

BROOKS ELBRIDGE STREETER

HISTORIC BOYS: THEIR
ENDEAVOURS, THEIR
ACHIEVEMENTS, AND
THEIR TIMES

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PREFACE

The world's historic boys and girls have been many. In every age and clime may be found notable examples of young people who, even before they reached manhood or womanhood, have – for good or evil – left their impress on their time.

From these the author of this volume has selected the careers of a dozen young fellows of different lands and epochs, who, even had they not lived out their "teens," could have rightly claimed a place in the world's annals as Historic Boys. They are such also as show that, from the earliest ages, manliness and self-reliance have ever been the chief groundwork of character, and that in this respect the boy of the nineteenth century in no way differs from his brother of the second or the ninth. To bravely front danger, difficulty, or death, if need be, for principle or right, is as commendable and as heroic in the boy brought up amid the surging and restless life of London to-day, as in the lads who trod the narrow streets of Jerusalem, or Rouen, of Florence, or old Rome centuries ago.

These stories of boy life, in the stirring days of old, have been based upon historic facts and prepared with a due regard to historic and chronologic accuracy. Nine of the twelve stories have already appeared in *St. Nicholas* magazine, but these have been revised and amplified for their present use, while the remaining three were specially prepared for this volume.

I

MARCUS OF ROME: THE BOY MAGISTRATE

(Afterward the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.)

[a. d. 137.]

A perfect autumn day. Above, the clear sky of Italy; below, a grassy plain, sloping gently down from the brown cliffs and ruined ramparts of old Veii – the city of the ancient Tuscan kings. In the background, under the shade of the oaks, a dozen waiting attendants; and here, in the open space before us, three trim and sturdy Roman youths, all flushed with the exercise of a royal game of ball. Come, boys and girls of to-day, go back with me seventeen and a half centuries, and join the dozen lookers-on as they follow this three-cornered game of ball. They call it the *trigon*. It is a favorite ball-game with the Roman youth, in which the three players, standing as if on a right-angled triangle, pitch and catch the ball, or *pila*, at long distances and with the left hand only. It is not so easy as you may think. Try it some time and see for yourself.

"This way – toss it this way, Aufidius; our good Sejus will need more lessons from old Trimalchio, the gladiator, ere he outranks us at *trigon*."

And with a quick but guarded dash of the left hand the speaker caught the ball as it came spinning toward him, and with as vigorous a "left-hander" sent it flying across to young Sejus.

"Faith, my Marcus," said Sejus, as he caught the ball with difficulty, "the gallop from Lorium has made me somewhat stiff of joint, and I pitch and catch but poorly. Keep the *pila* flying, and I may grow more elastic, though just now I feel much like our last text from Epictetus, that the good Rusticus gave us yesterday – 'a little soul bearing about a corpse.'"

"What then! Art as stiff as that, old Sejus?" gayly shouted Aufidius. "Ho! brace thee up, man," he cried, as he sent the ball whirling across to Marcus; "brace thee up, and use rather the words of our wise young Stoic here – 'Be like the promontory against which the waves continually break, but it stands firm and tames the fury of the waters around it.'"

"'T is well applied, Aufidius. But – said I all that?" Marcus inquired.

"Ay, so didst thou, my Marcus. 'T is all down on my tablets." And with merry talk the game went on.

But soon old Ballio, the *ordinarius*, or upper servant, left the oak shade and said to Marcus: "Come, my master; the water-glass shows that we must soon ride on if we mean to reach Rome by dinner-time."

So the game was broken off, and, after a few nibbles at the cakes and sweetmeats which one of the slaves carried to "stay the stomachs" of the travellers, the call "To horse!" was given, and the party moved on toward the city. The spirits of the lads ran high; and though the one called Marcus had a sedate and quiet look, he was roused into healthy and hearty boyishness as, over the Etruscan plains, they galloped on to Rome.

They had been riding, perhaps, a short half hour, when they saw, coming down a cross-road that entered the highway just beyond them, a large flock of sheep returning from their summer pasturage on the hills, in charge of three shepherds and their families. The game and the gallop had made the boys ripe for mischief; for, though close and patient students, they were in their hours of sport as ready for a frolic as are any schoolboys of to-day.

The shepherds, seeing a party of hard riders coming toward them, looked at their sheep anxiously and eyed the strangers suspiciously. For sheep-stealing was of common occurrence in those days, and, when changing pastures, the shepherds were kept constantly on the watch.

The quick eye of Aufidius marked the suspicions of the shepherds.

"Why, Marcus," he exclaimed, "yonder fellows surely take us for highwaymen."

"Highwaymen, indeed!" said Sejus, indignantly. "Dost think the knaves could mistake the noble Marcus Verus for a cowardly sheep-stealer."

"And why not," said Marcus, laughingly. "Man looks at man but as his reason bids him. If shepherds look but for sheep-stealers, to them, at first, all men are sheep-stealers. Come," he added, gayly, "let us not disappoint them. What did our teacher Rusticus tell us but yesterday: 'That which is a hinderance is made a furtherance to an act, and that which is an obstacle on the road helps us on the road.' Shall we not put his text to the test? Behold our obstacle on the road! Let us ride down the sheep!"

The spirit of mischief is contagious. Down the highway dashed the whole party, following the lead of Marcus and his cry of "Forward, friends!" while the now terrified shepherds turned their huddling sheep around, and with many cries and much belaboring struggled back to the cross-road to escape the pretended robbers. But the swift horses soon overtook the slow-footed shepherds, and the laughing riders, with uplifted weapons and shouts of seeming victory, were quickly at the heels of the flock. Then came a change. The shepherds, finding that they could not outrun their pursuers, stopped, wheeled around, and stood on the defensive, laying valiantly about them with crook and staff.

"Go on and increase in valor, O boy! this is the path to immortality," shouted the nimble Aufidius, and with this quotation from Virgil, he swooped down and caught up a struggling lamb.

"What says your philosophy now, O Marcus?" said Sejus as, rather ruefully, he rubbed an aching shin, sore from the ringing thwack of a shepherd's crook.

Marcus dodged a similar blow and replied "That nothing happens to any man, O Sejus, which he is not fitted by nature to bear. But I have had enough. Let us go our way in peace."

And turning from the fray, the whole party rode rather ingloriously from the field of defeat, while the victors vowed a lamb to Pales, the special patroness of shepherds, for their deliverance from "so blood-thirsty" a band of robbers.

So, flushed and merry over their adventure, the three lads rode on to Rome; but, ere they came in sight of the yellow Tiber, a fleet Numidian slave came running toward them, straight and swift as an arrow, right in the middle of the highway. Marcus recognized him as one of the runners of his uncle, the proconsul Titus Antoninus, and wondered as to his mission. The Numidian stopped short at sight of the party, and, saluting Marcus, handed him a small scroll. The boy unrolled it, and at once his face became grave.

"For me; this for me?" he said, and, in seeming surprise, laid his hand upon the arm of his friend Aufidius. Then, as if remembering that he was a Stoic, whose desire was to show neither surprise, pleasure, nor pain, let what might happen, he read the scroll carefully, placed it in his mantle, and said, half aloud: "How ridiculous is he who is surprised at any thing which happens in life!"

"What is it that so disturbs you, O Marcus?" Aufidius asked.

"Friends," said the lad, "this scroll from my uncle Antoninus tells me that I am named by the Emperor's council as prefect¹ of the city while the consuls and magistrates are at the Latin Games."

"Hail to thee, Prefect! hail! hail! hail!" cried Aufidius and Sejus, while the whole company joined in a respectful salute.

"Would it were some one more worthy than I, Aufidius," said Marcus, solemnly.

¹ *Præfectus urbi*: governor of the city.

"Nay, it is rightly decreed, my Marcus," protested his friend, proudly. "Did not Hadrian, the Emperor, himself say of thee: '*Non Verus, sed Verissimus!*'² and who but thee, Marcus Verissimus – Marcus the most true – should be the governor of Rome?"

"But think of it, friends! I am but a boy after all. Who can respect a prefect of sixteen?" still queried the modest Marcus.

Sejus at once dipped into history.

"And why not, O Marcus?" he asked. "Was not Tiberius Cæsar a public orator at nine, and Augustus a master of the horse at seventeen? Was not Titus a quæstor³ before he was eighteen, and the great Julius himself a priest of Jupiter at fourteen? And why, then, should not Marcus Verus, in whose veins runs the blood of the ancient kings, rightly be prefect of the city at sixteen?"

"Thou art a good pleader, my Sejus," Marcus said pleasantly. "Since, then, I must be prefect, may I be a just one, and take for my motto the text of the good Rusticus: 'If it is not right, do not do it; if it is not true, do not say it.' So, forward, my good friends! The lictors await me at the city gate."

So they pressed forward and, with more decorum, rode along the Via Cassia and across the Milvian Bridge to the broader Via Lata and the city gate. Here an escort of six lictors with their rods of office welcomed Marcus, and, thus accompanied, the young magistrate passed down the Via Lata – the street now known as "the Corso," the great thoroughfare of modern Rome – to the palace of his uncle Antoninus, near the Cœlian Gate.

"Hail, Prefect!" came the welcome of the noble uncle (one of the grand characters of Roman history). "And how fare the hens of Lorium?" For the good proconsul, so soon to be hailed as Cæsar and Emperor, loved the country pleasures and country cares of his farm at Lorium more than all the sculptured magnificence of the imperial city.

"The hens are well conditioned, O Antoninus," answered the boy, simply.

"But what said I?" his uncle exclaimed gayly. "What cares a prefect of Rome for the scratching hens of Lorium? As for me, most noble Prefect, I am but a man from whom neither power nor philosophy can take my natural affections"; and, as the parrot swinging over the door-way croaked out his "*Salve!*" (Welcome!), arm-in-arm uncle and nephew entered the palace.

