

Hero Tales of the Far North eBook

Hero Tales of the Far North by Jacob Riis

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Page 1

A KNIGHT ERRANT OF THE SEA

The Eighteenth Century broke upon a noisy family quarrel in the north of Europe. Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, the royal hotspur of all history, and Frederik of Denmark had fallen out. Like their people, they were first cousins, and therefore all the more bent on settling the old question which was the better man. After the fashion of the lion and the unicorn, they fought "all about the town," and, indeed, about every town that came in their way, now this and now that side having the best of it. On the sea, which was the more important because neither Swedes nor Danes could reach their fighting ground or keep up their armaments without command of the waterways, the victory rested finally with the Danes. And this was due almost wholly to one extraordinary figure, the like of which is scarce to be found in the annals of warfare, Peder Tordenskjold. Rising in ten brief years from the humblest place before the mast, a half-grown lad, to the rank of admiral, ennobled by his King and the idol of two nations, only to be assassinated on the "field of honor" at thirty, he seems the very incarnation of the stormy times of the Eleven Years' War, with which his sun rose and set; for the year in which peace was made also saw his death.

Peder Jansen Wessel was born on October 28, 1690, in the city of Trondhjem, Norway, which country in those days was united with Denmark under one king. His father was an alderman with eighteen children. Peder was the tenth of twelve wild boys. It is related that the father in sheer desperation once let make for him a pair of leathern breeches which he would not be able to tear. But the lad, not to be beaten so easily, sat on a grind-stone and had one of his school-fellows turn it till the seat was worn thin, a piece of bravado that probably cost him dear, for doubtless the exasperated father's stick found the attenuated spot.

Since he would have none of the school, his father had him apprenticed out to a tailor with the injunction not to spare the rod. But sitting cross-legged on a tailor's stool did not suit the lad, and he took it out of his master by snowballing him thoroughly one winter's day. Next a barber undertook to teach him his trade; but Peder ran away and was drifting about the streets when the King came to Norway. The boy saw the splendid uniforms and heard the story of the beautiful capital by the Oeresund, with its palaces and great fighting ships. When the King departed, he was missing, and for a while there was peace in Trondhjem.

Down in Copenhagen the homeless lad was found wandering about by the King's chaplain, who, being himself a Norwegian, took him home and made him a household page. But the boy's wanderings had led him to the navy-yard, where he saw midshipmen of his own size at drill, and he could think of nothing else. When he should have been waiting at table he was down among the ships. For him there was ever but one way to any goal, the straight cut, and at fifteen he wrote to the King asking to be appointed a midshipman. "I am wearing away my life as a servant," he wrote. "I want to

give it, and my blood, to the service of your Majesty, and I will serve you with all my might while I live!"



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The navy had need of that kind of recruits, and the King saw to it that he was apprenticed at once. And that was the beginning of his strangely romantic career.

Three years he sailed before the mast and learned seamanship, while Charles was baiting the Muscovite and the North was resting on its arms. Then came Pultava and the Swedish King's crushing defeat. The storm-centre was transferred to the North again, and the war on the sea opened with a splendid deed, fit to appeal to any ardent young heart. At the battle in the Bay of Kjoerge, the *Dannebrog*, commanded by Ivar Hvitfeldt, caught fire, and by its position exposed the Danish fleet to great danger. Hvitfeldt could do one of two things: save his own life and his men's by letting his ship drift before the wind and by his escape risking the rest of the fleet and losing the battle, or stay where he was to meet certain death. He chose the latter, anchored his vessel securely, and fought on until the ship was burned down to the water's edge and blew up with him and his five hundred men. Ivar Hvitfeldt's name is forever immortal in the history of his country. A few years ago they raised the wreck of the *Dannebrog*, fitly called after the Danish flag, and made of its guns a monument that stands on Langelinie, the beautiful shore road of Copenhagen.

Fired by such deeds, young Wessel implored the King, before he had yet worn out his first midshipman's jacket, to give him command of a frigate. He compromised on a small privateer, the *Ormen*, but with it he did such execution in Swedish waters and earned such renown as a dauntless sailor and a bold scout whose information about the enemy was always first and best, that before spring they gave him a frigate with eighteen guns and the emphatic warning "not to engage any enemy when he was not clearly the stronger." He immediately brought in a Swedish cruiser, the *Alabama* of those days, that had been the terror of the sea. In a naval battle in the Baltic soon after, he engaged with his little frigate two of the enemy's line-of-battle ships that were trying to get away, and only when a third came to help them did he retreat, so battered that he had to seek port to make repairs. Accused of violating his orders, his answer was prompt: "I promised your Majesty to do my best, and I did." King Frederik IV, himself a young and spirited man, made him a captain, jumping him over fifty odd older lieutenants, and gave him leave to war on the enemy as he saw fit.

The immediate result was that the Governor of Goeteborg, the enemy's chief seaport in the North Sea, put a price on his head. Captain Wessel heard of it and sent word into town that he was outside—to come and take him; but to hurry, for time was short. While waiting for a reply, he fell in with two Swedish men-of-war having in tow a Danish prize. That was not to be borne, and though they together mounted ninety-four guns to his eighteen, he fell upon them like a thunderbolt. They beat him off, but he returned for their prize. That time they nearly sank him with three broad-sides. However, he ran for the Norwegian coast and saved his ship. In his report of this affair he excuses himself for running away with the reflection that allowing himself to be sunk "would not rightly have benefited his Majesty's service."



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However, the opportunity came to him swiftly of “rightly benefiting” the King’s service. After the battle of Kolberger Heide, that had gone against the Swedes, he found them beaching their ships under cover of the night to prevent their falling into the hands of the victors. Wessel halted them with the threat that every man Jack in the fleet should be made to walk the plank, saved the ships, and took their admiral prisoner to his chief. When others slept, Wessel was abroad with his swift sailer. If wind and sea went against him, he knew how to turn his mishap to account. Driven in under the hostile shore once, he took the opportunity, as was his wont, to get the lay of the land and of the enemy. He learned quickly that in the harbor of Wesensoe, not far away, a Swedish cutter was lying with a Danish prize. She carried eight guns and had a crew of thirty-six men; but though he had at the moment only eighteen sailors in his boat, he crept up the coast at once, slipped quietly in after sundown, and took ship and prize with a rush, killing and throwing overboard such as resisted. In Sweden mothers hushed their crying children with his dreaded name; on the sea they came near to thinking him a troll, so sudden and unexpected were his onsets. But there was no witchcraft about it. He sailed swiftly because he was a skilled sailor and because he missed no opportunity to have the bottom of his ship scraped and greased. And when on board, pistol and cutlass hung loose; for it was a time of war with a brave and relentless foe.

His reconnoitring expeditions he always headed himself, and sometimes he went alone. Thus, when getting ready to take Marstrand, a fortified seaport of great importance to Charles, he went ashore disguised as a fisherman and peddled fish through the town, even in the very castle itself, where he took notice, along with the position of the guns and the strength of the garrison, of the fact that the commandant had two pretty daughters. He was a sailor, sure enough. Once when ashore on such an expedition, he was surprised by a company of dragoons. His men escaped, but the dragoons cut off his way to the shore. As they rode at him, reaching out for his sword, he suddenly dashed among them, cut one down, and, diving through the surf, swam out to the boat, his sword between his teeth. Their bullets churned up the sea all about him, but he was not hit. He seemed to bear a charmed life; in all his fights he was wounded but once. That was in the attack on the strongly fortified port of Stroemstad, in which he was repulsed with a loss of 96 killed and 246 wounded, while the Swedish loss footed up over 1500, a fight which led straight to the most astonishing chapter in his whole career, of which more anon.



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All Denmark and Norway presently rang with the stories of his exploits. They were always of the kind to appeal to the imagination, for in truth he was a very knight errant of the sea who fought for the love of it as well as of the flag, ardent patriot that he was. A brave and chivalrous foe he loved next to a loyal friend. Cowardice he loathed. Once when ordered to follow a retreating enemy with his frigate *Hvide Oernen* (the White Eagle) of thirty guns, he hugged her so close that in the darkness he ran his ship into the great Swedish man-of-war *Oesel* of sixty-four guns. The chance was too good to let pass. Seeing that the *Oesel's* lower gun-ports were closed, and reasoning from this that she had been struck in the water-line and badly damaged, he was for boarding her at once, but his men refused to follow him. In the delay the *Oesel* backed away. Captain Wessel gave chase, pelted her with shot, and called to her captain, whose name was *Soestjerna* (sea-star), to stop.

"Running away from a frigate, are you? Shame on you, coward and poltroon! Stay and fight like a man for your King and your flag!"

Seeing him edge yet farther away, he shouted in utter exasperation, "Your name shall be dog-star forever, not sea-star, if you don't stay."

"But all this," he wrote sadly to the King, "with much more which was worse, had no effect."

However, on his way back to join the fleet he ran across a convoy of ten merchant vessels, guarded by three of the enemy's line-of-battle ships. He made a feint at passing, but, suddenly turning, swooped down upon the biggest trader, ran out his boats, made fast, and towed it away from under the very noses of its protectors. It meant prize-money for his men, but their captain did not forget their craven conduct of the night, which had made him lose a bigger prize, and with the money they got a sound flogging.

The account of the duel between his first frigate, *Loevendahl's Galley*, of eighteen guns, and a Swede of twenty-eight guns reads like the doings of the old vikings, and indeed both commanders were likely descended straight from those arch fighters. Wessel certainly was. The other captain was an English officer, Bactman by name, who was on the way to deliver his ship, that had been bought in England, to the Swedes. They met in the North Sea and fell to fighting by noon of one day. The afternoon of the next saw them at it yet. Twice the crew of the Swedish frigate had thrown down their arms, refusing to fight any more. Vainly the vessel had tried to get away; the Dane hung to it like a leech. In the afternoon of the second day Wessel was informed that his powder had given out. He had a boat sent out with a herald, who presented to Captain Bactman his regrets that he had to quit for lack of powder, but would he come aboard and shake hands?



The Briton declined. Meanwhile the ships had drifted close enough to speak through the trumpet, and Captain Wessel shouted over from his quarter-deck that “if he could lend him a little powder, they might still go on.” Captain Bactman smilingly shook his head, and then the two drank to one another’s health, each on his own quarter-deck, and parted friends, while their crews manned what was left of the yards and cheered each other wildly.



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Wessel's enemies, of whom he had many, especially among the nobility, who looked upon him as a vulgar upstart, used this incident to bring him before a court-martial. It was unpatriotic, they declared, and they demanded that he be degraded and fined. His defence, which with all the records of his career are in the Navy Department at Copenhagen, was brief but to the point. It is summed up in the retort to his accusers that "they themselves should be rebuked, and severely, for failing to understand that an officer in the King's service should be promoted instead of censured for doing his plain duty," and that there was nothing in the articles of war commanding him to treat an honorable foe otherwise than with honor.

It must be admitted that he gave his critics no lack of cause. His enterprises were often enough of a hair-raising kind, and he had scant patience with censure. Thus once, when harassed by an Admiralty order purposely issued to annoy him, he wrote back: "The biggest fool can see that to obey would defeat all my plans. I shall not do it. It may suit folk who love loafing about shore, but to an honest man such talk is disgusting, let alone that the thing can't be done." He was at that time twenty-six years old, and in charge of the whole North Sea fleet. No wonder he had enemies.

However, the King was his friend. He made him a nobleman, and gave him the name Tordenskjold. It means "thunder shield."

"Then, by the powers," he swore when he was told, "I shall thunder in the ears of the Swedes so that the King shall hear of it!" And he kept his word.

Charles had determined to take Denmark with one fell blow. He had an army assembled in Skaane to cross the sound, which was frozen over solid. All was ready for the invasion in January 1716. The people throughout Sweden had assembled in the churches to pray for the success of the King's arms, and he was there himself to lead; but in the early morning hours a strong east wind broke up the ice, and the campaign ended before it was begun. Charles then turned on Norway, and laid siege to the city of Frederikshald, which, with its strong fort, Frederiksteen, was the key to that country. A Danish fleet lay in the Skagerak, blocking his way of reinforcements by sea. Tordenskjold, with his frigate, *Hvide Oernen*, and six smaller ships (the frigate *Vindhunden* of sixteen guns, and five vessels of light draught, two of which were heavily armed), was doing scouting duty for the Admiral when he learned that the entire Swedish fleet of forty-four ships that was intended to aid in the operations against Frederikshald lay in the harbor of Dynekilen waiting its chance to slip out. It was so well shielded there that its commander sent word to the King to rest easy; nothing could happen to him. He would join him presently.

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Tordenskjold saw that if he could capture or destroy this fleet Norway was saved; the siege must perforce be abandoned. And Norway was his native land, which he loved with his whole fervid soul. But no time was to be lost. He could not go back to ask for permission, and one may shrewdly guess that he did not want to, for it would certainly have been refused. He heard that the Swedish officers, secure in their stronghold, were to attend a wedding on shore the next day. His instructions from the Admiralty were: in an emergency always to hold a council of war, and to abide by its decision. At daybreak he ran his ship alongside *Vindhunden*, her companion frigate, and called to the captain:

“The Swedish officers are bidden to a wedding, and they have forgotten us. What do you say—shall we go unasked?”

Captain Grip was game. “Good enough!” he shouted back. “The wind is fair, and we have all day. I am ready.”

That was the council of war and its decision. Tordenskjold gave the signal to clear for action, and sailed in at the head of his handful of ships.

The inlet to the harbor of Dynekilen is narrow and crooked, winding between reefs and rocky steeps quite two miles, and only in spots more than four hundred feet wide. Halfway in was a strong battery. Tordenskjold’s fleet was received with a tremendous fire from all the Swedish ships, from the battery, and from an army of four thousand soldiers lying along shore. The Danish ships made no reply. They sailed up grimly silent till they reached a place wide enough to let them wear round, broadside on. Then their guns spoke. Three hours the battle raged before the Swedish fire began to slacken. As soon as he noticed it, Tordenskjold slipped into the inner harbor under cover of the heavy pall of smoke, and before the Swedes suspected their presence they found his ships alongside. Broadside after broadside crashed into them, and in terror they fled, soldiers and sailors alike. While they ran Tordenskjold swooped down upon the half-way battery, seized it, and spiked its guns. The fight was won.

But the heaviest part was left—the towing out of the captured ships. All the afternoon Tordenskjold led the work in person, pulling on ropes, cheering on his men. The Swedes, returning gamely to the fight, showered them with bullets from shore. One of the abandoned vessels caught fire. Lieutenant Toender, of Tordenskjold’s staff, a veteran with a wooden leg, boarded it just as the quartermaster ran up yelling that the ship was full of powder and was going to blow up. He tried to jump overboard, but the lieutenant seized him by the collar and, stumping along, made him lead the way to the magazine. A fuse had been laid to an open keg of powder, and the fire was sputtering within an inch of it when Lieutenant Toender plucked it out, smothered it between thumb and forefinger, and threw it through the nearest port-hole. There were two hundred barrels of powder in the ship.



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Tordenskjold had kept his word to the King. Not as much as a yawl of the Dynekilen fleet was left to the enemy. He had sunk or burned thirteen and captured thirty-one ships with his seven, and all the piled-up munitions of war were in his hands. King Charles gave up the siege, marched his army out of Norway, and the country was saved. The victory cost Tordenskjold but nineteen killed and fifty-seven wounded. On his own ship six men were killed and twenty wounded.

Of infinite variety was this sea-fighter. After a victory like this, one hears of him in the next breath gratifying a passing whim of the King, who wanted to know what the Swedish people thought of their Government after Charles's long wars that are said to have cost their country a million men. Tordenskjold overheard it, had himself rowed across to Sweden, picked up there a wedding party, bridegroom, minister, guests, and all, including the captain of the shore watch who was among them, and returned in time for the palace dinner with his catch. King Frederik was entertaining Czar Peter the Great, who had been boasting of the unhesitating loyalty of his men which his Danish host could not match. He now had the tables turned upon him. It is recorded that the King sent the party back with royal gifts for the bride. One would be glad to add that Tordenskjold sent back, too, the silver pitcher and the parlor clock his men took on their visit. But he didn't. They were still in Copenhagen a hundred years later, and may be they are yet. It was not like his usual gallantry toward the fair sex. But perhaps he didn't know anything about it.

Then we find him, after an unsuccessful attack on Goeteborg that cost many lives, sending in his adjutant to congratulate the Swedish commandant on their "gallant encounter" the day before, and exchanging presents with him in token of mutual regard. And before one can turn the page he is discovered swooping down upon Marstrand, taking town and fleet anchored there, and the castle itself with its whole garrison, all with two hundred men, swelled by stratagem into an army of thousands. We are told that an officer sent out from the castle to parley, issuing forth from a generous dinner, beheld the besieging army drawn up in street after street, always two hundred men around every corner, as he made his way through the town, piloted by Tordenskjold himself, who was careful to take him the longest way, while the men took the short cut to the next block. The man returned home with the message that the town was full of them and that resistance was useless. The ruse smacks of Peder Wessel's boyish fight with a much bigger fellow who had beaten him once by gripping his long hair, and so getting his head in chancery. But Peder had taken notice. Next time he came to the encounter with hair cut short and his whole head smeared with soft-soap, and that time he won.



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The most extraordinary of all his adventures befell when, after the attack on Stroemstad, he was hastening home to Copenhagen. Crossing the Kattegat in a little smack that carried but two three-pound guns, he was chased and overtaken by a Swedish frigate of sixteen guns and a crew of sixty men. Tordenskjold had but twenty-one, and eight of them were servants and non-combatants. They were dreadfully frightened, and tradition has it that one of them wept when he saw the Swede coming on. Her captain called upon him to surrender, but the answer was flung back:

“I am Tordenskjold! Come and take me, if you can.”

With that came a tiny broadside that did brisk execution on the frigate. Tordenskjold had hauled both his guns over on the “fighting side” of his vessel. There ensued a battle such as Homer would have loved to sing. Both sides banged away for all they were worth. In the midst of the din and smoke Tordenskjold used his musket with cool skill; his servants loaded while he fired. At every shot a man fell on the frigate.

Word was brought that there was no more round shot. He bade them twist up his pewter dinner service and fire that, which they did. The Swede tried vainly to board. Tordenskjold manoeuvred his smack with such skill that they could not hook on. Seeing this, Captain Lind, commander of the frigate, called to him to desist from the useless struggle; he would be honored to carry such a prisoner into Goeteborg. Back came the taunt:

“Neither you nor any other Swede shall ever carry me there!” And with that he shot the captain down.[1]

[Footnote 1: He was not mortally wounded, and Tordenskjold took him prisoner later at the capture of Marstrand.]

When his men saw him fall, they were seized with panic and made off as quickly as they could, while Tordenskjold’s crew, of whom only fourteen were left, beat their drums and blew trumpets in frantic defiance. Their captain was for following the Swede and boarding her, but he couldn’t. Sails, rigging, and masts were shot to pieces. Perhaps the terror of the Swedes was increased by the sight of Tordenskjold’s tame bear making faces at them behind his master. It went with him everywhere till that day, and came out of the fight unscathed. But during the night the crew ran the vessel on the Swedish shore, whence Tordenskjold himself reached Denmark in an open boat which he had to keep bailing all night, for the boat was shot full of holes, and though he and his companions stuffed their spare clothing into them it leaked badly. The enemy got the smack, after all, and the bear, which, being a Norwegian, proved so untractable on Swedish soil that, sad to relate, in the end they cut him up and ate him.

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King Charles, himself a knightly soul and an admirer of a gallant enemy, gave orders to have all Tordenskjold's belongings sent back to him, but he did not live to see the order carried out. He was found dead in the rifle-pits before Frederiksteen on December 11, 1718, shot through the head. It was Tordenskjold himself who brought the all-important news to King Frederik in the night of December 28,—they were not the days of telegraphs and fast steamers,—and when the King, who had been roused out of bed to receive him, could not trust his ears, he said with characteristic audacity, "I wish it were as true that your Majesty had made me a schoutbynacht,"—the rank next below admiral. And so he took the step next to the last on the ladder of his ambition.

Within seven months he took Marstrand. It is part of the record of that astonishing performance that when the unhappy Commandant hesitated as the hour of evacuation came, not sure that he had done right in capitulating, Tordenskjold walked up to the fort with a hundred men, half his force, banged on the gate, went in alone and up to the Commandant's window, thundering out:

"What are you waiting for? Don't you know time is up?"

In terror and haste, Colonel Dankwardt moved his Hessians out, and Tordenskjold marched his handful of men in. When he brought the King the keys of Marstrand, Frederik made him an admiral.

It was while blockading the port of Goeteborg in the last year of the war that he met and made a friend of Lord Carteret, the English Ambassador to Denmark, and fell in love with the picture of a young Englishwoman, Miss Norris, a lady of great beauty and wealth, who, Lord Carteret told him, was an ardent admirer of his. It was this love which indirectly sent him to his death. Lord Carteret had given him a picture of her, and as soon as peace was made he started for England; but he never reached that country. The remnant of the Swedish fleet lay in the roadstead at Goeteborg, under the guns of the two forts, New and Old Elfsborg. While Tordenskjold was away at Marstrand, the enemy sallied forth and snapped up seven of the smaller vessels of his blockading fleet. The news made him furious. He sent in, demanding them back at once, "or I will come after them." He had already made one ineffectual attempt to take New Elfsborg that cost him dear. In Goeteborg they knew the strength of his fleet and laughed at his threat. But it was never safe to laugh at Tordenskjold. The first dark night he stole in with ten armed boats, seized the shore batteries of the old fort, and spiked their guns before a shot was fired. The rising moon saw his men in possession of the ships lying at anchor. With their blue-lined coats turned inside out so that they might pass for Swedish uniforms, they surprised the watch in the guard-house and made them all prisoners. Now that there was no longer reason for caution, they raised a racket that woke the sleeping town up in a fright. The commander of the other fort sent out a boat to ascertain the cause. It met the Admiral's and challenged it, "Who goes there?"



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“Tordenskjold,” was the reply, “come to teach you to keep awake.”

It proved impossible to warp the ships out. Only one of the seven lost ones was recovered; all the rest were set on fire. By the light of the mighty bonfire Tordenskjold rowed out with his men, hauling the recovered ship right under the guns of the forts, the Danish flag flying at the bow of his boat. He had not lost a single man. A cannon-ball swept away all the oars on one side of his boat, but no one was hurt.

At Marstrand they had been up all night listening to the cannonading and the crash upon crash as the big ships blew up. They knew that Tordenskjold was abroad with his men. In the morning, when they were all in church, he walked in and sat down by his chief, the old Admiral Judicher, who was a slow-going, cautious man. He whispered anxiously, “What news?” but Tordenskjold only shrugged his shoulders with unmoved face. It is not likely that either the old Admiral or the congregation heard much of that sermon, if indeed they heard any of it. But when it was over, they saw from the walls of the town the Danish ships at anchor and heard the story of the last of Tordenskjold’s exploits. It fitly capped the climax of his life. Sweden’s entire force on the North Sea, with the exception of five small galleys, had either been captured, sunk, or burned by him.

The King would not let Tordenskjold go when peace was made, but he had his way in the end. To his undoing he consented to take with him abroad a young scalawag, the son of his landlord, who had more money than brains. In Hamburg the young man fell in with a gambler, a Swedish colonel by name of Stahl, who fleeced him of all he had and much more besides. When Tordenskjold heard of it and met the Colonel in another man’s house, he caned him soundly and threw him out in the street. For this he was challenged, but refused to fight a gambler.

“Friends,” particularly one Colonel Muennichhausen, who volunteered to be his second, talked him over, and also persuaded him to give up the pistol, with which he was an expert. The duel was fought at the Village of Gledinge, over the line from Hanover, on the morning of November 12, 1720. Tordenskjold was roused from sleep at five, and, after saying his prayers, a duty he never on any account omitted, he started for the place appointed. His old body-servant vainly pleaded with his master to take his stout blade instead of the flimsy parade sword the Admiral carried. Muennichhausen advised against it; it would be too heavy, he said. Stahl’s weapon was a long fighting rapier, and to this the treacherous second made no objection. Almost at the first thrust he ran the Admiral through. The seconds held his servant while Stahl jumped on his horse and galloped away. Tordenskjold breathed out his dauntless soul in the arms of his faithful servant and friend.



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His body lies in a black marble sarcophagus in the "Navy Church" at Copenhagen. The Danish and Norwegian peoples have never ceased to mourn their idol. He was a sailor with a sailor's faults. But he loved truth, honor, and courage in foe and friend alike. Like many seafaring men, he was deeply religious, with the unquestioning faith of a child. There is a letter in existence written by him to his father when the latter was on his death-bed that bears witness to this. He thanks him with filial affection for all his care, and says naively that he would rather have his prayers than fall heir to twenty thousand daler. His pictures show a stocky, broad-shouldered youth with frank blue eyes, full lips, and an eagle nose. His deep, sonorous voice used to be heard, in his midshipman days, above the whole congregation in the Navy Church. In after years it called louder still to Denmark's foes. When things were at their worst in storm or battle, he was wont to shout to his men, "Hi, *now* we are having a fine time!" and his battle-cry has passed into the language. By it, in desperate straits demanding stout hearts, one may know the Dane after his own heart, the real Dane, the world over. Among his own Tordenskjold is still and always will be "the Admiral of Norway's fleet."

HANS EGEDE, THE APOSTLE TO GREENLAND

When in the fall of 1909 the statement was flashed around the world that the North Pole had at last been reached, a name long unfamiliar ran from mouth to mouth with that of the man who claimed to be its discoverer. Dr. Cook was coming to Copenhagen, the daily despatches read, on the Danish Government steamer *Hans Egede*. A shipload of reporters kept an anxious lookout from the Skaw for the vessel so suddenly become famous, but few who through their telescopes made out the name at last upon the prow of the ship gave it another thought in the eager welcome to the man it brought back from the perils of the Farthest North. Yet the name of that vessel stood for something of more real account to humanity than the attainment of a goal that had been the mystery of the ages. No such welcome awaited the explorer Hans Egede, who a hundred and seventy-two years before sailed homeward over that very route, a broken, saddened man, and all he brought was the ashes of his best-beloved that they might rest in her native soil. No gold medal was struck for him; the people did not greet him with loud acclaim. The King and his court paid scant attention to him, and he was allowed to live his last days in poverty. Yet a greater honor is his than ever fell to a discoverer: the simple natives of Greenland long reckoned the time from his coming among them. To them he was in their ice-bound home what Father Damien was to the stricken lepers in the South seas, and Dr. Grenfell is to the fishermen of Labrador.

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Hans Poulsen Egede, the apostle of Greenland, was a Norwegian of Danish descent. He was born in the Northlands, in the parish of Trondenaes, on January 31, 1686. His grandfather and his father before him had been clergymen in Denmark, the former in the town of West Egede, whence the name. Graduated in a single year from the University of Copenhagen, "at which," his teachers bore witness, "no one need wonder who knows the man," he became at twenty-two pastor of a parish up in the Lofoden Islands, where the fabled maelstrom churns. Eleven years he preached to the poor fisherfolk on Sunday, and on week-days helped his parishioners rebuild the old church. When it was finished and the bishop came to consecrate it, he chided Egede because the altar was too fine; it must have cost more than they could afford.

"It did not cost anything," was his reply. "I made it myself."

No wonder his fame went far. When the church bell of Vaagen called, boats carrying Sunday-clad fishermen were seen making for the island from every point of the compass. Great crowds flocked to his church; great enough to arouse the jealousy of neighboring preachers who were not so popular, and they made it so unpleasant that his wife at last tired of it. They little dreamed that they were industriously paving the way for his greater work and for his undying fame.

The sea that surges against that rockbound coast ever called its people out in quest of adventure. Some who went nine hundred years ago found a land in the far Northwest barred by great icebergs; but once inside the barrier, they saw deep fjords like their own at home, to which the mountains sloped down, covered with a wealth of lovely flowers. On green meadows antlered deer were grazing, the salmon leaped in brawling brooks, and birds called for their mates in the barrens. Above it all towered snow-covered peaks. They saw only the summer day; they did not know how brief it was, and how long the winter night, and they called the country Greenland. They built their homes there, and other settlers came. They were hardy men, bred in a harsh climate, and they stayed. They built churches and had their priests and bishops, for Norway was Christian by that time. And they prospered after their fashion. They even paid Peter's Pence to Rome. There is a record that their contribution, being in kind, namely, walrus teeth, was sold in 1386 by the Pope's agent to a merchant in Flanders for twelve livres, fourteen sous. They kept up communication with their kin across the seas until the Black Death swept through the Old World in the Fourteenth Century; Norway, when it was gone, was like a vast tomb. Two-thirds of its people lay dead. Those who were left had enough to do at home; and Greenland was forgotten.

The seasons passed, and the savages, with whom the colonists had carried on a running feud, came out of the frozen North and overwhelmed them. Dim traditions that were whispered among the natives for centuries told of that last fight. It was the Ragnarok of the Northmen. Not one was left to tell the tale. Long years after, when fishing vessels landed on that desolate coast, they found a strange and hostile people in possession. No one had ever dared to settle there since.



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This last Egede knew, but little more. He believed that there were still settlements on the inaccessible east coast of Greenland where descendants of the old Northmen lived, cut off from all the world, sunk into ignorance and godlessness,—men and women who had once known the true light,—and his heart yearned to go to their rescue. Waking and dreaming, he thought of nothing else. The lamp in his quiet study shone out over the sea at night when his people were long asleep. Their pastor was poring over old manuscripts and the logs of whalers that had touched upon Greenland. From Bergen he gathered the testimony of many sailors. None of them had ever seen traces of, or heard of, the old Northmen.

To his bishop went Egede with his burden. Ever it rang in his ears: “God has chosen you to bring them back to the light.” The bishop listened and was interested. Yes, that was the land from which seafarers in a former king’s time had brought home golden sand. There might be more. It couldn’t be far from Cuba and Hispaniola, those golden coasts. If one were to go equipped for trading, no doubt a fine stroke of business might be done. Thus the Right Reverend Bishop Krog of Trondhjem, and Egede went home, disheartened.

At home his friends scouted him, said he was going mad to think of giving up his living on such a fool’s chase. His wife implored him to stay, and with a heavy heart Egede was about to abandon his purpose when his jealous neighbor, whose parishioners had been going to hear Egede preach, stirred up such trouble that his wife was glad to go. She even urged him to, and he took her at her word. They moved to Bergen, and from that port they sailed on May 3, 1721, on the ship *Haabet* (the Hope), with another and smaller vessel as convoy, forty-six souls all told, bound for the unknown North. The Danish King had made Egede missionary to the Greenlanders on a salary of three hundred daler a year, the same amount which Egede himself contributed of his scant store toward the equipment. The bishop’s plan had prevailed; the mission was to be carried by the expected commerce, and upon that was to be built a permanent colonization.

Early in June they sighted land, but the way to it was barred by impassable ice. A whole month they sailed to and fro, trying vainly for a passage. At last they found an opening and slipped through, only to find themselves shut in, with towering icebergs closing around them. As they looked fearfully out over the rail, their convoy signalled that she had struck, and the captain of *Haabet* cried out that all was lost. In the tumult of terror that succeeded, Egede alone remained calm. Praying for succor where there seemed to be none, he remembered the One Hundred and Seventh Psalm: “He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.” And the morning dawned clear, the ice was moving and their prison widening. On July 3, *Haabet* cleared the last ice-reef, and the shore lay open before them.



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The Eskimos came out in their kayaks, and the boldest climbed aboard the ship. In one boat sat an old man who refused the invitation. He paddled about the vessel, mumbling darkly in a strange tongue. He was an Angekok, one of the native medicine-men of whom presently Egede was to know much more. As he stood upon the deck and looked at these strangers for whose salvation he had risked all, his heart fell. They were not the stalwart Northmen he had looked for, and their jargon had no homelike sound. But a great wave of pity swept over him, and the prayer that rose to his lips was for strength to be their friend and their guide to the light.

