

THE DANISH KINGDOM OF YORK, 876-954

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It has often been observed that there are two really dark periods in the history of Britain, the one between 410 and 597—the breaking away from the Roman Empire to the arrival of St. Augustine at Canterbury, and the second between the ending up of the splendid history of the Venerable Bede in 731 and the recommencement of historical writing under the influence of King Alfred—whose scribes, including Bishop Asser, could look back for a good generation before his own accession to the throne in 871. Their memory reached behind them to the days of his father Ethelwulf, but barely to those of his grandfather Egbert, who remains a very misty and mysterious personality of uncertain origin, and was very imperfect for all English affairs outside Alfred's own kingdom of Wessex. To bridge the gap between 731 and 831 we have only the jejune scraps of the annals in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, compiled by Alfred's scribes in the end of the century, and almost worthless for anything in the North, with, at the other end of England, the slightly more interesting entries in the chronicle which goes by the name of Simeon of Durham, which that twelfth-century writer obviously took out of a lost Northumbrian Chronicle, since they contain many facts which would be known to Northumbrians alone, and could not have been got from the Wessex annalists who put together the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the benefit of King Alfred. 'Simeon' borrowed freely from them, but has much material which does not come from their compilation, and must be genuine Northumbrian stuff.

The old Northumbrian kingdom came to an end with the disaster at York in 867, when the two rival Kings Osberht and Aella, who had joined forces in despair to resist the final invasion of the Viking 'Great

Army,' were slain together within the walls of the city, from which they were striving in vain to evict the intruders. This is a fixed date of primary importance—I am trying to patch together what can be gathered concerning the fortunes of York between 867 and 954, the eighty-seven years during which the Viking kingdom in Northumbria had its tempestuous career, ending with the expulsion of the last pirate chief by King Eadred, and the taking of Northumbria into permanent union with the kingdom of 'All England.' The year 954 marks the end of the period, but it is well to remember that there was no continuous succession of Viking rulers in the North; York and its lands had already been twice conquered and annexed by the warlike descendants of King Alfred, and had from 926 to 941 been part of the realm of Athelstan, and from 944 to 947 part of the realm of Edmund, ruled directly by the high king from the South. The year 954 only marks the end of the last insurrection of the Yorkshire Danes against the inevitable process of absorption by the centralizing power.

But to start with 867—the downfall of the old Northumbrian kingdom, which had (we must confess) earned its rather ignominious end by involving itself in a hundred years of civil war—purely personal and dynastic civil war—when kings (some of the old house of Ida, some mere usurpers) were elected, deposed, murdered, or thrust into a monastery, with bewildering rapidity. There were nineteen reigns between 729 and 867 (three of them restorations of expelled kings who came back for a moment). This gives an average of not quite seven years per reign—seven kings were slain, eight deposed, only two appear to have died in their beds! We may omit in our reckoning several pretenders who made head for a time, but were never properly in possession of the whole Northumbrian realm, and came to bloody ends.

When the Danes had got possession of York in 867 they do not seem to have made any definite attempt to establish a state or settlement there. It was not till 876 that the Danish 'Kingdom of York' came into formal existence. The 'Great Army,' as the association

of many Viking bands under many chiefs was called, was still on the move, seeking plunder rather than settlement, and rolled away from the Humber to harry Mercia, East Anglia, and less effectively Wessex, for six years. York city may have lain desolate—certainly Wulfhere its archbishop was wandering far away, in the North, for many years. But we learn from Simeon of Durham that some remnant of the Northumbrians survived to make a pact with the invaders, by which a noble named Ecgbert did homage to them, and was allowed to call himself king in the regions north of the Tyne, but not in Deira. They marked their intention of keeping a grip on the southern lands by coming back to York in 869 and wintering there—how much cover there was still left in the ruined city we cannot guess: but there must have been some attraction in the place to account for their making it their base-camp for the winter of 869-70, from which they set forth to harry East Anglia, and to slay its last king, Edmund the Martyr.

The old disease of civil strife had not been cured among the Northumbrians even by the awful disaster of 867. After six years we hear that the remnant of them expelled that Ecgbert whom the Danes had set over them, and with him Archbishop Wulfhere, who had taken refuge with him. They set up instead an otherwise unknown king, a certain Ricsig. After he had been in possession of whatever remnant of the realm that remained for two years, the Vikings turned up again in 875—possibly because the king whom they had set up had been driven out. At any rate this second invasion of the Northern parts of Northumbria was the worst affliction that had yet been seen. The pirate King Halfdene appeared at the mouth of the Tyne with a very large fleet, and proceeded to harry the land in the most ferocious style. 'Fire and sword were carried from the Eastern Sea to the Western,' says Simeon of Durham. The Danes slew off all whom they met, and systematically burned all that was burnable. 'So thoroughly did they do their wicked work that of the ancient churches and monasteries nothing was left save bare unroofed walls—the present

generation can seldom discover in these places any memorial of their ancient dignity, and sometimes none at all.' This was the year in which bishop Eardwulf evacuated the time-honoured sanctuary of Lindisfarne, taking with him the body of St. Cuthbert and other treasures, and started on the six-year pilgrimage over hills and moors, whose episodes fill so many strange paragraphs in Simeon of Durham's narrative. He and his companions—many of them laymen and women—'wandered like sheep upon the mountain, finding nowhere any place of repose, but going forward and backward, hither and thither, as they fled before the face of the barbarians.' Their furthest wandering took them to Whitherne in Galloway.

