too who worked in the forests, and salt-men, and all takers of prey by sea and land', and, finally, the thralls. In the century after the death of Harald Fairhair no Norwegian king died peacefully in his bed and was succeeded by his son. Eirik Blood-axe was driven out and killed in England; Hakon the Good was killed by Eirik's sons at Fitjar; Harald Greycloak was enticed to Denmark with Norwegian help and killed in the Limfjord; jarl Hakon was deserted by his subjects and killed in the Trondelag; Olaf Tryggvason was killed at Svold by a confederacy including jarl Eirik Hakonarson; jarl Svein was driven out and died in Sweden; Olaf Haraldsson was driven out and on his return killed at Stiklarstadir. Most were rulers who had themselves seized the throne by violence, usually by sea-borne invasion. But in 1035 Magnus became king by the invitation of his subjects, and later made a peaceable arrangement with his uncle Harald Hardradi when he, too, sought dominion in Norway. Harald's death in England owed nothing to his subjects,

and his sons, grandson, and great-grandsons succeeded him in due order. Not less remarkable, his immediate descendants solved the problem of a double, even a triple kingship, without resort to assassination or civil war.

Clearly the monarchy was on a new footing. In the main this was because it had either broken or contained the power of the regional chieftains and changed the nature of the aristocracy. The viking captain with a hird and a fleet, thriving on civil war at home and plundering expeditions abroad, was departing the scene. The new chieftains were landed men, concerned with stability and peaceful development. A bondi aristocracy worked more closely with the king, and proved better for the country's prosperity, than a viking aristocracy with recurring military ambitions. The ruthless reign of Harald Hardradi was good for Norway; his long wars with Denmark were the ugly backside of his determination to be master in his own house. The king-breakers and king-makers whom he had inherited along with the kingdom, like Einar Thambarskelfir and the Arnorssons, he destroyed without scruple as opportunity arose. Only one private army would be tolerated: the king's. And this everyone would tolerate, the new-style chieftains, usually landed men and overseers, who attended to regional needs between royal visitations; the bishops whose interests were bound up with the king's, and who brought to his support not only their spiritual authority in Norway but the strength derived from their active membership of an institution which had taken Christendom as its parish, besides the organizing and administrative ability distinctive of the Church and so necessary to an emergent kingdom; and the free men likewise who looked to the king to implement law and justice. The only time the bondis need fear the hird was when they fell short in their duty to the king. During Harald's long reign this happened particularly in respect of Uppland, which he was determined to bring into full obedience. An improved relationship between the Norwegian king and his franklins great and small knit the kingdom more firmly together, and was matched south of the Skagerrak by the attachment of the Danes to Svein and his realm of Denmark.

Other social changes followed from the dying down of *víking*. Slavery was enfeebled as an institution as the supply of slaves came to an end. Emigration overseas fell off when there were no new lands to settle, no old ones from which to dispossess English, French,

or Irish householders. Younger sons must now make do at home, break the soil's surface wherever this was possible, seek higher or more northerly grazing, or, commonly, settle for a smaller farm, a straitened tenancy, and increasingly as time went on for hiring out as labour. This had important consequences at home, and immediately apparent ones overseas, in that the most sensational manifestation of Scandinavian history and civilization as it is recorded in other than Scandinavian sources, that is, the Viking Movement, the excursus abroad, was grinding to a halt. Viking incursions into the kingdom of the Franks (but not the Germans) had ended early in the tenth century with the creation of the duchy of Normandy, and after the death of Knut the ancient West Saxon dynasty pre-emptively reinherited England. Earlier still, on the principle that if one has a farm and a manor house one lives in the manor, Knut had settled to be king of England rather than Denmark, and sent his vikings back home. Apart from the fact that the viking aristocracy was in decline, with the arguable exception of Harald Hardradi's exploits in Byzantium and the north there were remarkably few viking opportunities left. And hardly any vikings. Instead there were Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, though the extent to which they were aware of their separateness from each other is hard to say, and across the water the Norse of Dublin, those of the sea-sundered region between Orkney and Man, the Icelanders by now become a people apart from Norway and the Western Islands, and the Greenlanders far out on the rim of the world. Even if 'vikings' now existed and had their ancient longings, where could they fulfil them? Alas for private enterprise and the rights of free men! Monarchs had taken over the business of war. Harald Hardradi's expedition to England, Svein Estridsson's baffled action there in 1069–70, and if they can properly be counted, the abortive plans of king Knut II (St. Knut), and the three westward sorties of Magnus Barelegs at the end of the century, were all royal and therefore at least quasi-national undertakings. There were still great blood-lettings, from Clontarf in 1014, by way of Lyrskov Heath in 1043 (where most of the blood was Wendish), to Gate Fulford and Stamford Bridge in 1066; service in the king's hird was still a hook drawing brave men to riches and regard; but the once-esteemed profession of arms with piracy offered fewer openings and ever-scantier opportunities. As for home waters, the seizure of cattle, food, and booty, *strandhögg*, *nesnám*, and *herfang*, were under ban. The viking was become an anachronism at home and abroad.

It is indeed curious to observe how by 1066–70, after two and a half centuries of ardent expansion overseas, the viking peoples, with the significant exception of their remote Atlantic colonies, were in large measure back inside their original boundaries. For this there were four good reasons: the constant struggle for territory and dominance in and between the three homeland kingdoms; their general inability to propagate elsewhere their political, social, and religious systems; the fact that they must encounter nations and peoples, the Franks and English, the Empire, Byzantium, the Caliphates, and in the long run the Slavs, richer or stronger, and altogether more absorbent and self-renewing than themselves; and, most important of all, their lack of manpower. These reasons are not always separable one from the other, and are capable of subdivision. But it is manifest that the wars at home for some kind of Scandinavian imperium, or even the welding of a kingdom or extension of a patrimony, persistently handicapped Norse ambitions abroad. Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf Haraldsson, Svein Forkbeard, Magnus Olafsson, and Harald Hardradi (to say nothing of Svein Estridsson) were all kings whose plans for Scandinavia delayed or terminated their operations in the west,[1] and the list could be lengthened with the names of leaders as famous as Godfred, Horik, Olaf-Amlaibh, and even Thorkell the Tall. The viking peoples, even under Knut (who, it must be remembered,

[1] There is confirmatory evidence from the buried hoards of Scandinavia. '[The] relationship between disturbances and hoards is well established for historical times both in Scandinavia and elsewhere and the best explanation for the large number of hoards from certain periods seems to be that those were unusually disordered. It has long been recognized that in Norway there are many hoards from the disturbed reigns of Olaf Tryggvason (died 1000), St Olaf (died 1030) and Harald Hardradi (1046–66), while there are few from the more peaceful reign of Magnus the Good (1035–47).[55] Similarly in Denmark there are many hoards datable to the period 1050–65 when there was extensive fighting between Harald and Svein Estrithson.[56] The same is true of England: the reign of Edgar has yielded very few hoards and the five years that saw the Norman Conquest, 1065–70, produced more hoards than the preceding five decades.' (P. H. Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, p. 105, with references to [55] A. W. Brøgger, 'Et mynt fund fra Foldøen i Ryfylke, fra xi Aarhundrede', in *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1910, pp. 239–82; [56] R. Skovmand, *De Danske Skattefund fra Vikingetiden og den ældste Middelalder indtil omkring 1150*, Copenhagen, 1942, pp. 192–6; [57] R. H. M. Dolley, *Anglo-Saxon Coins*, pp. 163–5.

