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William O. Stoddard**

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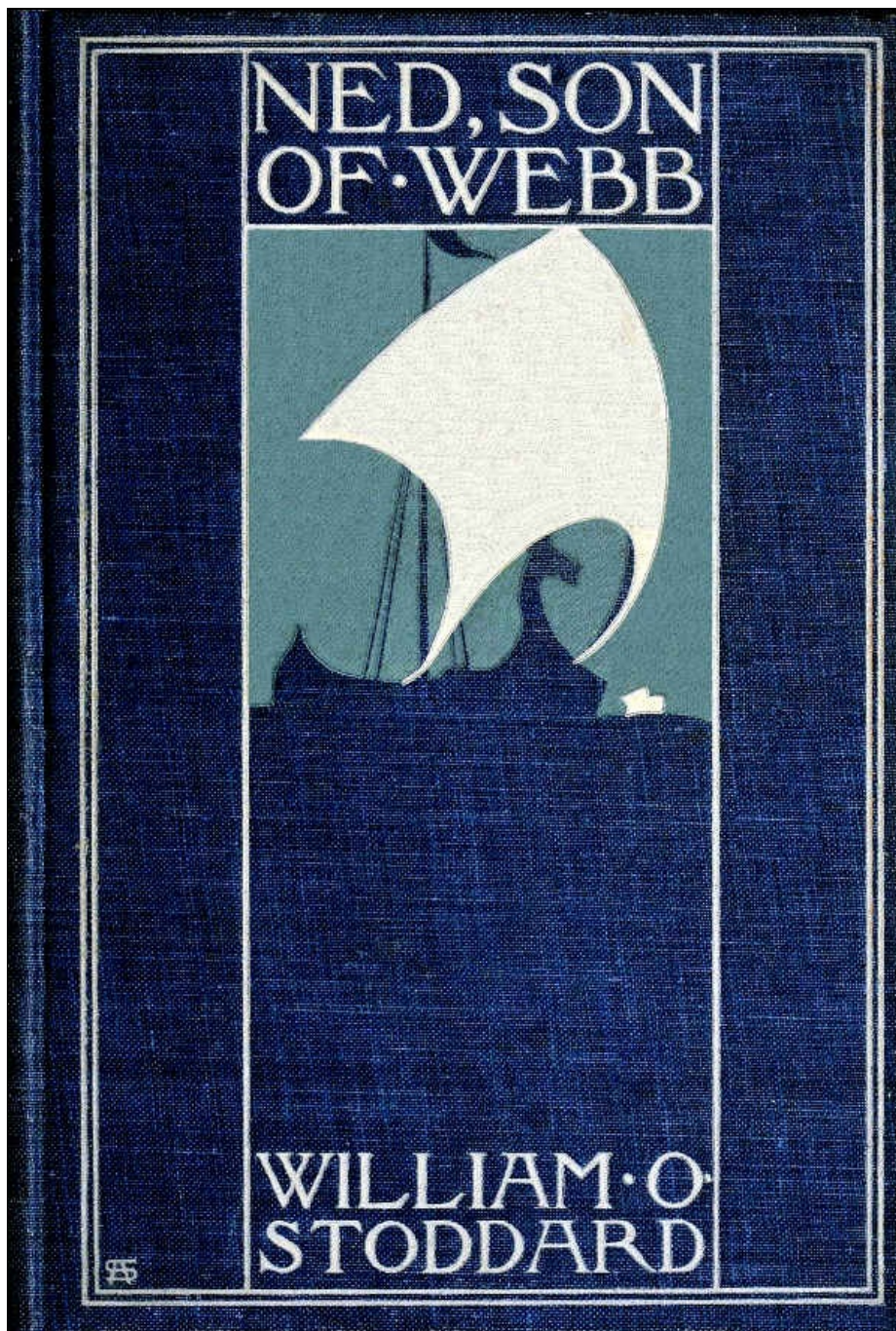
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## NED, THE SON OF WEBB: WHAT HE DID

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"THERE!" HE EXCLAIMED, AT LAST."

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NED, THE SON OF WEBB:

WHAT HE DID

BY

WILLIAM O. STODDARD

AUTHOR OF

"CROWDED OUT O' CROFIELD," "DESPATCH BOAT OF  
THE WHISTLE," ETC.

Illustrated by

VICTOR A. SEARLES



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## CHAPTER I.

### THE WAR SPIRIT.

"SHE'S grand!" exclaimed Ned, enthusiastically. "Uncle Jack, the *Kentucky* could knock any other ironclad in all the world!"

"Perhaps she could," growled Uncle Jack, somewhat thoughtfully. "I'm glad she is out of range of them, just now, though. I like her looks as she is. It is best for them, too."

They were standing near the head of Pier Number One, North River, gazing at the great line-of-battle ship as she steamed along slowly up the stream.

"Those double turrets make her as tall as a house," said Ned. "There's nothing else like her! See the long noses of those big guns!" [12]

"That's what I came for," replied Uncle Jack. "I wanted to see her, and now I have seen her I am more opposed to war than ever. I'm going to join the Peace Society."

"I'd rather join the navy," said Ned. "But if a shell from one of those guns should burst inside of another ship it would blow her sky-high."

"No!" responded his uncle, with firmness. "She would not go up to the sky, she would go down to the bottom of the deep sea."

"She could do it, anyhow," said Ned, not explaining which of the two ships he referred to.

It was evident that Uncle Jack was too deeply interested in the *Kentucky* to care for general conversation. For fear, however, that he might not have read the papers, his somewhat excited nephew told him that the steel-clad wonder of the sea had at least twelve thousand horses in her steam engines. He also said that she was of twelve thousand tons burden, but did not say whether that was the load she could carry or whether it might be supposed to be her fighting weight. [13]

"I wish I were captain of her," he declared, at last. "I'd like to conquer England."

"I felt just so once," responded Uncle Jack. "There is more in England that is worth capturing than there is anywhere else. You would need more than one ship, though. I tried the experiment, but the English beat me."

"Oh!" exclaimed Ned. "I know how you tried it. You went alone, though, and without any *Kentucky*."

"No," said his uncle, "I didn't go alone. Your aunt went with me. So did thousands of other brave Americans. They try it every year, and they always come home beaten."

"Yes, sir!" said Ned. "They spend all their money, and are glad to get back. They say the English can whip anything in all the world except Americans. I'm going there, some day. I don't believe there is any British ship that can whip the *Kentucky*." [14]

"She certainly is magnificent," replied his uncle. "She is a tremendous war machine. What we are ever to do with her, however, I don't care to think of. I want her never to fire one of those guns. After all, Ned, if one of her great steel bottom plates should get shaken loose and drop out, that vast leviathan would sink, with all on board."

"I guess not," said Ned. "They would get away in the boats. Besides, she isn't going to fall to pieces right away."

"All right," said his uncle. "We've seen her. Now let's go home."

They turned away and walked on across what the people of New York call the Battery. They do so because here was a fort once. Part of it, nearest the water, was made there two centuries ago. Another part, more like a modern fort, was made later, and it was distinguished for having been surrendered, back and forth, without firing one of its guns in defence, more times than any other military post in America. It was given up once by the Dutch, twice by the British, and once by the Americans. That was by General Washington, when the English troops drove him and his ragged rebels out of New York. None of the fighting that was done then was anywhere near the Battery. [15]

Ned had something to say about that, as they went along, and about the other forts around the harbour, of which he seemed to be very proud.

"My boy," remarked his uncle, "almost all of our New York forts are back numbers. One steel canoe like the *Kentucky*, if she were English, for instance, and if we were conquering England, could knock all of those old-fashioned affairs about our ears." [16]

"Well," said Ned, doubtfully, "so the *Kentucky* or the *Oregon* could do for any old fort in Europe. I say, Uncle Jack, right here is the lower end of all the elevated railways."

"Exactly," said his uncle; "and of the cable-cars that are hauled by a steel rope underground."

Away up yonder is the suspension bridge from this city to Brooklyn. There will be a dozen of them, more or less, before long. All over the upper part of town the trolley-cars run by lightning on a string. I hate all these modern inventions and innovations—I do! I hate railways up in the air on stilts, and I hate express trains that go a mile a minute, and I hate these electric lights. Why, Ned, when I was a boy, we were able to get first-rate tallow-dip candles to read by. Nobody can have anything of that kind, nowadays. Now, just look at those forty-story-chimney buildings! Fellows who live at the top of those things have to be shot up. It's awful!"

[17]

"I went up four of them," said Ned. "I wanted to know how it felt."

"Well," said Uncle Jack, "how did you feel?"

"I held my breath," replied Ned, "and I held on to the seat. I was glad to get out, though, top and bottom. I suppose a fellow can get used to it—"

"Ned," interrupted his uncle, "wait here a minute. I want to have a little talk with a friend of mine in Chicago. What they won't do next, with electricity and some things, I don't know."

They were in front of a long-distance telephone office, and Uncle Jack went in. His conversation with his neighbour, a thousand miles away, turned out a long one, and it was half an hour before he and his nephew reached the patch of cleared land which still remains around the City Hall.

"There!" suddenly exclaimed Ned. "Hurrah! We're having first-rate luck, Uncle Jack! That's the very thing I've been wanting to see!"

[18]

It was not another building, this time, and it was not altogether an innovation. It was something warlike and terrible; for a battery of the Fourth Regular Artillery, guns, ammunition wagons, all, was passing through the city, down Broadway, on its journey to some new post of duty.

"Those are three-inch calibre, long range guns," said Uncle Jack. "They send shells ten miles or so, to split things. The gun-barrels are longer than a fence-rail. For my part, I don't like 'em. They shoot too far."

"They're the right thing to have," said Ned. "If I were going to conquer England I'd want plenty of those guns."

"They'd be of no use at all to you, if you had them," said Uncle Jack. "The London police wouldn't let you keep 'em. They'd take them right away from you, as soon as you landed. You would be fined, too. It's against English law for any fellow to carry such things around with him."

[19]

Ned was silenced by that, for the time, and they both got into a street-car, and went on up-town. There were plenty of things worth seeing, all along, but the car was so crowded with passengers that they were packed, as Uncle Jack complained, "like sardines in a box." So they stood still, and hardly saw anything.

When at last they stepped out, and walked over toward one of the gateways of Central Park, he growled again.

"There they go!" he exclaimed. "One—two—three—four of 'em. They are those automobile carriages, that go without any horses. I like a horse, myself. That is, if he's a good one, and pulls well in harness. I was kicked half to death by one of my horses, once. I think he had some kind of automobile in him. If you should ever happen to conquer England, you'd get fine horses."

[20]

"That's what mother says," replied Ned. "She's a good American now, but she was born in England. She says they have the best horses in the world."

"Not by any means equal to ours," snapped Uncle Jack. "Ours are so fine that we are going to preserve some of them for specimens, after we get so that all our riding and pulling is done by steam and electricity. We shall keep pictures of them, too, and statues, so that people who live in such times as are to come may know what sort of animals horses used to be."

Uncle Jack appeared to be in a bad state of mind, that day, for he went on to denounce vigorously a long list of things. He even went so far as to condemn the entire Anglo-Saxon race, English and American together.

"Look at it, Ned!" he said, with energy. "Not only do both of these wretched nations come down to this new state of things, themselves, including the newspapers and the magazines and the floods of books, but they are clubbing together to force innovations upon all the rest of the world. They are a partnership concern now, and which of them is the meanest I don't know. The British are choking their inventions down the throats of China, India, Africa, and a lot of other unlucky continents and islands. We Americans are working in the same way with Cuba and Porto Rico and the Philippines and Magatapatanglew."

[21]

"Where on earth is that?" asked Ned.

"Where is it?" sadly responded his uncle, shaking his head. "I really don't know. Nobody else knows where half of these new places are, with long-tail names. I've a kind of notion it's near the junction."

"What junction?" inquired his nephew.

"Why!" exclaimed Uncle Jack. "The junction? You don't know? It is at the corner where the Congo River crosses the Ganges. It is very near the point where the Ural Mountains pour down into the Red Sea."

[22]

Ned was not entirely caught and mystified, this time, for he promptly replied: "Oh, I know where that is! I've been to Grammar School Sixty-eight. I know! It's down near the custom house."

"I declare!" said his uncle. "Boys know too much, anyhow, nowadays. You would learn a great deal more, though, if you'd take an army and a steamer, and go and conquer England. Your mother has dozens of cousins there, too. But you had better buy return excursion tickets before you start. That's what I did, and it helped me to get back home. Let's go to dinner."

"It's about dinner-time," said Ned; and his uncle talked along as they went.

"I like the English for one thing," he said. "They cook good dinners. I hate 'em for another thing, though: if you go to an English dinner-party, you have to wait till the last man gets there before they will give you anything to eat. I conquered them a little on that, anyhow, for I always went two hours late, myself. So I generally had to wait only about half an hour or so." [23]

Ned studied that matter until he thought he understood it. Afterward, however, he was glad to be an American, when his own dinner came to the table exactly on time. So did he and his uncle.

A long walk, and sightseeing, combined with plans for the conquest of England, will surely prepare a healthy sixteen-year-old boy for his dinner, especially if he is somewhat tall for his age and burly in build. Ned was not quite prepared, nevertheless, for some things which were coming upon him. He could not have expected, reasonably, that his entire family would set him up for a mark and shoot at him. That is what they did, and they fired at him from all around the table, hitting him. [24]

"Ned," began Uncle Jack, "I heard you! Where on earth did you learn to speak Norwegian? Not at the grammar school."

"Why," said Ned, "I got it from old Erica. She has been in the house since before I was born. She began with me when I was doing my first words of any kind."

"Oh," said Uncle Jack, "that's it! I suppose even the Norway babies catch it that way."

"I see," said his father. "It is about the same way with your Latin. I used to talk Latin at you when you wore frocks. You are pretty well up in it, for a boy only just graduated from a public school. Perhaps it may be of use to you, some day; but I am afraid that your Norwegian never will."

"Not unless he should go there, if he ever travels," said his mother. "What he needs to do now is to get out into the country. He has been cooped up in the city and held down over his books long enough." [25]

"He must spend a few weeks at his grandfather's house," remarked his Aunt Maria, with a severe expression. "He must go fishing. His health requires it."

So said his sisters and his older brothers, and then Uncle Jack gave him away entirely, telling of Ned's dealings with the *Kentucky*, and with the other wonders they had seen that morning.

"You don't say so!" exclaimed his father. "He wishes to conquer England! I know some English boys that could make him wish he were hiding on board the *Kentucky*."

"Well," responded Ned, rebelliously, "I'm not so sure about that! I'm captain of the baseball nine. I'm in on football, too. I can fence first-rate, and I've had Pat McCool for a boxing master."

"Oh!" remarked Aunt Maria. "Now I know! That is why you came home limping so horridly, a week ago Saturday. You had a pair of black eyes, too—" [26]

"That's nothing, Aunt Maria," interrupted Ned. "That was Jimmy Finley. We were boxing barehanded. He got it as bad as I did, too."

"Edward," exclaimed his mother, "that is shocking! It is like fighting! And you have been talking slang, too!"

"Well, mother," said Ned, respectfully, "I didn't mean to; but Jim is a regular rusher to hit."

"Edward!" said his father. "Slang again? I must take you in hand, myself."

"He is dreadful!" whispered one of his sisters. "He called Sallie Hemans a bricktop. Her hair is red—"

"I see how it is," continued his father. "The sooner you are out in the country, the better. Football, indeed! Baseball, fencing, boxing! All that sort of thing! What you need is exercise. Fishing, I should say, and plenty of good, fresh country air. Something beside books and school." [27]

"I'll tell you what, then," responded Ned. "I'll be glad enough to get there. All the colts I rode last summer'll be a year older now. I'm going to try 'em, and see if they can send me to grass, like they did then."

"Edward! What grammar!" groaned his aunt. "His Grandmother Webb will attend to that."

"I have my serious doubts," remarked Uncle Jack. "She has not altogether reformed her own neighbourhood. The country is the place for him, however. If he isn't sent away he may stir up a war with England, and it would be expensive."

From that the table talk drifted back to the terrible battle-ships and the new inventions.

"It is dreadful!" remarked Uncle Jack. "I used to think I knew, generally, what I was eating, but I have given it up. They have invented artificial eggs. The butter we get is a mystery; they make almost anything out of corn. The newspapers are printed on stuff that's made of cord-wood, and this new imitation silver is nothing but potter's clay, boiled down, somehow. It tires me out to think of it all." [28]

"I don't care," said Ned. "Hurrah for the country, and for the colts, and for some fishing!"

**NED WEBB'S OUTING.**

"YOUR grandmother is right, Edward. I agree with her entirely. She thinks that too much of your vacation time ought not to be spent in the woods, and it must not be. I wish, however, to say something more. Your education must continue without too great an interruption. There are ideas which I intend you to obtain while under my care."

"Why, grandfather!" exclaimed Ned, with a somewhat puzzled look on his face. "I think so, too. I don't care to be all the while in the woods. I want to do some fishing."

"Exactly," said his grandfather. "We both approve of that. You may have all the rods and lines you need, but you must not forget the wise saying of the immortal Franklin, that going fishing means only a rod and line with a worm at each end of it. There is not much to be caught in Green Lake." [30]

"Well," said Ned, "I guess I'll pull in something better'n suckers and bullheads. There are trout and perch and bass and pickerel."

"Eels, too," suggested his grandfather. "What I mean is, practically, that you are to employ a part of each day among your books. I especially wish you to acquire a rudimentary acquaintance with the history of the world you live in."

"Yes, sir, I know what that is," said Ned. "They bored us with it, awfully, at School Number Sixty-eight. I had to be examined on it, too, and I didn't get turned down."

Ned had safely reached his grandfather's house in the country. It was a large and handsome mansion. They two were now in the library, on the morning after his arrival. One glance at the ranges of bookcases was enough to afford an indication of the old gentleman's hobby. He was a distinguished member of the Historical Society; of the Antediluvian Research Association; of the Paleontological; the Paleozoic, and of several other brilliant scientific corporations. He was a short, stocky old man, and very positive in his manners. Possibly he might now have responded even severely, but at this moment a tall, thin, gray-haired, benevolent-looking woman entered the library. [31]

"Edward," she said, brushing a lot of dust from her dress, "I've been going over that fishing-tackle for you. You may pick out all you want of it, if you'll only let the guns alone. I can't let you play with gunpowder. Your grandfather mustn't make a bookworm of you, either."

"Oh," said Ned, "I was thinking of that. Worms! I guess I know where to dig 'em. What I'm going to go for, this morning, is the horses." [32]

"That's what you may do," said his grandfather, somewhat as if he had been getting orders from his wife. "You'd better fight shy of that sorrel filly, though. She might pitch you over her head."

"Why, Edward," interposed his grandmother, "you rode that colt a good many times, last vacation. She's better broken in now. I've driven her, myself. She's as kind and gentle as a kitten, but she's playful."

"Humph!" remarked the old gentleman. "She kicked one buggy into the middle of next week. I won't drive her."

There was more to be said, but Ned escaped with his grandmother to go and take a look at the fishing-tackle. It was in a closet of one of the up-stairs rooms, and it was worth any boy's while to have the rummaging of that closet.

"It's a perfect curiosity shop," said Ned, as he stared into it. "Why, grandmother, he must have been a tremendous fisherman." [33]

"So he was," she said, "when he was a younger man. That isn't all of it, though. This is his collection of all the implements employed by civilised and uncivilised tribes for catching fish. It isn't sorted very well, but that other side is packed with nets and spears. I'm afraid there isn't a really good boat for you on Green Lake. Clumsy things!"

"Anything'll do for me," said Ned. "I'm a sailor. Do you know, the other day, I went to see the *Kentucky*, the new line-o'-battle-ship. She's a giant."

"Oh, dear!" laughed the old lady. "If your grandfather could buy her at auction, he'd stow her away in this closet, for one of his specimens."

"I can see all I want," replied Ned. "I'll come and pick it out by and by. May I go to the barns now?"

"Go right along," she said. "Hadn't you better take a ride to Green Lake? It's only a mile or so, and horseback exercise'll do you good." [34]

She kept him a few minutes, however, to explain the nature of some of the more remarkable antiquities in the closet. Then he was down-stairs again, but he was not a free boy yet, for his grandfather caught him and led him into the library again.

"Edward," he said, solemnly, as they passed the doorway, "if there is anything I disapprove of, more than another, it is what they are printing nowadays to occupy the empty minds of the young,—the things which they advertise as popular books for boys, for instance. I find that even

where they are more or less historical in character, they are also perniciously imaginative, often presenting utter improbabilities as history. I will show you something, now, that will be worth your while. I suppose that you do not know anything of consequence concerning your Scandinavian forefathers." [35]

"Yes, I do," said Ned. "Our old Erica's a Norway girl. I can talk with her in Norwegian."

"What!" exclaimed his grandfather. "Have you actually acquired the difficult tongue of the Vikings and Berserkers? That is wonderful! Then you will be doubly interested in the work you are about to peruse."

"I guess I can swallow it," said Ned. "Are you going to give me a look at it?"

The old gentleman walked over to a corner of the library and pulled out from one of the lower shelves an exceedingly promising or portentous volume. He was a strong man, and he lifted it to the centre-table, throwing it wide open as he did so, and remarking:

"There, now! That's a book for a boy!"

Ned drew a long breath, in spite of some dust that flew from the book, as he came to the table. [36]

"Examine it," said his grandfather.

Ned turned first to the title-page, of course, to see what it was.

HISTORY OF THE NORMANS.  
By  
PROFESSOR SCHWEINFURTH BFJORNSEN.

Translated by

BARON FRITZ VON PLOKINWICZ.

475 Illustrations.

Published by

DRONTHEIM & WESTMINSTER.

Boston and Copenhagen.

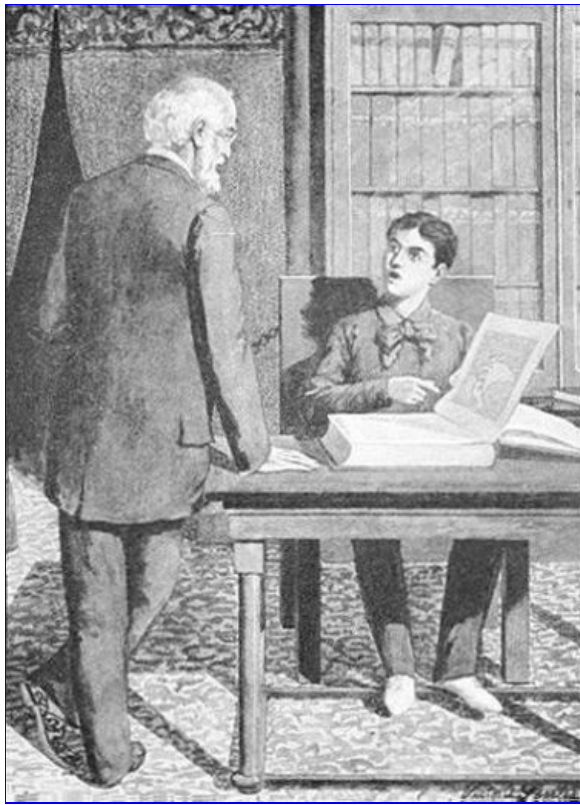
1900.

A pencilled memorandum added:

5,000 pp. \$50.

"This is just the thing!" exclaimed Ned. "I can look at every picture in it while I'm here. I guess not many of 'em are photos, though. They are splendid!"

---



"THERE ISN'T ANY SCHOOL-BOOK ABOUT THIS."

---

"They are works of art, all of 'em," said his grandfather. "I believe them to be sufficiently accurate, and that you may depend upon their instructive value." [37]

"I see," said Ned. "All about ever so many fights. I'll go right into it. Tell you what, grandfather, there isn't any school-book about this."

The old gentleman was evidently gratified by the eagerness with which Ned began to turn over the leaves, and he remarked, benevolently:

"It will give you a thorough knowledge of men and times whereof we have as yet discovered very little. The Vikings were a wonderful race of men."

"They'd fight like anything," said Ned. "Pirates, buccaneers, freebooters,—I'd like to see one of their battles. They blew horns all the while. Yelled. Sung songs. Yes, sir! It's the biggest kind of book."

"Go, now," said his grandfather, still more delighted with Ned's enthusiasm. "You may try the sorrel colt, but be careful." [38]

The barns and stables of the Webb place were at some distance in the rear of the mansion. At the right of the largest barn was a four-acre paddock, but it did not seem to have many occupants. At this hour of the day all work-horses were away at their farm duties. The carriage-horses were in their stalls, waiting for orders. All that Ned saw, therefore, on his arrival, were a brace of very young colts, four Devon calves, as handsome as pictures, and one three-year-old sorrel filly. She was in the hands of a groom, and instead of a halter she was wearing a bridle, with a plain snaffle-bit. Just at this moment the groom was putting upon her back a pretty blue blanket with white borders. She was a large animal for her age, and Ned was already aware that she had earned a reputation as a racer.

"There's speed in her!" he remarked. "She'll show time, one of these days. Temper? Well, I don't care if there is. Good horses always have some." [39]

Nanny's beautiful eyes looked gentle enough, and they were full of intelligence. She neighed inquiringly as he drew nearer.

"Hullo! How are ye, Masther Ned? Hark to the mare, now. She's askin' the name of ye. Come along, and spake to her."

"How are you, Pat McCarty?" called back Ned. "Nanny's looking fine! Grandfather says I may ride her."

"All right," said Pat. "She's ready. I was goin' to exercise her, meself."

A dozen more questions and answers followed rapidly, while Ned was caressing and admiring the perfectly shaped quadruped. She turned her pretty head to look at him, as he walked around her, and he was aware of a curious notion that she was now and then winking at him. She seemed, at the same time, a little impatient and restless, as if it irritated her to have to stand still. [40]

"You'll do as well without a saddle," said Pat. "Sometimes she objects to a saddle. The blanket and surcingle is all the summer goods she wants to wear."

"Guess they're enough," laughed Ned.

He was getting wildly eager for his romp with Nanny. Whether or not she remembered him, she seemed to be disposed to treat him politely. She even craned out her neck and pulled off his hat for him, taking the brim in her teeth.

"She's friendly, the day," said Pat. "Put your fut in me hand and I'll give ye the lift to the back of her."

Ned was as nimble as a monkey. In a moment more he was on Nanny's back, bridle in hand, feeling splendidly.

"Aff wid ye," said Pat. "I'll open the gate for ye. Ave she wants to go, though, it's little good to thry an' hould her in."

"I won't," said Ned. "I'll just let her fly!" [41]

He was thrilling all over with the excitement of being so well mounted, and he really knew how to ride. As for Nanny, she appeared to be set on springs, and her progress to the gate was a series of graceful curvetings, as easy for her rider as the motion of a rocking-chair.

They were now in the barnyard, and a lane from this led out into the road. Pat was no longer needed, for the yard gate was open, and Nanny pranced along through without any guiding.

"Luk at her!" shouted Pat. "She's out for fun the day. She's full o' life. Oh! but isn't she a beauty!"

"Whoop!" yelled Ned. "This is better than being shut up in a grammar school."

"It's the fine b'ye he is, ave they don't spile him entirely, among thim," remarked Pat, thoughtfully. "The ould grandmother'd give him the house and all, and the grandfather's been just a-waitin' for him till he kem. They're the right sort o' people, thim Webbs." [42]

The highway was clear and Nanny went into it at her own gait, a kind of springing, elastic canter that was not at first very rapid.

"This is the road toward Green Lake," thought Ned. "It's just the one I meant to take. I'll get there, to-morrow or next day, and see if there's any fishing. Sometimes they didn't bite worth a cent, last year. I'll find a boat, somehow. I can take a book along, too. Then I won't have to sit still

for an hour at a time, doing nothing."

Men and women in wagons and carriages, which he shortly met or passed, all turned for a look at Nanny, and it was quite apparent that she appreciated their admiration. Two or three times, indeed, she induced Ned to make a mild, restraining pull upon the bridle, but each time she resented his attempt at control by a shake of her head, followed by a vigorous bound forward. [43]

"I'd better take Pat's advice," he thought. "If she wants to speed it, I'll let her go. I can stick on, anyhow."

He had no doubt whatever on that point, and was not at all nervous. At the end of less than three-quarters of a mile, however, there was a narrow lane that left the highway on the right, though not at right angles. This lane was bordered by rail fences, trees, bushes, and farther on it led through a patch of dense forest.

"Green Lake Lane," thought Ned. "I won't go there to-day."

On that point he should have first consulted the sorrel colt under him. The instant she came to the head of the lane she uttered a sharp exclamation and whirled gaily into it. Ned at once drew upon his bridle in an attempt to guide her back into the highway. Up went her heels a little viciously, and her easy gallop changed into something like a run. If she had now only a quarter-mile to go, she was determined to make short work of whatever errand was in her mind. [44]

"She's going like lightning!" exclaimed Ned, clinging his best and pulling hard.

"This lane runs right on into the lake. Oh, my!"

Faster, faster, went the beautiful thoroughbred racer. The trees at the roadside seemed to go flashing by, and now the lake itself was in full view ahead.

It was a broad, placid, forest-bordered sheet of water, apparently somewhat irregular in shape. There were neither wharves nor piers nor boathouses to be seen.