Marcus Annius Verus was in all respects a model boy. Not the namby-pamby model that all human boys detest, but a right-minded, right-mannered, healthy, wealthy, and wise young Roman of the second century of the Christian era. At that time (for the world was not yet Christianized) there flourished a race of teachers and philosophers known as Stoics – wise old pagans, who held that the perfect man must be free from passion, unmoved by either joy or grief, taking every thing just as it came, with supreme and utter indifference. A hard rule that, but this lad's teachers had been mainly of the "School of the Stoics," as it was called, and their wise sayings had made so deep an impression on the little Marcus that, when only twelve years old, he set up for a full-fledged Stoic. He put on the coarse mantle that was the peculiar dress of the sect, practised all their severe rules of self-denial, and even slept on the hard floor or the bare ground, denying himself the comfort of a bed, until his good mother, who knew what was best for little fellows, even though they were Stoics, persuaded him to compromise on a quilt. He loved exercise and manly sport; but he was above all a wonderful student – too much of a student, in fact; for, as the old record states, "his excess in study was the only fault of his youth." And yet he loved a frolic, as the adventure with the shepherds proves.

Of the best patrician blood of old Rome; the relative and favorite of the great Emperor Hadrian; a splendid scholar, a capital gymnast, a true friend, a modest and unassuming lad; he was trying, even at sixteen, to make the best of himself, squaring all his actions by the rule that he, in after years, put into words: "I do my duty; other things trouble me not." Is not this young pagan of seventeen centuries back worthy to be held up as a model boy? Manly boys, with good principles, good manners,

² Not true, but *most* true.

³ An officer of the treasury.

and good actions, are young gentlemen always, whenever and wherever they may live; and quickly enough, as did young Marcus of Rome, they find their right place in the regard and affections of the people about them.

Well, the days of waiting have passed. The great festival to Jove, the *Feriae Latinae*, has drawn all the high magistrates to Mount Albanus, and in their stead, as prefect of the city, rules the boy Marcus. In one of the *basilicae*, or law courts of the great Forum, he sits invested with the toga of office, the ring and the purple badge; and, while twelve sturdy lictors guard his curule chair, he listens to the cases presented to him and makes many wise decisions – "in which honor," says the old record, "he acquitted himself to the general approbation." It was here no doubt that he learned the wisdom of the words he wrote in after life: "Do not have such an opinion of things as he who does the wrong, or such as he wishes thee to have, but look at them as they are in truth."

"Most noble Prefect," said one of the court messengers, or *accensi*, as they were called, "there waits, without, one Lydus the herdsman, demanding justice."

"Bid him enter," said Marcus; and there came into the *basilica* one whose unexpected appearance brought consternation to Aufidius and Sejus, as they waited in the court, and caused even the calm face of Marcus to flush with surprise. Lydus the herdsman was none other than their old acquaintance, the shepherd of the Etruscan highway!

"Most noble Prefect," said the shepherd, with a low salutation, "I am a free herdsman of Lake Sabatinus, and I ask for justice against a band of terrible highwaymen who lurk on the Via Cassia, near to old Veii. Only three days since, did these lawless fellows beset me and my companions, with our flocks, on the highway, and cruelly rob and maltreat us. I pray thee, let the *cohortes vigilum*⁴ search out and punish these robbers; and let me, too, be fully satisfied for the sheep they did force from me."

"Not so fast, man," said Marcus, as the shepherd concluded his glib recital. "Couldst thou identify these knaves, if once they were apprehended?"

"Ay, that could I, noble Prefect," replied the shepherd, boldly. "They were led on by three as villainous rascals as go unhung, and these had with them a crowd of riotous followers."

"Ha! is it so?" said Marcus. "Aufidius! Sejus! I pray you, step this way." His two friends, in some wonder as to his intention, approached the tribunal; and Marcus, stepping down from his curule chair, placed himself between them. "Three villainous rascals, thou didst say. Were they aught like us, think'st thou?"

"Like you? O noble young Prefect!" began the shepherd, protestingly. But when, at a word from Marcus, the three lads drew back their arms as if to brandish their weapons, and shouted their cry of attack, the mouth of Lydus stood wide open in amazement, his cropped head fairly bristled with fright, and, with a hasty exclamation, he turned on his heel, and fled from the *basilica*.

"Ho there, bring him back!" Marcus commanded; and guarded by two lictors, Lydus was dragged reluctantly back into the presence of the young prefect.

"So, my shepherd," said Marcus, "thou hast recognized thy villainous rascals. Surely, though, thy fear was larger than thine eyeballs; for thou didst multiply both the followers and the harm done to thee. Thou hast asked for justice, and justice thou shalt have! Forasmuch as I and my companions did frighten thee, though but in sport, it is wise to do well what doth seem but just. I, then, as prefect of the city, do fine Marcus Annius Verus, Aufidius Victorianus, and Sejus Fruscianus, each, one hundred *sestertii* (about twenty shillings), for interfering with travellers on the public highway; and I do command the lictors to mark the offenders unless they do straightway pay the fine here laid upon them."

Aufidius and Sejus looked troubled. They had barely a hundred *sestertii* between them; but Marcus drew forth an amount equal to the three fines, and, handing the money to an *accensus*, bade

⁴ Armed police.

him pay the shepherd. With many a bow, Lydus accepted the money, and with the words, "O noble young Prefect! O wise beyond thy years!" he would have withdrawn again.

"Hold!" said Marcus, ascending the tribunal, "hear the rest! Because thou hast placed a false charge before this tribunal, and hast sought to profit by thy lying tongue, I, the Prefect, do command that thou dost pay over to the *scriba* (clerk of the court) the sum of three hundred *sestertii*, to be devoted to the service of the poor; and that thou dost wear the wooden collar until thy fine is paid."

Very soberly and ruefully, Lydus paid over as the price of his big stories exactly the sum which he had received from the *scriba*, and departed from the *basilica* of the boy prefect, if not a poorer, at least a sadder and a wiser man.

The days of Marcus' magistracy were soon over, and when the great festival of Jove was ended, and the magistrates had returned to the city, the lad gave up the curule chair and the dress and duties of his office, and retired to his mother's house, bearing with him the thanks of the magistrates, the approval of the Emperor, and the applause of the people.

The villa of the matron Domitia Lucilla, the mother of Marcus, stood embowered in delightful gardens on the Caelian Hill, the most easterly of the famous Seven Hills of Rome. In an age of splendor, when grand palaces lined the streets and covered the hill-slopes of the imperial city, when fortunes were spent upon baths and gardens, or wasted on a gala dress, or on a single meal, this pleasant house was conducted upon a plan that suited the home ways of the mother and the quiet tastes of the son. Let us enter the spacious vestibule. Here in the door-way, or *ostium*, we stop to note the "*Salve!*" (Welcome!) wrought in mosaic on the marble floor, and then pass into the *atrium*, or great living-room of the house, where the female slaves are spinning deftly, and every thing tells of order and a busy life. Now, let us pass on to the spacious court-yard, in the very heart of the house. In the unroofed centre a beautiful fountain shoots its jets of cooling spray from a marble cistern of clear water.

And here, by the shining fountain, in the central court, stand two persons – Marcus and his mother. The lad has laid aside his *toga*, or outside mantle, and his close-fitting, short-sleeved tunic, scarcely reaching to his knees, shows a well-knit frame and a healthy, sun-browned skin. His mother, dressed in the tunic and long white *stola*, or outer robe, is of matronly presence and pleasant face. And, as they talk together in low and earnest tones, they watch with loving eyes, from the cool shadows of the high area walls, the motions of the dark-eyed little Annia, a winsome Roman maiden of thirteen, as, perched upon a cage of pet pigeons, she gleefully teases with a swaying peacock plume now the fluttering pigeons and now the wary-eyed Dido, her favorite cat.

"But there is such a thing as too much self-denial, my Marcus," said the mother in answer to some remark of the lad.

"Nay, this is not self-denial, my mother; it is simple justice," replied the boy. "Are not Annia and I children of the same father and mother? Is it just that I should receive all the benefit of our family wealth, and that she should be dependent on my bounty?"

"Divide then thy father's estate, my son. Let Annia and thyself share alike, but give it not all to thy sister," his mother suggested.

"Receive wealth without arrogance and be ready to let it go,' is what the Stoic Commodus hath taught me," the boy replied. "To whom we love much we should be ready to give much. Is it not so, my mother?"

"So I believe, my son," the matron answered.

"And if I seek to act justly in this matter, shall I not follow thy counsels, my mother?" Marcus continued; "for thou hast said, 'No longer talk about the kind of a man a good man ought to be, but be such.'"

"Ah, Marcus," the pleased mother exclaimed, "thou wilt be a happy man, too, if thou canst go ever by the right way, and think and act in the right way, as now. Thou art a good youth."

"And what is goodness, mother," argued the young philosopher, "but the desire to do justice and to practise it, and in this to let desire end? Let me, then, as I desire, give all my father's estate to my sister Annia. My grandfather's is sufficient for my needs. So shall Annia have her fair marriage portion, and we, my mother, shall all be satisfied."

And now, his sister Annia, wearying of her play with the pigeons, dropped her peacock plume and ran merrily toward her brother.

"O Marcus," she cried, "'t will soon be time for the bath. Do come and toss the *pila* with me; – that is," she added, with mock reverence, "if so grand a person as the prefect of Rome can play at ball!"

"And why not, my Annia," asked her mother, proudly; "even the world-ruling Julius loved his game of ball."

"Ah, but our Marcus is greater than the great Cæsar. Is he not, mother?" Annia asked, teasingly.

"Aye, that he is," the mother answered, feelingly; "for, know that he has this day given up to thee, his sister, one half of his heritage, and more – unwise and improvident youth!" she added, fondly.