increasingly identified himself with English interests) never settled to a common purpose—and it was impossible that they should. Under the second head it might be argued that Iceland and the Danelaw show that viking polity and custom could be exported; but Iceland was a country devoid of inhabitants, save for a few *papar*, and therefore a special if not unique case; while the strong flavour of Scandinavia in the Danelaw and its various influences back home cannot hide the readiness with which before the time of Brunanburgh it looked to England rather than to Denmark or Norway. The Norsemen there had gratified their desire for land, and wanted to farm it, not go on fighting for ever, and they came to find their heathen Norse brothers less congenial than their Christian English cousins. The religious view was everywhere important. In England, Normandy, and Kiev, the rejection of Æsir and Vanir in favour of Christ ate deep into the Norse sense of separateness, as back in Scandinavia heathendom had helped sustain it. And almost everywhere their numbers were too small, and their presence subject to erosion. At their western extremity it was this which led them to abandon Wineland the Good, and in course of time fail where the Eskimo would succeed, in Greenland; and in the east, in Russia, they were submerged completely. Even the improvements that were taking place in Scandinavian agriculture, and the new soil being brought under cultivation, led to fewer men going overseas. When, as we must, we set aside the exaggerations of Christian chroniclers from Ireland to Byzantium, with their tale of hundreds and thousands of ships, and tens of thousands of warriors distinguished by superhuman strength and subhuman destructiveness, and think instead on the realities of manpower and logistics, it is imperatively borne in on us that as colonizers or conquerors the vikings were too few for the many and varied causes they bore in hand. And this told more and more against them as their initial advantages of surprise and mobility were whittled away.

Paradoxically, in the light of all this, in two areas overseas they appear to have been too successful for their own good, in that they established colonies which became independent of the homeland, went their separate ways, and rendered further immigration impossible. The first of these was Iceland, whose ties of affection with south-west Norway were not more heartfelt than their devices for avoiding the pressures of Norwegian royal power. Remote and conservative, its habitable areas soon occupied, it

became a country of its own, and by virtue of the administrative enactments of 930 and 965 a republic answerable to none but its own folk. The second was the duchy of Normandy, which so cut free of its Danish-Norwegian apron-strings that long before the Viking Age closed it was French in language, culture, and political institutions, Christian in religion, and committed to a future in western Europe, without regard for the medieval north it had deliberately turned its back on. It does not do to forget that the Icelander and the Norman were blood-brothers, and that the enterprise and energy shown by the one in mastering his sea-girt, stony province, developing its arts and constitution, and mounting the voyages of exploration and colonization to Greenland and North America, were the counterpart of the organizing ability, statecraft, and military zeal which made the duchy of Normandy so formidable a newcomer to the comity of western Europe, and led in course of time to the Norman conquests in England and Sicily—though the two states' differing destiny in the post-viking centuries affords one of the more striking illustrations of geo-political determinism in the history of our continent.

In earlier chapters we have concluded the viking story in respect of the eastern progress to Kiev and thence south to Byzantium, the westward progress to Iceland, Greenland, and the fronting coast of North America, and the founding by Hrolf and his Danes of the duchy of Normandy. Before we return to Norway and Denmark, with the reference this entails to England, the tangled course of Norse affairs in Ireland demands a brief mention. Here, and still more in the viking colonies and conquests in Scotland and the islands from Man to Orkney, the practice of *víking* died hard. But much of what happened in these latter areas, though fascinating in itself, and amply if often creatively recorded in northern saga, was hardly central to viking history. Ireland was different. The Norsemen (part Danes, part Norwegians) had established a number of important trading towns in the southern half of the island, Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, and Limerick, and it was in petty kingdoms in and around these that leaders great and small maintained the viking tradition of a military aristocracy based on seapower and comitatus, and sustained by the profits of trade, tribute, and war. The nature of this society was little changed by an acquaintance with unpeaceful Christianity or intermarriage with

the unpeaceful Irish; and the evidence of the graves, especially in respect of weapons, still points to a life tumultuous, decorative, and lordly. The Irish triumph of 902, which gave them Dublin, proved short-lived. The Norsemen were back in 914, recovered Dublin, captured Limerick, held the overlordship of Waterford, and initiated another century of intermittent strife. For a while the affairs of the Norsemen in Ireland were bedevilled by their ambitions in northern England, which brought them brief glory, but helped the Irish kings contain their territorial ambitions. No doubt each lurch of Norse policy seemed meaningful at the time to men like Guthfrith and his son Olaf, to Sigtrygg Gale and Olaf Kvaran, and the various Ivars, Rognvalds, and Sigtryggs who span the century between the return of the grandsons of Ivar of Limerick and the battle of Clontarf. There was the dream of a maritime confederacy both sides of the Irish Sea, there were the encircling Irish, and the never-slackening demand for plunder and tribute to reward their hirdmen. But the hyperbole over events and the emphasis on romantic personalities in the documents which record their deeds, bring them too closely into line with the murky-glittering heroes of the Sagas of Old Time to engage our full belief. The stock of Ragnar continued to breed sowers of gold and feeders of ravens, but no one of them, whatever his valour and triumphs, gave his countrymen in Ireland a prospect of dominance and permanency. Olaf Guthfrith's son died in the north of England in 941, seemingly on the very brink of success, but it is unsafe to conclude that had he lived he would have held his own with the resolute Edmund. Olaf Kvaran not only abandoned hope of securing Northumbria in 951, but at the end of his long reign in Ireland lost Dublin and died a straw-death in Christian Iona. Thereafter the Norsemen found no one to match Mael Seachlainn Mor in the centre and Brian Boru in the south, and it was only the normal intractability of Irish politics which prevented their being bundled into the sea in the heyday of these two kings. But Ireland of the priests, the story-tellers, and the high kings, remained even after Clontarf in that state of disunity which made viking entry safe and survival easy.

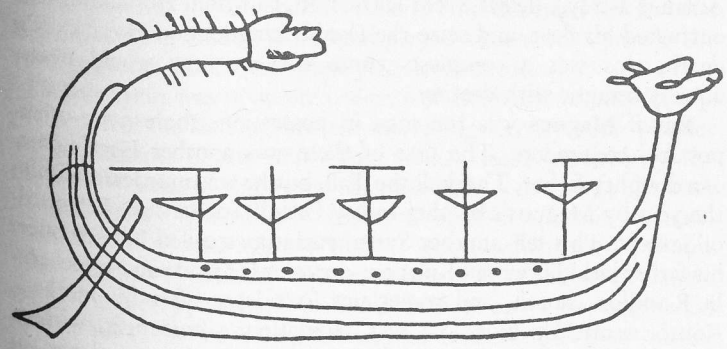
Clontarf is one of the incantatory names of viking history, a foreign counterpart of Hafrsfjord, Hjorungavag, Svold, and Stiklarstadir. Like them it was too important to be left to historians, so passed into the legend-maker's hand. Soon it was not merely a battle for an exceeding prize between armies, with the exceeding