Halfdene's descent upon Northumbria was no passing episode, such as had been the earlier visits of the Vikings in 867 and 869. In the following year (876), says the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 'he portioned out the lands of Northumbria, and they thenceforth continued ploughing and tilling.' Halfdene was not the most promising founder for the organization of a new state. He had quarrelled with the other chiefs of the 'Great Army,' owing to his hot and tyrannous temper, and after a winter spent in the newly conquered London¹ had parted from them, taking with him such part of the host as chose to follow him, while the other kings Guthrum and Amund went off to the invasion of Wessex, where King Alfred found them plenty of good fighting—a very different reception from that which Halfdene met in the helpless and distracted Northumbria. After ruling for only one year at York (876-7) the first Danish King of the North made himself so intolerable to his followers by his freakish cruelty that they rose and expelled him. Simeon assures us that he was liable to attacks of insanity—perhaps dipsomania—and at the same time afflicted with a noisome disease, 'the intolerable stench exhaling from which made him an object of abomination.' This may be exaggeration, but it is certain that he was forced to

¹ Where he struck some curious Roman money—two emperors with silver coins bearing a copy of ancient Victory standing behind them.

fly away with only three ships'-crews of retainers who still adhered to him, and perished shortly afterwards in an obscure battle in Ireland, near Strangford Lough. 'God's justice determining that he should suffer the punishment due for his cruelty towards churches and holy places.'

We now come to a most extraordinary phase of the Danish settlement in Yorkshire—yet one not altogether unparalleled by what happened in the better known regions of the South. The Army, we are told, being without a king, felt itself unhappy and insecure, and desired a leader. Such a one was found by the election of a certain Guthred, the son of Hardacnut, obviously a personage of high and well-known ancestry, or he would not have been accepted, but we have not the slightest indication of what had been Hardacnut's position. Only, as we are told, Guthred, when quite a lad, had been sold as a slave by some oppressor, probably Halfdene, and was in the hands of a certain widow among the Northumbrians, who dwelt near Alnwick. Bishop Eardulf, so the legend goes, was warned in a vision by St. Cuthbert, to suggest to the Danes that this lost boy of noble race was the king for whom they were seeking. And, marvellously as the story tells, the 'army' agreed that he was a proper candidate for the royal place. Whereupon Eardulf bought him from the widow, his mistress, and brought him before the assembly of the Danes at Oswysdun, where the royal bracelet was placed upon his arm, and he was saluted as king. [882 or 883 ?]

This election was followed by a general pacification. Guthred had embraced Christianity while in slavery, and his first royal act was to proclaim peace between Dane and Northumbrian, and to bring back Archbishop Wulfhere—who had survived all the troublous times, to his old see-town of York. 'The storms were lulled and tranquility restored.' In Guthred's reign of twelve years (882-894) the state was organised. It is to be wished that we had more details concerning the settlement. Apparently the Dane who wished to settle down obtained an endowment of land, but the English peasantry had not been exterminated, though the old

ruling class had been thinned down and driven north of Tees. The Danish kingdom of York was a much smaller thing than the old Northumbria, or even than the old Deira of Edwin and his house. The region that we now call the East Riding and the plain of York and parts of the West Riding and the North Riding up to the Tees, received a large immigrant population of landholders, small and great. The important men called *holds* occupied great grants of land, as the Anglian thegns had before them, but were much less numerous than the general body of small landholders. Under both were Anglian servile dependents, whom in the tenth century the Danes called *liesings* or freedmen—since their *weregeld* under the local law was the same as that of an English *ceorl*, there is little doubt that their blood and origin were the same. The area of settlement can be easily traced by the prevalence of the typical Danish place-names, which superseded the old Anglian ones in a few towns, such as Whitby—which had been Streonshalch—and in a great many villages. The termination in —‘by’ is the easiest token of Danish occupation, but one may also trace Scandinavian influence in the names of a certain amount of natural features—both hills and streams—‘becks, forces and thwaites.’ The greater part of the modern West Riding and the north-western part of the North Riding had never been thickly occupied in Anglian times, and were still less so in Danish. They remained moor and waste for several centuries yet to come, till the monastic settlers of the Post-Conquest age moved up into the wilderness, to set up there great abbeys, such as Jervaulx, Fountains and Bolton. There were other large areas of unoccupied land, such as Holderness—which both in Anglian and in Danish times was largely waterlogged morass,—and the rough land of the Wolds. The boundary of settlement reached northward to the Tees, but stopped short there: it is well marked by the line of villages ending in —‘by’ on its south bank, while no single one is to be found on its northern side—one notes the continuous line, Eppleby, Cleasby, Halnaby, Girsby, Maltby, Thornaby, Lackenby on the south bank, with only —‘cliffes’ —‘worths’ —‘tons,’

