

little since the final subjection of the Celt and the union of the Saxon kingdoms under Egbert; the imperfect character of that union, each kingdom retaining its own council and its own interests; and above all the command of the sea, which made the invaders ubiquitous, while the march of the defenders was delayed, and their junction prevented, by the woods and morasses of the uncleared island, in which the only roads worthy of the name were those left by the Romans.

It would be wrong to call the Northmen mere corsairs, or even to class them with piratical states such as *Silicia* of old, or *Barbary* in more recent times. Their invasions were rather to be regarded as an after-effect of the great migration of the Germanic tribes, one of the last waves of the flood which overwhelmed the Roman Empire, and deposited the germs of modern Christendom. They were, and but for the defensive energy of the Christianized Teuton would have been, to the Saxon what the Saxon had been to the Celt, whose sole monuments in England now are the names of hills and rivers, the usual epitaph of exterminated races. Like the Saxons, the Northmen came by sea, untouched by those Roman influences, political and religious, by which most of the barbarians had been more or less transmuted before their actual irruption into the Empire. If they treated all the rest of mankind as their prey, this was the international law of heathendom, modified only by a politic humanity in the case of the Imperial Roman, who preferred enduring dominion to blood and booty.

With Christianity came the idea even now imperfectly realized, of the brotherhood of man. The Northmen were a memorable race, and English character, especially its maritime element, received in them a momentous addition. In their

northern abodes they had undergone, no doubt, the most rigorous process of national selection. The sea-roving life, to which they were driven by the poverty of their soil, as the Scandinavian of our day is driven to emigration, intensified in them the vigour, the enterprise, and the independence of the Teuton. As has been said before, they were the first ocean sailors; for the Phœnicians, though adventurous, had crept along the shore; and the Greeks and Romans had done the same. The Northman, stouter of heart than they, put forth into mid Atlantic.

American antiquarians are anxious to believe in a Norse discovery of America. Norse colonies were planted in Greenland beyond what is now the limit of human habitation; and when a power grew up in his native seats which could not be brooked by the Northman's love of freedom, he founded amidst the unearthly scenery of Iceland a community which brought the image of a republic of the Homeric type far down into historic times. His race, widely dispersed in his course of adventure, and everywhere asserting its ascendancy, sat on the thrones of Normandy, Apulia, Sicily, England, Ireland, and even Russia, and gave heroic chiefs to the crusaders.

The pirates were not without heart towards each other, nor without a rudimentary civilization, which included on the one hand a strong regard for freehold property in land, and on the other a passionate love of heroic days. Their mythology was the universal story of the progress of the sun and the changes of the year, but in a Northern version, wild with storms and icebergs, gloomy with the darkness of Scandinavian winters. Their religion was a war religion, the lord of their hearts a war god; their only heaven was that of the brave, their only hell that of the coward; and the joys of paradise