"So let it end, mother," the boy said, as the pretty Annia sprang to him with a caress. "Come, Annia, let us see who can toss the *pila* best – a woman of property, such as thou, or the prefect of three days." And as hand in hand the brother and sister passed cheerily through the pillared portico, the mother looked after them with a happy heart and said, as did that earlier noble Roman matron of whom history tells us: "*These* are my jewels!"

The days passed. Winter grew to spring. The ides of March have come. And now it is one of the spring holidays of Rome, the fourteenth of March in the year 138 – the *Equiria*, or festival of Mars. Rome is astir early, and every street of the great city is thronged with citizens and strangers, slaves and soldiers, all hurrying toward the great pleasure-ground of Rome – the Circus Maximus. Through every portal the crowds press into the vast building, filling its circular seats, anxious for the spectacle. For the magistrate of the games for this day, it is said, is to be the young Marcus Annius, he who was prefect of the city during the last Latin Games; and, more than this, the festival is to close with a grand *venatio* – a wild-beast hunt!

There is a stir of expectation; a burst of trumpets from the Capitol; and all along the Sacred Street and through the crowded Forum goes up the shout, "Here they come!" With the flutes playing merrily, with swaying standards and sacred statues gleaming in silver and gold, with proud young cadets on horse and on foot, with priests in their robes and guards with crested helmets, with strange and marvellous beasts led by burly keepers, with a long string of skilled performers, restless horses, and gleaming chariots, through the Forum and down the Sacred Street winds the long procession, led by the boy magistrate, Marcus of Rome, the favorite of the Emperor. A golden chaplet, wrought in crusted leaves, circles his head; a purple *toga* drapes his trim, young figure; while the flutes and trumpets play their loudest before him, and the stout guards march at the heels of his bright-bay pony. So into the great circus passes the long procession, and as it files into the arena, two hundred thousand excited people – think, boys, of a circus-tent that holds two hundred thousand people! – rise to their feet and welcome it with hearty hand-clapping. The trumpets sound the prelude, the young magistrate (standing in his *suggestus*, or state box) flings the *mappa*, or white flag, into the course as the signal for the start; and, as a ringing shout goes up, four glittering chariots, rich in their decorations of gold and polished ivory, and each drawn by four plunging horses, burst from their arched stalls and dash around the track. Green, blue, red, white – the colors of the drivers stream from their tunics. Around and around they go. Now one and now another is ahead. The people strain and cheer, and many a wager is laid as to the victor. Another shout! The red chariot, turning too sharply, grates against the *meta*, or short pillar that stands at the upper end of the track, guarding the low central wall; the horses rear and plunge, the driver struggles manfully to control them, but all in vain; over goes the chariot, while the now maddened horses dash wildly on until checked by mounted attendants and led off to their stalls. "Blue! blue!" "Green! green!" rise the varying shouts,

as the contending chariots still struggle for the lead. White is far behind. Now comes the seventh or final round. Blue leads! No, green is ahead! Down the home stretch they go in a magnificent dash, neck and neck, and then the cheer of victory is heard, as, with a final spurt the green rider strikes the white cord first and the race is won!

And there, where the race is fiercest and the excitement most intense, sits the staid young Marcus, unmoved, unexcited, busy with his ivory tablets and his own high thoughts! For this wise young Stoic, true to his accepted philosophy, had mastered even the love of excitement – think of that, you circus-loving boys! He has left it on record that, even as a youth, he had learned "to be neither of the green nor of the blue party at the games in the circus," and while he looked upon such shows as dangerous and wasteful (for in those days they cost the state immense sums), he felt, still, that the people enjoyed them, and he said simply: "We cannot make men as we would have them; we must bear with them as they are and make the best of them we can." And so it happened that at this splendid race at which, to please the people, he presided as magistrate, this boy of sixteen sat probably the only unmoved spectator in that whole vast amphitheatre.

Now, in the interval between the races, come the athletic sports; foot-racing and wrestling, rope-dancing and high leaping, quoit-throwing and javelin matches. One man runs a race with a fleet Cappadocian horse; another expert rider drives two bare-backed horses twice around the track, leaping from back to back as the horses dash around. Can you see any very great difference between the circus performance of A. D. 138 and one of A. D. 1886?

Among the throng of "artistes" on that far-off March day there came a bright little fellow of ten or eleven years, a rope-dancer and a favorite with the crowd. Light and agile, he trips along the slender rope that stretches high above the arena. Right before the magistrate's box the boy poises in mid air, and even the thoughtful young director of the games looks up at the graceful motions of the boy. Hark! a warning shout goes up; now, another; the poor little rope-dancer, anxious to find favor in the eyes of the young noble, over-exerts himself, loses his balance on the dizzy rope, and, toppling over, falls with a cruel thud to the ground, and lies there before the great state box with a broken neck – dead. Marcus hears the shout, he sees the falling boy. Vaulting from his canopied box he leaps down into the arena, and so tender is he of others, Stoic though he be, that he has the poor rope-dancer's head in his lap even before the attendants can reach him. But no life remains in that bruised little body, and, as Marcus tenderly resigns the dead gymnast to the less sympathetic slaves, he commands that ever after a bed shall be laid beneath the rope as a protection against such fatal falls. This became the rule; and, when next you see the safety-net spread beneath the rope-walkers, the trapeze performers, and those who perform similar "terrific" feats, remember that its use dates back to the humane order of Marcus, the boy magistrate, seventeen centuries ago.

But, in those old days, the people had to be amused – whatever happened. Human life was held too cheaply for a whole festival to be stopped because a little boy was killed, and so the sports went on. Athletes and gymnasts did their best to excel; amidst wild excitement the chariots whirled around and around the course, and then the arena was cleared for the final act – the wild beast hunt.

The wary keepers raise the stout gratings before the dens and cages, and the wild animals, freed from their prisons, rush into the great open space, blink stupidly in the glaring light, and then with roar and growl echo the shouts of the spectators. Here are great lions from Numidia and tigers from far Arabia, wolves from the Apennines and bears from Libya, not caged and half-tamed as we see them now, but wild and fierce, loose in the arena. Now the hunters swarm in, on horse and on foot, – trained and supple Thracian gladiators, skilled Gætulian hunters, with archers, and spearmen, and net-throwers. All around the great arena rages the cruel fight. Here, a lion stands at bay; there, a tigress crouches for the spring; a snarling wolf snaps at a keen-eyed Thracian, or a bear with ungainly trot shambles away from the spear of his persecutor. Eager and watchful the hunters shoot and thrust, while the vast audience, more eager, more relentless, more brutal than beast or hunter, applaud and shout and cheer. But the young magistrate, who had, through all his life, a marked distaste for such

cruel sport, turns from the arena, and, again taking out his tablets, busies himself with his writing, unmoved by the contest and carnage before him.

The last hunted beast lies dead in the arena; the last valorous hunter has been honored with his *palma*, or reward, as victor; the slaves stand ready with hook and rope to drag off the slaughtered animals; the great crowd pours out of the vast three-storied building; the shops in the porticos are noisy with the talk of buyers and sellers; the boy magistrate and his escort pass through the waiting throng; and the Festival Games are over. But, ere young Marcus reaches the Forum on his return, a shout goes up from the people, and, just before the beautiful temple of the Twin Gods, Castor and Pollux, where the throng is densest, flowers and wreaths are thrown beneath his pony's feet, and a storm of voices raises the shout:

"*Ave Imperator! Ave Cæsar!*"

"What means that shout, Aufidius?" he asked his friend, who rode in the escort. But the only reply Aufidius made was to join his voice with that of the enthusiastic throng in a second shout; "*Ave Imperator! Auguste, Dii te servant!*" (Hail, O Emperor! The gods save your majesty!)

Then Marcus knew that the decree of the dying Emperor Hadrian had been confirmed, and that he, Marcus Annii Verus, the descendant of the ancient kings, the boy philosopher, the unassuming son of a noble mother, had been adopted as the son and successor of his uncle Antoninus, who was to reign after Hadrian's death, and that where he went, through the Forum and up the Sacred Street, there rode the heir to the greatest throne in the world, the future Emperor of Rome.

A Stoic still, unmoved, save for the slight flush that tinged his cheek as he acknowledged the greeting of the happy people, he passed on to his mother's house, and, in that dear home, amid the green gardens of the Cœlian Hill, he heard her lips speak her congratulations, and bent his head to receive her kiss of blessing.

"I lose a son, but gain an emperor," she said.

"No, my mother," the boy replied, proudly, "me thou shalt never lose. For, though I leave this dear home for the palace of the Cæsars, my heart is still here with that noble mother from whom I learned lessons of piety and benevolence and simplicity of life, and abstinence from evil deeds and evil thoughts."

Before five months had passed the great Emperor Hadrian died at Baia, in his hill-shaded palace by the sea, and the wise, country-loving uncle of Marcus succeeded to the throne as the Emperor Antoninus Pius. During all his glorious reign of twenty-three years, he had no more devoted admirer, subject, helper, and friend, than his adopted son and acknowledged successor, Marcus, who, in the year A. D. 161, ascended the throne of the Cæsars as the great Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

The life of this Roman Marcus was one of unsought honors and titles. At six, a knight of the Equestrian Order; at eight, one of the priests of Mars; at twelve, a rigid Stoic; at sixteen, a magistrate of the city; at seventeen, a quæstor, or revenue officer; at nineteen, a consul and Cæsar; at forty, an emperor, – he was always clear-headed and clean-hearted, beloved by his people and honored by all, making this one rule the guide of all his actions: "Every moment think steadily as a Roman and a man, to do what thou hast in hand with perfect and simple dignity, with affection and freedom and justice."