Not at once did the way open for the coveted friendship with the Eskimos. While they thought the strangers came only to trade they were hospitable enough, but when they saw them build, clearly intent on staying, they made signs that they had better go. They pointed to the sun that sank lower toward the horizon every day, and shivered as if from extreme cold, and they showed their visitors the icebergs and the snow, making them understand that it would cover the house by and by. When it all availed nothing and the winter came on, they retired into their huts and cut the acquaintance of the white men. They were afraid that they had come to take revenge for the harm done their people in the olden time. There was nothing for it, then, but that Egede must go to them, and this he did.

They seized their spears when they saw him coming, but he made signs that he was their friend. When he had nothing else to give them, he let them cut the buttons from his coat. Throughout the fifteen years he spent in Greenland Egede never wore furs, as did the natives. The black robe he thought more seemly for a clergyman, to his great discomfort. He tells in his diary and in his letters that often when he returned from his winter travels it could stand alone when he took it off, being frozen stiff. After a while he got upon neighborly terms with the Eskimos; but, if anything, the discomfort was greater. They housed him at night in their huts, where the filth and the stench were unendurable. They showed their special regard by first licking off the piece of seal they put before him, and if he rejected it they were hurt. Their housekeeping, of which he got an inside view, was embarrassing in its simplicity. The dish-washing was done by the dogs licking the kettles clean. Often, after a night or two in a hut that held half a dozen families, he was compelled to change his clothes to the skin in an open boat or out on the snow. But the alternative was to sleep out in a cold that sometimes froze his pillow to the bed and the tea-cup to the table even in his own home. Above all, he must learn their language.



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It proved a difficult task, for the Eskimo tongue was both very simple and very complex. In all the things pertaining to their daily life it was exceedingly complex. For instance, to catch one kind of fish was expressed by one word, to catch another kind in quite different terms. They had one word for catching a young seal, another for catching an old one. When it came to matters of moral and spiritual import, the language was poor to desperation. Egede's instruction began when he caught the word "kine"—what is it? And from that time on he learned every day; but the pronunciation was as varied as the workaday vocabulary, and it was an unending task.

It proceeded with many interruptions from the Angekoks, who tried more than once to bewitch him, but finally gave it up, convinced that he was a great medicine-man himself, and therefore invulnerable. But before that they tried to foment a regular mutiny, the colony being by that time well under way, and Egede had to arrest and punish the leaders. The natives naturally clung to them, and when Egede had mastered their language and tried to make clear that the Angekoks deceived them when they pretended to go to the other world for advice, they demurred. "Did you ever see them go?" he asked. "Well, have you seen this God of yours of whom you speak so much?" was their reply. When Egede spoke of spiritual gifts, they asked for good health and blubber: "Our Angekoks give us that." Hell-fire was much in theological evidence in those days, but among the Eskimos it was a failure as a deterrent. They listened to the account of it eagerly and liked the prospect. When at length they became convinced that Egede knew more than their Angekoks, they came to him with the request that he would abolish winter. Very likely they thought that one who had such knowledge of the hot place ought to have influence enough with the keeper of it to obtain this favor.

It was not an easy task, from any point of view, to which he had put his hands. As that first winter wore away there were gloomy days and nights, and they were not brightened when, with the return of the sun, no ship arrived from Denmark. The Dutch traders came, and opened their eyes wide when they found Egede and his household safe and even on friendly terms with the Eskimos. Pelesse—the natives called the missionary that, as the nearest they could come to the Danish *praest* (priest)—Pelesse was not there after blubber, they told the Dutchmen, but to teach them about heaven and of "Him up there," who had made them and wanted them home with Him again. So he had not worked altogether in vain. But the brief summer passed, and still no relief ship. The crew of *Haabet* clamored to go home, and Egede had at last to give a reluctant promise that if no ship came in two weeks, he would break up. His wife alone refused to take a hand in packing. The ship was coming, she insisted, and at the last moment it did come. A boat arriving after dark brought the first word of it. The people ashore heard voices speaking in Danish, and flew to Egede, who had gone to bed, with the news. The ship brought good cheer. The Government was well disposed. Trading and preaching were to go on together, as planned. Joyfully then they built a bigger and a better house, and called their colony Godthaab (Good Hope).



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The work was now fairly under way. Of the energy and the hardships it entailed, even we in our day that have heard so much of Arctic exploration can have but a faint conception. Shut in on the coast of eternal ice and silence,—silence, save when in summer the Arctic rivers were alive, and crash after crash announced that the glaciers coming down from the inland mountains were “casting their calves,” the great icebergs, upon the ocean,—the colonists counted the days from the one when that year’s ship was lost to sight till the returning spring brought the next one, their only communication with their far-off home. In summer the days were sometimes burning hot, but the nights always bitterly cold. In winter, says Egede, hot water spilled on the table froze as it ran, and the meat they cooked was often frozen at the bone when set on the table. Summer and winter Egede was on his travels between Sundays, sometimes in the trader’s boat, more often the only white man with one or two Eskimo companions, seeking out the people. When night surprised him with no native hut in sight, he pulled the boat on some desert shore and, commending his soul to God, slept under it. Once he and his son found an empty hut, and slept there in the darkness. Not until day came again did they know that they had made their bed on the frozen bodies of dead men who had once been the occupants of the house, and had died they never knew how. Peril was everywhere. Again and again his little craft was wrecked. Once the house blew down over their heads in one of the dreadful winter storms that ravage those high latitudes. Often he had to sit on the rail of his boat, and let his numbed feet hang into the sea to restore feeling in them. On land he sometimes waded waist-deep in snow, climbed mountains and slid down into valleys, having but the haziest notion of where he would land. At home his brave wife sat alone, praying for his safety and listening to every sound that might herald his return. Tremble and doubt they did, Egede owns, but they never flinched. Their work was before them, and neither thought of turning back.

The Eskimos soon came to know that Egede was their friend. When his boat entered a fjord where they were fishing, and his rowers shouted out that the good priest had come who had news of God, they dropped their work and flocked out to meet him. Then he spoke to a floating congregation, simply as if they were children, and, as with Him whose message he bore, “the people heard him gladly.” They took him to their sick, and asked him to breathe upon them, which he did to humor them, until he found out that it was an *Angekok* practice, whereupon he refused. Once, after he had spoken of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, they took him to a new-made grave and asked him, too, to bring back their dead. They brought him a blind man to be healed. Egede looked upon them in sorrowful pity. “I can do nothing,” he said; “but if he believes in Jesus, He has the power and can do it.”



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"I do believe," shouted the blind man: "let Him heal me." It occurred to Egede, perhaps as a mere effort at cleanliness, to wash his eyes in cognac, and he sent him away with words of comfort. He did not see his patient again for thirteen years. Then he was in a crowd of Eskimos who came to Godthaab. The man saw as well as Egede.

"Do you remember?" he said, "you washed my eyes with sharp water, and the Son of God in whom I believed, He made me to see."

Children the Eskimos were in their idolatry, and children they remained as Christians. By Egede's prayers they set great store. "You ask for us," they told him. "God does not hear us; He does not understand Eskimo." Of God they spoke as "Him up there." They believed that the souls of the dead went up on the rainbow, and, reaching the moon that night, rested there in the moon's house, on a bench covered with the white skins of young polar bears. There they danced and played games, and the northern lights were the young people playing ball. Afterward they lived in houses on the shore of a big lake overshadowed by a snow mountain. When the waters ran over the edge of the lake, it rained on earth. When the "moon was dark," it was down on earth catching seal for a living. Thunder was caused by two old women shaking a dried sealskin between them; the lightning came when they turned the white side out. The "Big Nail" we have heard of as the Eskimos' Pole, was a high-pointed mountain in the Farthest North on which the sky rested and turned around with the sun, moon, and stars. Up there the stars were much bigger. Orion's Belt was so near that you had to carry a whip to drive him away.

The women were slaves. An Eskimo might have as many wives as he saw fit; they were his, and it was nobody's business. But adultery was unknown. The seventh commandment in Egede's translation came to read, "One wife alone you shall have and love." The birth of a girl was greeted with wailing. When grown, she was often wooed by violence. If she fled from her admirer, he cut her feet when he overtook her, so that she could run no more. The old women were denounced as witches who drove the seals away, and were murdered. An Eskimo who was going on a reindeer hunt, and found his aged mother a burden, took her away and laid her in an open grave. Returning on the third day, he heard her groaning yet, and smothered her with a big stone. He tried to justify himself to Egede by saying that "she died hard, and it was a pity not to speed her." Yet they buried a dog's head with a child, so that the dog, being clever, could run ahead and guide the little one's steps to heaven.



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They could count no further than five; at a stretch they might get to twenty, on their fingers and toes, but there they stopped. However, they were not without resources. It was the day of long Sunday services, and the Eskimos were a restless people. When the sermon dragged, they would go up to Egede and make him measure on their arms how much longer the talk was going to be. Then they tramped back to their seats and sat listening with great attention, all the time moving one hand down the arm, checking off the preacher's progress. If they got to the finger-tips before he stopped, they would shake their heads sourly and go back for a remeasurement. No wonder Egede put his chief hope in the children, whom he gathered about him in flocks.

For all that, the natives loved him. There came a day that brought this message from the North: "Say to the speaker to come to us to live, for the other strangers who come here can only talk to us of blubber, blubber, blubber, and we also would hear of the great Creator." Egede went as far as he could, but was compelled by ice and storms to turn back after weeks of incredible hardships. The disappointment was the more severe to him because he had never quite given up his hope of finding remnants of the ancient Norse settlements. The fact that the old records spoke of a West Bygd (settlement) and an East Bygd had misled many into believing that the desolate east coast had once been colonized. Not until our own day was this shown to be an error, when Danish explorers searched that coast for a hundred miles and found no other trace of civilization than a beer bottle left behind by the explorer Nordenskjold.

Egede's hope had been that Greenland might be once more colonized by Christian people. When the Danish Government, after some years, sent up a handful of soldiers, with a major who took the title of governor, to give the settlement official character as a trading station, they sent with them twenty unofficial "Christians," ten men out of the penitentiary and as many lewd and drunken women from the treadmill, who were married by lot before setting sail, to give the thing a halfway decent look. They were good enough for the Eskimos, they seem to have thought at Copenhagen. There followed a terrible winter, during which mutiny and murder were threatened. "It is a pity," writes the missionary, "that while we sleep secure among the heathen savages, with so-called Christian people our lives are not safe." As a matter of fact they were not, for the soldiers joined in the mutiny against Egede as the cause of their having to live in such a place, and had not sickness and death smitten the malcontents, neither he nor the governor would have come safe through the winter. On the Eskimos this view of the supposed fruits of Christian teaching made its own impression. After seeing a woman scourged on shipboard for misbehavior, they came innocently enough to Egede and suggested that some of their best Angekoks be sent down to Denmark to teach the people to be sober and decent.



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There came a breathing spell after ten years of labor in what had often enough seemed to him the spiritual as well as physical ice-barrens of the North, when Egede surveyed a prosperous mission, with trade established, a hundred and fifty children christened and schooled, and many of their elders asking to be baptized. In the midst of his rejoicing the summer's ship brought word from Denmark that the King was dead, and orders from his successor to abandon the station. Egede might stay with provisions for one year, if there was enough left over after fitting out the ship; but after that he would receive no further help.

When the Eskimos heard the news, they brought their little children to the mission. "These will not let you go," they said; and he stayed. His wife, whom hardship and privation and the lonely waiting for her husband in the long winter nights had at last broken down, refused to leave him, though she sadly needed the care of a physician. A few of the sailors were persuaded to stay another year. "So now," Egede wrote in his diary when, on July 31, 1731, he had seen the ship sail away with all his hopes, "I am left alone with my wife and three children, ten sailors and eight Eskimos, girls and boys who have been with us from the start. God let me live to see the blessed day that brings good news once more from home." His prayer was heard. The next summer brought word that the mission was to be continued, partly because Egede had strained every nerve to send home much blubber and many skins. But it was as a glimpse of the sun from behind dark clouds. His greatest trials trod hard upon the good news.

To rouse interest in the mission Egede had sent home young Eskimos from time to time. Three of these died of smallpox in Denmark. The fourth came home and brought the contagion, all unknown, to his people. It was the summer fishing season, when the natives travel much and far, and wherever he went they flocked about him to hear of the "Great Lord's land," where the houses were so tall that one could not shoot an arrow over them, and to ask a multitude of questions: Was the King very big? Had he caught many whales? Was he strong and a great Angekok? and much more of the same kind. In a week the disease broke out among the children at the mission, and soon word came from islands and fjords where the Eskimos were fishing, of death and misery unspeakable. It was virgin soil for the plague, and it was terribly virulent, striking down young and old in every tent and hut. More than two thousand natives, one-fourth of the whole population, died that summer. Of two hundred families near the mission only thirty were left alive. A cry of terror and anguish rose throughout the settlements. No one knew what to do. In vain did Egede implore them to keep their sick apart. In fever delirium they ran out in the ice-fields or threw themselves into the sea. A wild panic seized the survivors, and they fled to the farthest tribes, carrying the seeds of death with them wherever they went. Whole villages perished, and their dead lay unburied. Utter desolation settled like a pall over the unhappy land.



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Through it all a single ray of hope shone. The faith that Egede had preached all those years, and the life he had lived with them, bore their fruit. They had struck deeper than he thought. They crowded to him, all that could, as their one friend. Dying mothers held their suckling babes up to him and died content. In a deserted island camp a half-grown girl was found alone with three little children. Their father was dead. When he knew that for him and the baby there was no help, he went to a cave and, covering himself and the child with skins, lay down to die. His parting words to his daughter were, "Before you have eaten the two seals and the fish I have laid away for you, Pelesse will come, no doubt, and take you home. For he loves you and will take care of you." At the mission every nook and cranny was filled with the sick and the dying. Egede and his wife nursed them day and night. Childlike, when death approached, they tried to put on their best clothes, or even to have new ones made, that they might please God by coming into His presence looking fine. When Egede had closed their eyes, he carried the dead in his arms to the vestibule, where in the morning the men who dug the graves found them. At the sight of his suffering the scoffers were dumb. What his preaching had not done to win them over, his sorrows did. They were at last one.

That dreadful year left Egede a broken man. In his dark moments he reproached himself with having brought only misery to those he had come to help and serve. One thorn which one would think he might have been spared rankled deep in it all. Some missionaries of a dissenting sect—Egede was Lutheran—had come with the smallpox ship to set up an establishment of their own. At their head was a man full of misdirected zeal and quite devoid of common-sense, who engaged Egede in a wordy dispute about justification by faith and condemned him and his work unsparingly. He had grave doubts whether he was in truth a "converted man." It came to an end when they themselves fell ill, and Egede and his wife had the last word, after their own fashion. They nursed the warlike brethren through their illness with loving ministrations and gave them back to life, let us hope, wiser and better men.

At Christmas, 1735, Egede's faithful wife, Gertrude, closed her eyes. She had gone out with him from home and kin to a hard and heathen land, and she had been his loyal helpmeet in all his trials. Now it was all over. That winter scurvy laid him upon a bed of pain and, lying there, his heart turned to the old home. His son had come from Copenhagen to help, happily yet while his mother lived. To him he would give over the work. In Denmark he could do more for it than in Greenland, now he was alone. On July 29, 1736, he preached for the last time to his people and baptized a little Eskimo to whom they gave his name, Hans. The following week he sailed for home, carrying, as all his earthly wealth, his beloved dead and his motherless children.



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The Eskimos gathered on the shore and wept as the ship bore their friend away. They never saw him again. He lived in Denmark eighteen years, training young men to teach the Eskimos. They gave him the title of bishop, but so little to live on that he was forced in his last days to move from Copenhagen to a country town, to make both ends meet. His grave was forgotten by the generation that came after him. No one knows now where it is; but in ice-girt Greenland, where the northern lights on wintry nights flash to the natives their message from the souls that have gone home, his memory will live when that of the North Pole seeker whom the world applauds is long forgotten. Hans Egede was their great man, their hero. He was more,—he was their friend.

GUSTAV VASA, THE FATHER OF SWEDEN

A great and wise woman had, after ages of war and bloodshed, united the crowns of the three Scandinavian kingdoms upon one head. In the strong city of Kalmar, around which the tide of battle had ever raged hottest, the union was declared in the closing days of the Thirteenth Century. Norwegian, Swede, and Dane were thenceforth to stand together, to the end of time; so they resolved. It was all a vain dream. Queen Margaret was not cold in her grave before the kingdoms fell apart. Norway clung to Denmark, but Sweden went her own way. In the wars of two generations the Danish kings won back the Swedish crown and lost it, again and again, until in 1520 King Christian II clutched it for the last time, at the head of a conquering army. He celebrated his victory with a general amnesty, and bade the Swedish nobles to a great feast, held at the capital in November.

Christian is one of the unsolved riddles of history. Ablest but unhappiest of all his house, he was an instinctive democrat, sincerely solicitous for the welfare of the plain people, but incredibly cruel and faithless when the dark mood seized him. The coronation feast ended with the wholesale butchery of the unsuspecting nobles. Hundreds were beheaded in the public square; for days it was filled with the slain. It is small comfort that the wicked priest who egged the King on to the dreadful deed was himself burned at the stake by the master he had betrayed. The Stockholm Massacre drowned the Kalmar Union in its torrents of blood. Retribution came swiftly. Above the peal of the Christmas bells rose the clash and clangor of armed hosts pouring forth from the mountain fastnesses to avenge the foul treachery. They were led by Gustav^[1] Eriksson Vasa, a young noble upon whose head Christian had set a price.

[Footnote 1: The older spelling of this name is followed here in preference to the more modern Gustaf. Gustav Vasa himself wrote his name so.]



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The Vasas were among the oldest and best of the great Swedish families. It was said of them that they ever loved a friend, hated a foe, and never forgot. Gustav was born in the castle of Lindholmen, when the news that the world had grown suddenly big by the discovery of lands beyond the unknown seas was still ringing through Europe, on May 12, 1496. He was brought up in the home of his kinsman, the Swedish patriot Sten Sture, and early showed the fruits of his training. "See what I will do," he boasted in school when he was thirteen, "I will go to Dalecarlia, rouse the people, and give the Jutes (Danes) a black eye." Master Ivar, his Danish teacher, gave him a whaling for that. White with anger, the boy drove his dirk through the book, nailing it to the desk, and stalked out of the room. Master Ivar's eyes followed the slim figure in the scarlet cloak, and he sighed wearily "*nobilium nati nolunt aliquid pati*,—the children of the great will put up with nothing."

Hardly yet of age, he served under the banner of Sten Sture against King Christian, and was one of six hostages sent to the King when he asked an interview of the Swedish leader. But Christian stayed away from the meeting and carried the hostages off to Denmark against his plighted faith. There Gustav was held prisoner a year. All that winter rumors of great armaments against Sweden filled the land. He heard the young bloods from the court prate about bending the stiff necks in the country across the Sound, and watched them throw dice for Swedish castles and Swedish women,—part of the loot when his fatherland should be laid under the yoke. Ready to burst with anger and grief, he sat silent at their boasts. In the spring he escaped, disguised as a cattle-herder, and made his way to Luebeck, where he found refuge in the house of the wealthy merchant Kort Koenig.

They soon heard in Denmark where he was, and the King sent letters demanding his surrender; but the burghers of the Hanse town hated Christian with cause, and would not give him up. Then came Gustav's warder who had gone bail for him in sixteen hundred gulden, and pleaded for his prisoner.

"I am not a prisoner," was Gustav's retort, "I am a hostage, for whom the Danish king pledged his oath and faith. If any one can prove that I was taken captive in a fight or for just cause, let him stand forth. Ambushed was I, and betrayed." The Luebeck men thought of the plots King Christian was forever hatching against them. Now, if he succeeded in getting Sweden under his heel, their turn would come next. Better, they said, send this Gustav home to his own country, perchance he might keep the King busy there; by which they showed their good sense. His ex-keeper was packed off back home, and Gustav reached Sweden, sole passenger on a little coast-trader, on May 31, 1520. A stone marks the spot where he landed, near Kalmar; for then struck the hour of Sweden's freedom.



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But not yet for many weary months did the people hear its summons. Swedish manhood was at its lowest ebb. Stockholm was held by the widow of Sten Sture with a half-famished garrison. In Kalmar another woman, Anna Bjelke, commanded, but her men murmured, and the fall of the fortress was imminent. When Gustav Vasa, who had slipped in unseen, exhorted them to stand fast, they would have mobbed him. He left as he had come, the day before the surrender. Travelling by night, he made his way inland, finding everywhere fear and distrust. The King had promised that if they would obey him "they should never want for herring and salt," so they told Gustav, and when he tried to put heart into them and rouse their patriotism, they took up bows and arrows and bade him be gone. Indeed, there were not wanting those who shot at him. Like a hunted deer he fled from hamlet to hamlet. Such friends as he had left advised him to throw himself upon the King's mercy; told him of the amnesty proclaimed. But Gustav's thoughts dwelt grimly among the Northern mountaineers whom as a boy he had bragged he would set against the tyrant. Insensibly he shaped his course toward their country.

He was with his brother-in-law, Joachim Brahe, when the King's message bidding him to the coronation came. Gustav begged him not to go, but Brahe's wife and children were within Christian's reach, and he did not dare stay away. When he left, the fugitive hid in his ancestral home at Raefsnæs on lake Mælær. There one of Brahe's men brought him news of the massacre in which his master and Gustav's father had perished. His mother, grandmother, and sisters were dragged away to perish in Danish dungeons. On Gustav's head the King had set a price, and spies were even then on his track.

Gustav's mind was made up. What was there now to wait for? Clad as a peasant, he started for Dalecarlia with a single servant to keep him company, but before he reached the mines the man stole all his money and ran away. He had to work now to live, and hired out to Anders Persson, the farmer of Rankhyttan. He had not been there many days when one of the women saw an embroidered sleeve stick out under his coat and told her master that the new hand was not what he pretended to be. The farmer called him aside, and Gustav told him frankly who he was. Anders Persson kept his secret, but advised him not to stay long in any one place lest his enemies get wind of him. He slipped away as soon as it was dark, nearly lost his life by breaking through the ice, but reached Ornaes on the other side of Lake Runn, half dead with cold and exposure. He knew that another Persson who had been with him in the war lived there, and found his house. Arendt Persson was a rascal. He received him kindly, but when he slept harnessed his horse and went to Mans Nilsson, a neighbor, with the news: the King's reward would make them both rich, if he would help him seize the outlawed man.



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Mans Nilsson held with the Danes, but he was no traitor, and he showed the fellow the door. He went next to the King's sheriff; he would be bound to help. To be sure, he would claim the lion's share of the blood-money, but something was better than nothing. The sheriff came soon enough with a score of armed men. But Arendt Persson had not reckoned with his honest wife. She guessed his errand and let Gustav down from the window to the rear gate, where she had a sleigh and team in waiting. When the sheriff's posse surrounded the house, Gustav was well on his way to Master Jon, the parson of Svaerdsjoe, who was his friend. Tradition has it that while Christian was King, the brave little woman never dared show her face in the house again.

Master Jon was all right, but news of the man-hunt had run through the country, and when the parson's housekeeper one day saw him hold the wash-bowl for his guest she wanted to know why he was so polite to a common clod. Master Jon told her that it was none of her business, but that night he piloted his friend across the lake to Isala, where Sven Elfsson lived, a gamekeeper who knew the country and could be trusted. The good parson was hardly out of sight on his way back when the sheriff's men came looking for Gustav. It did not occur to them that the yokel who stood warming himself by the stove might be the man they were after. But the gamekeeper's wife was quick to see his peril. She was baking bread and had just put the loaves into the oven with a long-handled spade. "Here, you lummox!" she cried, and whacked him soundly over the back with it, "what are ye standing there gaping at? Did ye never see folks afore? Get back to your work in the barn." And Gustav, taking the hint, slunk out of the room.

For three days after that he lay hidden under a fallen tree in the snow and bitter cold; but even there he was not safe, and the gamekeeper took him deeper into the forest, where a big spruce grew on a hill in the middle of a frozen swamp. There no one would seek him till he could make a shift to get him out of the country. The hill is still there; the people call it the King's Hill, and not after King Christian, either. But in those long nights when Gustav Vasa listened to the hungry wolves howling in the woods and nosing about his retreat, it was hardly kingly conceits his mind brooded over. His father and kinsmen were murdered; his mother and sister in the pitiless grasp of the tyrant who was hunting him to his death; he, the last of his race, alone and forsaken by his own. Bitter sorrow filled his soul at the plight of his country that had fallen so low. But the hope of the young years came to the rescue: all was not lost yet. And in the morning came Sven, the gamekeeper, with a load of straw, at the bottom of which he hid him. So no one would be the wiser.



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It was well he did it, for half-way to the next town some prowling soldiers overtook them, and just to make sure that there was nothing in the straw, prodded the load with their spears. Nothing stirred, and they went on their way. But a spear had gashed Gustav's leg, and presently blood began to drip in the snow. Sven had his wits about him. He got down, and cut the fetlock of one of the beasts with his jack-knife so that it bled and no one need ask questions. When they got to Marnaes, Gustav was weak from the loss of blood, but a friendly surgeon was found to bind up his wounds.

Farther and farther north he fled, keeping to the deep woods in the day, until he reached Raettwik. Feeling safer there, he spoke to the people coming from church one Sunday and implored them to shake off the Danish yoke. But they only shook their heads. He was a stranger among them, and they would talk it over with their neighbors. Not yet were his wanderings over. To Mora he went next, where Parson Jakob hid him in a lonely farm-house. Evil chance led the spies direct to his hiding-place, and once more it was the housewife whose quick wit saved him. Dame Margit was brewing the Yule beer when she saw them coming. In a trice she had Gustav in the cellar and rolled the brewing vat over the trap-door. Then they might search as they saw fit; there was nothing there. The first blood was spilled for Gustav Vasa while he was at Mora, and it was a Dane who did it. He was the kind that liked to see fair play; when an under-sheriff came looking for the hunted man there, the Dane waylaid and killed him.

Christmas morning, when Master Jakob had preached his sermon in the church, Gustav spoke to the congregation out in the snow-covered churchyard. A gravestone was his pulpit. Eloquent always, his sorrows and wrongs and the memory of the hard months lent wings to his words. His speech lives yet in Dalecarlia, for now he was among its mountains.

"It is good to see this great meeting," he said, "but when I think of our fatherland I am filled with grief. At what peril I am here with you, you know who see me hounded as a wild beast day by day, hour by hour. But our beloved country is more to me than life. How long must we be thralls, we who were born to freedom? Those of you who are old remember what persecution Swedish men and women have suffered from the Danish kings. The young have heard the story of it and have learned from they were little children to hate and resist such rule. These tyrants have laid waste our land and sucked its marrow, until nothing remains for us but empty houses and lean fields. Our very lives are not safe." He called upon them to rise and drive the invaders out. If they wanted a leader, he was ready.

His words stirred the mountaineers deeply. Cries of anger were heard in the crowd; it was not the first time they had taken up arms in the cause of freedom. But when they talked it over, the older heads prevailed; there had not been time enough to hear both sides. They told him that they would not desert the King; he must expect nothing of them.



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Broken-hearted and desperate, Gustav Vasa turned toward the Norwegian frontier. He would leave the country for which there was no hope. While the table in the poorest home groaned with Yuletide cheer, Sweden's coming king hid under an old bridge, outcast and starving, till it was safe to leave. Then he took up his weary journey alone. The winter cold had grown harder as the days grew shorter. Famished wolves dogged his steps, but he outran them on his snow-shoes. By night he slept in some wayside shelter, such as they build for travellers in that desolate country, or in the brush. The snow grew deeper, and the landscape wilder, as he went. For days he had gone without food, when he saw the sun set behind the lofty range that was to bar him out of home and hope forever. Even there was no abiding place for him. What thoughts of his vanished dream, perchance of the distant lands across the seas where the tyrant's hand could not reach him, were in his mind, who knows, as he bent his strength to the last and hardest stage of his journey? He was almost there, when he heard shouts behind him and turned to sell his life dear. Two men on skis were calling to him. They were unarmed, and he waited to let them come up.

Their story was soon told. They had come to call him back. After he left, an old soldier whom they knew in Mora had come from the south and told them worse things than even Gustav knew. It was all true about the Stockholm murder; worse, the King was having gallows set up in every county to hang all those on who said him nay; a heavy tax was laid upon the peasants, and whoever did not pay was to have a hand or foot cut off; they could still follow the plow. And now they had sent away the one man who could lead against the Danes, with the forests full of outlawed men who would have enlisted under him as soon as ever the cry was raised! While the men of Dalecarlia were debating the news among themselves orders came from the bailiff at Westeras that the tax was to be paid forthwith. That night runners were sent on the trail of Gustav to tell him to come back; they were ready.

When he came, it was as if a mighty storm swept through the mountains. The people rose in a body. Every day whole parishes threw off their allegiance to King Christian. Sunday after Sunday Gustav spoke to the people at their meeting-houses, and they raised their spears and swore to follow him to death. Two months after the murder in Stockholm an army of thousands that swelled like an avalanche was marching south, and province after province joined in the rebellion. King Christian's host met them at Brunbaeck in April. One of its leaders asked the country folk what kind of men the Dalecarlians were, and when he was told that they drank water and ate bread made of bark, he cried out, "Such a people the devil himself couldn't whip; let us get out." But his advice was not taken and the Danish army was wiped out. Gustav halted long enough to drill his men and give them time to temper their arrows and spears, then he fell upon Westeras and beat the Danes there. The peasant mob scattered too soon to loot the town, and the King's men came back with a sudden rush. Only Gustav's valor and presence of mind saved the day that had been won once from being lost again.



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When it was seen that the Danes were not invincible, the whole country rose, took the scattered castles, and put their defenders to the sword. Gustav bore the rising on his shoulders from first to last. He was everywhere, ordering and leading. His fiery eloquence won over the timorous; his irresistible advance swept every obstacle aside. In May he took Upsala; by midsummer he was besieging Stockholm itself. Most of the other cities were in his hands. The Hanse towns had found out what this Gustav could do at home. They sang his praise, but as for backing him with their purse, that was another matter. They refused to lend Gustav two siege-guns when he lay before Stockholm, though he offered to pledge a castle for each. He had no money. Happily his enemy, Christian, was even worse off. Neither pledges nor promises could get him the money he needed. His chief men were fighting among themselves and made peace only to turn upon him. Within a year after the Swedish people had chosen Gustav Vasa to be Regent at the Diet of Vadstena, Christian went into exile and, when he tried to get his kingdom back, into prison, where he languished the rest of his life. He fully deserved his fate. Yet he meant well and had done some good things in his day. Had he been able to rule himself, he might have ruled others with better success. Schoolboys remember with gratitude that he forbade teachers to “spank their pupils overmuch and without judgment, as was their wont.”

At the Diet of Vadstena the people had offered Gustav the crown, but he put it from him. Scarce eight months had passed since he hid under the bridge, hunted and starving. When Stockholm had fallen after a siege of two years and all Sweden was free, the people met (1523) and made him King, whether or no. He still objected, but gave in at last and was crowned.

Popular favor is fickle. Hard times came that were not made easier by Gustav's determination to fill the royal coffers, and the very Dalecarlians who had put him in the high seat rose against him and served notice that if things did not mend they would have none of him. Gustav made sure that they had no backing elsewhere, then went up and persuaded them to be good by cutting off the heads of their leaders, who both happened to be priests: one was even a bishop. He had been taught in a school that always found an axe ready to hand. Let those who lament the savagery of modern warfare consider what happened then to a Danish fleet that tried to bring relief to hard-pressed Stockholm. It was beaten in a fight in which six hundred men were taken prisoners. They were all, say the accounts, “tied hand and foot and flung overboard amid the beating of drums and blowing of trumpets to drown their cries.” The clergy fared little better than the laymen in that age, but then it was their own fault. In plotting and scrapping they were abreast of the worst and took the consequences.