The entire lake landscape was wildly picturesque,—if Ned could at that moment have considered at all any of the beauties of nature. He could not have done so, for it seemed to him that Nanny was not even giving him time to think. Long afterward, he remembered asking himself if it were possible that Nanny had any idea of going for a swim. [45]

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"NED DID NOT SIT STILL AT ALL."

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She had no such intentions, indeed. She had other plans and purposes, and she carried out her own conception of a grand morning romp with Ned to perfection.

The moderate slope to the water's edge was green with grass, and the little waves came rippling in smilingly. The water there was not very shallow, however.

On—on—sprang swiftly the sorrel colt, and it was plain that only the lake itself could stop her.

That is, the bridle and bit were of no account, but she could stop herself. Her round yellow fore hoofs came down side by side at the margin, and the water was only a few inches above her silken fetlocks when she suddenly, sharply braced herself as still as if she had been instantaneously cast in bronze for exhibition.

Ned did not sit still at all. He was cast clean over the gracefully bowing head of the playful Nanny, right into Green Lake, as far as she could throw him. [46]

Beyond all doubt, she had accomplished her purposes remarkably well.

There was no actual harm done to her rider, either, for the water in which Ned landed, if a boy can correctly be said to land in water, was fully four feet deep. He went into it head first, heels up, hat flying, with a kind of astonished yell in his throat that was drowned before it could get away from him.

When he came to the surface again and struck out for the shore, recapturing his floating hat on the way, there stood Nanny entirely calm and as gentle as ever.

Now again he could almost have believed that she was winking at him. She neighed very kindly, drank some lake water, and then she lifted her head and gazed around the lake as if she enjoyed the scenery.

"I can mount her again," asserted Ned, as he stood still to drip. "Oh, but ain't I glad I lighted on something soft! It wasn't a fair throw, anyhow. I hadn't anything left to hold on with." [47]

Whatever he meant by that, she had slung him over her head, and there was very little doubt but what she could do it again. She had a will of her own, too, as to being ridden, and she as much as said so when he went to get hold of her bridle, intending to lead her to a neighbouring log and remount. He did not succeed in putting a hand on the leather. Up went her heels, around she whirled, and away she went, neighing cheerfully as she galloped along the lane.

"Now, this is too bad!" groaned Ned. "I'm as wet as a drowned rat and I've got to foot it home. Nanny'll get there before I do, too, unless she runs away somewhere else, and they'll all wonder what's become of me."

He felt humiliated, discouraged, and not at all like the kind of fellow to command ironclads and lead armies. [48]

There was nothing else to be done, nevertheless, and he began to trudge dolefully along on his homeward way. Walking in wet clothing is not very comfortable exercise, anyhow, and Ned was not now, by any means, the nobby-looking young man from the city that he had been when he rode away that morning. Even more than before, when he was so well mounted, did curious people turn in their carriages and wagons to stare at him. It was on his mind that every one of them had a good laugh and remarked:

"That chap's had a ducking!"

He plodded along, and succeeded in getting half-way before anything serious occurred. Then, indeed, he suddenly stood stock-still, and wished he had been farther.

"There they come!" he exclaimed. "There are grandfather and grandmother and Pat and old Mrs. Emmons and Uncle Jack. More people behind 'em. Oh, dear! They've seen me already, or I'd climb a fence." [49]

It was altogether too late for any attempt at escape. In a few moments more they were in front of him, and all around him, saying all sorts of things so rapidly that he had to keep shut up till they gave him a chance.

"Oh, my blessed boy!" exclaimed Grandmother Webb. "If you wasn't so wet, I'd hug you! We thought the colt had thrown you; we were afraid you were killed!"

"No!" said Ned, with energy. "But she fired me over her head into the lake, and I swam ashore."

"I caught her," put in Pat McCarty. "Here she is,—the beauty! That was for thryin' to hould her in. You must niver do that ag'in."

"I didn't pull much," said Ned.

Uncle Jack had been looking him all over, critically, from head to foot.

"That lake is very wet," he remarked. "Ned, my boy, I'm glad the critter projected you into soft water. You've come out of it a fine-looking bird." [50]

"I don't care," said Ned. "This blue flannel doesn't shrink with wetting. My hat'll be all right as soon as it's dry; so'll my shoes."

At that moment he heard a shrill, soft neigh close to his ear, and Nanny poked her head over his shoulder to gaze affectionately at the family gathering, as if she felt that she was entitled to some of the credit of the occasion.

"It's the fun of her," said Pat. "It's just the joke she played on the b'ye. She knows more'n half the

min."

"Edward," commanded his grandfather, "come right back to the house."

"He can't ketch cold sech a day as this," said old Mrs. Emmons, "or I'd make him some pepper tea; but his mother mustn't hear of it. How it would skeer her!"

"No, it wouldn't," said Ned. "She knows I can swim. Father won't care, either, so long's I got ashore." [51]

The procession set out for the house, Pat and Nanny marching ahead. It grew, too, as it went, for ever so many of the village boys came hurrying to join it, and to inquire how it was that Nanny made out to throw Ned into Green Lake. Then they all went forward to walk along with her, full of admiration for a colt that knew how to give a boy a ducking.

"She slung him," said one.

"Hove him clean over her head."

"She was goin' a mile a minute."

"If I'd ha' been Ned, I'd ha' braced back and stuck on."

"Then she'd ha' rolled over."

Not one of them offered to ride her, however; and the procession reached the house. When it did so, Nanny broke away from Pat, and cantered on to the barn-yard. The gate from that into the paddock was shut, and she went over it with a splendid leap, to begin a kind of dance around the Devon calves. [52]

"It's mighty little good to fence in the like of her," remarked Pat. "I'm thinkin' I'd better give the b'ye wan o' thim other cowlts."

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## **CHAPTER III.**

[53]

### **A VERY WIDE LAKE.**

"**T**HIS is the coolest place there is in the house," remarked Ned, as he looked around the library that hot June afternoon. "Grandmother and the rest of them have gone out to the Sewing Society. What a fuss they made! As if a bit of a swim could hurt me!"

The shelves and cases were crowded with books, and at first he did nothing but lie in a big wickerwork chair, and stare at them.

"No," he said, aloud, "I won't do any reading, not in such a sweltering day as this is. I can get out that Norway book, though, and look at the pictures."

He pulled it out, and lugged it to the table, with a strong impression upon his mind that it was a book to be carried around in January rather than in June. [54]

"It never will be a popular book for boys," he remarked of it. "Not for small boys."

Open it came, and he began with a study of the abundant illustrations. They were fine, and they stirred him up, by degrees, until he began to feel a growing interest in the reading matter scattered along among them. It was all in large type, so that the pages might be conquered easily, one after another. Before long he found himself entirely absorbed in the narrative of the old Norse times.

"Curious lot of men they were," he remarked, "those Vikings. How they did seem to enjoy killing their enemies and cutting each other's heads off! They'd steal anything, too. Tell you what, though, if I'd been wearing one o' their coats of mail when Nanny pitched me into the lake, I'd ha' gone to the bottom like a stone. I wonder if any of 'em could swim in their armour? I don't believe they could. Most likely they took it off if they were going to be wrecked anywhere. A fellow in a steel shirt ought to have some life-preservers handy." [55]

More and more intense became his interest as he went on, and at about tea-time his grandfather came in.

"What, Ned?" asked the old gentleman. "Are you at it yet? That's all right, but I can't let you do too much of it. You must spend all the time you can in the open air. You may read this evening, but to-morrow morning you must go fishing. You may take a book with you."

"I'll take along this one, then," said Ned. "I can read between bites."

"That's what I do sometimes," said his grandfather. "I think it averages about two books to each fish, but a pike pulled a dictionary overboard for me, once." [56]

"What did he want of a dictionary?" asked Ned. "Did you hook him?"

"Yes, I pulled him in," said the old gentleman, "but the book went out of sight. It's going to be too warm for trolling for pike."

"I guess so," said Ned. "I'm going to find some grasshoppers."

"They're the right bait," said Grandfather Webb. "Better than worms. The lake is full of bullheads."

So is the wide, wide world. I've been out there, just now, talking to one of 'em. He's an Englishman. He's been beating me out of ten dollars, and he won't understand my explanation of it. He insists on keeping the ten."

"That's like 'em," said Ned. "I'd like to conquer England. Uncle Jack says that if I did they'd lock me up in the station-house."

"That's what they'd do," said his grandfather. "Anybody that invaded England would be arrested at once. They'd convict him, too, and make him buy something of 'em." [57]

"I don't care," said Ned, "I'm going there, some day. It's about the greatest country in the world. I'm going to see London, and the forts, and the ships. The English soldiers and sailors can fight like anything. They can whip anybody but Americans."

"Come to supper!" commanded his grandfather; "then you may go on with your book. I'm afraid, though, that if you were in command of the *Kentucky* you'd try to steam her all over England, across lots, without minding the fences."

At the supper-table Ned was compelled to hear quite a number of remarks about swimming in Green Lake.

"He'd better try that colt in a buggy, next time," said Mrs. Emmons. "She's skittish."

"She likes a buggy," remarked Uncle Jack. "Pat lent her to one of his best friends, last week, to drive her a mile or so for exercise. She didn't stop short of Centreville Four Corners. The buggy's there, now, in the wagon-shop getting mended, and Nanny came home alone, quiet as a lamb." [58]

"I guess Edward may drive one of the other horses," said his grandmother. "Pat'll pick out a quiet one."

"I'd want a buggy, or something," said Ned, "if I was to take that big book of grandfather's with me. I never saw such pictures, though. Loads of 'em."

"Read it! Read it!" said his grandfather. "When you get through with it, you'll know more'n you do now."

They let him alone after that, and talked of other affairs. He was quite willing to keep still, and he got away from the table before anybody else. There was a growing fever upon him to dive into that folio and to find out how the story fitted the pictures. No one happened to go into the library until about eleven o'clock, and he was there alone. Then old Mrs. Emmons herself was hunting everywhere for a ball of yarn she had lost, and she tried the library. Ned was not reading when she came in. He was lying stretched half-way across the table, sound asleep, with his head on the open book, and the cat curled up beside it. [59]

"I had to shake him awake," she reported afterward, "and the cat followed him when he went upstairs to his room."

Nevertheless, he was awake again not long after sunrise, next morning, and hurried out on a bait hunt. Before breakfast he had done well as to angleworms, but not so well as to grasshoppers. Of these he had captured only six, shutting them up in a little tin match-box.

"Now, then," said his grandfather, when they came out of the house together, after breakfast, "here's your rod. Three good lines. Plenty of hooks and sinkers. The boat's down there at the landing." [60]

"I saw it when I swam ashore," said Ned. "It's a scow-punt and it isn't much bigger'n a wash-tub."

"It's better than it looks," replied the old gentleman. "I saw four men in it once, and they went half-way across the lake before it upset with them."

"Did any of 'em get drowned?" asked Ned.

"No," said Mr. Webb, "not more'n half drowned. I was out in another boat with Pat McCarty, trolling, and we fished in all four of 'em. You needn't get upset unless you try to carry Nanny or some of the boys. I'd rather you'd not have any company. Safer!"

"I don't want any of 'em along," said Ned. "I'd rather be alone. Then I can read while I'm waiting for fish. You said I could take that big book."

"All right, you may," said his grandfather. "Put it into your bait-box. Be sure you bring it home with you." [61]

Away went Ned, and his grandfather turned back into the house, laughing.

"He'll think twice," he said, "before he lugs that folio to Green Lake, this hot day. He won't take it."

He was only half right, for Ned had already thought twice, at least, and had decided what to do.

He had found a small, lightly made garden hand-cart, two-wheeled, and when he set out for Green Lake all his baggage was in the cart, including the book, the angleworms, and the grasshoppers. He succeeded in getting away quietly, too, without giving Pat or anybody else a chance to ask him if he expected to need a wagon to bring home his fish.

It was getting very warm before he was half a mile from the house, for June days always grow warmer, rapidly, if you are shoving a hand-cart. [62]

"It was a good lift to get the book in," thought Ned. "I wish I'd greased the wheels."

The boat lay idly at the shore when he reached the landing-place. A pair of oars lay in it, but he

saw also something which pleased him much more.

"Mast and sail!" he shouted. "Who'd ha' thought of that! Hurrah!"

There they lay, a short mast, truly, and a mere rag of sail, with a boom and sprit all ready for use.

"I know how," thought Ned. "I can step the mast and hoist the sail, myself. Then I can tack all over the lake, without any hard work a-rowing."

His first undertaking, however, was to get his huge folio volume into the boat and not into the water. He succeeded perfectly, with some effort. Then he stepped his bit of a mainmast, as he called it, through the hole bored for it in the forward seat of the punt. It was plain that he knew something about naval affairs, for he spoke of his snub-nosed cruiser as a "catboat," and regretted that she had no "tiller."

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"JUNE DAYS ALWAYS GROW WARMER, RAPIDLY, IF YOU ARE SHOVING A HAND-CART."

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"She hasn't any anchor, either," he said, "except a rope and a crooked stone. She has a keel, though, and there are thole-pins in her bulwarks, starboard and port. She's higher at the stern than she is at the prow, and I'm afraid she'd be a little cranky in a ten-knot breeze. She isn't ballasted to speak of, and I'd better keep her well before the wind. That's a little nor'west by north, just now."

However that might be, he pushed his gallant bark out from the shore, sitting in the stern, and shoving the land away with the rudder,—that is to say, with one of the oars.

The sail was already up, but it was a question to be answered how he could have told the direction from which the wind was coming or where it was going. To any ordinary observer, not an old salt nor the commander of a line-of-battle ironclad, it looked as if the wind had not yet reached Green Lake. It had very likely paused somewhere, in the village or over among the woods. [64]

"I'll have to row at first," he remarked. "I think I can see a ripple out yonder. Where there's a ripple, there's wind, or it may have been made by that pickerel when he jumped out after something. If he'll bite, I'll pull him in."

Rowing is, after all, easy enough work when there is no hurry and the boat is nearly empty. Ned pulled gently on his oars, and the boom and sail swung to and fro as she slipped along. Pretty soon she reached and went through the ripple made by the pickerel, leaving behind her others that were larger, but which did not indicate wind.

"I'd give something for a catspaw," he said, remembering another nautical term. "I needn't furl the mainsail. She can drift to looard, if she wants to, while I try for some fish. If it's true that this lake hasn't any bottom, it won't pay to cast anchor. There isn't cable enough in that coil to do any good." [65]

He ceased rowing. He put his joint rod together, and fitted on his reel, ready for sport. The bait question was decided against worms and in favour of grasshoppers, with regret that he had so few.

"Now," he said, "I don't much care whether it's to be a bass or a pickerel."

No choice was given him, for in only a minute or so more a handsome yellow perch came over the side of the boat to account for one grasshopper.

"That fellow'll weigh a pound, more or less," he said. "I don't want any pumpkinseeds, though."

That, however, was the kind of fish he pulled in next. Shortly afterward he had the usual unpleasantness belonging to the unhooking of a large, fat, slippery-skinned bullhead. He was really making a very good beginning indeed, considering what was the established reputation of Green Lake. [66]

"Uncle Jack said it was fished out," he said to himself. "I guess there are more shiners and pumpkinseeds than anything else. Hullo! Here comes a big one!"

What seemed to be a tremendous tug at his hook held on vigorously as he hauled in his line. The excitement of that strong bite made him tingle all over.

"Pickerel!" he shouted. "Or a big bass, or maybe it's a pike or a lake trout. What will Uncle Jack say, now?"

In a few moments more he was sadly replying, on behalf of his uncle, "Nothing but a cod-lamper eel!"

Soaked bush branches and pond weed are hard to pull in, and they are good for nothing in a frying-pan. A fisherman's gloomiest disappointments come to him in the landing of them. [67]

Another grasshopper was put on, and another cast was made. The bullhead flopped discontentedly on the bottom of the boat. So did the perch, now and then, but there were no other signs of fish life during the next half-hour, with the sun all the while growing hotter.

"I'll stick my rod," thought Ned, "and throw out another line, with a worm. Then I'll read till I get a bite. I think it's coming on to blow a little. I can see signs of weather."

So he could, really. Hardly were his two hooks and lines in the water before what some people romantically term a zephyr came gently breathing along the placid lake. It soon grew even strong enough to make itself felt by the drooping sail, but Ned remarked, as he lifted his eyes from his book illustrations: [68]

"That canvas doesn't bend worth a cent. I needn't take in any reef just now. Let her spin along. Hullo! The boat's beginning to move!"

He felt more and more sure of that while he again bent over the folio, opened out upon the middle seat, with an old starch box behind it for his accommodation. The breeze had come, what there was of it, but he shortly forgot all about winds and fishing, while he turned page after page of that book, and took in more and more of the meaning of the pictures. The sail was now filled well. There were larger and larger wavelets on the lake, but there came no fish-bites to interrupt Ned's reading. He had no idea for how long a time he had been sailing on, without noticing anything whatever around him. At last, however, the wind grew strong enough to turn one of his book-leaves for him, and he once more raised his head. [69]

"I declare!" he exclaimed. "This bit of a gale is freshening. I'll haul on the main sheet, and bring her head to the wind. She's leaning over a little too much. If a gust or a squall should come on,

she might turn turtle."

He evidently knew what it was best to do under such circumstances, and his next exclamation was uttered with even stronger emphasis. He was, of course, doing something in the steering line with his paddle-rudder, and he had taken occasion to look back along the wake of his dashing scow.

"What's this? Who ever knew that Green Lake was so wide? I can't see the other shore, toward our house. There isn't another boat in sight, either. If I expect to get home to-night, it's about time I went about, and headed southerly. This is a curious piece of business. I'll take in my lines, right away."

He shut up his book at once. There was even an anxious tone in his voice, and an exceedingly puzzled look upon his face. It was such, perhaps, as the captain of a line-of-battle-ship might wear upon finding his huge fighting machine in unknown or difficult navigation. Any experienced nautical man would have been able to comprehend Ned's unpleasant situation. That is, perhaps so, if it had been at all possible to know what was the precise nature of the circumstances. [70]

The lines came in fast enough and Ned knew how to tack, if that were indeed the correct thing for him to do next. Now, however, came a second discovery, almost as perplexing as the first. Behind him was a wide waste of water without a visible shore, but he was by no means out of sight of land when he turned to look ahead. The northerly shore of the lake was near, and it was rapidly drawing nearer.

"This is tremendous!" he remarked, and he took a tin cup out of his tackle-box, expressing a hope that the lake water might not prove too warm to drink. [71]

He leaned over the side of the boat, still gazing shoreward, scooped the cup full, and began to drink like a very thirsty fellow.

"Faugh! Phew!" he suddenly sputtered, and a vigorous, choking, coughing spell followed. "What's this? Salt water? How did Green Lake get salted!"

He tasted again, as if to make sure, and then he looked around him utterly bewildered. The shore was all the while drawing nearer, and the water in his cup was of the peculiar brackish flavour that belongs to the great seas.

"Mountains?" he murmured. "I knew there were high hills over this way, but I never was told of anything like this. Right along shore, too. Why, that cliff there's as high as a church steeple. Higher. That's an eagle, too, circling around over the top of it." [72]

Was one side of Green Lake salt and the other fresh, or had it in some mysterious way broken through and become connected with the Atlantic? It even occurred to him to wonder, vaguely, if the lake had joined the ocean in such a way that ships, the *Kentucky*, for instance, could ever come steaming in, firing salutes and astonishing all the country people. His head was all a buzz of perplexing questions, but he managed to keep hold of his rudder, and speed onward toward the land. In fact, the wind was now very good, and the punt was running rapidly.

"Yonder," he remarked aloud, "is the mouth of a kind of inlet. Those cliffs on each side of it are awful. They're almost perpendicular. It makes a fellow think of some of those pictures of Norway fiords, in the book. The best thing I can do is to steer right in and find out what it is. Tell you what, though, I've sailed farther than I'd any idea of." [73]

He still had some distance to go before reaching the opening between the tall cliffs, and his eyes were busy. He tried the water yet again, curiously.

"I know what sea water is," he thought. "I tried it once, out in New York Bay. This tastes saltier than that did. Hullo! Those are porpoises, tumbling around out yonder. I've seen porpoises before, off Long Island, when I went bluefishing with Uncle Jack. I wish he were here to tell me what all this amounts to. He knows a heap."

Perfectly stupendous were those beetling promontories between which the boat sailed in. They must have been several hundreds of feet in height. Here and there, in the clefts and crevices of their rugged sides and along their summits, grew gigantic pines and fir-trees.

"I'll put away the book," he said, "in the locker under the back seat. I'm going ashore. I want to find somebody that can tell me what this means. I won't go home till I know all about it. This isn't any kind of cove, though. It runs away in." [74]

So it did, narrow and deep, and it wound around a rock corner, shortly, so that all view of Green Lake behind him was cut off. It was almost cool in there, as well as shadowy, and Ned felt a kind of shudder going over him. He was not exactly afraid, but his heart was beating more quickly than usual. He had put away the folio with great care, and all of its four hundred and seventy-five splendid illustrations seemed to be running through his memory like a river in a flood-time, after a rousing rain-storm.

"There!" he exclaimed, at last. "There's a landing-place! I can see boats and men and women. Away off yonder, up the slope, houses enough for a village. Hullo! That's a ship at anchor."

Beyond the village, as far as his eyes could search, were more mountains, covered half-way up with forests, but right here before him the fiord widened so as to make a small cliff-guarded harbour of the safest kind. It was really a very beautiful place to visit, if Ned had been at all able, just then, to admire scenery. [75]

"Who would have thought," he exclaimed, "that a fellow could get to such a thing as this is, just



## CHAPTER IV.

[76]

### BEHIND THE TIMES.

"I WISH I had on a better rig," thought Ned, very naturally. "I look like anything."

He felt that he was going in among entire strangers, and that he was not by any means in company dress. He had come out fishing in a pair of blue flannel trousers and a blue woollen outing shirt, with canvas shoes, and wearing the low, brown felt hat he had dived in yesterday. It was dry now, but not handsome. He lowered his sail and began to paddle slowly along, thinking of all sorts of things, and watching sharply for whatever might turn up. He studied the sloop at anchor, as he went past it, and declared that it was a queer enough craft to look at. It was very long, and it was low amidships, with big thole-pins along the rails, as if it were planned to operate occasionally as a rowboat. The stern of it rose very high, so that it might contain a cabin, and so did the bow. Projecting from the latter was an iron-clad beak. It was chisel-edged, and Ned remarked:

[77]

"That's a ram, but she doesn't look much like a ship-of-war. Our ironclads have rams, but they never get near enough to other ships to strike with them. Our fighting has to be done with long-range guns. Well! I never saw her like before. Hullo! I see it! She is made like the Norse pirate pictures in that book! She is one of them!"

He was eager enough to go forward now, and he rowed with his eyes at work in all directions. The landing-place was now not far ahead of him. It was provided with a pretty substantial wharf, made of logs and stones. From this a pier of similar construction ran out about fifty feet into the harbour. Upon the deck of the pier, and on the wharf, and along the beach, were scattered men and women, and there were a number of stout-looking rowboats hitched here and there, or pulled up on the shore.

[78]

Ned ceased rowing for a full half-minute to stare intensely at the people, and then he exclaimed:

"I guess I'm right about it. These chaps are out and out Norsemen! That biggest man wears an iron topknot, too, and he carries a spear. Every man of 'em has a short sword at his belt, and those are all what the book calls seaxes. I know where I am now. I'm in for it! But how on earth am I ever to get home again in time for supper?"

That particular anxiety, and almost everything else, was speedily driven out of his head as he paddled his punt in among the fishing-boats at the pier. It came very near astonishing him, however, that not a soul among them seemed to be at all surprised at seeing him. They paid him no especial attention after they had hailed him, and after he had replied to them in the language which he had learned at home from old Erica. She herself had told him that her speech was not exactly the Norwegian of the printed books. She could not even read them very well, for she had been born up among the mountains and fiords, where the country people still talked the ancient Norse dialect, which could sometimes hardly be understood by town folk.

[79]

That is, he knew already that Norway, in that particular, was very much like parts of England, Scotland, Ireland, and several other countries.

As for the manner in which he was received, it was possible that his rig, which had made him nervous, was in his favour. He was really very much better dressed than were any of these fisher people. They all bowed to him politely, and he heard them say something about his being a young jarl. He had some idea of the meaning of that term, but he did not just now feel like a highly aristocratic boy.

[80]

The man who wore the long-nosed steel cap and carried the spear was very busy giving directions to the others, and was evidently some sort of captain among them. Just as Ned stepped from the pier to the wharf, however, he saw something that almost took his breath away, and he paid no more attention to anything else.

"Isn't he splendid!" he exclaimed. "It's the first time I ever saw a man in armour."

Not many paces away, and coming slowly and with dignity, was a tall, gray-bearded, powerful-looking Norseman. He carried no shield, but he wore a coat of link-mail that glittered in the sunshine. The spear in his hand was long, with a straight blade that was broad and brightly polished. His helmet was open in front, and was ornamented on top by a small pair of gilded wings. His face was handsome, and he smiled very good-humouredly as Ned stepped forward to meet him.

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"I am Vebba, son of Bjorn," he said. "Thou art welcome. Who art thou?"

"I am Ned Webb. I went out fishing, and I came in by the fiord."

"Ned, son of Webb?" replied the Viking. "Thou art of the south haven men. I know them not well. Come thou to my house. I will meet thy father when he cometh to the gathering."

"I shall be glad to come," said Ned, with his best manners, but he was thinking, "Meet my father? Well! I don't believe he will. I've a pretty clear notion that father won't be there."

"All mine have been fishing also," said Vebba, as he turned to walk away, Ned following with him. "Thou must know that we are salting and smoking every fin we can pull in, that the ships of Harold Hardrada's fleet may not sail without plentiful provisions when he and Tostig Godwinson harness the steeds of the sea to bear the heroes of the North to the conquest of England." [82]

Ned's heart gave a great thump, and Vebba must have noticed how his face flushed with sudden delight, for he laughed loudly and said to him:

"Thou art but young to join in a feast of swords, but we will arm thee and thou shalt sail with us to the shore of Britain. There will be grand fighting when we close with the Saxon host that will meet us under Harold the King."

"That's just what I'd like to see!" exclaimed Ned. "Of all things! I've always wanted to conquer England, and now I'm to have a tip-top chance. When do you all expect to go?"

"It hath taken long to build ships," replied Vebba. "The keels of Hardrada will be fifteen score, and Tostig hath already as many as three score with him at Bruges. We wait, now, only for the outfitting. Let us walk on to the house." [83]

Ned had noticed that, with the exception of Vebba, all whom he had yet seen were barefooted. The chief, however,—for there could be no doubt about his rank,—wore sandals that were strapped to his feet and ankles by broad thongs of leather. Most of the other men wore leathern blouses, which reminded Ned of some buckskin hunting-shirts he had seen pictures of. The women were supplied with gowns, some of which were of coarse woollen stuff and some of leather. All of the garments were more or less fish-soiled, and not a few were ragged. "No style here," thought Ned. "I wonder, though, if a steel cap feels heavy on a fellow's head. Perhaps it doesn't when one gets used to it. Oh, but I'm glad I can understand them. I'd be in the worst kind of fix if I couldn't." [84]

The fish which had been brought to the shore in the boats were very fine. Ned saw cod, haddock, herring, salmon, and some that he was not familiar with. Heaviest of all was a great porpoise they had speared and that lay on the sand ready for cutting up for war purposes. He had never before heard of sea-pigs being eaten.

The village lay somewhat farther from the landing than it had at first appeared, looking at it from the water. It was in a narrow valley between two rugged, mountainous ridges, and all around it were broad fields of cultivated land. Most of the houses were low-roofed and small, constructed of logs and stones and tempered clay that was used to stop chinks and holes with. Three or four of a better sort were built, in part at least, of hewn logs and planks and pretty fair-looking stonework, but all were irregular in plan and as if they had been builded at random. Of these larger dwellings, the roofs were high-pitched, differing altogether from the mere cabins. Ned did not see any chimneys, and he knew why, after his armoured guide had led him into the most extensive house, at the upper end of the village. It was more like a collection of houses around one huge affair in the middle, and this, when he entered it, seemed to be all one room or hall. [85]

"Hullo!" thought Ned. "There's their fireplace, in the middle of the floor, and the smoke gets out at that hole in the roof, if it can. Well, no, there isn't any floor but the earth except at the end, away there at the left. There's a pretty wide plank platform there."

On this "dais," raised about a foot above the hard beaten earth of the rest of the level, he saw a long table, around which were benches and chairs of various kinds. In the middle, behind the table, was one very high-backed chair of oak, that was covered with grotesque carving. [86]

"That's the dinner-table," he said to himself. "It's big enough for a New York hotel. There are benches and bunks all around the sides of the room. Six windows, too, and not a sash in one of them. That's good enough for summer, but what do they do in winter?"

He had to leave that question unsettled, so many others were coming along. The earth floor seemed to be as hard as stone, but it could not have been swept recently. There were neither carpets nor rugs, but in one corner he saw a spinning-wheel and what looked like a hand-loom for weaving. In another corner was a strong stone-work, at the side of which was an anvil, against which a large bellows was leaning. The clothing he had seen had told him that these people knew what to do with wool and flax.