and 'hams' facing them in what is now the palatine county of Durham. The Danes only once made an attempt to occupy the Palatinate—this was thirty years after Guthred's time, in the days of King Regnald I, who gave grants therein to two 'holds' named Scula and Onlaf, both of whom, as Simeon of Durham is happy to relate, came to evil ends—no doubt by the vengeance of St. Cuthbert on intruders into his patrimony. Nor did they ever settle in Northumberland, when a vague King Ecgbert II is said to have reigned under Danish vassalage for a few years. The real area of occupation was from the south bank of the Tees to the Don in the south, where the —'by' villages cluster thick among the Anglian —ingtons, —hams, and —boroughs. There was another area of settlement along the coast, where the harbour-towns like Whitby, Scarborough [Scardeborg a true Scandinavian name] and Bridlington, are flanked by numerous villages ending in the inevitable —'by.'

Presumably it must have been in the reign of Guthred that the Danes, now permanently settled down and provided with land and a state organisation, introduced the administrative changes which in all later ages marked off the area of Danish occupation from the larger half of England which was not so occupied. The local divisions in Yorkshire were now 29 'Wapentakes,' mustering places for the armed warriors, which would in general correspond to the large 'hundreds' of a Mercian shire. The rural divisions inside the Wapentake are calculated throughout the 'Danelaw'—in the north-east midlands no less than in Yorkshire—in 'carucates,' ploughlands, differing from the 'hide' of Anglo-Saxon districts. And—most important of all—there was a new judicial and social system, the fines and weregelds being arranged and named in terms unlike those of the lands under 'English Law.' The proportion of freeholders was larger than in the south, servile dependents are 'liesings' instead of 'theows.' The largest landholders or 'holds' seem somewhat more important (and rare) than the ordinary English thegn—in the well-known 'North Peoples Law' a hold is valued in *weregeld* at double a thegn. The Danish term

for the greatest personage under kingly rank, *Jarl*, was originally applied to the leaders of war-bands—we find them by the half-dozen in the great Viking armies of the ninth century—but after the settlement it became used for the administrator of a large district, equivalent to the Saxon ‘Alderman’ of a shire. But what is curious is to find that the name, in the form ‘earl,’ spread southward, and was by the end of the Old English period used regularly everywhere. Godwin and Leofric and the other great magnates of the time of Edward the Confessor are always called ‘Earls,’ though a century before they would certainly have been styled Aldermen. The change came, as might have been expected, when Canute, a Dane, was King of England no less than of Denmark.

What the state of the kingdom of York was like in Guthred’s day is a little difficult to make out, from the very contradictory notes in the Chronicles. On the one hand the king himself was a zealous Christian, and apparently a lover of peace. He rebuilt the minster of York, where he himself was buried, and restored churches and monasteries—sheltering the aged archbishop Wulfhere (who survived till 892) in his own city, and settling bishop Eardwulf at Chester-le-Street, which became the see-town of Bernicia, and the resting place of the bones of St. Cuthbert for the greater part of a century. Moreover, he was on good terms with King Alfred, and perhaps did homage to him (see the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle under 894 A.D.). There are certainly coins which bear Alfred’s name on one side and that of the King of York on the other.

On the other hand York seems to have remained a sort of central base and market place for the Vikings, who were leaving Wessex alone, and specialising on raids upon the continent. It is most perplexing to find York-struck coins of this period with EBORACI CIVITAS and pious Christian inscriptions such as DOMINVS DEVS REX and MIRABILIA FECIT, mixed with other types which copy Frankish king’s names, and those of Frankish towns in Viking temporary occupation, such as Quentovic, and ‘Cunnetti,’ which last seems to mean Condé, where a Viking host tarried for a year in

883. But most of these York and other coins bear the name not of Guthred, as might have been expected, but of a Cnut. Now no Cnut is known in this period of Viking history, and we know that Guthred was reigning at York for many years at the time when these coins were being produced.¹ It seems certain, therefore, that Cnut was a royal name adopted by Guthred, just as Guthrum, the Danish king in East Anglia, took the name of Ethelstan after he had done homage to Alfred and been baptized. If so, Danish bands ostensibly acknowledging the king of York as their chief, must have been ravaging in the land of the Franks, though they were leaving the formidable king of Wessex alone.

