

CHAPTER VIII

THE DISRUPTION OF CHARLEMAGNE'S EMPIRE

I. THE NORTHMEN

For centuries the German peoples of the North harassed the coasts of the North Sea and often extended their invasions far inland. In one of the letters of Apollinaris Sidonius<sup>1</sup> we have a vivid picture of the Saxons about the time that they were getting their foothold in England in the middle of the fifth century. At the end of a long letter to a friend, Sidonius says :

65. Apollinaris Sidonius describes the Saxon pirates of the fifth century.

Behold, when I was on the point of concluding this epistle, in which I have already chattered on too long, a messenger suddenly arrived from Saintonge with whom I have spent some hours in conversing about you and your doings. He affirms that you have just sounded your trumpet on board the fleet, and that, combining the duties of a sailor and a soldier, you are roaming along the winding shores of the ocean, looking out for the curved pinnaces of the Saxons. When you see the rowers of that nation you may at once make up your mind that every one of them is an arch-pirate; with such wonderful unanimity do all at once command, obey, teach, and learn their one chosen business of brigandage. For this reason I ought to warn you to be more than ever on your guard in this warfare.

Our enemy is the most truculent of all enemies. Unexpectedly he attacks; when expected he escapes; he despises those who seek to block his path, he overthrows those who are off their guard; he always succeeds in cutting off the

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 58-59.

enemy whom he follows, while he never fails when he desires to effect his own escape. Moreover, to these men a shipwreck is capital practice rather than an object of terror. The dangers of the deep are to them not casual acquaintances but intimate friends. For since a tempest throws the invaded off their guard and prevents the invaders from being descried from afar, they hail with joy the crash of waves on the rocks, which gives them their best chance of escaping from other enemies than the elements.

The Monk of St. Gall<sup>1</sup> gives us some idea of the attitude of the Northmen toward the rites of the Christian religion.

Speaking of the Northmen, I will illustrate their esteem for the faith, and for baptism, by telling an anecdote of the days of our grandfathers. This terrible people, who had stood in awe of the great Emperor Charles and paid him tribute, continued after his death to exhibit to his son Louis [the Pious] the respect they had shown his father. After a time the pious emperor had compassion upon their ambassadors, and asked them whether they would accept the Christian faith. They answered that they were ready to obey him in all things, always and everywhere. He then commanded that they be baptized in his name of whom the learned Augustine said: "If there were no Trinity, the Truth itself would not have said, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"

The Northmen were treated like adopted sons by the chief lords of the court. They received from the king's closet the white baptismal robe, and from their sponsors the Frankish dress—costly garments, and weapons, and ornaments.

This custom was followed for a long time. The Northmen came year after year in even greater numbers, not for Christ's sake, but for worldly gain. They did not come now

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 149.

66. A Northman's baptism. (From the Monk of St. Gall's *Deeds of Charles the Great.*)

as ambassadors; but as submissive vassals they hastened at the holy Eastertide to do homage to the emperor. Finally one year they came fifty strong. The emperor asked them whether they would be baptized. They assented, and he commanded that they be straightway sprinkled with holy water. There were not enough linen robes, so the emperor had more garments cut out and sewed up roughly like a bag or towel.

One of these robes was suddenly put upon one of the oldest of the Northmen. He looked at it awhile with critical eyes, and grew not a little angry. Then he said to the emperor: "I have been baptized here twenty times before, and every time I was clad in the best and whitest garments; and now you give me a sack which befits a swineherd rather than a warrior. I have given up my own garments and would be ashamed of my nakedness if I cast aside this one also, else I would leave thy robe to thee and thy Christ."

The Norse sagas give us the Northman's idea of himself and his people.