A noble boy; a noble man; preserving, as has been said of him, "in a time of universal corruption, a nature sweet, pure, self-denying, and unaffected," – he teaches us all, boys and men alike, a lesson of real manliness. Here are two of his precepts, which we are none of us too young to remember, none of us too old to forget: "The best way of avenging thyself is not to become like the wrong-doer"; "Let me offer to the gods the best that is in me; so shall I be a strong man, ripened by age, a friend of the public good, a Roman, an emperor, a soldier at his post awaiting the signal of his trumpet, a man ready to quit life without a fear." The foremost boy of his time, manly, modest, princely, brave, and true, we can surely find no more fitting representative with which to open this

series of "Historic Boys" than the boy magistrate, Marcus of Rome, the greatest and best of the Antonines.

II

BRIAN OF MUNSTER: THE BOY CHIEFTAIN

(Afterward Brian Boru, King of Ireland.)

[a. d. 948.]

Into that picturesque and legend-filled section of Ireland now known as the County Clare, where over rocks and boulders the Shannon, "noblest of Irish rivers," rushes down past Killaloe and Castle Connell to Limerick and the sea, there rode one fair summer morning, many, many years ago, a young Irish lad. The skirt of his parti-colored *lenn*, or kilt, was richly embroidered and fringed with gold; his *inar*, or jacket, close-fitting and silver-trimmed, was open at the throat, displaying the embroidered *lenn* and the *torc*, or twisted collar of gold about his sturdy neck, while a purple scarf, held the jacket at the waist. A gleaming, golden brooch secured the long plaid *brat*, or shawl, that dropped from his left shoulder; broad bracelets encircled his bare and curiously tattooed arms, and from an odd-looking golden spiral at the back of his head his thick and dark-red hair fell in flowing ringlets upon his broad shoulders. Raw-hide shoes covered his feet, and his bronze shield and short war-ax hung conveniently from his saddle of skins. A strong guard of pikemen and gallowglasses, or heavy-armed footmen, followed at his pony's heels, and seemed an escort worthy a king's son.

A strong-limbed, cleanly-built lad of fifteen was this sturdy young horseman, who now rode down to the Ath na Borumma, or Ford of the Tribute, just above the rapids of the Shannon, near the town of Killaloe. And as he reined in his pony, he turned and bade his herald, Cogoran, sound the trumpet-blast that should announce to the Clan of Cas the return, from his years of fosterage, of the young *flaith*, or chieftain, Brian, the son of Kennedy, King of Thomond.

But ere the strong-lunged Cogoran could wind his horn, the hearts of all the company grew numb with fear as across the water the low, clear strains of a warning-song sounded from the haunted gray-stone, – the mystic rock of Carrick-lee, that overhung the tumbling rapids:

"Never yet for fear of foe,
By the ford of Killaloe,
Stooped the crests of heroes free —
Sons of Cas by Carrick-lee.

"Falls the arm that smites the foe,
By the ford of Killaloe;
Chilled the heart that boundeth free,
By the rock of Carrick-lee.

"He who knows not fear of foe,
Fears the ford of Killaloe;
Fears the voice that chants his dree,
From the rock of Carrick-lee."

Young Brian was full of the superstition of his day – superstition that even yet lives amid the simple peasantry of Ireland, and peoples rocks, and woods, and streams with good and evil spirits,

fairies, sprites, and banshees; and no real, native Irish lad could fail to tremble before the mysterious song. Sorely troubled, he turned to Cogoran inquiringly, and that faithful retainer said in a rather shaky voice:

"'T is your warning-song, O noble young chief! 't is the voice of the banshee of our clan — *A-oib-hinn*, the wraith of Carrick-lee."

Just then from behind the haunted gray-rock a fair young girl appeared, tripping lightly across the large stepping-stones that furnished the only means of crossing the ford of Killaloe.

"See – see!" said Cogoran, grasping his young lord's arm; "she comes for thee. 'T is thy doom, O Master – the fiend of Carrick-lee!"

"So fair a fiend should bring me naught of grief," said young Brian, stoutly enough, though it must be confessed his heart beat fast and loud. "O Spirit of the Waters!" he exclaimed; "O banshee of Clan Cas! why thus early in his life dost thou come to summon the son of Kennedy the King?"

The young girl turned startled eyes upon the group of armed and warlike men, and grasping the skirt of her white and purple *lenn*, turned as if to flee, – when Cogoran, with a loud laugh, cried out:

"Now, fool and double fool am I, – fit brother to Sitric the blind, the black King of Dublin! Why, 't is no banshee, O noble young chief, 't is but thy foster-sister, Eimer, the daughter of Conor, Eimer the golden-haired!"

"Nay, is it so? St. Senanus be praised!" said Brian, greatly relieved. "Cross to us, maiden; cross to us," he said. "Fear nothing; 't is but Brian, thy foster-brother, returning to his father's home."

The girl swiftly crossed the ford and bowed her golden head in a vassal's welcome to the young lord.

"Welcome home, O brother," she said. "Even now, my lord, thy father awaits the sound of thy horn as he sits in the great seat beneath his kingly shield. And I – "

"And thou, maiden," said Brian, gayly, "thou must needs lurk behind the haunted rock of Carrick-lee, to freeze the heart of young Brian at his home-coming, with thy banshee song."

Eimer of the golden hair laughed a ringing laugh. "Say'st thou so, brother?" she said. "Does the 'Scourge of the Danes' shrink thus at a maiden's voice?"

"Who calls me the 'Scourge of the Danes'?" asked Brian.

"So across the border do they say that the maidens of King Callaghan's court call the boy Brian, the son of Kennedy," the girl made answer.

"Who faces the Danes, my sister, faces no tender foe," said Brian, "and the court of the King of Cashel is no ladies' hall in these hard-striking times. But wind thy horn, Cogoran, and cross we the ford to greet the king, my father."

Loud and clear the herald's call rose above the rush of the rapids, and as the boy and his followers crossed the ford, the gates of the palace, or *dun*, of King Kennedy of Thomond were flung open, and the band of welcomers, headed by Mahon, Brian's eldest brother, rode out to greet the lad.

Nine hundred years ago the tribe of Cas was one of the most powerful of the many Irish clans. The whole of Thomond, or North Munster, was under their sway, and from them, say the old records, "it was never lawful to levy rent, or tribute, or pledge, or hostage, or fostership fees," so strong and free were they. When the clans of Munster gathered for battle, it was the right of the Clan of Cas to lead in the attack, and to guard the rear when returning from any invasion. It gave kings to the throne of Munster, and valiant leaders in warfare with the Danes, who, in the tenth century, poured their hosts into Ireland, conquering and destroying. In the year 948, in which our sketch opens, the head of this powerful clan was Cennedigh, or Kennedy, King of Thomond. His son Brian had, in accordance with an old Irish custom, passed his boyhood in "fostership" at the court of Callaghan, King of Cashel, in East Munster. Brought up amid warlike scenes, where battles with the Danish invaders were of frequent occurrence, young Brian had now, at fifteen, completed the years of his fostership, and was a lad of strong and dauntless courage, cool and clear-headed, and a firm foe of Ireland's scourge – the fierce "Dub-Gaile," or "Black Gentiles," as the Danes were called.

The feast of welcome was over. The bards had sung their heroic songs to the accompaniment of the *cruot*, or harp; the fool had played his pranks, and the juggler his tricks, and the chief bard, who was expected to be familiar with "more than seven times fifty stories, great and small," had given the best from his list; and as they sat thus in the *cuirmtech*, or great hall, of the long, low-roofed house of hewn oak that scarcely rose above the stout earthen ramparts that defended it, swift messengers came bearing news of a great gathering of Danes for the ravaging of Munster, and the especial plundering of the Clan of Cas.

"Thou hast come in right fitting time, O son!" said Kennedy the King. "Here is need of strong arms and stout hearts. How say ye, noble lords and worthy chieftains? Dare we face in fight this, so great a host?"

But as chiefs and counsellors were discussing the king's question, advising fight or flight as they deemed wisest, young Brian sprung into the assembly, war-ax in hand.

"What, fathers of Clan Cas," he cried, all aflame with excitement, "will ye stoop to parley with hard-hearted pirates – ye, who never brooked injustice or tyranny from any king of all the kings of Erin – ye, who never yielded even the leveret of a hare in tribute to Leinsterman or Dane? 'T is for the Clan of Cas to demand tribute, – not to pay it! Summon our vassals to war. Place me, O King, my father, here at the Ford of the Tribute and bid me make test of the lessons of my fostership. Know ye not how the boy champion, Cuchullin of Ulster, held the ford for five long days against all the hosts of Connaught? What boy hath done, boy may do. Death can come but once!"

The lad's impetuous words fired the whole assembly, the gillies and retainers caught up the cry, and, with the wild enthusiasm that has marked the quick-hearted Irishman from Brian's day to this, "they all," so says the record, "kissed the ground and gave a terrible shout." Beacon fires blazed from cairn and hill-top, and from "the four points" – from north and south and east and west, came the men of Thomond rallying around their chieftains on the banks of Shannon.

With terrible ferocity the Danish hosts fell upon Ireland. From Dublin to Cork the coast swarmed with their war-ships and the land echoed the tramp of their swordmen. Across the fair fields of Meath and Tipperary, "the smooth-plained grassy land of Erinn," from Shannon to the sea, the kings and chieftains of Ireland gathered to withstand the shock of the invaders. Their chief blow was struck at "Broccan's Brake" in the County Meath, and "on that field," says the old Irish record, "fell the kings and chieftains, the heirs to the crown, and the royal princes of Erinn." There fell Kennedy the King and two of his stalwart sons. But at the Ford of the Tribute, Brian, the boy chieftain, kept his post and hurled back again and again the Danes of Limerick as they swarmed up the valley of the Shannon to support their countrymen on the plains of Meath.