profits of Norse traders and carriers decorating the background, but the formal assembly of heroes pursuant of doom. Between Liffey and Tolka, within a mile or two of Dublin Bay, there gathered on behalf of Ireland in April 1014 the high king Brian with his son Murchad and grandson Tordelbach, Mael Seachlainn and the southern O'Neill, and Ospak of Man. Opposing them, with their backs to the sea, stood jarl Sigurd the Stout of Orkney, Brodir of Man, Maelmordha with his Leinstermen, and the Dublin vikings under the command of Dubhgall, brother of Sigtrygg Silk-beard. It was an alignment which set brother against brother, father-in-law against son-in-law, Irishman against Irishman, viking against viking, and the skalds and sagamen did it justice, weaving many remarkable personalities, motives, and incidents into their tragic tapestries. There was Gormflaith (Kormlod), mother of Sigtrygg Silk-beard, sister of Maelmordha, widow of Olaf Kvaran, divorced consort of Mael Seachlainn, deserting wife of Brian, impossibly promised as a prize of victory to both Sigurd of Orkney and Brodir of Man, with the Dublin kingdom for dowry. At a far extreme there was Thorstein the Icelander, son of Hall of Sida, who knelt and tied his shoelace, calmly, as men fled after the fall of jarl Sigurd. The pursuing Irishmen asked him why he was not running away like the rest of them. 'Because I can't get home tonight,' said Thorstein, 'for my home is out in Iceland.' He was spared, that his answer might be known—or invented. Omens, wonders, and miracles multiplied, to foretell or confirm the fall of princes. On the Irish side Brian was cut down as he prayed for victory in 'Tomar's Wood', his son Murchad was killed even as victory came in sight, and his grandson Tordelbach, hunting victims by the river-mouth as a seal hunts salmon, was drowned near the Weir of Clontarf. Along with their leaders died 4,000 Irishmen. Of Vikings and Leinstermen the slaughter was worse, for when they fled it was to the hardly attainable refuge of their ships or the viking stronghold over the Liffey. Sigurd died bravely, Brodir gruesomely (if we may trust to *Njáls Saga* 157), and with them 7,000 men. Thereafter it was clear that Ireland would never fall under a Norse yoke, but it also happened that the Norsemen were neither now nor later expelled from Ireland. They remained important to the country's trade and the development of its towns, had kings here and princes there, survived the military disasters of 1052, and were still royally led at the coming of the English in the 1160s and '70s.

We said, at the end of our preceding chapter, that the chief beneficiary of the changes consequent upon the death of Knut and his sons was Norway. A more cynical opinion might limit the benefits to her king, Magnus, and his eventual partner and successor, Harald Hardradi (*Harðráði*, Hard Counsel, Hard Ruler, Harald the Ruthless). At his death in 1035 Knut left three sons, two by his mistress Ælgifu, that Svein whom we have seen expelled from Norway upon the return of Magnus Olafsson, and Harald nicknamed Harefoot, and the third, Hordaknut, the issue of his marriage to Emma, widow of the ill-starred Ethelred. It was Knut's intention that both England and Denmark should be ruled by his one legitimate heir, Hordaknut, but even if all parties, factions, kingdoms, mothers, and half-brothers had been in full agreement, this was impracticable. Hordaknut already bore the title king of Denmark and was resident there. It was to him that the discredited Svein, Ælgifu's son, fled for refuge in the autumn of 1035, and it was at Hordaknut's court that he died a few months later. This still left Harald Harefoot, then resident in England. In the normal course of events Hordaknut would have come straightway to England to be hailed as her king; but this he could not do. The resurgence of Norwegian interests in Norway, accompanied by hostility to Denmark and the sudden prestige of Magnus, kept him so to speak on the frontier. To leave Denmark was to invite invasion. Still, something had to be done, and over in England an English habit prevailed. There was a compromise of interests: the election of a king was postponed, Harald Harefoot was made regent, and Hordaknut's mother Emma remained in charge of Knut's treasure-chest and some of his housecarles in Winchester. But the arrangement was not intended to last, or even to work. Ælgifu's maternal ambitions, thwarted in the case of the dead Svein, were intensified on behalf of Harald; Knut's treasure was seized, a 'king's party' rapidly and efficiently established, Emma's chief supporter, earl Godwine, suborned or otherwise brought over, and Emma's son by Ethelred, Alfred the Ætheling, betrayed and so horribly ill-treated that he died of his blinding. In 1037 Harald was recognized as king of England, and Emma driven from the country to seek refuge with Count Baldwin in Flanders.

And still Hordaknut could not move. It was not until 1038 that he and Magnus reached the agreement which permitted him to gather an invasion force to recover his rights in England. First he

went with ten ships to consult with his mother in Bruges. Possibly he had intelligence that all was not well with Harald Harefoot's health, for he was still in Bruges when his half-brother died of an illness on 17 March 1040. Three months later he reached Sandwich with a fleet of sixty-two ships, and 'was at once received by both English and Danes, though afterwards his councillors made a stiff recompense for it when they ordained that [Hordaknut's] sixty-two ships should be paid at the rate of eight marks a rowlock'. In 1041 this fleet-tax produced the monstrous sum of 32,000 pounds of silver for Hordaknut and a commensurate grievance for his subjects. He had Harald's body disinterred from its tomb at Winchester and thrown into the Thames, made peace with earl Godwine for his share in the Ætheling's death in return for a resplendent warship equipped for eighty men, harried all Worcestershire to avenge the killing of two of his tax-collectors, basely betrayed earl Eadwulf of Northumbria, and in the opinion of the C version of the *Chronicle* 'never did anything worthy of a king so long as he reigned'. This was for a period of two years, and in its entry for 1042 the same authority records how 'this year Hordaknut died as he stood at his drink, and he suddenly fell to the ground with a horrible convulsion; and those who were near thereto took hold of him, but he never spoke again, and passed away on 8 June'. The thrones of Denmark and England stood without an incumbent, and the feeble progeny of Knut was exhausted. Svein had failed in Norway, Harald and Hordaknut in England. The Norwegians already had a king of their own ancient



56. A NORSE SHIP

line, and so now would the English, when immediately and by acclamation they chose Hordaknut's half-brother Edward, son of Emma and Ethelred, and finished with Danish kings (though not with Anglo-Danes) for ever. The problem of succession in Denmark was more complicated, and to understand it we must look back to the train of events in Denmark and Norway after the accession of Hordaknut and Magnus Olafsson.

At the time of his return from Russia to Norway in 1034 Magnus was 11 years old. Hordaknut, when he became full king of Denmark, was 17. Both must have relied on their mentors, and we are unclear as to the advice these gave them and the course of action that ensued. A weight of testimony, Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic (the *Chronicle of Roskilde*, Saxo, Theodoric, *Agrip*, *Morkinskinna*, and *Fagrskinna*, as well as *Heimskringla*), speaks of a 'treaty' between the two kingdoms; but Adam of Bremen speaks of war. The treaty, we are told, was negotiated on an island at the mouth of the Göta-elv or Göta-river, a water-boundary between the kingdoms, at which Magnus and Hordaknut took each other for foster-brother and pledged everlasting peace. If either died without a male heir, the survivor should take his lands and subjects. The twelve highest-born men of each country swore confirmatory oaths that this peace should be enforced so long as any one of them stayed alive. The death of Hordaknut when king of both Denmark and England would give any such arrangement momentous consequences. If, on the other hand, we trust to Adam, who has Magnus invade Denmark during the absence of Hordaknut in England (in this particular Adam is astray), defeat Svein Estridsson, to whom Hordaknut had entrusted his fleet, and seize the Danish kingdom on Hordaknut's death, this was a conquest whose consequences would prove equally fraught with destiny.