He was quickly compelled to cut off his observations, for now a tall, handsome, yellow-haired woman came forward and shook hands with him, telling him that she was Wiltna, the wife of Vebba. Following her were other women, and at least a dozen of boys and girls, whose several names he had a great deal of difficulty in catching. He did best of all with one tall, red-haired youngster of about his own age. [87]

"I am Lars, son of Vebba," he said, loudly. "Come with me, and see the hawks and hounds. Let us get away from so many women. I am glad thou art come."

In an instant Ned began to feel at home. What would he have done in a country where there were no boys!—if there ever was such a forlorn land as that.

He and Lars were like old friends in a minute, but they had only to get out of the house to see some of the dogs. A pair of tall, ferocious-looking wolf-hounds came bounding toward them, not barking, but uttering strange, short howls of greeting, and showing dangerous rows of sharp, white teeth. Lars wrestled for a moment with one of them, boxing the animal's ears fearlessly, and Ned made friends with the other. On they all went, then, to a low building behind the house, from which a chorus of howls arose as they drew near. [88]

"Pups that are only half trained," said Lars. "We have to keep 'em shut up. If they and some of the

older savages got out, we might never see 'em again. They'd go hunting on their own account, or they'd get among the sheep; then they'd be worse than wolves, for the shepherd dogs wouldn't fight them."

It was hardly necessary for Ned to ask questions, so eager was Lars to entertain him, and to tell him the name and character of all the dogs in all the kennels, older and younger. They went to the stables, after that, and to a paddock.

"Horses enough," thought Ned, "but only a very few of them are large ones. Nanny could run out of sight of anything I've seen here. They're a clumsy-looking lot, and the carts and the harness are all the roughest kind. They don't seem to know what a buckle is, and the wheels are a sight to see. They make pretty good saddles, though. Now for the hawks. I want to see 'em." [89]

On went Lars to his bird-cages, beyond the stables, and here was what Ned called "the biggest kind of poultry show."

There were more than twenty falcons, of all sorts, in Vebba's falconry. All of them were leading dull and tedious lives, sitting on perches, and several of them were not only fettered but hooded. Lars transferred one of these from its perch to his own wrist, over which he wore a thick leather guard to protect the skin from the sharp talons of the bird.

"Come on!" he said. "I'll show thee. There won't be any game in sight, but I'll fly him, and call him. I trained him myself. He's a gerfalcon. Hardrada's brother gave him to father after the fight with the pirates at Croning's Fiord. Father killed five of them, and took one of their boats. It was almost big enough for a ship. It got sunk, though, last winter, by the ice." [90]

So they chatted, back and forth, as they walked along together, away out of the village. They met people who bowed and greeted them, but no other boys seemed to feel at liberty to join them. Ned learned, afterward, that it was considered bad manners for anybody to interfere with hawking or any other kind of sport.

Suddenly Lars uttered a short, sharp cry, as he looked upward, and the falcon began to ruffle his feathers.

"A heron!" exclaimed Lars. "He is well up, but my bird can reach him."

Off came the falcon's hood, and his brilliant eyes winked rapidly as they were getting accustomed again to the light. [91]

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"WITH A STRONG MOTION THEN HE THREW HIS HAWK UPWARD."

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"He seeth!" shouted Lars. "I'll cast him!" With a strong motion then he threw his hawk upward, blowing a shrill screech upon a bone whistle that hung by a cord of braided leather around his neck.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Ned, as the beautiful hawk spread his pinions and sailed swiftly away. "He seeth the heron!"

His own eyes could not see the game very well, so high in the air it was flying, and the sunlight dazzled him.

Higher, higher, in great circles, the falcon sped upward until he arose above the now frightened and screaming heron.

"He will strike soon!" said Lars. "See! He is swooping! He never faileth! He is the king of gerfalcons!"

At that moment the falcon seemed to Ned a mere speck against the sky, while the heron was flying lower, as if its fear bore it downward. Then the speck above it disappeared for a moment, so like a flash of lightning was the unerring pounce of the well-trained bird of prey. [92]

"Struck! Well struck!" shouted Lars. "Forward, now; we must be with them at their falling."

It was not far that they had to run, and Ned kept well abreast of his young Norse comrade. He saw the hawk and the heron strike the earth together, fluttering and struggling, and then the game lay motionless. Forward darted Lars, before the falcon released the grip of his talons, and in a moment more the bird's bright eyes were hooded again.

"He shall not tear," said Lars. "It would harm his training."

Nevertheless, his favourite screamed angrily as he was restored to the wrist of his master.

"Thou knowest," said Lars, "that no hawk will come to a whistle when his talons are in. It is only when they miss that thou canst call them back." [93]

"Do your hawks ever miss?" asked Ned.

"Often," said Lars. "Or else there were soon no more herons. All of these long-billed fowl will fight, too. I have seen an old heron kill a falcon, spiking him."

"I've read about it," thought Ned, "and I'm glad I've seen it done. It's great!"

"Now, houseward," said Lars, picking up the heron. "Didst thou ever slay a wild boar?"

"I never did," confessed Ned.

"Then I am ahead of thee," exulted Lars. "It was but a week ago that my two hounds and I brought a fine one to bay in the gorge of the north mountain thou seest yonder. My father would have held me back, had he been there, but I went in alone. When the boar charged out, my spear went through his heart and the hounds pulled him down. Angry was Vebba, but he bade the carles cut me out the tusks to keep for a prize." [94]

"There are wolves and bears in the forest mountains?" inquired Ned.

"That there are, and many," replied Lars, "but who would go taking them in the summer-time, when their fur is short and thin? No man careth for a bear-skin or a wolf-skin, save in winter, when the fur is full upon them. If thou art here next winter, I will show thee sport. Ye people of the lower fiords and the towns have small enjoyment, I think, save in going to sea. This raid on Britain is to be my first long voyage. My father saith that thou art to sail with us."

"I wouldn't miss it for anything," said Ned. "Canst thou throw a spear?"

"I will show thee soon," said Lars. "But I will not throw before the men lest they say I am but young. How art thou with a sword?"

"Try me!" exclaimed Ned. "I am better with a sword than with a spear." [95]

Then he remarked, to himself:

"I don't believe he ever had a better fencing-master than I did. We'll see."

They were soon at the house, and, to Ned's surprise, it was old Vebba himself who ordered his son into what he called the house of arms. It was only a kind of barn of split logwork at the right of the central dwelling. It had a good earthen floor, however, and its walls inside were hung with many weapons.

"So," thought Ned, "is the great hall in yonder. I'm going to take a good look at them, by and by."

"Take this light shield," said Vebba to Ned, "and this thin blade. It is heavy enough for thee. Thou wilt first fence with Svip, the son of Pend."

"No shield," said Ned, a little proudly, putting it down on the floor. "Let him punch away at me."

Several grown-up Vikings were standing around watching, and they all uttered exclamations of surprise, but Svip, a youth as tall as Lars, stepped promptly forward, sword in hand. Neither of them wore armour, but the shield of Svip was a pretty heavy weight for a fencer to carry,—unless the other fencer should also be weighted. [96]

Svip was even irritated by something in the confident manner of Ned, the son of Webb, and he attacked vigorously, striking and pushing. Of course it was not intended that any hurt should be done. The swords were blunt on edge and point, and the hilts were basketed with strong steelwork. On each boy's head was also a thick bull-hide cap, serving as a helmet. No blow of

those dull blades could split such a cap.

In half a minute there were loud exclamations of admiration, for Ned's fencing-master at home had indeed been a good one. Svip, the son of Pend, had no chance with him whatever, for there was no science at all in him. He was even forced across the room with several hard raps upon his leathern helmet, and then he was disarmed, his sword flying from his hand. [97]

"Thou art a young swordsman!" shouted Vebba. "Thou mayest go with Hardrada. Thy father will be proud of thee. Thou shalt give Lars his lessons in thy skill of fence. Try thou a spear."

Ned looked at the light javelins they brought out, and he did not wish to let them see how little he knew of spears; but a wooden target was set, and the other boys made their casts. It was his turn, and he could not back out. He imitated their manner of swaying and balancing, and then he sent his javelin.

"All an accident," he thought, "but I landed mine between theirs."

"Thou throwest well," said Vebba. "Take now a shield and let us see if thou canst catch as well as throw." [98]

Ned was silent, for at that moment Lars stepped forth, shield on arm and spear in hand, to let the other youngsters throw headless javelins at him at ten paces.

"That's the way they do it, is it?" he said, to himself, as Lars caught throw after throw upon his shield, quite skilfully. "Any baseball catcher can beat that. I'm the best catcher in our nine. I can pitch, too. I can stop one of those things."

It was his turn next. He did not actually throw down the shield, this time, but he held it close to him and parried with only his spear-shaft the throws of Lars and the others. Only one cast went by his guard to ring against the shield.

"It is the better way," said Vebba. "It is the skill of old warriors. I can catch the spears of battle on sword or axe. Thou wilt need the less armour. But who may parry the swift arrow? Thou wilt need good mail for English arrows." [99]

Long and tiresome was the exercise, but it terminated suddenly, for the sound of a horn blast came loudly through the open door.

"Dinner!" exclaimed Lars. "Oh, Ned, the son of Webb, all we are ready to eat. I am ever glad to hear the sound of that crooked horn. Let us go."

Whatever was Ned's reply in Norwegian, his inner thought was, "I'm as ready as he is."

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## CHAPTER V.

 [100]

### THE WAR SUMMONS.

"**T**HERE!" thought Ned, as he reëntered the great central hall of Vebba's house. "One of those other buildings that are stuck on to this is their kitchen."

He saw several of the women coming in with dishes through an open doorway near him, and he stepped forward for a look at the place from which they came. He saw no cooking stove or range, but there was a charcoal fire in the middle of the floor. Around this were the cooks with kettles, gridirons, and saucepans of entirely familiar shapes. There was no smoke, and instead of it there was an unpleasant smell of burning charcoal. He noticed particularly that some of the cooking utensils had a brassy look, and he soon afterward discovered that his new friends knew how to do a great many things with copper and bronze as well as with iron and steel. [101]

Almost everybody was now hastening toward the dinner-table on the dais. If, under ordinary circumstances, noon might be the dinner-hour, upon this occasion there was a variation. Not only the fishermen of the family, but several other persons, had but just arrived, and this late meal was to be something of an affair.

Sitting down at the table appeared to be a matter of particular ceremony, and it quickly aided Ned in understanding how minute and sharp were the distinctions of social position and rank among the Norsemen. They were a free people, but for all that any man's ancestry, his wealth, and his achievements in war had much to do with the esteem in which he was held and the place he might sit in. Vebba himself was evidently of high degree, and he took his seat in the high-backed middle chair behind the table with great dignity. At his right was Madame Vebba, as Ned called her, or Wiltna, and at his left was a short, black-haired woman who wore a gold bracelet and a high cap. She might be a guest of rank. After these, on either hand, were seated men and women with evident precision according to some rule. Lars and Ned and other youths, not yet considered especially distinguished, were at the left end of the table, and a number of young women and girls were at the right end. There were many servants to fetch and carry dishes. [102]

"The plates are wooden!" said Ned. "They won't break if you drop 'em. Some of the cups and pitchers are of wood. Made with hoops like little pails. They make all sorts of pails. Horn cups, crockery, green glass,—why don't they make window glass, too?"

He had taken his seat by Lars, and the first entirely thoughtless thing that he did was to speak to [103]

one of the men waiters, saying:

"Knife and fork, please."

"Oh!" exclaimed Lars. "I see! He hath no cutter. Bring him a good blade."

Ned's cheeks were blazing. He had almost forgotten that he was not at home. There was not one solitary fork in the hall of Vebba the chief.

"No!" he said aloud. "Nor a napkin, nor a table-cloth, nor a potato!"

"I hear thee!" came suddenly in the deep tones of Vebba. "Thou hast also been taught other tongues. It is well. Thy father is wise with thee. When the priest cometh he shall talk with thee in Latin, for we understand him not very well."

"That's it!" thought Ned. "I spoke in English. What'll I do with Latin?"

Then he replied to Vebba:

"I will be glad to see the priest."

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"We like him well," said Wiltna. "He is from Ireland, where there are many such as he, and he cometh here to teach against the old gods of the North. Most of the people swear by Wodin and Thor to this day. They change not easily."

Ned did not say anything aloud about their being heathen, but he blurted out in Norwegian:

"It is just so among us; we have ever so many preachers, and most of the people do not go by what they say any too well."

Vebba nodded, as if that were understood to be a matter of course everywhere, and the dinner went on.

"How they do drink beer!" thought Ned. "Nothing else. Every fellow uses his own sheath-knife and his fingers. Salt, but no pepper. Fair butter. Pretty good bread. This is goat mutton, is it? I like it pretty well. I guess there won't be any pie. Fingers were made before forks, as Uncle Jack says."

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Nevertheless, the table manners were very good, and the food was abundant, fish, flesh, and fowl. The fish, especially, were all that could be asked for, and the poultry was wild game of several kinds.

Now and then a remark from Vebba or Wiltna came to Ned, politely, but he was left to Lars and the other youngsters most of the time. It was manifestly against the rules of good Norse society to ask too many questions of a guest. Strangers were welcome to come and go, and would simply be treated according to their degree while there. In fact, much of the respect with which Ned was now regarded by his new friends belonged to the fact that he had learned so much from his American fencing-master,—and he, too, had been French.

The dinner ended for the aristocratic part of the household, all of lower degree getting their provision afterward, or in other houses or outer rooms.

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It could be seen that this day was of some unusual interest. Other men were arriving, one by one, and they came in armour, bringing weapons with them. While they were being welcomed by their hosts, Ned had a good opportunity for his proposed examination of the ornaments of the walls of the hall.

Great antlers, fastened here and there, served as hooks on which to hang things, and all were heavily loaded. There were helmets of many patterns; shields of all sorts; coats of mail; pieces of armour; coats of thick leather, with or without plates of metal before and behind; short-handled and long-handled battle-axes, with single-edged and double-edged blade-heads of curious shapes; spears, heavy and light, and swords, some of which seemed as if they were made for giants, for they were almost as long as a man. In one corner lay several bundles or sheaves of arrows, and there were plenty of bows.

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"I don't believe I could bend some of those bows," thought Ned. "I'd rather have a revolver, anyhow, or a repeating rifle that would carry a mile. It would send a bullet through one of those coats of mail, or a shield, either."

He was called away from his tour of observation by a sudden sound of music. He whirled upon his feet to see, and there in front of the table, on the dais, sat four old men with harps, which they were tuning, getting ready to play. At the same time the hall was growing lighter. It had been somewhat dusky, but now a strong glare was reddening over the walls and the black rafters of the roof. The servants had brought in upright, three-legged cressets of iron-work. That is, at the top of the upright stem of each of these tripod cressets was an iron basket, into which fragments and knots of pine and fir were fed, as they burned. These were the chandeliers of the dwelling of Vebba, and they answered remarkably well.

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"No candles to snuff," thought Ned, "but I'd rather have electric light, or coal gas, or kerosene. Hullo! They're going to work at the forge. I wonder if every man around here has a blacksmith shop in his own house."

Probably not, considering how very costly a thing an anvil and a lot of hammers and chisels and files might be. Only a rich chief could afford such an affair as was that forge in the house of Vebba. There was a charcoal fire upon its masonry now, however, and a brawny, grimy man in a leather coat was holding a piece of steel in it with tongs, while another man worked the bellows.

Then the four harpers struck up, and at once the smith began to sing. Out came his white-hot

piece of steel to the anvil, up went a hammer in his strong right hand, and the thudding blows that he struck kept time with the music and with the cadences of his anvil-song: [109]

"I forge a sword;  
I hammer steel;  
It shall cleave shields,  
Going through mail.  
By it shall men fall.  
Hammer! Hammer! Hammer! So do  
I shape the steel for the battle."

The smith had a rich, deep, musical voice, and the hall was filled with a great roar of song when all the other voices in it joined in the hammer chorus at the end of each stanza. Somewhat slowly the meaning of it all began to dawn upon the mind of Ned, the son of Webb. This was not mere forge-work; not the manufacture of one blade more at this time; it was part of the entertainment of the evening, and there was an increasing excitement among the Vikings as the singing and harping and hammering went on.

"It is grand!" thought Ned. "Something else is coming, I know there is. Hullo! What's that?" [110]

Instantly all the great chorus died away, and every face was turned toward the open outer door of the hall. Through this doorway had come a fiercely ringing blast of a powerfully blown war-horn, and now, striding forward three paces into the hall, was a broad-shouldered, splendidly armoured warrior, carrying shield and ax.

"Ho, Vebba, son of Bjorn!" he shouted. "Hearken thou and thine to the summons of Harold Hardrada the King! All is ready for Britain, save this last of thy keels. Let it follow thee. Be thou at the seaside the third day hence, and bring with thee every sword and spear of thy house."

"Hail!" shouted back Vebba, joyfully. "Hail to thee and to thy message from Harold Hardrada! Bide thou with me this night, O messenger of the king."

"Not I, Vebba the chief," loudly responded the warrior at the door. "One horn of ale I will drink, for thy welcome. Then go I onward, for the summons is hasty, and the steeds of the sea are already harnessed. I am bidden to say to thee and to all, that the hosts of the Northland and the lithsmen of Tostig Godwinson the Earl must be in England to claim the land for their own before the muster of William of Normandy can cross the sea to land in south Britain. It is to be ours, and not theirs, to cut down the Saxons of Harold the King. Hail to Harold Hardrada! Hail to the winning of England by the heroes of the Northland! My message is done." [111]

A huge silver-mounted horn cup, foaming with ale, was brought to him. He drank it standing, and it appeared to be out of order to ask him further questions. At the same time, however, all the excited warriors present were loudly repeating to each other the substance of this war news.

Away strode the messenger, whose name escaped the ears of Ned, the son of Webb, and as he departed the harpers once more struck up a roaring battle-song. The women were as excited as the men, and many of them had excellent voices. [112]

"This is splendid!" exclaimed Ned, and at that moment a heavy hand was laid upon his arm.

"Come thou with me," said one of the older warriors. "It is by the order of Vebba, the chief. I will show thee thy arms and armour, and then thou wilt go to thy rest. We are to march in the morning."

"Horses for thee and me," interrupted Lars, at the side of the old Viking. "It is but six leagues to ride. Then we take ship. There will be many carts, also."

"All right!" exclaimed Ned, in English, and then he corrected himself and replied in Norwegian, as he followed them to the house of arms.

Both of them carried pine-knot torches, and when Ned turned at the doorway to look back upon the Vikings, the women, and the harpers, he thought he had never seen anything else half so wonderful. The men had caught weapons and shields from the antlers on the walls, and these, as well as the anvil and hammer, were now clanging time to the music and its choruses. [113]

It was only a few steps farther, and then Ned, the son of Webb, was feverishly examining his new metallic clothing. The helmet handed him was of bronze. It was plainly made, without any crest, like one which Lars showed him as his own, and it had a nose-piece in front as well as a back neck-piece behind. He put it on, and it did not hurt, for it was lined with padded deer-skin. Next Lars held up before him, to measure his size, a beautiful coat of linked-steel mail, not too heavy, and polished till it looked like silver.

"Thou and I must wear our mail at once," he said, "to get used to it. Even old fighters need to harden a little, after a long peace. Put it on, but first put on the leather shirt, for thy blue cloth is too thin." [114]

"It would wear to holes in no time," said Ned, and he pulled on over his outing shirt another of soft goat-leather.

It was a genuine pleasure, then, to find that his splendid mail hauberk was a capital fit, and did not pinch him at any part. The belt by which his sword-sheath was to be suspended had also a strap to go over his right shoulder, the better to sustain the weight. It had a very good buckle, too, and he wondered why they did not use better buckles on their harness.

He drew his sword from the sheath to look at it, and was delighted. It was a slightly curved short



sabre, sharp on one edge and at the point, with a steel cross-hilt that had no guard.

"Thou knowest how to use a sword," said the old Viking, pleasantly. "Thou wilt be a jarl, some day. These are thy spears and thy shield and thine ax. Fight thou well before the eyes of Harold Hardrada and the sea kings, for thou and Lars are but young to face Saxons." [115]

The two spears, longer and shorter, were of the best. The ax was short-handled, but was heavy enough to need both of Ned's hands to swing it well. The shield was round, steel-rimmed, of thick, hard-faced hide, having thongs within for a left arm to pass through. The other armour consisted of light steel leg and arm pieces, and shoulder-bars that would stop a pretty strong sword-cut.

"Now we are ready," said Lars. "Thou and I have nothing to do with bows and arrows. Neither thy arm nor mine can bend a battle-bow. Not one man in ten can bend the bow of Vebba, the son of Bjorn, and the bow of Hardrada the Sea King is as a bow of steel. It sendeth an arrow through the side of a ship."

"I guess not," thought Ned. "Not, anyhow, if she were an American ironclad. What is all this armour compared to our two-foot steel plates? I'm glad I'm to have a horse, though. I don't believe Nanny would let me mount her if I came up to her in this rig." [116]

He was to take it all off now, however, and carry it with him to the room in which he was to sleep. This was in a small house that opened at one corner into the main dwelling or hall. In it, around the sides, were four broad benches, upon each of which were wolf-skins and a straw pillow. Two of these bench-bunks were already occupied by sleepers, and down went Lars upon another, after putting out his torch.

"That's it, is it?" said Ned, to himself. "Well, it's bed enough for a soldier, I suppose. I'll do just as he did."

His mail and arms were laid upon the floor, and his helmet was placed upon them. Tired, exceedingly tired, he stretched himself upon his wolf-skin, and the old Viking walked out, carrying his torch with him. [117]

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## CHAPTER VI.

 [118]

### THE SEA KING.

**T**HROUGH a sashless window, the next morning's light came into the room where Ned was sleeping, and woke him. With it poured in the dull roar of the ocean waves upon the rocky coast of Norway.

"What's that?" he exclaimed, sitting up and looking around him. "Where am I? I say, what would father and mother think of this? Well, I begin to remember it all now! There's Lars. I saw his hawks and the dogs and all the rest. Then came the blacksmith business and the songs and the harping. I know where I am! I'm a Viking, and I heard the messenger from King Hardrada. Hurrah! I'm going to invade England! Just the very thing I've always wanted to do!"

He was on his feet now, picking up his arms and armour. His exclamations and the clatter he was making aroused the other sleepers. They, too, sprang up with shouts of warlike enthusiasm, and began to talk eagerly about the mustering of the army. They helped one another with the mail and the pieces of armour, for clothing of that style had peculiar difficulties of its own. Their hero was Hardrada the Sea King, and they had wild tales to tell of his exploits and adventures half-way around the world. [119]

"He went almost to the edge of it, once," said Lars. "I'd like to go there, myself, and see where the sky touches the earth. It's as hard as a brick and has star-holes in it, but you can't climb through."

"He doesn't know that the earth is round," thought Ned, "but he will, some day. What he needs is the primary and then four years in a grammar school. I want to see Hardrada, and then I'd like a good look at Harold of England and William the Norman." [120]

Out they went to breakfast, and all the while Ned learned more and more about the great invasion. It was to be made by the largest force that ever had sailed from the Northland. Even Knud the Great, the conqueror of England, had never gathered such a fleet. He was a Dane, indeed, but all sorts of Northmen had gone with him, or he would have been beaten by the Saxons.

There was no order at the breakfast-table except that of first come first served, and nobody lingered long.

Ned's next errand carried him to a place from which he could see the landing, and he watched the boats that were busily plying to and from the ship.

"They're loading her as fast as they can," he remarked. "I'd rather go by land. There'll be sea-going enough—"

A loud summons from Lars interrupted him, and in a few minutes more they were among a considerable drove of saddled and bridled horses. [121]

"Some of them are big ones," he said, "but Lars and I are to ride ponies."

Vebba himself was very well mounted, and he was riding around, in full armour, giving orders to his men. These were several scores in number, and they were a ferocious-looking crew. Their arms and equipments were of all sorts, for each man had suited himself, and nothing like a uniform was called for by the army regulations. Most of them were tall fellows, but there were also a number of short, broad-shouldered, powerful-looking fighters, with dark skins and black hair, who almost seemed to belong to some other race.

"Who are those fellows?" replied Lars, when Ned asked about them. "Why, knowest thou not who they are? They belong to the old race that was here when Woden and Thor and our people came in here from the east. They are all miners. They live among the mountains, and some of them are wizards. They are good fighters, though, and they never spare an enemy." [122]

Terrible, indeed, were their hard, cruel faces. One of them, in particular, had a kind of fascination for Ned, he was so tremendously broad-shouldered and long-armed, and seemed so strong. It was enough to make one shudder to look at him and see him move. There could not have been an ounce of fat on him, but he must have weighed over two hundred pounds. For all that, however, he stepped around as lightly as a fourteen-year-old catcher in a game of baseball.

"He is worth a hundred common men," explained Lars. "He is Sikend, the Berserker, and no spear can hit him. He can catch an arrow on his ax-edge and he can cleave a steel helmet as if it were made of pine. There isn't any Saxon that can stand before him."

Ned and his friends were quickly mounted, and were riding away in a southerly direction. Vebba remained behind to bring on the main body of his following, while a score of his best men went forward with his son. To him he said, at parting: [123]

"Get speech with the king. Say to him that I and mine are coming. Say that I have sent on great store of provisions and three more good keels wherewith he may ferry his levies. Go!"

Everybody seemed in good spirits, but there was a kind of excitement which was in the way of conversation. Even the women at the house and in the village were cheerful.

"I suppose," he thought, "they may do some crying when the men go, but Lars says that the Norway women can fight. His mother killed a wolf once. I wouldn't like to have my mother go out for wolf-killing. Wouldn't she run! So would the girls or Aunt Sally. Oh!"

He and Lars were now riding together at the rear of their little company, and just then he heard the sound of galloping hoofs behind him. He turned his head to look, and a horseman wearing a long black robe and a peculiar cap reined in at his side, exclaiming loudly, in Latin: [124]

"Thou art Ned, the son of Webb. I am Brian, the missionary, from the Clontarf School and Abbey in blessed Ireland. Good-will to thee!"

Ned summoned up all the Latin he had ever worked upon, but there was danger of its falling somewhat short. He had begun with it early, and Uncle Jack and his father had bored him horribly with it, year after year, making him talk it as well as read it. He could, therefore, really do something in this sudden emergency, but he was willing to say little and to let the rosy-faced and friendly priest do most of the talking,—which he was ready to do.

"Alas, my son!" he remarked to Ned. "These men of the North are no better than heathen. They are not at all civilised Christians such as we have in Ireland. Even after they are converted, they stick to their old gods,—such as they are. They are all murderous pirates, anyhow. If it were not for the like of them and the Danes there would be peace and prosperity in Ireland all the while. Even the Saxons trouble us less than do the Danes and the Jutlanders and the sea kings." [125]

Ned was entirely able to ask questions, and he was likely to learn a great deal concerning the piety and enlightenment of the land of St. Patrick, the land of education, from which more missionaries were going out than from any other. Already had they done wonders for the English and Scotch and similar idolaters. Alfred the Great, said Father Brian, had welcomed the Irish scholars gladly, giving them houses and lands and cattle. Edward the Confessor had also done well by them, and the present King of England, Harold, the son of Godwin, had been their friend when as yet he was only an earl. [126]

"What if Hardrada and Tostig are going to beat him?" asked Ned.

"That is yet to be determined," replied Father Brian, thoughtfully. "They may indeed divide the island of Great Britain with Duke William of Normandy. He is a pious man. He speaketh Latin. He will bring with him shiploads of teachers and missionaries. He will build churches and found schools, as he hath already done in Normandy. It hath been on my mind that these Vikings may but cripple the Saxons and open the way for William the Norman."

"King Harold of England is said to be a hard fighter," suggested Ned.

"Thou art but a boy," exclaimed Father Brian. "I was a soldier once, myself. Mark thou! Harold fighteth with two at a time instead of with one enemy only, and each of the twain is his equal, I think. I hear that the English themselves are little more than half-hearted for Harold. Were there not seven kingdoms of them not so long ago? They are a bundle of sticks that is badly tied together." [127]

Somehow or other, although Ned was now one of Hardrada's warriors, he felt a strong feeling of admiration, if not of sympathy, growing in him for Harold of England. The Saxon king was to be forced to defend the northern and southern ends of his kingdom at the same time, and there was no fairness in it. A great deal that he was hearing was new to him, but he could dimly remember

having read something somewhere concerning the great development of the early Irish Church.

"St. Patrick himself set it going," he said, thoughtfully, "but Father Brian doesn't seem to know much about him. Perhaps his biography hasn't been published there yet. As soon as it is, he'd better get a copy and read it." [128]

Something like that idea was wandering around in his mind when he spoke to Father Brian in modern English concerning the telegraphic reports of Harold Hardrada's landing in England.

"What's that thou art saying, my boy?" sharply inquired the missionary, in good Clontarf Latin. "Change thy tongue."

Ned strove to explain the matter, but he found himself altogether at sea, for his reverend friend had not the smallest idea concerning either printing or electricity.