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They were the days of the Reformation, and Gustav would not have been human had he failed to see a way out of his money troubles by confiscating church property. He had pawned the country's trade to the merchants of Luebeck and there was nothing else left. Naturally the church opposed him. The King took the bull by the horns. He called a meeting and told the people that he was sick of it all. He had encouraged the Reformation for their good; now, if they did not stand by him, they might choose between him and his enemies. The oldest priest arose at that and said that the church's property was sacred. The King asked if the rest of them thought the same way. Only one voice was raised, and to say yes.

"Then," said Gustav, "I don't want to be your King any more. If it does not rain, you blame me; if the sun does not shine, you do the same. It is always so. All of you want to be masters. After all my trouble and labor for you, you would as lief see my head split with an axe, though none of you dare lay hold of the handle. Give me back what I have spent in your service and I will go away and never come back." And go he did, to his castle, with half a dozen of his nearest friends.

They sat and looked at one another when he was gone, and then priests and nobles fell to arguing among themselves, all talking at once. The plain people, the burghers and the peasants, listened awhile, but when they got no farther, let them know that if they couldn't settle it, they, the people, would, and in a way that would give them little joy. The upshot of it all was that messengers were sent to bring the King back. He made them go three times, and when he came at last, it was as absolute master. In the ordering of the kingdom that was made there, he became the head of the church as well as of the state. Gustav's pen was as sharp as his tongue. When Hans Brask, the oldest prelate in the land, who had stood stoutly by the old regime, left the country and refused to come back, he wrote to him: "As long as you might milk and shear your sheep, you staid by them. When God spake and said you were to feed them, not to shear and slaughter them, you ran away. Every honest man can judge if you have done well." Hard words to a good old man; but there were plenty of others who deserved them. That was the end of the hierarchy in Sweden.

But not of the unruly peasants who had tasted the joys of king-making. How kindly they took to the Reformation at the outset one can judge from the demand of some of them that the King should "burn or otherwise kill such as ate meat on Friday." They rose again and again, and would listen only to the argument of force. When the Luebeckers pressed hard for the payment of old debts, and the treasury was empty as usual, King Gustav hit upon a new kind of revenue. He demanded of every church in the land that it give up its biggest bell to the funds. It was the last straw. The Dalecarlians rose



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against what they deemed sacrilege, under the leadership of Mans Nilsson and Anders Persson of Rankhyttan, the very men who had befriended Gustav in his need, and the insurrection spread. The “War of the Bells” was settled with the sword, and the peasants gave in. But Gustav came of a stock that “never forgot.” Two years later, when his hands were free at home, he suddenly invaded Dalecarlia with a powerful army, determined to “pull those weeds up by the roots.” He summoned the peasants to Thing, made a ring around them of armed men, and gave them their choice:

“Submit now for good and all,” he said, “or I will spoil the land so that cock shall not crow nor hound bark in it again forever!”

The frightened peasants fell on their knees and begged for mercy. He made them give up their leaders, including his former friends, and they were all put to the sword. After that there was peace in Dalecarlia.

Gustav Vasa’s long reign ended in 1560. Like his enemy, Christian II, he was a strange mixture of contradictions. He was brave in battle, wise in council, pious, if not a saint, clean, and merciful when mercy fitted into his plans. His enemies called him a greedy, suspicious despot. Greedy he was. More than eleven thousand farms were confiscated by the crown during his reign, and he left four thousand farms and a great fortune to his children as his personal share. But historians have called him “the great housekeeper” who found waste and loss and left an ordered household. He gave all for Sweden, and all he had was at her call. It was share and share alike, in his view. Despotic he could be, too. *L’etat c’est moi* might have been said by him. But he did not exploit the state; he built it. He fashioned Sweden out of a bunch of quarrelsome provincial governments into a hereditary monarchy, as the best way—indeed, the only way then—of giving it strength and stability. He was suspicious because everybody had betrayed him, or had tried to. With all that, his steady purpose was to raise and enlighten his people and make them keep the peace, if he had to adopt the Irishman’s plan of keeping it himself with an axe. He was the father of a line of great warriors. Gustav Adolf was his grandson.

Bent under the burden of years, he bade his people good-by at the Diet of Stockholm, a few weeks before his death. His old eloquence rings unimpaired in the farewell. He thanked God, who had chosen him as His tool to set Sweden free from thralldom. Almost might he liken himself to King David, whom God from a shepherd had made the leader of his people. No such hope was in his heart when, forty years before, he hid in the woods from a bloodthirsty enemy. For what he had done wrong as king, he asked the people’s pardon; it was not done on purpose. He knew well that many thought him a hard ruler, but the time would come when they would gladly dig him up from his grave if they only could. And with that he went out, bowing deeply to the Diet, the tears streaming down his face.



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They saw him no more; but on his tomb the Swedish people, forgetting all else, have written that he was the “Father of his Country.”

ABSALON, WARRIOR BISHOP OF THE NORTH

A welcome change awaits the traveller who, having shaken off the chill of the German Dreadnaughts at Kiel, crosses the Baltic to the Danish Islands—a change from the dread portents of war to smiling peace. There can be nothing more pastoral and restful than the Seeland landscape as framed in a car window; yet he misses its chief charm whom its folk-lore escapes—the countless legends that cling to field and forest from days long gone. The guide-book gives scarce a hint of them; but turn from its page and they meet you at every step, hail you from every homestead, every copse. Nor is their story always of peace. Here was Knud Lavard slain by his envious kinsman for the crown, and a miraculous spring gushed forth where he fell. Of the church they built for the pilgrims who sought it from afar they will show you the site, but the spring dried up with the simple old faith. Yonder, under the roof of Ringsted church, lie Denmark’s greatest dead. Not half an hour from the ferry landing at Korsøer, your train labors past a hill crowned by a venerable cross, Holy Anders’ Hill. So saintly was that masterful priest that he was wont, when he prayed, to hang his hat and gloves on a sunbeam as on a hook. And woe to the land if his cross be disturbed, for then, the peasant will tell you, the cattle die of plague and the crops fail. A little further on, just beyond Sorøe, a village church rears twin towers above the wheat-field where the skylark soars and sings to its nesting mate. For seven hundred years the story of that church and its builder has been told at Danish firesides, and the time will never come when it is forgotten.

Fjenneslev is the name of the village, and Asker Ryg[1] ruled there in the Twelfth Century, when the king summoned his men to the war. Bidding good-by to his wife, Sir Asker tells her to build a new church while he is away, for the old, “with wall of clay, straw-thatched and grim,” is in ruins. And let it be worthy of the Master:

“The roof let make of tiling red;
Of stone thou build the wall;”

and then he whispers in her ear:

“Hear thou, my Lady Inge,
Of women thou art the flower;
An’ thou bearest to me a son so bold,
Set on the church a tower.”

[Footnote 1: Pronounce Reeg.]



Should the child be a girl, he tells her to build only a spire, for “modesty beseemeth a woman.” Well for Sir Asker that he did not live in our day of clamoring suffragists. He would have “views” without doubt. But no such things troubled him while he battled in foreign lands all summer. It was autumn when he returned and saw from afar the swell behind which lay Fjenneslev and home. Impatiently he spurred his horse to the brow of the hill, for no news had come of Lady Inge those many months. The bard tells us what he saw there:



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“It was the good Sir Asker Ryg;
Right merrily laughed he,
When from that green and swelling hill
Two towers did he see.”

Two sons lay at the Lady Inge’s breast, and all was well.

“The first one of the brothers two
They called him Esbern Snare.[2]
He grew as strong as a savage bear
And fleeter than any hare.

“The second him called they Absalon,
A bishop he at home.
He used his trusty Danish sword
As the Pope his staff at Rome.”

[Footnote 2: Pronounce Snare, with a as in are. In the Danish hare rhymes with snare, so pronounced.]

Absalon and Esbern were not twins, as tradition has it. They were better than that. They became the great heroes of their day, and the years have not dimmed their renown. And Absalon reached far beyond the boundaries of little Denmark to every people that speaks the English tongue. For it was he who, as archbishop of the North, “strictly and earnestly” charged his friend and clerk Saxo to gather the Danish chronicles while yet it was time, because, says Saxo, in the preface of his monumental work, “he could no longer abide that his fatherland, which he always honored and magnified with especial zeal, should be without a record of the great deeds of the fathers.” And from the record Saxo wrote we have our Hamlet.

It was when they had grown great and famous that Sir Asker and his wife built the church in thanksgiving for their boys, not when they were born, and the way that came to light was good and wholesome. They were about to rebuild the church, on which there had been no towers at all since they crumbled in the middle ages, and had decided to put on only one; for the sour critics, who are never content in writing a people’s history unless they can divest it of all its flesh and make it sit in its bones, as it were, sneered at the tradition and called it an old woman’s tale. But they did not shout quite so loud when, in peeling off the whitewash of the Reformation, the mason’s hammer brought forth mural paintings that grew and grew until there stood the whole story to read on the wall, with Sir Asker himself and the Lady Inge, clad in garments of the Twelfth Century, bringing to the Virgin the church with the twin towers. So the folklore was not so far out after all, and the church was rebuilt with two towers, as it should be.



Under its eaves, whether of straw or tile, the two boys played their childish games, and before long there came to join in them another of their own age, young Valdemar, whose father, the very Knud Lavard mentioned above, had been foully murdered a while before. It was a time, says Saxo, in which “he must be of stout heart and strong head who dared aspire to Denmark’s crown. For in less than a hundred years more than sixteen of her kings and their kin were either slain without cause by their own subjects, or otherwise met a sudden death.” Sir Asker and the murdered Knud had been foster brothers, and throughout the bloody years that followed, he and his brothers, sons of the powerful Skjalm Hvide,[3] espoused his cause in good and evil days, while they saw to it that no harm came to the young prince under their roof.



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[Footnote 3: Pronounced Veethe.]

The three boys, as they grew up, were bred to the stern duties of fighting men, as was the custom of their class. Absalon, indeed, was destined for the church; but in a country so recently won from the old war gods, it was the church militant yet, and he wielded spear and sword with the best of them. When, at eighteen, they sent him to France to be taught, he did not for his theological studies neglect the instruction of his boyhood. There he became the disciple and friend of the Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, more powerful than prince or Pope, and when the abbot preached the second great crusade, promising eternal salvation to those who took up arms against the unbelievers, whether to wrest from them the Holy Sepulchre or to plant the cross among the wild heathen on the Baltic, his heart burned hot within him. It was a long way to the Holy Land, but with the Baltic robbers his people had a grievous score to settle. Their yells had sounded in his boyish ears as they ravished the shores of his fatherland, penetrating with murder and pillage almost to his peaceful home. And so, while he lent a diligent ear to the teachings of the church, earning the name of the "most learned clerk" in the cloister of *Ste. Genevieve* in Paris, daily he laid the breviary aside and took up sword and lance, learning the arts of modern warfare with the graces of chivalry. In the old way of fighting, man to man, the men of the North had been the equals of any, if not their betters; but against the new methods of warfare their prowess availed little. Absalon, the monk, kept his body strong while soul and mind matured. When nothing more adventurous befell, he chopped down trees for the cloister hearths. But oftener the clash of arms echoed in the quiet halls, or the peaceful brethren crossed themselves as they watched him break an unruly horse in the cloister fen. Saxo tells us that he swam easily in full armor, and in more than one campaign in later years saved drowning comrades who were not so well taught.

The while he watched rising all about some of the finest churches in Christendom. It was the era of cathedral building in Europe. The Romanesque style of architecture had reached its highest development in the very France where he spent his young manhood's years, and the Gothic, with its stamp of massive strength, was beginning to displace its gentler curve. Ten years of such an environment, in a land teeming with historic traditions, rounded out the man who set his face toward home, bent on redeeming his people from the unjust reproach of being mere "barbarians of the North."



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It was a stricken Denmark to which he came back. Three claimants were fighting for the crown. The land was laid waste by sea-rovers, who saw their chance to raid defenceless homes while the men able to bear arms were following the rival kings. The people had lost hope. Just when Absalon returned, peace was made between the claimants. Knud, Svend, and Valdemar, his foster brother of old, divided up the country between them. They swore a dear oath to keep the pact, but for all that "the three kingdoms did not last three days." The treacherous Svend waited only for a chance to murder both his rivals, and it came quickly, when he and Valdemar were the guests of Knud at Roskilde. They had eaten and drunk together and were gathered in the "Storstue," the big room of the house, when Knud saw Svend whispering aside with his men. With a sudden foreboding of evil, he threw his arms about Valdemar's shoulders and kissed him. The young King, who was playing chess with one of his men, looked up in surprise and asked what it meant. Just then Svend left the hall, and his henchmen fell upon the two with drawn swords. Knud was cut down at once, his head cleft in twain. Valdemar upset the table with the candles and, wrapping his cloak about his arm to ward off the blows that showered upon him, knocked his assailants right and left and escaped, badly wounded.

Absalon came into the room as Knud fell and, thinking it was Valdemar, caught him in his arms and took his wounded head in his lap. Sitting there in utter sorrow and despair, heedless of the tumult that raged in the darkness around him, he felt the King's garment and knew that the man who was breathing his last in his arms was not his friend. He laid the lifeless body down gently and left the hall. The murderers barred his way, but he brushed their swords and spears aside and strode forth unharmed. Valdemar had found a horse and made for Fjenneslev, twenty miles away, with all speed, and there Absalon met him and his brother Esbern in the morning.

King Svend sought him high and low to finish his dastardly work, while on Thing he wailed loudly before the people that Valdemar and Knud had tried to kill him, showing in proof of it his cloak, which he had rent with his own sword. But Valdemar's friends were wide awake. Esbern flew through the island on his fleet horse in Valdemar's clothes, leading his pursuers a merry dance, and when the young King's wound was healed, he found him a boat and ferried him across to the mainland, where the people flocked to his standard. When Svend would have followed, it was the Lady Inge who scuttled his ship by night and gave her foster son the start he needed. There followed a short and sharp struggle that ended on Grathe Heath with the utter rout of Svend's forces. He himself was killed, and Valdemar at last was King of all Denmark.

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From that time the three friends were inseparable as in the old days when they played about the fields of Fjenneslev. Absalon was the keeper of the King's conscience who was not afraid to tell him the truth when he needed to hear it. And where they were Esbern was found, never wavering in his loyalty to either. Within a year Absalon was made bishop of Roskilde, the chief See of Denmark. Saxo innocently discovers to us King Valdemar's little ruse to have his friend chosen. He was yet a very young man, scarce turned thirty, and had not been considered at all for the vacancy. There were three candidates, all of powerful families, and, according to ecclesiastical law, the brethren of the chapter were the electors. The King went to their meeting and addressed them in person. Nothing was farther from him, he said, than to wish to interfere with their proper rights. Each must do as his conscience dictated, unhindered. And with that he laid on the table *four* books with blank leaves and bade them write down their names in them, each for his own choice, to get the matter right on the record. The brethren thanked him kindly and all voted "nicely together" for Absalon. So three of the books were wasted. But presently Saxo found good use for them.

For now had come the bishop's chance of putting in practice the great abbot's precepts. "Pray and fight" was the motto he had written into the Knights Templars' rule, and Absalon had made it his own. Of what use was it to build up the church at home, when any day might see it raided by its enemies who were always watching their chance outside? The Danish waters swarmed with pirates, the very pagans against whom Abbot Bernard had preached his crusade. Of them all the Wends were the worst, as they were the most powerful of the Slav tribes that still resisted the efforts of their neighbors, the Christian Germans, to dislodge them from their old home on the Baltic. They lived in the island of Ruegen, fairly in sight of the Danish shores. Every favoring wind blew them across the sea in shoals to burn and ravage. The Danes, once the terror of the seas, had given over roving when they accepted the White Christ in exchange for Thor and his hammer, and now, when they would be at peace, they were in turn beset by this relentless enemy, who burned their homes and their crops and dragged the peaceful husbandman away to make him a thrall or offer him up as a sacrifice to heathen idols. More than a third of all Denmark lay waste under their ferocious assault. Here was the blow to be struck if the country was to have peace and the church prosperity.



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The chance to strike came speedily. Absalon had been bishop only a few months when, on the evening before Palm Sunday, word was brought that the enemy had landed, twenty-four ship-crews strong, and were burning and murdering as usual. Absalon marshalled his eighteen house-carles and such of the country-folk as he could, and fell upon the Wends, routing them utterly. A bare handful escaped, the rest were killed, while the bishop lost but a single man. He said mass next morning, red-handed it is true, but one may well believe that for all that his Easter message reached hearts filled with a new, glad hope for their homes and for the country. That was a bishop they could understand. So the first blow Absalon struck for his people was at home. But he did not long wait for the enemy to come to him. Half his long and stirring life he lived on the seas, seeking them there. Saxo mentions, in speaking of his return from one of his cruises, that he had then been nine months on shipboard. And in a way he was shepherding his flock there, if it was with a scourge; for, many years before, a Danish king had punished the Wends in their own home and laid their lands under the See of Roskilde, though little good it did them or any one else then. But when Absalon had got his grip, there were days when he baptized as many as a thousand of them into the true faith.

He was not altogether alone in the stand he took. Here and there, from very necessity, the people had organized to resist the invaders, but as no one could tell where they would strike next, they were not often successful, and fear and discouragement sat heavy on the land. From his own city of Roskilde a little fleet of swift sailers under the bold Wedeman had for years waged relentless war upon the freebooters and had taken four times the number of their own ships. Their crews were organized into a brotherhood with vows like an order of fighting monks. Before setting out on a cruise they were shriven and absolved. Their vows bound them to unceasing vigilance, to live on the plainest of fare, to sleep on their arms, ready for instant attack, and to the rescue of Christians, wherever they were found in captivity. The Roskilde guild became the strong core of the King's armaments in his score of campaigns against the Wends.

Perhaps it was not strange that Valdemar should be of two minds about venturing to attack so formidable an enemy in his own house. The nation was cowed and slow to move. In fact, from the first expedition, that started with 250 vessels, only seven returned with the standard, keeping up a running fight all the way across the Baltic with pursuing Wends. The rest had basely deserted. On the way over, the King, listening to their doubts and fears, turned back himself once, but Absalon, who always led in the attack and was the last on the homeward run, overtook him and gave him the talking to be deserved. Saxo, who was very likely there and heard, for there is little doubt that he accompanied his master on many of the campaigns he so vividly describes, gives us a verbatim report of the lecture:



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“What wonder,” said the bishop, “if the words stick in our throats and are nigh to stifling us, when such grievous dole is ours! Grieve we must, indeed, to find in you such a turncoat that naught but dishonor can come of it. You follow where you should lead, and those you should rule over, you make your peers. There is nothing to stop us but our own craven souls, hunt as we may for excuses. Is it with such laurel you would bind your crown? with such high deed you would consecrate your reign?”

The King was hard hit, and showed it, but he walked away without a word. In the night a furious storm swept the sea and kept the fleet in shelter four whole days, during which Valdemar’s anger had time to cool. He owned then that Absalon was right, and the friends shook hands. The King gave order to make sail as soon as the gale abated. If there was still a small doubt in Absalon’s mind as he turned, on taking leave, and asked, “What now, if we must turn back once more?” Valdemar set it at rest:

“Then you write me from Wendland,” he laughed, “and tell me how things are there.”

If little glory or gain came to the Danes from this first expedition, at least they landed in the enemy’s country and made reprisal for past tort. The spirit of the people rose and shamed them for their cowardice. When the King’s summons went round again, as it did speedily, there were few laggards. Attacked at home, the Wends lost much of the terror they had inspired. Before many moons, the chronicle records, the Danes cut their spear-shafts short, that they might the more handily get at the foe. Scarce a year passed that did not see one or more of these crusades. Absalon preached them all, and his ship was ever first in landing. In battle he and the King fought shoulder to shoulder. In the spring of 1169, he had at last his wish: the heathen idols were destroyed and their temples burned.

The holy city of the Wends, Arcona, stood on a steep cliff, inaccessible save from the west, where a wall a hundred feet high defended it. While the sacred banner Stanitza waved over it the Danes might burn and kill, but the power of Svantevit was unbroken. Svantevit was the god of gods in whose presence his own priests dared not so much as breathe. When they had to, they must go to the door and breathe in the open, a good enough plan if Saxo’s disgust at the filth of the Wendish homes was justified. Svantevit was a horrid monster with four heads, and girt about with a huge sword. Up till then the Christian arms had always been stayed at his door, but this time the King laid siege to Arcona, determined to make an end of him. Some of the youngsters in his army, making a mock assault upon the strong walls, discovered an accidental hollow under the great tower over which the Stanitza flew and, seizing upon a load of straw that was handy, stuffed it in and set it on fire. It was done in a frolic, but when the tower caught fire and was burned and the



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holy standard fell, Absalon was quick to see his advantage, and got the King to order a general assault. The besieged Wends, having no water, tried to put out the fire with milk, but, says the chronicle, "it only fed the flames." They fought desperately till, between fire and foe, they were seized with panic and, calling loudly upon Absalon in their extremity, offered to give up their city. The army clamored for the revenge that was at last within their grasp, and the King hesitated; but Absalon met the uproar firmly, reminding them that they had crossed the seas to convert the heathen, not to sack their towns.

The city was allowed to surrender and the people were spared, but Svantevit and his temple were destroyed. A great crowd of his followers had gathered to see him crush his enemies at the last, and Absalon cautioned the men who cut the idol down to be careful that he did not fall on them and so seem to justify their hopes. "He fell with so great a noise that it was a wonder," says Saxo, naively; "and in the same moment the fiend ran out of the temple in a black shape with such speed that no eye could follow him or see where he went." Svantevit was dragged out of the town and chopped into bits. That night he fed the fires of the camp. So fickle is popular favor that when the crowd saw that nothing happened, they spurned the god loudly before whom they had grovelled in the dust till then.

When they heard of Arcona's fall in the royal city of Karents, they hastened with offers of surrender, and Absalon went there with a single ship's crew to take possession. They were met by 6000 armed Wends, who guarded the narrow approach to the city. In single file they walked between the ranks of the enemy, who stood with inverted spears, watching them in sullen silence. His men feared a trap, but Absalon strode ahead unmoved. Coming to the temple of their local god, Rygievit, he attacked him with his axe and bade his guard fall to, which they did. Saxo has left us a unique description of this idol that stood behind purple hangings, fashioned of oak "in every evil and revolting shape. The swallows had made their nests in his mouths and throats" (there were seven in so many faces) "and filled him up with all manner of stinking uncleanness. Truly, for such god was such sacrifice fit." He had a sword for every one of his seven faces, buckled about his ample waist, but for all that he went the way of the others, and even had to put up with the indignity of the Christian priests standing upon him while he was being dragged out. That seems to have helped cure his followers of their faith in him. They delivered the temple treasure into the hands of the King—seven chests filled with money and valuables, among them a silver cup which the wretched King Svend had sent to Svantevit as a bribe to the Wends for joining him against his own country and kin. But those days were ended. It was the Danes' turn now, and Wendland was laid waste until "the swallows found no eaves of any house whereunder to build their nests and were forced to build them on the ships." A sad preliminary to bringing the country under the rule of the Prince of Peace; but in the scheme of those days the sword was equal partner with the cross in leading men to the true God.



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The heathen temples were destroyed and churches built on their sites of the timber gathered for the siege of Arcona. The people, deserted by their own, accepted the Christians' God in good faith, and were baptized in hosts, thirteen hundred on one day and nine hundred on the next. Three days and nights Absalon saw no sleep. He did nothing half-way. No sooner was he back home than he sent over priests and teachers supplied with everything, even food for their keep, so that they "should not be a burden to the people whom they had come to show the way to salvation."

The Wends were conquered, but the end was not yet. They had savage neighbors, and many a crusade did Absalon lead against them in the following years, before the new title of the Danish rulers, "King of the Slavs and Wends," was much more than an empty boast. He organized a regular sea patrol of one-fourth of the available ships, of which he himself took command, and said mass on board much oftener than in the Roskilde church. It is the sailor, the warrior, the leader of men one sees through all the troubled years of his royal friend's life. Now the Danish fleet is caught in the inland sea before Stettin, unable to make its way out, and already the heathen hosts are shouting their triumph on shore. It is Absalon, then, who finds the way and, as one would expect, he forces it. The captains wail over the trap and abuse him for getting them into it. Absalon, disdainful to answer them, leads his ships in single file straight for the gap where the Wendish fleet lies waiting, and gets the King to attack with his horsemen on shore. Between them the enemy is routed, and the cowards are shamed. But when they come to make amends, he is as unmoved as ever and will have none of it. Again, when he is leading his men to the attack on a walled town, a bridge upon which they crowd breaks, and it is the bishop who saves his comrades from drowning, swimming ashore with them in full armor.

Resting in his castle at Haffn, the present Copenhagen, which he built as a defence against the sea-rovers, he hears, while in his bath, his men talking of strange ships that are sailing into the Sound, and, hastily throwing on his clothes, gives chase and kills their crews, for they were pirates whose business was murder, and they merely got their deserts. In the pursuit his archers "pinned the hands of the rowers to the oars with their arrows" and crippled them, so skilful had much practice made them. Turn the leaf of Saxo's chronicle, and we find him under Ruegen with his fleet, protecting the now peaceful Wendish fishermen in their autumn herring-catch, on which their livelihood depended. Of such stuff was made the bishop who

"Used his trusty Danish sword
As the Pope his staff in Rome."



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Wherever danger threatens Valdemar and Absalon, Esbern is found, too, earning the name of the Fleet (Snare), which the people had fondly given to their favorite. Where the fighting was hardest, he was sure to be. The King's son had ventured too far and was caught in a tight place by an overwhelming force, when Esbern pushed his ship in between him and the enemy and bore the brunt of a fight that came near to making an end of him. He had at last only a single man left, but the two made a stand against a hundred. "When the heathen saw his face they fled in terror." At last they knocked him senseless with a stone and would have killed him, but in the nick of time the King's men came to the rescue.

Coming home from Norway he ran afoul of forty pirate ships under the coast of Seeland. He tried to steal past; forty against one were heavy odds. But it was moonlight and he was discovered. The pirates lay across his course and cut him off. Esbern made ready for a fight and steered straight into the middle of them. The steersman complained that he had no armor, and he gave him his own. He beat his pursuers off again and again, but the wind slackened and they were closing in once more, swearing by their heathen gods that they would have him dead or alive, for a Danish prisoner on one of their ships had told who he was. But Esbern had more than one string to his bow. He sent a man aloft with flint and steel to strike fire in the top, and the pirates, believing that he was signalling to a fleet he had in ambush, fled helter-skelter. Esbern got home safe.

The German emperors' fingers had always itched for the over-lordship of the Danish isles, and they have not ceased to do so to this day. When Frederick Barbarossa drove Alexander III from Rome and set up a rival Pope in his place, Archbishop Eskild of Lund, who was the Primate of the North, championed the exiled Pope's case, and Valdemar, whose path the ambitious priest had crossed more than once, let it be known that he inclined to the Emperor's cause, in part probably from mere pique, perhaps also because he thought it good politics. The archbishop in a rage summoned Absalon and bade him join him in a rising against the King. Absalon's answer is worthy the man and friend:

"My oath to you I will keep, and in this wise, that I will not counsel you to your own undoing. Whatever your cause against the King, war against him you cannot, and succeed. And this know, that never will I join with you against my liege lord, to whom I have sworn fealty and friendship with heart and soul all the days of my life."



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He could not persuade the archbishop, who went his own way and was beaten and exiled for a season, nor could he prevent the King from yielding to the blandishments of Frederick and getting mixed up in the papal troubles; but he went with him to Germany and saved him at the last moment from committing himself by making him leave the church council just as the anti-pope was about to pronounce sentence of excommunication against Alexander. He commanded Absalon to remain, as a servant of the church, but Absalon replied calmly that he was not there in that capacity, but as an attendant on his King, and must follow where he went. It appeared speedily that the Emperor's real object was to get Valdemar to own him as his over-lord, and this he did, to Absalon's great grief, on the idle promise that Frederick would join him in his war upon all the Baltic pagans. However, it was to be a purely personal matter, in nowise affecting his descendants. That much was saved, and Absalon lived long enough to fling back, as the counsellor of Valdemar's son, from behind the stout wall he built at Denmark's southern gate, the Emperor's demand for homage, with the reply that "the King ruled in Denmark with the same right as the Emperor in Germany, and was no man's subject."

However grievously Absalon had offended the aged archbishop, when after forty years in his high office illness compelled him to lay it down, he could find no one so worthy to step into his shoes. He sent secretly to Rome and got the Pope's permission to name his own successor, before he called a meeting of the church. The account of what followed is the most singular of all Saxo's stories. Valdemar did not know what was coming and, fearing fresh trouble, got the archbishop to swear on the bones of the saints before them all that he was not moved to abdication by hate of the King, or by any coercion whatever. Then the venerable priest laid his staff, his mitre, and his ring on the altar and announced that he had done with it all forever. But he had made up his mind not to use the power given him by the Pontiff. They might choose his successor themselves. He would do nothing to influence their action.

The bishops and clergy went to the King and asked him if he had any choice. The King said he had, but if he made it known he would get no thanks for it and might estrange his best friend. If he did not, he would certainly be committing a sin. He did not know what to do.

"Name him," said they, and Valdemar told them it was the bishop of Roskilde.

At that the old archbishop got up and insisted on the election then and there; but Absalon would have none of it. The burden was too heavy for his shoulders, he said. However, the clergy seized him, "being," says Saxo, who without doubt was one of them, "the more emboldened to do so as the archbishop himself laid hands upon him first." Intoning the hymn sung at archiepiscopal consecrations, they tried to lead him to the altar. He resisted



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with all his might and knocked several of the brethren down. Vestments were torn and scattered, and a mighty ruction arose, to which the laity, not to be outdone, added by striking up a hymn of their own. Archbishop and King tried vainly to make peace; the clamor and battle only rose the higher. Despite his struggles, Absalon was dragged to the high seat, but as they were about to force him into it, he asked leave to say a single word, and instantly appealed his case to the Pope. So there was an end; but when the aged Eskild, on the plea of weakness, begged him to pronounce the benediction, he refused warily, because so he would be exercising archiepiscopal functions and would be *de facto* incumbent of the office.[4]

[Footnote 4: That all this in no way affected the personal relations of the two men Saxo assures us in one of the little human touches with which his chronicle abounds. When Eskild was going away to end his days as a monk in the monastery of Clairvaux, he rested awhile with Absalon at his castle Haffn, where he was received as a father. The old man suffered greatly from cold feet, and Absalon made a box with many little holes in, and put a hot brick in it. With this at his feet, Eskild was able to sleep, and he was very grateful to Absalon, both because of the comfort it gave him and “because that he perceived that filial piety rather than skill in the healer’s art” prompted the invention.]

Here, as always, Absalon thought less of himself than of his country, so the event showed. For when the Pope heard his plea, though he decided against him, he allowed him to hold the bishopric of Roskilde together with the higher office, and so he was left at Valdemar’s side to help finish their work of building up Denmark within and without. At Roskilde he spent, as a matter of fact, most of his time while Valdemar lived. At Lund he would have been in a distant part of the country, parted from his friend and out of touch with the things that were the first concern of his life.

They were preparing to aim a decisive blow against the Pomeranian pagans when Valdemar died, on the very day set for the sailing. The parting nearly killed Absalon. Saxo draws a touching picture of him weeping bitterly as he said the requiem mass over his friend, and observes: “Who can doubt that his tears, rising with the incense, gave forth a peculiar and agreeable savour in high heaven before God?” The plowmen left their fields and carried the bier, with sobs and lamentations, to the church in Ringsted, where the great King rests. His sorrow laid Absalon on a long and grievous sick-bed, from which he rose only when Valdemar’s son needed and called him.

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In the fifteen years that follow we see his old warlike spirit still unbroken. Thus his defiance of the German Emperor, whose anger was hot. Frederick, in revenge, persuaded the Pomeranian duke Bugislav to organize a raid on Denmark with a fleet of five hundred sail. Scant warning reached Absalon of the danger. King Knud was away, and there was no time to send for him. Mustering such vessels as were near, he sailed across the Baltic and met the enemy under Ruegen the day after Whitsuntide (1184). The bishop had gone ashore to say mass on the beach, when word was brought that the great fleet was in sight. Hastily pulling off his robe and donning armor instead, he made for his ship with the words: "Now let our swords sing the praise of God." The Pomeranians were taken completely by surprise. They did not know the Danes were there, and when they heard the archbishop's dreaded war-cry raised, they turned and fled in such terror and haste that eighteen of their ships were run down and sunk with all on board. On one, a rower hanged himself for fear of falling into the hands of the Danes. Absalon gave chase, and the rout became complete. Of the five hundred ships only thirty-five escaped; all the rest were either sunk or taken. Duke Bugislav soon after became a vassal of Denmark, and of the Emperor's plots there was an end.