But if Magnus was the man in possession, there were other possible contenders. The first of these was another Harald, son of a doughty father, Thorkell the Tall, but he was murdered within the year by Magnus's brother-in-law Ordulf, son of duke Bernhard of Saxony. This left another Svein, sometimes called Ulfsson after his father jarl Ulf, whom Knut cut down in his pride and treachery in Roskilde church, and sometimes Estridsson after his mother, Knut's sister. By blood he was Hordaknut's true heir, with a realistic claim to the throne of Denmark and a theoretical one to the throne of England, where he spent his youth as a hostage for his

father's good faith while regent of Denmark. He had lived a further twelve years in Sweden in the service of king Onund Jacob. He was a personable and wealthy young man, with a limp, considerable natural gifts, a subtle sense of political manoeuvre, inexhaustible determination, and patience without end. But Magnus had four weighty and on the whole unanswerable advantages: his prestige (he was a winner of victories, Svein was a loser; he had a saint for father, Svein an unavenged traitor); there was his agreement with Hordaknut and the Danish aristocracy, or maybe his simple right of possession; his deep purse; and his speed of action. And these advantages rested on or were reinforced by his superior fleet. Before Svein could rally his supporters, Magnus crossed from Norway to Jutland and was proclaimed king at the Viborg Thing.

In the circumstances Svein Estridsson judged it advisable to come to terms with Magnus. Once more a Dane met Magnus at the Göta-elf, and this time he promised allegiance. In return Magnus set Svein as jarl and regent over Denmark, like his father Ulf before him. This was more than Svein could have hoped to achieve by force of arms, and he returned to Denmark well placed, as he thought, to exploit the indignation caused by the murder of Harald son of Thorkell the Tall, and so further his own advancement. Soon afterwards he betook himself to Viborg Thing, where the Danes are said to have paid him the same homage due to a king they had recently paid to Magnus. But any satisfaction Svein felt would be short-lived. Magnus moved with his usual speed and energy, and Svein had little to set against the powerful fleet with which he sailed for Denmark. Prudently he departed for Sweden and the court of Onund Jacob, and played a spectator's part in the stirring events which next took place in Denmark.

When Svein was appointed regent of Denmark it was 'for the protection of the land' against the increasing activity of the peoples and settlements of the south Baltic coast, more particularly the Slavonic Wends. In the event Magnus had to discharge the task himself. Either immediately before Svein's disaffection or soon thereafter he moved against Wollin, whose inhabitants, by now predominantly Wendish, but no doubt still retaining a Danish element more sympathetic to Svein than to any Norwegian, had thrown off their allegiance. In 1043 he took the town by storm, burnt its fortifications, and ravaged the surrounding districts. Snorri, for what his word is worth, describes Magnus's attack as

against the Wends in Jomsborg, and the skaldic verses incorporated in his narrative (they are by Arnor Jarlaskald) make no mention of vikings, only of Wends and heathens. Adam of Bremen (*schol.* 56) has Magnus besiege Jumne, 'richest city of the Slavs'. At any rate, the Jomsborg vikings, creatures of legend for the best part of a century, now disappear from our sight for ever.

Magnus now turned to deal with a Wendish invasion of southern Jutland. Continuing Slavonic pressure westwards through the north German plain was the most serious menace to Danish security at home since the northward-looking ambitions of Charlemagne, and a sharp threat to Danish trade. The outlook was equally perturbing to the Saxons, and Magnus and his brother-in-law Ordulf joined forces to save their peoples from the common danger. But clear though the situation was, and urgent the need, there were complications. There were Norwegians who judged it politic to let the Danes clear their own southern boundaries and weaken themselves in the process. There were Danes who wished to see the Wends defeated but grudged the glory of a Christian triumph to a Norwegian, while supporters of Svein were less than happy to aggrandize the popularity of his rival. But with his usual incisiveness Magnus brought his fleet to Hedeby and disembarked his men in the rear of the Wends, who were harrying farther north. This permitted him to join with Ordulf and the Saxons. The question now was whether to fight, and it seems to the modern observer, as it seemed to Magnus and Ordulf in September 1043, that there was only one answer. So the Norse-Saxon army moved into position on the flat expanse of the Lyrskov Hede north-west of the modern Schleswig, and there, if it had not already done so, legend took over from history. That night the Christians slept, as good Christians should, in their armour under their shields. The king prayed and was wakeful, but slept long enough to see his father St. Olaf in a dream and learn that the morrow would be rough on the heathen. And so it proved. As dawn grew to day the northerners heard the ringing of a bell on high, and those who had been in Nidaros thought it sounded like the pealing of the great bell Glad which St. Olaf had presented to the Church of St. Clement there. If the Wends heard it too, the circumstance went unreported. It was Michaelmas Eve. All Christian sources stress the superiority in numbers of the Wendish host, but in the light of St. Olaf's assurance this could not dismay the land's defenders. It is told of Magnus that, fortified by faith and

vision, he doffed his mail-shirt and fought in a kirtle of red silk swinging the battle-axe Hel which had been St. Olaf's own. The foremost of the Wends fell in waves, those in the rear fled and perished like cattle, the entire heath was strewn with their dead. Adam of Bremen ventures a total of 15,000 Wendish corpses, Snorri leaves it with the statement that in Christian times no such carnage was ever wrought in the north as that among the Wends on Lyrskov Heath. That the Wendish army was shattered in Jutland and the Wendish threat to Denmark removed is not to be doubted. Both conclusions are unaffected by the inconsistencies, even the contradictions, to be found in the early sources.[1]

Magnus had still to deal with the threat to his authority in Denmark posed by Svein Estridsson. He had also to make a gesture in respect of England, which by his treaty with Hordaknut he considered should now belong to him, not to Edward the Englishman. The English took his claim, as they should, seriously, for he disposed of the naval strength of two great seafaring kingdoms, but his preoccupations at home, first with Svein and then with his maternal uncle Harald Hardradi, prevented his ever mounting an expedition for England, where he knew he could look for a united opposition, save for the eccentricities of queen Emma and maybe bishop Stigand of Elmham.[2] To Svein Estridsson's inquiries about

[1] Our doubts extend far beyond the discardable hagiographical and propagandist details. Skaldic verses by Thjodolf Arnorson and Arnor Jarlaskald preserved in *Morkinskinna* but not used by Snorri Sturluson in *Heimskringla* point to there being two big engagements, one on Lyrskov Hede and the other by the Skotborgará, Skotborg river, near Ribe, a good way farther north. Snorri evidently considers the Skotborgará to be a river traversing Lyrskov Hede (*Hlýrskógsheiði*). *Knýtlinga Saga* 22 would have Svein Estridsson take part in the battle, on the Danish side, invoking to this end a probably misquoted verse by the skald Thorleik the Fair. With comparable rashness *Ágrip* makes Svein fight for the Wends. *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla* preserve the likely tradition that Svein, having reneged on his treaty with Magnus, could take no part in the struggle. Adam of Bremen makes no mention of his royal friend and patron Svein, but ascribes the victory 'on the heath near Hedeby' to Magnus. For a concise summary, see Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla*, III, pp. xi–xii and 42.