"It's the lightning, is it?" he gruffly remarked. "Let me tell thee, then, thou wilt get little good out of that."

Ned was silenced completely, and gave the matter up.

"It's a curious piece of business," he thought. "I have been living in another world than his. The world that he and all these others live in is pretty near a thousand years behind time. I wish I could give them a photograph of the *Kentucky* or show them an express train going sixty miles an hour." [129]

He and the Vikings were going along at pony trot, and he was discovering that a steel mail overcoat, put on over leather and flannel, was a pretty warm kind of summer clothing.

"I wonder if a fellow ever gets used to it!" he remarked to Father Brian. "Those Vikings don't seem to mind it much. They're all iron-clad, too, like so many war-steamers."

"There was never mail made yet," replied the good man, "but something would go through it. I've split a shield with a pole-ax."

He was looking somewhat unpeaceful, just then, for his pony was kicking.

"Even a Berserker, though," said Ned, "would want no bearskin shirt to-day."

"They never wear them," said the missionary. "Thou art all wrong with the name. The word Ber meaneth bear, that's so, but some weak minds will spell it b-a-r-e, as if they'd fight in their linen, if they had any. No more do they take bearskins for mail." [130]

"What do they, then?" asked Ned, in Latin.

"Like other men," said the priest, hotly. "The meaning is that they're descended from bears, and fight like wild beasts. There are other opinions, indeed, but mine is as good as any other man's, any day."

Perhaps that was a good enough reason for sticking to his own notions and lashing his pony into good behaviour. At all events, Ned did not contradict him. He was just then recalling the savage countenance of Sikend the Berserker, and it had reminded him of a grizzly bear he had seen in the Central Park menagerie.

"It's the same expression in the eyes," he said to himself, "but the old grizzly had a better-tempered look than Sikend has." [131]

On went the cavalcade, halting at noon for a rest and for luncheon. Only an hour or so after that they halted again on the crest of a ridge. Beyond this lay a wide, deep valley, bordered westerly by the blue waters of the North Sea. With one accord the Vikings raised an enthusiastic shout, and clashed their spears against their shields.

"The host of Hardrada the Sea King!"

"The hundred keels of Norway!"

"The flag of the World Waster!"

"Hail to the banner of Woden!"

"Hail to Harold Hardrada!"

"The spears will be many and sharp!"

"Swords will cleave helms!"

"Axes will break the mail of the Saxons!"

The war-cries of the men of Vebba, young and old, were fierce and exulting as they gazed down upon the valley and out upon the sea. Scattered upon all the slopes and levels and along the shore were the houses of a considerable town. At the upper end of the valley, and also at the right of the very commodious harbour, were what looked like extensive fortifications. These were composed mainly of strong palisade works, surrounded by ditches or moats. Nowhere was to be seen anything like a castle of stone. In the open spaces, everywhere, were tents and booths. These must now have been empty, for the afternoon sun glittered upon the polished arms and armour of long lines and serried columns of warriors drawn up in battle array as if for inspection. [132]

"Ships! Ships! Ships!" exclaimed Ned. "Scores and scores of them, big and little. I don't see any square-rigged ships, with yards and topsails, but a good many of them have two masts and some have three or four. They are all single sticks without topmasts, and with brig and schooner rigging. I shall know better what they are like after I get down among them." [133]

Now came up from the valley a loud sound of harping and the braying of thousands of war-horns, followed by a great shout that ran along the lines as one body of troops after another caught its meaning and passed it on.

"On, men! Ride forward! Lars, son of Vebba, yonder cometh King Hardrada. He revieweth his army before it goeth on ship-board. Thou wilt hasten to deliver to him the greeting of thy father. Let Ned, the son of Webb, ride with thee. I go to the shore speedily, to seek our shipping. This errand is thine." So spoke the veteran warrior in charge of this party of Vebba's men, and all rode rapidly onward.

"This is awful!" thought Ned. "I hope the king will have little to say to me. I wouldn't know what on earth is the correct way of talking back to him."

He did not have many minutes more of riding, nevertheless, before Lars, the son of Vebba, said to him: [134]

"Pull in, Ned. We will halt at the right front of this nearest square of men, and wait for the king. See thou! He and his jarls and captains come this way. I am not of full age that I may ride to meet him."

Only a man of rank or a warrior of fame, it appeared, might presume to go out in front of the lines to greet the royal company, and Ned began at once to breathe more freely.

"I will keep a little back," he said to Father Brian. "We will let Lars do the talking."

"That will not I!" exclaimed the rosy-faced Irishman. "Any half-heathen king like him is no better than the rest of us; besides that, I am a missionary from Clontarf. I will speak my mind to him."

He consented, however, to halt with the rest and wait for the king to come.

Loud rang the cheers and war-cries, fiercely brayed the war-horns, as the great Sea King rode slowly nearer. His keen, flashing blue eyes were searching the array of his warriors, man by man, and rank by rank, while his proud face flushed with exultation. Never before had any monarch of the North gathered such a mustering of the best fighting men of the broad flat earth. [135]

Hardrada was almost a giant in size, being said to measure over seven feet, and to be strong in proportion. His armour was richly ornamented with gold and jewels. His gilded head-piece had no visor in front to hide his features, and his abundant, bright red hair, from which he took his name, flowed down his shoulders in a mass of ripples, instead of being worn in braids like those of numbers of his followers. At his saddle-bow was slung a huge battle-ax, which few arms but his could wield. From his belt hung a long, straight sword, in a jewelled sheath. His broad, round, gorgeously decorated shield was thrown over his shoulder. In his hand was a long spear, not unlike the lances which were carried by the men-at-arms of France and Normandy. [136]

"Isn't he magnificent!" exclaimed Ned. "Hurrah! I have seen the greatest of the Vikings, Lars! The Saxons will find him a hard man to meet. Who is that other man at his side? He is almost as splendid as the king."

"That must be Tostig the Earl," said Lars. "They said he was away with his ships, but he hath come to talk with Hardrada. He is a brother of Harold Godwinson, the King of the Saxons. Men say he is a good fighter, but not so good as his brother. What a match it would be between the two Harolds of Norway and England!"

"That's so!" said Ned. "Or between Tostig the Earl and Sikend the Berserker."

"No man on earth is a match for Sikend," said Lars. "He beareth a charmed life. There are witches and wizards among his people. They read the old runes on the tombstones. They boil snakes and lizards and evil roots, to make charms with, and salve ointments for hurts. Some of them can make a sword-cut close up and heal over, but I think I would not be smeared with any witch grease." [137]

"Salve is a good thing for a cut," said Ned. "It's good for a burn, too. You can find out the right thing from the advertisements. I don't remember any liniment, though, that they said was made of snake-fat. They couldn't get snakes enough, I guess, unless they raised them themselves."

The reviewing party of great men, headed by the king and the earl, halted as it reached the head of the column, with which Vebba's men were posted. Its captain had not yet left it, and the king may have known him by sight, for he at once beckoned him forward.

With him rode out Lars, Father Brian, and, by their direction, Ned, the son of Webb.

"Speak," said Hardrada to the warrior. "What word hast thou for me?" [138]

"It is not mine," he replied. "O king, Lars, the son of Vebba, will deliver unto thee the greeting from his father."

"Let it be brief," said the king. "Time passeth."

"O Harold the King," spoke Lars, freely and boldly, "my father bade me greet thee with this, that all swordsmen are ready. They march this day to join thee. The last of the provision ships lifteth her anchor at sunset. He himself cometh with the miners and the mountain men."

"It is well," said Hardrada. "I know the value of thy father. Who is the youth with thee? O priest, hold thou thy peace!"

"That will I not," responded Father Brian, sturdily. "I have first this word for thee that came by sea. Haste, thou and thine, or William the Norman will reach England before thee. This do I speak for thy good, if thou art able to take friendly advice, like a man of sense." [139]

"Thou art late with thy warning," grimly responded the king. "Well did I know that matter, already. Nevertheless, I will freely hear it from thee. Thou hast spoken loyally. And now I would know concerning the youth that is with the son of Vebba."

It had come to pass, by the way, as they rode hitherward, that Ned, the son of Webb, had given to the missionary the Latin charter name of the American city that he came from, and from it a somewhat crooked understanding had arisen, for Eboricum is nothing but York, whether new or old. Therefore his reverend friend at once replied for him:

"He is Ned, the son of Webb, the chief, or it might be he is somewhat of a jarl. He is an Angle, and he cometh from York. And a fine boy he is, if I say it myself."

The next remark came promptly from Tostig the Earl.

"O Harold the King, my friend, did I not tell thee of my many faithful adherents in my earldom of Northumberland and in mine own city of York? He is welcome. He shall sail with us, and we shall be joined by many more as soon as our standards are seen at the Humber. I pray thee, for the present, let him remain with Vebba, his friend." [140]

"It is well," said the king. "What sayest thou, Ned, the son of Webb?"

"O king," said Ned, hoping that he was bowing correctly, although he nearly pitched out of the saddle in doing it, "I will do as Tostig the Earl hath said. Lars and I are chums. I would give much to see Sikend the Berserker in a battle. I would like to see thee fight also, O King Hardrada, or Tostig the Earl."

Loudly laughed the red-haired king, and as loudly roared Tostig and other of the great warriors.

"Well spoken!" shouted Hardrada. "Thou shalt have thy will in that matter." [141]

"O Hardrada the King," interposed Vebba's captain, "I will say this for him, that he is the best sword, for his age, that I ever saw, and he catcheth a flying spear like an old fighter."

"I like him well," said Tostig. "So let him show the Northmen of what sort are my men of Northumberland. It is a good thing that he hath done, to even flee from York to join us as we sail."

No more was said, and the royal party rode slowly on along the lines.

"I'm out of that scrape, tip-top," said Ned to himself, as he and his friends wheeled back to their post at the head of the Viking column. "But what explanation can I give if we ever get to old York? It beats me all hollow."

At that moment the old Viking at his side said to him:

"I go, now, to the shore. Thou hast a strong friend in Tostig the Earl. I am glad to know this much more concerning thee and thine. We were questioning much in our minds as to how we might deal with thee, and some said it were well to take off thy head. It is ever wise to make sure of all comrades who march with us, for at times there have been false companions." [142]

Ned was silent, for he was not pleased with the suggestion concerning his head, and the warrior rode away.

A few hours later, Vebba arrived with another force of his men, and he expressed great gratification upon learning that he would now be under no necessity for giving an account of his young friend.

"Aha!" he exclaimed. "The youth appertaineth to Tostig the Earl, and he biddeth him to remain with me. He is the son of a Saxon under-jarl. I am glad to be upon better terms with Tostig."

Therefore it was duly settled in the minds of all men, and Ned was acknowledged as being the right sort of youth to associate with Vikings of good degree. The review having been finished, the army had scattered to its camps. Vebba's men had been assigned an open space a little north of the town, and to this his first detachment had marched. Their first duty was to prepare all things for further arrivals, and this work began, of course, with the kindling of camp-fires. Fuel enough had been provided, and Ned at once discovered something that was new to him. The making of a fire was an affair of toil and trouble. He saw his comrades carefully splitting splinters and hunting for handfuls of dry grass. [143]

"That's all right," he thought, "but just look at that fellow hammering out sparks with his flint and steel. It'll take him all night! Why doesn't he go for an old newspaper and some matches?"

The mailed stoker did nothing of the kind, and his sparks fell vainly upon his insufficient tinder. [144]

"That's it!" exclaimed Ned. "What a stupid I am! There isn't a box of matches in all the world! I guess I'll show them a point they don't know. I've a whole box of lighters in my pocket.—Now! I won't let one of them see just what I am doing. It's a good joke."

The would-be fire maker was getting disgusted with his bad success, and he was standing erect at the moment when Ned stooped and put something into the little heap of pine splinters. Nobody had seen him scratch his match upon a stone, and, in a moment more, all eyes turned curiously to stare at the sudden blaze which sprang up so brightly as the resinous fuel kindled.

"It is the work of the young Saxon of Tostig the Earl!" one of them said.

"Ay!" remarked another. "He hath rare skill with a flint. Who ever saw such fire making? He hath been well taught." [145]

He was thenceforth to be admired and valued, for one who could kindle camp-fires readily was a

welcome comrade in a campaign. Ned also learned from their talk that in a Norway dwelling great care was always taken to keep fire from day to day, the whole year round. If the fire of one household should at any time be extinguished, it was better to send elsewhere and bring to it a torch, from even a considerable distance, than to toil over the creation of a brand new blaze with flint and steel.

"It only cost me one match," thought Ned. "I'll be stingy about burning the rest. They may last me clean through the conquest of England, if I'm careful. Old newspapers are the right thing to start fires with, though, and I can't even get an old school-book to tear up."

Tents there were none for Vebba's men, but the night was clear and warm, and the supposed favourite of Tostig, the great Earl, slept like a top in his first bivouac as a soldier in the army of Hardrada the Sea King. [146]

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## CHAPTER VII.

 [147]

### THE KEELS OF THE NORTHLAND.

"How we shall be crowded!" exclaimed Ned, the son of Webb. "Who ever supposed that the Vikings had ships that would carry so many passengers? Some of them, too, are loaded with horses."

It was about noon of the day after the great review of Hardrada's army, and Ned was standing upon the high prow of the *Serpent*, the two-masted war-ship which was to transport Vebba's men and others to the coast of England. He knew that Tostig the Earl had hurried away in a swift vessel, the previous evening, to rejoin his own squadron at Bruges, and he remarked:

"I'm glad he went. I couldn't guess what to say if he were to corner me and ask questions." [148]

Everything here was going forward in good order, for Hardrada was an experienced seaman, and so were his officers. They knew thoroughly well how to manage an embarkation of troops, and therefore there was no confusion. The gathered warriors marched to the shore and were embarked rapidly, thousand after thousand. It might be an exaggeration, but Ned had obtained an idea that the three hundred ships of the king, sailing from this and other ports, when joined by those of Tostig, would be carrying over thirty thousand men. It was also expected that upon landing they would be reinforced by as many more of the disaffected Saxons who were ready to rebel against the hard rule of Harold, the son of Godwin, who was not descended from the English royal line.

"He is all the better for that," thought Ned. "I like him. He was elected, like one of our presidents. They swore him in, too." [149]

He had to confess, nevertheless, that the appearance of things was bad for the English king,—or president. Harold was to be, indeed, the last ruler of England chosen by regular election, like an American.

All of the ships were regarded as war-ships, and none of them had been constructed for ease, elegance, or the passenger business. Each of them had more or less cabin room for men of high degree and importance, but the rank and file, as Ned called them, would, obviously, have to camp out wherever they might find deck room to lie down on. It was quite a comfort to Ned to find that Lars and he were to have bunks under the after deck.

"It will be a good deal better," he said, "if there should come a rainy night."

The weather now was pleasant, and ship after ship was made ready and sailed away. All the while, the blowing of horns and the shouting were tremendous, and every harper in the fleet seemed to be twanging the best he knew how. There were many flags and streamers, and Ned saw several banners which bore the black picture of a raven. He was staring around him in all directions, and the *Serpent* was swiftly gliding out of the harbour, when a hearty voice at his side declared: [150]

"My boy, I am glad to be with thee on the same ship. I'll tell thee one thing. We are on a doubtful errand. Whichever side wins, I am intending to stay in England. There are plenty of heathen there to convert, and I'll not be in Norway another winter. It's a cold place in snow time. Even the sea freezes hard, and the wolves come howling into the towns at night, and a man's nose getteth frost-bitten if he weareth it out-of-doors. They have fine winters often in England."

"They are not so long, either," said Ned. "I'd rather be there, myself. How many days dost thou give for this voyage of ours?" [151]

"That dependeth upon the wind," said Father Brian, "and how much will come, I don't know. These heathen pirates have been praying for good blasts to all the old idols they can think of. They don't seem to know the name of one saint among them. It's not so in Ireland. I am glad I was born in a civilised land, among Christians. I am told that Duke William of Normandy can speak Latin. He is an exceedingly religious man. He is in favour of teaching, too, but not one man in a thousand of his own army can read the best parchment I can put before him."

Ned had already begun to find his Latin speech improving with the constant exercise of it forced

upon him by Father Brian. Day by day, also, he could make better use of Erica's Norwegian, for he was continually picking up new words. Nevertheless, he was all the while wondering what he was to do among Saxons to keep up the impression that he was one of them. It was almost a relief, therefore, when, shortly, the zealous missionary began to grumble concerning the babel of tongues and dialects in the British Islands. [152]

"It is all sorts," he said. "Where we are to land, they are mostly Angles and Danes and one kind of Saxons. Besides them, there are Jutes, Frisians, West Saxons, South Saxons, East Saxons, Scot Saxons, and no man knoweth what else, not to speak of the Gaels and the Welsh and the Cornishmen. It is not at all the same in Ireland, my boy, where all speak the same tongue, except at the north of it and at the south and in the middle. I can do nothing with a Briton, or a Gael, or a Manxman, or with one of those long-legged Kernes from the West and the centre, that speak no tongue at all but a kind of jabber that everybody else hath forgotten, long ago."

From his further account it appeared that all the countries and islands of those regions were divided among many tribes, clans, and languages. Each leading language was split up into local dialects which differed much in the speaking. [153]

"That's it!" thought Ned. "I can get along well enough, where it's an every-day matter for one fellow not to understand another of the same kind. They'll pay it no attention."

That night was a warm one, and the fleet sailed along comfortably before a fair wind. So it did during the next day, and the next. The swarm of keels kept pretty well together, and Ned, the son of Webb, of York in Northumberland, the young friend of Tostig the Earl, wondered more and more at the size, the swiftness, and the good handling of those strangely modelled war-ships. Sailing down the North Sea appeared, thus far, as a very agreeable summer excursion, except for the crowded condition of the *Serpent*. That, however, was only a temporary inconvenience, which everybody had calculated upon beforehand, and the men endured it with general good humour. [154]

Altogether different became the tone of public feeling, so to call it, when a gale swept down from the north, lashing the sea into foaming surges. The ships of the Vikings were constructed to stand against stormy weather, but all the sails had to be taken in. Then, for the first time, Ned, the son of Webb, began to appreciate the thole-pins and the great oars. To each of the latter, long-handled, broad-bladed, two, or even three, strong men were ordered. On the high deck at the stern stood an officer, shouting loudly in a hoarse cadence like a song, and stamping time with his feet, that all the rowers might pull together. At regular intervals the oarsmen were changed, so that all on board, except men of high rank, might take turns at this hard and disagreeable work. Even such celebrated warriors as Sikend the Berserker were called upon to do their share. Ned, himself, was half afraid that he might be given an oar, and he may have escaped quite as much on account of his age and size as by reason of his supposed aristocracy. [155]

Harder and harder blew the wind as the sun went down, and the most important consolation was that it was all the while driving them toward England. The night which followed was full of discomfort. In the morning the rain-drenched and weary Vikings were grumbling all over the ship. It was as if King Harold Hadrada and Tostig the Earl were to be held responsible for not having provided better weather and smoother water.

"A fine lot of men they are," scornfully remarked Father Brian. "Look at them! Who would have expected to see so many of them seasick at once? I was never like that, any time."

An hour or so later, Ned saw his reverence leaning dolefully over a bulwark between two dripping war-shields, with all the roses gone from his cheeks. [156]

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "What did I eat, to-day? It's not the motion of the ship I care for. She's a bad one to pitch and roll, anyhow. They build better ships than this in Ireland."

The great fleet had been increased from day to day, as it was joined by squadrons from other ports. It was necessarily scattered far and wide by this rough weather. When, at last, land was seen to the westward, word was passed rapidly around, by swift rowboats, that all should draw well together, and make for the wide bay, known as the Humber, for there the landing was to be made. All disaffection among the overcrowded Vikings instantly disappeared, as the good news spread among them, and there was an immediate cleaning of all weapons and armour.

Ned himself felt better, for several reasons. [157]

"I've not been so very seasick," he said to himself, "but I'd like to eat something cooked. I'm tired of chewing dried fish and raw ham. The water is bad, too, and I won't drink any beer. There's one thing, though; there isn't any smoking or tobacco chewing among these fellows. There isn't a pipe, nor a cigar, nor a Virginia plug, in the whole fleet. No cigarettes. They can't get any, yet, but they will, some day."

The headlands at the mouth of the Humber were very near now. The King of England had no forts there, nor had he stationed any forces to oppose the landing of an enemy. The fact was, as Ned had learned from Father Brian, that the Saxons did very little stone-work building, whether of castles or churches.

"That's one thing they'll have to learn after they're conquered," said the good missionary. "The ignorant savages! But it'll be a queer lot of teaching that'll be going on among them now, with Tostig and Hadrada for teachers." [158]

Ned was all the more of that opinion after he heard Sikend the Berserker blessing Thor and Woden for getting him across the sea, and for the chances he was soon to have for murdering Saxons.

"I know what he means by the Valkyrias and the ravens," said Ned to Father Brian, "but what is it he was saying about being afraid of a cow's death?"

"These Norse heathen," replied the priest, "have a notion that it's a burning shame for any man to die decently in his bed. He'd rather be murdered, any day. May he have his own will in that matter, say I! Most likely he will not be disappointed, this trip, and there will be more than one funeral the day they put him under,—the wild beast!"

At that moment, truly, Sikend was hardly looking like a human being. He sat upon the low deck amidships, between the rows of rowers, sharpening with a stone the edge of an enormous battle-ax. Now and then he would hold it up to the light, twirling its heavy weight as if it had been a feather, while his dark, hairy features twisted and gleamed with bloodthirsty ferocity, and his deeply sunken eyes flashed fire. From such a slayer as he, no foeman might look for mercy. It was said of all Berserkers that in their blind rage they spared neither old nor young, man or woman or child.

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"All of them will have to be killed off," said Ned, decidedly. "The world can't be really civilised while they are in it."

"That is what will have to be done," replied Father Brian. "We had them as bad as he is, in the old days, in Ireland. Picts and Scots, they were, and Cornishmen that came over to harry the land. The worst of all were the giants, like Finn and his big brethren. What wouldst thou think of Sikend now, my boy, if he were twelve feet high, and had four arms to kill with, instead of only twain, his mouth blowing fire, and his every stride more than the length of a tall man?"

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"I should go for him with a rifle, at long range," said Ned. "Hullo! Father Brian! There's the king's own ship, ahead of us, going right into the Humber. We are all to follow him, they said. That land yonder is England!"

"Hurrah for that!" shouted the good missionary. "The next ship behind Hardrada's is Tostig's. Hark to the war-horns! All the Vikings will be going blood wild! Ah, my boy, there'll be hard fighting before long. It's not one battle that'll conquer England,—or Ireland either, for that matter."

All the ships in sight were obeying their orders to follow the king. The wind had gone down, and they could fall into line all the better for being propelled by oars. As Ned remarked, oars were as good as steam, for that business, so far as they went. The fleet made a splendid appearance, and it was a sight worth seeing to watch so many banks of long oars dipping and lifting together.

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"It is a tremendous show," said Ned to Father Brian, "but the *Kentucky* could make it look as if there'd been a fire in half an hour."

"Speak Latin," said the missionary. "What is that thou wert saying? I don't know one word of Saxon. It's a tongue they'll all get rid of when they're conquered."

Ned made an effort to explain himself, but it was of no use, for his friend knew nothing about gunpowder.

"It's a kind of witchcraft, most likely," was the good man's pious conclusion. "All of them ought to be burned, and they will be. It's not a country like England that can be civilised in that way. It hath been on my mind, though, that if the Northmen and Duke William kill off the Saxons, we could send over enough of the right kind of men from Ireland to make a fine land of it."

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"You could do that," replied Ned. "Loads and loads of Irish have come over to our country, and after they get there they all turn into Americans."

"That's witchcraft," again grumbled Father Brian. "What's the good of them if they all become heathen themselves?"

Before Ned could decide exactly what to say to that point, a loud shout came to him from Lars.

"Mail and helmet, O Ned, the son of Webb! The command of the king is that every man shall land in full armour. There will be a battle right away."

"Hurrah!" shouted Ned, and up sprang the good missionary, exclaiming:

"I'll be there myself! I'll not have any heathen Saxon cut my throat for nothing, either. I'll have good mail under my cassock, and I can swing an ax with any of them. Get thyself ready, my boy. Thou art young for it, but thou canst show them what thou art made of."

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Ned was already on his way to his bunk under the deck to put on his battle trappings, and he shortly discovered that the missionary had not left Norway, or it might be Ireland, unprovided for warlike emergencies.

The shields which had hung along the bulwarks of the *Serpent* during the voyage were now transferred to the strong left arms of their owners. Even the rowers put on their mail. War-horn after war-horn rang out across the sea, chief answering chief with fierce, defiant music, while once more came twanging with the horn blasts the sound of many harps. It was an hour of intense excitement, for the armament of the Sea King had come to decide the fate and future of a great empire. It was well understood by all, moreover, that it was to be met by a Saxon king and general, Harold, the son of Godwin, who was believed to be equal to Alfred the Great himself, in either battle-field or council-room. Ned had noticed that the Vikings did not often speak of him as king, but rather by the old title of Harold the Earl, under which he had earned his fame.

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As Earl of Wessex and as prime minister of Edward the Confessor he had long been the actual ruler of England, dreaded by its enemies and greatly beloved by its people.



Ned also remembered that the West Saxons had been Alfred's own people, his original kingdom.

"It worked like a kind of hub," he said, "and the other kingdoms of the old Heptarchy were stuck on, one after another. Father Brian says that some of them are hitched on a little loosely, even now, and that Harold cannot make them obey him any too well. That may get him whipped in this fight."

The Humber is a bay, long and wide, which narrows gradually toward the place where the river Ouse runs into it. The invading fleet was, therefore, compelled to accommodate its order and movement to the shape and area of the water it was now rowing into. It soon began to string out, with a narrower front, and the *Serpent* was not one of the foremost vessels. [165]

"I should like to see the first of them get ashore," said Ned to Father Brian.

"Thou art all too late for that," replied the good missionary. "Our ship came right along, with nothing else to do, but Hardrada's men have been working havoc everywhere. There hath been hard fighting in the Scotch islands, that's the Orkneys and Shetland, and a good many Scots are with him now. Didst thou know he had ships and men from Iceland, where the fire mountain is?"

"No," said Ned. "That's a long way off."

"So it is," continued Father Brian, "and they are a bit civilised up there. And while we have sailed along, part of Hardrada's army hath been harrying the coast of Yorkshire, they call it, to no good that I can see. Now he hath pulled them all together, and if he doth not get himself killed he will conquer the north of England first. It is on my mind that he hath been wasting his chances. We shall soon see about that." [166]

How and where the landing was to be made, was, indeed, a matter of great importance. Narrower became the channel of the Humber, and still the long line of ships rowed steadily on. No man could say just where the Humber ended and the Ouse began. Before long the mouth of a river was reached on the left. That was the Don, and Ned did not see any ships go into it. Not a great deal farther up, on the same side, was another stream flowing into the Ouse, and that was the river Aire.

"It's of no use to Hardrada," said Father Brian. "What he wanteth to do, now, is to get his grip on thy own city of York, and maybe he will." [167]

A sort of gloomy doubt seemed to be growing in the mind of the good missionary, and he evidently had military ideas of his own.

"Thou mayest remember," he remarked to Ned, "that the women at Vebba's place made no wailing at all when their men marched away? I am told that it was not so elsewhere. The women wept as if they were mourning, and all the old ones, that are half witch-like, foretold bad luck. There hath many a bad luck sign been spoken of. Here we are, though."

So they were, and the now more swiftly rowed ships of the Vikings were crowding one another somewhat in the narrow Ouse.

Lars came in full armour to stand by Ned, and gaze at the woodlands, the cultivated fields, and the homesteads on either bank. He had been almost a talkative boy in Norway, among his hawks and hounds and the scenery he was accustomed to. Ever since coming on board the *Serpent*, however, he had seemed another fellow. He was tall and strong for his age, and his yellow hair was put up in a long braid, which the back rim of his steel cap appeared to rest on. His bright gray eyes were full of excitement, but his lips were tightly closed, as if it were impossible for him to express something or was resolutely keeping it in. [168]

"What's the matter, Lars?" asked Ned.

"Father is angry with the king," said Lars. "The troops are to land all along shore. That will scatter them, he saith, and some of them will be cut to pieces by these Danes and Angles of Northumberland. Father doth not believe that thy Earl Tostig can do anything with them. All the news is bad."

That was the longest speech Ned had heard him make since leaving Norway, and Father Brian at once replied to it: [169]

"Thy father's a man of sense, my boy. I am thinking I will keep myself a good piece in the rear of this army rather than at the front. That's where men get killed, anyhow."

The *Serpent* had advanced steadily, and she was now passing the mouth of the river Derwent, on the right. Large numbers of vessels of all sizes, which had been ahead of her, were already making fast at convenient places along the banks. From each of these gang-planks were put out, and lines of warriors were marching forth upon the land. From other ships, at anchor out in the stream, boats were plying, but Father Brian was not looking at them. He was gazing very critically down the river.