With the death of Guthred-Cnut in 894 we come to a very dark period. It would seem that in some of his later years he had as his colleague a certain Siefred or Sievert, for a few of his later coins give his name CNVT REX on one side, but SIEFREDUS without a royal title on the reverse. And this Siefred appears afterwards on coins of his own as SIEFREDVS REX, with types similar to those of Cnut, so that he was apparently his successor in 894.² Though these coins still bear Christian symbols, and occasionally Christian inscriptions like DOMINVS DEVS REX, it would seem that Siefred broke the peace with the English king, and gave help to the last great Viking storm which beat upon Southern England in 893-96, under the direction of the great pirate king Hasting, which Alfred repelled after a protracted struggle. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that in 894 the Northumbrians broke their truce with the King of Wessex, though they had given him hostages, and went out sometimes with the 'Great Army,' sometimes on their own. This is made more definite by Ethelweard's statement that 'Sigferth the Pirate, twice came out with a fleet, and wrought devastation on the coast, after which he went home.'

¹ The proof of this comes from the celebrated 'Cuerdale Hoard,' a vast find of Viking money mixed with many hundred coins of Alfred, and a few of his successor Edward the Elder. As the hoard must have been buried not later than 905, the 'Cnut'

coins must belong to a king at York whose date lies in the period 880-905, which exactly fits Guthred. See coins 1, 2 and 8, 9, on Plate I of coins.

² See coins 3, 4, 5, on Plate I.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle speaks in the same year of Northumbrian Danes who came by land, and joined the raiders who had seized Chester, from which being expelled they escaped back into their own land, and then by a detour turned to the east coast, and descended by East Anglia into Essex to join the main body of the Viking host. Beaten once more, the horde broke up and departed, some for Northumbria, some for East Anglia, while the rest got themselves ships and departed once more to harry the kingdoms of the Franks. 'Thanks be to God the Danes had not utterly broken down the English nation.'

What became of King Siefred we do not know—there is no record of his death, and only one obscure allusion to his having to deal with a rival chief, one Earl Sihtric, whom he is said to have slain. The only real trace of this Sihtric is from his very rare coins,¹ which survive to show that somewhere about 596 or so he struck money at Shelford ('Sceldfor') by means of his moneyer Gundibert—a Frankish rather than a Danish name.

Siefred must have been gone before 900—there was certainly no king, and possibly or probably anarchy more or less—a state of things hinted at by a survival of coins resembling those of Guthred and Siefred, but bearing only sometimes the inscription EBORACI CIVITAS—usually spelt most inaccurately—sometimes a religious inscription on both sides.² Obviously a Christian party was in possession of York, for the coinage is most pious and orthodox. The kingless period came to an end in an unexpected fashion—after King Alfred's death his nephew, the Etheling Aethelwald, made a fruitless snatch at the crown of Wessex, and being easily chased away by the legitimate successor, Edward the Elder, fled to Northumbria, where the Danes, as we read to our surprise, elected him king—though he was an Englishman and a hereditary enemy. He reigned for less than two years (901-3) and was slain in action by his cousin Edward at the battle of the Holme, along with Eric the Danish

¹ See coin 1 on Plate I.

² See coins 7, 8, on Plate I.

king of East Anglia, who had joined him for raids on Wessex.¹

After his death the York Danes do not seem to have elected any king, and made peace with King Edward at 'Yttingaford' [Linslade?] in the following year [903]. Nor does this peace seem to have been disturbed all through the reign of Alfred's warlike son. For we hear of no interference by the Northumbrians during all the lengthy campaign between 910 and 918, during which Edward conquered and annexed all the kindred Danish states of the east and the midlands, the realm of East Anglia, the Jarldoms on the Ouse and the Nen, and the 'Five Boroughs' of the valley of the Trent. Indeed, when the King of Wessex pushed his boundary up to the Humber, the Yorkshire Danes offered him a tame homage, making no resistance. They had previously concluded a treaty with his sister Ethelflead in 917, 'placing themselves at her disposition by oath and pledge.'

What was going on at York between 903 and 918? Apparently the Danish settlement was governed, like the 'Five Boroughs' to the south, by an oligarchy of magnates, 'holds,' great landed proprietors. Possibly their unenterprising policy during the great wars in the Midlands may have been guided by the fact that York as a centre of trade was growing very important—there are signs of great monetary prosperity. This emerges from the existence of a long issue of silver coins bearing the name of York and the emblem and title of St. Peter, without any name of a king, which certainly began to be issued soon after 903, and continued with some breaks for a considerable period.² It was so popular that several of the later Danish kings of York utilized as their normal type pennies with St. Peter's sword and cross, only substituting their own names for that of the Apostle. This repetition went on at intervals right down to the end of the Danish kingdom in 954. The sword type is sometimes better executed, sometimes worse, but it persists. That it began not long after 903 is shown by the fact that the Danes of the neighbouring city of Lincoln copied it, only substituting the name of

¹ See his coin 9, on Plate I.