It was the last blow, and the story of it went far and wide. Absalon's work was nearly done. Denmark was safe from her enemies. The people were happy and prosperous. Valdemar's son ruled unchallenged, and though he was childless, by his side stood his brother, a manly youth who, not yet full grown, had already shown such qualities of courage and sagacious leadership that the old archbishop could hang up the sword with heart at ease. The promise was kept. The second Valdemar became Denmark's royal hero for all time. Absalon's last days were devoted to strengthening the Church, around which he had built such a stout wall. He built churches and cloisters, and guided them with a wise and firm hand. And he made Saxo, his clerk, set it all down as an eye-witness of these things, and as one who came to the task by right; for, says the chronicler, "have not my grandfather and his father before him served the King well on land and sea, hence why should not I serve him with my book-learning?" He bears witness that the bishop himself is his authority for much that he has written.

Archbishop Absalon closed his eyes on St. Benedict's Day, March 21, 1201, in the cloister at Soroe which Sir Asker built and where he lived his last days in peace. Absalon's statue of bronze, on horseback, battle-axe in hand, stands in the market square in Copenhagen, the city he founded and of which he is the patron saint; but his body lies within the quiet sanctuary where, in the deep forest glades, one listens yet for the evensong of the monks, long silent now. When his grave was opened, in 1826, the lines of his tall form, clad in clerical robes, were yet clearly



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traceable. The strong hands, turned to dust, held a silver chalice in which lay his episcopal ring. They are there to be seen to-day, with remnants of his staff that had partly crumbled away. No Dane approaches his grave without emotion. "All Denmark grieved for him," says a German writer of that day, "and commended his soul to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, for that in his lifetime he had led many who were enemies to peace and concord." In his old cathedral, in Roskilde town, lies Saxo, according to tradition under an unmarked stone. When he went to rest his friend and master had slept five years.

Esbern outlived his brother three years. The hero of so many battles met his death at last by an accidental fall in his own house. The last we hear of him is at a meeting in the Christmas season, 1187, where emissaries of Pope Gregory VIII preached a general crusade. Their hearers wept at the picture they drew of the sufferings Christians were made to endure in the Holy Land. Then arose Esbern and reminded them of the great deeds of the fathers at home and abroad. The faith and the fire of Absalon were in his words:

"These things they did," he said, "for the glory of their name and race, knowing nothing of our holy religion. Shall we, believing, do less? Let us lay aside our petty quarrels and take up this greater cause. Let us share the sufferings of the saints and earn their reward. Perhaps we shall win—God keeps the issue. Let him who cannot give himself, give of his means. So shall all we, sharing the promise, share also the reward."

The account we have says that many took the cross, such was the effect of his words, more likely of the man and what he was and had been in the sight of them all throughout his long life.

KING VALDEMAR, AND THE STORY OF THE DANNEBROG

To the court of King Ottocar of Bohemia there came in the year 1205 a brilliant embassy from far-off Denmark to ask the hand of his daughter Dragomir for King Valdemar, the young ruler of that country. Sir Strange^[1] Ebbesoer and Bishop Peder Sunesoer were the spokesmen, and many knights, whose fame had travelled far in the long years of fighting to bring the Baltic pagans under the cross, rode with them. The old king received them with delight. Valdemar was not only a good son-in-law for a king to have, being himself a great and renowned ruler, but he was a splendid knight, tall and handsome, of most courteous bearing, ambitious, manly, and of ready wit. So their suit prospered well. The folk-song tells how they fared; how, according to the custom of those days, Sir Strange wedded the fair princess by proxy for his lord, and how King Ottocar, when he bade her good-by, took this promise of her:



In piety, virtue, and fear of God,
Let all thy days be spent;
And ever thy subjects be thy thought,
Their hopes on thy care be bent.



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[Footnote 1: Pronounce as Strangle, with the l left out.]

The daughter kept her vow. Never was queen more beloved of her people than Dagmar. That was the name they gave her in Denmark, for the Bohemian Dragomir was strange to them. Dagmar meant daybreak in their ancient tongue, and it really seemed as if a new and beautiful day dawned upon the land in her coming. The dry pages of history have little enough to tell of her beyond the simple fact of her marriage and untimely death, though they are filled with her famous husband's deeds; but not all of his glorious campaigns that earned for him the name of "The Victor" have sunk so deep into the people's memory, or have taken such hold of their hearts, as the lovely queen who

Came without burden, she came with peace;
She came the good peasant to cheer.

Through all the centuries the people have sung her praise, and they sing it yet. Of the many folk-songs that have come down from the middle ages, those that tell of Queen Dagmar are the sweetest, as they are the most mournful, for her happiness was as brief as her life was beautiful.

They sailed homeward over sunny seas, until they came to the shore where the royal lover awaited his bride, impatiently scanning the horizon for the gilded dragon's head of the ship that bore her. The minstrel sings of the great wedding that was held in the old city of Ribe.[2] The gray old cathedral in which they knelt together still stands; but of Valdemar's strong castle only a grass-grown hill is left. It was the privilege of a bride in those days to ask a gift of her husband on the morning after the wedding, and have it granted without question. Two boons did Dagmar crave,

"right early in the morning, long before it was day":

one, that the plow-tax might be forgiven the peasant, and that those who for rising against it had been laid in irons be set free; the other, that the prison door of Bishop Valdemar be opened. Bishop Valdemar was the arch-enemy of the King. The first request he granted; but the other he refused for cause:

An' he comes out, Bishop Valdemar,
Widow he makes you this year.

And he did his worst; for in the end the King yielded to Dagmar's prayers, and much mischief came of it.

[Footnote 2: Pronounced Reebe, in two syllables.]

Seven years the good queen lived. Seven centuries have not dimmed the memory of them, or of her. The King was away in a distant part of the country when they sent to



him in haste with the message that the queen was dying. The ballad tells of his fears as he sees Dagmar's page coming, and they proved only too true.

The king his checker-board shut in haste,
The dice they rattled and rung.
Forbid it God, who dwells in heaven,
That Dagmar should die so young.

In the wild ride over field and moor, the King left his men far behind:



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When the king rode out of Skanderborg
Him followed a hundred men.
But when he rode o'er Ribe bridge,
Then rode the king alone.

The tears of weeping women told him as he thundered over the drawbridge of the castle that he was too late. But Dagmar had only swooned. As he throws himself upon her bed she opens her eyes, and smiles upon her husband. Her last prayer, as her first, is for mercy and peace. Her sin, she says, is not great; she has done nothing worse than to lace her silken sleeves on a Sunday. Then she closes her eyes with a tired sigh:

The bells of heaven are chiming for me;
No more may I stay to speak.

Thus the folk-song. Long before Dagmar went to her rest, Bishop Valdemar had stirred up all Germany to wreak his vengeance upon the King. He was an ambitious, unscrupulous priest, who hated his royal master because he held himself entitled to the crown, being the natural son of King Knud, who was murdered at Roskilde, as told in the story of Absalon. While they were yet young men, when he saw that the people followed his rival, he set the German princes against Denmark, a task he never found hard. But young Valdemar made short work of them. He took the strong cities on the Elbe and laid the lands of his adversaries under the Danish crown. The bishop he seized, and threw him into the dungeon of Soeborg Castle, where he had sat thirteen years when Dagmar's prayers set him free. He could hardly walk when he came out, but he could hate, and all the world knew it. The Pope bound him with heavy oaths never to return to Denmark, and made him come to Italy so that he could keep an eye on him himself. But two years had not passed before he broke his oath, and fled to Bremen, where the people elected him to the vacant archbishopric and its great political power. Forthwith he began plotting against his native land.

In the bitter feud between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines he found his opportunity. One of the rival emperors marched an army north to help the perjured priest. King Valdemar hastened to meet them, but on the eve of battle the Emperor was slain by one of his own men. On Sunday, when the archbishop was saying mass in the Bremen cathedral, an unknown knight, the visor of whose helmet was closed so that no one saw his face, strode up to the altar, and laying a papal bull before him, cried out that he was accursed, and under the ban of the church. The people fled, and forsaken by all, the wretched man turned once more to Rome in submission. But though the Pope forgave him on condition that he meddle no more with politics, war, or episcopal office, another summer found him wielding sword and lance against the man he hated, this time under the banner of the Guelphs. The Germans had made another onset on Denmark, but again King Valdemar defeated them. The bishop intrenched himself in Hamburg, and made a desperate resistance, but the King carried the city by storm. The beaten and hopeless man fled, and shut himself up in a cloister in Hanover, where daily and nightly



he scourged himself for his sins. If it is true that “hell was fashioned by the souls that hated,” not all the penance of all the years must have availed to save him from the torments of the lost.



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Denmark now had peace on its southern border. Dagmar was dead, and Valdemar, whose restless soul yearned for new worlds to conquer, turned toward the east where the wild Esthland tribes were guilty of even worse outrages than the Wends before Absalon tamed them. The dreadful cruelties practised by these pagans upon christian captives cried aloud to all civilized Europe, and Valdemar took the cross "for the honor of the Virgin Mary and the absolution of his sins," and gathered a mighty fleet, the greatest ever assembled in Danish waters. With more than a thousand ships he sailed across the Baltic. The Pope sped them with his apostolic blessing, and took king and people into his especial care, forbidding any one to attack the country while they were away converting the heathen. Archbishop Anders led the crusade with the king. As the fleet approached the shore they saw it covered with an innumerable host of the enemy. So great was their multitude that the crusaders quailed before the peril of landing; but the archbishop put heart into them, and led the fleet in fervent prayer to the God of battle. Then they landed without hindrance.

There was an old stronghold there called Lyndanissa that had fallen into decay. The crusaders busied themselves for two days with building another and better fort. On the third day, being St. Vitus' Day, they rested, fearing no harm. The Esthlanders had not troubled them. Some of their chiefs had even come in with an offer of surrender. They were willing to be converted, they said, and the priests were baptizing them after vespers, while the camp was making ready for the night, when suddenly the air was filled with the yells of countless savages. On every side they broke from the woods, where they had been gathering unsuspected, and overwhelmed the camp. The guards were hewn down, the outposts taken, and the King's men were falling back in confusion, their standard lost, when Prince Vitislav of Ruegen who had been camping with his men in a hollow between the sand-hills, out of the line of attack, threw himself between them and the Esthlanders, and gave the Danes time to form their lines.

In the twilight of the June evening the battle raged with great fury. With the King at their head, who had led them to victory on so many hard-fought fields, the Danes drove back their savage foes time after time, literally hewing their way through their ranks with sword and battle-axe. But they were hopelessly outnumbered. Their hearts misgave them as they saw ten heathen spring out of the ground for every one that was felled. The struggle grew fiercer as night came on. The Christians were fighting for life; defeat meant that they must perish to a man, by the sword or upon pagan altars; escape there was none. Upon the cliff overlooking the battle-field the archbishop and his priests were praying for success to the King's arms. Tradition that has been busy with this great battle all through the ages tells how, while the aged bishop's hands were raised toward heaven, victory leaned to the Danes; but when he grew tired, and let them fall, the heathen won forward, until the priests held up his hands and once more the tide of battle rolled back from the shore, and the Christian war-cry rose higher.



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Suddenly, in the clash of steel upon steel and the wild tumult of the conflict, there arose a great and wondering cry "the banner! the banner! a miracle!" and Christian and pagan paused to listen. Out of the sky, as it seemed, over against the hill upon which the priests knelt, a blood-red banner with a great white cross was seen falling into the ranks of the Christian knights, and a voice resounded over the battle-field, "Bear this high, and victory shall be yours." With the exultant cry, "For God and the King," the crusaders seized it, and charged the foe. Terror-stricken, the Esthlanders wavered, then turned, and fled. The battle became a massacre. Thousands were slain. The chronicles say that the dead lay piled fathom-high on the field that ran red with blood. Upon it, when the pursuit was over, Valdemar knelt with his men, and they bowed their heads in thanksgiving, while the venerable archbishop gave praise to God for the victory.

That is the story of the Dannebrog which has been the flag of the Danes seven hundred years. Whether the archbishop had brought it with him intending to present it to King Valdemar, and threw it down among the fighting hordes in the moment of extreme peril, or whether, as some think, the Pope himself had sent it to the crusaders with a happy inspiration, the fact remains that it came to the Danes in this great battle, and on the very day which, fifty years before, had seen the fall of Arcona, and the end of idol-worship among the western Slavs. Three hundred years the standard flew over the Danes fighting on land and sea. Then it was lost in a campaign against the Holstein counts and, when recovered half a century later, was hung up in the cathedral at Slesvig, where gradually it fell to pieces. In the first half of the Nineteenth Century, when national feeling and national pride were at their lowest ebb, it was taken down with other moth-eaten old banners, one day when they were cleaning up, and somebody made a bonfire of them in the street. Such was the fate of "the flag that fell from heaven," the sacred standard of the Danes. But it was not the end of it. The Dannebrog flies yet over the Denmark of the Valdemars, no longer great as then, it is true, nor master of its ancient foes; but the world salutes it with respect, for there was never blot of tyranny or treason upon it, and its sons own it with pride wherever they go.

King Valdemar knighted five and thirty of his brave men on the battle-field, and from that day the Order of the Dannebrog is said to date. It bears upon a white crusader's cross the slogan of the great fight "For God and the King," and on its reverse the date when it was won, "June 15, 1219." The back of paganism was broken that day, and the conversion of all Esthland followed soon. King Valdemar built the castle he had begun before he sailed home, and called it Reval, after one of the neighboring tribes. The Russian city of that name grew up about it and about the church which Archbishop Anders reared. The Dannebrog became its arms, and its people call it to this day "the city of the Danes."



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Denmark was now at the height of her glory. Her flag flew over all the once hostile lands to the south and east, clear into Russia. The Baltic was a Danish inland sea. King Valdemar was named "Victor" with cause. His enemies feared him; his people adored him. In a single night foul treachery laid the whole splendid structure low. The King and young Valdemar, Dagmar's son, with a small suite of retainers had spent the day hunting on the little island of Lyoe. Count Henrik of Schwerin,—the Black Count they called him,—who had just returned from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, was his guest. The count hated Valdemar bitterly for some real or fancied injury, but he hid his hatred under a friendly bearing and smooth speech. He brought the King gifts from the Holy Sepulchre, hunted with him, and was his friend. But by night, when the King and his son slept in their tent, unguarded, since no enemy was thought to be near, he fell upon them with his cutthroats, bound and gagged them despite their struggles, and gathering up all the valuables that lay around, to put the finishing touch upon his villainy, fled with his prisoners "in great haste and fear," while the King's men slept. When they awoke, and tried to follow, they found their ships scuttled. The count's boat had been lying under sail all day, hidden in a sheltered cove, awaiting his summons.

Germany at last had the lion and its whelp in her grasp. In chains and fetters they were dragged from one dungeon to another. The traitors dared not trust them long in any city, however strong. The German Emperor shook his fist at Count Henrik, but secretly he was glad. He would have liked nothing better than to have the precious spoil in his own power. The Pope thundered in Rome and hurled his ban at the thugs. But the Black Count's conscience was as swarthy as his countenance; and besides, had he not just been to the Holy Land, and thereby washed himself clean of all his sins, past and present?

Behind prison walls, comforted only by Dagmar's son, sat the King, growing old and gray with anger and grief. Denmark lay prostrate under the sudden blow, while her enemies rose on every side. Day by day word came of outbreaks in the conquered provinces. The people did not know which way to turn; the strong hand that held the helm was gone, and the ship drifted, the prey of every ill wind. It was as if all that had been won by sixty years of victories and sacrifice fell away in one brief season. The forests filled with out-laws; neither peasant nor wayfarer, nor yet monk or nun in their quiet retreat, was safe from outrage; and pirates swarmed again in bay and sound, where for two generations there had been peace. The twice-perjured Bishop Valdemar left his cloister cell once more and girt on the sword, to take the kingdom he coveted by storm.



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He was met by King Valdemar's kinsman and friend, Albert of Orlamunde, who hastened to the frontier with all the men he could gather. They halted him with a treaty of peace that offered to set Valdemar free if he would take his kingdom as a fief of the German crown. He, Albert, so it was written, was to keep all his lands and more, would he but sign it. He did not stop to hear the rest, but slashed the parchment into ribbons with his sword, and ordered an instant advance. The bishop he made short work of, and he was heard of no more. But in the battle with the German princes Albert was defeated and taken prisoner. The door of King Valdemar's dungeon was opened only to let his friend in.

After two years and a half in chains, Valdemar was ransomed by his people with a great sum of gold. The Danish women gave their rings and their jewels to bring back their king. They flocked about him when he returned, and received him like the conqueror of old; but he rode among them gray and stern, and his thoughts were far away.

They had made him swear on oath upon the sacrament, and all Denmark's bishops with him, before they set him free, that he would not seek revenge. But once he was back in his own, he sent to Pope Gregory, asking him to loose him from an oath wrung from him while he was helpless in the power of bandits. And the Pope responded that to keep faith with traitors was no man's duty. Then back he rode over the River Eider into the enemy's land—for they had stripped Denmark of all her hard-won possessions south of the ancient border of the kingdom, except Esthland and Ruegen—and with him went every man who could bear arms in all the nation. He crushed the Black Count who tried to block his way, and at Bornhoeved met the German allies who had gathered from far and near to give him battle. Well they knew that if Valdemar won, the reckoning would be terrible. All day they fought, and victory seemed to lean toward the Danes, when the base Holsteiners, the Danish rear-guard whom the enemy had bought to betray their king, turned their spears upon his army, and decided the day. The battle ended in utter rout of Valdemar's forces. Four thousand Danish men were slain. The King himself fell wounded on the field, his eye pierced by an arrow, and would have fallen into the hands of the enemy once more but for an unknown German knight, who took him upon his horse and bore him in the night over unfrequented paths to Kiel, where he was safe.

“But all men said that this great hurt befell the King because that he brake the oath he swore upon the sacred body of the Lord.”

The wars of Valdemar were over, but his sorrows were not. Four years later the crushing blow fell when Dagmar's son, who was crowned king to succeed him, lost his life while hunting. With him, says the folk-song, died the hope of Denmark. The King had other sons, but to Dagmar's boy the people had given their love from the first, as they had to his gentle mother. The old King and his people grieved together.



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But Valdemar rose above his sorrows. Great as he had been in the days of victory, he was greater still in adversity. The country was torn by the wars of three-score years, and in need of rest. He gave his last days to healing the wounds the sword had struck. Valdemar, the Victor, became Valdemar, the Law-giver. The laws of the country had hitherto made themselves. They were the outgrowths of the people's ancient customs, passed down by word of mouth through the generations, and confirmed on Thing from time to time. King Valdemar gave Denmark her first written laws that judged between man and man, in at least one of her provinces clear down into our day. "With law shall land be built" begins his code. "The law," it says, "must be honest, just, reasonable, and according to the ways of the people. It must meet their needs, and speak plainly so that all men may know and understand what the law is. It is not to be made in any man's favor, but for the needs of all them who live in the land." That is its purpose, and "no man shall judge (condemn) the law which the King has given and the country chosen; neither shall he (the King) take it back without the will of the people." That tells the story of Valdemar's day, and of the people who are so near of kin with ourselves. They were not sovereign and subjects; they were a chosen king and a free people, working together "with law land to build."

King Valdemar was married twice. The folk-song represents Dagmar as urging the King with her dying breath

"that Bengerd, my lord, that base bad dame
you never to wife will take."

Bengerd, or Berengaria, was a Portuguese princess whom Valdemar married in spite of the warning, two years later. As the people had loved the fair Dagmar, so they hated the proud Southern beauty, whether with reason or not. The story of her "morning gift," as it has come down to us through the mists of time, is very different from the other. She asks the King, so the ballad has it, to give her Samsoe, a great and fertile island, and "a golden crown[3] for every maid," but he tells her not to be quite so greedy:

There be full many an honest maid
with not dry bread to eat.

[Footnote 3: A coin, probably.]

Undismayed, Bengerd objects that Danish women have no business to wear silken gowns, and that a good horse is not for a peasant lad. The King replies patiently that what a woman can buy she may wear for him, and that he will not take the lad's horse if he can feed it. Bengerd is not satisfied. "Let bar the land with iron chains" is her next proposal, that neither man nor woman enter it without paying tax. Her husband says scornfully that Danish kings have never had need of such measures, and never will. He is plainly getting bored, and when she keeps it up, and begrudges the husbandman

more than “two oxen and a cow,” he loses his temper, and presumably there is a matrimonial



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tiff. Very likely most of this is fiction, bred of the popular prejudice. The King loved her, that is certain. She was a beautiful high-spirited woman, so beautiful that many hundreds of years after, when her grave was opened, the delicate oval of her skull excited admiration yet. But the people hated her. Twenty generations after her death it was their custom when passing her grave to spit on it with the exclamation "Out upon thee, Bengerd! God bless the King of Denmark"; for in good or evil days they never wavered in their love and admiration for the king who was a son of the first Valdemar, and the heir of his greatness and of that of the sainted Absalon. Tradition has it that Bengerd was killed in battle, having gone with her husband on one of his campaigns. "It was not heard in any place," says the folk-song wickedly, "that any one grieved for her." But the King mourned for his beautiful queen to the end of his days.

Bengerd bore Valdemar three sons upon whom he lavished all the affection of his lonely old age. Erik he chose as his successor, and to keep his brothers loyal to him he gave them great fiefs and thus, unknowing, brought on the very trouble he sought to avoid, and set his foot on the path that led to Denmark's dismemberment after centuries of bloody wars. For to his second son Abel he gave Slesvig, and Abel, when his brother became king, sought alliance with the Holstein count Adolf,[4] the very one who had led the Germans at the fatal battle of Bornhoeved. The result was a war between the brothers that raged seven years, and laid waste the land. Worse was to follow, for Abel was only "Abel in name, but Cain in deed." But happily the old King's eyes were closed then, and he was spared the sight of one brother murdering the other for the kingdom.

[Footnote 4: That was the beginning of the Slesvig-Holstein question that troubled Europe to our day; for the fashion set by Abel other rulers of his dukedom followed, and by degrees Slesvig came to be reckoned with the German duchies, whereas up till then it had always been South-Jutland, a part of Denmark proper.]

Some foreboding of this seems to have troubled him in his last years. It is related that once when he was mounting his horse to go hunting he fell into a deep reverie, and remained standing with his foot in the stirrup a long time, while his men wondered, not daring to disturb him. At last one of them went to remind him that the sun was low in the west. The King awoke from his dream, and bade him go at once to a wise old hermit who lived in a distant part of the country. "Ask him," he said, "what King Valdemar was thinking of just now, and bring me his answer." The knight went away on his strange errand, and found the hermit. And this was the message he brought back: "Your lord and master pondered as he stood by his horse, how his sons would fare when he was dead. Tell him that war and discord they shall have, but kings



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they will all be.” When the King heard the prophecy he was troubled in mind, and called his sons and all his great knights to a council at which he pleaded with them to keep the peace. But though they promised, he was barely in his grave when riot and bloodshed filled the land. The climax was reached when Abel inveigled his brother to his home with fair words and, once he had him in his power, seized him and gave him over to his men to do with “as they pleased.” They understood their master only too well, and took King Erik out on the fjord in an open boat, and killed him there, scarce giving him time to say his prayers. They weighted his body with his helmet, and sank it in the deep.

Abel made oath with four and twenty of his men that he was innocent of his brother’s blood, and took the crown after him. But the foul crime was soon avenged. Within a few years he was himself slain by a peasant in a rising of his own people. For a while his body lay unburied, the prey of beast and bird, and when it was interred in the Slesvig cathedral there was no rest for it. “Such turmoil arose in the church by night that the monks could not chant their vigils,” and in the end they took him out, and buried him in a swamp, with a stake driven through the heart to lay his ghost. But clear down to our time when people ceased to believe in ghosts, the fratricide was seen at night hunting through the woods, coal-black and on a white horse, with three fiery dogs trailing after; and blue flames burned over the sea where they vanished. That was how the superstition of the people judged the man whom the nobles and the priests made king, red-handed.

Christopher, the youngest of the three brothers, was king last. His end was no better than that of the rest. Indeed, it was worse. Hardly yet forty years old, he died—poisoned, it was said, by the Abbot Arnfast, in the sacrament as he knelt at the altar-rail in the Ribe cathedral. He was buried in the chancel where the penitents going to the altar walk over his grave. So, of all Valdemar’s four sons, not one died a peaceful, natural death. But kings they all were.

Valdemar was laid in Ringsted with his great father. He sleeps between his two queens. Dagmar’s grave was disturbed in the late middle ages by unknown vandals, and the remains of Denmark’s best-loved queen were scattered. Only a golden cross, which she had worn in life, somehow escaped, and found its way in course of time into the museum of antiquities at Copenhagen, where it now is, its chief and priceless treasure. There also is a braid of Queen Bengerd’s hair that was found when her grave was opened in 1855. The people’s hate had followed her even there, and would not let her rest. The slab that covered her tomb had been pried off, and a round stone dropped into the place made for her head. Otherwise her grave was undisturbed.

“Truly then fell the crown from the heads of Danish men,” says the old chronicle of King Valdemar’s death, and black clouds were gathering ominously even then over the land.

But in storm and stress, as in days that were fair, the Danish people have clung loyally to the memory of their beloved King and of his sweet Dagmar.



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HOW THE GHOST OF THE HEATH WAS LAID

On the map of Europe the mainland of Denmark looks like a beckoning finger pointing due north and ending in a narrow sand-reef, upon which the waves of the North Sea and of the Kattegat break with unceasing clamor and strife. The heart of the peninsula, quite one-fourth of its area, was fifty years ago a desert, a barren, melancholy waste, where the only sign of life encountered by the hunter, gunning for heath-fowl and plover, was a rare shepherd tending a few lonesome sheep, and knitting mechanically on his endless stocking. The two, the lean sheep and the long stocking, together comprised the only industries which the heath afforded and was thought capable of sustaining. A great change has taken place within the span of a single life, and it is all due to the clear sight and patient devotion of one strong man, the Gifford Pinchot of Denmark. The story of that unique achievement reads like the tale of the Sleeping Beauty who was roused from her hundred years' sleep by the kiss of her lover prince. The prince who awoke the slumbering heath was a captain of engineers, Enrico Dalgas by name.

Not altogether fanciful is the conceit. Barren, black, and desolate, the great moor gripped the imagination as no smiling landscape of field and forest could—does yet, where enough of it remains. Far as eye reaches the dun heather covers hill and plain with its sombre pall. Like gloomy sentinels, furry cattails nod in the bog where the blue gentian peeps timidly into murky pools; the only human habitation in sight some heath boer's ling-thatched hut, flanked by rows of peat stacks in vain endeavor to stay the sweep of the pitiless west wind. On the barrows where the vikings sleep their long sleep, the plover pipes its melancholy lay; between steep banks a furtive brook steals swiftly by as if anxious to escape from the universal blight. Over it all broods the silence of the desert, drowsy with the hum of many bees winging their swift way to the secret feeding-places they know of, where mayflower and anemone hide under the heather, witness that forests grew here in the long ago. In midsummer, when the purple is on the broom, a strange pageant moves on the dim horizon, a shifting mirage of sea and shore, forest, lake, and islands lying high, with ships and castles and spires of distant churches—the witchery of the heath that speaks in the tales and superstitions of its simple people. High in the blue soars the lark, singing its song of home and hope to its nesting mate. This is the heath which, denying to the hardest toil all but the barest living, has given of its poetry to the Danish tongue some of its sweetest songs.



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But in this busy world day-dreams must make way for the things that make the day count, castles in the air to homes upon the soil. The heath had known such in the dim past. It had not always been a desert. The numberless cairns that lie scattered over it, sometimes strung out for miles as if marking the highways of the ancients, which they doubtless do, sometimes grouped where their villages stood, bear witness to it. Great battles account for their share, and some of them were fought in historic times. On Grathe Heath the young King Valdemar overcame his treacherous rival Svend. Alone and hunted, the beaten man sought refuge, Saxo tells us, behind a stump, where he was found and slain by one of the King's axemen. A chapel was built on the spot. More than seven centuries later (in 1892) they dug there, and found the bones of a man with skull split in two.

The stump behind which the wretched Svend hid was probably the last representative of great forests that grew where now is sterile moor. In the bogs trunks of oak and fir are found lying as they fell centuries ago. The local names preserve the tradition, with here and there patches of scrub oak that hug the ground close, to escape the blast from the North Sea. There is one such thicket near the hamlet of Taulund—the name itself tells of long-forgotten groves—and the story runs among the people yet that once squirrels jumped from tree to tree without touching ground all the way from Taulund to Gjellerup church, a stretch of more than five miles to which the wild things of the woods have long been strangers. In the shelter of the old forests men dwelt through ages, and made the land yield them a living. Some cairns that have been explored span over more than a thousand years. They were built in the stone age, and served the people of the bronze and iron ages successively as burial-places, doubtless the same tribes who thus occupied their homesteads from generation to generation. That they were farmers, not nomads, is proved by the clear impression of grains of wheat and barley in their burial urns. The seeds strayed into the clay and were burned away, but the impression abides, and tells the story.

Clear down to historic times there was a thrifty population in many of the now barren spots. But a change was slowly creeping over the landscape. The country was torn by long and bloody wars. The big men fought for the land and the little ones paid the score, as they always do. They were hunted from house and home. Next the wild hordes of the Holstein counts overran Jutland. Its towns were burned, the country laid waste. Great fires swept the forests. What ravaging armies had left was burned in the smelteries. In the sandy crust of the heath there is iron, and swords and spears were the grim need of that day. The smelteries are only names now. They went, but they took the forests with them, and where the ground was cleared the west wind broke through, and ruin followed fast. Last of all came the Black Death, and set its seal of desolation upon it all. When it had passed, the country was a huge graveyard. The heath had moved in. Rovers and smugglers found refuge there; honest folk shunned it. Under the heather the old landmarks are sometimes found yet, and deep ruts made by wheels that long since ceased to turn.

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In the Eighteenth Century men began to think of reclamation. A thousand German colonists were called in and settled on the heath, but it was stronger than they, and they drifted away until scarce half a hundred families remained. The Government tried its hand, but there was no one who knew just how, and only discouragement resulted. Then came the war with Germany in 1864, that lost to Denmark a third of her territory. The country lay prostrate under the crushing blow. But it rose above defeat and disaster, and once more expectant eyes were turned toward the ancient domain that had slipped from its grasp. "What was lost without must be won within" became the national slogan. And this time the man for the task was at hand.

Enrico Mylius Dalgas was by the accident of birth an Italian, his father being the Danish consul in Naples; by descent a Frenchman; by choice and training a Dane, typical of the best in that people. He came of the Huguenot stock that left France after the repeal of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and scattered over Europe, to the great good of every land in which it settled. They had been tillers of the soil from the beginning, and at least two of the family, who found homes in Denmark, made in their day notable contributions to the cause of advanced, sensible husbandry. Enrico's father, though a merchant, had an open eye for the interests which in later years claimed the son's life-work. In the diary of a journey through Sweden he makes indignant comment upon the reckless way in which the people of that country dealt with their forests. That he was also a man of resolution is shown by an incident of the time when Jew-baiting was having its sorry day in Denmark. An innkeeper mistook the dark-skinned little man for a Jew, and set before him a spoiled ham, retorting contemptuously, when protest was made, that it was "good enough for a Sheeny." Without further parley Mr. Dalgas seized the hot ham by its shank and beat the fellow with it till he cried for mercy. The son tells of the first school he attended, when he was but five years old. It was kept by the widow of one of Napoleon's generals, a militant lady who every morning marshalled the school, a Lilliputian army with the teachers flanking the line like beardless sergeants in stays and petticoats, and distributed rewards and punishments as the great Emperor was wont to do after a battle. For the dunces there was a corner strewn with dried peas on which they were made to kneel with long-eared donkey caps adorning their luckless heads. Very likely it was after an insult of this kind that Enrico decided to elope to America with his baby sister. They were found down by the harbor bargaining with some fishermen to take them over to Capri *en route* for the land of freedom. The elder Dalgas died while the children were yet little, and the widow went back to Denmark to bring up her boys there.