"There they go," he muttered. "All those men that are landing away down yonder, below the mouth of the Derwent, will have that bit of water and swamp between them and us. They are cut off from doing any good if the rest of us get into a battle. Maybe it's good generalship and maybe it isn't. I wish Hardrada were an Irishman, and he'd never have split his army in two." [170]

A very strong force of Northmen was getting ashore with Hardrada, above the mouth of the Derwent, nevertheless, and among them, before long, were all the passengers of the *Serpent*.

There was nobody there to oppose them. The Earls of Northumberland and Mercia, Edwin and Morcar, had expected Hardrada to come, but not so soon, and they had not dreamed that he

would push right on up the river, to land so near them. They were not ready, therefore, and the King of Norway had now posted his army in strong positions, while the frightened people who had fled at his coming were telling the news in the city of York. The horses, what there were of them, were also coming ashore, but it was evident that the invading army would have no cavalry to speak of. [171]

"That isn't the worst of it, by any means," remarked Ned, the son of Webb, as he marched along with Vebba's men. "England can never be conquered without artillery. If King Harold or the Saxon earls could bring out a few batteries of Maxim guns, or of field-pieces like those of the Fourth Artillery, they could tear up this invasion before Saturday night."

The landing of so great an army was a matter of time and toil, and it was well indeed for the Vikings that there were neither forts nor forces for them to encounter at the outset. Even when sunset came, and after that the darkness, ship after ship, as it arrived, was hastily unladen, every man stepping ashore with an idea that he might be marching into an immediate collision with the Saxons.

"It is pretty good luck we have had, thus far," said Father Brian, "in spite of the old women of Norway, but no man ever knoweth exactly when the luck will turn, if it's against him and if he is careless about what he is doing. There is always bad luck in that." [172]

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## **CHAPTER VIII.**

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### **THE SCOUTING PARTY.**

**T**HERE was no large town at or near the mouth of the Humber. There were villages along the coast, however, and the uplands on either shore were dotted with hamlets and cabins. There were also comfortable farmhouses and the half-fortified residences of the richer landholders. To all sorts of people, the fishermen had brought in early warning of the coming of the Norway fleet. Time had been given for getting away and for the removal of much property to places of comparative safety. Therefore, every house which the invaders had entered upon landing had been found nearly empty, to the great disgust of the brave Vikings.

"Didst thou see the carts that went ashore from the ships?" asked Father Brian of his young friend. "The horses were fetched along to pull them and not for riding. They will go out to gather all that's left, or there'll be a famine in the army." [174]

"The king's orders are not to kill anybody that isn't fighting," said Ned. "Tostig lost his earldom by being cruel to the people. Now he is going to try and make himself popular."

"He will not do that," said Father Brian. "They know the hard hand he put on them. It's a pity, indeed, about the cattle and horses, my boy. I'm afraid we will get none. There is only one kind of cattle that the English couldn't take with them."

"What's that?" asked Ned.

"It's the pigs," replied the good missionary. "Not one of them could be driven easily, and there will be fresh pork in camp. All the big houses, too, have more or less bacon in them and dried fish. I will talk no more, now. This is the place that Vebba hath chosen for our sleeping." [175]

It was an open place among trees, well on in the advance but within the army outposts. No tents had been provided, and once more did Ned, the son of Webb, distinguish himself by the miraculous rapidity with which he kindled a camp-fire. He was likely to become a favourite with the men, if this was to go on, although Sikend the Berserker stared at him gloomily, and muttered something dangerous about killing wizards.

By that fire a great deal of cooking was done that evening, even Sikend broiling his fresh pork as if he had no prejudices.

"That didn't come from any of the ships," remarked Ned, as he saw the supplies of butcher meat, even of beef, brought in. "I suppose it is what army men call foraging, and it's another name for plundering. I hope they didn't have to kill anybody, but that's what they want to do more than anything else." [176]

The night was pleasant, but it was long before Ned could shut his eyes. Not that he could see anything with them at more than a few yards from the fires. The dull glare of these shone upon polished shields and armour, here and there. He could see, too, the dim shapes of sentries and patrols, standing still or walking to and fro. They did not often have occasion to speak, and when they did so it was in the gruff and guarded tones of men on the watch for enemies.

The thing which, more than anything else, seemed to keep him awake, was a continual dull roar which filled his ears and worried him.

"It isn't the roar of waves on the shore," he thought. "That may be part of it, but I guess there is something more. I know now! It is the sound of the camp! It is the roar of the army. I remember, in New York, if a fellow gets up before daylight and looks out of a window it is all pretty still until he listens. Then he will hear something like this, a good deal like the roar of a waterfall. Then, as the morning goes along, the racket grows, with the carts and everything, till he gets so used to it [177]

that he can't hear it any longer. There are so many thousands of men here, and I shouldn't wonder if a good many of 'em were snoring."

He could rest more quietly after he understood that mighty hum, but it was not yet sunrise when he was awakened by a jerk of his left elbow.

"Get up, my boy," said the voice of Father Brian. "I've roused Lars. I have something for both of you. We will eat our breakfast at once, and then we'll be off. I have permission from Vebba to go out scouting among the heathen Saxons. It's fine!"

"Scouting!" exclaimed Ned, springing up and reaching for his mail. "Of all things! I'm ready—I'm awfully hungry, too." [178]

A breakfast of fresh pork broiled at the end of a stick, and nothing to go with it but water, may be prepared and eaten without much waste of time. Neither Lars nor Ned felt like making a long affair of it, but his Reverence was the first to throw away his broiling-stick.

"Come along now!" he exclaimed. "The beasts are tethered handy. I pulled them out of a drove that was gathered by the men. We have bridles but no saddles, and I've ridden that way many a time in Ireland, bless her! Not that these Mercia ponies are at all the equal of our Irish horses. The best in all the world can be found among the farms around Clontarf."

In a minute or so more they and a tall Viking who was to go with them were loosening the halters of four strong-looking but somewhat short-legged horses. They were not properly to be called ponies, being larger and heavier than the shelties of Scotland or the small horses of Wales. They belonged to a peculiar breed which was at that time very numerous in England. Not one of them objected to being mounted, and the four scouts galloped away unchallenged by any sentinel. [179]

"No man will hinder us," remarked Father Brian. "I think that Tostig the Earl is wise. He gave out that all spies might come and go freely. He willed that the English earls should be told what's coming to them."

"I don't believe they will be scared very badly," replied Ned. "Hardrada isn't going to win in that way. Everybody knows that the English will fight."

The sun was rising now, and all the camps behind them were astir. More ships were reaching landing-places and more troops were coming on shore, but not by any means the whole of Hardrada's army was as yet in shape for a great battle. It would be well for him to advance with great prudence until his full strength should be with him, and he was doing so. The same kind of caution might have been well for the Northumberland and Mercian earls, Edwin and Morcar, but they were even now preparing to strike without waiting to gather sufficient forces. They had been unready and now they were hasty. [180]

The country was beautiful. It did not seem to be densely peopled. There were many farms, however, which seemed to Ned to be under pretty good cultivation. Empty, desolate, abandoned were all the dwellings past which the scouts rode onward. There were no cattle to be seen in the fields.

"There hath been no burning, as yet," remarked the tall Viking. "Tostig hath forbidden fire, to the great discontent of many. Of what good indeed is war if we are not to burn and slay? It is but little better than peace."

"O thou Leif, the son of Beo," broke in Father Brian, angrily, "if thou art in the advance on the morrow, or the next day, I think the heathen Saxons will show thee war enough." [181]

"Woden be praised for that!" exclaimed the Viking. "I think they will. The Valkyrias will come for many. I shall die no cow's death. I would that Thor and his hammer and all the hero gods of the North might come and fight for King Harold of Norway."

"Hear him!" muttered the good missionary. "And men like him call themselves Christians! I would as soon be an Englishman!"

"The English are not heathens," said Ned, the son of Webb. "Alfred the Great was the best kind of man."

"No doubt," said Father Brian, "and a bad lot he had to deal with. He was helped much by the right sort of educated missionaries from Ireland,—men, like myself, that could read and write. I am glad, my boy, to be here now and carry on the good work. Hark! What's that? Ride fast, all! There is evil ahead. Hear that shrieking of women!" [182]

A little beyond them was a sharp turn in the narrow road they were following, and on either side were dense woods. Forward dashed the four horsemen, headed by the now excited missionary, and they all drew rein to reconnoitre the situation as soon as they had galloped around the turn.

Here was a sight to see, indeed! The land beyond, at the right, was under cultivation, cut up into enclosures of various sizes. There were many cabins, and out of the hamlet composed of them led other roads. Some distance back from the middle of the hamlet was an ancient-looking timber-built manse or large farmhouse, and around this was a pretty strong stockade, bordered by a deep ditch. This was the local fort, into which all the near neighbours were expected to run for safety in case of sudden peril. That they had at the present time done so was evident, for it was from within the stockade that the shrieks and cries were arising. [183]

"There are none of them hurt yet, I trust," said Father Brian. "Look at them, though! The wolves of Norway! They are putting fire to the stockade, to burn a hole in it. They are swearing to slay every soul for only shutting the gate against them."

"I am glad they were slow in their fire making," said Ned. "That was flint and steel work. It's a good thing they didn't have any parlour matches. One cartridge of dynamite, though, would blow that stockade every which way—or a can of powder."

"Ned, the son of Webb," shouted Father Brian, "thou art Tostig's man. The poor folk in the fort belong to his earldom. Ride in with me, now, and bid those Vikings that they must obey the earl and the king!"

"They may listen," growled Leif, the son of Beo, "or they may slay us all for interfering. I have split a man's head, myself, for less than that. Ride on!" [184]

Ned felt all his pulses tingling as he urged onward his horse, for the screams of terror were increasing, and well they might. Several of the angry marauders assailing the stockade were chopping at it furiously with their battle-axes, and there was no doubt but what they would shortly cut their way in.

He shouted loudly, but the Vikings did not seem to hear or heed him, and almost before he knew it he was at the little bridge across the moat in front of the great gate of the stockade. This bridge should have been removed long since by the garrison, but for some reason or other it had stuck fast, rendering the ditch of small account as a defence. Down to the ground sprang Father Brian, at that moment, pole-ax in hand, and down dropped Ned, while Lars and Leif, the son of Beo, bravely followed them. Here, therefore, stood the four scouts, like heroes, with their backs to the gate. This was massively made, of oaken planks, fastened with iron spikes, and was likely to withstand much chopping. As yet, it appeared that no blood had been shed on either side, but there could be no doubt but what the Saxons or Angles, or whatever they were, would sell their lives dearly. [185]

"The Vikings don't seem to care a straw for anything I've said," groaned Ned. "I don't suppose they take scalps, but they'll kill women and children as if they were so many Sioux Indians. I suppose the English would be just as cruel, if they had a chance. I wish the world were civilised."

"Come on, ye wolves of Norway," roared the valiant priest, at his side. "But I bid ye hold your hands. By the order of Harold the King and Tostig the Earl! Ye will have to slay us four ere ye break in to murder the people of the earl."

One who seemed a chief among the Vikings paused only to blow a strong blast on his war-horn, and then he came angrily forward toward Brian. [186]

"I know thee not," he said. "Thou art an outlander and a saga man, but I know thy companions. That youth is a son of my friend Vebba, of Nordensfiord. With him is Vebba's house-carle. The boy with a strange tongue I know to be a lithsman of Tostig the Earl. Were we to slay him, we were but lost men. The orders are hard, but I will obey them, only that we will make prize of all casks of ale and of whatever is fit to eat. Blood we will not shed."

"To that we all give assent," shouted a man's voice from within the stockade. "Upon that pledge we will open the gate. We belong to Tostig the Earl, and therefore we did not flee at his coming."

"We will keep faith with you," responded the Viking leader. "Ned, the son of Webb, hath the right in this matter. He doeth well to protect the people of his earl. I approve him. Open the gate!" [187]

Open it swung, and those who were within waited fearlessly, for all the Northmen could be trusted to do no unnecessary murder after they had plighted faith with friend or foe.

"Go not in," whispered Father Brian to Ned. "The people are safer than thou art, and there are black looks sent at thee. Thou hast robbed wolves of their prey, and they will bite thee if they may."

There came a sound of galloping hoofs around the turn in the road, as Ned and his friends were getting upon their horses. In a minute more, all the open spaces of the hamlet swarmed with armed riders, and there arose a shout of "Tostig the Earl!"

Forward rode Father Brian, while Leif, the son of Beo, restrained the others.

"Let him report for us," he said. "I like not to have speech with that black-haired son of Earl Godwin. He smiteth suddenly when his spear is in his hand, and none may account with him." [188]

They saw the haughty and cruel earl draw his rein, face to face with the missionary, and all could hear the loud, clear tones of the questions and answers which followed. Brief enough were these, and Tostig seemed to be in a fairly good state of mind.

"It is well," he said. "Ned, the son of Webb, hath guarded his father's neighbours. I blame him not, but let him beware how he interfereth too much. I have many a head to strike off in this rebellious Northumberland. I will spare not one of those who drove me out."

Well was it understood that his proud heart was full of revenge, and that his return as a victor would bring woe to many. At this point, nevertheless, the squadron of horsemen halted, drawing away from the roadside as if waiting.

"We have done our duty," said Father Brian to Leif. "Had we not stayed that slaughter, there had been sharp vengeance taken." [189]

"The men may thank the son of Webb and thee," said Leif. "So may the Angles, for else they were all dead ere this. There cometh the vanguard! There will be a battle this day."

"It cometh shortly," said the missionary. "It is but nine miles from the river to the city gates. The king will strike before Morcar and Edwin have time to gather more forces."

"We will go on with them," said Ned. "I would not miss seeing that battle for anything. That's what I came for."

"Keep well behind the foremost lines, then," said his reverend friend. "Serve Tostig, if thou wilt, but strike not any of thine own people. York is thy city, and thou wilt be back in it before many hours."

"Hurrah for that!" exclaimed Ned. "I want a good look at it as it is now."

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Thousand after thousand, the host of Hardrada pressed forward. Other columns of the invaders were advancing by other roads and across the fields and through the woods. There would be enough of them to make a strong front at any place where the men of Northumberland might meet them. Not with the vanguard, but between two solid bodies of Northern spearmen, did Ned, the son of Webb, and his three friends push forward toward the first great battle that was to be fought in England by Hardrada, the Sea King, and his terrible army.

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## **CHAPTER IX.**

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### **THE GREAT FULFORD FIGHT.**

**T**HE battle was at hand, and all the men knew that they were marching into it.

"I'm in!" shouted Ned, the son of Webb. "But I haven't any horn to blow. Hear 'em! They are all going wild! Fighting is what they live for, and they're not good for much of anything else, to speak of."

No generalship whatever was exercised in the selection of the battle-field. The lay of the land, as Ned remarked of it, had provided all that beforehand, and it gave no especial advantage to either army. Nearly midway between the river Ouse, on the left of the Vikings, and the river Derwent, on their right, was the moderately elevated level of land along which they were marching. The banks of the rivers on either side of them were swampy.

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It would have seemed good military policy for the English earls to abide behind the strong walls of York, after having missed the opportunity to meet their enemies at the landing. They may, however, have been aware that a large part of Hardrada's forces had landed below the mouth of the Derwent, and was still on the wrong side of that river. This, perhaps, induced them to strike a blow at the nearer division before it should be reinforced.

"Here we are!" shouted Ned, as he rode out from a patch of wood. "See how our lines are forming, all the way across, between the swamps. Look yonder! Standards and clouds of dust! The English are coming! A host of them!"

"The king hath ordered us to halt, and let them charge," replied Lars. "This is my first battle! Hurrah!"

"Hail to thee, O my son! Glad am I to find thee," called out a loud voice from a column of spearmen, catching up with them. "Come thou and join thy father's men. Thou shalt fight at my side this day. Let Ned, the son of Webb, ride on and be with Tostig the Earl, as is his duty."

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"All right!" shouted Ned. "Go ahead, Lars!"

"God keep you all this day!" earnestly responded Father Brian. "I will keep the boy out of harm's way, if I can. By the side of Earl Tostig in this fight will be a place for strong men."

Leif, the son of Beo, wheeled away with Lars, and Ned shouted after them:

"Oh, Vebba! I am coming to join thee and Lars as soon as we have taken York."

"Maybe thou wilt and maybe thou wilt not," growled Father Brian. "A good many Vikings are to be killed before sunset. Look how the Saxons come on! I am willing to keep well away from their axes."

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So was Ned himself, and, being on horseback, on pretty high ground, he was able to get a fair view of all that was going on.

Except for arrows and javelins, all the fighting would be hand to hand, so that personal skill and strength would count for all they were worth, while the small and weak were pretty sure to go down.

"There is the banner of King Hardrada," said Ned, "away at the left, toward the Ouse River. I guess Tostig is with him, and I won't go in that direction. Father Brian and I can see more if we stay in the middle. Whoop! Here comes the crash! It's awful!"

It was the tremendous onset of the English. It struck the Norwegian line first at the right, and all opposition seemed to be crushed before it. There could be no question of the courage or prowess of the Northumberland warriors, and their earls were leading them well.

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"All the saints!" exclaimed Father Brian. "Are we to be beaten at once? Then I am thankful that thou and I will have a chance to ride away, for the English will spare no man."

"Wait a bit," replied Ned. "The king and the earl are charging in. All their best men are with them. See the rush of Hardrada, with his two-handed sword. He is like a man a-mowing! He is a

giant!"

He had a sudden advantage given him, too, for the English followed the routed Vikings on the right, so that their own flank was exposed. They were necessarily in some disorder when the rush of the king's veterans struck them. Even numbers were at this point much in favour of the invaders, and there was soon a change in the aspect of the battle. Hard, terrible, desperate, was that long struggle of life and death. The slaughter thinned the ranks on both sides fearfully.

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More and more intense became the interest of Ned, the son of Webb, and his companion. Almost unconsciously they pushed forward to get a nearer view of the combat. The contending forces were in many places so mingled that it was hardly possible to distinguish one party from the other. The din was dreadful.

"Hullo!" suddenly exclaimed Ned. "I declare! Father Brian's horse has run away with him. I hope he won't be killed."

His own animal also grew restive, and the next minute he was charging forward as if to take his share in the battle.

"I can't hold him in!" groaned Ned, tugging at his rein. "He is worse than Nanny herself. There, though! The English are breaking everywhere. It's going to be a first-class victory for us. Oh, dear! This fellow is taking me right along to the very front!"

There was peril, indeed, in that. There was no telling how far or into what the now frantic beast might gallop on.

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Bound after bound, neighing loudly with fear, he dashed forward into the very thickest of the awful carnage, while his rider stared wildly around him upon the slayers and the slain.

"Oh!" yelled Ned. "That spear struck him! I must get off! He is falling!"

One of the hundreds of flying javelins had smitten his horse in the chest, burying its long, sharp blade almost a foot deep. Down sank the dying victim, snorting, screaming, and Ned sprang off only just in time to escape from being rolled under him.

"I did it all the better," he remarked, "for having no saddle or stirrups."

Out came his sword, but before he could do anything with it the rush of the battle swept on beyond him. The English were now retreating in disorder, but the greater part of them were fighting as they went. Many of them, it was afterward said, were driven into the swamps and into the rivers, but the stories told were probably exaggerated. At all events, thousands of them were slain, and the defeat of Edwin and Morcar was decisive.

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Ned was on foot, now, and he had marched forward, for he did not see that he was in any danger.

"They won't hold up till they get to York," he was saying. "Just see this!"

He was standing at a spot where the flying English had made a despairing rally, and all around him were scattered scores of slain or disabled warriors. At his very feet was a sort of half circle of them, and he was staring at their shattered armour when a loud cry arose from a mailed form which had lain at full length upon the bloody grass.

"One more!" it shouted. "I will strike one more good blow against the outlanders! Out! Out! Holy cross! Down with thee, O wolf of Norway!"

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Ned, the son of Webb, had barely time to lift his shield before his enemy was upon him. He was nearly taken by surprise.

"Glad my sword was out," he said, "but what's the use of hacking at such an iron rig as his is? I can't hurt him. My suit is a good one, too. Let him chop away."

It was on his mind that more of the dead or wounded Saxons might get up and come at him, however, and he felt that he was in the worst kind of scrape. What would have been the result if his opponent had been fresh and unwounded was easy to calculate, for he was a large, strong man. As it was, Ned's greater agility and skill were enabling him to make a particularly good fighting appearance when something large and dark came springing to his side.

"Down!" roared a terrible voice, and a flash of steel fell cleavingly upon the helmet of the big Saxon. He dropped as if struck by lightning, and then Ned found himself looking up with astonishment into the fierce face of Tostig the Earl.

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"Art thou here?" he exclaimed. "Verily, thou hast done well, but thou art no match for such as he. He was one of the strongest knaves that rebelled against me. O son of Webb, I will remember thee well for this!"

Ned hardly knew what to say in reply, and the earl's face grew thoughtful.

"Thou art of York," he said. "I bid thee take thy first opportunity to get inside of the walls. Learn all thou mayest, and be ready to answer when I question thee. I would know what is said in the city."

"I will get in as soon as I can," said Ned, "but just how, I don't know."

Away spurred the earl, and Ned looked after him, remarking:

"He is a tremendous fellow! I guess he saved my life, and I kind o' like him. I wonder, though, if he thinks that I killed all of these Danes and Angles and Saxons that are lying around here. If he does, I must explain it to him some day. I wouldn't care to have it look as if I told him so."

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It was too late for any explanations at the present time, and he was ruefully considering what it might be best for him to try next, when a cheerful but somewhat anxious voice came to him from a little distance.

"Ned, my boy!" it exclaimed. "Art thou there? I am glad, indeed, to find thee. Hold on till I get to thee."

"Come on, Father Brian," shouted back Ned. "Where is thy horse? Mine was killed by a spear."

"The evil beast pitched me into the grass," responded the missionary, rapidly striding nearer. "I will see if I can get me another before long. I will do no walking if there is a horse to be had. Mark thou this, though. Hardrada hath won this battle of Fulford, truly, but it hath cost him more men than he can spare. If the English are going to fight like this, the Vikings will all be killed before the land is conquered. It is about as I told thee it would be. They have Harold of England to deal with, yet."

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The battle-field was a fearful place for any man to stroll around in. Nearly the entire space between the two marshes was littered with corpses. In many places the slain lay in heaps which told of especially severe encounters, or pitiless massacres. They were not all Saxons, by any means, and Ned could understand the forebodings of his intelligent companion. Whether or not it was because Father Brian was a highly educated man, and could both read and write, he seemed to be something of a general if not also of a statesman.

The distance from the field to the city of York was but a mile or so, and all that was left of the English army was already safe behind the walls. More had escaped, doubtless, than the Vikings were willing to believe or tell of, and they were in no condition for an immediate attack upon strong fortifications. No more of the invading forces were, as yet, crossing the Derwent River, and the weary victors marched on to make their camp for the night near the margin of that stream.

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"I guess Tostig will have enough to do without thinking of me," said Ned to himself. "He won't send for me, anyhow, until he thinks I've made a trip to York and back. What on earth could I say if he were to ask me what street there I lived on? I was never there in my life, and I might have to own up. What I want most, just now, is to know where Vebba's men are, and if Lars did any fighting. I don't think they got to the front."

At this hour the King of Norway and his officers were hard at work finding out the state of their forces, and trying to get them into shape for whatever might be coming next. They were in no fear of any immediate attack from the terribly shattered lines of the English earls, but it would be necessary to make short work of the subjugation of the northern counties of England. These, as to their boundaries and organisation, were in effect nothing more than old kingdoms of the Saxon Heptarchy, as changed, from time to time, by Danish and other conquests. There was no such thing, in those days, as a united, solid England. Several kings were yet to reign, and much blood was to be spilled, before such a result as that would be accomplished. Ned, the son of Webb, discovered, in his conversation with Father Brian, as they walked on among the camps, that his friend was possessed with a curious idea that Great Britain, for its good, must some day be annexed to Ireland.

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"Then, my boy," said the enthusiastic missionary, "thou wilt see what can be done for all these heathen by conversion and civilisation and education. This will become almost as fine a land to live in as Ireland itself—but not quite."

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They had little difficulty, after all, in discovering the camping-place of so well known a chief as Vebba. When it was reached there was an exceedingly noisy welcome, with an exchange of news items. The men liked Ned, the son of Webb. Even Sikend the Berserker shook hands with him, for he had heard that the young hero from York had been seen in the very front of the battle, doing wonders of valour, and afterward chasing the beaten Saxons and Danes and Angles into the swamps of the Ouse.

"What a dime novel it all is!" thought Ned. "And Vebba's men take their share of the victory and the glory, although they were not in it at all. Why, if it were in our army, old Vebba might be promoted to be a brigadier, and Sikend to be a colonel."

However that might be, he and Lars had a tremendous time by themselves, exchanging yarns and experiences, and then they slept like a pair of warlike tops.

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The next day was Thursday, for the battle had been fought on Wednesday. All the army knew, at an early hour, that messengers were coming and going between King Hardrada, on the one side, and the English earls, on the other. It was said that a treaty of peace was making, and that the King of Norway was at once to become king of all that part of England, with Tostig under him as Earl of Northumberland.

"Now, Father Brian," inquired Ned, "what do you think of that arrangement?"

"What do I think of it, indeed?" replied the subtle-minded priest. "It needeth no thinking. It is as plain as is thy nose upon thy face. Edwin and Morcar are doing the thing that I would do myself, if I were in their place. They are skirmishing to gain time, and to put Hardrada into as deep a trap as they can dig. Not either of them is really intending to give up anything. Neither thou nor I would be in a hurry to give up an earldom, and surrender to the vengeance of Tostig first, and then to the wrath of King Harold of England."

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"Thou thinkest they are playing sharp?" said Ned. "If that is so, then all we have to do is to watch out for a bit and we'll hear something drop. According to your idea, there's the biggest kind of a



mistake being made by Hardrada."

"Just so," said the missionary, quite thoughtfully, "and thou and I may not remain in the Viking camp any longer than we can help. The command given thee by Tostig the Earl upon the battle-field must be obeyed by thee speedily, and I will accompany thee into York."

"All right," said Ned. "We don't want to see Tostig again until we have done something worth while."

"Let us now walk around," said Father Brian. "Talk not so much in thy Saxon tongue. I wish to see the Stamford bridge over this swampy river Derwent. It is the only crossing for miles and miles, up and down. The river is not deep enough for ships. I think it is a part of the trap set for Hardrada." [208]

"What he needs," remarked Ned, "is a lot of East River and North River steam ferry-boats. They would take over a whole army before bank hours. They do it, now, every day in the year."

All of the invading army that was on the York side of the Derwent was now lying near the head of the bridge the missionary spoke of. On the other side of the river was encamped very much the larger part of the remaining strength of King Hardrada. To this larger division additions were all the while coming from the ships in the Humber.

"Here we are, my boy," said Father Brian, as he and Ned came to the bridge. "It is a good one, what there is of it, but it's narrow and there is no fort at either end of it." [209]

"I should say it is about wide enough for one two-horse wagon," said Ned. "Two of them couldn't pass each other on it. For its length, it's about the meanest bridge I ever saw. It would take our army a long while to foot it across that thing."

"It is my opinion," said the missionary, sombrely, "that every last man of King Hardrada's army would do well to walk over it this day, one way or the other, and join forces. I have had my look at it and I will go. It is thy duty and mine to get into the city of York as soon as possible, and stay there."

"I must get in, anyhow," said Ned. "I wouldn't like, even now, to have the earl come riding along and find me here. He's rough. I think any man would want to get behind good walls, just now, though—unless he had his life insured pretty heavily in good companies." [210]

Father Brian stared at him for a moment, but that was one of many of the sayings of Ned, the son of Webb, to which the good man did not attempt to make any reply.

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## **CHAPTER X.**

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### **THE COMING OF HAROLD THE SAXON.**

"**S**PEAK thou in the Norway tongue, for thou canst, that these who stand by may understand thee. O Ned, the son of Webb, thou wilt now find thy way into the city of York?"

"That is what I am going to do, O Tostig the Earl," responded Ned. "I can get in somehow or other."

"Go thou, then, and return and tell me if Edwin and Morcar are gathering more armed men within the walls. Bring me what tidings thou shalt hear concerning my brother Harold, the King. Go, and see that thou have a care for thy tongue, that thou bring no news except to Harold Hardrada or myself."

"I can keep my mouth shut," said Ned, and away rode the stern earl, accompanied by several Vikings of high rank, who had entered the camp of Vebba with him. [212]

Ned had been summoned to meet the earl at a little distance from his own Norse friends, and not even Vebba himself nor Father Brian dared question him afterward too closely concerning his orders from the very dangerous tempered Tostig. As Vebba said to the missionary, "It were a spear thrust, quickly, for thee or me, if we foolishly meddled with the private matters of the son of Godwin. See that thou let the youth obey his earl."

"That will I do," said Father Brian, but it evidently went hard with him.

Before the evening of Thursday, some results of the peace negotiations had been made public, and they appeared to be all that the army ought to ask for. The city of York was to be surrendered upon the following Monday. There was to be no more fighting, although there were yet a number of minor points remaining to be settled. [213]

Fair as this seemed, there were loud murmurs, here and there, for many of the Vikings were sorely disappointed. They declared that in this manner they were being unjustly robbed of all the pleasure upon which they had counted in the taking and sacking of so large and fine a town.