² See coins 10, 11, on Plate I.

their patron, Saint Martin, for that of Saint Peter.¹ As King Edward conquered Lincoln and annexed it in 917, the Lincoln sword-coins must have been copied from the York ones before that date.

This period of non-regal government at York came to a sudden end in 918, when the Danish oligarchy there was suddenly overwhelmed by a disaster. The disturbing element was a new Viking storm. There was an Irish-Danish sea-king named Regnald, a grandson of the Ivar (or Ingwar) who had been a great raider in Alfred's early days. Originally only King of Waterford, he had been very busy in the western waters of late; in 914 he ravaged the Isle of Man. A little later we hear of him making trouble both in the surviving Anglian land north of Tyne, where he fought with Ealdred of Bamborough, who ruled there without the title of king, and then in Scotland, where he defeated Constantine king of the Scots, and harried his lands as far as Dumblane. Being apparently at the head of a great force collected from all sorts of Viking bands, he fell in 918 upon the Danish state of York. 'Landing on the Northumbrian shore with a large fleet,' says Simeon of Durham, 'he broke in upon York, and either slew or drove out of the land the most influential of its inhabitants.' Not only did he get possession of the York settlement, but he trespassed north of Tees, when Guthred and his successors had left the Angles undisturbed, and divided up what afterwards was the palatinate of Durham between his lieutenants Scula and Onlaf. This annexation, however, was temporary and precarious.

Regnald was a pagan and a burner of churches. His domination at York is marked by the supersession of the old St. Peter money, with the sword and cross, by pennies bearing heathen types, the hammer and iron glove of the God Thor, and a bow and arrow, the badge, no doubt, of some other divinity—perhaps Egil. They are very barbarous, the inscriptions barely legible, and the series is unlike all other York coins: but blundered forms of EBORACI CIVITAS always appear upon them.²

¹ See coin 12 on Plate I.

² See coins 13-15 on Plate I.

GUTHRED — CNUȚ, 883 — 894.



SIEGFRED 894 898 (?)



SIEGFRED

JARL SITRIC, 895 (?)



ANONYMOUS WITH RELIGIOUS TYPES 898–901.



ETHELWALD, 901–903.

ST PETER'S MONEY, 903 918



ST PETER'S MONEY 903 918. LINCOLN copying ST PETER, 915 (?)



It is surprising, therefore, to find that after making this heathen conquest of the Christian state of York, Regnald in the next year offered to do homage to Edward of Wessex, as his predecessors had done. In 919, when Edward was in Derbyshire, building new fortresses to protect his northern border, we hear that all the rulers of the North came to offer him homage, both Regnald of York, Ealdred the Anglian high-reeve of Bamborough, Donald king of the Strathclyde Welsh, and Constantine the Scot, 'they chose Edward to father and lord, and concluded a firm league with him.'

Regnald reigned for something over four years at York—probably he was baptised after his submission, as were so many Viking chiefs when they acknowledged an English over-lord. Possibly his reception into civilisation is represented by some coins of a more decent appearance than his first barbarous issues, where he calls himself REGNALD CVNVNC (king) on one side, but states the value of the pieces by putting on the reverse by AVRA MONETA REGIS, i.e., 'value one ðre' [the coin name still used in Scandinavia], this coin closely resembles the money of his overlord Edward. So he is both REX and CVNVNC, and on both sides this issue shows the Christian sign of the cross.

Regnald died a natural death in 923—a rare thing with a Viking. But the York kingdom was allowed to continue under his brother Sihtric—who had started like himself as a sea-farer and a general nuisance to his neighbour. He had slain his brother Niall, king of Dublin, in 919, but, driven out of Ireland, was a pirate on the high seas and had been ravaging Cheshire. It was probably his incursion in this direction which had caused King Edward to fortify first Thelwall and then Manchester in 920, as strongholds to guard the lands about the Mersey. It is therefore somewhat surprising to hear not only that on Regnald's death in 923 the Yorkshire Danes saluted Sihtric as king, but that Athelstan (who had only just succeeded to the English throne) confirmed the election, and gave his sister in marriage to Sihtric, on his accepting baptism and doing homage. The bridegroom must have been a good deal older than the bride, and was one-eyed, having lost an

eye in war, hence the nickname *Caoch* by which he is distinguished from other Sihtrics. The marriage, however, was not destined to have any political results, for the Northumbrian king died in the next year.¹ Whereupon the Danes chose as his successor his eldest son Guthferth, the child (of course) of some earlier wife. Athelstan refused to accept his homage, moved up an army to York, and annexed the whole kingdom. So strong was his hand that he succeeded in maintaining it in obedience for the whole remaining thirteen years of his reign—in spite of internal discontent aided by external assistance. For it would seem that while there was a section of the Yorkshire Danes who acquiesced in the annexation, there was another which resented it. Athelstan was able to rule Northumbria by Danish earls rather than by intrusive English ‘Aldermen,’ and the very prolific royal mint which he set up at York was largely worked by moneyers with the Danish names of Regnald and Siward.² We may perhaps believe that the party which leaned to submission was commercial and strongly Christian, that which resented it being more or less pagan, unsettled, and filled with the tradition of the old Viking conquests and the harrying of England.