In the extracts from the Annals given below there are plenty of sad pictures of the Northmen as pirates and cruel invaders, but to gain an idea of how they viewed themselves, we must turn to the Norse *sagas*. About the time that Charles the Fat was bargaining with the Northmen in France, many belonging to the same race were streaming over from Norway to Iceland. Here it was that the Norse literature sprang up—the *sagas*, or tales, which still delight the reader in something the same way that Homer does. Of these *sagas* the finest is perhaps *The Story of Burnt Njal*, who lived in the time of Otto the Great. The famous tale opens as follows:

67. Opening of *The Story of Burnt Njal*.

There was a man named Mord whose surname was Fiddle; he was the son of Sigvat the Red, and he dwelt at the "Vale" in the Rangriversdales. He was a mighty chief, and a great taker up of suits, and so great a lawyer that no

judgments were thought lawful unless he had a hand in them. He had an only daughter named Unna. She was a fair, courteous, and gifted woman, and was thought the best match in all the Rangriversdales.

Now the story turns westward to the Broadfirth dales, where, at Hauskuldstede, in Laxriverdale, dwelt a man named Hauskuld, who was Dalakoll's son, and his mother's name was Thorgerda. He had a brother named Hrut, who dwelt at Hrutstede; he was of the same mother as Hauskuld, but his father's name was Heriolf. Hrut was handsome, tall and strong, well skilled in arms, and mild of temper; he was one of the wisest of men—stern towards his foes, but a good counselor on great matters.

It happened once that Hauskuld bade his friends to a feast, and his brother Hrut was there, and sat next him. Hauskuld had a daughter named Hallgerda, who was playing on the floor with some other girls. She was fair of face and tall of growth, and her hair was as soft as silk; it was so long, too, that it came down to her waist. Hauskuld called out to her, "Come hither to me, daughter." So she went up to him, and he took her by the chin, and kissed her; and after that she went away.

Then Hauskuld said to Hrut, "What dost thou think of this maiden? Is she not fair?" Hrut held his peace. Hauskuld said the same thing to him a second time, and then Hrut answered, "Fair enough is this maid, and many will smart for it, but this I know not, whence thief's eyes have come into our race." Then Hauskuld was wroth, and for a time the brothers saw little of each other.

[Gunnar, who is one of the chief personages in the story, has been on a successful sea-roving expedition, during which he has shown much prowess and won much booty. Before returning home he visits Denmark, where the fame of his deeds has preceded him. He is summoned to the court of King Harold, Gorm's son, who offers to get him a wife and to raise him to great power if he will settle down there.] Gunnar thanked the king for his offer and said, "I will first of all sail back to Iceland to see my friends and kinsfolk."

Gunnar visits Denmark.

"Then thou wilt never come back to us," says the king. "Fate will settle that, Lord," says Gunnar.

Gunnar gave the king a good long-ship, and much goods besides, and the king gave him a robe of honor and golden-seamed gloves, and a fillet with a knot of gold on it, and a Russian hat.

Gunnar woos  
Halgerda.

[On his return to Iceland Gunnar visited the *Althing*, the annual general assembly of the people.] It happened one day that Gunnar went away from the Hill of Laws and passed by the booths of the men from Mossfell; then he saw a woman coming to meet him, and she was in goodly attire; but when they met she spoke to Gunnar at once. He took her greeting well, and asked what woman she might be. She told him that her name was Halgerda, and said that she was the daughter of Hauskuld, Dalakoll's son. She spoke up boldly to him, and bade him tell her of his voyages; and he said that he would not gainsay her a talk. Then they sat them down and talked. She was so clad that she had on a red kirtle, and had thrown over her a scarlet cloak trimmed with needlework down to the waist. Her hair came down to her bosom, and was both fair and full. Gunnar was clad in the scarlet clothes which King Harold, Gorm's son, had given him; he had also the golden ring on his arm which Earl Hacon had given him.