[2] There is little evidence that Magnus seriously considered the conquest of England. Also it is hard to credit Adam of Bremen's twicemade assertion that Edward of England promised Svein Estridsson that he should be his heir (II, lxxviii, and III, xii). Sture Bolin suggests (*Scandia*, V, 214–21) that Adam's words may be interpreted to mean that Edward had made this promise not to

help against Magnus, England returned an unhelpful answer. In 1045 and again in the following year Edward stationed a fleet off Sandwich in readiness for a Norwegian attack; early in 1047 he and his councillors refused Svein's request for fifty ships to serve with him in northern waters. But for the moment we must stay with the year 1045.

Svein was not the only monarch-to-be who ate Onund's meat that winter, for 1045 saw the re-entry into the northern arena of the last of the part-historical, part-legendary viking heroes, Harald Hardradi, the 'thunder-bolt of the north', as Adam of Bremen described him. We saw him last at Stiklarstadir, young, untried in war, most valiant, fighting alongside his half-brother Olaf. That was fifteen years ago, when he was 15 years old. The man who now returned to Sweden from the east was 30, in the prime of his strength, the flower of his fame and ambition. His valour and skill at arms were legendary, as were his deeds and reputation as a captain of armies. Brought off the field after Stiklarstadir, and healed of his wounds in a lonely farm-house, he thereafter crossed the Keel into Sweden, and from there proceeded into the service of king Yaroslav in Russia, taking part in the Polish campaign of 1031. Three years later, with a personal following of 500 warriors, he sailed to Byzantium and entered the imperial service. It would be imprudent to insist on the details of the campaigns with which his saga credits him during the next ten years, but we can be sure he spent most of the time with harness on his back, and became a commander of the Varangians. He was a professional who fought in any theatre of war to which his employer sent him, including the Greek islands, Asia

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Svein but to Magnus. It may be granted that Adam was much misinformed by Svein in various contexts concerning himself and Magnus. In the mid-1040s Edward had not the slightest need to placate Svein, but he and his councillors felt unease about Magnus. That the arrival of Harald Hardradi's son Magnus in the Irish Sea in 1058 with a view to conquering England should be related to Edward's promise of the succession to Magnus the Good some twelve years earlier is a possibility, but nothing more. His expedition is noticed in Welsh and Irish sources (see the reference in B. G. Charles, *Old Norse Relations with Wales*, Cardiff, 1934, p. 48, n. 4) and, very sparely, in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (see Earle and Plummer, *Two Saxon Chronicles*, II, p. 248): 'In this year came a naval force from Norway: it is tiresome to relate how it all happened.'

Minor, the Caucasus, Palestine, Sicily, Bulgaria.[1] With every allowance made for the subsequent growth of his legend, he showed himself during these years fierce, resourceful, cunning, resilient and enduring, and when occasion called for it, double-dealing, vengeful, and cruel. In brief, the epitome of the viking who lived by rapine and war, believed in fame, riches, and power, and employed fair

[1] *Haralds Saga Sigurðarsonar*, 2–16, offers a highly coloured and far from acceptable account of Harald's exploits while in the service of Byzantium. It much exaggerates his importance in Byzantine affairs, informs us that the empress Zoe wished to marry him, confuses Asia Minor with Africa, credits him with various time-worn stratagems for the reduction of cities, and offers some eccentric information about palace politics. We can accept that the Varangians played an important part in the events of 1042 which led to the blinding and deposition of Michael Calaphates; but *Heimskringla*'s insistence that Harald personally gouged out the emperor's eyes is made suspect by its choice of Constantine Monomachus in the true victim's stead.

The comparable Greek source, the anonymous 'Book of Advice to an Emperor', *c.* 1070–80 (ed. Vasilievsky and Jernstedt, in *Cecaumeni Strategicon*, St Petersburg, 1896) has this to say of Harald: 'Araltes [Harald] was son to the king of Varangia, and had a brother Julavos [Olaf] who inherited his father's kingdom after his death and made his brother Araltes next after him in the kingdom. But while he was still young he decided to go on his travels and pay his respects to the blessed emperor Michael Paphlagon and acquaint himself with Byzantine administration. He had with him too a company of 500 valiant soldiers. Off he went, and the emperor received him as was seemly and proper, and dispatched him together with his company to Sicily, because the Byzantine army had a war on its hands in that island. And he went there and achieved mightily. And when Sicily had been conquered he returned with his troop to the emperor, who appointed him *manglavites* [belt-wearer, a mark of honour]. After this it befell that Delianos began a revolt in Bulgaria, and Araltes and his company went campaigning with the emperor and achieved mightily there against the enemy, as befitted a man of his lineage and valour. The emperor returned home once he had subjugated Bulgaria. I too fought for the emperor as best I might. And as soon as we reached Mesina (?) the emperor appointed him *spatharokandates* [troop-leader, a rank of honour] as a reward for his services. After the death of the emperor Michael and that nephew of his who succeeded him [Michael Calaphates], Araltes sought to obtain permission in the time of Monomachus to return home to his own country, but he was not given leave for this, but instead difficulties were put in his way. Even so he got away by stealth and became king over his country in place of his brother Julavos.'

This associates him with the Sicilian campaign of 1038–41 and the Bulgarian campaign of 1041, and shows a less than sensational rise in the service. For a general discussion, see Sigfús Blöndal, 'The Last Exploits of Harald Sigurdsson in Greek Service', in *Classica et Mediaevalia*, I, 2, 1939, pp. 1–26.

means and foul to obtain them. If the Viking Age went out with Harald Hardradi it ended with a foremost kemper, albeit a shade new-style.

Meantime he had not returned home by way of Kiev, Novgorod, and Aldeigjuborg through any sentimental longing for his native land and tongue. He had heard how Magnus was ruler over two kingdoms since the death of Hordaknut, and wanted his share of Norway—to which he considered himself entitled as Olaf's half-brother and one who had shed blood for the cause while Magnus was still a child in Russia. Since Svein wanted something from Magnus, too, it was natural for them to lay their heads together in Sigtuna and plan a demonstration against what they regarded as the most lightly held part of Magnus's dominion. This led to the ravaging of Zealand and Fyn, but an alliance between Harald and Svein was based on the merest expediency: the game of power politics in which they were engaged with Magnus was three-cornered, not a straight fight. Harald's aim was a kingdom or half-kingdom in Norway; Svein wanted Denmark; Magnus wanted Norway and Denmark, but could afford to settle for half of the one so long as he held on to the whole of the other. Nothing could illustrate more clearly the status of a 'kingdom' as the personal property of its then ruler, whether by inheritance, donation, or conquest. Nation it was not. Nor, in speaking of the kingdom of Norway should we forget how remote in miles was the north, how remote in spirit the inland provinces, and how little national sentiment obtained in either. This was hardly less true of Sweden.

In circumstances which early sources do little to clarify, Harald made contact with his not unwilling nephew, and Magnus agreed to a division of his Norwegian territories. 'The kings were now merry'—but not for long. The situation was still three-cornered when Magnus died of accident or sickness, by land or water, in Jutland or Zealand, in the autumn of 1047. Svein had fled to Skåne, but promptly returned. He was acclaimed king at Isøre Thing on Zealand and (for the second time) at Viborg Thing in Jutland, and king he remained over Denmark till his life's end in 1074.