The discontented party looked over-seas for the help of sea-kings of the house of their former rulers. The chief of them were two piratical princes who, for the confusion of historians, both bore the name of Anlaf (the same name as the Olaf of later usage). The elder was Anlaf Guthfrithson, king of the Danes of Dublin, the younger Anlaf Sihtricson, son of Sihtric the one-eyed—he is more often called Anlaf Quaran ‘the crooked.’ The first named was the son-in-law and ally of Constantine king of the Scots, and aided him in two successive attempts to shake off the English suzerainty. The first was in 933, when the only result was a vicious ravaging of Scotland by Athelstan’s fleet and army—the former went as far as Caithness, where

¹ Sihtric has two types of coins. The first, with the Danish banner, probably belongs to 923, before his marriage; the other, with the Christ-

ian type of St. Peter’s sword, to 923-4. See coin 16 on Plate II.

² See coin 17 on Plate II.

they must have been fighting Danish settlers, not Celtic Scots. The later and more famous war fell in 937, when a great invasion scheme, in which the Scots and Strathclyde Britons were aided by a very powerful Viking fleet under Anlaf of Dublin, which we are assured mustered no less than 615 vessels—a figure which implies at least 20,000 warriors. It was supposed to be the largest fleet ever seen in English waters. It seems (for the confusion of historians) that Anlaf Guthfrithson was accompanied on this expedition by his younger cousin Anlaf Quaran. The united army suffered complete defeat by King Athelstan at Brunanburh, a locality oftener mentioned but still not clearly identifiable. Simeon of Durham says that Anlaf, 'the pagan king of the Irish and of many islands,' came ashore in the Humber, an unlikely place for a fleet from Ireland, and one where a junction with the Scots would be difficult. On the other hand there are indications that the descent was (a thing much more likely) on the west coast, opposite Ireland, and near the borders of the Strathclyde Britons and the Scots. The old Roman fortress of Birrens, or Burnswalk, on the north-east side of the Solway Firth, seems as likely a battle-spot as any of the other places that have been suggested, and its site is seamed with ancient camp-enclosures.

Be the site of Brunanburh where it may be—east or west—the victory gave Athelstan peace to the end of his reign, and he died in 940 still holding the title of *REX TOTIVS BRITANNIAE*, which he had assumed after the Scots and Northumbrians had done him homage in 926, and still holding York.

The death of a great conquering king was often followed in the Dark Ages by a general rising of those who had been wont to give him homage and tribute. Athelstan's successor, his half-brother Edmund, was but a youth of nineteen, and the experiment of revolt seemed worth trying to those of the Yorkshire Danes who belonged to the separationist party, which had remained in submission for the last thirteen years. In the spring after the death of Athelstan 'the Northumbrians were false to their plighted oath and chose

Anlaf of Ireland as their king.' This was Anlaf Guthfrithson, king of Dublin, the vanquished enemy of Brunanburh. We are surprised to hear that Archbishop Wulfstan of York joined with the Danish nobles in the election, for this prelate was of English birth (as his name shows) and had been appointed by King Athelstan in 931.

There must have been considerable discontent against the English rule not only in Yorkshire but in the north-midland Danish districts, which had been incorporated into the realm of Edward the Elder more than twenty years back. For when Anlaf and his following entered the lands of the 'Five Boroughs,' they were admitted into Leicester and apparently into Lincoln and Derby also. This invading army was repulsed from Northampton, but stormed Aethelflaed's old *burh* of Tamworth—the original Mercian fortress against the Danelaw. When King Edmund came up with the army of Wessex, we are surprised to hear that no general action was fought, but that the two archbishops, Oda of Canterbury and Wulfstan of York, negotiated a peace, by which Anlaf, on receiving baptism and doing homage, was recognised as ruler not only of York but of all the Danish lands of the 'Five Boroughs.' This unlikely happening is, however, corroborated by the fact that the moneyer at Derby, Sigar, who had been striking pennies for Athelstan a few years back, is found coining for Anlaf in 941.¹ But the Irish king's rule over this wide kingdom was to last but for two years. In 942 he is found sacking