So they talked long out loud, and at last it came about that he asked whether she were unmarried. She said, so it was, "and there are not many that would run the risk of that." "Thinkest thou none good enough for thee?" "Not that," she says, "but I am said to be hard to please in husbands." "How wouldst thou answer were I to ask for thee?" "That cannot be in thy mind," she says. "It is, though," says he. "If thou hast any mind that way, go and see my father." After that they broke off their talk.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Halgerda proved to be a wicked and altogether heartless woman, who finally brought Gunnar, whom she marries, to his death by refusing to give him a lock of her beautiful hair to replace his bowstring when he was hard beset by his enemies.

## II. STRUGGLES BETWEEN THE SONS OF LOUIS THE PIOUS

(840) Louis [the German], the emperor's son, took possession of the part of the Empire lying beyond the Rhine as if it were his by right. He won the support of many East Franks by his prudent conduct, and marched through Alemannia to Frankfort. The emperor, learning this, was forced to return from Aquitaine, leaving his business there unfinished. He sent his brother Druogo, the archchaplain, Count Albert, and many others before him to guard the west bank of the Rhine; then he himself followed and celebrated Easter at Aix-la-Chapelle. About this time, night after night, a strange glow appeared in the air, in fashion like a beam, in the southeast, and another arising from the northwest. The two joined together and formed a cone and presented an appearance like clotted blood at the zenith.

After Easter the emperor gathered an army and pursued his son through Thuringia up to the frontiers of the barbarians. He drove him out of the imperial territory and forced him to make a difficult march homeward to Bavaria through the land of the Slavs. The emperor himself set all things in order in that region, and then returned to the royal town of Salz, and celebrated there the Rogation Days and the festival of our Lord's Ascension. On the very day before the Ascension of our Lord, i.e. on the twelfth of May, there was an eclipse of the sun at about the seventh and eighth hour — so completely was the sun obscured that the stars were seen and the color of things on earth was changed.

In these days the emperor fell ill and began to waste away. He was taken on a ship down the Main to Frankfort, and from there after a few days to an island in the Rhine near Ingilenheim. His illness steadily increased upon him, and on the twentieth of June he ended his life. His body was brought to the city of Metz and buried with all due honor in the basilica of St. Arnulf the Confessor.

Lothaire, who came from Italy too late [to see his father], was accepted by the Franks to rule over them in his father's

68. The death of Louis the Pious and the strife between his sons. (From the *Annals of Fulda*.)

Lothaire accepted by the Franks as their ruler.

stead. For men say the dying emperor had designated him as the one who should hold after him the helm of the state, and had sent him the royal insignia — the scepter of the Empire and the crown.

Lothaire's brothers did not agree, however, to this arrangement, and they made ready to rebel against him. He went with his army to the precincts of Mayence, and there his brother Louis marched to meet him with a strong following of East Franks. They, however, agreed together to postpone decisive action until another time; and Lothaire marched northward to meet Charles [the Bald]. Meantime Louis bound to his cause by an oath of fidelity the East Franks, the Alemanni, the Saxons, and the Thuringians.

(841) Meanwhile Lothaire placed garrisons along the Rhine and prepared to secure the east bank against an invasion from the west. He heard, through a messenger, of Louis' hostile measures, and, giving up pursuing Charles, he turned about, and at the beginning of the month of April crossed the Rhine secretly at Worms with all his army. Louis was betrayed by some of his followers and, almost surrounded by the army of Lothaire, he was forced to retreat to Bavaria.

The emperor placed guards whom he believed he could trust in those regions, and then turned his energy and his forces once more against Charles, who had already planned to establish a camp beyond the Maas. Louis was summoned to aid Charles and came by way of Alemannia. There the counts to whom Lothaire had intrusted the defense of that region met Louis with an army. They gave battle on the thirteenth of May. Count Adalbert, who had stirred up the strife, was killed; and with him a countless number of men were laid low.