The haunted gray-stone of Carrick-lee, from which Brian had heard the song of the supposed banshee, rose sharp and bold above the rushing waters; and against it and around it Brian and his followers stood at bay, battling against the Danish hosts. "Ill-luck was it for the foreigner," says the record, "when that youth was born – Brian, the son of Kennedy." In the very midst of the stubborn fight at the ford, and around from a jutting point of the rock of Carrick-lee, a light shallop came speeding down the rapids. In the prow stood a female figure, all in white, from the gleaming golden *lann*, or crescent, that held her flowing veil, to the hem of her gracefully falling *lenn*, or robe. And above the din of the strife a clear voice sang:

"First to face the foreign foe,
First to strike the battle blow;
Last to turn from triumph back,
Last to leave the battle's wrack;
Clan of Cas shall victors be
When they fight at Carrick-lee."

It was, of course, only the brave young Eimer of the golden hair bringing fresh arms in her shallop to Brian and his fighting-men; but as the sun, bursting through the clouds, flashed full upon the shining war-ax which she held aloft, the superstitious Danes saw in the floating figure the "White Lady of the Rapids," the banshee, *A-oib-hinn*, the fairy guardian of the Clan of Cas. Believing, therefore, that they could not prevail against her powerful aid, they turned and fled in dismay from the flowing river and the haunted rock.

But fast upon young Brian's victory came the tearful news of the battle of Broccan's Brake and the defeat of the Irish kings. Of all the brave lad's family only his eldest brother Mahon escaped from that fatal field; and now he reigned in place of Kennedy, his father, as King of Thomond. But the victorious Danes overran all Southern Ireland, and the brothers Mahon and Brian found that they could not successfully face in open field the hosts of their invaders. So these two "stout, able, valiant pillars," these two "fierce, lacerating, magnificent heroes," as the brothers are called in the curious and wordy old Irish record, left their mud-walled fortress-palace by the Shannon, and with "all their people and all their chattels" went deep into the forests of Cratloe and the rocky fastnesses of the County Clare; and there they lived the life of robber chieftains, harassing and plundering the Danes of Limerick and their recreant Irish allies, and guarding against frequent surprise and attack. But so hazardous and unsettled a life was terribly exhausting, and "at length each party of them became tired of the other," and finally King Mahon made peace with the Danes of Limerick.

But "Brian the brave" would make no truce with a hated foe. "Tell my brother," he said, when messengers brought him word of Mahon's treaty, "that Brian, the son of Kennedy, knows no peace with foreign invaders. Though all others yield and are silent, yet will I never!"

And with this defiance the boy chieftain and "the young champions of the tribe of Cas" went deeper into the woods and fastnesses of the County Clare, and for months kept up a fierce guerilla warfare. The Danish tyrants knew neither peace nor rest from his swift and sudden attacks. Much booty of "satins and silken cloths, both scarlet and green, pleasing jewels and saddles beautiful and foreign" did they lose to this active young chieftain, and much tribute of cows and hogs and other possessions did he force from them. So dauntless an outlaw did he become that his name struck terror from Galway Bay to the banks of Shannon, and from Lough Derg to the Burren of Clare. "When he inflicted not evil on the foreigners in the day," the quaint old record asserts, "he was sure to do it in the next night, and when he did it not in the night he was sure to do it in the following day."

To many an adventurous boy the free outlaw life of this daring lad of nine centuries ago may seem alluring. But "life in the greenwood" had little romance for such old-time outlaws as Brian Boru and Robin Hood and their imitators. To them it was stern reality, and meant constant struggle and vigilance. They were outcasts and Ishmaels – "their hands against every man and every man's hand against them," – and though the pleasant summer weather brought many sunshiny days and starlit nights, the cold, damp, and dismal days took all the poetry out of this roving life, and sodden forests and relentless foes brought dreary and disheartening hours. Trust me, boys, this so-called "free and jolly life of the bold outlaw," which so many story-papers picture, whether it be with Brian Boru in distant Ireland, nine hundred years ago, or in Sherwood Forest with Robin Hood, or with some "Buckeye Jim" on our own Montana hill-sides to-day, is not "what it is cracked up to be." Its attractiveness is found solely in those untruthful tales that give you only the little that seems to be sweet, but say nothing of the much that is so very, very harsh and bitter. Month by month the boy chieftain strove against fearful odds, day by day he saw his brave band grow less and less, dying under the unpitying swords of the Danes and the hardships of this wandering life, until of all the high-spirited and valiant comrades that had followed him into the hills of Clare only fifteen remained.

One chill April day, as Brian sat alone before the gloomy cave that had given him a winter shelter in the depths of the forests of Clare, his quick ear, well trained in wood-craft, caught the sound of a light step in the thicket. Snatching his ever-ready spear, he stood on guard and demanded:

"Who is there?"

No answer followed his summons. But as he waited and listened, he heard the notes of a song, low and gentle, as if for his ear alone:

"Chieftain of the stainless shield,
Prince who brooks no tribute fee;
Ne'er shall he to pagan yield
Who prevailed at Carrick-lee.
Rouse thee, arm thee, hark and heed,
Erin's strength in Erin's need."

"'T is the banshee," was the youth's first thought. "The guardian of our clan urgeth me to speedier action." And then he called aloud: "Who sings of triumph to Brian the heavy-hearted?"

"Be no longer Brian the heavy-hearted; be, as thou ever art, Brian the brave!" came the reply, and through the parting thicket appeared, not the dreaded vision of *A-oib-hinn*, the banshee, but the fair young face of his foster-sister, Eimer of the golden hair.

"Better days await thee, Brian, my brother," she said; "Mahon the King bids thee meet him at Holy Isle. None dared bring his message for fear of the death-dealing Danes who have circled thee with their earth-lines. But what dare not I do for so gallant a foster-brother?"

With the courtesy that marked the men of even those savage times, the boy chieftain knelt and kissed the hem of the daring little maiden's purple robe.

"And what wishes my brother, the king, O Eimer of the golden hair?" he said. "Knows he not that Brian has sworn never to bend his neck to the foreigner?"

"That does he know right well," replied the girl. "But his only words to me were: 'Bid Brian my brother take heart and keep this tryst with me, and the sons of Kennedy may still stand, unfettered, kings of Erin.'"

So Brian kept the tryst; and where, near the southern shores of Lough Derg, the Holy Isle still lies all strewn with the ruins of the seven churches that gave it this name, the outlawed young chieftain met the king. Braving the dangers of Danish capture and death, he had come unattended to meet his brother.

"Where, O Brian, are thy followers?" King Mahon inquired.

"Save the fifteen faithful men that remain to me in the caves of Uim-Bloit," said the lad, "the bones of my followers rest on many a field from the mountains of Connaught to the gates of Limerick; for their chieftain, O my brother, maketh no truce with the foe."

"Thou art but a boy, O Brian, and like a boy thou dost talk," said the king, reprovingly. "Thy pride doth make thee imprudent. For what hast thou gained, since, spite of all, thy followers lie dead!"

"Gained!" exclaimed the young chieftain, impetuously, as he faced Mahon the King; "I have gained the right to be called true son of the Clan of Cas – of ancestors who would brook no insult, who would pay no tribute fee to invaders, who would give no hostage; and as to my trusty liegemen who have fallen – is it not the inheritance of the Clan of Cas to die for their honor and their homes?" demanded Brian. "So surely it is no honor in valorous men, my brother, to abandon without battle or conflict their father's inheritance to Danes and traitorous kings!"

The unyielding courage of the lad roused the elder brother to action, and, secretly, but swiftly, he gathered the chiefs of the clan for council in the *dun* of King Mahon by the ford of Killaloe. "Freedom for Erin and death to the Danes!" cried they – "as the voice of one man," says the record. Again the warning beacons flamed from cairn and hill-top. In the shadow of the "Rock of Cashel," the royal sun-burst, the banner of the ancient kings, was flung to the breeze, and clansmen and vassals and allies rallied beneath its folds to strike one mighty blow for the redemption of Ireland.

In the county of Tipperary, in the midst of what is called "the golden valley," this remarkable "Rock of Cashel" looms up three hundred feet above the surrounding plain, its top, even now, crowned

with the ruins of what were in Brian's day palace and chapel, turret and battlement and ancient tower. Beneath the rough archway of the triple ramparts at the foot of the rock, and up the sharp ascent, there rode one day the herald of Ivar, the Danish King of Limerick. Through the gate-way of the palace he passed, and striding into the audience-hall, spoke thus to Mahon the King:

"Hear, now, O King! Ivar, the son of Sitric, King of Limerick and sole Over-lord of Munster, doth summon thee, his vassal, to give up to him this fortress of Cashel, to disperse thy followers, to send to him at Limerick, bounden with chains, the body of Brian the outlaw, and to render unto him tribute and hostage."

King Mahon glanced proudly out to where upon the ramparts fluttered the flag of Ireland.

"Say to Ivar, the son of Sitric," he said, "that Mahon, King of Thomond, spurns his summons, and will pay no tribute for his own inheritance."

"And say thou too," cried his impetuous younger brother, "that Brian, the son of Kennedy, and all the men of the Clan of Cas prefer destruction and death rather than submit to the tyranny of pirates and the over-lordship of foreigners and Danes!"

"Hear then, Mahon, King of Thomond; hear thou and all thy clan, the words of Ivar, the son of Sitric," came the stern warning of the Danish herald. "Thus says the king: I will gather against thee a greater muster and hosting, and I will so ravage and destroy the Clan of Cas that there shall not be left of ye one man to guide a horse's head across a ford, an abbot or a venerable person within the four corners of Munster who shall not be utterly destroyed or brought under subjection to me, Ivar the king!"

"Tell thy master," said Mahon the King, unmoved by this terrible threat, "that the Clan of Cas defy his boastful words, and will show in battle which are lords of Erin."

"And tell thy master," said his brother, "that Brian the outlaw will come to Limerick not bound with chains, but to bind them."