¹ The coins of the two Anlafs are very puzzling, but it seems that we may ascribe to Guthfrithson those which show the typical Viking device of a raven on one side, and others which give a banner on one side and a pile of three shields (?), or perhaps a more fanciful design, a 'tribrach' on the other. On both he calls himself ANLAF CVNVNC. Sihtric had issued coins with the banner and tribrach and the Danish title CVNVNC fifteen years back—perhaps in his days of unregenerate heathenism, before he married Athelstan's sister and was baptised. The type may have been pagan and anti-English. The later

coins of Anlaf Quaran on the other hand appear to be those in which he spells his name ONLAF, as the chroniclers often do, calls himself REX, has the Christian symbol of the cross only—no ravens or banners,—and employs the same moneyers Radulf and Ingelgar who also struck money for his rival Eric Bloodaxe. Ingelgar worked for both Edmund and Edred as well—a curious proof that the expulsion of an ephemeral Danish king from York did not mean a general sweeping out of the personnel of the York mint, as perhaps might have been expected. See coins 18-23 on Plate II.

the ancient shrine of St. Balthere at Tynningham, in Lothian—which belonged to the surviving English earldom north of the Danish-settled districts. And there, we read, he perished miserably by the vengeance of the saint, wherefore the men of York ravaged the holy island of Lindisfarne, the sanctuary of St. Cuthbert in earlier days, ‘and slew many.’ Obviously this points to a rising of the Northumbrian English of the north against the Danish supremacy. It coincided with a new advance of King Edmund, who in this same year reconquered the ‘Five Boroughs,’ which he had lost only in 941.

Anlaf Guthfrithson being dead, the Danes, or a section of them, chose his cousin Anlaf Quaran, the son of Sihtric Caoch as king, but he found a rival in his predecessor’s brother Regnald Guthfrithson of Dublin, who drove him out of York in 943. Possibly Anlaf still maintained a hold on part of the Danish settlement, for in 944 King Edmund, as we are told, marched into Northumbria and drove out *both* the Danish kings, Regnald and Anlaf alike. Ethelweard calls them ‘desertores,’ i.e., rebels. This was the completing of the work begun in 942, when Edmund had recovered the ‘Five Boroughs’ after the death of Anlaf I. For the last three years of his reign Edmund was once more in possession of the whole of the realm which his brother Athelstan had ruled—but he never took the proud title of REX TOTIVS BRITANNIAE, as he well might have done. On some of his York coins belonging to his last two years (944-46) issued by the moneyer Ingelgar, who also worked for Anlaf, Edmund is called REX EB—obviously REX EBORACI, as if his Yorkish kingship was still something different from his general kingship of England. This rather falls in with Simeon of Durham’s phrase that ‘the two kings being expelled,’ he ‘obtained the kingdom of the Northumbrians’—as if it was a separate thing.

When Edmund died in 946—slain in a chance scuffle by an outlaw—the Yorkshire Danes (as had happened before at the death of Athelstan) thought that they had another chance to get loose from English suzerainty. Edmund’s successor, his brother Edred, was in the

spring after his election (947) duly received as king, the Archbishop Wulfstan and all the magnates of the north did homage to him, and gave their oaths of allegiance at a session at Tanshelf near Pontefract. But before the year was out they 'belied their pledge and their oaths,' rose in rebellion and elected as king Eric Blood-axe, an exiled prince of Norway, the son of Harold Horfagr, who, driven away from his own land after having slain *three* of his brothers(!) was wandering in the North Sea with a large pirate fleet. Whether he tempted the York Danes to rebellion, or whether they, already intent on rebellion, besought him to come in with his fleet, we cannot tell.

This rebellion brought down King Edred to the North: he ravaged the whole valley of the Ouse as far as Ripon, but failed to take York. Nevertheless the Danes, tired apparently of Eric after the experience of one year of his rule, expelled him, did homage to Edred, and paid him a great sum as compensation for their outbreak. The land was broken up again into earldoms (or aldermanies), as in Ethelstan's day (948).

But the tendency to particularism among the Yorkshire Danes was still deeply rooted. In the very next year another old friend comes upon the scene—that Anlaf Quaran who had been driven out, after a very short reign, in 943. Since then he had been in Ireland, and had apparently made himself king of Dublin in 945. The Yorkshiresmen, unable to win their independence by the aid of the pirate-hordes of Eric Blood-axe, fell back on their old alliance with the Irish Vikings. Anlaf maintained himself apparently for two years and more as king (949 to the spring of 952). It is possible that Edred may have acknowledged him, and allowed him to do homage as 'subregulus.' But the only authority for this is the Norse *Heimskringla* which is too late to be of much worth, and is filled with inaccuracies. It says that the King of England (whom it wrongly calls Edmund instead of Edred) thought Eric Blood-Axe such a danger that he set up a king called Olaf (Anlaf) to defend his frontiers. But it then proceeds to say that this Olaf beat Eric in battle and slew him, which is entirely wrong. For when Eric did

fall, some years later, it was at the hands, not of Anlaf Quaran, who had already vanished from the Northumbrian scene, but at those of Magnus, Quaran's son.