Louis, victor in this encounter, crossed the Rhine and hastened toward Gaul to aid his brother Charles. The three brothers met in Auxerre, near Fontenay. They could not agree to divide the Empire because Lothaire, who wished to be sole monarch, was opposed to it. So they agreed that

Battle of  
Fontenay  
(841).

the case should be decided by the power of the sword and so proved by the judgment of God. On the twenty-fifth of June a great battle was fought between them, and the blood shed on both sides was so great that the present age remembers no such carnage among the Frankish people before. On the same day Lothaire began a retreat to his city of Aix-la-Chapelle. Louis and Charles seized his camp and collected and buried the bodies of their slain. They then parted; Charles remained in the west and Louis went in the month of August to the royal town Salz.

Lothaire again collected his forces from all sides. He went to Mayence and ordered the Saxons, with his little son Lothaire, to meet him at Speyer. He himself crossed the Rhine, intending to pursue his brother Louis to the confines of the outlying nations. He returned to Worms, unsuccessful. He celebrated there the marriage of his daughter, and then marched toward Gaul to subdue Charles. He spent the whole winter in fruitless effort and strife and then returned to Aix. On the twenty-fifth of December a comet appeared in the sign of Aquarius.

(843) Lothaire and Louis dwelt each in the confines of his own kingdom and kept the peace. Charles was marching about Aquitaine. . . . In the terrible and increasing calamities of the time and the general devastation, many men in various parts of Gaul were forced to eat a kind of bread made of earth and a little flour. It was an abominable crime that men should be reduced to eat earth, when the horses of those who were devastating the land were plentifully supplied with fodder.

Pirates of the Northmen's race came to the city of Nantes. They killed the bishop and many of the clergy and laity, both men and women, and plundered the city. Then they marched away to lay waste the land of lower Aquitaine. Finally they reached a certain island [Rhé, near Rochelle], and took thither from the mainland materials to build them houses; and they settled there for the winter as if it were a fixed habitation.

69. The  
Northmen  
at Nantes.  
(From the  
Annals of  
St. Bertin.)

The treaty  
of Verdun.

Charles betook himself to a rendezvous with his brothers, and joined them at Verdun; and there they divided the land among them. Louis had as his portion everything beyond the Rhine, and on this side of the Rhine the cities and districts of Speyer, Worms, and Mayence. Lothaire received the territory between the Rhine and the Scheldt to their emptying into the sea, besides Cambria, Hennegau, Lomatschgau, and the provinces on the left bank of the Maas, and further on to the place where the Saône joins the Rhone, and the counties along the Rhone on both banks to the sea. The other lands to the confines of Spain they ceded to Charles. When each had given his oath to the others they parted.

### III. A MELANCHOLY GLIMPSE OF THE CONDITIONS IN THE NINTH CENTURY

The *Annals of Xanten* give us a terrible impression of the disorder and gloom which prevailed in the Frankish kingdoms, owing to the civil wars and the devastations of the Northmen. The portion here given was probably written as the events occurred.

70. An extract from  
the *Annals*  
of *Xanten*.

(844) Pope Gregory departed this world and Pope Sergius followed in his place. Count Bernhard was killed by Charles. Pippin, king of Aquitaine, together with his son and the son of Bernhard, routed the army of Charles, and there fell the abbot Hugo. At the same time King Louis advanced with his army against the Wends, one of whose kings, Gestimus by name, was killed; the rest came to Louis and pledged him their fidelity, which, however, they broke as soon as he was gone. Thereafter Lothaire, Louis, and Charles came together for council in Diedenhofen, and after a conference they went their several ways in peace.

(845) Twice in the canton of Worms there was an earthquake; the first in the night following Palm Sunday, the second in the holy night of Christ's Resurrection. In the

same year the heathen broke in upon the Christians at many points, but more than twelve thousand of them were killed by the Frisians. Another party of invaders devastated Gaul; of these more than six hundred men perished. Yet owing to his indolence Charles agreed to give them many thousand pounds of gold and silver if they would leave Gaul, and this they did. Nevertheless the cloisters of most of the saints were destroyed and many of the Christians were led away captive.