The Danish power was strong and terrible, but the action of the two valiant brothers was swift and their example was inspiring. Clansmen and vassals flocked to their standard, and a great and warlike host gathered in old Cashel. Brian led them to battle, and near a willow forest, close to the present town of Tipperary, the opposing forces met in a battle that lasted "from sunrise to mid-day." And the sun-burst banner of the ancient kings streamed victorious over a conquered field, and the hosts of the Danes were routed. From Tipperary to Limerick, Brian pursued the flying enemy; and capturing Limerick, took therefrom great stores of booty and many prisoners; and the queer old Irish record thus briefly tells the terrible story of young Brian's vengeance – a story that fittingly shows us the cruel customs of those savage days of old, days now fortunately gone for ever: "The fort and the good town he reduced to a cloud of smoke and to red fire afterward. The whole of the captives were collected on the hills of Saingel, and every one that was fit for war was killed, and every one that was fit for a slave was enslaved."

And from the day of Limerick's downfall the star of Ireland brightened, as in battle after battle, Brian Boru,⁵ the wise and valiant young chieftain, was hailed as victor and deliverer from sea to sea.

But now he is a lad no longer, and the story of the boy chieftain gives place to the record of the valiant soldier and the able king. For upon the death of his brother Mahon, in the year 976, Brian became King of Thomond, of Munster, and Cashel. Then uniting the rival clans and tribes under his sovereign rule, he was crowned at Tara, in the year 1000, "Ard-righ," or "High King of Erin." The reign of this great king of Ireland was peaceful and prosperous. He built churches, fostered learning, made bridges and causeways, and constructed a road around the coast of the whole kingdom. In his palace at Kincora, near the old *dun* of his father, King Kennedy, by the ford of Killaloe, he "dispensed a royal hospitality, administered a rigid and impartial justice, and so continued in prosperity for

⁵ *Boru*, or *Borumha*, the tribute; therefore "Brian of the Tribute."

the rest of his reign, having been at his death thirty-eight years King of Munster and fifteen years Sovereign of all Ireland."

So the boy chieftain came to be King of Ireland, and the story of his death is as full of interest and glory as the record of his boyish deeds. For Brian grew to be an old, old man, and the Danes and some of the restless Irishmen whom he had brought under his sway revolted against his rule. So the "grand old king of ninety years" led his armies out from the tree-shaded ramparts of royal Kincora, and meeting the enemy on the plains of Dublin, fought on Friday, April 23, 1014, near the little fishing station of Clontarf, the "last and most terrible struggle of Northman and Gael, of Pagan and Christian, on Irish soil." It was a bloody day for Ireland; but though the aged king and four of his six sons, with eleven thousand of his followers were slain on that fatal field, the Danes were utterly routed, and the battle of Clontarf freed Ireland forever from their invasions and tyrannies.

"Remember the glories of Brian the brave,
Though the days of the hero are o'er;
Though lost to Mononia and cold in the grave,
He returns to Kincora no more!
That star of the field, which so often has poured
Its beam on the battle, is set;
But enough of its glory remains on each sword
To light us to victory yet!"

So sings Thomas Moore in one of his inspiring "Irish Melodies"; and when hereafter you hear or read of Brian Boru, remember him not only as Ireland's greatest king, but also as the dauntless lad who held the ford at Killaloe, and preferred the privations of an outlaw's life to a disgraceful peace; and who, dying an old, old man, still kept his love of country undiminished, and sealed with his blood the liberty of his native land, declaring, as the poet Moore puts it in his glowing verse:

"No, Freedom! whose smiles we shall never resign,
Go tell our invaders, the Danes,
That 't is sweeter to bleed for an age at thy shrines
Than to sleep but a moment in chains!"

Kincora, the royal home of Brian the King, is now so lost in ruins that travellers cannot tell the throne-room from the cow-house; Cashel's high rock is deserted and dismantled; and on the hill of Tara the palace of the ancient Irish kings is but a grass-grown mound. But, though palaces crumble and nations decay, the remembrance of truth and valor and glowing patriotism lives on forever, and to the boys and girls of this more favored time the stories of noble lives and glorious deeds come as a priceless legacy, bidding them be stout-hearted in the face of danger and strong-souled in spite of temptation. So to every lover of daring deeds and loyal lives time cannot dim the shining record of the great King of Ireland, Brian Boru – Brian of Munster: the Boy Chieftain.

III

OLAF OF NORWAY: THE BOY VIKING

(Afterward King Olaf II., of Norway – "St. Olaf.")

[a. d. 1010.]

Old Rane, the helmsman, whose fierce mustaches and shaggy shoulder-mantle made him look like some grim old northern wolf, held high in air the great bison-horn filled with foaming mead.

"Skoal to the Viking! Hael; was-hael!"⁶ rose his exultant shout. From a hundred sturdy throats the cry re-echoed till the vaulted hall of the Swedemen's conquered castle rang again.

"Skoal to the Viking! Hael; was-hael!" and in the centre of that throng of mail-clad men and tossing spears, standing firm and fearless upon the interlocked and uplifted shields of three stalwart fighting-men, a stout-limbed lad of scarce thirteen, with flowing light-brown hair and flushed and eager face, brandished his sword vigorously in acknowledgment of the jubilant shout that rang once again through the dark and smoke-stained hall, "Was-hael to the sea-wolf's son! Skoal to Olaf the King!"

Then above of the din and clash of shouting and of steel rose the voice of Sigvat the saga-man, or song-man of the young viking, singing loud and sturdily:

"Olaf the King is on his cruise,
His blue steel staining,
Rich booty gaining,
And all men trembling at the news.
Up, war-wolf's brood! our young fir's name
O'ertops the forest trees in fame,
Our stout young Olaf knows no fear.
Though fell the fray,
He's blithe and gay,
And warriors fall beneath his spear.
Who can't defend the wealth they have
Must die or share with the rover brave!"

A fierce and warlike song, boys and girls, to raise in honor of so young a lad. But those were fierce and warlike days when men were stirred by the recital of bold and daring deeds – those old, old days, eight hundred years ago, when Olaf, the boy viking, the pirate chief of a hundred mail-clad men, stood upon the uplifted shields of his exultant fighting-men in the grim and smoke-stained hall of the gray castle of captured Sigtun, oldest of Swedish cities.

Take your atlas, and, turning to the map of Sweden, place your finger on the city of Stockholm. Do you notice that it lies at the easterly end of a large lake? That is the Maelar, beautiful with winding channels, pine-covered islands, and rocky shores. It is peaceful and quiet now, and palace and villa and quaint northern farm-house stand unmolested on its picturesque borders. But channels, and islands, and rocky shores have echoed and re-echoed with the war-shouts of many a fierce sea-rover since

⁶ "Hail and Health to the Viking!"

those far-off days when Olaf, the boy viking, and his Norwegian ships of war plowed through the narrow sea-strait, and ravaged the fair shores of the Maelar with fire and sword.

Stockholm, the "Venice of the North," as it is called, was not then in existence; and little now remains of old Sigtun save ruined walls. But travellers may still see the three tall towers of the ancient town, and the great stone-heap, alongside which young Olaf drew his ships of war, and over which his pirate crew swarmed into Sigtun town, and planted the victorious banner of the golden serpent upon the conquered walls.

For this fair young Olaf came of hardy Norse stock. His father, Harald Graenske, or "Greymantle," one of the tributary kings of Norway, had fallen a victim to the tortures of the haughty Swedish queen; and now his son, a boy of scarce thirteen, but a warrior already by training and from desire, came to avenge his father's death. His mother, the Queen Aasta, equipped a large dragon-ship or war-vessel for her adventurous son, and with the lad, as helmsman and guardian, was sent old Rane, whom men called "the far-travelled," because he had sailed westward as far as England and southward to Nörvasund (by which name men then knew the Straits of Gibraltar). Boys toughened quickly in those stirring days, and this lad, who, because he was commander of a dragon-ship, was called Olaf the King – though he had no land to rule, – was of viking blood, and quickly learned the trade of war. Already, among the rocks and sands of Sodermann, upon the Swedish coast, he had won his first battle over a superior force of Danish war-vessels.

Other ships of war joined him; the name of Olaf the Brave was given him by right of daring deeds, and "Skoal to the Viking!" rang from the sturdy throats of his followers as the little sea-king of thirteen was lifted in triumph upon the battle-dented shields.

But a swift runner bursts into the gray hall of Sigtun. "To your ships, O King; to your ships!" he cries. "Olaf, the Swedish king, men say, is planting a forest of spears along the sea-strait, and, except ye push out now, ye may not get out at all!"

The nimble young chief sprang from the upraised shields.

"To your ships, vikings, all!" he shouted. "Show your teeth, war-wolves! Up with the serpent banner, and death to Olaf the Swede!"

Straight across the lake to the sea-strait, near where Stockholm now stands, the vikings sailed, young Olaf's dragon-ship taking the lead. But all too late; for, across the narrow strait, the Swedish king had stretched great chains, and had filled up the channel with stocks and stones. Olaf and his Norsemen were fairly trapped; the Swedish spears waved in wild and joyful triumph, and King Olaf, the Swede, said with grim satisfaction to his lords: "See, jarls and lendermen, the Fat Boy is caged at last!" For he never spoke of his stout young Norwegian namesake and rival save as "Olaf Tjocke," – Olaf the Thick, or Fat.

The boy viking stood by his dragon-headed prow, and shook his clenched fist at the obstructed sea-strait and the Swedish spears.

"Shall we, then, land, Rane, and fight our way through?" he asked.

"Fight our way through?" said old Rane, who had been in many another tight place in his years of sea-roving, but none so close as this. "Why, King, they be a hundred to one!"

"And if they be, what then?" said impetuous Olaf. "Better fall as a viking breaking Swedish spears, than die a straw-death⁷ as Olaf of Sweden's bonder-man. May we not cut through these chains?"

"As soon think of cutting the solid earth, King," said the helmsman.