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They were poor, and the change from the genial skies of sunny Italy to the bleak North did not make it any easier for them. Enrico's teacher saw it, and gave him his overcoat to be made over. But the boys spotted it and squared accounts with their teacher by snowballing the wearer of the big green plaid until he was glad to leave it at home, and go without. He was in the military school when war broke out with Germany in 1848. Both of his brothers volunteered, and fell in battle. Enrico was ordered out as lieutenant, and put on the shoulder-straps joyfully, to the great scandal of his godfather in Milan, who sympathized with the German cause. When the young soldier refused to resign he not only cut him off in his will, but took away a pension of four hundred kroner he had given his mother in her widowhood. If he had thoughts of bringing them over by such means, he found out his mistake. Mother and son were made of sterner stuff. Dalgas fought twice for his country, the last time in 1864, as a captain of engineers.

It was no ordinary class, the one of 1851 that resumed its studies in the military high school. Two of the students did not answer roll-call; their names were written among the nation's heroic dead. Some had scars and wore the cross for valor in battle. All were first lieutenants, to be graduated as captains. Dalgas had himself transferred from the artillery to the engineers, and was detailed as road inspector. So the opportunity of his life came to him.

There were few railways in those days; the highways were still the great arteries of traffic. Dalgas built roads that crossed the heath, and he learned to know it and the strong and independent, if narrow, people who clung to it with such a tenacious grip. He had a natural liking for practical geology and for the chemistry of the soil, and the deep cuts which his roads sometimes made gave him the best of chances for following his bent. The heath lay as an open book before him, and he studied it with delight. He found the traces of the old forests, and noted their extent. Occasionally the pickaxe uncovered peat deposits of unsuspected depth and value. Sometimes the line led across the lean fields, and damages had to be discussed and assessed. He learned the point of view of the heath farmer, sympathized with his struggles, and gained his confidence. Best of all, he found a man of his own mind, a lawyer by the name of Morville, himself a descendant of the exiled Huguenots. It is not a little curious that when the way was cleared for the Heath Society's great work, in its formal organization with M. Mourier-Petersen, a large landowner, as their associate in its management, the three men who for a quarter of a century planned the work and marked out the groove in which it was to run were all of that strong stock which is by no means the most common in Denmark.



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With his lawyer friend Captain Dalgas tramped the heath far and wide for ten years. Then their talks had matured a plan. Dalgas wrote to the Copenhagen newspapers that the heath could be reclaimed, and suggested that it should be done by the State. They laughed at him. "Nothing better could have happened," he said in after years, "for it made us turn to the people themselves, and that was the road to success, though we did not know it." In the spring of 1866 a hundred men, little and big landowners most of them, met at his call, and organized the Heath Society^[1] with the object of reclaiming the moor. Dalgas became its managing director.

[Footnote 1: Danske Hedeselskab.]

To restore to the treeless waste its forest growth was the fundamental idea, for until that was done nothing but the heather could grow there. The west wind would not let it. But the heath farmer shook his head. It would cost too much, and give too little back. What he needed was water and marl. Could the captain help them to these?—that was another matter. The little streams that found their way into the heath and lost it there, dire need had taught them to turn to use in their fields; not a drop escaped. But the river that ran between deep banks was beyond their reach. Could he show them how to harness that? Dalgas saw their point. "We are working, not for the dead soil, but for the living men who find homes upon it," he told his associates, and tree planting was put aside for the time. They turned canal diggers instead. Irrigation became their aim and task; the engineer was in his right place. The water was raised from the stream and led out upon the moor, and presently grass grew in the sand which the wiry stems of the heather had clutched so long. Green meadows lined the water-runs, and fragrant haystacks rose. To the lean sheep was added a cow, then two. The farmer laid by a little, and took in more land for cultivation. That meant breaking the heath. Also, it meant marl. The heath is lime-poor; marl is lime in the exact form in which it best fits that sandy soil. It was known to exist in some favored spots, but the poor heath farmer could not bring it from a distance. So the marl borer went with the canal digger. Into every acre he drove his auger, and mapped out his discoveries. At last accounts he had found marl in more than seventeen hundred places, and he is not done yet. Where there was none, Dalgas's Society built portable railways into the moor far enough to bring it to nearly every farmer's door.

It was as if a magic wand had been waved over the heath. With water and marl, the means were at hand for fighting it and winning out. Heads that had drooped in discouragement were raised. The cattle keep increased, and with it came the farmer's wealth. Marl changes the character of the heath soil; with manure to fertilize it there was no reason why it should not grow crops—none, except the withering blast of the west wind. The time for Dalgas to preach tree planting had come.



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While the canal digger and marl seeker were at work, there had been neighborhood meetings and talks at which Captain Dalgas did the talking. When he spoke the heath boer listened, for he had learned to look upon him as one of them. He wore no gold lace. A plain man in every-day gray tweeds, with his trousers tucked into his boots, he spoke to plain people of things that concerned them vitally, and in a way they could understand. So when he told them that the heath had once been forest-clad, at least a large part of it, and pointed them to the proofs, and that the woods could be made to grow again to give them timber and shelter and crops, they gave heed. It was worth trying at any rate. The shelter was the immediate thing. They began planting hedges about their homesteads; not always wisely, for it is not every tree that will grow in the heath. The wind whipped and wore them, the ahl cramped their roots, and they died. The ahl is the rusty-red crust that forms under the heather in the course of the ages where the desert rules. Sometimes it is a loose sandstone formation; sometimes it carries as much as twenty per cent of iron that is absorbed from the upper layers of the sand. In any case, it must be broken through; no tree root can do it. The ahl, the poverty of the sand, and the wind, together make the "evil genius" of the heath that had won until then in the century-old fight with man. But this time he had backing, and was not minded to give up. The Heath Society was there to counsel, to aid. And soon the hedges took hold, and gardens grew in their shelter. There is hardly a farm in all west Jutland to-day that has not one, even if the moor waits just beyond the gate.

Out in the desert the Society had made a beginning with plantations of Norway spruce. They took root, but the heather soon overwhelmed the young plants. Not without a fight would this enemy let go its grip upon the land. It had smothered the hardy Scotch pine in days past, and now the spruce was in peril. Searching high and low for something that would grow fast and grow green, Dalgas and his associates planted dwarf pine with the spruce. Strangely, it not only grew itself, but proved to be a real nurse for the other. The spruce took a fresh start, and they grew vigorously together—for a while. Then the pine outstripped its nursling, and threatened to smother it. The spruce was the more valuable; the other was at best little more than a shrub. The croaker raised his voice: the black heath had turned green, but it was still heath, of no value to any one, then or ever.

He had not reckoned with Dalgas. The captain of engineers could use the axe as well as the spade. He cut the dwarf pine out wherever the spruce had got its grip, and gave it light and air. And it grew big and beautiful. The Heath Society has now over nineteen hundred plantations that cover nearly a hundred thousand acres, and the State and private individuals, inspired by the example it set, have planted almost as large an area. The ghost of the heath has been laid for all time.



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Go now across the heath and see the change forty years have wrought. You shall seek in vain the lonely shepherd with his stocking. The stocking has grown into an organized industry. In grandfather's day the farmer and his household "knitted for the taxes"; if all hands made enough in the twelvemonth to pay the tax-gatherer, they had done well. Last year the single county of Hammerum, of which more below, sold machine-made underwear to the value of over a million and a half kroner. The sheep are there, but no longer lean; no more the ling-thatched hut, but prosperous farms backed by thrifty groves, with hollyhock and marigold in the dooryards, heaps of gray marl in the fields, tiny rivulets of water singing the doom of the heath in the sand; for where it comes the heather moves out. A resolute, thrifty peasantry looks hopefully forward. Not all of the heath is conquered yet. Roughly speaking, thirty-three hundred square miles of heath confronted Dalgas in 1866. Just about a thousand remain for those who come after to wrestle with; but already voices are raised pleading that some of it be preserved untouched for its natural beauty, while yet it is time.

Meanwhile the plow goes over fresh acres every year—once, twice, then a deeper plowing, this time to break the stony crust, and the heath is ready for its human mission. From the Society's nurseries that are scattered through the country come thousands of tiny trees, and are set out in the furrows, two of the spruce for each dwarf pine till the nurse has done her work. Then she is turned into charcoal, into tar, and a score of other things of use. The men who do the planting in summer find chopping to do in winter in the older plantations, at good wages. Money is flowing into the moor in the wake of the water and the marl. Roads are being made, and every day the mail-carrier comes. In the olden time a stranger straying into the heath often brought the first news of the world without for weeks together. Game is coming, too,—roebuck and deer,—in the young forests. The climate itself is changing; more rain falls in midsummer, when it is needed. The sand-blast has been checked, the power of the west wind broken. The shrivelled soil once more takes up and holds the rains, and the streams will deepen, fish leap in them as of yore. Groves of beech and oak are springing up in the shelter of their hardier evergreen kin. "Make the land furry," Dalgas said, with prophetic eye beholding great forests taking the place of sand and heather, and in his lifetime the change was wrought that is transforming the barren moor into the homeland of a prosperous people.

To the most unlikely of places, through the very prison doors, his gospel of hope has made its way. For the last dozen years the life prisoners in the Horsens penitentiary have been employed in breaking and reforesting the heath, and their keepers report that the effect upon them of the hard work in the open has been to notably cheer and brighten them. The discipline has been excellent. There have been few attempts at escape, and they have come to nothing through the vigilance of the other prisoners.



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While the population in the rest of Denmark is about stationary, in west Jutland it grows apace. The case of Skaphus farm in the parish of Sunds shows how this happens. Prior to 1870 this farm of three thousand acres was rated the "biggest and poorest" in Denmark. Last year it had dwindled to three hundred and fifty acres, but upon its old land thirty-three homesteads had risen that kept between them sixty-two horses and two hundred and fifty-two cows, beside the sheep, and the manor farm was worth twice as much as before. The town of Herning, sometimes called "the Star of the Heath," is the seat of Hammerum county, once the baldest and most miserable on the Danish mainland. In 1841 twenty-one persons lived in Herning. To-day there are more than six thousand in a town with handsome buildings, gas, electric lighting, and paved streets. The heath is half a dozen miles away. And this is not the result of any special or forced industry, but the natural, healthy growth of a centre for an army of industrious men and women winning back the land of their fathers by patient toil. All through the landscape one sees from the train the black giving way to the green. Churches rear their white gables; bells that have been silent since the Black Death stalked through the land once more call the people to worship on the old sites. More churches were built in the reign of "the good King Christian," who has just been gathered to his fathers, than in all the centuries since the day of the Valdemars.

Bog cultivation is the Heath Society's youngest child. The heath is full of peat-bogs that only need the sand, so plentiful on the uplands, to make their soil as good as the best, the muck of the bog being all plant food, and they have a surplus of water to give in exchange. With hope the keynote of it all, the State has taken up the herculean task of keeping down the moving sands of the North Sea coast. All along it is a range of dunes that in the fierce storms of that region may change shape and place in a single night. The "sand flight" at times reached miles inland, and threatened to bury the farmer's acres past recovery. Austrian fir and dwarf pine now grow upon the white range, helping alike to keep down the sand and to bar out the blast.

With this exception, the great change has been, is being, wrought by the people themselves. It was for their good, in the apathy that followed 1864, that it should be so, and Dalgas saw it. The State aids the man who plants ten acres or more, and assumes the obligation to preserve the forest intact; the Heath Society sells him plants at half-price, and helps him with its advice. It disposes annually of over thirteen million young trees. The people do the rest, and back the Society with their support. The Danish peasant has learned the value of coöperation since he turned dairy farmer, and associations for irrigation, for tree planting, and garden planting are everywhere. They even reach across the ocean. This year a call was issued to sons of the old soil, who have found a new home in America, to join in planting a Danish-American forest in the desert where hill and heather hide a silvery lake in their deep shadows and returning wanderers may rest and dream of the long ago.



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Soldier though he was, Enrico Dalgas's pick and spade brigade won greater victories for Denmark than her armies in two wars. He literally "won for his country within what she had lost without." A natural organizer, a hard worker who found his greatest joy in his daily tasks, a fearless and lucid writer who yet knew how to keep his cause out of the rancorous politics that often enough seemed to mistake partisanship for patriotism, he was the most modest of men. Praise he always passed up to others. At the "silver wedding" of the Society he founded they toasted him jubilantly, but he sat quiet a long time. When at last he arose, it was to make this characteristic little speech:

"I thank you very much. His Excellency the Minister of the Interior, who is present here, will see from this how much you think of me, and possibly my recommendation that the State make a larger contribution to the Heath Society's treasury may thereby acquire greater weight with him. I drink to an increased appropriation."

On the heath Dalgas was prophet, prince, and friend of the people. In the crowds that flocked about his bier homespun elbowed gold lace in the grief of a common loss. Boughs of the fragrant spruce decked his coffin, the gift of the heath to the memory of him who set it free.

To Dalgas apply the words of the seer with which he himself characterized the Society that was the child of his heart and brain: "The good men are those who plant and water," for they add to the happiness of mankind.

KING CHRISTIAN IV

[Illustration: Musical notation with lyrics]

Maestoso.

King Christian stood by loft-y mast
In mist and smoke; His sword was ham-mer-ing so fast,
Thro' Goth-ic helm and brain it passed;
Then sank each hos-tile hulk and mast. In mist and smoke.
"Fly," shout-ed they, "fly, he who can!
Who braves of Denmark's Christ-i-an,
Who braves of Denmark's Christian The stroke?"

Deep in the beech-woods between Copenhagen and Elsinore, upon the shore of a limpid lake, stands Frederiksborg, one of the most beautiful castles in Europe. In its chapel the Danish kings were crowned for two centuries, and here was born on April 12, 1577, King Christian of the Danish national hymn which Longfellow translated into our tongue. No Danish ruler since the days of the great Valdemars made such a mark upon his time; none lives as he in the imagination of the people. He led armies to war and won and lost battles; indeed, he lost more than he won on land when matched against the great generals of that fighting era. On the sea he sailed his own ship and was the captain of his own fleet, and there he had no peer. He made laws in the days of peace



and reigned over a happy, prosperous land. In his old age misfortune in which he had no share overwhelmed Denmark, but he was ever greatest in adversity, and his courage saved the country from ruin. The great did not love him overmuch; but to the plain people he was ever, with all his failings, which were the failings of his day, a great, appealing figure, and lives in their hearts, not merely in the dry pages of musty books.



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He was eleven years old when his father died, and until he came of age the country was governed by a council of happily most able men who, with his mother, gave him such a schooling as few kings have had. He not only became proficient in the languages, living and dead, and in mathematics which he put to such practical use that he was among the greatest of architects and ship-builders; he was the best all-round athlete among his fellows as well, and there was some sense in the tradition that survives to this day that whoever was touched by him in wrath did not live long, for he was very tall with a big, strong body, and when he struck, he struck hard. He was a dauntless sailor who knew as much about sailing a ship as any one of his captains, and much more about building it. Danger appealed to him always. When the spire on the great cathedral in Copenhagen threatened to fall, he was the one who went up in it alone and gave orders where and how to brace it.

As he grew, he sat in the council of state, learning kingcraft, and showed there the hard-headed sense of fairness and justice that went with him through life. He was hardly fourteen when the case of three brothers of the powerful Friis family came before the council. They had attacked another young nobleman in the street, struck off one of his hands, and crippled the other. Because of their influence, the council was for being lenient, atrocious as the crime was. A fine was deemed sufficient. The young prince asked if there were not some law covering the case with severer punishment, and was told that in the province of Skaane there was such a law that applied to serfs. But the assault had not been committed in Skaane, and these were high noblemen.

“All the worse for them,” said the prince. “Is then a serf in Skaane to have more rights under the law than a nobleman in the rest of Denmark? Let the law for the serf be theirs.” And the judgment stood.

He had barely attained his majority, when the young king was called upon to judge between another great noble and a widow whom he sued for 9000 daler, money he claimed to have lent to her husband. In proof he laid before the judges two bonds bearing the signatures of husband and wife. The widow denounced them as forgeries, but the court decided that she must pay. She went straight to the King with her story, assuring him that she had never heard of the debt. The King sent for the bonds and upon close scrutiny discovered that one of them was on paper bearing the water-mark of a mill that was not built till two years after the date written in the bond. The noble was arrested and the search of his house brought to light several similar documents waiting their turn. He went to the scaffold. His rank only aggravated his offence in the eyes of the King. No wonder the fame of this judge spread quickly through the land.



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A dozen contented years he reigned in peace, doing justice between man and man at home. Then the curse of his house gripped him. In two centuries, since the brief union between the three Scandinavian kingdoms was broken by the secession of Sweden, only two of sixteen kings in either country had gone to their rest without ripping up the old feud. It was now Christian's turn. The pretext was of little account: there was always cause enough. Gustav Adolf, whose father was then on the throne of Sweden, said in after years that there was no one he had such hearty admiration for and whose friend he would like so well to be as Christian IV: "The mischief is that we are neighbors." King Christian crossed over into Sweden and laid siege to the strong fortress of Kalmar where he first saw actual war and showed himself a doughty campaigner of intrepid courage. It came near costing him his life when a cannoneer with whom he had often talked on his rounds deserted to the enemy and picked the King out as his especial target. Twice he killed an officer attending upon him, but the King he never hit. It is almost a pleasure to record that when he tried it again, in another fight, Christian caught him and dealt with him as the traitor he was, though the rough justice of those days is not pleasant to dwell on. The besieged tried to create a diversion by sneaking into camp at night and burying wax images of the King and his generals in the earth, where they were afterwards found and spread consternation through the army; for such things were believed to be wrought by witchcraft and to bring bad luck to those whom they represented.

However, neither the real courage of the defenders, nor their dallying with the black art, helped them any. King Christian stormed the town at the head of his army and took it. The burgomaster hid in the church, disguised as a priest, and pretended to be shriving some women when the crash came, but it did not save him. When the Swedish king came with a host twice the size of his own, there was a battle royal, but Christian drove him off and laid siege to the castle where dissension presently arose between the garrison and its commander who was for surrendering. In the midst of their noisy quarrel, King Christian was discovered standing upon the wall, calmly looking on. He had climbed up alone on a rope ladder which the sentinel let down at his bidding. At the sight they gave it up and opened the gates, and the King wrote home, proudly dating his letter from "our castle Kalmar."

Its loss so angered the Swedish king who was old and sick, that he challenged Christian to single combat, without armor. The letters that passed between them were hardly kindly. King Christian wrote that he had other things to do: "Better catch a doctor, old man, and have your head-piece looked after." Helpless anger killed Karl, and Gustav Adolf, of whom the world was presently to hear, took the command and the crown. After that Christian had a harder road to hoe.



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A foretaste of it came to him when he tried to surprise the fortress of Gullberg near the present Goetaborg. Its commander was wounded early in the fight, but his wife who took his place more than filled it. She and her women poured boiling lye upon the attacking Danes until they lay "like scalded pigs" under the walls. Their leader knew when he had enough and made off in haste, with the lady commandant calling after him, "You were a little unexpected for breakfast, but come back for dinner and we will receive you properly." She would not even let them take their dead away. "Since God gave us luck to kill them," she said, "we will manage to bury them too." They were very pious days after their own fashion, and God was much on the lips of his servants. Troubles rarely come singly. Soon after, King Christian met the enemy unexpectedly and was so badly beaten that for the second time he had to run for it, though he held out till nearly all his men had fallen. His horse got mired in a swamp with the pursuers close behind. The gay and wealthy Sir Christen Barnekow, who had been last on the field, passed him there, and at once got down and gave him his horse. It meant giving up his life, and when Sir Christen could no longer follow the fleeing King he sat down on a rock with the words, "I give the King my horse, the enemy my life, and God my soul." The rock is there yet and the country folk believe that the red spots in the granite are Christen Barnekow's blood which all the years have not availed to wash out.

They tired of fighting at last and made it up. Sweden paid Denmark a million daler; for the rest, things stayed as they had been before. King Christian had shown himself no mean fighter, but the senseless sacking and burning of town and country that was an ugly part of those days' warfare went against his grain, and he tried to persuade the Swedes to agree to leave that out in future. Gustav Adolf had not yet grown into the man he afterward became. "As to the burning," was his reply, "seeing that it is the usage of war, and we enemies, why we will each have to do the best we can," which meant the worst. Had the two kings, who had much in common, got together in the years of peace that followed, much misery might have been saved Denmark, and a black page of history might read very differently. For those were the days of the Thirty Years' War, in which together they might have dictated peace to harassed Europe.

Now King Christian's ambition, his piety, for he was a sincerely religious man, as well as his jealousy of his younger rival and of the growing power of Sweden—so mixed are human motives—made him yield to the entreaties of the hard-pressed Protestant princes to take up alone their cause against the German Emperor. He had tried for half a dozen years to make peace between them. At last he drew the sword and went down to force it. After a year of fighting Tilly and Wallenstein, the Emperor's great generals,



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he met the former in a decisive battle at Lutter-am-Baremburg. King Christian's army was beaten and put to rout. He himself fled bareheaded through the forests of the Hartz Mountains, pursued by the enemy's horsemen. It was hardly necessary for the Emperor to make him promise as the price of peace to keep out of German affairs thenceforth. His allies had left him to fight it out alone. All their fine speeches went for nothing when it came to the test, and King Christian rode back to Denmark, a sadder and wiser man. It was left to Gustav Adolf, after all, to teach the German generals the lesson they needed.

In the years of peace before that unhappy war, Danish trade and Danish culture had blossomed exceedingly, thanks to the wisdom, the clever management, and untiring industry of the King. He built factories, cloth-mills, silk-mills, paper-mills, dammed the North Sea out from the rich marshlands with great dikes, taught the farmers profitable ways of tilling their fields; for he was a wondrous manager for whom nothing was too little and nothing too big. He kept minute account of his children's socks and little shirts, and found ways of providing money for his war-ships and for countless building schemes he had in hand both in Denmark and Norway. For many of them he himself drew the plans. Wherever one goes to this day, his monogram, which heads this story, stares at him from the splendid buildings he erected. The Bourse in Copenhagen and the Round Tower, the beautiful palace of Rosenborg, a sort of miniature of his beloved Frederiksborg which also he rebuilt on a more magnificent scale—these are among his works which every traveller in the North knows. He built more cities and strongholds than those who went before or came after him for centuries. Christiania and Christiansand in Norway bear his name. He laid out a whole quarter of Copenhagen for his sailors, and the quaint little houses still serve that purpose. Regentsen, a dormitory for poor students at the university, was built by him. He created seven new chairs of learning and saw to it that all the professors got better pay. He ferreted out and dismissed in disgrace all the grafting officials in Norway, and administered justice with an even hand. At the same time he burned witches without end, or let it be done for their souls' sake. That was the way of his time; and when he needed fireworks for his son's wedding (he made them himself, too), he sent around to all the old cloisters and cathedral churches for the old parchments they had. Heaven only knows what treasures that can never be replaced went up in fire and smoke for that one night's fun.



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King Christian founded a score of big trading companies to exploit the East, taking care that their ships should have their bulwarks pierced for at least six guns, so that they might serve as war-ships in time of need. He sent one expedition after another to the waters of Greenland in search of the Northwest Passage. It was on the fourth of these, in 1619, that Jens Munk with two ships and sixty-four sailors was caught in the ice of Hudson Bay and compelled to winter there. One after another the crew died of hunger and scurvy. When Jens Munk himself crept out from what he had thought his death-bed, he found only two of them all alive. Together they burrowed in the snow, digging for roots until spring came when they managed to make their way down to Bergen in the smallest of the two vessels. Jens Munk had deserved a better end than he got. He spun his yarns so persistently at court that he got to be a tiresome bore, and at last one day the King told him that he had no time to listen to him. Whereat the veteran took great umbrage and, slapping his sword, let the King know that he had served him well and was entitled to better treatment. Christian snatched the weapon in anger and struck him with the scabbard. The sailor never got over it. "He withered away and died," says the tradition. It was the old superstition; but whether that killed him or not, the King lost a good man in Jens Munk.

He was not averse to hearing the truth, though, when boldly put. When Ole Vind, a popular preacher, offended some of the nobles by his plain speech and they complained to the King, he bade him to the court and told him to preach the same sermon over. Master Vind was game and the truths he told went straight home, for he knew well where the shoe pinched. But King Christian promptly made him court preacher. "He is the kind we need here," he said. There was never a day that the King did not devoutly read his Bible, and he was determined that everybody should read it the same way. The result was a kind of Puritanism that filled the churches and compelled the employment of men to go around with long sticks to rap the people on the head when they fell asleep. Christian the Fourth was not the first ruler who has tried to herd men into heaven by battalions. But his people would have gladly gone in the fire for him. He was their friend. When on his tramps, as likely as not he would come home sitting beside some peasant on his load of truck, and would step off at the palace gate with a "So long, thanks for good company!" He was everywhere, interested in everything. In his walking-stick he carried a foot-rule, a level, and other tools, and would stop at the bench of a workman in the navy-yard and test his work to see how well he was doing it. "I can lie down and sleep in any hut in the land," was his contented boast. And he would have been safe anywhere.



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Gustav Adolf was a wise and generous foe. While he lived he refused to listen to proposals for the partition of Denmark after King Christian's defeat in Germany. He knew well that she was a barrier against the ambition of the German princes and that, once she was out of the way, Sweden's turn would come next. But when he had fallen on the battle-field of Luetzen, and his generals, following in his footsteps, had achieved fame and lands and the freedom of worship for which he gave his life, the Swedish statesmen lost their heads and dreamed of the erection of a great northern Protestant state by the conquest of Denmark and Norway, to balance the power of the German empire. Without warning or declaration of war a great army was thrown into the Danish peninsula from the south. Another advanced from Sweden upon the eastern provinces, and a fleet hired in Holland for Swedish money came through the North Sea to help them over to the Danish islands. If the two armies met, Denmark was lost. In Swedish harbors a still bigger fleet was fitting out for the Baltic.

King Christian was well up in the sixties, worn with the tireless activities of a long reign; but once more he proved himself greater than adversity. When the evil tidings reached him, in the midst of profound peace, the enemy was already within the gates. The country lay prostrate. The name of Torstenson, the Swedish general, spread terror wherever it was heard. In the German campaigns he had been known as the "Swedish Lightning." Beset on every side, never had Denmark's need been greater. The one man who did not lose his head was her king. By his personal example he put heart into the people and shamed the cowardly nobles. He borrowed money wherever he could, sent his own silver to the mint, crowded the work in the navy-yard by night and by day, gathered an army, and hurried with it to the Sounds where the enemy might cross. When the first ships were ready he sailed around the Skaw to meet the Dutch hirelings. "I am old and stiff," he said, "and no good any more to fight on land. But I can manage the ships."

And he did. He met the Dutchmen in the North Sea, in under the Danish coast, and whipped them, almost single-handed, for his own ship *Trefoldigheden* was for a long while the only one that wind and tide would let come up with them. That done, he left one of his captains to watch lest they come out from among the islands where their ships of shallower draught had sought refuge, and sailed for Copenhagen. Everything that could carry sail was ready for him by that time; also the news that the Swedish fleet of forty-six fighting ships under Klas Fleming had sailed for the coast of Holstein to take on board Torstenson's army.

King Christian lost no time. He hoisted his flag on *Trefoldigheden* and made after them with thirty-nine ships, vowing that he would win this fight or die. At Kolberger Heide, the water outside the Fjord of Kiel, he caught up with them and attacked at once. The battle that then ensued is the one of which the poet sings and with which the name of Christian IV is forever linked.



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At the outset the Danish fleet was in great peril. The Swedes fought gallantly as was their wont, and they were three or four against one, for most of the King's ships came up slowly, some of them purposely, so it seems. The King said after the battle of certain of his captains, "They used me as a screen between them and the enemy." His own ship and that of his chief admiral's bore the brunt of the battle for a long time.

Trefoldigheden fired 315 shots during the engagement, and at one time had four hostile ships clustering about her. King Christian was on the quarter-deck when a cannon-ball shivered the bulwark and one of his guns, throwing a shower of splintered iron and wood over him and those near him, killing and wounding twelve of the crew. The King himself fell, stunned and wounded in twenty-three places. His right eye was knocked out, two of his teeth, and his left ear hung in shreds.

The cry was raised that the King was dead and panic spread on board. The story has it that a sailor was sent aloft to strike the flag but purposely entangled it in the rigging so that it could not fall; he could not bear to see the King's ship strike its colors. In the midst of the tumult the aged monarch rose to his feet, torn and covered with blood. "I live yet," he cried, "and God has left me strength to fight on for my country. Let every man do his duty." Leaning on his sword, he led the fight until darkness fell and the battle was won. Denmark was saved. The danger of an invasion was averted. In the palace of Rosenborg the priceless treasure they show to visitors is the linen cloth, all blood-stained, that bound the King's face as he fought and won his last and biggest fight that day.

Half blind, his body black and blue and sore from many bruises, King Christian yet refused to sail for Copenhagen to have his wounds attended. Three weeks he lay watching the narrow inlet behind which the beaten enemy was hiding, to destroy his ships when he came out. Then he gave over the command to another and hastened to the province of Skaane on the Swedish mainland, from which he expelled a hostile army. But when his back was turned, the men he had set to watch fell asleep and let the Swedish admiral steal out into the open. There he found and joined the Dutch ships that had slipped around the Skaw during the rumpus. Together they overwhelmed the Danish fleet, being now three to one, and crushed it. The slothful admiral paid for it with his life, but the harm was done. It was the last and heaviest blow. The old King sheathed his sword and set his name to a peace that took from Denmark some of her ancient provinces, with the bitter sigh: "God knows I had no share in this," and he had not. Even at the last he appealed to the country to try the fortunes of war with him once more. The people were willing, but the nobles wanted peace, "however God send it," and he had to yield. The treaty was made at Broemsebro, where a bridge crossed



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the river dividing the two kingdoms. In the middle of the river was an island and the negotiations were carried on in a tent erected there, the French and the Dutch being the arbitrators. The envoys of Sweden and Denmark sat on opposite sides of the boundary post where the line cut through, each on the soil of his own country. So bitterly did they hate one another that they did not speak but wrote their messages, though they could have shaken hands where they sat. Even that was too close quarters, and they ended up by negotiating at second hand through the foreign ambassadors, all at the same table, but each looking straight past the other as if he were not there.

Another touch of comedy relieves the gloom of that heavy day. It was the conquest of the Saernadal, a mountain valley in Norway just over the Swedish frontier, by Pastor Buschovius who, Bible in hand, at the head of two hundred ski-men invaded and captured it one winter's day without a blow. He came over the snow-fields into the valley that had not seen a preacher in many a long day, had the church bells rung to summon the people, preached to them, married and christened them, and gave them communion. The simple mountaineers had hardly heard of the war and had nothing against their neighbors over the mountain. They joined Sweden then and there at the request of the preacher, and they stayed Swedes too, for in the final muster they were forgotten with their valley. Very likely the treaty-makers did not know that it existed.

King Christian died four years later, in 1648, past the three score and ten allotted to man. He was not a great leader like Gustav Adolf, and he was very human in some of his failings. But he was a strong man, a just king, and a father of his people who still cling to his memory with more than filial affection.