After this had taken place King Louis once more led a force against the Wends. When the heathen had learned this they sent ambassadors, as well as gifts and hostages, to Saxony, and asked for peace. Louis then granted peace and returned home from Saxony. Thereafter the robbers were afflicted by a terrible pestilence, during which the chief sinner among them, by the name of Reginheri, who had plundered the Christians and the holy places, was struck down by the hand of God. They then took counsel and threw lots to determine from which of their gods they should seek safety; but the lots did not fall out happily, and on the advice of one of their Christian prisoners that they should cast their lot before the God of the Christians, they did so, and the lot fell happily. Then their king, by the name of Rorik, together with all the heathen people, refrained from meat and drink for fourteen days, when the plague ceased, and they sent back all their Christian prisoners to their country.

(846) According to their custom the Northmen plundered Eastern and Western Frisia and burned the town of Dordrecht, with two other villages, before the eyes of Lothaire, who was then in the castle of Nimwegen, but could not punish the crime. The Northmen, with their boats filled with immense booty, including both men and goods, returned to their own country.

In the same year Louis sent an expedition from Saxony against the Wends across the Elbe. He personally, however, went with his army against the Bohemians, whom he

call *Beu-winitha*, but with great risk. . . . Charles advanced against the Britons, but accomplished nothing.

At this same time, as no one can mention or hear without great sadness, the mother of all churches, the basilica of the apostle Peter, was taken and plundered by the Moors, or Saracens, who had already occupied the region of Beneventum. The Saracens, moreover, slaughtered all the Christians whom they found outside the walls of Rome, either within or without this church. They also carried men and women away prisoners. They tore down, among many others, the altar of the blessed Peter, and their crimes from day to day bring sorrow to Christians. Pope Sergius departed life this year.

(847) After the death of Sergius no mention of the apostolic see has come in any way to our ears. Rabanus [Maurus], master and abbot of Fulda, was solemnly chosen archbishop as the successor of Bishop Otger, who had died. Moreover the Northmen here and there plundered the Christians and engaged in a battle with the counts Sigir and Liuthar. They continued up the Rhine as far as Dordrecht, and nine miles farther to Meginhard, when they turned back, having taken their booty.

(848) On the fourth of February, towards evening, it lightened and there was thunder heard. The heathen, as was their custom, inflicted injury on the Christians. In the same year King Louis held an assembly of the people near Mayence. At this synod a heresy was brought forward by a few monks in regard to predestination. These were convicted and beaten, to their shame, before all the people. They were sent back to Gaul whence they had come, and, thanks be to God, the condition of the church remained uninjured.

(849) While King Louis was ill his army of Bavaria took its way against the Bohemians. Many of these were killed and the remainder withdrew, much humiliated, into their own country. The heathen from the North wrought havoc in

Christendom as usual and grew greater in strength; but it is revolting to say more of this matter.

(850) On January 1st of that season, in the octave of the Lord, towards evening, a great deal of thunder was heard and a mighty flash of lightning seen; and an overflow of water afflicted the human race during this winter. In the following summer an all too great heat of the sun burned the earth. Leo, pope of the apostolic see, an extraordinary man, built a fortification round the church of St. Peter the apostle. The Moors, however, devastated here and there the coast towns in Italy. The Norman Rorik, brother of the above-mentioned younger Heriold, who earlier had fled dishonored from Lothaire, again took Dordrecht and did much evil treacherously to the Christians. In the same year so great a peace existed between the two brothers — Emperor Lothaire and King Louis — that they spent many days together in Osning [Westphalia] and there hunted, so that many were astonished thereat; and they went each his way in peace.

(851) The bodies of certain saints were sent from Rome to Saxony, — that of Alexander, one of seven brethren, and those of Romanus and Emerentiana. In the same year the very noble empress, Irmgard by name, wife of the emperor Lothaire, departed this world. The Normans inflicted much harm in Frisia and about the Rhine. A mighty army of them collected by the river Elbe against the Saxons, and some of the Saxon towns were besieged, others burned, and most terribly did they oppress the Christians. A meeting of our kings took place on the Maas.