"They are as mad as wet hens," remarked Ned, "because they are not to have the fun of killing the people. I guess, though, that York wouldn't be of much more use to Hardrada and Tostig after all these pirates had gone through it. They'd leave it worth a last year's bird's nest."

Something like that was also said by Father Brian, and all the while the prudent priest was



watching his opportunities. On Friday morning a number of distinguished English clergymen came out from the city in company with the ambassadors who were to confer with Hardrada and Earl Tostig. When these learned and excellent men returned to York, the Irish missionary and Ned, the son of Webb, went through the gate with them. [214]

"My boy," exclaimed Father Brian as they did so, "here we are, safe and sound. I'm sorry thy own family is not within the walls, but thou canst do the bidding of thy earl easily. We will find a good lodging, and I have money enough for us both. I found it in the pouches of some of the unfortunate heathen that lay dead on the Fulford field. They will not need it any more, and it is a very timely supply for thee and me. I will divide fairly."

The coins which had been gathered from the slain at Fulford were mostly of copper and silver, and were not very well shaped. With these were several pieces of gold, none of them as large as a five-dollar piece.

"Not any greenbacks," remarked Ned, as he pocketed his share. "Money goes far here, though, and a fellow earning a dollar a day is a mogul in England in these times. Father Brian says you can buy a horse for five dollars and a farm for fifty. These coppers are as big as saucepans, and one of 'em will pay for a night's lodging at the best York hotel." [215]

If he might otherwise have had some conscientious scruples concerning the source of this supply of money, he was willing to leave all that to so good a man as the missionary, and to consider the cash as the ordinary spoils of war.

"I couldn't give it back to its old owners, if I wanted to," he thought. "War is war, anyhow, and this invasion is a great piece of piracy from beginning to end. I am a kind of Norse Viking pirate, myself."

Now that he was really inside the walls of the city of York, he considered that he was under a necessity for beginning to seem, if not also to feel, exceedingly English, or rather Danish-Saxon. Thousands of angry fugitives from the Fulford fight and thousands more of fresh arrivals from the interior were likely to be roaming around the streets. Every man of them would have a weapon with him, and was sure to have revengeful feelings toward either a favourite of Tostig or a young Viking. [216]

"The fact is," thought Ned, "I'm a kind of spy, and they shoot spies as soon as they catch them. I won't do them any harm, anyhow."

There was nothing in his dress or appearance to distinguish him, for his helmet and his mail and shield were as like as two peas to such as were worn or carried by the English soldiery.

"All the hotels will be crowded," he said to Father Brian. "I shouldn't wonder if we had to sleep in one of the streets."

"No, we will not," replied his friend. "I have a direction to a hostelry. It is a place of entertainment for man and beast that is attached to one of the churches. It is likely to be quiet and is good enough if a man can get nothing better." [217]

"Any kind of coop will do for me," said Ned. "I'm not half so particular about that as I am about getting under cover. I want to see all there is of this town, too."

"That is thy duty," said the missionary, "and thou wilt see but little of me before Sunday. I have to pay my respects to the bishop, as thou knowest."

Ned, the son of Webb, did not really know anything whatever about the manner in which things were managed in the Northumberland churches, but he was quite willing to do his sightseeing or his business for Tostig by himself. His friend led the way to the hostelry and left him there, and as yet neither of them had been spoken to by anybody.

"Well!" remarked Ned to himself, shortly afterward, sitting by a small table with very good mutton chops before him. "So this is a tavern in York! I declare! When I came through the front door of it, I thought it looked more like a jail. Quiet kind of place where ministers come, like Father Brian and his friends? Those fellows at the other table are awfully quiet—only I don't understand a word of their jangle. There come their swords! It's a fight!" [218]

The dining-room was large, with a wooden floor and tolerably good plain furniture. The plates and cups were clean, and most of them were of heavy pewter ware. Even napkins of linen were supplied; but he had not yet seen a yard of cotton goods. Of course there were several tables, and around one of these had been sitting half a dozen rough-looking men. None was in mail, but two wore steel corselets. The others had large round shields or targets, and all were provided with swords. They had talked loudly, rudely, from the moment that they sat down, and it seemed that they were angrily discussing the battle and the treaty with the King of Norway. Louder, fiercer grew their hot dispute, until one of them struck another a blow with his fist, and all sprang to their feet, every man drawing his sword as he did so. The two who had quarrelled were target men, and in a moment more there was a ringing of steel upon blades and bucklers. Nobody made any attempt at interference, even the tavern waiters looking on almost unexcitedly, as if at a common, every-day incident. Several persons lounged in from other rooms, and the faces of women peered through open doorways. [219]

"Why don't they call for the police?" exclaimed Ned, without getting up. "They ought to be sent to the station-house. I'll finish my chops, anyhow, for I guess I'm safe away in this corner of the room."

His keen hunger helped his wisdom, and he ate very fast, becoming conscious as he did so that

there were inquiring eyes aimed at him.

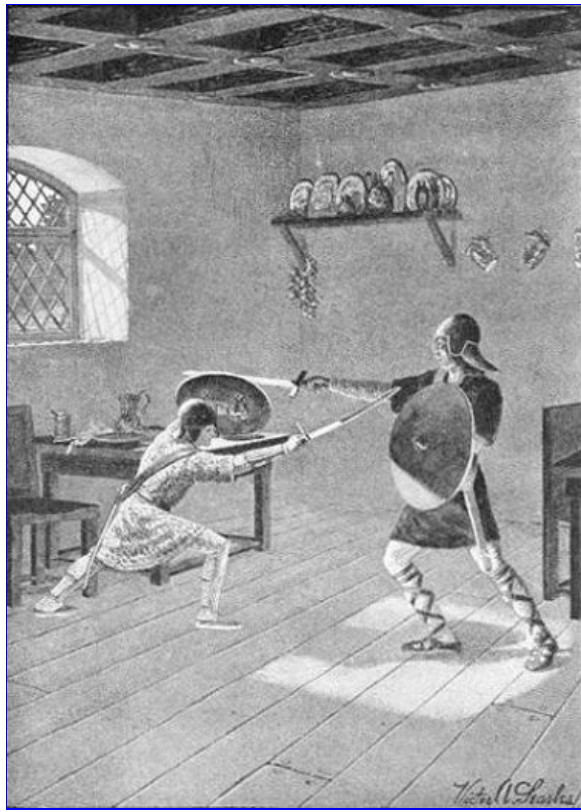
Both of the combatants were evidently experienced swordsmen, and as yet all the fight had been mere rattle, when a third target bearer swaggered over toward Ned, saying something to him in a tongue which might be almost any kind of old English. [220]

"He means mischief," thought Ned. "I'd better be ready for him. I won't let him stick me for nothing."

He did not say a word aloud, but in an instant he was on his feet, shield on arm, blade in hand. He was really but just in time, for his sudden movement had been taken for a challenge, and the ruffian struck at once. The first pair paused in their sword-play, as if they had had brawl enough, or rather as if they were more deeply interested in this unexpected skirmish with an entire stranger.

"Hullo!" said Ned, loudly, as they came closer around him, "the fellow can't fence! I punched him through the sword arm as if he had been made of putty." [221]

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"HE WAS REALLY BUT JUST IN TIME, FOR THE RUFFIAN STRUCK AT ONCE."

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His burly antagonist had indeed been disabled at the third pass, for he had been accustomed to parry almost altogether with his buckler, and modern science was against him. He dropped his heavy broadsword and stared at Ned in astonishment, while all the lookers-on clapped their hands.

"It won't do to talk Norway here," thought Ned. "I'll just bother them with New York English instead of anything there is in old York."

So he did, as man after man, even his assailant, came forward to compliment him on his prowess. He might have felt better, perhaps, if he had understood an explanation made by one of them to the others.

"The youth cometh from Cornwall," he told them. "I have often heard their speech, which none may understand. He belongeth to Harold the Earl, the king. All the Cornishmen have those tricks with a blade. He hath earned his peace. Do ye all let him alone, for the king's sake."

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Ned followed with some severe remarks about good manners to strangers, the police court, and the state prison, and they all swaggered out of the tavern, declaring that they had had good sport for the day, and that they thought well of King Harold's Cornish fighters.

The keeper of the inn came to have a look at Ned, and was easily made to understand that the next thing required by the Cornish gladiator was another mutton chop, somewhat less rare if possible. Ned's added request for a cup of coffee and some custard pie was not so perfectly comprehended, for none came. He felt a great deal better after dinner, although he did not so much as imagine what new country he had now been born in or how very much improved was his social position so far as that hotel was concerned.

He was duly conducted to the room assigned him, and it was in some respects the best he had had since leaving the United States of America. It was, indeed, as he declared of it, a narrow bit of crib, with slits in the wall for windows, but he was pleased to find that it contained a bowl and pitcher of water, and a couple of good towels. Even the bed was not a bunk, but stood upon legs and had a straw mattress, sheets, and a hair pillow. This was luxury.

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"It's more than I ever saw in Norway," he remarked. "There isn't any elevator in this building, though, and I don't believe there is a box of blacking in England. I sha'n't hear any fellow calling after me to let him shine 'em up."

The remainder of that day and all of Saturday went by like a dream, so busy was Ned with his spying into the affairs of York. He knew that he was in one of the old historic cities of England. Here had been a town of the ancient Britons, and the Romans, when they conquered them, had made a prosperous place of it. There were Roman walls and houses yet, and all the wider streets, as Ned said of them, "kind o' talked Latin."

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The Saxons, when they came, had slaughtered the Roman-British population in accordance with the existing laws of war. All the streets of their making, with some that were older, were narrow as well as dirty.

"They are dusty enough, too, just now," remarked Ned. "I guess there isn't much of a street-cleaning department in the city government. No street sprinkling. Not a sidewalk anywhere, nor any street lamps nor telegraph poles. Every fellow plays policeman for himself. If he isn't of the kind they allow to wear a sword, he carries a big club and has a long sheath-knife in his belt. About these days all the women seem to be keeping indoors—without any pianos or stationary washtubs or sewing-machines."

He saw several fine churches and palaces, but the latter and all of the larger dwellings were like so many private forts, expecting to be besieged and defended sometime or other.

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"This is a queer way to live," he thought, "with a half-grown-up war around you all the while. I've looked at the walls, too. They'd stand anything but artillery. I guess a few of our heavy shells would send all that stonework flying."

On Sunday morning Father Brian appeared again at the tavern as he had promised to do. He seemed in good spirits, but he wore a mysterious air, as if he were prudently concealing something. He inquired with friendly interest concerning all of Ned's explorations around York.

"My boy," he then remarked, "thou wilt be able to make a good report to Tostig the Earl when he cometh into the city, but I will not permit thee to make it until then. I will tell thee one thing more, if it will keep thee quiet. The Saxon guards at the Derwent side gates would split thy head for thee if thou shouldst attempt to go out of the trap that hath been set for Hardrada."

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"I don't mean to be split," replied Ned, "but what is the trap? Hardrada's army is to march in before sunset to-morrow. I can see the earl then."

"If he getteth in, my boy," laughed the knowing missionary. "That is the trap. Keep thy mouth shut and save thy head from a pole-ax. They would cleave thee to the jaws for a word. Edwin and Morcar have saved all the time that was needed for their plan to work. They were to give King Hardrada a hundred and fifty important men for hostages, and not a soul of them will ever need to leave his house. The Norway army will begin Monday with eating and drinking and getting ready to put a garrison into York, but when they come to try that they will find out what the trap is."

"Dost thou know it?" asked Ned.

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"I am not a blind one," replied the twinkling-eyed man from Ireland. "When I saw Edwin and

Morcar skirmishing for every hour of time, I hardly needed to be told the rest of it. Mark thou this, my boy, for thy life! Thou and I belong to Harold the Earl, the King of England, unless thou shalt see the raven flags of Hardrada inside the walls of York. It will be long before thou doest that, I think."

The King of Norway was apparently in no doubt whatever concerning the entire good faith of the two English earls. He considered them already his own subjects. Many of the great men of Northumberland had held a mass convention, and had voted to accept him as their ruler. Everything was working well, therefore, and he felt sure that his new kingdom had been at least half won for him by his great victory at Fulford.

Nevertheless, according to agreement, Saxon warriors were as yet keeping stern guard at all the gates of York. [228]

"I saw them," said Ned to himself. "I won't run against their spears, either. One of 'em would go right through me. I'll find just a little more, though, and then I'll get out, if I have to climb over the walls. I don't see any trap, if Father Brian does, but if there is one, I'm going to warn Tostig. I wonder if he suspects anything? Maybe that's the reason why he sent me in."

Without ever having been sworn in, as he called it, for a regular soldier of the King of Norway, he considered himself a part of the invading army, and he meant to do his duty by his general so far as he could. This was, therefore, a time of intense excitement for him as well as for others, and when Monday morning came he and his reverend friend were up and out early.

"Come on, my boy," said Father Brian. "If thou wilt go with me to the other side of the city, where the bridge over the Ouse letteth in the southern highway through the wall gate, I may be able to show thee that which it would be worth the while of Tostig thine earl to know." [229]

"That's what I want," exclaimed Ned. "I'll get it to him, somehow. We'll take the trolley-cars—" There he stopped short, for his friend was striding away.

Ned followed him, and he was beginning to be aware of a new and strange idea which made him tingle all over. He felt desperate, warlike, and he changed his shield from over his shoulder to its fighting-place upon his left arm, while he gripped his spear tightly as if he expected to use it.

Perhaps it was his appearance of angry excitement which got him into his next bad scrape, for other men also were in a dangerous state of mind. The Ouse gate had been almost reached, and Father Brian was several paces in advance. Just here, however, at a sharp turn of the winding, alley-like street, they came unexpectedly upon a furious mob of the lowest kind of Danes and Angles. They were club and knife men, of course, wearing no armour. They were nothing more than so many fierce, wild, ignorant, and cruel savages. [230]

"Upon him! Upon him!" they yelled, at once, in their own dialect. "He looketh like a Norwegian! Down with him! Club him to the death!"

That they might have done quickly, but for Ned's helmet and shield and the lively use he made of his spear. They were many, however, and it was well for him that he could back against a house wall so that they could not get behind him.

"This is awful!" he exclaimed. "I guess I'm done for. I prodded that fellow. I wish I had Lars here and a dozen Vikings, or Sikend the Berserker."

They were far away, indeed, but at that moment he heard a ringing Irish war-cry. Then, as he desperately plied his spear and shielded his head from clubs as best he might, he saw the long-handled pole-ax of Father Brian flashing swiftly, murderously, upon the shaggy crowns and shoulders of his brutal, barbarous assailants. [231]

Down they were going, like so many human ninepins, when a great, tumultuous shouting arose in the direction of the gate. Ned did not get its meaning, but all the ruffians who were still upon their feet shouted as if in reply to it and sprang away.

"Thou hast fought well, my boy," said the missionary. "Art thou hurt?"

"I'm banged pretty well," said Ned, "but what is all that shouting?"

"Come thou along in haste," said his friend, "I will show thee what it is. The city of York will close no gate against the man that is coming now. He bringeth woe to all the host of Hardrada, and I think thou wilt deliver no report to Tostig the Earl this day. On! On to the gate!" [232]

"If it is anything worth while I'll see that the earl gets it," replied Ned, "but my shield hath had all the style clubbed out of it. Oh, how my arm aches—and my head!"

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## **CHAPTER XI.**

[233]

### **THE BATTLE OF STAMFORD BRIDGE.**

"**L**ook thou yonder! Look, O Ned, the son of Webb!" exclaimed Father Brian. "Banners!" responded Ned, almost breathlessly. "Horsemen! Who can they be? Is it the army of Harold, the King of England? Tostig and Hardrada think he is away at the southern shore, watching for Duke William of Normandy. Why, he can march right on into the

city!"

"He will do more than that," replied the Irishman, with a very knowing look. "My boy, mark thou well now! Not a horn nor a trumpet soundeth among yonder horsemen, and they ride rapidly. Stand still here and keep thine eyes open. We are safe at this place. Then will we go on with them, and I think we shall see the springing of the great trap of Harold, with which he hath caught the Vikings." [234]

"I ought to go ahead at once and warn Tostig the Earl!" said Ned.

"If thou in thy armour art able to go faster than will the horsemen of the King of England," half laughed the missionary, "thou mayst be sure, also, that thousands of swords are on guard along the walls, watching well that no man shall get out on the Derwent side to carry news of this thing."

"I'll get the news correctly, first, and then I'll see what I can do with it," said Ned, stubbornly, but he instantly became absorbed by his inspection of the arriving host of the Saxon king.

Right onward rode fast its vanguard of mounted men, and Ned quickly perceived that these were unlike anything that he had seen before. Their arms and armour were so nearly of a pattern that it was as if they were in steel uniform. Their horses were large and strong, and there was no disorder to be seen in their trained and disciplined movements. Minutes passed by, and then he heard a man who stood near him exclaim, loudly: [235]

"Yea, my friend, these are the thingmen. They are the house-carles of the king. There are no other men like them. They are the picked ax-men of all England."

Already, Ned had heard a great deal about these fighters. First among the Kings of England, it was said, Harold had organised and maintained a considerable standing army, selecting for it the best men he could find, and making them personally devoted to himself.

"None of Hardrada's troops march as these do," thought Ned, as a column of house-carles on foot followed the foremost detachment of cavalry. "Our best city regiments can't beat it. None of our militia would care to carry so much iron, though. Not in hot weather. What tremendously big fellows they are. Hullo! There comes the king! Hurrah! I always wanted to see Harold. Isn't he splendid! He isn't as tall as Hardrada of Norway. He's a giant." [236]

His sudden explosion of enthusiasm was joined in by all around, and it won for him many kindly looks and sayings, for the people of York were going wild with joy at their unexpected deliverance from the Vikings and from the cruel revenges of Earl Tostig. They could hardly believe their ears and eyes that this was, indeed, their hero monarch.

Splendid, indeed, was Harold, the son of Godwin, riding bareheaded into the city, which might be called one of the two capitals of his kingdom. London was the other capital, and in many respects it was the more important, but all the north of the kingdom was to be ruled, in a manner, from York.

The handsome, thoughtful face of Harold was somewhat pallid from recent illness, but he seemed to Ned, the son of Webb, one of the most powerfully built men that he had ever seen, even in Norway. [237]

"They say," he was thinking, "that not many men living can stand before him in single fight. I shouldn't wonder if my conquest of England is going to be cracked to pieces, right away. If that's so, I'm going to be one of Harold's men and fight Duke William. Harold is a better man than Tostig. But what on earth am I going to do about Lars and Vebba?"

He was afraid that Father Brian was right, and that he had now no chance for returning to them or to the earl, and a strange wave of new feeling was sweeping through him. He did not now wish to fight these Englishmen who were defending their country, and a great admiration for Harold the hero was taking possession of him.

Great men often seem to have a magnetic power for drawing all other men to them, and the last of the Saxon kings was a very strong magnet. At his side now rode his brother, Leofwine, not so tall, but reputed to be almost as good a warrior. On behind them poured steadily the long columns of the Saxon army. Not by any means all of its forces, however, were as thoroughly disciplined and equipped as were the house-carles of the king. [238]

"I think thou canst now understand this matter, my boy," remarked Father Brian. "Thou seest with thine own eyes that all things were ready for their coming, and that they march through the city without halting for a moment. None will hinder their going out at the Derwent gate, and not a man beyond the wall on that side knoweth of their coming. This will be a bad day for all of Hardrada's men that are on this side of the Derwent. They will be surprised and outnumbered, and small mercy will be shown to them." [239]

"Come on!" exclaimed Ned. "I want to get there. I may do something yet."

Around by other streets, necessarily much more slowly than the mounted men, the two friends made their way across the city. When at last they reached the Derwent gate, however, there was nothing to prevent their marching out at once with the foot-soldiers of King Harold.

"Father Brian," inquired Ned, "dost thou suppose that Edwin and Morcar knew of this all the while?"

"They did," he responded. "A swift messenger came to tell them how much time they must save in their bargainings. He was a Saxon priest, and no man suspected his errand. Push on, now. Some

of Hardrada's troops were expecting to march in and garrison the city at this hour. Then the King of Norway and Earl Tostig were to hold a court here and give a great feast. Very little more good eating are they likely to do, this day." [240]

The Saxon army pressed forward steadily, and its several divisions were evidently under clear instructions; for, as they marched, they spread out on the right and left into a compact battle-array, with a broad front, the centre of which consisted of the house-carles.

Hardly had the foremost lines advanced half-way from the city walls to the river Derwent when they were suddenly confronted by the strong body of Vikings which had been sent to take possession of York in accordance with the terms of surrender. It was swinging along fearlessly, joyously, without any thought of meeting a hostile force.

Ned, the son of Webb, and his companion had walked their very best to keep with the advance, and they were now away at the right of the Saxon army front, for there was no possibility of getting through it.

"Hark!" suddenly exclaimed Father Brian. "The trumpets of the house-carles! They are sounding the charge! Hearest thou not also that braying of Viking war-horns? Forward, over this ridge, my boy. Thou and I are to see something now." [241]

"There they go!" shouted Ned. "The whole line is making a rush. Quick! I want to see that charge. I wish I knew where Lars is. I hope he's beyond the river."

They were only just in time to see. The warriors of Norway had no time at all given them to form in order of battle. The narrow front of their astonished column was instantly shattered by the charge of the mounted house-carles. Behind these, closing around upon their flanks, clashed forward the Saxon footmen with ax and spear.

Hardrada's men were veterans, and they fell back, fighting furiously and struggling to keep their ranks.

All things were against them, however,—the surprise, the superior numbers, and the flanking, encircling tactics of King Harold's men. [242]

"Look!" said Father Brian. "All this part of them are in the trap. All that are behind are turning toward the bridge. Only such as reach it while these are fighting will ever get away. The rest must die."

"It's as awful as the Fulford fight," said Ned. "Hardrada lost men enough there, and now another large slice of his army is gone. He will have to give up the idea of conquering England."

"He lost that at Fulford," said the missionary, "and he threw away all that was left him when he let the earls cheat him into waiting for Harold."

The slaughter now going on was pitiless. Much the larger part of Hardrada's remaining strength, nevertheless, was still upon the other side of the Derwent, and considerable numbers were escaping across the bridge to join it.

"It is our time to go ahead, my boy," said Father Brian. "We must get to the bank of the river, if we can. I want to see how the Saxons will manage to cross the bridge. Hardrada can easily hold it against them." [243]

"We can't cross it ourselves," replied Ned. "So far as I can see, we must stay with the English army, whether we like it or not."

"Thou hast no errand, now, for Tostig the Earl," growled the missionary. "He hath no more need for anything that thou couldst tell him. Ho! Boats! Two of them. One will do for us, and that is what I was looking for. We need no bridge."

"There's a fellow getting into one of them," said Ned. "We'll take the other."

Down they went, and in a minute more they were pulling away over the Derwent, taking little notice of the occupant of the other boat, except to see that he was a heavily armoured spearman of the house-carles.

Their eyes were too busy to care for him, for they were watching the rush of the fugitives across the bridge. For life, for life, they were crowding along the narrow passage which was their only escape from the steel of the Saxons. It was beginning to look as if all who could escape were already over, when Ned, the son of Webb, almost yelled out: [244]

"Sikend! Sikend the Berserker! Look at him! He is holding the bridge all alone. Row on! I want to get nearer!"

A few strokes of the oars carried them upstream to within fifty yards of the spot where the Berserker stood. Clad still in full armour, his tremendous form seeming broader and more powerful than ever, mad with all the battle fury of his race and nature, ax in hand and shield on arm, he defied the rush of his antagonists with a prowess that appeared to be more than human.

Loudly and mockingly laughed the fierce champion of Norway as he caught spear after spear and arrow after arrow upon his broad, bright shield. Louder yet was his shout of vindictive triumph as his resistless ax cleft helmet after helmet and shoulder after shoulder. There he must die, and this he knew right well, but his was to be no cow's death. Little did he care for its coming, so that he might slay many foemen, and fall surrounded by their dead bodies. [245]

Brave as they were, the Saxons fell back for a moment from before this awful shape. It had happened that the first of them to cross the bridge were not of the thingmen of Harold.

These were still busily destroying the remainder of the Vikings on the York side of the river. Again a rush was made, and again Sikend drove it back. It was afterward said that not less than forty warriors fell dead under the terrible blows of the Berserker.

"Yonder is King Harold, on the bank," said Ned, the son of Webb, "but look at that Saxon in the boat under the bridge! He is after Sikend! He is stabbing upward with his spear, through the cracks between the planks!" [246]

"They can't be wide enough," said Father Brian. "Ha! Sikend is hurt! He is down upon one knee! He can stand and fight no longer!"

"I'll stop that man!" shouted Ned, pulling hard upon his oars. "Sikend is a friend of mine—"

"Let thou alone!" exclaimed Father Brian. "It is no affair of thine!"

He was too late, for Ned had now arisen, in his sudden excitement, and his angry yell had drawn upon him the attention of the house-carle. Louder was the response of the tall Saxon, and as he shouted he hurled at Ned the long javelin with which he had smitten the Berserker.

"Thou hast it!" gasped the missionary.

"On my shield," said Ned. "It went through it as if it had been cardboard, but my mail stopped it. There! He is over! I need not spear him!" [247]

"Praise the saints!" muttered Father Brian. "He hath upset! But for me thou wouldst have done the same."

That was not strictly correct. The Saxon's boat was floating well, but the very energy of his furiously angry spear-throwing had tipped his tiny punt and sent it out from under him, plunging him into the swiftly eddying current of the Derwent.

"Can he swim," whispered Ned, "with all his armour on?"

"That is the last of him!" remarked Father Brian. "He will throw no more javelins. He is gone!"

Not even once did the overweighted house-carle come to the surface. He may indeed have been no swimmer. In the meantime, however, with wild hurrahs, the Saxons on the bridge had charged forward, and thrust after thrust had been given to the prostrate body of the wounded Berserker. He had fallen as he had wished to fall, a hero defying a whole army. [248]

"King Harold's men are pushing across the bridge," said Ned, as his boat drifted out from under it. "Why on earth did the Vikings leave it to be defended by one man?"

"It is only one more of Hardrada's blunders," replied the missionary. "He is only a sea king, and not a good general on the land. A man may be the biggest pirate in all the world and not know enough to handle an army. He hath done little more than to fight hard and to blunder all the while, ever since he landed. Seest thou now? The mounted house-carles gallop forward. Behind them the Saxon army will form on the other bank, and then Hardrada's army is doomed. Thou and I will cross quickly, that we may obtain a good place from which to watch the shutting of this death-trap."

"The Vikings that are left will be awfully outnumbered," said Ned. "Oh, how I wish I could do something for Lars and Vebba and our men!" [249]

"The invading host hath no hope," said his friend. "They are to be struck by one of the best generals in the world, leading the best fighters. Thou canst do nothing at all for thy friends."

"It's too bad!" groaned Ned. "I like Lars."

The boat was soon left behind them. Not a great while afterward they were standing upon a moderate elevation of rocky ground, at the right of the level upon which the Saxon forces were rapidly forming in order of battle, under the eyes of their king. They were doing so at this precise place, for the reason that immediately in front of them were assembled all that was now left of the forces of King Hardrada.

"My boy," exclaimed the missionary, "both sides are looking splendidly. I am glad to be where I can see, but any man running in between those two fronts would be like a corn of wheat between millstones. See thou! All of the house-carles are dismounting. They will fight on foot. They do not mean to lose too many horses. I would not, if I were they, with mayhap a long ride near to come." [250]

"William of Normandy's horses wear armour," said Ned. "I have seen pictures of them,—as much armour as a man weareth."

"Not many of them," replied Father Brian. "Here and there one, perhaps, if the owner of the horse can afford that kind of harness. Not many can, for armour costeth money. The man that made the pictures may have had some of that armour in his head."

"Thou meanest in his eye," said Ned. "There were loads of it, anyhow, and if a horse loaded like that were to stumble and fall, he'd be likely to stay down."

"Any man that goeth down to-day will stay down," responded the missionary. "The Northumberland levies that follow in the rear have come to take revenge for the slaughter at Fulford. It is a cruel, heathenish business, from first to last. I will be glad when the whole world shall be civilised, as it is around Clontarf." [251]

The great invasion of England by the sea king was already a complete failure. He and his brave but now dispirited Vikings had rallied to make their last stand against the unexpected and now overwhelming host of the hero King of England. Upon that very day, Hardrada of Norway and



Tostig the Earl were to have entered York as conquerors. Here they were, instead, at a little after midday, confronting sure ruin and probable death.

All the remaining fighting strength of York and its vicinity had zealously joined King Harold, so that all the while the Stamford bridge was still thronged with marching men. The marvel that Tostig or Hardrada had not ordered it to be burnt or chopped away was on the tongues of many. They may have vainly thought of again using it to recross the Derwent, and, if so, this was one more bad blunder, for they had left it in the hands of King Harold, and he was a general. [252]

The army front presented by the Northmen was exceedingly dangerous looking, nevertheless. They had formed in close order with the raven standard, the Land Waster, near the centre. In front of this, at first, were the sea king, himself, and Tostig the Earl, but their duty as leaders shortly called upon them to ride to and fro among their half-disheartened followers, uttering loud sounding words of encouragement and hope. Norwegians were very brave men, and they responded with loud shouts and the braying of thousands of war-horns, while every harp among them sounded.