GUSTAV ADOLF, THE SNOW-KING

The city of Prague, the capital of Bohemia, went wild with excitement one spring morning in the year 1618. The Protestant Estates of Germany had met there to protest against the aggressions of the Catholic League and the bad faith of the Emperor, who had guaranteed freedom of worship in the land and had now sent two envoys to defy the meeting and declare it illegal. In the old castle they delivered their message and bade the convention disperse; and the delegates, when they had heard, seized them and their clerk and threw them out of the window "in good old Bohemian fashion." They fell seventy feet and escaped almost without a scratch, which fact was accepted by the Catholics of that strenuous day as proof of their miraculous preservation; by the Protestants as evidence that the devil ever takes care of his own.



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It was the tiny spark that set Europe on fire. Out of it grew the Thirty Years' War, the most terrible that ever scourged the civilized world. When Catholic League and Evangelical Union first mustered their armies, Bohemia had a prosperous population of four million souls; when the war was over there were less than eight hundred thousand alive in that unhappy land, and the wolves that roamed its forests were scarcely more ferocious than the human starvelings who skulked among the smoking ruins of burned towns and hamlets. Other states fared little better. Two centuries did not wipe out the blight of those awful years when rapine and murder, inspired by bigotry and hate, ran riot in the name of religion.

In the gloom and horror of it all a noble figure stands forth alone. It were almost worth the sufferings of a Thirty Years' War for the world to have gained a Gustav Adolf. The "snow-king" the Emperor's generals named him when he first appeared on German soil at the head of his army of Northmen, and they prophesied that he would speedily melt, once the southern sun shone upon his host. They little knew the man. He went from victory to victory, less because he was the greatest general of his day than because he, and all his army with him, believed himself charged by the Almighty with the defence of his country and of his faith. The Emperor had attacked both, the first by attempting to extend his dominion to the Baltic; but Pommerania and the Baltic provinces were regarded by the Swedish ruler as the outworks of his kingdom; and Sweden was Protestant. Hence he drew the sword. "Our brethren in the faith are sighing for deliverance from spiritual and bodily thralldom," he said to his people. "Please God, they shall not sigh long." That was his warrant. Axel Oxenstjerna, his friend and right hand who lived to finish his work, said of him, "He felt himself impelled by a mighty spirit which he was unable to resist." As warrior, king, and man, he was head and shoulders above his time. Gustav Adolf saved religious liberty to the world. He paid the price with his life, but he would have asked no better fate. A soldier of God, he met a soldier's death on the field of battle, in the hour of victory.

A man of destiny he was to his people as to himself. Long years before his birth, upon the appearance of the comet of 1577, Tycho Brahe, the astronomer, who was deep in the occultism of his day, had predicted that a prince would appear in Finland who would do great things in Germany and deliver the Protestant peoples from the oppression of the popes, and the prophecy was applied to Gustav Adolf by his subjects all through his life. He was born on December 9, 1594, old style, as they still reckon time in Russia. Very early he showed the kind of stuff he was made of. When he was yet almost a baby he was told that there were snakes in the park, and showed fight at once: "Give me a stick and I will kill them." With the years he grew into a handsome youth who read his books, knew his Seneca by heart, was fond of the poets and the great orators, and mastered eight languages, living and dead. At seventeen he buckled on the sword and put the books away, but kept Xenophon as his friend; for he was a military historian after his own heart. He was then Duke of Finland.



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The King, his father, was a stern but observant man who, seeing his bent, threw him with soldiers to his heart's content, glad to have it so, for it was a warlike age. From his tenth year he let him sit in council with him and early delegated to him the duty of answering ambassadors from foreign countries. The lad was the only one who dared oppose the king when he was in a temper, and often he made peace and healed wounds struck in anger. The people worshipped the fair young prince, and his father, when he felt the palsy of old age and bodily infirmities creeping upon him and thought of his unfinished tasks, would murmur as his eyes rested upon the bonny youth: "*Ille faciet*—He will do it." There is still in existence a document in which he laid down to him his course as a sovereign. "First of all," he writes, "you shall fear God and honor your father and mother. Give your brothers and sisters brotherly affection; love your father's faithful servants and requite them after their due. Be gracious to your subjects; punish evil and love the good. Believe in men, but find out first what is in them. Hold by the law without respect of person."

It was good advice to a prince, and the king took it to heart. On the docket of the Supreme Court at Stockholm is a letter written by Gustav Adolf to the judges and ordered by him to be entered there, which tells them plainly that if any of them is found perverting justice to suit him, the King, or any one else, he will have him flayed alive and his hide nailed to the judgment-seat, his ears to the pillory! Not a nice way of talking to dignified judges, perhaps, but then the prescription was intended to suit the practice, if there was need.

The young king earned his spurs in a war with Denmark that came near being his last as it was his first campaign. He and his horsemen were surprised by the Danes on a winter's night as they were warming themselves by a fire built of the pews in the Wittsjoe church, and they cut their way through only after a desperate fight on the frozen lake. The ice broke under the king's horse and he was going down when two of his men caught him in the nick of time. He got away with the loss of his sword, his pistols, and his gloves. "I will remember you with a crust that shall do for your bairns too," he promised one of his rescuers, a stout peasant lad, and he kept his word. Thomas Larsson's descendants a generation ago still tilled the farm the King gave him. When the trouble with Denmark was over for the time being, he settled old scores with Russia and Poland in a way that left Sweden mistress of the Baltic. In the Polish war he was wounded twice and was repeatedly in peril of his life. Once he was shot in the neck, and, as the bullet could not be removed, it ever after troubled him to wear armor. His officers pleaded with him to spare himself, but his reply was that Caesar and Alexander did not skulk behind the lines; a general must lead if he expected his men to follow.



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In this campaign he met the League's troops, sent to chase him back to his own so that Wallenstein, the leader of the imperial armies, might be "General of the Baltic Sea," unmolested. "Go to Poland," he commanded one of his lieutenants, "and drive the snow-king out; or else tell him that I shall come and do it myself." The proud soldier never knew how near he came to entertaining the snow-king as his unwilling guest then. In a fight between his rear-guard and the imperial army Gustav Adolf was disarmed and taken prisoner by two troopers. There was another prisoner who had kept his pistol. He handed it to the King behind his back and with it he shot one of his captors and brained the other. For all that they nearly got him. He saved himself only by wriggling out of his belt and leaving it in the hands of the enemy. Eight years he campaigned in Poland and Prussia, learning the arts of war. Then he was ready for his life-work. He made a truce with Poland that freed his hands for a season, and went home to Sweden.

That spring (1629) he laid before the Swedish Estates his plan of freeing the Protestants. To defend Sweden, he declared, was to defend her faith, and the Estates voted supplies for the war. To gauge fully the splendid courage of the nation it must be remembered that the whole kingdom, including Finland, had a population of only a million and a half at the time and was preparing to attack the mighty Roman empire. In the first year of the war the Swedish budget was thirteen millions of dollars, of which nine and a half went for armaments. The whole army which Gustav Adolf led into Germany numbered only 14,000 soldiers, but it was made up of Swedish veterans led by men whose names were to become famous for all time, and welded together by an unshakable belief in their commander, a rigid discipline and a religious enthusiasm that swayed master and men with a common impulse. Such a combination has in all days proven irresistible.

The King's farewell to his people—he was never to see Sweden again—moved a nation to tears. He spoke to the nobles, the clergy and to the people, admonishing them to stand together in the hard years that were coming and gave them all into the keeping of God. They stood on the beach and watched his ships sail into the sunset until they were swallowed up in glory. Then they went back home to take up the burden that was their share. On the Ruegen shore the King knelt with his men and thanked God for having brought them safe across the sea, then seized a spade, and himself turned the first sod in the making of a camp. "Who prays well, fights well," he said.



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He was not exactly hospitably received. The old Duke of Pommerania would have none of him, begged him to go away, and only when the King pointed to his guns and hinted that he had keys well able to open the gates of Stettin, his capital, did he give in and promise help. The other German princes, with one or two exceptions, were as cravenly short-sighted. They held meetings and denounced the Emperor and his lawless doings, but Gustav they would not help. The princes of Brandenburg and of Saxony, the two Protestant Electors of the empire, were rather disposed to hinder him, if they might, though Brandenburg was his brother-in-law. Only when the King threatened to burn the city of Berlin over his head did he listen. While he was yet laboring with them, recruiting his army and keeping it in practice by driving the enemy out of Pommerania, news reached him of the fall of Magdeburg, the strongest city in northern Germany, that had of its own free will joined his cause.

The sacking of Magdeburg is one of the black deeds of history. In a night the populous city was reduced to a heap of smoking ruins under which twenty thousand men, women, and children lay buried. Not since the fall of Jerusalem, said Pappenheim, Tilly's famous cavalry leader to whom looting and burning were things of every day, had so awful a visitation befallen a town. Only the great cathedral and a few houses near it were left standing. The history of warfare of the Christian peoples of that day reads like a horrid nightmare. The fighting armies left a trail of black desolation where they passed. "They are not made up of birds that feed on air," sneered Tilly. Peaceful husbandmen were murdered, the young women dragged away to worse than slavery, and helpless children spitted upon the lances of the wild landsknechts and tossed with a laugh into the blazing ruins of their homes. But no such foul blot cleaves to the memory of Gustav Adolf. While he lived his men were soldiers, not demons. In his tent the work of Hugo Grotius on the rights of the nations in war and peace lay beside the Bible and he knew them both by heart. When he was gone, the fame of some of his greatest generals was smirched by as vile orgies as Tilly's worst days had witnessed. It is told of John Baner, one of the most brilliant of them, that he demanded ransom of the city of Prip, past which his way led. The city fathers permitted themselves an untimely jest: "Prix giebt nichts—Prix gives nothing," they said. Baner was as brief: "Prix wird zu nichts—Prix comes to nothing," and his army wiped it out.

Grief and anger almost choked the King when he heard of Magdeburg's fate. "I will avenge that on the Old Corporal (Tilly's nickname)," he cried, "if it costs my life." Without further ado he forced the two Electors to terms and joined the Saxon army to his own. On September 7, 1631, fifteen months after he had landed in Germany, he met Tilly face to face at Breitenfeld, a village



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just north of Leipzig. The Emperor's host in its brave show of silver and plumes and gold, the plunder of many campaigns under its invincible leader, looked with contempt upon the travel-worn Swedes in their poor, soiled garb. The stolid Finns sat their mean but wiry little horses very unlike Pappenheim's dreaded Walloons, descendants of the warlike Belgae of Gaul who defied the Germans of old in the forest of the Ardennes and joined Caesar in his victorious march. But Tilly himself was not deceived. He knew how far this enemy had come and with what hardships cheerfully borne; how they had routed the Russians, written laws for the Poles in their own land, and overthrown armies and forts that barred their way. He would wait for reinforcements; but his generals egged him on, said age had made him timid and slow, and carried the day.

The King slept in an empty cart the night before the battle and dreamed that he wrestled with Tilly and threw him, but that he tore his breast with his teeth. When all was ready in the morning he rode along the front and told his fusiliers not to shoot till they saw the white in the enemy's eyes, the horsemen not to dull their swords by hacking the helmets of the Walloons: "Cut at their horses and they will go down with them." In the pause before the onset he prayed with head uncovered and lowered sword, and his voice carried to the farthest lines:

"Thou, God, in whose hands are victory and defeat, look graciously upon thy servants. From distant lands and peaceful homes have we come to battle for freedom, truth and thy gospel. Give us victory for thy holy name's sake, Amen!"

Tilly had expected the King to attack, but the fiery Pappenheim upset his plans. The smoke of the guns drifted in the faces of the Swedes and the King swung his army to the south to get the wind right. In making the turn they had to cross a brook and this moment Pappenheim chose for his charge. Like a thunderbolt his Walloons fell upon them. The Swedish fire mowed them down like ripened grain and checked their impetuous rush. They tried to turn the King's right and so outflank him; but the army turned with them and stood like a rock. The extreme mobility of his forces was Gustav Adolf's great advantage in his campaigns. He revised the book of military tactics up to date. The imperial troops were massed in solid columns, after the old Spanish fashion, the impact of which was hard to resist when they struck. The King's, on the contrary, moved in smaller bodies, quickly thrown upon the point of danger, and his artillery was so distributed among them as to make every shot tell on the compact body of the enemy. Whichever way Pappenheim turned he found a firm front, bristling with guns, opposing him. Seven times he threw himself upon the living wall; each time his horsemen were flung back, their lines thinned and broken. The field was strewn with their dead. Tilly, anxiously watching, threw up his hands in despair. "This man will lose me honor and fame, and the Emperor his lands," he cried. The charge ended in wild flight, and Tilly saw that he must himself attack, to turn the tide.



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On the double-quick his columns of spearmen charged down the heights, swept the Saxons from the field, and fell upon the Swedish left. The shock was tremendous. General Gustav Horn gave back to let his second line come up, and held the ground stubbornly against fearful odds. Word was brought the King of his danger. With the right wing that had crushed Pappenheim he hurried to the rescue. In the heat of the fight the armies had changed position, and the Swedes found themselves climbing the hill upon which Tilly's artillery was posted. Seeing this, the King made one of the rapid movements that more than once won him the day. Raising the cry, "Remember Magdeburg!" he carried the position with his Finns by a sudden overwhelming assault, and turned the guns upon the dense masses of the enemy fighting below.

In vain they stormed the heights. Both wings and the centre closed in upon them, and the day was lost. Tilly fled, wounded, and narrowly escaped capture. A captain in the Swedish army, who was called Long Fritz because of his great height, was at his heels hammering him on the head with the butt of his pistol. A staff officer shot him down in passing, and freed his chief. Twilight fell upon a battle-field where seven thousand men lay dead, two-thirds of them the flower of the Emperor's army. Blood-stained and smoke-begrimed, Gustav Adolf and his men knelt on the field and thanked God for the victory.

Had the King's friend and adviser, Axel Oxenstjerna, been with him he might have marched upon Vienna then, leaving the Protestant Estates to settle their own affairs, and very likely have ended the war. Gustav Adolf thought of Tilly who would return with another army. Oxenstjerna saw farther, weighing things upon the scales of the diplomatist.

"How think you we would fare," asked the King once, when the chancellor saw obstacles in their way which he would brush aside, "if my fire did not thaw the chill in you?"

"But for my chill cooling your Majesty's fire," was his friend's retort, "you would have long since been burned up." The King laughed and owned that he was right.

Instead of bearding the Emperor in his capital he turned toward the Rhine where millions of Protestants were praying for his coming and where his army might find rest and abundance. The cathedral city of Wuerzburg he took by storm. The bishop who ruled it fled at his approach, but the full treasury of the Jesuits fell into his hands. The Madonna of beaten gold and the twelve solid silver apostles, famous throughout Europe, were sent to the mint and coined into money to pay his army. In the cellar they found chests filled with ducats. The bottom fell out of one as they carried it up and the gold rolled out on the pavement. The soldiers swarmed to pick it up, but a good many coins stuck to their pockets. The King saw it and laughed: "Since you have them, boys, keep them." The dead were still lying in the castle yard after the siege, a number of monks among them. The color of some of them seemed high for corpses. "Arise from

the dead," he said waggishly, "no one will hurt you," and the frightened monks got upon their feet and scampered away.



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Frankfort opened its gates to his victorious host and Nuernberg received him as a heaven-sent liberator. But Tilly was in the field with a fresh army, burning to avenge Breitenfeld. He had surprised General Horn at Bamberg and beaten him. At the approach of the King he camped where the river Lech joins the Danube, awaiting attack. There was but one place to cross to get at him, and right there he stood. The king seized Donauworth and Ulm, and under cover of the fire of seventy guns threw a bridge across the Lech. Three hundred Finns carrying picks and spades ran across the shaky planks upon which the fire of Tilly's whole artillery park was concentrated. Once across, they burrowed in the ground like moles and, with bullets raining upon them, threw up earthworks for shelter. Squad after squad of volunteers followed. Duke Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar swam his horsemen across the river farther up-stream and took the Bavarian troops in the flank, beating them back far enough to let him join the Finns at the landing. The King himself was directing the artillery on the other shore, aiming the guns with his own hand. The Walloons, Tilly's last hope, charged, but broke under the withering fire. In desperation the old field-marshal seized the standard and himself led the forlorn hope. Half-way to the bridge he fell, one leg shattered by a cannon-ball, and panic seized his men. The imperialists fled in the night, carrying their wounded leader. He died on the march soon after. Men said of him that he had served his master well.

The snow-king had not melted in the south. He was master of the Roman empire from the Baltic to the Alps. The way to Austria and Italy lay open before him. Protestant princes crowded to do him homage, offering him the imperial crown. But Gustav Adolf did not lose his head. Toward the humbled Catholics he showed only forbearance and toleration. In Munich he visited the college of the Jesuits, and spoke long with the rector in the Latin tongue, assuring him of their safety as long as they kept from politics and plotting. The armory in that city was known to be the best stocked in all Europe and the King's surprise was great when he found gun-carriages in plenty, but not a single cannon. Looking about him, he saw evidence that the floor had been hastily relaid and remembered the "dead" monks at Wuerzburg. He had it taken up and a dark vault appeared. The King looked into it.

"Arise!" he called out, "and come to judgment," and amid shouts of laughter willing hands brought out a hundred and forty good guns, welcome reenforcements.

The ignorant Bavarian peasants had been told that the King was the very anti-Christ, come to harass the world for its sins, and carried on a cruel guerilla warfare upon his army. They waylaid the Swedes by night on their foraging trips and maimed and murdered those they caught with fiendish tortures. The bitterest anger filled Gustav Adolf's soul when upon his entry into Landshut the burgomaster knelt at his stirrup asking mercy for his city.



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“Pray not to me,” he said harshly, “but to God for yourself and for your people, for in truth you have need.”

For once thoughts of vengeance seemed to fill his soul. “No, no!” he thundered when the frightened burgomaster pleaded that his townsmen should not be held accountable for the cruelty of the country-folk, “you are beasts, not men, and deserve to be wiped from the earth with fire and sword.” From out the multitude there came a warning voice: “Will the King now abandon the path of mercy for the way of vengeance and visit his wrath upon these innocent people?” No one saw the speaker. The day was oppressively hot and the King came near fainting in the saddle. As he rode out of the city toward the camp, a bolt of lightning struck the ground beside him and a mighty crash of thunder rolled overhead. Pale and thoughtful, he rode on. But Landshut was spared. That evening General Horn brought the anxious citizens the King’s promise of pardon.

A few weeks later tidings reached Gustav Adolf that Wallenstein and the Elector of Bavaria were marching to effect a junction at Nuernberg. If they took the city, his line of communication was cut and his army threatened. Wallenstein, who was a traitor, had been in disgrace; but he was a great general and in his dire need Emperor Ferdinand had no one else to turn to. So he took him back on his own terms, and in the spring he had an army of forty thousand veterans in the field. This was the host he was leading against Nuernberg. But the King got there first and intrenched himself so strongly that there was no ousting him. Wallenstein followed suit and for eleven weeks the enemies eyed one another from their “lagers,” neither willing to risk an attack. In the end Gustav Adolf tried, but even his Finns could not take the impregnable heights the enemy held. At last he went away with colors flying and bands playing, right under the enemy’s walls, in the hope of tempting him out. But he never stirred.

When Wallenstein was sure he had gone, he burned his camp and turned toward Saxony to punish the Elector for joining the Swedes. A wail of anguish went up from that unhappy land and the King heard it clear across the country. By forced marches he hurried to the rescue of his ally, picking up Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar on the way. At Naumburg the people crowded about him and sought to kiss or even to touch his garments. The King looked sadly at them. “They put their trust in me, poor weak mortal, as if I were the Almighty. It may be that He will punish their folly soon upon the object of their senseless idolatry.” He had come to stay, but when he learned that Wallenstein had sent Pappenheim away to the west, thus weakening his army, and was going into winter quarters at Luetzen, near Leipzig, a half-day’s march from the memorable Breitenfeld, he broke camp at once and hastened to attack him. Starting early, his army reached Luetzen at nightfall on November 15, 1632.

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Wallenstein believed the campaign was over for that year and the Swedes in winter quarters, and was taken completely by surprise. Had the King given battle that night, he would have wiped the enemy out. Two things, in themselves of little account, delayed him: a small brook that crossed his path, and the freshly plowed fields. His men were tired after the long march and he decided to let them rest. It was Wallenstein's chance. Overnight he posted his army north of the highway that leads from Luetzen to Leipzig, dug deep the ditches that enclosed it, and made breastworks of the dirt. Sunrise found sheltered behind them twenty-seven thousand seasoned veterans to whom Gustav Adolf could oppose but twenty thousand; but he had more guns and they were better served.

As the day broke the Swedish army, drawn up in battle array, intoned Luther's hymn, "A mighty fortress is our God," and cheered the King. He wore a leathern doublet and a gray mantle. To the pleadings of his officers that he put on armor he replied only, "God is my armor." "To-day," he cried as he rode along the lines, "will end all our hardships." He himself took command of the right wing, the gallant Duke Bernhard of the left. As at Breitenfeld, the rallying cry was, "God with us!"

The King hoped to crush his enemy utterly, and the whole line attacked at once with great fury. From the start victory leaned toward the Swedish army. Then suddenly in the wild tumult of battle a heavy fog settled upon the field. What followed was all confusion. No one knows the rights of it to this day. The King led his famous yellow and blue regiments against the enemy's left. "The black fellows there," he shouted, pointing to the Emperor's cuirassiers in their black armor, "attack them!" Just then an adjutant reported that his infantry was hard pressed. "Follow me," he commanded, and, clapping spurs to his horse, set off at full speed for the threatened quarter. In the fog he lost his way and ran into the cuirassiers. His two attendants were shot down and a bullet crushed the King's right arm. He tried to hide the fact that he was wounded, but pain and loss of blood made him faint and he asked the Duke of Lauenburg who rode with him to help him out of the crush. At that moment a fresh troop of horsemen bore down upon them and their leader, Moritz von Falkenberg, shot the King through the body with the exultant cry, "You I have long sought!" The words had hardly left his lips when he fell with a bullet through his head.

The King swayed in the saddle and lost the reins. "Save yourself," he whispered to the Duke, "I am done for." The Duke put his arm around him to support him, but the cuirassiers surged against them and tore them apart. The King's horse was shot in the neck and threw its rider. Awhile he hung by the stirrup and was dragged over the trampled field. Then the horse shook itself free and ran through the lines, spreading the tidings of the King's fall afar.



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A German page, Leubelfing, a lad of eighteen, was alone with the King. He sprang from his horse and tried to help him into the saddle but had not the strength to do it. Gustav Adolf was stout and very heavy. While he was trying to lift him some Croats rode up and demanded the name of the wounded man. The page held his tongue, and they ran him through. Gustav Adolf, to save him, said that he was the King.[1] At that they shot him through the head, and showered blows upon him. When the body was found in the night it was naked. They had robbed and stripped him.

[Footnote 1: This is the story as the page told it. He lived two days.]

The King was dead. Through the Swedish ranks Duke Bernhard shouted the tidings. "Who now cares to live? Forward, to avenge his death!" With the blind fury of the Berserkers of old the Swedes cleared the ditches, stormed the breastworks, and drove the foe in a panic before them. The Duke's arm was broken by a bullet. He hardly knew it. With his regiment he rode down the crew of one of the enemy's batteries and swept on. In the midst of it all a cry resounded over the plain that made the runaways halt and turn back.

"Pappenheim! Pappenheim is here!"

He had come with his Walloons in answer to the general's summons. "Where is the King?" he asked, and they pointed to the Finnish brigade. With a mighty crash the two hosts that had met so often before came together. Wallenstein mustered his scattered forces and the King's army was attacked from three sides at once. The yellow brigade fell where it stood almost to the last man. The blue fared little better. Slowly the Swedish infantry gave back. The battle seemed lost.

But the tide turned once more. In the hottest fight Pappenheim fell, pierced by three bullets. The "man of a hundred scars" died, exulting that the King whom he hated had gone before. With his death the Emperor's men lost heart. The Swedes charged again and again with unabated fury. Night closed in with Wallenstein's centre still unbroken; but he had lost all his guns. Under cover of the darkness he made his escape. The King's army camped upon the battle-field. The carnage had been fearful; nine thousand were slain. It was Wallenstein's last fight. With the remnants of his army he retreated to Bohemia, sick and sore, and spent his last days there plotting against his master. He died by an assassin's hand.

The cathedrals of Vienna, Brussels, and Madrid rang with joyful Te Deums at the news of the King's death. The Spanish capital celebrated the "triumph" with twelve days of bull-fighting. Emperor Ferdinand was better than his day; he wept at the sight of the King's blood-stained jacket. The Protestant world trembled; its hope and strength were gone. But the Swedish people, wiping away their tears, resolved stoutly to carry on Gustav Adolf's work. The men he had trained led his armies to victory on yet many a stricken field. Peace came at length to Europe; the last religious war had been fought

and won. Freedom of worship, liberty of conscience, were bought at the cost of the kingliest head that ever wore a crown. The great ruler's life-work was done.



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Gustav Adolf was in his thirty-eighth year when he fell. Of stature he was tall and stout, a fair-haired, blue-eyed giant, stern in war, gentle in the friendships of peace. He was a born ruler of men. Though he was away fighting in foreign lands all the years of his reign, he kept a firm grasp on the home affairs of his kingdom. One traces his hand everywhere, ordering, shaping, finding ways, or making them where there was none. The valuable mines of Sweden were ill managed. The metal was exported in coarse pigs to Germany for very little, worked up there, and resold to Sweden at the highest price. He created a Board of Mines, established smelteries, and the day came when, instead of going abroad for its munitions of war, Sweden had for its customers half Europe. Like Christian of Denmark with whom he disagreed, he encouraged industries and greatly furthered trade and commerce. He built highways and canals, and he did not forget the cause of instruction. Upon the university at Upsala he bestowed his entire personal patrimony of three hundred and thirteen farms as a free gift. His people honor him with cause as the real founder of the Swedish system of education.

The master he was always. Sweden had, on one hand, a powerful, able nobility; on the other, a strong, independent peasantry,—a combination full of pitfalls for a weak ruler, but with equal promise of great things under the master hand. His father had cowed the stubborn nobles with the headsman's axe. Gustav Adolf drew them to him and imbued them with his own spirit. He found them a contentious party within the state; he left them its strongest props in the conduct of public affairs. Nor was it always with persuasion he worked. His reward for the unjust judge has been quoted. When the council failed to send him supplies in Germany, pleading failure of crops as their excuse, he wrote back: "You speak of the high prices of corn. Probably they are high because those who have it want to profit by the need of others." And he set a new chief over the finances. On the other hand, he gave shape to the relations between king and people. The Riksdag held its sessions, but the laws that ruled it were so vague that it was no unusual thing for men who were not members at all to attend and join in the debates. Gustav Adolf put an abrupt end to "a state of things that exposed Sweden to the contempt of the nations." As he ordered it, the initiative remained with the crown; it was the right of the Riksdag to complain and discuss; of the King to "choose the best" after hearing all sides.

As a young prince, Gustav Adolf fell deeply in love with Ebba Brahe, the beautiful daughter of one of Sweden's most powerful noblemen. The two had been play-mates and became lovers. But the old queen frowned upon the match. He was the coming king, she was a subject, and the queen managed, with the help of Oxenstjerna, who was Gustav's best friend all through his life, to make him give



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up his love. "Then I will never marry," he cried in a burst of tempestuous grief. But when the queen had got Ebba Brahe safely married to one of his father's famous generals, he wedded the lovely sister of the Elector of Brandenburg. She adored her royal husband, but never took kindly to Sweden, and the people did not like her. They clung to the great king's early love, and to this day they linger before the picture of the beautiful Ebba in the Stockholm castle when they come from his grave in the Riddarholm church, while they pass the queen's by with hardly a glance. It is recorded that Ebba made her husband a good and dutiful wife. If her thoughts strayed at times to the old days and what might have been, it is not strange. In one of those moods she wrote on a window-pane in the castle:

I am happy in my lot,
And thanks I give to God.

The queen-mother saw it and wrote under it her own version:

You wouldn't, but you must.
'Tis the lot of the dust.

KING AND SAILOR, HEROES OF COPENHAGEN

Of all the foolish wars that were ever waged, it would seem that the one declared by Denmark against Sweden in 1657 had the least excuse. A century before, the two countries had fought through eight bitter years over the momentous question whether Denmark should carry in her shield the three lions that stood for the three Scandinavian kingdoms, the Swedish one having set up for itself in the dissolution of the union between them, and at the end of the fight they were where they had started: each of them kept the whole brood. But this war was without even that excuse. Denmark was helplessly impoverished. Her trade was ruined; the nobles were sucking the marrow of the country. Of the freehold farms that had been its strength scarce five thousand were left in the land. It could hardly pay its way in days of peace. Its strongholds lay in ruins; it had neither arms, ammunition, nor officers. On its roster of thirty thousand men for the national defence were carried the dead and the yet unborn, while the Swedish army of tried veterans had gone from victory to victory under a warlike king. To cap the climax, Copenhagen had been harassed by pestilence that had killed one-fifth of its fifty thousand people.

So ill matched were they when a stubborn king forced a war that could end only in disaster. When one of his councillors advised against the folly, he caned him and sent him into exile. Yet out of the fiery trial this king came a hero; his queen, whose pride and wasteful vanity[1] had done its full share in bringing the country to the verge of ruin,



became the idol of the nation. In the hour of its peril she grew to the stature of a great woman who shared danger and hardship with her people and by her example put hope and courage into their hearts.

[Footnote 1: It is of record that Queen Sofie Amalie used one-third of the annual revenues of the country for her household. The menu of a single “rustic dinner” of the court mentions 200 courses and nearly as many kinds of preserves and dessert, served on gold, with wines in corresponding abundance.]



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Karl Gustav, the Swedish king, was campaigning in Poland, but as soon as he could turn around he marched his army against Denmark, scattered the forces that opposed him, and before news of his advance had reached Copenhagen knocked at the gate of Denmark demanding “speech of brother Frederik in good Swedish.” A winter of great severity had bridged the Baltic and the sounds of the island kingdom. In two weeks he led his army, horse, foot, and guns, over the frozen seas where hardly a wagon had dared cross before. Great rifts yawned in their way, and whole companies were swallowed up; his own sleigh sank in the deep, but nothing stopped him. Danish emissaries came pleading for peace. He met them on the way to the capital, surrounded by his Finnish horsemen, and gave scant ear to their speeches while he drove on. Before the city he halted and dictated a peace so humiliating that one of the Danish commissioners exclaimed when he came to sign, “I wish I could not write.” Perhaps the same wish troubled the conqueror’s ambitious dreams. The peace was broken as swiftly as made. In five months he was back before Frederik’s capital with his whole army, while a Swedish fleet anchored in the roadstead outside. “What difference does it make to you,” was the contemptuous taunt flung at the anxious envoys who sought his camp, “whether the name of your king is Karl or Frederik so long as you are safe?” He had come to make an end of Denmark.

Copenhagen was almost without defences. The old earth walls mounted only six guns, with breastworks scarce knee-high. In places King Karl could have driven his sleigh into the heart of the city at the head of his army. But for the second time he hesitated when a swift blow would have won all—and lost. Overnight the Danish nation awoke to a fight for its life. King and people, till then strangers, in that hour became one. Frederik the Third met the craven counsel that he fly to Norway with the proud answer, “I will die in my nest, if need be, and my wife with me.” With a shout the burghers swore to fight to the last man. The walls of the city rose as if by magic. Nobles and mechanics, clergy and laborers, students, professors and sailors worked side by side; high-born women wheeled barrows. Every tree was cut down and made into palisades. The crops ripening in the fields were gathered in haste and the cattle driven in. The city had been provisioned for barely a week and garrisoned by four hundred raw recruits. Sailors from the useless ships took out their guns and mounted them in the redoubts. Peasants flocked in and were armed with battle-axes, clubs, and boat-hooks when the supply of muskets gave out. When Karl Gustav drew his lines tight he faced six thousand determined men behind strong walls. The city stood in a ring of blazing fires. Its defenders were burning down the houses and woods beyond the moats to clear the way for their gunners. The King watched the sight from his horse in silence. He knew what it meant; he had fought in the Thirty Years’ War: “Now, I vow, we shall have fighting,” was all he said.