"So; and why not, then?" young Olaf exclaimed, struck with a brilliant idea. "Ho, Sigvat," he said, turning to his saga-man, "what was that lowland under the cliff where thou didst say the pagan Upsal king was hanged in his own golden chains by his Finnish queen?"

⁷ So contemptuously did those fierce old sea-kings regard a peaceful life, that they said of one who died quietly on his bed at home: "His was but a straw-death."

"T is called the fen of Agnefit, O King," replied the saga-man, pointing toward where it lay.

"Why, then, my Rane," asked the boy, "may we not cut our way out through that lowland fen to the open sea and liberty?"

"T is Odin's own device," cried the delighted helmsman, catching at his young chief's great plan. "Ho, war-wolves all, bite ye your way through the Swedish fens! Up with the serpent banner, and farewell to Olaf the Swede!"

It seemed a narrow chance, but it was the only one. Fortune favored the boy viking. Heavy rains had flooded the lands that slope down to the Maelar Lake; in the dead of night the Swedish captives and stout Norse oarsmen were set to work, and before daybreak an open cut had been made in the lowlands beneath Agnefit, or the "Rock of King Agne," where, by the town of Södertelje, the vikings' canal is still shown to travellers; the waters of the lake came rushing through the cut, and an open sea-strait waited young Olaf's fleet.

"Unship the rudder; hoist the sail aloft!" commanded Rane the helmsman "Sound war-horns all! Skoal to the Viking; skoal to the wise young Olaf!"

A strong breeze blew astern; the Norse rowers steered the rudderless ships with their long oars, and with a mighty rush, through the new canal and over all the shallows, out into the great Norrström, or North Stream, as the Baltic Sea was called, the fleet passed in safety while the loud war-horns blew the notes of triumph.

So the boy viking escaped from the trap of his Swedish foes, and, standing by the "grim gaping dragon's head" that crested the prow of his war-ship, he bade the helmsman steer for Gotland Isle, while Sigvat the saga-man sang with the ring of triumph:

"Down the fiord sweep wind and rain;
Our sails and tackle sway and strain;
Wet to the skin
We're sound within.
Our sea-steed through the foam goes prancing,
While shields and spears and helms are glancing.
From fiord to sea,
Our ships ride free,
And down the wind with swelling sail
We scud before the gathering gale."

What a breezy, rollicking old saga it is. Can't you almost catch the spray and sea-swell in its dashing measures, boys?

Now, turn to your atlases again and look for the large island of Gotland off the south-eastern coast of Sweden, in the midst of the Baltic Sea. In the time of Olaf it was a thickly peopled and wealthy district, and the principal town, Wisby, at the northern end, was one of the busiest places in all Europe. To this attractive island the boy viking sailed with all his ships, looking for rich booty, but the Gotlanders met him with fair words and offered him so great a "scatt," or tribute, that he agreed not to molest them, and rested at the island, an unwelcome guest, through all the long winter. Early in the spring he sailed eastward to the Gulf of Riga and spread fear and terror along the coast of Finland. And the old saga tells how the Finlanders "conjured up in the night, by their witchcraft, a dreadful storm and bad weather; but the king ordered all the anchors to be weighed and sail hoisted, and beat off all night to the outside of the land. So the king's luck prevailed more than the Finlanders' witchcraft."

Then away "through the wild sea" to Denmark sailed the young pirate king, and here he met a brother viking, one Thorkell the Tall. The two chiefs struck up a sort of partnership; and coasting southward along the western shores of Denmark, they won a sea-fight in the Ringkiöbing Fiord,

among the "sand hills of Jutland." And so business continued brisk with this curiously matched pirate firm – a giant and a boy – until, under the cliffs of Kinlimma, in Friesland, hasty word came to the boy viking that the English king, Ethelred "The Unready," was calling for the help of all sturdy fighters to win back his heritage and crown from young King Cnut, or Canute the Dane, whose father had seized the throne of England. Quick to respond to an appeal that promised plenty of hard knocks, and the possibility of unlimited booty, Olaf, the ever ready, hoisted his blue and crimson sails and steered his war-ships over sea to help King Ethelred, the never ready. Up the Thames and straight for London town he rowed.

"Hail to the serpent banner! Hail to Olaf the Brave!" said King Ethelred, as the war-horns sounded a welcome; and on the low shores of the Isle of Dogs, just below the old city, the keels of the Norse war-ships grounded swiftly, and the boy viking and his followers leaped ashore. "Thou dost come in right good time with thy trusty dragon-ships, young King," said King Ethelred; "for the Danish robbers are full well entrenched in London town and in my father Edgar's castle."

And then he told Olaf how, "in the great trading place which is called Southwark," the Danes had raised "a great work and dug large ditches, and within had builded a bulwark of stone, timber and turf, where they had stationed a large army."

"And we would fain have taken this bulwark," added the King, "and did in sooth bear down upon it with a great assault; but indeed we could make naught of it."

"And why so?" asked the young viking.

"Because," said King Ethelred, "upon the bridge betwixt the castle and Southwark have the ravaging Danes raised towers and parapets, breast high, and thence they did cast down stones and weapons upon us so that we could not prevail. And now, Sea-King, what dost thou counsel? How may we avenge ourselves of our enemies and win the town?"

Impetuous as ever, and impatient of obstacles, the young viking said: "How? why, pull thou down this bridge, King, and then may ye have free river-way to thy castle."

"Break down great London Bridge, young hero?" cried the amazed king. "How may that be? Have we a Duke Samson among us to do so great a feat?"

"Lay me thy ships alongside mine, King, close to this barricaded bridge," said the valorous boy, "and I will vow to break it down, or ye may call me caitiff and coward."

"Be it so," said Ethelred, the English king; and all the war-chiefs echoed: "Be it so!" So Olaf and his trusty Rane made ready the war-forces for the destruction of the bridge.

Old London Bridge was not what we should now call an imposing structure, but our ancestors of nine centuries back esteemed it quite a bridge. The chronicler says that it was "so broad that two wagons could pass each other upon it," and "under the bridge were piles driven into the bottom of the river."

So young Olaf and old Rane put their heads together, and decided to wreck the bridge by a bold viking stroke. And this is how it is told in the "Heimskringla," or Saga of King Olaf the Saint:

"King Olaf ordered great platforms of floating wood to be tied together with hazal bands, and for this he took down old houses; and with these, as a roof, he covered over his ships so widely that it reached over the ships' sides. Under this screen he set pillars, so high and stout that there both was room for swinging their swords, and the roofs were strong enough to withstand the stones cast down upon them."

"Now, out oars and pull for the bridge," young Olaf commanded; and the roofed-over war-ships were rowed close up to London Bridge.

And as they came near the bridge, the chronicle says:

"There were cast upon them, by the Danes upon the bridge, so many stones and missile weapons, such as arrows and spears, that neither helmet nor shield could hold out against it; and the ships themselves were so greatly damaged that many retreated out of it."

But the boy viking and his Norsemen were there for a purpose, and were not to be driven back by stones or spears or arrows. Straight ahead they rowed, "quite up under the bridge."

"Out cables, all, and lay them around the piles," the young sea-king shouted; and the half-naked rowers, unshipping their oars, reached out under the roofs and passed the stout cables twice around the wooden supports of the bridge. The loose end was made fast at the stern of each vessel, and then, turning and heading down stream, King Olaf's twenty stout war-ships waited his word:

"Out oars!" he cried; "pull, war-birds! Pull all, as if ye were for Norway!"

Forward and backward swayed the stout Norse rowers; tighter and tighter pulled the cables; fast down upon the straining war-ships rained the Danish spears and stones; but the wooden piles under the great bridge were loosened by the steady tug of the cables, and soon with a sudden spurt the Norse war-ships darted down the river, while the slackened cables towed astern the captured piles of London Bridge. A great shout went up from the besiegers, and "now," says the chronicle, "as the armed troops stood thick upon the bridge, and there were likewise many heaps of stones and other weapons upon it, the bridge gave way; and a great part of the men upon it fell into the river, and all the others fled – some into the castle, some into Southwark." And before King Ethelred, "The Unready," could pull his ships to the attack, young Olaf's fighting-men had sprung ashore, and, storming the Southwark earthworks, carried all before them, and the battle of London Bridge was won.

And the young Olaf's saga-man sang triumphantly:

"London Bridge is broken down —
Gold is won and bright renown;
Shields resounding,
War-horns sounding,
Hildar shouting in the din!
Arrows singing,
Mail-coats ringing,
Odin makes our Olaf win!"

And perhaps, who knows, this wrecking of London Bridge so many hundred years ago by Olaf, the boy viking of fifteen, may have been the origin of the old song-game dear to so many generations of children:

"London Bridge is fallen down, fallen down, fallen down —
London Bridge is fallen down, my fair lady!"

So King Ethelred won back his kingdom, and the boy viking was honored above all others. To him was given the chief command in perilous expeditions against the Danes, and the whole defence of all the coast of England. North and south along the coast he sailed with all his war-ships, and the Danes and Englishmen long remembered the dashing but dubious ways of this young sea-rover, who swept the English coast and claimed his dues from friend and foe alike. For those were days of insecurity for merchant and trader and farmer, and no man's wealth or life was safe except as he paid ready tribute to the fierce Norse allies of King Ethelred. But soon after this, King Ethelred died, and young Olaf, thirsting for new adventures, sailed away to the south and fought his way all along the French coast as far as the mouth of the river Garonne. Many castles he captured; many rival vikings subdued; much spoil he gathered; until at last his dragon-ships lay moored under the

walls of old Bordeaux, waiting for fair winds to take him around to the Straits of Gibraltar, and so on "to the land of Jerusalem."

One day, in the booty-filled "fore-hold" of his dragon-ship, the young sea-king lay asleep; and suddenly, says the old record, "he dreamt a wondrous dream."