Whether Anlaf Quaran reigned at York as a rebel prince or as a vassal of Edred for over two years (949-52) is uncertain. But his second precarious royalty came to an end in the latter year, when 'the Northumbrians,' as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us, 'drove out Anlaf and received again Eric, Harold's son.' The idea that Quaran may have been a recognised sub-king, is perhaps somewhat helped by an entry in the Chronicle that in this year Edred arrested Wulfstan Archbishop of York and put him in prison at 'Judanbyrig' (the Essex fortress of Ythancester), 'because he was always being accused of treason.' Possibly the treason had something to do with the new disturbance in the north. In the autumn of 952 Eric got possession of York and held it again for somewhat more than a year. But he was apparently as unsatisfactory to his subjects in his second as in his first reign. In the spring of 954, when Edred was marching against him, they expelled Eric again and made their submission. 'Here ended the kings of Northumbria, henceforth that province was governed by earls,' says Simeon. The first earl was Oswulf of Bamborough, who had maintained an unshaken loyalty to the king through the recent five years of trouble.

Eric, leaving York, took refuge with his followers and partisans on the west coast, where he fell in battle in the next year fighting with Magnus, the son of his old rival Anlaf Quaran, at Stanmore Heath in Cumberland. But Quaran made no more attempts on Northumbria, and confined his attention to Ireland (as it seems) for the rest of his long life, where he fought many a battle. Finally in 981 he died as a monk at the great northern monastery of Iona:—Since he was a grown man and a sea-king in the 930 period, he was probably some four-score years before his quiet end.

The Danes of York gave no further trouble—probably they had little reason to congratulate themselves on the last sovereign whom they had chosen, they had come to the conclusion that the power of England

was too much for them, and had learned during the three intervals of subjection to Athelstan, Edmund, and Edred, which they had gone through since 927, that the rule of the descendants of Alfred was neither oppressive nor antipathetic. The Wessex kings did not interfere with Danish laws and customs, they used Danish subjects freely in office, provided that they conformed to Christianity. It may perhaps have been the heathen party of Viking tendencies that called in pirates like Anlaf and Eric to rule over them, with no approval from a Christian party that was growing stronger in each generation. We may guess that York as the one great town of Northern England could prosper more than when it was an irregular entrepôt for pirate hordes under rival sea-kings, and that the majority of the Danes came to appreciate the fact. When the next great Viking storm beat upon England fifty years after, in the wretched reign of Ethelred the Redeless, the Northumbrians under their earl Uhtred were among the last defenders of the house of Alfred.

N.B.—There are some nice numismatic puzzles in the distribution of the coinage of the later Danish kings of York. Fortunately there was only one King Eric, but in his two short reigns (947-48) and 952-54, he used two types—one with a simple regal name ERIC REX EFOR in a circle, and a moneyer's name on the reverse—the other with the familiar sword of St. Peter (as on the autonomous coins of 903-910, and on some of Sihtric's money). The latter are much the rarer, and may perhaps belong to the first and shorter reign. (See coins 23 and 26 on Plate II.)

We must probably give to Regnald II, Guthfrithson (943-4) some coins which are wholly unlike the barbarous issues of Regnald I, struck in 918, but exactly similar to some of those of Anlaf II, his rival, bearing the banner and the 'tribrach' of shields, and (like Anlaf's) giving the royal title ASCVNVC. They are extremely rare—as his reign was very short. (See coin 22 on Plate II.)

There remains, as has been said before, the difficulty of dividing the coins of the two Anlafs. To Anlaf I (940-2) we must give apparently many coins, not only

REGNOLD I. 918 - 923



REGNOLD I.

SIHTRIC CAOCH 923 - 926



ATHELSTAN at YORK. 926-940. ANLAF I. (Guthfrithson) 940-942



ANLAF I. (Guthfrithson) 940 - 942



ANLAF II. Quarar, 1st Reign 942-3.

REGNOLD II. 943-44.



ERIC. Bloodaxe, 1st Reign, 947-48

ANLAF II, 2nd Reign, 949-52.



ANLAF II. 2nd Reign, 949-52

ERIC 2nd Reign, 952-54.



those with the raven and the title CVNVNC, but also those with the small crosses on obverse and reverse, some certainly struck in Mercian towns during his short occupation of the 'Five Boroughs' in 941-42. (See coins 18-20 on Plate II.)

This leaves for Anlaf Quaran the coins of poor style, some struck by the moneyer who worked for Eric and also for King Edmund, Ingelgar. Of his two reigns in 942-43 and 949-52 it is to the latter that all the coins with the name spelled ONLAF must be referred. And he also probably struck, in his first short reign, the 'banner' coins, which are like those of Regnald II. (See coin 21 on Plate II.)