(852) The steel of the heathen glistened; excessive heat; a famine followed. There was not fodder enough for the animals. The pasturage for the swine was more than sufficient.

(853) A great famine in Saxony so that many were forced to live on horse meat.

(854) The Normans, in addition to the very many evils which they were everywhere inflicting upon the Christians, burned the church of St. Martin, bishop of Tours, where his body rests.

(855) In the spring Louis, the eastern king, sent his son of the same name to Aquitaine to obtain possession of the heritage of his uncle Pippin.

(856) The Normans again chose a king of the same name as the preceding one, and related to him, and the Danes made a fresh incursion by sea, with renewed forces, against the Christians.

(857) A great sickness, accompanied by swelling of the bladder, prevailed among the people. This produced a terrible foulness, so that the limbs were separated from the body even before death came.

(858) Louis, the eastern king, held an assembly of the people of his territory in Worms.

(859) On the first of January, as the early mass was being said, a single earthquake occurred in Worms and a triple one in Mayence before daybreak.

(860) On the fifth of February thunder was heard. The king returned from Gaul after the whole empire had gone to destruction, and was in no way bettered.

(861) The holy bishop Luitbert piously furnished the cloister which is called the Freckenhorst with many relics of the saints, namely, of the martyrs Boniface and Maximus, and of the confessors Eonius and Antonius, and added a portion of the manger of the Lord and of his grave, and likewise of the dust of the Lord's feet as he ascended to heaven. In this year the winter was long and the above-mentioned kings again had a secret consultation on the above-mentioned island near Coblenz, and they laid waste everything round about.

#### IV. HOW THE NORTHMEN HARRIED FRANKLAND AND LAID SIEGE TO PARIS

(882) . . . The Northmen in the month of October entrenched themselves at Condé, and horribly devastated the kingdom of Carloman,<sup>1</sup> while King Charles with his army took his stand on the Somme at Barleux. The Northmen ceased not from rapine and drove all the inhabitants who were left beyond the Somme. . . .

[King Carloman gave them battle] and the Franks were victorious and killed nigh a thousand of the Northmen. Yet they were in no wise discomfited by this battle. . . . They went from Condé back to their ships, and thence laid waste the whole kingdom with fire and sword as far as the Oise. They destroyed houses, and razed monasteries and churches to the ground, and brought to their death the servants of our holy religion by famine and sword, or sold them beyond the sea. They killed the dwellers in the land and none could resist them.

Abbot Hugo, when he heard of these calamities, gathered an army and came to aid the king. When the Northmen came back from a plundering expedition . . . he, in company with the king, gave them chase. They, however, betook themselves to a wood, and scattered hither and yon, and finally returned to their ships with little loss. In this year died Hinckmar, archbishop of Rheims, a man justly esteemed by all.

(883) . . . In the spring the Northmen left Condé and sought the country along the sea. Here they dwelt through the summer; they forced the Flemings to flee from their lands, and raged everywhere, laying waste the country with fire and sword. As autumn approached, Carloman, the king, took his station with his army in the canton of Vithman at Mianai, opposite Lavier, in order to protect the kingdom. The Northmen at the end of October came to Lavier with cavalry, foot soldiers, and all their baggage. Ships, too, came

71. How the Northmen harried Francia and besieged Paris (882-886). (From the *Annals of St. Vaast*.)

<sup>1</sup> Son of Charles the Bald. See *History of Western Europe*, p. 96.

from the sea up the Somme and forced the king and his whole army to flee and drove them across the river Oise. The invaders went into winter quarters in the city of Amiens and devastated all the land to the Seine and on both sides of the Oise, and no man opposed them; and they burned with fire the monasteries and churches of Christ. . . .

(884) At this time died Engelwin, bishop of Paris, and the abbot Gauzelin was put in his stead. The Northmen ceased not to take Christian people captive and to kill them, and to destroy churches and houses and burn villages. Through all the streets lay bodies of the clergy, of laymen, nobles, and others, of women, children, and suckling babes. There was no road nor place where the dead did not lie; and all who saw Christian people slaughtered were filled with sorrow and despair.