A long and pointless struggle now ensued between Harald and Svein, characterized on Harald's side by viking raids and punitive expeditions, on Svein's by battles lost and resistance renewed. The Icelandic historians exerted their full powers of memory, rearrangement, and invention to shed splendour, even humour, on what is

essentially a sorry narrative of coasts raided, farms burned, husbands killed, and womenfolk carried off. The skalds, too, did their best. The stag of billows, kelpland-courser, still bore ring-sarked oaks of Odinn to the Thing of arrows, where they fed the wolf, gave meat to the raven, shed wound-dew on the waters. But by now we have heard it all before; the limitations of the style are becoming exposed; and it is gifted amateurs like Harald himself with his four-lined contrast between sailors anchored in the hostile Randers-fjord and husbands lullabied a-bed by their night-linened wives,[1] or the unnamed sailor who sang of burning Hedeby, that suddenly catch our fancy, not Harald's versifying public-relations men. There were two main periods of Norwegian aggression against Denmark, separated by a ten-year interval during which Harald most resolutely stabilized his boundary with Sweden, drove hard ecclesiastical and economic policies at home and abroad, and strengthened his personal authority by ruthlessly, and often basely, getting rid of various of his enemies and friends, including the four great lords of the Trondelag and Uppland: Einar Thambarskelfir, whom he made 'kiss the thin lips of the axe', along with his son Eindridi; Kalf Arnarson, whom like a northern Uriah he saw advanced into the forefront of battle that he might die of an undefended back; Finn Arnarson, an unwitting tool in his brother's destruction, who fled to the Danes; and Hakon Ivarsson, great-grandson of jarl Hakon of the Trondelag, who fled to the Swedes. The earlier attacks on Denmark were concentrated in the three or four years following upon Harald's accession to the throne of all Norway in 1047, the later came to a climax after 1060. The first series was distinguished by the destruction of the town of Hedeby, the second by the sea-fight at the Nissa in Halland.

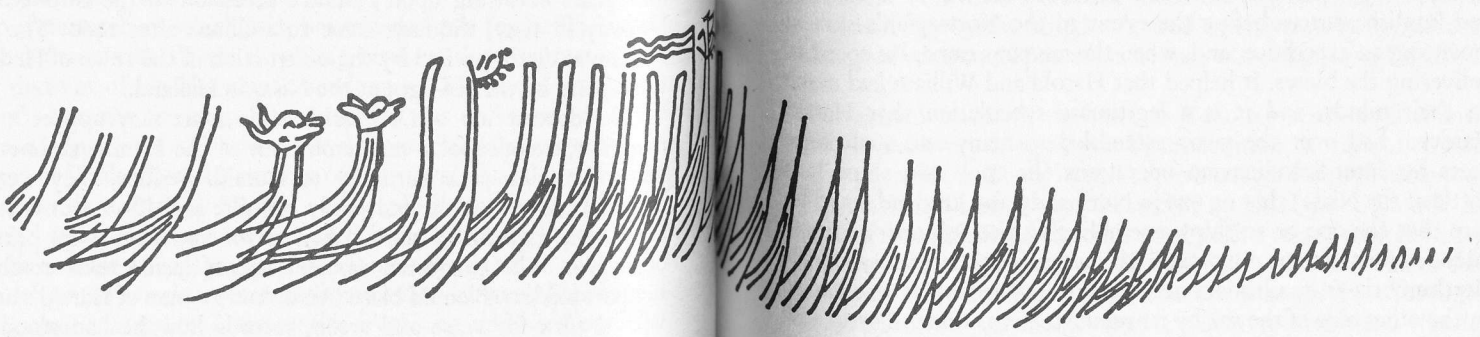
The destruction of Denmark's main mart may appear a self-mangling exercise for a man ambitious of the Danish throne. But burning towns came naturally to Harald. Besides, they were of timber here up north, and easily rebuilt; and if we can trust to Snorri the expedition of 1049 had terror and loot as its primary objectives. The congested wooden houses inside their confining rampart made a splendid blaze. An unknown man of Harald's army, with a turn for verse and arson, records how he had stood the previous night *á borgar armi*, on the stronghold's arm, no doubt the

[1] The verse has also been attributed to Thjodolf Arnarsson, and may be of still later provenance.

rampart's northern extremity, and watched the flames climb high over the houses. It was a gallant deed, he opined, and calculated to make Svein as well as Hedeby smart.

The wasteful campaigns that thereafter sought to make two unwilling kingdoms into one dragged on till 1064, when even Harald must recognize that everyone was sick of them. The fight at Nissa itself, which emptied seventy ships of the Danes, settled nothing. Svein was back in Denmark the following winter with undiminished revenues and the approbation of his people. During the winter of 1063–4 messengers passed between the two rulers and a peace meeting was arranged at the Göta river in the spring. The two kings arrived for negotiations which for a while went as uncordially as a modern peace treaty, and for much the same reasons of pride, greed, revenge, and embittered memory. Then wisdom prevailed. Harald should have Norway, Svein Denmark. The ancient boundaries were left undisturbed; there would be no compensation paid or exacted; the line was drawn as of that day, and the peace should last their lifetimes. Harald, winner of battles, carried his banner, the famed Land-Waster, back to Norway, disciplined Raumarike and Heidmark, and fiercely chastised the tax-withholding Upplanders. Svein, loser of battles, returned to Denmark and bound up the nation's wounds. Always defeated, constantly in flight, invariably returning, he had outlasted Magnus and would outlast Harald by eight good years.

And now the Viking Age was moving to its close. Its last and



57. A NORSE FLEET
'With sharp keel they ploughed the crest of the foaming deep and sailed in a swift course between skerries and capes till they reached the town and laid their prows up to the pier in the presence of a great crowd (Bergen).'

consummatory figure had just two more years to live before he died his splendid and unnecessary death at Stamford Bridge near the city of York, drawn there by the never-failing viking compulsions of land, wealth, and fame overseas. His first battle had been at Stiklarstadir back in 1030; next came the great arc of sacks and sieges, sea-fights and land-battles, from Poland through Russia by way of Asia Minor and Bulgaria on to Sicily; then his bid for a kingdom in Norway, wars throughout Uppland and along the Swedish border, and seventeen years of hostilities against the Danes. Now, his fiftieth year safely behind him, he would please himself and gratify his chroniclers by challenging fortune once more, in a greedy, royal, and aesthetically satisfying way. He would undertake an expedition west-over-sea and meet his doom in a holocaust reminiscent of the fabled encounters of old. He would fail to win England, but would ensure its conquest by another and remoter branch of the Nordmanni, the Normans of Normandy. This was the last effective viking intervention in the affairs of western Europe; the manner and extent of Harald's disaster, and its consequences for three nations, made it culminatory.