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It was not long in coming. On the second night the garrison made a sortie and drove back the invaders, destroying their works with great slaughter. Night after night, and sometimes in the broad day, they returned to the charge, overwhelming the Swedes where least expected, capturing their guns, their supplies, and their outposts. Short of arms and ammunition, they took them in the enemy's lines. In one of these raids Karl Gustav himself was all but made prisoner. A horseman had him by the shoulder, but he wrenched himself loose and spurred his horse into the sea where a boat from one of the ships rescued him. The defence took on something of the fervor of religious frenzy. Twice a day services were held on the walls of the city; within, the men who could not bear arms, and the women, barricaded the streets with stones and iron chains for the last fight, were it to come. In his place on the wall every burgher had a hundred brickbats or stones piled up for ammunition, and by night when the enemy rained red-hot shot upon the city, he fought with a club or spear in one hand, a torch in the other.

Eleven weeks the battle raged by night and by day. Then a Dutch fleet forced its way through the blockade after a fight in which it lost six ships and two admirals. It brought food, ammunition, and troops. The joy in the city was great. All day the church bells were rung, and the people hailed the Dutch as the saviours of the nation. But when they, too, would thank God for the victory and asked for the use of the University's hall, they were refused. They were followers of Calvin and their heresies must not be preached in the place set apart for teaching the doctrines of the "pure faith," said the professors, who were Lutheran. It was the way of the day. The Reformation had learned little from the bigotry of the Inquisition. The Dutchmen had to be content with the court-house. But the siege was not over. Another hard winter closed in with the enemy at the door, burrowing hourly nearer the outworks, and food and fire-wood grew scarcer day by day in the hard-pressed city. When things were at the worst pass in February, the Swedes gathered their hosts for a final assault. In the midnight hour they came on with white shirts drawn over their uniforms to make it hard to tell them from the snow. Karl Gustav himself led the storming party and at last was in the way of "getting speech of brother Frederik," for the Danish King was as good as his word. He had said that he would die in his nest, and time and again he had to be sternly reasoned with to prevent him from exposing himself overmuch. Where the danger was greatest he was, and beside him ever the queen, all her frivolity gone and forgotten. She who had danced at the court fetes and followed the hounds on the chase as if the world had no other cares, became the very incarnation of the spirit of the bitter and bloody struggle. All through that winter the royal couple lived in a tent among their men, and when the alarm was sounded they were first on foot to lead them. Now that the hour had come, they were in the forefront of the fight.



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Where the famous pleasure garden Tivoli now is, the strength of the enemy was massed against the redoubts at the western gate. The name of "Storm Street" tells yet of the doings of that night. King Karl had promised to give over the captured town to be sacked by his army three days and nights, and like hungry wolves they swarmed to the attack, a mob of sailors and workmen with scaling ladders in the van. The moats they crossed in spite of the gaps that had been made in the ice to stop them, but the garrison had poured water over the walls that froze as it ran, until they were like slippery icebergs. A bird could have found no foothold on them. Showers of rocks and junk and clubs fell upon the laddermen. Three times Karl Gustav hurled his columns against them; as often they were driven back, broken and beaten. A few gained a foothold on the walls only to be dashed down to death. The burghers fought for their lives and their homes. Their women carried boiling pitch and poured it over the breastworks, and when they had no more, dragged great beams and rolled them down upon the ladders, sweeping them clear of the enemy. In the hottest fight Gunde Rosenkrantz, one of the king's councillors, trod on a fallen soldier and, looking into his face, saw that it was his own son breathing his last. He bent over and kissed him, and went on fighting.

In the early morning hour Karl Gustav gave the order to retreat. The attack had failed. Many of his general officers were slain; nearly half of his army was killed, disabled, or captured. Six Swedish standards were taken by the Danes. The moats were filled with the dead. The Swedes had "come in their shrouds." The guns of the city thundered out a triple salute of triumph and the people sang Te Deums on the walls. Their hardships were not over. Fifteen months yet the city was invested and the home of daily privation; but their greatest peril was past. Copenhagen was saved, and with it the nation; the people had found itself and its king. That autumn a second Swedish army under the veteran Stenbock was massacred in the island of Fyen, and Karl Gustav exclaimed when the beaten general brought him the news, "Since the devil took the sheep he might have taken the buck too." He never got over it. Three months later he lay dead, and the siege of Copenhagen was raised in May, 1660. It had lasted twenty months.

* * * * *

Seven score years and one passed, and the morning of Holy Thursday[2] saw a British fleet sailing slowly up the deep before Copenhagen, the deck of every ship bristling with guns, their crews at quarters, Lord Nelson's signal to "close for action" flying from the top of the flag-ship *Elephant*. Between the fleet and the shore lay a line of dismantled hulks on which men with steady eyes and stout hearts were guarding Denmark's honor. Once more it had been jeopardized by foolish counsel in high places. Danish statesmen had trifled and temporized



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while England, facing all Europe alone in the fight for her life, made ready to strike a decisive blow against the Armed Neutrality that threatened her supremacy on the sea. Once more the city had been caught unprepared, defenceless, and once more its people rose as one man to meet the danger. But it was too late. Outside, in the Sound, a fleet as great as that led by Nelson waited, should he fail, to finish his work. That was to destroy the Danish ships, if need be to bombard the city and so detach Denmark from the coalition of England's foes. So she chose to consider such as were not her declared friends.

[Footnote 2: The battle of Copenhagen was fought April 2, 1801.]

Denmark had no fighting ships at home to pit against her. Her sailors were away serving in the merchant marine. She had no practised gunners, nothing but a huddle of dismantled vessels in her navy-yard, most of them half-rotten hulks without masts. Those that had standing rigging were even worse, for none of them had sails and the falling spars in battle lumbered up the decks and menaced the crew. But such as they were she made the most of them. Eighteen hulks were hauled into the channel and moored head and stern. Where they lay they could not be moved. Only the guns on one side were therefore of use, while the enemy could turn and manoeuvre. They were manned by farm lads, mechanics, students, enlisted in haste, not one of whom had ever smelt powder, and these were matched against Nelson's grim veterans. Even their commander, J. Olfert Fischer, had not been under fire before that day, for Denmark had had peace for eighty years. But his father had served as a midshipman with Tordenskjold and the son did not flinch, outnumbered though his force was, two to one, in men and guns.

The sun shone fair upon the blue waters as the great fleet of thirty-odd fighting ships sailed up from the south. From the city's walls and towers a mighty multitude watched it come, unmindful of peril from shot and shell; the Danish line was not half a mile away. In the churches whose bells were still ringing when the first gun was fired from the block-ship *Proevestenen*, the old men and women prayed through the long day, for there were few homes in Copenhagen that did not have son, brother, or friend fighting out there. A single gun answered the challenge, now two and three at once, then broadside crashed upon broadside with deafening roar. When at length all was quiet a tremendous report shook the city. It was the flag-ship *Dannebrog* that blew up. She was on fire with only three serviceable guns left when she struck her colors, but no ship of her name might sail with an enemy's prize crew on board, and she did not.



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The story of that bloody day has been told many times. Briton and Dane hoist their flags on April 2 with equal right, for never was challenge met with more dauntless valor. Lord Nelson owned that of all the hundred and five battles he had fought this was hottest. On the *Monarch*, which for hours was under the most galling fire from the Danish ships, two hundred and twenty of the crew were killed or wounded. "There was not a single man standing," wrote a young officer on board of her, "the whole way from the mainmast forward, a district containing eight guns a side, some of which were run out ready for firing, others lay dismantled, and others remained as they were after recoiling.... I hastened down the fore ladder to the lower deck and felt really relieved to find somebody alive." The slaughter on the Danish ships was even greater. More than one-fifth of their entire strength of a little over five thousand men were slain or wounded. Of the eighteen hulls they lost thirteen, but only one were the British able to take home with them. The rest were literally shot to pieces and were burned where they lay. As one after another was silenced, those yet alive on board spiked their last guns, if indeed there were any left worth the trouble, threw their powder overboard and made, for the shore. Twice the Danish Admiral abandoned his burning ship, the last time taking up his post in the island battery Tre Kroner. Each time one of the old hulls was crushed, a Briton pushed into the hole made in the line and raked the remaining ones fore and aft until their decks were like huge shambles. The block-ship *Indfoedsretten* bore the concentrated fire of five frigates and two smaller vessels throughout most of the battle. Her chief was killed. When the news reached head-quarters on shore, Captain von Schroedersee, an old naval officer who had been retired because of ill health, volunteered to take his place. He was rowed out, but as he came over the side of the ship a cannon-ball cut him in two. *Proevestenen*, as it was the first to fire a shot, held out also to the last. One-fourth of her crew lay dead, and her flag had been shot away three times when the decks threatened to cave in and Captain Lassen spiked his last guns and left the wreck to be burned. All through the fight she was the target of ninety guns to which she could oppose only twenty-nine of her own sixty.

Nelson had promised Admiral Parker to finish the fight in an hour. When the battle had lasted three, Parker signalled to him to stop. Every school-boy knows the story of how Lord Nelson put the glass to his blind eye and, remarking that he could see no signal, kept right on. In the end he had to resort to stratagem to force a truce so that he might disentangle some of his ships that were drifting into great danger in the narrow channel. The ruse succeeded. Crown Prince Frederik, moved by compassion for the wounded whom Nelson threatened to burn with the captured



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hulks if firing did not stop, ordered hostilities to cease without consulting the Admiral of the fleet, and the battle was over. Denmark's honor was saved. "Nothing," wrote our own Captain Mahan, "could place a nation's warlike fame higher than did her great deeds that day." All else was lost; for "there had come upon Denmark one of those days of judgment to which nations are liable who neglect in time of peace to prepare for war." It had been long coming, but it had overtaken her at last and found all the bars down.

Alongside the *Dannebrog* throughout her fight with Nelson's flag-ship, and edging ever closer in under the *Elephant's* side until at last the marines were sent to man her rail and keep it away with their muskets, lay a floating battery mounting twenty guns under command of a beardless second lieutenant. The name of Peter Willemoes will live as long as the Danish tongue is spoken. Barely graduated from the Naval Academy, he was but eighteen when the need of officers thrust the command of "Floating Battery No. 1" upon him. So gallantly did he acquit himself that Nelson took notice of the young man who, every time a broadside crashed into his ship or overhead, swung his cocked hat and led his men in a lusty cheer. When after the battle he met the Crown Prince on shore, the English commander asked to be introduced to his youthful adversary. "You ought to make an admiral of him," he said, and Prince Frederik smiled: "If I were to make admirals of all my brave officers, I should have no captains or lieutenants left." When the *Dannebrog* drifted on the shoals, abandoned and burning, Willemoes cut his cables and got away under cover of the heavy smoke. Having neither sails nor oars, he was at the mercy of the tide, but luckily it carried him to the north of the Tre Kroner battery, and he reached port with forty-nine of his crew of one hundred and twenty-nine dead or wounded. The people received him as a conqueror returning with victory. His youth and splendid valor aroused the enthusiasm of the whole country. Wherever he went crowds flocked to see him as the hero of "Holy Thursday's Battle." Especially was he the young people's idol. Sailor that he was, he was "the friend of all pretty girls," sang the poet of that day. He danced and made merry with them, but the one of them all on whom his heart was set, so runs the story, would have none of him, and sent him away to foreign parts, a saddened lover.

Meanwhile much praise had not made him vain. "I did my duty," he wrote to his father, a minor government official in the city of Odense where four years later Hans Christian Andersen was born on the anniversary day of the battle, "and I have whole limbs which I least expected. The Crown Prince and the Admiral have said that I behaved well." He was to have one more opportunity of fighting his country's enemy, and this time to the death.



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In the summer of 1807, England was advised that by the treaty of Tilsit Russia and Prussia had secretly joined Napoleon in his purpose of finally crushing his mortal enemy by uniting all the fleets of Europe against her, Denmark's too, by compulsion if persuasion failed. Without warning a British fleet swooped down upon the unsuspecting nation, busy with the pursuits of peace, bombarded and burned Copenhagen when the Commandant refused to deliver the ships into the hands of the robbers as a "pledge of peace," and carried away ships, supplies, even the carpenters' tools in the navy-yard. Nothing was spared. Seventy vessels, sixteen of them ships of the line, fell into their hands, and supplies that filled ninety-two transports beside. A single fighting ship was left to Denmark of all her fleet,—the *Prince Christian Frederik* of sixty-eight guns. She happened to be away in a Norwegian port and so escaped. Willemoes was on leave serving in the Russian navy, but hastened home when news came of the burning of Copenhagen, and found a berth under Captain Jessen.

On March 22, 1808, the *Prince Christian*, so she was popularly called, hunting a British frigate that was making Danish waters insecure, met in the Kattegat the *Stately* and the *Nassau*, each like herself of sixty-eight guns. The *Nassau* was the old *Holsteen*, renamed,—the single prize the victors had carried home from the battle of Copenhagen. Three British frigates were working up to join them. The coast of Seeland was near, but wind and tide cut off escape to the Sound. Captain Jessen ran his ship in close under the shore so that at the last he might beach her, and awaited the enemy there.

The sun had set, but the night was clear when the fight between the three ships began. With one on either side, hardly a pistol-shot away, Jessen returned shot for shot, giving as good as they sent, and with such success that at the end of an hour and a half the Britons dropped astern to make repairs. The *Prince Christian* drifted, helpless, with rudder shot to pieces, half a wreck, rigging all gone, and a number of her guns demolished. But when the enemy returned he was hailed with a cheer and a broadside, and the fight was on once more. This time they were three to one; one of the British frigates of forty-four guns had come up and joined in.

When the hull of the *Prince Christian* was literally knocked to pieces, and of her 576 men 69 lay dead and 137 wounded, including the chief and all of his officers who were yet alive, Captain Jessen determined as a last desperate chance to run one of his opponents down and board her with what remained of his crew. But his officers showed him that it was impossible; the ship could not be manoeuvred. There was a momentary lull in the fire and out of the night came a cry, "Strike your colors!" The Danish reply was a hurrah and a volley from all the standing guns. Three broad-sides crashed into the doomed ship in quick succession, and the battle was over. The *Prince Christian* stood upon the shore, a wreck.



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Young Willemoes was spared the grief of seeing the last Danish man-of-war strike its flag. In the hottest of the fight, as he jumped upon a gun the better to locate the enemy in the gloom, a cannon-ball took off the top of his head. He fell into the arms of a fellow officer with the muttered words, "Oh God! my head—my country!" and was dead. In his report of the fight Captain Jessen wrote against his name: "Fell in battle—honored as he is missed." They made his grave on shore with the fallen sailors, and as the sea washed up other bodies they were buried with them.

The British captured the wreck, but they could only set fire to it after removing the wounded. In the night it blew up where it stood. That was the end of the last ship of Denmark's proud navy.

THE TROOPER WHO WON A WAR ALONE

Jens Kofoed was the name of a trooper who served in the disastrous war of Denmark against Sweden in Karl Gustav's day. He came from the island of Bornholm in the Baltic, where he tilled a farm in days of peace. When his troop went into winter quarters, he got a furlough to go home to receive the new baby that was expected about Christmas. Most of his comrades were going home for the holidays, and their captain made no objection. The Swedish king was fighting in far-off Poland, and no one dreamed that he would come over the ice with his army in the depth of winter to reckon with Denmark. So Jens Kofoed took ship with the promise that he would be back in two weeks. But they were to be two long weeks. They did not hear of him again for many moons, and then strange tidings came of his doings. Single-handed he had bearded the Swedish lion, and downed it in a fair fight—strangest of all, almost without bloodshed.

The winter storms blew hard, and it was Christmas eve when he made land, but he came in time to receive, not one new heir, but twin baby girls. Then there were six of them, counting Jens and his wife, and a merry Christmas they all had together. On Twelfth Night the little ones were christened, and then the trooper bethought himself of his promise to get back soon. The storms had ceased, but worse had befallen; the sea was frozen over as far as eye reached, and the island was cut off from all communication with the outer world. There was nothing for it but to wait. It proved the longest and hardest winter any one then living could remember. Easter was at hand before the ice broke up, and let a fishing smack slip over to Ystad, on the mainland. It came back with news that set the whole island wondering. Peace had been made, and Denmark had ceded all its ancient provinces east of the Oeresund to Karl Gustav. Ystad itself and Skaane, the province in which Jens Kofoed had been campaigning, were Swedish now, and so was Bornholm. All unknown to its people, the island had changed hands in the game of war overnight, as it were. A Swedish garrison was coming over presently to take charge.



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When Jens Kofoed heard it, he sat down and thought things over. If there was peace, his old captain had no use for him, that was certain; but there might be need of him at home. What would happen there, no one could tell. And there were the wife and children to take care of. The upshot of it all was that he stayed. Only, to be on the safe side, he got the Burgomaster and the Aldermen in his home town, Hasle, to set it down in writing that he could not have got back to his troop for all he might have tried. Kofoed, it will be seen, was a man with a head on his shoulders, which was well, for presently he had need of it.

There were no Danish soldiers in the island, only a peasant militia, ill-armed and untaught in the ways of war; so no one thought of resisting the change of masters. The people simply waited to see what would happen. Along in May a company of one hundred and twenty men with four guns landed, and took possession of Castle Hammershus, on the north shore, the only stronghold on the island, in the name of the Swedish king. Colonel Printzenskoeld, who had command, summoned the islanders to a meeting, and told them that he had come to be their governor. They were to obey him, and that was all. The people listened and said nothing.

Perhaps if the new rulers had been wise, things might have kept on so. The people would have tilled their farms, and paid their taxes, and Jens Kofoed, with all his hot hatred of the enemy he had fought, might never have been heard of outside his own island. But the Swedish soldiers had been through the Thirty Years' War and plunder had become their profession. They rioted in the towns, doubled the taxes, put an embargo on trade and export, crushed the industries; worse, they took the young men and sent them away to Karl Gustav's wars in foreign lands. They left only the old men and the boys, and these last they kept a watchful eye on for drafts in days to come. When the conscripts hid in the woods, so as not to be torn from their wives and sweethearts, they organized regular man-hunts as if the quarry were wild beasts, and, indeed, the poor fellows were not treated much better when caught.

All summer they did as they pleased; then came word that Karl Gustav had broken the peace he made, and of the siege of Copenhagen. The news made the people sit up and take notice. Their rightful sovereign had ceded the island to the Swedish king, that was one thing. But now that they were at war again, these strangers who persecuted them were the public enemy. It was time something were done. In Hasle there was a young parson with his heart in the right place, Poul Anker by name. Jens Kofoed sat in his church; he had been to the wars, and was fit to take command. Also, the two were friends. Presently a web of conspiracy spread quietly through the island, gripping priest and peasant, skipper and trader, alike. Its purpose was to rout out the Swedes. The Hasle trooper and parson were the leaders; but their secret was well kept. With the tidings that the Dutch fleet had forced its way through to Copenhagen with aid for the besieged, and had bottled the Swedish ships up in Landskrona, came a letter purporting to be from King Frederik himself, encouraging the people to rise. It was passed secretly from hand to hand by the underground route, and found the island ready for rebellion.



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Governor Printzenskoeld had seen something brewing, but he was a fearless man, and despised the “peasant mob.” However, he sent to Sweden for a troop of horsemen, the better to patrol the island and watch the people. Early in December, 1658, just a year after Jens Kofoed, the trooper, had set out for his home on furlough, the governor went to Roenne, the chief city in the island, to start off a ship for the reinforcements. The conspirators sought to waylay him at Hasle, where he stopped to give warning that all who had not paid the heavy war-tax would be sold out forthwith; but they were too late. Master Poul and Jens Kofoed rode after him, expecting to meet a band of their fellows on the way, but missed them. The parson stayed behind then to lay the fuse to the mine, while Kofoed kept on to town. By the time he got there he had been joined by four others, Aage Svendsoen, Klavs Nielsen, Jens Laurssoen, and Niels Gummeloese. The last two were town officers. As soon as the report went around Roenne that they had come, Burgomaster Klaus Kam went to them openly.

The governor had ridden to the house of the other burgomaster, Per Larssoen, who was not in the plot. His horse was tied outside and he just sitting down to supper when Jens Kofoed and his band crowded into the room, and took him prisoner. They would have killed him there, but his host pleaded for his life. However, when they took him out in the street, Printzenskoeld thought he saw a chance to escape in the crowd and the darkness, and sprang for his horse. But his great size made him an easy mark. He was shot through the head as he ran. The man who shot him had loaded his pistol with a silver button torn from his vest. That was sure death to any goblin on whom neither lead nor steel would bite, and it killed the governor all right. The place is marked to this day in the pavement of the main street as the spot where fell the only tyrant who ever ruled the island against the people’s will.

The die was cast now, and there was need of haste. Under cover of the night the little band rode through the island with the news, ringing the church bells far and near to call the people to arms. Many were up and waiting; Master Poul had roused them already. At Hammershus the Swedish garrison heard the clamor, and wondered what it meant. They found out when at sunrise an army of half the population thundered on the castle gates summoning them to surrender. Burgomaster Kam sat among them on the governor’s horse, wearing his uniform, and shouted to the officers in command that unless they surrendered, he, the governor, would be killed, and his head sent in to his wife in the castle. The frightened woman’s tears decided the day. The garrison surrendered, only to discover that they had been tricked. Jens Kofoed took command in the castle. The Swedish soldiers were set to doing chores for the farmers they had so lately harassed. The ship that was to have fetched reenforcements from Sweden was sent to Denmark instead, with the heartening news. They needed that kind there just then.

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But the ex-trooper, now Commandant, knew that a day of reckoning was coming, and kept a sharp lookout. When the hostile ship *Spes* was reported steering in from the sea, the flag of Sweden flew from the peak of Hammershus, and nothing on land betrayed that there had been a change. As soon as she anchored, a boat went out with an invitation from the governor to any officers who might be on board, to come ashore and arrange for the landing of the troops. The captain of the ship and the major in charge came, and were made prisoners as soon as they had them where they could not be seen from the ship. It blew up to a storm, and the *Spes* was obliged to put to sea, but as soon as she returned boats were sent out to land the soldiers. They sent only little skiffs that could hold not over three or four, and as fast as they were landed they were overpowered and bound. Half of the company had been thus disposed of when the lieutenant on board grew suspicious, and sent word that without the express orders of the major no more would come. But Jens Kofoed's wit was equal to the emergency. The next boat brought an invitation to the lieutenant to come in and have breakfast with the officers, who would give him his orders there. He walked into the trap; but when he also failed to return, his men refused to follow. He had arranged to send them a sign, they said, that everything was all right. If it did not come, they would sail away to Sweden for help.

It took some little persuasion to make the lieutenant tell about the sign, but in the end Jens Kofoed got it. It turned out to be his pocket-knife. When they saw that, the rest came, and were put under lock and key with their fellows.

The ship was left. If that went back, all was lost. Happily both captain and mate were prisoners ashore. Four boat-loads of islanders, with arms carefully stowed under the seats, went out with the mate of the *Spes*, who was given to understand that if he as much as opened his mouth he would be a dead man. They boarded the ship, taking the crew by surprise. By night the last enemy was comfortably stowed, and the ship on her way to Roenne, where the prisoners were locked in the court-house cellar, with shotted guns guarding the door. Perhaps it was the cruelties practised by Swedish troops in Denmark that preyed upon the mind of Jens Kofoed when he sent the parson to prepare them for death then and there; but better counsel prevailed. They were allowed to live. The whole war cost only two lives, the governor's and that of a sentinel at the castle, who refused to surrender. The mate of the *Spes* and two of her crew contrived to escape after they had been taken to Copenhagen, and from them Karl Gustav had the first tidings of how he lost the island.



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The captured ship sailed down to Copenhagen with greeting to King Frederik that the people of Bornholm had chosen him and his heirs forever to rule over them, on condition that their island was never to be separated from the Danish Crown. The king in his delight presented them with a fine silver cup, and made Jens Kofoed captain of the island, beside giving him a handsome estate. He lived thirty-three years after that, the patriarch of his people, and raised a large family of children. Not a few of his descendants are to-day living in the United States. In the home of one of them in Brooklyn, New York, is treasured a silver drinking cup which King Frederik gave to the ex-trooper; but it is not the one he sent back with his deputation. That one is still in the island of Bornholm.

CARL LINNE, KING OF THE FLOWERS

Years ago there grew on the Jonsboda farm in Smaland, Sweden, a linden tree that was known far and wide for its great age and size. So beautiful and majestic was the tree, and so wide the reach of its spreading branches, that all the countryside called it sacred. Misfortune was sure to come if any one did it injury. So thought the people. It was not strange, then, that the farmer's boys, when they grew to be learned men and chose a name, should call themselves after the linden. The peasant folk had no family names in those days. Sven Carlsson was Sven, the son of Carl; and his son, if his given name were John, would be John Svensson. So it had always been. But when a man could make a name for himself out of the big dictionary, that was his right. The daughter of the Jonsboda farmer married; and her son played in the shadow of the old tree, and grew so fond of it that when he went out to preach he also called himself after it. Nils Ingemarsson was the name he received in baptism, and to that he added Linnaeus, never dreaming that in doing it he handed down the name and the fame of the friend of his play hours to all coming days. But it was so; for Parson Nils' eldest son, Carl Linne, or Linnaeus, became a great man who brought renown to his country and his people by telling them and all the world more than any one had ever known before about the trees and the flowers. The King knighted him for his services to science, and the people of every land united in acclaiming him the father of botany and the king of the flowers.

They were the first things he learned to love in his baby world. If he was cross, they had but to lay him on the grass in the garden and put a daisy in his hand, and he would croon happily over it for hours. He was four years old when his father took him to a wedding in the neighborhood. The men guests took a tramp over the farm, and in the twilight they sat and rested in the meadow, where the spring flowers grew. The minister began telling them stories about them; how they all had their own names and what powers for good or ill the apothecary found



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in the leaves and root of some of them. Carl's father, though barely out of college, was a bright and gifted man. One of his parishioners said once that they couldn't afford a whole parson, and so they took a young one; but if that was the way of it, the men of Stenbrohult made a better bargain than they knew. They sat about listening to his talk, but no one listened more closely than little Carl. After that he had thought for nothing else. In the corner of the garden he had a small plot of his own, and into it he planted all the wild flowers from the fields, and he asked many more questions about them than his father could answer. One day he came back with one whose name he had forgotten. The minister was busy with his sermon.

"If you don't remember," he said impatiently, "I will never tell you the name of another flower." The boy went away, his eyes wide with terror at the threat; but after that he did not forget a single name.

When he was big enough, they sent him to the Latin school at Wexioe, where the other boys nicknamed him "the little botanist." His thoughts were outdoors when they should have been in the dry books, and his teachers set him down as a dunce. They did not know that his real study days were when, in vacation, he tramped the thirty miles to his home. Every flower and every tree along the way was an old friend, and he was glad to see them again. Once in a while he found a book that told of plants, and then he was anything but a dunce. But when his father, after Carl had been eight years in the school, asked his teachers what they thought of him, they told him flatly that he might make a good tailor or shoemaker, but a minister—never; he was too stupid.

That was a blow, for the parson of Stenbrohult and his wife had set their hearts on making a minister of Carl, and small wonder. His mother was born in the parsonage, and her father and grandfather had been shepherds of the parish all their lives. There were tears in the good minister's eyes as he told Carl to pack up and get ready to go back home; he had an errand at Dr. Rothman's, but would return presently. The good doctor saw that his patient was heavy of heart and asked him what was wrong. When he heard what Carl's teachers had said, he flashed out:

"What! he not amount to anything? There is not one in the whole lot who will go as far as he. A minister he won't be, that I'll allow, but I shall make a doctor of him such as none of them ever saw. You leave him here with me." And the parson did, comforted in spite of himself. But Carl's mother could not get over it. It was that garden, she declared, and when his younger brother as much as squinted that way, she flew at him with a "You dare to touch it!" and shook him.



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When Dr. Rothman thought his pupil ready for the university, he sent him up to Lund, and the head-master of the Latin School gave him the letter he must bring, to be admitted. "Boys at school," he wrote in it, "may be likened to young trees in orchard nurseries, where it sometimes happens that here and there among the saplings there are some that make little growth, or even appear as wild seedlings, giving no promise; but when afterwards transplanted to the orchard, make a start, branch out freely, and at last yield satisfactory fruit." By good luck, though, Carl ran across an old teacher from Wexioe, one of the few who had believed in him and was glad to see him. He took him to the Rector and introduced him with warm words of commendation, and also found him lodgings under the roof of Dr. Kilian Stobaeus.

Dr. Stobaeus was a physician of renown, but not good company. He was one-eyed, sickly, lame in one foot, and a gloomy hypochondriac to boot. Being unable to get around to his patients, he always had one or two students to do the running for him and to learn as best they might, in doing it. Carl found a young German installed there as the doctor's right hand. He also found a library full of books on botany, a veritable heaven for him. But the gate was shut against him; the doctor had the key, and he saw nothing in the country lad but a needy student of no account. Perhaps the Rector had passed the head-master's letter along. However, love laughs at locksmiths, and Carl Linnaeus was hopelessly in love with his flowers. He got on the right side of the German by helping him over some hard stiles in the *materia medica*. In return, his fellow student brought him books out of the library when the doctor had gone to bed, and Carl sat up studying the big tomes till early cockcrow. Before the house stirred, the books were back on their shelves, the door locked, and no one was the wiser.

No one except the doctor's old mother, whose room was across the yard. She did not sleep well, and all night she saw the window lighted in her neighbor's room. She told the doctor that Carl Linnaeus fell asleep with the candle burning every single night, and sometime he would upset it and they would all be burned in their beds. The doctor nodded grimly; he knew the young scamps. No doubt they both sat up playing cards till dawn; but he would teach them. And the very next morning, at two o'clock, up he stumped on his lame foot to Carl's room, in which there was light, sure enough, and went in without knocking.

Carl was so deep in his work that he did not hear him at all, and the doctor stole up unperceived and looked over his shoulder. There lay his precious books, which he thought safely locked in the library, spread out before him, and his pupil was taking notes and copying drawings as if his life depended upon it. He gave a great start when Dr. Stobaeus demanded what he was doing, but owned up frankly, while the doctor frowned and turned over his notes, leaf by leaf.



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“Go to bed and sleep like other people,” he said gruffly, yet kindly, when he had heard it all, “and hereafter study in the daytime;” and he not only gave him a key to his library, but took him to his own table after that. Up till then Carl had merely been a lodger in the house.

When he was at last on the home stretch, as it seemed, an accident came near upsetting it all. He was stung by an adder on one of his botanizing excursions, so far from home and help that the bite came near proving fatal. However, Dr. Stobaeus’ skill pulled him through, and in after years he got square by labelling the serpent *furia infernalis*—hell-fury—in his natural history. It was his way of fighting back. All through his life he never wasted an hour on controversy. He had no time, he said. But once when a rival made a particularly nasty attack upon him, he named a new plant after him, adding the descriptive adjective *detestabilis*—the detestable so-and-so. On the whole, he had the best of it; for the names he gave stuck.

It was during his vacation after the year at Lund that Linnaeus made a catalogue of the plants in his father’s garden at Stenbrohult that shows us the country parson as no mean botanist himself; for in the list, which is preserved in the Academy of Sciences at Stockholm, are no less than two hundred and twenty-four kinds of plants. Among them are six American plants that had found their way to Sweden. The poison ivy is there, though what they wanted of that is hard to tell, and the four-o’clock, the pokeweed, the milkweed, the pearly everlasting, and the potato, which was then (1732) classed as a rare plant. Not until twenty years later did they begin to grow it for food in Sweden.

When Carl Linnaeus went up to Upsala University, his parents had so far got over their disappointment at his deserting the ministry that they gave him a little money to make a start with; but they let him know that no more was coming—their pocket-book was empty. And within the twelvemonth, for all his scrimping and saving, he was on the point of starvation. He tells us himself that he depended on chance for a meal and wore his fellow students’ cast-off clothes. His boots were without soles, and in his cheerless attic room he patched them with birch bark and card board as well as he could. He was now twenty-three years old, and it seemed as if he would have to give up the study that gave him no bread; but still he clung to his beloved flowers. They often made him forget the pangs of hunger. And when the cloud was darkest the sun broke through. He was sitting in the Botanical Garden sketching a plant, when Dean Celsius, a great orientalist and theologian of his day, passed by. The evident poverty of the young man, together with his deep absorption in his work, arrested his attention; he sat down and talked with him. In five minutes Carl had found a friend and the Dean a helper. He had been commissioned to write a book on the plants of the Holy Land and had collected a botanical library for the purpose, but the work lagged. Here now was the one who could help set it going. That day Linnaeus left his attic room and went to live in the Dean’s house. His days of starvation were over.