Meanwhile, because the king was still a child, all the nobles came together in the city of Compiègne to consider what should be done. They took counsel, and decided to send to the Northmen the Dane Sigfried, who was a Christian and faithful to the king, and the nephew of Heoric the Dane, that he might treat with the nobles of his people and ask them to accept tribute money and leave the kingdom.

He accordingly undertook to carry out the task assigned to him, went to Amiens, and announced his mission to the leaders of the Northmen. After long consultations and much going to and fro, these decided to impose upon the king and the Franks a tribute of twelve thousand pounds of silver, according to their manner of weighing. After both parties had given hostages, the people who dwelt beyond the Oise were secure in some degree. They enjoyed this security from the day of the Purification of St. Mary until the month of October.

The Northmen, however, made raids in their accustomed manner beyond the Scheldt, and laid waste all things with fire and sword, and totally destroyed churches, monasteries, cities and villages, and put the people to slaughter. After the holy Easter festival the collection of the tribute began,

and churches and church property were ruthlessly plundered. At last, the whole sum being finally brought together, the Franks assembled with a view of resisting the Northmen should they break their pledges, but the Normans burned their camp and retreated from Amiens. . . .

(885) [In December of this same year Carloman was accidentally killed while on a boar hunt.] As soon as Emperor Charles [the Fat] received tidings of this, he made a hasty journey and came to Pontion; and all the men of Carloman's kingdom went to him there and submitted to his sway. . . .

On the twenty-fifth of July the whole host of the Northmen forced their way to Rheims. Their ships had not yet come, so they crossed the Seine in boats they found there, and quickly fortified themselves. The Franks followed them. All those who dwelt in Neustria and Burgundy gathered to make war upon the Northmen. But when they gave battle it befell that Ragnold, duke of Maine, was killed, with a few others. Therefore all the Franks retreated in great sorrow and accomplished nothing.

Thereupon the rage of the Northmen was let loose upon the land. They thirsted for fire and slaughter; they killed Christian people and took them captive and destroyed churches; and no man could resist them.

Again the Franks made ready to oppose them, not in battle, but by building fortifications to prevent the passage of their ships. They built a castle on the river Oise at the place which is now called Pontoise, and appointed Aletramus to guard it. Bishop Gauzelin fortified the city of Paris.

In the month of November the Northmen entered the Oise, and besieged the castle the Franks had built. They cut off the water supply from the castle's garrison, for it depended on the river for water and had no other. Soon they who were shut up in the castle began to suffer for lack of water. What more need be said? They surrendered on condition that they be allowed to go forth unharmed. After hostages had been exchanged, Aletramus and his



men went to Beauvais. The Northmen burned the castle and carried off all that had been left by the garrison, who had been permitted to depart only on condition that they would leave everything behind except their horses and arms.

The Northmen besiege Paris.

Elated with victory, the Northmen appeared before Paris, and at once attacked a tower, confident that they could take it quickly because it was not yet fully fortified. But the Christians defended it manfully and the battle raged from morning till evening. The night gave a truce to fighting and the Northmen returned to their ships. Bishop Gauzelin and Count Odo worked with their men all night long to strengthen the tower against assaults. The next day the Northmen returned and tried to storm the tower, and they fought fiercely till sunset. The Northmen had lost many of their men and they returned to their ships. They pitched a camp before the city and laid siege to it and bent all their energies to capture it. But the Christians fought bravely and stood their ground.

(886) On the sixth of February those in the city suffered a severe reverse. The river rose and washed away the Little Bridge. When the bishop heard of this disaster he sent brave and noble men to guard the tower, so that they might begin to rebuild the broken bridge when morning broke. The Northmen knew all that had happened. They arose before sunrise, hurried with all their forces to the tower, surrounded it on all sides so that no reinforcements could reach the garrison, and tried to take the tower by storm.