There was yet a wide open space between the two army fronts. Into this rode out from that of the Northmen a herald sounding a parley. The agreement for one being made at once, from the same side rode out Tostig the Earl, accompanied by Vikings of rank, and he was met about half-way by a similar party of Saxons. [253]

"What terms," asked Tostig, "will Harold of England offer, if Harold Hardrada and Tostig, the son of Godwin, will now make peace with him? What will he offer to the earl, and what part of England will he surrender to the King of Norway?"

A loud, ringing voice from among the Saxon horsemen at once responded:

"To Tostig, the son of Godwin, full pardon and an earldom. To Harold Hardrada of Norway, seven feet of English ground for his burial. Or, since he is said to be taller than other men, he will be allowed twelve inches more."

"Then tell thou him," replied the earl, "that Tostig will not desert the comrades who have trusted him, and that he will fight to the last." [254]

Back rode both of the embassies to their own friends, and Hardrada, who had heard all of the loudly uttered questions and answers, exclaimed to Tostig:

"Good was thy speech, my friend; but who was the man who heard and answered thee?"

"He was Harold, the son of Godwin," replied the earl.

"What?" shouted the angry king. "Then he should never have gotten back in safety to his own!"

"Not so," said Tostig, sadly. "I have erred much, but my royal brother I might not betray to thee and thine."

Other things were said on both sides, but none of them was heard by Ned, the son of Webb. It was indeed no time for any quarrel between Tostig and Hardrada, for the war-horns were sounding and the Saxons were advancing along their whole line. Firmly, steadily, with desperate courage and magnificent prowess, they were met by the close array of the Northmen. [255]

Although these were not so well disciplined, and were inferior in numbers, they were, individually, equally skilled in arms, and they were fighting for their lives. They fought on with almost an appearance of possible success until the resistless pressure of the trained thingmen broke their front and disordered them. Even then they would not yield, and all who afterward told stories of the battle had wonderful things to relate concerning the feats of arms performed by the sea king himself, and by Tostig the Earl, and by many of the heroes of the Vikings.

Under the Land Waster standard at last an arrow slew the King of Norway. There, also, fighting valiantly, fell Tostig the Earl, and with their slaying the battle ended, for the remaining Northmen lost heart and fled.

Then, to the surprise of some, Harold the King forbade further following, and commanded that his forces should once more come into close order. It may be that he was not quite assured as to how many Vikings might yet remain, at the shore or on the ships. At all events, there were excellent reasons why he should be willing to waste neither men nor time at that place, and why he should offer generous terms to the remnant of the invaders. That he intended doing this was to be made known somewhat later, and now he sat upon his horse, not far from the raven standard, giving directions concerning the bodies of his brother Tostig and of King Hardrada. [256]

Ned, the son of Webb, was not a great many yards away, for he and the missionary had followed the charge of the Saxons and had been almost in the front of the battle. He was now staring around him at the gory evidences of how hard the fight had been. Almost at his feet lay a heap of slain Norwegians, and from under one edge of it somebody appeared to be struggling out. [257]

"Lars, the son of Vebba!" shouted Ned. "Come here, Father Brian. Thou and I must save him! Get up, Lars!"

"No man will harm him now," shouted back the priest. "Is he badly wounded?"

"I have not a cut," responded Lars himself. "I was knocked down by a mace, that is all, and these others fell upon me. O Ned, the son of Webb! We are ruined! Ruined! There will be sad mourning among the fiords of Norway!"

"Vebba!" exclaimed Ned. "Where is he?"

"I saw him escape to the ships among the first," replied Lars, almost weeping.

"Go thou after him, thyself," said Ned. "Harold the King hath commanded that all like thee may go. Tell Vebba that I am to stay here. Run if thou canst! Get on board a ship."

"Thou art right to stay," said Lars. "This is thine own country. Thou hast lost thine Earl Tostig, but mind not that too much. There are always plenty of earls." [258]

"Good-bye!" said Ned, and in a moment more Lars was walking away briskly.

He was safe from spear or blade, for the commands of Harold the King would surely be obeyed by all his men.

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## CHAPTER XII.

[259]

### A RIDE IN OLD ENGLAND.

NED, the son of Webb, stood still, gazing very earnestly at the King of England.

"I suppose he feels badly about his brother," Ned was thinking. "I would, no matter what he'd been up to. I'm sorry Tostig was killed, anyhow. He was a friend of mine. I didn't see King Harold do any hand to hand fighting, either. I guess he kept back on purpose."

"My boy!" sharply whispered Father Brian. "The king wheeleth his horse toward thee. Stand thou still, for he hath his eye upon thee."

In a moment more the hot blood was flushing Ned's cheeks to redness, for the king drew rein in front of him and spoke in Saxon. If Ned could have understood him he might have been astonished, for he was saying: [260]

"I saw thee row under the bridge, O boy with a battered shield. Thou art the cunning spearman that slew for me the Berserker and opened the way for the advance. I thank thee, whoever thou art. Thou art but young, too, for such a doing. What is thy name?"

Ned more than half guessed that such a question was asked him, and he promptly responded in Latin:

"I am Ned, the son of Webb, O king!"

"Aha! Thou speakest Latin?" exclaimed the king. "Thou seemest to be well born, and thou art a scholar. What can I do for thee? Speak quickly!"

"O Harold the King," said Ned. "I would that I might ride with the army when it marcheth away from York. William the Norman is coming. I wish to be with thy house-carles and fight the Normans for thee and for England."

He felt that he had made a tremendously long speech, and he had, but a bright smile shot across the face of the king. [261]

"That thou shalt have," he said, and he added, to a horseman near him, "Wolfram of Hythe, get good horses for this youth and for his teacher that attendeth him. O priest, remain thou with thy pupil. Go both of you now to York. Ned, the son of Webb, I will see thee again."

"I will be with him, O king," replied Father Brian, loudly. "He is a youth of much promise, and he needeth my continual instruction."

King Harold spurred away, followed by his chiefs and thanes and earls, while the good missionary turned almost indignantly upon Ned.

"This is wrong!" he exclaimed. "Thou art deceiving the king. I did not understand at first, but I heard others of them repeat his words. He believeth thee the slayer of Sikend the Berserker from under the bridge. Thou art not!" [262]

"Was that it?" almost gasped Ned. "I never said I was. I think it was a mean thing to do, anyhow, to stab Sikend in the legs, in that way, so he couldn't stand up and fight. I'm sorry the king should think I would do anything so unfair as that."

"So am I," said Father Brian, "for a lie is a bad thing, any day. Thou must yet find an opportunity to tell him the truth of that matter. But I am glad, nevertheless, that we are to have horses and get away from York in good company. I have a great desire to get speedily to London, whatever may happen afterward."

Wolfram of Hythe did not have far to go for his horses, and those which he was now bringing forward were big enough for war-horses. They had a somewhat jaded appearance, for they had travelled far that day. They had lost their riders in the battle, it was explained, and in a moment more Ned and the missionary were as well mounted as if they both were house-carles of the king. [263]

"It is well for us, indeed," said Father Brian. "We shall have good quarters, and rations, too, while we are on the march. Thou wilt set the king right concerning Sikend in due season, for truth's sake. Thou didst not harm thy fellow soldier, and yet I tell thee that the world cannot be civilised until there are no more Berserkers. Small matter it is how they are killed."

"I didn't even hurt the Saxon that did kill him," said Ned. "He was drowned."

"I am glad of that, almost," replied Father Brian. "It will be better for thee to make thine own explanation than for that house-carle to come and tell the king thou art a false witness."

"It's awful!" said Ned. "I'm a fraud! It isn't any fault of mine, though, and I can straighten it, as soon as I've a chance."

The shadows of evening were deepening when the two friends rode over Stamford bridge and galloped on toward York. When they reached the city it was almost dark, and in all directions hundreds of men were going about with torches and rude lanterns. [264]

"The panes of glass in those lanterns," said Ned to himself, "are all made of cow's horn, scraped thin. I guess they don't break easily. They are better than nothing, though, and we can find our way to the tavern."

So they did, and once more Ned had something to say about lights.

"There's an awful difference," he remarked, "between these rush-light smokers and electric bulbs or gas, or even kerosene or candles. Hollow rushes with fat poured into them! They stand up pretty well in the sticks, but they don't last long, and how they do smoke!"

He did not allow his own rush-light to burn down, however. As soon as the horses were cared for and supper was eaten, he was glad enough to get into bed. [265]

"I do believe there is nothing else in all the world," he said, "that will tire a fellow out like a great battle. Father Brian was right, though, about the trap that was set for King Hardrada. Those two English earls, Edwin and Morcar, knew well enough that Harold was coming, and they had everything ready when he got here. Hardrada ought to have watched. He knew he was dealing with his enemies. So did Tostig, and I believe he suspected something."

Sleep stopped him there, and he arose the next morning with a feeling that he was going to walk out into something entirely new. He was now no longer a Norway Viking, invading England with Harold Hardrada the Sea King. Nor was he any longer under the special protection of Tostig the Earl. All of his previous experiences, as he said of them, were so many back numbers, and he was now King Harold of England's devoted follower. He winced a little, also, when he remembered that he was regarded as one of the heroes of the great battle of Stamford bridge. [266]

During this day and several more which followed, he was left almost altogether by himself, for Father Brian had affairs of his own to attend to.

"It is just the way I'd like to have it," said Ned. "Now I've a good horse that won't pitch me over his head, as Nanny did, I'm going to ride all around and see the country. I'll see the city better, too. I'd like to tell father and mother what I'm doing, too."

The city gates were open now, and all men came and went at their will. There were throngs of them, for all the country people were eager to get a glimpse of their victorious king and his wonderful army. Ned found nothing to hinder him, therefore, and he made his horseback excursions industriously. The very first of them carried him once more over Stamford bridge and across the battle-field. He had thought he would wish to look at it and remember the fighting, but he did not linger there for a moment. [267]

"It is too dreadful!" he exclaimed, urging his horse forward. "I never want to see a battle-field again, that is, not after all the battle is over. I'll ride on and see if I can visit Lars and Vebba."

It was not so very long a gallop to the bank of the Humber. Large numbers of Norway war-ships were still there, anchored or moored to the shore, but Ned searched among them in vain for a glimpse of his old friend, the *Serpent*. The fact was that these ships which remained were such as had been surrendered after the defeat of Hardrada's army. Quite a number, which had been ready for sea, had sailed away at once, carrying such Vikings as had not marched to the Derwent at all, and with them a great many of the first arriving fugitives.

"I guess she got away," said Ned. "She belonged to Vebba. I hope he and Lars are on board of her. Some day I mean to visit Norway again and go and see them, but they'd do better if they'd emigrate to America." [268]

King Harold of England was dealing very mercifully with the beaten invaders. It was said that he had given two dozen of the captured vessels for his prisoners to go home in.

"It wouldn't do for him to kill them," remarked Ned, as he rode homeward. "I guess he was glad to be rid of them."

Other days went by, and Ned spent most of the in on horseback, so that he saw a great deal of that part of Northumberland. He returned to the tavern pretty well tired out, one evening, and, just as he was carrying a sputtering rush-light up-stairs, he heard heavy footsteps behind him and a cheery voice that shouted:

"My boy! Our luck hath come! A messenger came from London to the king, to-day, to tell him that the fleet of Duke William of Normandy hath been seen off the southern coast. Before Harold and his army can get there, the Normans will all be landed. They will have before them, soon, a greater battle than the one that was fought with the Norwegians, putting Fulford and Stamford bridge together." [269]

"That's bad news for England," said Ned. "A host of men will be killed. I'm ready, anyhow. I want to see King Harold win another victory."

"Thou knowest very little about that," replied the missionary, going on up the stairs with him. "No man may say how a battle will turn out until after the fighting is over. I will ask thee one thing,

however. Canst thou speak at all in French?"

"Of course I can," said Ned. "I learned it at home, when I was a little chap."

"It may yet be a good thing for thee," said Father Brian. "I have it upon my mind, however, that the greater part of Duke William's motley army speak tongues of their own, and not a word of French. It is a speech I have not yet heard. It may be that thou and I will listen to it before long." [270]

"I guess so," said Ned. "I'll have a talk with King Harold's French prisoners, after he whips the duke."

Ned's admiration for the Saxon king had been strengthening rapidly from day to day, as he heard men talk about him. He did not now entertain any idea that his hero could really be beaten by Duke William. At the same time, he had begun to pick up rapidly a number of words of several kinds of Saxon. This had helped him very much in a number of conversations with the king's house-carles. It had also proved convenient at the tavern, among the citizens of York, and among the country people.

The Saxon army had been resting well during all these days, and it had been preparing for the long, severe march which its royal commander had known it must soon perform. He, statesman as well as general, had been setting in order the tangled affairs of the great northern earldoms. The two Earls of Mercia and Northumberland, Edwin and Morcar, had professed utter loyalty to him. They had promised to bring all the forces they could muster to join the army which was to oppose Duke William of Normandy. [271]

This, nevertheless, would require time, and the king could not now wait for any new levies. He was needed to defend the southern counties of England, and, especially, to prevent the speedy capture of London by the Normans.

The mounted house-carles, the thingmen, were ready to march on the day following the arrival of the messenger who brought the tidings concerning Duke William's fleet. It may be that even then King Harold was aware of the terrible truth, that the landing of the Normans had already begun at Pevensey, on the southern coast, only three days after the battle of Stamford bridge. He was also aware, nevertheless, that the transfer from ship to shore of such a host as that of William, with its supplies, and with a vast number of horses for its cavalry, was a task which would surely require a number of days. More time would necessarily be consumed, after that, in getting the invading army into shape for any considerable forward movement. It was still possible, therefore, for Harold and his army to get to London in season. If he could save his capital city, then would follow the awful struggle that was sure to come for England's throne and freedom. [272]

Out of the Ouse gate of the old city of York rode the mailed horsemen, in close array. Behind them, in endless columns, strode the footmen, thousand after thousand. Perhaps not a man who saw them march away could have believed what a fate was waiting for them on the southern shore of the land they were going to defend. [273]

"My boy," said Father Brian, "thou and I will keep close along toward the front. The king himself rideth far ahead of all. He intendeth to stir up, as he goeth along, all the fighting strength of the middle counties."

"I'm afraid I won't have a chance to get at him," replied Ned. "I want to let him know the truth about that affair of Sikend the Berserker."

"Thou mayest let that rest," said the good missionary. "He hath quite enough to busy him just now. I think he may be caring very little who it was that speared one Viking. Only I bid thee keep good care of thy tongue and speak only the truth. It is always bad for a man to win upon false pretences. See that thou maintain thy honesty, my boy."

"I guess I will," said Ned. "There isn't anything crooked about me. If a man will tell a falsehood, the next thing he will be caught passing counterfeit money." [274]

"Thou hast a great many of thy York Saxon sayings," remarked Father Brian, "that thou art not able to turn into good Latin. I have found it so with all the heathen I have ever been among. It sometimes maketh me wish that I were back at Clontarf, to hear men talking good sense once more. I give that up, however, for my duty biddeth me to remain, that I may do somewhat for the civilisation and instruction of these ignorant English people."

This was an undertaking concerning which the good man was becoming more and more enthusiastic. It was plain that he cared for it much more than he did for any victories or defeats of either Norman William or Saxon Harold.

Ned had heard him saying to himself:

"Little odds is it which of the two shall wear the crown, provided that these millions of human beings shall be made over into something better than so many two-legged cattle. They are little more than that now." [275]

At first, even after exploring York, Ned had hardly agreed with him, but he learned a great deal as they rode along and as he saw the actual state of things in England.

Day followed day, and the mounted house-carles rode steadily onward. Town after town, camp after camp, was reached and left behind. Everywhere the king was welcomed with noisy acclamations. He appeared, indeed, to be exceedingly well beloved by his subjects of every rank and kind.

"They are all sorts, though," was a remark that Ned was forced to make concerning them, and he

added: "What they want is about forty thousand Father Brians."

Large numbers, he discovered, were no better than slaves, the property of the landholders. They had no hope whatever of improving their condition. Even the freemen were only a shade better off. Not many, even of the rich and titled, were able to read and write. There were a great many other faults to find. [276]

"Sometimes," said Ned, "I almost think England ought to be conquered. Harold or somebody else ought to stir up things with a long pole."

He was hardly able to say what he would try to do first, if he were king, and he determined to have a talk about it with Harold some day after he should have beaten the Normans.

The country they rode through was very beautiful, after all. Some of the towns were fairly well built. Some of the castles and palaces were picturesque and attractive. There were numberless green fields and fruitful orchards. The flocks of sheep and the herds of cattle looked like prosperity.

Then, too, there were grand old forests of oaks and other trees, and Ned saw herd after herd of beautiful red deer. [277]

"No poor man dares to hunt them, they tell me," he said of the deer. "They'd hang him as if he'd killed a man. Not even if he were starving. It is a good deal as Father Brian says, the lower kinds of people in England are treated as if they were beasts."

Above these, nevertheless, were the hundreds of thousands of strong-armed yeomanry,—the farmers, the squires, the thanes, great and small, and from among these King Harold was now trying to strengthen his army. No doubt his success in doing so would have been better if more time had been given him, but as he pushed onward messenger after messenger came riding swiftly to tell him of the vast numbers and warlike appearance of the host of William of Normandy. This was now all landed, they reported, and it was almost ready for a march upon London, where there was nothing to oppose it but a moderate force under Gyrth, Earl of the East Angles and younger brother of the king. [278]

"I want to see Gyrth," said Ned to the missionary. "They say he is another hero like Harold."

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## **CHAPTER XIII.**

[279]

### **THE HOST OF THE NORMANS.**

"**L**ONDON! London! London!" exclaimed Ned, the son of Webb, slowly and thoughtfully. "After all I had heard and read about this place, I hadn't the ghost of an idea of what it would really be. I went through all the London guide-books, too, that Uncle Jack brought home with him. I guess it changed a good deal before they were printed."

He had other remarks to make, and some of them were uncomplimentary. It appeared that he had been going through all quarters of the English capital city, ever since he rode into it with the house-carles of the king. He knew something of its history, old British, Roman, Saxon, and he could add to that wonderful ideas of what it would be in the years to come. He had taken careful notes of its larger buildings, its walls, and fortifications. [280]

"I think that Duke William was wise," he remarked, "in not coming here until he was entirely ready. It's a strong place. He could not have taken it right away. King Harold knew it could stand a siege or he would not have gone to fight the Vikings."

Nevertheless, until the return of their king and his army, the people of London had been in a panic of fear lest their town should be taken and sacked by the invaders.

"Now," said Ned, at last, "I have seen enough of these dirty streets. They are as bad as those of York, or worse. I'll go and get my horse and see if Father Brian has come."

His learned Irish friend had been full of affairs of his own ever since their arrival. He too, moreover, had been exploring London, and he had formed a very low opinion of its civilisation. Ned found him waiting, shortly, in the queer old hostelry which had been assigned them by the army authorities as their quarters. [281]

"My boy!" exclaimed Father Brian. "I am glad to see thee. Oh, the heathen town that this is! It is full of thieves. It is exceedingly disorderly and dirty. I may say that the army being here doth not make it any better. Ah, me! I shall be glad when the battle is over and we know which of the twain is to be king of this place. Whichever it may be, he hath a long, hard bit of work before him to make this country what it ought to be."

There could be no doubt of that, but Ned, the son of Webb, was not just now much interested in questions of reform and education. His head was full of army affairs, and Father Brian was his best newspaper.

"What?" exclaimed the missionary, in reply to Ned's questioning. "Will the Saxons fight? Indeed they will, and King Harold himself is to lead his army. I am told that his brother Gyrth—the brave man that he is!—asked permission to lead this battle himself, and urged the king to stay out of it. He said that then Harold would have time to gather more troops. Gyrth might be defeated and [282]

killed, but the kingdom would not be lost all at once. What is more, Harold might lay waste all the lands nearest the Normans and starve them out, fighting them inch by inch. He is an unselfish patriot, to offer his life in that way."

"What did the king say?" asked Ned.

"As thou mightest expect, I think," replied Father Brian. "He declared that he would waste no English land nor burn an English house. He would allow no other man to fight and die in his place. He would lead his own army, he said, and he is right about that."

"No, he isn't," said Ned. "He had better take Gyrth's advice. He is risking too much upon one battle. He hath not men enough here to beat the Normans." [283]

"King Harold knoweth best," said Father Brian. "His men would not fight as well under anybody else. His absence might dishearten them. Now, I tell thee: they say that the Norman duke hath sixty thousand men, but that the most of them are of all sorts, taken as they came. Harold of England hath only a quarter as many, indeed, but the main body of them consists of picked and chosen warriors, well-disciplined veterans. There is a great strength in that."

"Thou meanest," said Ned, "that no common men are fit to face the house-carles? The duke should have seen them at Stamford."

"He knoweth them, I suppose," said Father Brian. "It maketh him slow and cautious. The thingmen will all die where they stand, and I think that many other men will die when they do. It is a pity that they were at the north and not here when the fleet of William came to Pevensey. Had they been at hand, the Normans would not have gotten ashore at all. Harold would have slaughtered them at the water's edge." [284]

"All of that is Tostig's work," said Ned, angrily. "He stirred up Hardrada to come with his Vikings, just at the worst time."

"He hath paid for it with his life," replied Father Brian, "and it is a heavy load for any man to put upon his soul. One bad, ambitious, selfish plotter may sometimes do a vast amount of bloody mischief."

All that was of the past, and there was no help for it. Everybody was well aware, moreover, that there had been an exchange of embassies, day after day, between the king and Duke William. Terms of settlement had been offered and rejected, for neither of them would give up the main point of dispute, the right to the crown of England. Therefore there could be no compromise, and the sword must decide. [285]

While the two friends had been talking, their horses had been brought out. They mounted now, and rode out together through one of the southerly gates.

"These walls and the forts are quite strong," remarked Father Brian. "The best work on them was done long ago by the Romans. I have thought that if I were Harold I would wait for the Normans at this place."

"One of the house-carles told me," said Ned, "that the king had chosen a better. He had seen it himself. He hadn't the least idea that the king will be beaten."

"He would not be," replied the missionary, "if all of his men were like them. Man for man, the Normans have nothing like them. They will cleave through shield or mail or helmet with a blow of their long-handled axes. They fear nothing."

The guards posted at the city gates were not questioning any who came or went, and people from all directions were seeking safety within the walls. None of these had yet been harmed, but before Ned and his companion had ridden many miles they found the roads crowded with men, women, and children, fleeing inland from the cruelty of the invaders. Terrible tales were told by these poor fugitives of the atrocities already inflicted upon the shore-folk by the savage rabble of which a large part of William's army consisted. This was to have been expected, whether the duke willed it or not, and Saxon England was receiving a sad warning of the methods by which, from that time onward, its conquest was to be completed. [286]

Both Ned, the son of Webb, and the missionary were now getting excited, and they rode faster. The whole affair was becoming more real to them. It was a tremendous thing to think of. The entire future history of England was about to be decided by one great fight, and everything relating to that was to be studied with almost feverish interest. [287]

It was late in the day when Father Brian drew his rein, exclaiming:

"There, my boy, look yonder! That is the ridge and hill of Senlac. That is where Harold hath chosen to wait for William. He is wise. It is a very strong military position."

"Then why on earth," asked Ned, "did not the duke send a force ahead and seize it? It was right in his way, if he intended to march for London."

"Perhaps he knew it not," said Father Brian. "He is in a strange country. I believe that he would prefer to have the Saxon army come on and meet him, at almost any place. What he needeth most of all is this very battle to be fought without delay, for his host is eating up its provisions. This ridge of Senlac, if thou wilt mark it, will prove a death-trap for him or for Harold, as the fight may turn either way." [288]

"Can the king be caught in it?" asked Ned.

"I know not, yet," grimly responded the missionary. "I heard once, though, of a man who trapped a bear. The trap was a good one, and the bear was in it."

"How did it work, then?" asked Ned.

"I heard that soon there was very little left of either the trap or the hunter," growled Father Brian. "It was a large bear. Come on, now, and we will see what all these men are doing. They are as busy as bees."

The long, low hill toward which they were riding was somewhat steep upon its southerly side. From end to end, it now swarmed with toilers. It had been generally understood that the Saxon army had not yet left London, and who, then, were these?

Father Brian gazed at them in silence for a minute or so before he turned in his saddle to say, with energy:

"The trap is well set for catching the duke. King Harold knew what might be done with this reach of land. He hath sent on his two brothers and a sufficient force to fortify the ridge. Seest thou? They are making a strong breastwork of timber and in some places more than that. I think it might stop any charge of Duke William's best horsemen. They will fare but badly, with Harold's axmen behind the barrier. Let us ride on." [289]

There was an elevation high enough to be described by Ned as a hill, at a little distance behind the ridge, toward the right, and here, too, the men were fortifying. The timber-work defences at the front were sufficiently extensive to bar the entire way by which the Normans must come in their march northward from their camps. These were not now at their Pevensey landing-place, but near the coast village of Hastings, several miles nearer to Senlac.

"That means Bloody Pond, or the Lake of Blood," remarked Ned. "There is a pond in New York State that is named so from an old fight with the Indians. I don't see any kind of pond around here." [290]

"There may have been one, once," replied Father Brian. "Maybe they let the water out of it, or it dried up somehow and left the name of it sticking to the hill. There will be blood enough spilled here to fill a pond, I am afraid."

They rode nearer the hill, now, and on the crest of it they saw two mailed men on horseback.

"Hear them!" whispered Father Brian. "Hark to the two great earls!"

"Oh, Gyrth, my brother," said one of them, loudly and cheerfully, "here will we set up the standards. I think the axmen of England can hold yonder lines against all the motley pirates under Duke William."

"Or else," calmly responded Gyrth, "here will the sons of Godwin die. Our brother Sveyn is gone, long since. Tostig is slain. Harold and thou and I remain. Oh, Leofwine, thou art ever light-hearted, but yonder is a mighty host, between us and the sea." [291]

"So be it," responded Leofwine, as recklessly as ever. "Let them come on. I care not at all to live under the yoke of William the Norman. It were far better to die in battle."

"I would that all England were of one mind with thee in that matter," replied Gyrth. "Then were we not so few, this day. The levies of the midland counties are all so laggard in coming. Moreover, Edwin and Morcar have been but half-hearted, from the beginning. I think they wait to hear the ending of this very battle."

"They made a good fight at Fulford," said Leofwine. "Many of the Northumberland spearmen were at Stamford bridge. If we may but baffle the first assault of the Normans and hold them in check a few days, we shall soon thereafter be strong enough to send the Duke of Normandy back to his ships." [292]

"Such is the war policy of Harold," responded Gyrth. "There is a deep wisdom in it if we may hold our lines through but one day only. I will say no more, now, my brother. I have a strange foreboding upon me, and I like not the name of this place."

"The Lake of Blood?" said Leofwine. "Ay! All England will be made red enough if we hold not the hill against Duke William. Who knoweth the spot that waiteth for thine and mine?"

"God only!" responded Gyrth. "I had thought, too, that he would fight on our side for the freedom of England."

They turned their horses' heads and rode away from the hill to pass along the lines, inspecting the defences. Both of the listeners were silent a moment, for they had heard enough to make them thoughtful.

"Those two are brave men," said Father Brian, then. "I fear they have spoken a hard truth. The people have not come to the king's help loyally. They may pay for their lack, sorely, after their king is gone from them. Didst thou hear them speak of their older brother, Sveyn? He was like them for fighting well, but he had a wild spirit in him. It is rare that there are five in one family that are like the sons of old Earl Godwin." [293]

Both of them wished for a closer look at the defences, and they rode onward. It was surprising how much had been done already, and the force which the king had sent forward to protect the workmen was more than half of his army. Nothing less than a rush made with all the power of the invaders could have carried the ridge that evening.

"What I'd like to do, now," said Ned, "is to ride out and try for a look at some of the Norman camps. What sayest thou?" [294]

"I am with thee," replied Father Brian. "We may well ride sword in hand, my boy, lest we chance

to run against some stray party of Normans. I will unslung my pole-ax. Where didst thou get that long spear?"

"It was given me by one of the house-carles," said Ned. "It is not too heavy for me, in spite of the long shaft. It is a kind of lance."

"I will get me one like it, then, as soon as I can," said the missionary, combatively. "I may yet have to push some Norman from his saddle. I can throw a spear fairly well, too. That is one thing that I learned at Clontarf."

It was not a bad idea, certainly, that the missionaries who were sent out in such times as these were should be sufficiently well trained in the use of weapons to defend themselves if they should ever be attacked, for instance, by bears or wolves.

At several places the Senlac ridge was cut by ravines, which added to its defensive character. At others, the Saxon workmen had dug deep ditches. At the weaker points, where the slope below was less steep, strong palisades had been set instead of mere breastworks. In these lines of palisades were gateways, and through one of these, which was as yet left open, Ned rode out with Father Brian. [295]

"It's a strong fort!" exclaimed Ned, as he looked behind him at the defences.