It was on 5 January 1066 that Edward king of England died of age and sickness, and was succeeded one day later by Harold Godwinson, his *subregulus*. Harald of Norway was never the man to forget that he, too, had a claim to a land as rich as England. One of his first actions after he became sole king of Norway had been to dispatch envoys of peace there. (Svein, typically, asked yet again

to be sent a fleet of fifty ships, and yet again was denied them). But no emphasis on Harald the viking abroad should obscure that he was a hard-headed king at home. The early years of his reign were no time for an Enterprise of England, and thereafter he was too deeply engaged with Svein, though maybe the western expedition of 1058 conducted by his son Magnus shows that he was keeping his ambitions warm. By the winter of 1065–6 he was at long last free to plan a course of action in the light of the significant news coming in from England, Flanders, and Normandy. The legality of his claim, its strength or weakness compared with the claims of others, would not worry him. The thing that mattered was could it be enforced? Clearly he thought it could, and that Svein's claim as the nephew of Knut could not. We would give a good deal to know what was said in Trondheim that winter and the following spring about Harold Godwinson the Englishman and William the Bastard of Normandy and *their* claims. One thing we can be sure of: Harald of Norway judged he had the beating of them both. The emissaries who came to him from Harold's brother Tostig, the deposed earl of Northumbria, and from the stirring hive of Orkney with pleas and counsel would be of the same opinion. Even so he must plan carefully, move unannounced, strike hard and true. It is difficult to believe that so shrewd a calculator as William knew nothing of Harald's interest, particularly in view of the Scandinavian connection, but we have no evidence that he was aware he was planning a full-scale invasion. Harold Godwinson was taken entirely by surprise, so perhaps we should attribute the silence of Norman and English sources before the event to the Norwegian's skill in mounting an expedition and, when the moment came, his speed in delivering the blows. It helped that Harold and William had much on their minds, and it is a legitimate speculation that Harald Hardradi had over the years assembled so many and such large fleets for inter-Scandinavian operations (he took 180 ships into battle at the Nissa) that no one in Normandy and England could be sure that the 200 or so ships assembling in the Solunds were not intended for the same purpose. In the autumn the fleet set sail, with Northumbria as its ultimate destination. By the time it was joined on the other side of the sea by its reinforcements under Tostig and the Orkneyers it is said to have numbered 300 ships and 9,000 men. It could hope for the support of Tostig's former earldom, and rely on the goodwill of the Scots.

Possibly Harald knew that the wind which carried him down the coast of Yorkshire, ravaging in Cleveland, Scarborough, and Holderness on the way, would keep the Norman invasion fleet in port and immobilize Harold Godwinson, condemned to wait upon William's initiative. But speculation serves no purpose: once Harald entered the Humber and, moving behind the few and retreating English ships, followed the Ouse to Riccall, three miles below the conjunction of that river with the Wharfe, where he disembarked his men, he was committed to winning a kingdom or a grave on English soil, whatever the course of events down south. Northumbria was not to be acquired without a battle, and one which though somewhat neglected in history and story compared with the battle of Stamford Bridge, played a vital part in deciding the issues of the year. The small English fleet lay a few miles up the Wharfe at Tadcaster; ten miles north of Riccall stood the city of York, and Harald advanced upon it without delay. Barring his road was the army of Edwin earl of Mercia and Morcar earl of Northumbria. The earls had taken up position at Gate Fulford on the Ouse, two miles south of York, and here they fought with Harald and Tostig on Wednesday, 20 September. It was a hard and close-locked engagement for most of the day. When the Englishmen broke they had suffered losses which would affect the issue at Hastings, while Norwegian mortality helped decide Stamford Bridge.

Meantime, though Harald of Norway did not know it, Harold of England was riding north with his housecarles, and the invasion coast stood open. This was a calculated risk of the English king's, a course imposed on him by the kingdom's need and his own temperament. A change of wind could prove him wrong, without proving his critics right.

For Harald Hardradi the road to York lay open, as did York itself. He had everything to gain by moderation; it was not treated as a hostile town, and once he had taken hostages for good behaviour and provisions for his troops, he retired to his ships at Riccall. At this same time he offered the citizens of York a treaty whereby they would become his allies and march south with him 'to conquer this realm'. But habit demanded that he secure hostages from throughout the shire, and we assume that it was to receive these that he now marched the main body of his army to Stamford Bridge on the Derwent, twelve miles from the ships at Riccall, and eight miles north-east of York. It was a good centre of road communications,

well suited to his purpose. Harald's movement away from his ships was eloquent of self-confidence—and ignorance of the man he had to deal with. A forced march had by now brought Harold Godwinson north to Tadcaster, where he met with the English ships and spent the night of the 24th. Incredibly, Hardradi was still unaware of his movements. On the morrow, Monday, 25 September, Harold moved rapidly north through an undefended York, and at the end of a seventeen-mile march came upon the unsuspecting Norwegians at Stamford Bridge.

We know very little about the battle itself. The Norwegian position was on the east bank of the river, but possibly because of their leisurely overconfidence and subsequent surprise they seem not to have set a strong enough guard about the vital bridge. 'A very stubborn battle', says the *Chronicle*, 'was fought by both sides.' It was an encounter which moved northern historians to compile a magnificent story, complete with omens, accidents, confrontations, gnomic rejoinders, berserk fury, and the casting away of armour, but story, alas, is all that it is.[1] In numbers and quality, weapons and armour, the armies were well matched. In skill, valour, and

[1] There are thoroughgoing discussions of the northern historical material relating to the battles of 1066 in Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de Norsk Kongers Sagaer*, Oslo, 1937, and in his many-times cited edition of *Heimskringla*. See also G. Indrebø, *Fagrskinna*, Kristiania, 1917, and most recently Svend Ellehøj, *Studier over den ældste norrøne historieskrivning*, Copenhagen, 1965. The relevant parts of *Hemings þáttr* have been translated by Jacqueline Simpson, *The Northmen Talk*, 1965; and *Orkneyinga Saga* may be read in G. W. Dasent's version, Rolls Series, 88, 1894. It is interesting that *Morkinskinna* (the oldest of the three), *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla* omit from their rather stereotyped set of portents attendant on Harald's expedition, as well as on the battlefield itself, the 'haired star', Halley's Comet, whose appearance so deeply impressed the compilers of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the Bayeux Tapestry. Of confrontations the one we set aside with most regret produced the promise to Harald Hardradi of seven feet of English ground, 'or as much more as he is taller than other men', and Harald's comment on his English namesake: 'A small king that, but he stood bravely (*var.* well) in his stirrups.' The only English contribution in any way comparable is the *C-Chronicle*'s twelfth-century conclusion. 'The Norwegians fled from the English, but there was one Norwegian who stood firm against the English force, so that they could not cross the bridge nor clinch victory. An Englishman shot with an arrow but to no avail, and another went under the bridge and stabbed him through the coat of mail. Then Harold, king of the English, crossed the bridge and his levies went forward with him; and there made great slaughter of both Norwegians and Flemings.' (Trans. Garmonsway.)

experience it would be hard to choose between them, and each had an imperative need of victory. They fought on foot, and with the advantages of surprise and preparedness resting with the English, so far as we can tell they slogged it out till the day turned irrecoverably against the Norwegians. Harald, says tradition, was struck in the throat by an arrow and fell. There can have been few survivors from his bodyguard: a new generation of soldiers had to grow up in Norway before an overseas adventure could be undertaken again. When their frightfully punished army at last took to flight the survivors were harried over a dozen bloody miles to Riccall. There was to be no residual menace in the north when Harold Godwinson sped south again. But at Riccall he stayed his reddened hand and gave the *wēalāf*, the sorry remnant, quarter. Of the battle and its aftermath the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (D) has this to say: 'Then Harold our king came unexpectedly upon the Norwegians, and met them beyond York at Stamford Bridge with a great host of Englishmen, and that day a very stubborn battle was fought by both sides. There were slain Harald Hardradi [MS. Fairhair] and earl Tostig, and the remaining Norwegians were put to flight, while the English fiercely assailed their rear until some of them reached their ships: some were drowned, others burnt to death, and thus perished in various ways so that there were few survivors, and the English had possession of the place of slaughter. The king then gave quarter to Olaf, the son of the king of the Norwegians, to their bishop, to the jarl of Orkney, and to all those who were left aboard the ships. They then went inland to our king, and swore oaths that they would ever maintain peace and friendship with this land; and the king let them sail home with twenty-four ships.'