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In the Dean's employ his organizing genius developed the marvellous skill of the cataloguer that brought order out of the chaos of groping and guessing and blundering in which the science of botany had floundered up till then. Here and there in it all were flashes of the truth, which Linnaeus laid hold of and pinned down with his own knowledge to system and order. Thus the Frenchman, Sebastian Vaillant, who had died a dozen years before, had suggested a classification of flowers by their seed-bearing organs, the stamens and pistils, instead of by their fruits, the number of their petals, or even by their color, as had been the vague practice of the past. Linnaeus seized upon this as the truer way and wrote a brief treatise developing the idea, which so pleased Dr. Celsius that he got his young friend a license to lecture publicly in the Botanical Garden.

The students flocked to hear him. His message was one that put life and soul into the dry bones of a science that had only wearied them before. The professor of botany himself sat in the front row and hammered the floor with his cane in approval. But his very success was the lecturer's undoing. Envy grew in place of the poverty he had conquered. The instructor, Nils Rosen, was abroad taking his doctor's degree. He came home to find his lectures deserted for the irresponsible teachings of a mere undergraduate. He made grievous complaint, and Linnaeus was silenced, to his great good luck. For so his friend the professor, though he was unable to break the red tape of the university, got him an appointment to go to Lapland on a botanical mission. His enemies were only too glad to see him go.

Linnaeus travelled more than three thousand miles that summer through a largely unknown country, enduring, he tells us, more hardships and dangers than in all his subsequent travels. Again and again he nearly lost his life in swollen mountain streams, for he would not wait until danger from the spring freshets was over. Once he was shot at as he was gathering plants on a hillside, but happily the Finn who did it was not a good marksman. Fish and reindeer milk were his food, a pestilent plague of flies his worst trouble. But, he says in his account of the trip, which is as fascinating a report of a scientific expedition as was ever penned, they were good for something, after all, for the migrating birds fed on them. From his camps on lake or river bank he saw the water covered far and near with swarms of ducks and geese. The Laplander's larder was easily stocked.

He came back from the dangers of the wild with a reputation that was clinched by his book "The Flora of Lapland," to find the dragon of professional jealousy rampant still at Upsala. His enemy, Rosen, persuaded the senate of the university to adopt a rule that no un-degreed man should lecture there to the prejudice of the regularly appointed instructors. Tradition has it that Linnaeus flew into a passion



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at that and drew upon Rosen, and there might have been one regular less but for the interference of bystanders. It may be true, though it is not like him. Men wore side-arms in those days just as some people carry pistols in their hip-pockets to-day, and with as little sense. At least they had the defence, such as it was, that it was the fashion. However, it made an end of Linnaeus at Upsala for the time. He sought a professorship at Lund, but another got it. Then he led an expedition of his former students into the Dalecarlia mountains and so he got to Falun, where Baron Reuterholm, one of Sweden's copper magnates, was seeking a guide for his two sons through the region where his mines were.

Linnaeus was not merely a botanist, but an all around expert in natural science. He took charge of the boys and, when the trip was ended, started a school at Falun, where he taught mineralogy. It had been hit or miss with the miners up till then. There was neither science nor system in their work. What every-day experience or the test of fire had taught a prospector, in delving among the rocks, was all there was of it. Linnaeus was getting things upon a scientific basis, when he met and fell in love with the handsome daughter of Dr. Moraeus. The young people would marry, but the doctor, though he liked the mineralogist, would not hear of it till he could support a wife. So he gave him three years in which to go abroad and get a degree that would give him the right to practise medicine anywhere in Sweden. The doctor's daughter gave him a hundred dollars she had saved, and her promise to wait for him.

He went to Harderwyk in Holland and got his degree at the university there on the strength of a thesis on the cause of malarial fever, with the conclusions of which the learned doctors did not agree; but they granted the diploma for the clever way in which he defended it. On the way down he tarried in Hamburg long enough to give the good burghers a severe jolt. They had a seven-headed serpent that was one of the wonders of the town. The keen sight of the young naturalist detected the fraud at once; the heads were weasels' heads, covered with serpent's skin and cunningly sewed on the head of the reptile. The shape of the jaws betrayed the trick. But the Hamburgers were not grateful. The serpent was an asset. There was a mortgage on it of ten thousand marks; now it was not worth a hundred. They took it very ill, and Linnaeus found himself suddenly so unpopular that he was glad to get out of town overnight. What became of the serpent history does not record.

Linnaeus had carried more than his thesis on malarial fever with him to Holland. At the bottom of his trunk were the manuscripts of two books on botany which, he told his sweetheart on parting, would yet make him famous. Probably she shook her head at that. Pills and powders, and broken legs to set, were more to her way of thinking, and her father's, too. If only he had patients, fame might take



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care of itself. But now he put them both to shame. At Leyden he found friends who brought out his first book, "Systema Naturae," in which he divides all nature into the three kingdoms known to every child since. It was hardly more than a small pamphlet, but it laid the foundation for his later fame. To the enlarged tenth edition zoologists point back to this day as to the bed-rock on which they built their science. The first was quickly followed by another, and yet another. Seven large volumes bearing his name had come from the press before he set sail for home, a whole library in botany, and a new botany at that, so simple and sensible that the world adopted it at once.

Dr. Hermann Boerhaave was at that time the most famous physician in Europe. He was also the greatest authority on systematic botany. Great men flocked to his door, but the testy old Dutchman let them wait until it suited him to receive them. Peter the Great had to cool his heels in his waiting-room two long hours before his turn came. Linnaeus he would not see at all—until he sent him a copy of his book. Then he shut the door against all others and summoned the author. The two walked through his garden, and the old doctor pointed proudly to a tree which was very rare, he said, and not in any of the books. Yes, said Linnaeus, it was in Vaillant's. The doctor knew better; he had annotated Vaillant's botany himself, and it was not there. Linnaeus insisted, and the doctor, in a temper, went for the book to show him. But there it was; Linnaeus was right. Nothing would do then but he must stay in Holland. Linnaeus demurred; he could not afford it. But Dr. Boerhaave knew a way out of that. He had for a patient Burgomaster Clifort, a rich old hypochondriac with whom he could do nothing because he would insist on living high and taking too little exercise. When he came again he told him that what he needed was a physician in daily attendance upon him, and handed him over to Linnaeus.

"He will fix your diet and fix your garden, too," was his prescription. The Burgomaster was a famous collector and had a wondrous garden that was the apple of his eye. He took Linnaeus into his house and gave him a ducat a day for writing his menu and cataloguing his collection. That was where his books grew, and the biggest and finest of them was "Hortus Clifortianus," the account of his patron's garden.

Armed with letters from Dr. Boerhaave and the Burgomaster, he took one stronghold of professional prejudice after another. Not without a siege. One of them refused flatly to surrender. That was Sir Hans Sloan, the great English naturalist, to whom Dr. Boerhaave wrote in a letter that is preserved in the British Museum: "Linnaeus, who bears this letter, is alone worthy of seeing you, alone worthy of being seen by you. He who shall see you both together shall see two men whose like will scarce ever be found in the world." And the doctor was no flatterer,



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as may be inferred from his treatment of Peter the Great. But the aged baronet had had his own way so long, and was so well pleased with it, that he would have nothing to do with Linnaeus. At Oxford the learned professor Dillenius received him with no better grace. "This," he said aside to a friend, "is the young man who confounds all botany," and he took him rather reluctantly into his garden. A plant that was new to him attracted Linnaeus' attention and he asked to what family it belonged.

"That is more than you can tell me," was the curt answer.

"I can, if you will let me pluck a flower and examine it."

"Do, and be welcome," said the professor, and his visitor after a brief glance at the flower told its species correctly. The professor stared.

"Now," said Linnaeus, who had kept his eyes open, "what did you mean by the crosses you had put all through my book?" He had seen it lying on the professor's table, all marked up.

"They mark the errors you made," declared the other.

"Suppose we see about that," said the younger man and, taking the book, led the way. They examined the flowers together, and when they returned to the study all the pride had gone out of the professor. He kept Linnaeus with him a month, never letting him out of his sight and, when he left, implored him with tears to stay and share his professorship; the pay was enough for both.

A letter that reached him from home on his return to Holland made him realize with a start that he had overstayed his leave. It was now in the fourth year since he had left Sweden. All the while he had written to his sweetheart in the care of a friend who proved false. He wanted her for himself and, when the three years had passed, told her that Carl would never come back. Dr. Moraeus was of the same mind, and had not a real friend of the absent lover turned up in the nick of time Linnaeus would probably have stayed a Dutchman to his death. Now, on the urgent message of his friend, he hastened home, found his Elisabeth holding out yet, married her and settled down in Stockholm to practise medicine.

Famous as he had become, he found the first stretch of the row at home a hard one to hoe. His books brought him no income. Nobody would employ him, "even for a sick servant," he complained. Envious rivals assailed him and his botany, and there were days when herring and black bread was fare not to be despised in Dr. Linnaeus' household. But he kept pegging away and his luck changed. One well-to-do patient brought another, and at last the queen herself was opportunely seized with a bad



cough. She saw one of her ladies take a pill and asked what it was. Dr. Linnaeus' prescription for a cold, she said, and it always cured her right up. So the doctor was called to the castle and his cure worked there, too. Not long after that he set down in his diary that "Now, no one can get well without my help."



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But he was not happy. "Once, I had flowers and no money," he said; "now, I have money and no flowers." That they appointed him professor of medicine at Upsala did not mend matters. His lectures were popular and full of common sense. Diet and the simple life were his hobbies, temperance in all things. He ever insisted that where one man dies from drinking too much, ten die from overeating. Children should eat four times a day, grown-ups twice, was his rule. The foolish fashions and all luxury he abhorred. He himself in his most famous years lived so plainly that some said he was miserly, and his clothes were sometimes almost shabby. The happiest day of his life came when he and his old enemy Rosen, whom he found filling the chair of botany at the university, and with whom he made it up soon after they became fellow members of the faculty, exchanged chairs with the ready consent of the authorities. So, at last, Linnaeus had attained the place he coveted above all others, and the goal of his ambition was reached.

He lived at Upsala thirty-seven years and wrote many books. His students idolized him. They came from all over the world. Twice a week in summer, on Wednesday and Saturday, they sallied forth with him to botanize in field and forest, and when they had collected specimens all the long day they escorted the professor home through the twilight streets with drums and trumpets and with flowers in their hats. But however late they left him at his door, the earliest dawn saw him up and at his work, for the older he grew the more precious the hours that remained. In summer he was accustomed to rise at three o'clock; in the dark winter days at six.

He found biology a chaos and left it a science. In his special field of botany he was not, as some think, the first. He himself catalogued fully a thousand books on his topic. But he brought order into it; he took what was good and, rejecting the false, fashioned it into a workable system. In the mere matter of nomenclature, his way of calling plants, like men, by a family name and a given name wrought a change hard to appreciate in our day. The common blue grass of our lawns, for instance, he called, and we call it still, *Poa pratensis*. Up to his time it had three names and one of them was *Gramen pratense paniculatum majus latiore folio poa theophrasti*. Dr. Rydberg, of the New York Botanical Gardens, said aptly at the bicentenary of his birth, that it was as if instead of calling a girl Grace Darling one were to say "Mr. Darling's beautiful, slender, graceful, blue-eyed girl with long, golden curls and rosy cheeks."



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The binomial system revolutionized the science. What the lines of longitude and latitude did for geography Linnaeus' genius did for botany. And he did not let pride of achievement persuade him that he had said the last word. He knew his system to be the best till some one should find a better, and said so. The King gave him a noble name and he was proud of it with reason—vain, some have said. But vanity did not make the creature deny the Creator. He ever tried to trace science to its author. When the people were frightened by the “water turning to blood” and overzealous priests cried that it was a sign of the wrath of God, he showed under the magnifying glass the presence of innumerable little animals that gave the water its reddish tinge, and thereby gave offence to some pious souls. But over the door of his lecture room were the words in Latin: “Live guiltless—God sees you!” and in his old age, seeing with prophetic eye the day of bacteriology that dawned a hundred years after his death, he thanked God that He had permitted him to “look into His secret council room and workshop.”

He was one of the clear thinkers of all days, uniting imagination with sound sense. It was Linnaeus who discovered that plants sleep like animals. The Pope ordered that his books, wherever they were found in his dominions, should be burned as materialistic and heretical; but Linnaeus lived to see a professor in botany at Rome dismissed because he did not understand his system, and another put in his place who did, and whose lectures followed his theories. When he was seventy he was stricken with apoplexy, while lecturing to his students, and the last year of his life was full of misery. “Linnaeus limps,” is one of the last entries in his diary, “can hardly walk, speaks unintelligibly, and is scarce able to write.” Death came on January 10, 1778.

Under the white flashes of the northern lights in the desolate land he explored in his youth, there grows in the shelter of the spruce forests a flower which he found and loved beyond any other, the *Linnaea borealis*, named after him. In some pictures we have of him, he is seen holding a sprig of it in his hand. It is the twin flower of the northern Pacific coast and of Labrador, indeed of the far northern woods from Labrador all the way to Alaska, that lifts its delicate, sweet-scented pink bells from the moss with gentle appeal, “long overlooked, lowly, flowering early” despite cold and storm, typical of the man himself.

NIELS FINSEN, THE WOLF-SLAYER

Hard by the town of Thorshavn, in the Faroee islands, a little lad sat one day carving his name on a rock. His rough-coated pony cropped the tufts of stunted grass within call. The grim North Sea beat upon the shore below. What thoughts of the great world without it stirred in the boy he never told. He came of a people to whom it called all through the ages with a summons that rarely went unheeded. If he heard he gave no sign. Slowly and laboriously he traced in the stone the letters N.R.F. When he had finished he surveyed his work with a quiet smile. “There!” he said, “that is done.”



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The years went by, and a distant city paused in its busy life to hearken to bells tolling for one who lay dead. Kings and princes walked behind his coffin and a whole people mourned. Yet in life he had worn no purple. He was a plain, even a poor man. Upon his grave they set a rock brought from the island in the North Sea, just like the other that stands there yet, and in it they hewed the letters N.R.F., for the man and the boy were one. And he who spoke there said for all mankind that what he wrought was well done, for it was done bravely and in love.

Niels Ryberg Finsen was born in 1860 in the Faroee islands, where his father was an official under the Danish Government. His family came of the sturdy old Iceland stock that comes down to our time unshorn of its strength from the day of the vikings, and back to Iceland his people sent him to get his education in the Reykjavik Latin school, after a brief stay in Denmark where his teachers failed to find the key to the silent, reserved lad. There he lived the seven pregnant years of boyhood and youth, from fourteen to twenty-one, and ever after there was that about him that brought to mind the wild fastnesses of that storm-swept land. Its mountains were not more rugged than his belief in the right as he saw it.

The Reykjavik school had a good name, but school and pupils were after their own kind. Conventional was hardly the word for it. Some of the "boys" were twenty and over. Finsen loved to tell of how they pursued the studies each liked best, paying scant attention to the rest. In their chosen fields they often knew much more than the curriculum called for, and were quite able to instruct the teacher; the things they cared less about they helped one another out with, so as to pass examinations. For mere proficiency in lessons they cherished a sovereign contempt. To do anything by halves is not the Iceland way, and it was not Niels Finsen's. All through his life he was impatient with second-hand knowledge and borrowed thinking. So he worked and played through the long winters of the North. In the summer vacations he roamed the barren hills, helped herd the sheep, and drank in the rough freedom of the land and its people. At twenty-one the school gave him up to the university at Copenhagen.

Training for life there was not the heyday of youthful frolicking we sometimes associate with college life in our day and land. Not until he was thirty could he hang up his sheepskin as a physician. Yet the students had their fun and their sports, and Finsen was seldom missing where these went on. He was not an athlete because already at twenty-three the crippling disease with which he battled twenty years had got its grip on him, but all the more he was an outdoor man. He sailed his boat, and practised with the rifle until he became one of the best shots in Denmark. And it is recorded that he got himself into at least one scrape at the university by his love of freedom.



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The country was torn up at that time by a struggle between people and government over constitutional rights, and it had reached a point where a country parish had refused to pay taxes illegally assessed, as they claimed. It was their Boston tea-party. A delegation of the “tax refusers” had come to Copenhagen, where the political pot was boiling hot over the incident. The students were enthusiastic, but the authorities of the university sternly unsympathetic. The “Reds” were for giving a reception to the visitors in Regentsen, the great dormitory where, as an Iceland student, Finsen had free lodging; but it was certain that the Dean would frown upon such a proposition. So they applied innocently for permission to entertain some “friends from the country,” and the party was held in Finsen’s room. Great was the scandal when the opposition newspapers exploited the feasting of the tax refusers in the sacred precincts of the university. To the end of his days Finsen chuckled over the way they stole a march on the Dean.

For two or three years after getting his degree he taught in the medical school as demonstrator, eking out his scant income by tutoring students in anatomy. His sure hand and clear decision in any situation marked him as a practitioner of power, and he had thoughts once of devoting himself to the most delicate of all surgery,—that of the eye. He was even then groping for his life-work, without knowing it, for it was always light, light—the source or avenue or effect of it—that held him. And presently his work found him.

It has been said that Finsen was a sick man. A mysterious malady^[1] with dropsical symptoms clutched him from the earliest days with ever tightening grip, and all his manhood’s life he was a great but silent sufferer. Perhaps it was that; perhaps it was the bleak North in which his young years had been set that turned him to the light as the source of life and healing. He said it himself: “It was because I needed it so much, I longed for it so.” Probably it was both. Add to them his unique power of turning the things of everyday life to account in his scientific research, and one begins to understand at once his success and his speedy popularity. He dealt with the humble things of life, and got to the heart of things on that road. And the people comprehended; the wise men fell in behind him—sometimes a long way behind.

[Footnote 1: The autopsy which he himself ordered on his death-bed as his last contribution to medical knowledge, showed it to be a slow ossification of the membrane of the heart, involving the liver and all the vital organs. He was “tapped” for dropsy more than twenty times.]

In the yard of Regentsen there grows a famous old linden tree. Standing at his window one day and watching its young leaf sprout, Finsen saw a cat sunning itself on the pavement. The shadow of the house was just behind it and presently crept up on pussy who got up, stretched herself, and moved into the sunlight. In a little while the shadow overtook her there, and pussy moved once more. Finsen watched the shadow rout her out again and again. It was clear that the cat liked the sunlight.



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A few days later he stood upon a bridge and saw a little squad of insects sporting on the water. They drifted down happily with the stream till they came within the shadow of the bridge, when they at once began to work their way up a piece to get a fresh start for a sunlight sail. Finsen knew just how they felt. His own room looked north and was sunless; his work never prospered as it did when he sat with a friend whose room was on the south side, where the sun came in. It was warm and pleasant; but was that all? Was it only the warmth that made the birds break into song when the sun came out on a cloudy day, made the insects hum joyously and man himself walk with a more springy step? The housekeeper who “sunned” the bed-clothes and looked with suspicion on a dark room had something else in mind; the sun “disinfected” the bedding. Finsen wanted to know what it was in the sunlight that had this power, and how we could borrow it and turn it to use.

The men of science had long before analyzed the sunlight. They had broken it up into the rays of different color that together make the white light we see. Any boy can do it with a prism, and in the band or spectrum of red, yellow, green, blue, and violet that then appears, he has before him the cipher that holds the key to the secrets of the universe if we but knew how to read it aright; for the sunlight is the physical source of all life and of all power. The different colors represent rays with different wave-lengths; that is, they vibrate with different speed and do different work. The red vibrate only half as fast as the violet, at the other end of the spectrum, and, roughly speaking, they are the heat carriers. The blue and violet are cold by comparison. They are the force carriers. They have power to cause chemical changes, hence are known as the chemical or actinic rays. It is these the photographer shuts out of his dark room, where he intrenches himself behind a ruby-colored window. The chemical ray cannot pass that; if it did it would spoil his plate.

This much was known, and it had been suggested more than once that the “disinfecting” qualities of the sunlight might be due to the chemical rays killing germs. Finsen, experimenting with earthworms, earwigs, and butterflies, in a box covered with glass of the different colors of the spectrum, noted first that the bugs that naturally burrowed in darkness became uneasy in the blue light. As fast as they were able, they got out of it and crawled into the red, where they lay quiet and apparently content. When the glass covers were changed they wandered about until they found the red light again. The earwigs were the smartest. They developed an intelligent grasp of the situation, and soon learned to make straight for the red room. The butterflies, on the other hand, liked the red light only to sleep in. It was made clear by many such experiments that the chemical rays, and they only, had power to stimulate, to “stir life.” Finsen called it that himself. In the language of the children, he was getting “warm.”



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That this power, like any other, had its perils, and that nature, if not man, was awake to them, he proved by some simple experiments with sunburn. He showed that the tan which boys so covet was the defence the skin puts forth against the blue ray. The inflammation of sunburn is succeeded by the brown pigmentation that henceforth stands guard like the photographer's ruby window, protecting the deeper layers of the skin. The black skin of the negro was no longer a mystery. It is his protection against the fierce sunlight of the tropics and the injurious effect of its chemical ray.

Searching the libraries in Copenhagen for the records of earlier explorers in his field, and finding little enough there, Finsen came across the report of an American army surgeon on a smallpox epidemic in the South in the thirties of the last century. There were so many sick in the fort that, every available room being filled, they had to put some of the patients into the bomb-proof, to great inconvenience all round, as it was entirely dark there. The doctor noted incidentally that, as if to make up for it, the underground patients got well sooner and escaped pitting. To him it was a curious incident, nothing more. Upon Dr. Finsen, sitting there with the seventy-five-year-old report from over the sea in his hand, it burst with a flood of light: the patients got well without scarring *because* they were in the dark. Red light or darkness, it was all the same. The point was that the chemical rays that could cause sunburn on men climbing glaciers, and had power to irritate the sick skin, were barred out. Within a month he jolted the medical world by announcing that smallpox patients treated under red light would recover readily and without disfigurement.

The learned scoffed. There were some of them who had read of the practice in the Middle Ages of smothering smallpox patients in red blankets, giving them red wine to drink and hanging the room with scarlet. Finsen had not heard of it, and was much interested. Evidently they had been groping toward the truth. How they came upon the idea is not the only mystery of that strange day, for they knew nothing of actinic rays or sunlight analyzed. But Finsen calmly invited the test, which was speedy in coming.

They had smallpox in Bergen, Norway, and there the matter was put to the proof with entire success; later in Sweden and in Copenhagen. The patients who were kept under the red light recovered rapidly, though some of them were unvaccinated children, and bad cases. In no instance was the most dangerous stage of the disease, the festering stage, reached; the temperature did not rise again, and they all came out unscarred.

Finsen pointed out that where other methods of treatment such as painting the face with iodine or lunar caustic, or covering it with a mask or with fat, had met with any success in the past, the same principle was involved of protecting the skin from the light, though the practitioner did not know it. He was doing the thing they did in the middle ages, and calling them quacks.



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It is strange but true that Dr. Finsen had never seen a smallpox patient at that time, but he knew the nature of the disease, and that the sufferer was affected by its eruption first and worst on the face and hands—that is to say, on the parts of the body exposed to the light—and he was as sure of his ground as was Leverrier when, fifty years before, he bade his fellow astronomers look in a particular spot of the heavens for an unknown planet that disturbed the movements of Uranus. And they found the one we call Neptune there.

Presently all the world knew that the first definite step had been taken toward harnessing in the service of man the strange force in the sunlight that had been the object of so much speculation and conjecture. The next step followed naturally. In the published account of his early experiments Finsen foreshadows it in the words, "That the beginning has been made with the hurtful effects of this force is odd enough, since without doubt its beneficial effect is far greater." His clear head had already asked the question: if the blue rays of the sun can penetrate deep enough into the skin to cause injury, why should they not be made to do police duty there, and catch and kill offending germs—in short, to heal?

Finsen had demonstrated the correctness of the theory that the chemical rays have power to kill germs. But it happens that these are the rays that possess the least penetration. How to make them go deeper was the problem. By an experiment that is, in its simplicity, wholly characteristic of the man, he demonstrated that the red blood in the deeper layers of the skin was the obstacle. He placed a piece of photographic paper behind the lobe of his wife's ears and concentrated powerful blue rays on the other side. Five minutes of exposure made no impression on the paper; it remained white. But when he squeezed all the blood out of the lobe, by pressing it between two pieces of glass, the paper was blackened in twenty seconds.

That night Finsen knew that he had within his grasp that which would make him a rich man if he so chose. He had only to construct apparatus to condense the chemical rays and double their power many times, and to apply his discovery in medical practice. Wealth and fame would come quickly. He told the writer in his own simple way how he talked it over with his wife. They were poor. Finsen's salary as a teacher at the university was something like \$1200 a year. He was a sick man, and wealth would buy leisure and luxury. Children were growing up about them who needed care. They talked it out together, and resolutely turned their backs upon it all. Hand in hand they faced the world with their sacrifice. What remained of life to him was to be devoted to suffering mankind. That duty done, what came they would meet together. Wealth never came, but fame in full measure, and the love and gratitude of their fellow-men.

There is a loathsome disease called lupus, of which, happily, in America with our bright skies we know little. Lupus is the Latin word for wolf, and the ravenous ailment is fitly named, for it attacks by preference the face, and gnaws at the features, at nose, chin, or

eye, with horrible, torturing persistence, killing slowly, while the patient shuts himself out from the world praying daily for death to end his misery.



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In the north of Europe it is sadly common, and there had never been any cure for it. Ointments, burning, surgery—they were all equally useless. Once the wolf had buried its fangs in its victim, he was doomed to inevitable death. The disease is, in fact, tuberculosis of the skin, and is the most dreadful of all the forms in which the white plague scourges mankind—was, until one day Finsen announced to the world his second discovery, that lupus was cured by the simple application of light.

It was not a conjecture, a theory, like the red-light treatment for smallpox; it was a fact. For two years he had been sending people away whole and happy who came to him in despair. The wolf was slain, and by this silent sufferer whose modest establishment was all contained within a couple of small shanties in a corner of the city hospital grounds, at Copenhagen.

There was a pause of amazed incredulity. The scientific men did not believe it. Three years later, when the physician in charge of Finsen's clinic told at the medical congress in Paris of the results obtained at the Light Institute, his story was still received with a polite smile. The smile became astonishment when, at a sign from him, the door opened and twelve healed lupus patients came in, each carrying a photograph of himself as he was before he underwent the treatment. Still the doctors could not grasp it. The thing was too simple as matched against all their futile skill.

But the people did not doubt. There was a rush from all over Europe to Copenhagen. Its streets became filled with men and women whose faces were shrouded in heavy bandages, and it was easy to tell the new-comers from those who had seen "the professor." They came in gloom and misery; they went away carrying in their faces the sunshine that gave them back their life. Finsen never tired, when showing friends over his Institute, of pointing out the joyous happiness of his patients. It was his reward. For not "science for science's sake," or pride in his achievement, was his aim and thought, but just the wish to do good where he could. Then, in three more years, they awarded him the great Nobel prize for signal service to humanity, and criticism was silenced. All the world applauded.

"They gave it to me this year," said Finsen, with his sad little smile, "because they knew that next year it would have been too late." And he prophesied truly. He died nine months later.

All that is here set down seems simple enough. But it was achieved with infinite toil and patience, by the most painstaking experiments, many times repeated to make sure. In his method of working Finsen was eminently conservative and thorough. Nothing "happened" with him. There was ever behind his doings a definite purpose for which he sought a way, and the higher the obstacles piled up the more resolutely he set his teeth and kept right on. "The thing is not in itself so difficult," he said, when making ready for his war upon the wolf, "but the road is long and the experiments many before we find the right way."



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He took no new step before he had planted his foot firmly in the one that went before; but once he knew where he stood, he did not hesitate to question any scientific dogma that opposed him, always in his own quiet way, backed by irrefutable facts. In a remarkable degree he had the faculty of getting down through the husk to the core of things, but he rejected nothing untried. The little thing in hand, he ever insisted, if faithfully done might hold the key to the whole problem; only let it be done *now* to get the matter settled.

Whatever his mind touched it made perfectly clear, if it was not so already. As a teacher of anatomy he invented a dissecting knife that was an improvement on those in use, and clamps for securing the edges of a wound in an operation. As a rifle shot he made an improved breech; as a physician, observing the progress of his own disease, an effective blood powder for anaemia. At the Light Institute, which friends built for him, and the government endowed, he devised the powerful electric lamps to which he turned in the treatment of lupus, for the sun does not shine every day in Copenhagen; and when it did not, the lenses that gathered the blue rays and concentrated them upon the swollen faces were idle. And gradually he increased their power, checking the heat rays that would slip through and threatened to scorch the patient's skin, by cunning devices of cooling streams trickling through the tubes and the hollow lenses.

Nothing was patented; it was all given freely to the world. The decision which he and his wife made together was made once for all. When the great Nobel prize was given to him he turned it over to the Light Institute, and was with difficulty persuaded to keep half of it for himself only when friends raised an equal amount and presented it to the Institute.

Finsen knew that his discoveries were but the first groping steps upon a new road that stretched farther ahead than any man now living can see. He was content to have broken the way. His faith was unshaken in the ultimate treatment of the whole organism under electric light that, by concentrating the chemical rays, would impart to the body their life-giving power. He himself was beyond their help. Daily he felt life slipping from him, but no word of complaint passed his lips. He prescribed for himself a treatment that, if anything, was worse than the disease. Only a man of iron will could have carried it through.

A set of scales stood on the table before him, and for years he weighed every mouthful of food he ate. He suffered tortures from thirst because he would allow no fluid to pass his lips, on account of his tendency to dropsy. Through it all he cheerfully kept up his labors, rejoicing that he was allowed to do so much. His courage was indomitable; his optimism under it all unwavering. His favorite contention was that there is nothing in the world that is not good for something, except war. That he hated, and his satire on the militarism of Europe as its supreme folly was sharp and biting.



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Of such quality was this extraordinary man of whom half the world was talking while the fewest, even in his own home city, ever saw him. Fewer still knew him well. It suited his temper and native modesty, as it did the state of his bodily health, to keep himself secluded. His motto was: "*bene vixit qui bene latuit*—he has lived well who has kept himself well hidden"—and his contention was always that in proportion as one could keep himself in the background his cause prospered, if it was a good cause. When kings and queens came visiting, he could not always keep in hiding, though he often tried. On one of his days of extreme prostration the dowager empress of Russia knocked vainly at his door. She pleaded so hard to be allowed to see Dr. Finsen that they relented at last, and she sat by his bed and wept in sympathy with his sufferings, while he with his brave smile on lips that would twitch with pain did his best to comfort her. She and Queen Alexandra, both daughters of King Christian, carried the gospel of hope and healing from his study to their own lands, and Light Institutes sprang up all over Europe.

In his own life he treated nearly nineteen hundred sufferers, two-thirds of them lupus patients, and scarce a handful went from his door unhelped. When his work was done he fell asleep with a smile upon his lips, and the "universal judgment was one of universal thanksgiving that he had lived." He was forty-three years old.

When the news of his death reached the Rigsdag, the Danish parliament, it voted his widow a pension such as had been given to few Danes in any day. The king, his sons and daughters, and, as it seemed, the whole people followed his body to the grave. The rock from his native island marks the place where he lies. His work is his imperishable monument. His epitaph he wrote himself in the speech another read when the Nobel prize was awarded him, for he was then too ill to speak.

"May the Light Institute grasp the obligation that comes with its success, the obligation to maintain what I account the highest aim in science—truth, faithful work, and sound criticism."