"Ay," said Father Brian, "for such men as will hold it. I think better of King Harold's prospects. Unless I am in error, all the men from the London camps were to march this day. They will be here before sunrise to-morrow."

They were indeed arriving at that very hour, but both the king and the duke were willing that there should be no battle until all things were ready on both sides. There were to be further negotiations, and the fort builders were to have more time for the completion of their work.

There were several miles of broken country between Hastings and Senlac. Some of the advanced encampments of the Normans were very nearly midway between the Saxon lines and the seashore. [296]

It was toward one of these outermost camps, containing, it might be, a large force of the invaders, that Ned and the missionary were now riding. So far as they could discern, nothing in the nature of fortification had been done here, for no attack was to be expected. They were aware, nevertheless, that Norman patrols would surely be out on duty, and that loose parties from such an army would probably be going hither and thither, for plunder or even for mere adventure.

"Hearest thou the sound of Duke William's army?" said Ned. "It is like the early morning roar of a great city."

"It is the sound of a cataract!" exclaimed Father Brian. "I hear it, but I was thinking of quite another thing, my boy. A swift dash of the thingmen might make wild work of yonder camp this night." [297]

"King Harold could do a great deal better than that," replied Ned. "If he had a few batteries of heavy artillery on the ridge at Senlac they would be within easy range of all these camps. He could pitch percussion shells among them all night long. Duke William would find it very interesting, I can tell him."

"Speak it in Latin," said the good man, and then Ned found himself compelled to say something which did not include shells and long-range cannon.

"Hither cometh a Norman squad!" suddenly interrupted the missionary, getting ready his pole-ax. "Thy spear, my boy! Be on guard! They are taking us for enemies without question."

"I guess we will have to take them, then," said Ned. "There are only four of them. Here goes!"

He spurred his horse forward as he spoke, but it was not to meet genuine Norman men-at-arms. These fellows were only Breton marauders, armoured imperfectly and mounted on ponies. They came dashing forward irregularly instead of charging together. [298]

"I hate to kill a man," muttered Ned, and he did not do so, for the foremost Breton fell from his pony with no worse harm than a spear-wound in the arm.

Ned's shield caught a sword-cut from the second assailant, and it was not repeated, for Father Brian's ax came down upon that man's helmet, and one more saddle was empty.

"Down with them!" roared the valiant missionary. "Thou hast laid one more upon the sand!"

"The spear didn't go through his corselet half an inch," said Ned, "but there he is."

The fourth Breton exchanged a few blows with some skill, but Father Brian was too much for him, and his pony, also, was quickly riderless. [299]





"FOR FATHER BRIAN'S AX CAME DOWN UPON THAT MAN'S HELMET."

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"Father Brian hit him on his shoulder, finely!" exclaimed Ned. "Come on, now! We had better cut stick for Harold's camp."

"Thou art right about that," replied his comrade; "there are more of them coming. It did me much good to upset those heathen. His reverence the Abbot of Clontarf knoweth well what to do with a pole-ax. He drove off twenty wild knaves, one day, when he was all alone. We buried full half of them, that evening, and the others knew better than to come again. I tell thee, my boy, the peace can be well kept in Ireland, especially anywhere near the schools and civilisation."

It was well for them to ride rapidly now, however, for they were pursued almost to a gate of the Saxon army palisades. The one they succeeded in reaching was closed and guarded.

Even when Father Brian shouted out his name and character and what he had been doing, the officer in command of it let them in only to conduct them at once into the presence of Gyrth, Earl of the East Angles. [300]

Near a blazing camp-fire, the light of which glittered and sparkled upon his splendid armour, stood the hero brother of King Harold. Only the king, himself, could be more loftily majestic in form and manner. Not a word did he utter while Father Brian made his very full report, and then he said:

"Our other scouts have erred somewhat, it appeareth. The Normans have advanced their camps nearer than we were aware, but it is of no consequence. O priest, I know thee and thy pupil to be true men. He slew the Norway champion for us at Stamford bridge, and thou wert with him. Go ye to your camp!"

"Speak not a word!" whispered Father Brian to Ned. "Thou mayest explain that matter only to the king himself. Let well enough alone, this night. That is our safeguard now, for we had broken orders and knew it not. Ride on!" [301]

Low, indeed, did Ned, the son of Webb, bow to the Saxon hero, and he went on in silence, but he was thinking, remorsefully:

"What would father and mother say? It isn't honest! I am cheating them about Sikend."

There seemed to be no help for it at present, however, and he was glad to reach his camp and dismount from his over-weary horse.

After supper, not even the roar which arose from the army and the very busy fort-builders could keep him awake, and he slept soundly until morning.

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## **CHAPTER XIV.**

 [302]

### **THE BATTLE OF SENLAC.**

**B**OTH armies remained within their lines, that Friday morning, and both were busily preparing for battle. The commanders as well as the warriors were making ready.

The instructions given by King Harold to his men were to act altogether upon the defensive, and to content themselves with their strong position along Senlac ridge.

If his orders had been rigidly obeyed by all, there would have been no victory won by William of Normandy. The generalship of the king and the valour of his warriors were made of no avail by the headlong folly of the less disciplined part of the Saxon army.

During this day, ambassadors went back and forth, more than once, as if the last possibility of peace had not already for ever passed away. Harold could not consent to any terms which did not include the immediate departure of the invaders, and William could not at this hour abandon his great military enterprise without fighting a battle. [303]

Both armies were in good spirits. The Normans might well feel confidence in their greatly superior numbers and in the established reputation of Duke William as a successful general. The Saxons, on the other hand, appreciated the strength of their position, and they were able to say to one another that Harold, the son of Godwin, had never lost a battle. They believed him to be at least the equal of any living army leader.

Ned, the son of Webb, and Father Brian were busy all along the lines, from hour to hour, but there was nothing warlike for them to do. When, however, they returned to their camp at evening, both of them appeared to have become exceedingly English, or at least Saxon, in feeling. [304]

"I believe I know what's coming," said Ned. "The Normans can't break in! We can cut them all to pieces if they try it on."

"The fight will be long and hard," replied the missionary, very seriously. "It will be well for thee and me to obtain places of observation upon as high ground as we may."

"All right," said Ned. "I want to see it all. It will be something for me to tell about when I get home. I shall never forget it as long as I live!"

"Ah, my boy!" said the good man, "a great many thousands of these Saxons and Normans will not live to remember it."

They slept again, and arose with the sun of Saturday, October 14, A. D. 1066, the day of the great change which came to England.

It was yet early in the forenoon when Harold the King rode slowly along his lines and spoke good words to all his soldiers. Everywhere they responded to him with loud, enthusiastic acclamations of love and loyalty, and fearlessness. [305]

Duke William of Normandy also, attended by a brilliant escort of celebrated warriors and men of high rank, rode from one to another of the serried masses of his mighty host. He addressed them with fiery eloquence, assuring them of complete and speedy victory over the inferior forces opposed to them.

They, as well as he, however, were able to see how strong were the Senlac works, and how warlike and firm was the Saxon array behind the barriers.

Ned, the son of Webb, and his companion found that, from their post on the hill, they had a good view of both armies. They had been watching all movements and indications with almost breathless interest. It was not yet noon when Ned suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, isn't this magnificent! I don't believe there was ever anything more splendid in all the world!" [306]

"It will be a great battle, my boy," said the missionary, "one of the greatest in all history. There! Seest thou?"

"I see!" shouted Ned. "The Normans are advancing! William's whole army is moving! Oh, how I wish our men were armed with breech-loaders! I wish we had Maxim guns and cannon looking out through the palisades. The Normans would never get near enough to do any chopping on them, then."

"Chopping?" echoed the good man. "In a very little, I think thou wilt see good chopping done by the Saxons. The best of our ax-men are at the front. Mark thou the slingers behind them, and note King Harold's bowmen. I would there were more of them. The archers and slingers of Duke William come on in advance of his horsemen."

"They are beginning, too," said Ned. "A stone from a sling will break a shield. They say the Norman arrows will go through armour." [307]

"If they hit!" said the priest. "Mark, now! This is the advantage of the king's position."

Ned could understand it in a moment. The duke's archers had a high reputation, but in this beginning of the battle they laboured under a serious disadvantage. All their skill and strength were of small value, while they were shooting from low ground at enemies who were not only above them, but were protected by walls of wood. It was evident that until these defences were broken through stones and arrows would make no important impression upon Harold's men.

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed Father Brian. "They sling well, but they are in need of more stones to throw. A man may not carry a quarry in a quiver. Small harm have they done, and the sharp arrows are wasted on the palisades. I think Duke William must do better than this, or he will get no nearer London." [308]

"How lead would tell just now!" responded Ned. "The range is getting short enough for heavy revolvers. Hurrah! Here come the Norman spearmen and the mounted knights in full armour. What can lances do against palisades? This is grand!"

The duke's archers and slingers had suffered heavy losses, and they now fell back discomfited, leaving the Senlac slope littered thickly with the victims of the shafts and stones of the Saxons. All was clear, however, for the desperate assault which was to test the strength of King Harold's lines. If it were successful, it would be proved that his judgment as a general had been wrong, and that he ought not to have faced the invaders at Senlac.

The attack was made in excellent order, and with desperate courage, by masses which seemed to be overwhelming. As they pressed onward up the slope, the arrows and javelins of the Saxons came among them in a death-dealing storm, slaying or disabling both horses and men by the hundred. They did not waver, however, and now their foremost ranks had reached the palisades to be met by the long spears, the missiles, and the terrible pole-axes. [309]

"How they go down, the Normans!" gasped Ned. "They have not broken through at any place. They are falling back! They are beaten! What will the duke do, now?"

Up to this moment, the King of England and his two brothers had remained on the hill, together, that they might better observe the operations of both armies, and it must have seemed to them that their plan of battle promised complete success. On the duke's left, indeed, his host of Bretons, horse and foot, had suffered such severe losses that they were retreating in much disorder. In their panic rout they were confusing also his left centre, and at the same time his entire right wing had staggered back down the slope in dismay. [310]

Terrible was the disappointment and wild was the wrath of the Norman leader as he witnessed this first result of the stubborn valour of the Saxons. They had suffered small loss, comparatively, and their confidence in themselves and in their king was stronger than ever. It was only too strong, for it became a great danger.

Sometimes the power of a really great leader of men shows at its best under adverse circumstances. Dark as seemed the prospect before him, Duke William had lost neither heart nor hope. He was among his troops, now, galloping from point to point, commanding, directing,

encouraging, even threatening. It was by his own personal exertions and address that his beaten forces were rallying at the very moment when the Saxon right wing, contrary to the strict orders of King Harold, broke forth from the security of its defences to pursue the fleeing Bretons.

[311]

Ned, the son of Webb, heard, or thought he heard, a terrible exclamation from the king, and then both of the earls, his brothers, Gyrth and Leofwine, spurred away. They went to recall the mistaken sally of their overconfident men, but they were too late.

The quick eyes of Duke William had instantly perceived his opportunity. He was already reinforcing with fresh troops his rallying fugitives, and at once, in the open field, their superior numbers became available. In vain did their rash Saxon pursuers rally around the two royal brothers. In vain did they cut down hundreds of their foemen while they strove to fight their way back to the shelter of their Senlac defences.

"Swarms!" groaned Ned. "Oh, what swarms of Normans are pouring around those men! William himself is there! More of his men-at-arms are charging in! His very best knights! What? There! He and Earl Gyrth are fighting, hand to hand! William's horse is killed! He has fallen! He is up again! Gyrth's horse, too, is killed! They are fighting again on foot! Is it Gyrth? No, I can see William! Yes! Oh, dear! Gyrth is dead!"

[312]

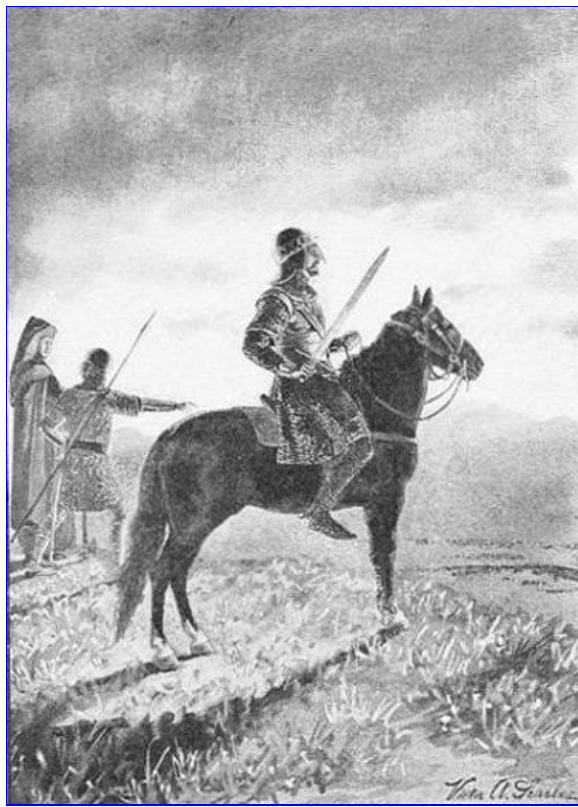
It was terribly exciting to watch such a struggle as this had become. Near him sat King Harold, himself, upon his horse, as motionless as a bronze image.

"Father Brian," whispered Ned, hoarsely, "Leofwine, too, is down. King Harold hath no brothers, now. He must fight the rest of this battle alone. Oh, this is dreadful!"

Dark, indeed, had now become the prospect before the central body of the Saxon army. Although the defences in front of it were unbroken, those at its right as well as at its left were very soon passed by the Normans. It was afterward said that Duke William had cunningly ordered his troops on the Saxon right also to pretend flight, that their enemies might be tempted to follow as those on the left had followed the Bretons.

[313]

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"NEAR HIM SAT KING HAROLD HIMSELF, UPON HIS HORSE, AS MOTIONLESS AS A BRONZE IMAGE."

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However that may be, the sun was now sinking, and the centre of King Harold's army was all that was left of it in good fighting order. Of its assailants, the number which had fallen was believed to equal, man for man, that of all the Saxons who had been present at Senlac that morning. Nearly a fourth part of Duke William's army, therefore, lay upon the field. The remainder of it, however, still outnumbered, five to one, the remnant of King's Harold's heroes.

Firm as a rock stood these, and against them the furious tide of the invaders, horsemen and footmen, broke in vain. Still they held their strong position upon the hill of the standards, the Golden Dragon of England and the Fighting Man that was Harold's own personal banner. The king, himself, was now fighting on foot in the front rank of his house-carles, and he had performed mighty deeds of valour. [314]

In this hour, however, the subtle war cunning of the duke came to his aid. The shields and the armour of the closely serried Saxons behind these remaining works prevented the shafts of his bowmen from injuring greatly the solid wedge of warriors into which the thingmen and their comrades had formed themselves around and on the hill. The battle could not be altogether lost so long as this living wall should remain unbroken. All the Saxons were on foot, and the Normans, who were mounted, gained little thereby, since their unarmoured horses were so often killed by javelins as they pressed forward.

"Shoot up! Shoot up!" shouted the duke to his archers. "Let the shafts fall upon them from above. They have no shields over their heads."

Thousands of strong-armed bowmen at once obeyed him. In a moment more, it was as if a thick hail of sharp arrows was falling among the Saxons behind, while those who were in front were still compelled to hold their shields before them. The cunning device of the duke might yet have been baffled, perhaps, but for one of its first fatal consequences. Man after man was going down, and the king himself looked up to see what this might be. Even as he raised his head, the battle was lost, and the crown of England passed to William of Normandy, for from the sky above, as it seemed, a hissing shaft came down and pierced through his right eye to the brain. [315]

"The king hath fallen!" screamed Ned, the son of Webb. "Harold is dead! He is dead! We are beaten! England is conquered!"

"Come thou on with me, then," said Father Brian. "There are plenty of horses. We must speed away from this place. The house-carles are wearied with long fighting, but they will all die where they stand. Thou and I have no need to die with them. Quickly, now, my boy!" [316]

Fierce, frenzied, desperate, was the last stand of the Saxons around the royal standards and the dying king. Terrible was the carnage which they made among the Normans, but it was as Father Brian had said: the warriors of Harold were worn out with long fighting, and they were now continually assailed by arrivals of fresh troops, men who had hitherto done little or nothing. Flesh and blood could endure no more, and the work of destruction was slowly completed. One strong body of Saxons, it was afterward related, was actually getting away when the darkness came. It was closely followed by the duke himself and his men-at-arms. Then the Saxons turned again upon their pursuers, and William not only lost many horsemen, but came very near losing his own life also in the hour of victory.

"Where shall we go now?" asked Ned, as he and his friend clambered into the saddles of two horses which had been tethered in the rear of the lost position on the hill. [317]

"I will guide thee, my boy," replied the missionary. "Thou and I may make good our escape, if we are prudent."

"How on earth can we get away from the Normans?" groaned Ned. "Some of them are between us, already, and all the rest of England. I don't see how we are to get through William's army."

"We must get out of the battle, first," said Father Brian. "Then we'll ride away around into the Norman camps at the seashore. We would do well to obtain speech with him in the morning. Now that he hath slain King Harold and considereth himself the ruler of England, he will gladly welcome any from among the Saxons who cometh to him with a peaceful tongue. Be thou mindful of that, my boy. I am glad that thou art able to speak French to him."

"So am I," said Ned, with some energy. "I'd really like to have a good talk with William the Conqueror. But, oh, Father Brian! this hath been an awful affair. They will not need so many surgeons or ambulances or hospitals as civilised armies would. As soon as any man is down, somebody killeth him. They do not seem to know what mercy is." [318]

"That they do not," said Father Brian. "Thou wilt bear in mind, however, that the killing of King Harold and all of his best men giveth to William of Normandy all the good title he hath to the crown of England. If Harold had escaped all alone from this battle-field he would be king still."

"The English elected him fairly," replied Ned. "Not one voter among them put in a ballot for the duke. I suppose they won't try to do any more against him after this, though. Let him have it, then. All I can say is that I hope there will never be another invasion of England by anybody." [319]

"No man may foretell concerning that matter," said the missionary. "There hath been much fighting on this island. Even Ireland herself hath been attacked many a time, and she might be again. It is my opinion, though, my boy, that England will for ever continue to be English, whoever is king, even as Ireland continueth Irish."

"Most likely thou art right," replied Ned. "The duke may bring in droves on droves of Normans and all sorts. He won't think of killing off the Angles, and Saxons, and Danes, and Welsh, and

Scotch. We don't, when they come to America. Every kind that lands among us becometh American, and I shouldn't wonder if even the Normans became Englishmen."

"Better for them to become civilised," said the missionary, thoughtfully. "The duke will kill none unless it may be a few earls and other high men who may stand in his way, or such commoners as resist him. I think he will speak all others fairly and make peace with them. Were he not to do so, there are axes enough left in England to make away with all that the Senlac battle hath left of his army." [320]

"That's so!" exclaimed Ned. "I've seen some of them. Anyhow, I don't want to be an English earl just now. It wouldn't be safe."

"Come!" said Father Brian. "Faster! The farther we get away from Senlac the safer we will be from sword and spear. It is getting very dark. I am glad of it."

After that he did not again draw his rein until they had almost reached a line of tents a little distance inland from the town of Hastings.

"Now do I wish I knew," he declared, emphatically, "which of these may happen to belong to some man who was killed in the battle. Oh, Ned, the son of Webb, let us make trial of this large one that is nearest at hand. Speak thou to yonder gaily apparelled youth in thy best French." [321]

"Ho! whose tent is this?" Ned asked at once, as he rode nearer.

He shouted his question at a young man who appeared to be a sort of esquire, stepping hastily forward from the canvas doorway to meet them.

"This is the marquee of the Sieur Raoul de Berri," replied its custodian. "Whether he be now alive or dead we know not. What news, if any, have ye from the battle?"

"Of thy master I know nothing," said Ned, "but of the battle I can tell thee that the Saxon army is beaten and that Harold the King is dead. Hard hath been the fighting, all day, and the slain are many."

There had been hurrying feet from all directions toward the spot where the two newcomers had halted, and so there had been other hearers besides the gay esquire of Sieur Raoul de Berri. Loud and prolonged were the shouts with which the announcement made by Ned was received, for before this there had arrived doubtful news from the hard contested field. [322]

"Dismount ye and come in," said the esquire. "Well may we feast the bringers of joyful tidings. Whoever ye may be, ye are most welcome. Even while ye are eating and drinking, moreover, we pray you to talk on. We would gladly hear all that we may concerning the great battle. How was it fought? Can ye tell us the names of any that were slain? How fareth it with our liege lord the duke, that shall henceforth be King of England?"

It was truly a good thing that Ned, the son of Webb, was so well practised in his French, albeit the kind he spoke varied much from that which was now being uttered so volubly around him. For once, indeed, Father Brian was left to something which to him painfully resembled silence. [323]

Before long, however, there arrived a swarm of French and Norman clergymen, all of whom could understand the kind of Latin taught in the great school at Clontarf. Speedily, then, the good missionary went out with them, and Ned was left alone to entertain his tent-full of eager and excited listeners. All the while, moreover, the good news spread rapidly through all that camp and was carried on to others.

"Sir," said Ned to the esquire, at last, "I am tired out! I think there is nothing else that will use up a man so completely as a great battle."

"Ay!" exclaimed his new friend, hospitably. "Thy couch is prepared for thee. Thou hast fought well this day. Well am I assured that our liege lord, the Duke of the Normans, and the Sieur de Berri himself would have us take all care of thee."

"I shall be glad to get to bed," said Ned. [324]

"Sleep thou well," replied the esquire, "and on the morrow thou shalt surely be brought into the presence of the duke, as thou desirest."

The appointments of that marquee and the comfort of its arrangements for sleeping were more in accordance with Norman luxury than with Saxon plainness. Ned, the son of Webb, took note of them, weary as he was. Nevertheless, before his eyes closed he was thinking:

"If here isn't another of these frauds! I didn't do any real fighting, for either side. I'm afraid it's as bad, almost, as the Stamford bridge humbug, and what to do about it I don't know. Oh, how sorry I am that I had no opportunity for telling King Harold that I did not kill Sikend the Berserker. I shall always have the credit of it, without any fault of mine. They may put it into books of history, just like other great exploits."

His slumbers were long and heavy, and they were broken at last by a friendly shaking at the hands of Father Brian. [325]

"Up! Up!" he shouted. "O Ned, the son of Webb, hasten and eat thy breakfast. The Duke of Normandy cometh. Not yet, I think, are we to call him the King of England. That may not be until he hath been duly crowned as king. My boy, I trust that now thou art shortly to have speech with him."

Ned became very wide awake while he heard what the missionary had to say, and his mind grew very busy.

"I thought likely," he said, "that the duke would come back to his camp. He won't march for London till he knoweth what the other Saxons are doing. His army was badly mauled, yesterday, anyhow, and he must get it into shape again."

The army of Norman invaders had indeed been seriously damaged. If a second English army could have attacked them on the day after Senlac, it would have found them unfit for another such struggle. There was no such army in existence, however, and William went on with his plans without armed interruption. He went first to inspect his fleet, and he sent the greater part of it back to Normandy and other places. [326]

At about the middle of the forenoon of that day, the duke was at a camp a little south of Hastings, attended by a number of his great men. Among them were his brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and Lanfranc, the famous scholar.

Here it was that Ned, the son of Webb, and Father Brian were brought before him, and they had already been named to the stern and haughty Conquerors as the persons who had brought the first tidings of the victory.

"They are guests of mine, my liege," said the Sieur Raoul de Berri, as he saw them approaching. "The youth is a young thane from Northumberland, and the priest is his tutor. They have prayed for an audience."

"This day will I hear but few words from any," replied the duke, "but if it will please thee, the boy may speak. Let the priest keep silence. What wilt thou, O Ned, the son of Webb?" [327]

Ned had recently become somewhat hardened to meetings with remarkable men, but he was now gazing at the Conqueror with manifest admiration. Harold, the son of Godwin, himself, had not appeared more royally majestic or carried in his face such an expression of conscious power, combined with indomitable strength of will. Ned kept his courage up, however, and boldly responded:

"O Duke of Normandy and Conqueror of England, all I wanted to say to thee is this: The best thing thou canst do for this country, now it is thine, is to run in railroads and telegraph lines and newspapers as fast as thou art able. Also, thou hadst better have Mr. Lanfranc appointed Superintendent of Public Schools. He can set up primary and grammar schools and academies and universities, all over the island. I can tell him what books to get and where to get them. I will give him, now, a complete list of all I went through at Grammar School Number Sixty-eight. He couldn't beat it if he should try—" [328]

"Halt thou then!" interrupted the duke. "Lanfranc, this youth's matter appertaineth to thee. I know naught of such affairs. Let his tutor lead him away now. He is but malapert to urge me at such a time as this. Forward, all! Odo, my brother, we have much to do ere sunset. England is yet but half won and we sheathe not our swords yet."

Father Brian's hand had been upon the bridle of Ned's horse, and he hurried him away.

"O Ned, the son of Webb!" he exclaimed, "what is in thee? Thou art overdaring. The duke was all but wroth with thee!"

"I guess that is so," said Ned. "His eyes flashed as if he had half a mind to hit me, and I don't see why. I gave him the best kind of advice. Didst thou not say that thou hast some of thy clergymen friends to consult with?" [329]

"That have I," replied Father Brian, "and I must go quickly to meet them. Thou mayest amuse thyself by riding around for awhile. Then get thee back to the tent of the good Sieur de Berri. There or elsewhere I hope to meet thee again, for our companionship hath been exceedingly pleasant and profitable. Fare thee well, for the hour. I must go."

"Good-bye, then, Father Brian," said Ned. "Come back to the tent, if thou canst. I hope thou wilt soon have a mission school of thine own. There will be scholars enough, but where thou wilt get books and things, I can't guess."

Away rode the good missionary, and Ned, the son of Webb, was left to himself. He did not feel like exploring the camps of the Normans, and his horse galloped on with him until he was pulled in at the shore of the sea. It was at a place where a narrow wooden pier jutted out from a sandy beach between high rocks on either hand. [330]

Here Ned dismounted and walked down to the water's edge, like a boy in a dream. A small scow-built punt, with a mast and sail in it, lay rocking on the waves by the pier.

"I will take off my armour before I get in," he remarked. "I'm glad I kept on my outing shirt and my trousers under my mail, all the while. This is a very curious business. I saved my hat, too. Oh, don't I feel easier and lighter? I never want to be an ironclad again."

His helmet and mail and shield and weapons were pitched from him across the sand in a hurry, and he stepped eagerly into the boat. A good wind was blowing offshore and he put up the sail to catch it.

"I don't feel like rowing," he remarked, "after such a time as I have had. This breeze ought to take me to the other side before sunset. It is a good thing for me that this is Green Lake and not the Atlantic Ocean or the North Sea. Oh, what a tremendous book that is. It's safe in the cubby under the stern seat, too." [331]

On he sailed, after that, swiftly and silently, over the sparkling billows of the little lake. Almost before he was aware of it, the punt ran ashore at the place where Nanny had so skilfully pitched



him over her head. He saw the two-wheeled barrow among the weeds a few yards away and he went and brought it to the margin. Into it he carried, with great care and an appearance of something like respect, the great folio History of the Normans.

"I'll go home now," he thought, "but I wish I had Lars with me, and Father Brian. I'd like to show father and mother and all of them my armour."

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He found it tiresome work to trundle the barrow, and he was both warm and weary when he reached his grandfather's gate. [332]

"There they are!" he exclaimed. "There's a whole crowd of them, waiting for me."

"Hullo, Ned!" came loudly from within the gate. "Where have you been all day?"

"Why, Uncle Jack—"

"My dear child!" interrupted Grandmother Webb. "I was almost beginning to be worried about you. Why did you stay so?"

"Did you catch anything?" asked his grandfather. "Did you get any bites?"

"Well!" responded Ned, hardly knowing exactly what to say. "I'll tell you how it is. It was this book."

"My folio!" exclaimed Grandfather Webb. "I had no idea that you really would take it along. I'd have said no!"

"I did," said Ned. "I've been invading England with Harold Hardrada of Norway and the Vikings. Then I went all the way from York and the battle of Stamford bridge to the battle of Senlac, with King Harold of England and Duke William the Conqueror." [333]

"Oh, that's it, is it?" exclaimed Uncle Jack. "I know how that is, myself. A man can sit in his own room, nowadays, and travel all around the world. All he needs is plenty of guide-books and maps and histories. You've been doing it, have you? I think you had better keep it up and learn something. Travel everywhere. See all there is to be seen, and know all you can."

"That's what I think I'll do," replied Ned, "but it's hard work, if there's as much fighting as I've been having."

He had the folio in his arms now, as if he were hugging it, but his grandfather took it away as if he were pleased to get it back unwetted by a bath in Green Lake, and carried it back to its place in the library.

THE END.

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## TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE:

Obvious printer errors have been corrected. Otherwise, the author's original spelling, punctuation and hyphenation have been left intact.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NED, THE SON OF WEBB: WHAT HE DID \*\*\*

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