This Olaf was Olaf Kyrre, the Gentle or Peaceful, who ruled at first with his brother and then alone over Norway till 1093 without strife or bloodshed. It was well for the Scandinavian kingdoms that he was spared. He sailed for home by way of Orkney, and one wonders how soon he learned that within days of the truce at Riccall the victorious Harold Godwinson had made a second forced march, this time south to his death at Hastings, and that the Normans had achieved what their northern kinsmen had missed, the conquest of England.

One year after Stamford Bridge Harald Hardradi's body was brought from England to Norway. He was buried north in Nidaros, in St. Mary's church, which he himself had founded. When that

huge skull, with its sweeping moustaches and mis-aligned eyebrows, and that stupendous frame which for thirty-five years was 'never free of turbulence and war', were laid away in the presence of his peace-loving son, the Viking Age was over.

Symbolically if not factually. For in 1069 Svein Estridsson, made hopeful by unease and rebellion in the northern half of England, dispatched a strong invasion fleet to that country. It had no success off Kent and East Anglia, but at York won a victory ominous for the Normans. But in their viking greed for prisoners and money its leaders allowed king William to win back the initiative his captains had lost, devastate the north and the north Midlands, and when Svein crossed in person to the Humber in the spring of 1070 it was to find the situation so unpromising that by summer-time he made peace with king William and sailed his fleet home again to Denmark. Old habits die hard, the Danes briefly, and the Norwegians till the skirmish at Largs in 1263, would again lead their lank steeds of ocean into western waters, display the dragon-head, but these were the spasmodic efforts of stragglers in a race already run, whose principal figures had long since quit the field and, save for the winners of fame, been hooded in darkness for ever.

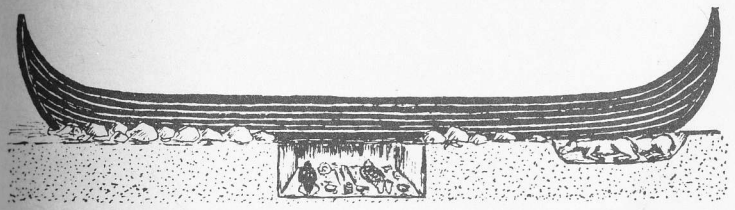
And so the Age ended.

þverra nú, þeirs þverrðu,
þingbirtingar Ingva,
hvar skalk manna mildra,
mjaðveitar dag, leita,
þeira's hauks fyr handan
háfjöll digulsnjávi
jarðar gjörð við orðum
eyneglda mér hegldu.

Minish they now who diminished
Dawnfire of meadfoaming horn;
Now vanish the heroes, time-vanquished,
War's flaunters, the thingmen of Ingvi.
Who now shower limbeck's snowsilver
As guerdon past earth's sea-isled girdle?
Or fill high hawkfell of my hand
With skald's reward for skilled word?

This had been Egill Skallagrimsson's lament for Arinbjorn the hersir, when he learned of his death alongside Harald Greycloak of

Norway at the battle by Hals in the Limfjord, *c.* 974. A century later it can serve as an epitaph for those last strong props of the Viking Age—the unknown fighting-men who watched Hedeby blaze and covered the retreat at Stamford Bridge, great lords like Einar Thambarskelfir and the Arnarsons, and the monarchs themselves—who died with the reigns of Harald Hardradi and Svein Estridsson, and brought the Age to its rough-hewn, mortuary conclusion.



58. 'THE RIDERS SLEEP, HEROES IN THE GRAVE'

2. Svein Forkbeard, Saint Olaf, and Knut the Great

WHEN IN THE MILLENNIAL YEAR 1000 KING OLAF Tryggvason in his scarlet cloak leapt from the gunwale of the *Long Serpent* at Svold, and the kingdom of Norway broke from his hand, the lords of three realms inherited. Olaf Skötkonung of Sweden made the long-desired western advance into the former Gautish coastal territories of Ranrike-Bohuslän and into the eastern districts of the Trondelag. Jarl Eirik of Hladir, the magnanimous, temperate son of that immoderate lover of gods, gold, and women, jarl Hakon Sigurdarson, received the coastal provinces of the west from far-away Halogaland beyond the Polar Circle in the north to the green fields and early harvests of the Jaeder and Agdir in the south. To Svein Forkbeard of Denmark, the shrewd and purposeful engineer of the confederacy which destroyed the Norwegian Olaf, came the traditional areas of Danish overlordship in the Vik. In fact, his gains were more substantial than this. Jarl Eirik was his liegeman and son-in-law, and while in the viking world it was not always safe to trust to such relationships (Olaf Tryggvason was Svein's brother-in-law, which helped him not at all), jarl Eirik's loyalty to Svein, as to his son Knut after him, was as absolute as it was profitable. King Olaf of Sweden entrusted part of his Norwegian territory to jarl Eirik's brother Svein, and since Eirik seems to have been the ablest, as he was certainly the most celebrated of all those brothers, it would seem to follow that king Svein's influence throughout much of Norway was strong indeed. And a firm hold there not only strengthened Denmark in a Scandinavian context; it made possible a stepping-up of Svein's ambitions in respect of England.

After the expulsion of Eirik Blood-axe from York in 954, his heroic yet somehow paltry death, and the seizure of Northumbria by

the English king Eadred, England was to enjoy a quarter of a century's freedom from Norse aggression. This fortunate period ended in 980. England's western neighbour Wales had enjoyed her respite earlier, from 918 till 952, when the death of one of the most renowned of Welsh kings, Hywel Dda ('the Good'), offered the Norsemen of Dublin and then of Limerick, too, together with their compatriots in Man, opportunities for gain and adventure they were prompt to make use of. The raids grew worse after 980; the cathedral of St. David's in Dyfed was sacked four times between 982 and 989; and Norse armies several times espoused a cause of profit on behalf of one scuffling Welsh prince or another. It is probable that they had more success in the southern half of the country during these fifty years than written history records, and, as in Ireland, fostered along the South Wales seaboard small marts and havens. In England as in Wales the renewal of Norse activity coincided with, or was inspired by, a change for the worse in rulers. The strong Eadred had been followed after the four-year interlude of Eadwig the All-fair by the strong Edgar in 959. Out of his strength he could treat the Danes in England at once generously and firmly. They need no longer be the alien people of a conquered province, but fellow subjects with the English of an English king. They would serve him in war and accept their lay and ecclesiastical lords at his hand. The king's peace would be as real in the Danelaw (it would shortly acquire this title) as in Wessex and Mercia, but their proved loyalty would be rewarded with an ungrudging recognition of Danish law and custom, and the right to manage regional affairs in their own way. On the face of it, self-interest if nothing better should make them a contented part of the English realm. Edgar died in 975 and was followed by his son Edward, of whom we know little save that he was young, unstable, resented by many, murdered in 978, and in time dubbed saint and martyr. He was succeeded by his 12-year-old brother Ethelred, from his accession to our own day one of the most fiercely reprehended of English monarchs. It was early in his disturbed, unhappy reign (978–1016) that the viking scourge again fell upon England.

The situation was a familiar one. In Denmark and the neighbouring north political change and material needs encouraged adventurers and restless men to try their hand at the old courses just when their natural prey invited assault by internal weakness and irresolution. But by now Normandy and the Frankish lands were closed to