"Olaf, great stem of kings, attend!" he heard a deep voice call; and, looking up, the dreamer seemed to see before him "a great and important man, but of a terrible appearance withal."

"If that thou art Olaf the Brave, as men do call thee," said the vision, "turn thyself to nobler deeds than vikings' ravaging and this wandering cruise. Turn back, turn back from thy purposeless journey to the land of Jerusalem, where neither honor nor fame awaits thee. Son of King Harald, return thee to thy heritage; for thou shalt be King over all Norway."

Then the vision vanished and the young rover awoke to find himself alone, save for the sleeping foot-boy across the cabin door-way. So he quickly summoned old Rane, the helmsman, and told his dream.

"'T was for thy awakening, King," said his stout old follower. "'T was the great Olaf, thine uncle, Olaf Tryggvesson the King, that didst call thee. Win Norway, King, for the portent is that thou and thine shall rule thy fatherland."

And the war-ships' prows were all turned northward again, as the boy viking, following the promise of his dream, steered homeward for Norway and a throne.

Now in Norway Earl Eric was dead. For thirteen years he had usurped the throne that should have been filled by one of the great King Olaf's line; and, at his death, his handsome young son, Earl Hakon the Fair, ruled in his father's stead. And when young King Olaf heard this news, he shouted for joy and cried to Rane:

"Now, home in haste, for Norway shall be either Hakon's heritage or mine!"

"'T is a fair match of youth 'gainst youth," said the trusty helmsman; "and if but fair luck go with thee, Norway shall be thine!"

So, from "a place called Furovald," somewhere between the mouths of Humber and of Tees, on the English coast, King Olaf, with but two stout war-ships and two hundred and twenty "well-armed and chosen persons," shook out his purple sails to the North Sea blasts, and steered straight for Norway.

As if in league against this bold young viking the storm winds came rushing down from the mountains of Norway and the cold belt of the Arctic Circle and caught the two war-ships tossing in a raging sea. The storm burst upon them with terrific force, and the danger of shipwreck was great. "But," says the old record, "as they had a chosen company and the king's luck with them all went on well.

"Thou able chief!"

sings the faithful saga-man,

"With thy fearless crew
Thou meetest with skill and courage true
The wild sea's wrath
On thy ocean path.
Though waves mast-high were breaking round,
Thou findest the middle of Norway's ground,
With helm in hand
On Saelö's strand."

Now *Sael* was Norse for "lucky" and Saelö's Island means the lucky island.

"I'll be a lucky king for landing thus upon the Lucky Isle," said rash young Olaf, with the only attempt at a joke we find recorded of him, as, with a mighty leap, he sprang ashore where the sliding keel of his war-ship ploughed the shore of Saelö's Isle.

"True, 't is a good omen, King," said old Rane the helmsman, following close behind.

But the soil of the "lucky isle" was largely clay, moist and slippery, and as the eager young viking climbed the bank his right foot slipped, and he would have fallen had not he struck his left foot firmly in the clay and thus saved himself. But to slip at all was a bad sign in those old, half-pagan, and superstitious times, and he said, ruefully: "An omen; an omen, Rane! The king falls!"

"Nay, 't is the king's luck," says ready and wise old Rane. "Thou didst not fall, King. See; thou didst but set fast foot in this thy native soil of Norway."

"Thou art a rare diviner, Rane," laughed the young king much relieved, and then he added solemnly: "It may be so if God doth will it so."

And now news comes that Earl Hakon, with a single war-ship, is steering north from Sogne Fiord; and Olaf, pressing on, lays his two ships on either side of a narrow strait, or channel, in Sandunga Sound. Here he stripped his ships of all their war-gear, and stretched a great cable deep in the water, across the narrow strait. Then he wound the cable-ends around the capstans, ordered all his fighting-men out of sight, and waited for his rival. Soon Earl Hakon's war-ship, crowded with rowers and fighting-men, entered the strait. Seeing, as he supposed, but two harmless merchant-vessels lying on either side of the channel, the young earl bade his rowers pull between the two. Suddenly there is a stir on the quiet merchant-vessels. The capstan bars are manned; the sunken cable is drawn taut. Up goes the stern of Earl Hakon's entrapped war-ship; down plunges her prow into the waves, and the water pours into the doomed boat. A loud shout is heard; the quiet merchant-vessels swarm with mail-clad men, and the air is filled with a shower of stones, and spears, and arrows. The surprise is complete. Tighter draws the cable; over topples Earl Hakon's vessel, and he and all his men are among the billows struggling for life. "So," says the record, "King Olaf took Earl Hakon and all his men whom they could get hold of out of the water and made them prisoners; but some were killed and some were drowned."

Into the "fore-hold" of the king's ship the captive earl was led a prisoner, and there the young rivals for Norway's crown faced each other. The two lads were of nearly the same age – between sixteen and seventeen, – and young Earl Hakon was considered the handsomest youth in all Norway. His helmet was gone, his sword was lost, his ring-steel suit was sadly disarranged, and his long hair, "fine as silk," was "bound about his head with a gold ornament." Fully expecting the fate of all captives in those cruel days – instant death, – the young earl nevertheless faced his boy conqueror proudly, resolved to meet his fate like a man.

"They speak truth who say of the house of Eric that ye be handsome men," said the King, studying his prisoner's face. "But now, Earl, even though thou be fair to look upon, thy luck hath failed thee at last."

"Fortune changes," said the young earl. "We both be boys; and thou, king, art perchance the shrewder youth. Yet, had we looked for such a trick as thou hast played upon us, we had not thus been tripped upon thy sunken cables. Better luck next time."

"Next time!" echoed the king; "dost thou not know, Earl, that as thou standest there, a prisoner, there may be no 'next time' for thee?"

The young captive understood full well the meaning of the words. "Yes, King," he said; "it must be only as thou mayst determine. Man can die but once. Speak on; I am ready!" But Olaf said: "What wilt thou give me, Earl, if at this time I do let thee go, whole and unhurt?"

"'T is not what I may give, but what thou mayst take, King," the earl made answer. "I am thy prisoner; what wilt thou take to free me?"

"Nothing," said the generous young viking, advancing nearer to his handsome rival. "As thou didst say, we both be boys, and life is all before us. Earl, I give thee thy life, do thou but take oath

before me to leave this my realm of Norway, to give up thy kingdom, and never to do battle against me hereafter."

The conquered earl bent his fair young head.

"Thou art a generous chief, King Olaf," he said. "I take my life as thou dost give it, and all shall be as thou wilt."

So Earl Hakon took the oath, and King Olaf righted his rival's capsized war-ship, refitted it from his own stores of booty, and thus the two lads parted; the young earl sailing off to his uncle, King Canute, in England, and the boy viking hastening eastward to Vigen, where lived his mother, the Queen Aasta, whom he had not seen for full five years.

It is harvest-time in the year 1014. Without and within the long, low house of Sigurd Syr, at Vigen, all is excitement; for word has come that Olaf the sea-king has returned to his native land, and is even now on his way to this, his mother's house. Gay stuffs decorate the dull walls of the great-room, clean straw covers the earth-floor, and upon the long, four-cornered tables is spread a mighty feast of mead and ale and coarse but hearty food, such as the old Norse heroes drew their strength and muscle from. At the door-way stands the Queen Aasta with her maidens, while before the entrance, with thirty "well-clothed men," waits young Olaf's stepfather, wise Sigurd Syr, gorgeous in a jewelled suit, a scarlet cloak, and a glittering golden helmet. The watchers on the house-tops hear a distant shout, now another and nearer one, and soon, down the highway, they catch the gleam of steel and the waving of many banners; and now they can distinguish the stalwart forms of Olaf's chosen hundred men, their shining coats of ring-mail, their foreign helmets, and their crossleted shields flashing in the sun. In the very front rides old Rane, the helmsman, bearing the great white banner blazoned with the golden serpent, and, behind him, cased in golden armor, his long brown hair flowing over his sturdy shoulders, rides the boy viking, Olaf of Norway.

It was a brave home-coming; and as the stout young hero, leaping from his horse, knelt to receive his mother's welcoming kiss, the people shouted for joy, the banners waved, the war-horns played their loudest; and thus, after five years of wandering, the boy comes back in triumph to the home he left when but a wild and adventurous little fellow of twelve.

The hero of nine great sea-fights, and of many smaller ones, before he was seventeen, young Olaf Haraldson was a remarkable boy, even in the days when all boys aimed to be battle-trying heroes. Toughened in frame and fibre by his five years of sea-roving, he had become strong and self-reliant, a man in action though but a boy in years.

"I am come," he said to his mother and his stepfather, "to take the heritage of my forefathers. But not from Danish nor from Swedish kings will I supplicate that which is mine by right. I intend rather to seek my patrimony with battle-ax and sword, and I will so lay hand to the work that one of two things shall happen: Either I shall bring all this kingdom of Norway under my rule, or I shall fall here upon my inheritance in the land of my fathers."

These were bold words for a boy of seventeen. But they were not idle boastings. Before a year had passed, young Olaf's pluck and courage had won the day, and in harvest-time, in the year 1015, being then but little more than eighteen years old, he was crowned King of Norway in the Drontheim, or "Throne-home," of Nidaros, the royal city, now called on your atlas the city of Drontheim. For fifteen years King Olaf the Second ruled his realm of Norway. The old record says that he was "a good and very gentle man"; but history shows his goodness and gentleness to have been of a rough and savage kind. The wild and stern experiences of his viking days lived again even in his attempts to reform and benefit his land. When he who had himself been a pirate tried to put down piracy, and he who had been a wild young robber sought to force all Norway to become Christian, he did these things in so fierce and cruel a way that at last his subjects rebelled, and King Canute came over with a great army to wrest the throne from him. On the bloody field of Stiklestad, July 29, 1030, the stern king fell, says Sigvat, his saga-man,

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