The guard resisted valiantly, and the clamor of the multitude arose to heaven. The bishop was on the city wall with all the inhabitants. The people wept and groaned because they could not aid their own. The bishop commended them all to Christ because there was nothing else that he could do. The Northmen tried to break in the gate of the tower and finally set fire to it. Those who were within, weakened by wounds, were conquered by fire; and to the shame of Christianity, they were killed in divers ways and cast into

the river. The Northmen then destroyed the tower; and afterward they ceased not to assault the city itself.

The bishop was heartbroken over this heavy loss. He straightway sent to Count Herkenger and begged him to go at once to Germany and ask Henry, duke of Austrasia, to aid him and the Christian people. Herkenger hastened to carry out the mission intrusted to him, and persuaded Henry to come with an army to Paris. He, however, accomplished nothing there and soon returned to his own country.

Then Gauzelin, who sought in all possible ways to help the Christian people, decided to come to a friendly understanding with Sigfried, king of the Danes, to secure the deliverance of the city from siege.

Unhappily, while negotiations were going on, the bishop fell into sore infirmity. He ended his life and was buried in his city. The Northmen were aware of his death; and before it was announced to the citizens, the Northmen proclaimed from the gates that the bishop was dead. The people were exhausted by the siege and overwhelmed by the death of their father; they lost courage and abandoned themselves to sorrow. But Odo, the illustrious count, gave them renewed strength with his brave words.

The Northmen ceased not to attack the city daily; many were killed and still more were disabled by wounds, and food began to give out in the city. At this time Hugo, the venerable abbot, departed this life and was buried in the monastery of St. German Antisdoro. Odo saw how the people were falling into despair, and he went forth secretly to seek aid from the nobles of the kingdom, and to send word to the emperor that the city would soon be lost unless help came. When Odo returned to Paris he found the people lamenting his absence. Nor did he reënter the city without a remarkable incident. The Northmen had learned that he was coming back, and they blocked his way to the gate. But Odo, though his horse was killed, struck down his enemies right and left, forced his way into the city, and brought joy to the anxious people. . . .

Valiant  
conduct of  
Odo, count  
of Paris.

Charles the Fat makes a shameful treaty with the Northmen.

[The siege had lasted eight months when the emperor came to relieve the city.] It was in the autumn that he appeared before Paris with a very strong army. . . . But he did not force them to raise the siege. He made terms with them and signed a shameful treaty. He promised to pay a ransom for the city, and gave them leave to march unopposed into Burgundy, to plunder it during the winter.

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## CHAPTER IX

### FEUDALISM

#### I. THE OLDER INSTITUTIONS WHICH SERVE TO EXPLAIN FEUDALISM

The blank forms (*formulæ*) used in drawing up legal contracts are a great aid to the student of history, for they do not apply to a single case only, but indicate the habits of the time. Some examples of the formulæ illustrating the arrangements which underlay feudalism are here given.<sup>1</sup>

##### A. — Grants of Immunity from the Visits of the King's Officials

We believe that it increases the great strength of our realm, if with benevolent deliberation we concede opportune benefits to certain churches, — or to certain other specified parties, — and under God's protection write them down to endure permanently. Therefore, may your Zeal know that we have seen fit upon petition to grant such a benefit, for our eternal reward, to that apostolic man, Lord —, bishop of the city of —; that in the vills belonging to the church of that lord, which he is seen to have at the present time, either by our gift or that of any one else, or which in the future godly piety shall wish to add to the possessions of that holy place, no public judge shall at any time presume to enter, for the hearing of causes or for the exaction of payments, but the prelate himself, or his successors in God's name

72. Formula for grant of immunity to a bishop.

<sup>1</sup> I have been greatly aided in the preparation of this chapter by Professor Cheyney's "Documents Illustrative of Feudalism." *Translations and Reprints*, Vol. IV, No. 3.