

skill (being expert carpenters and shipwrights) in making palisades, shelter-works, wooden towers for assailing tall walls, and the like, and good knowledge in throwing up earthen lines and dykes, digging trenches, and making portages to haul their ships over difficult ground, in those cases where the use of fire, or fair words, or a sudden and bold attack was impossible.

The numbers of the hosts varied greatly, but reckoning the average crew as forty men and upwards, we hear of fleets of hundreds of ships. These large fleets were made up of lesser fleets, two or three sailing together on some enterprise too weighty for one sea-king's command to deal with. There were seldom less than two leaders, each a king or king's son, to a fleet, and usually two captains to each vessel, one to each watch, no doubt. This had its use in lessening the chance of a commander's death breaking up the expedition, or leading to disaster in battle.

It may be noted that Earl is used for the first time, it seems, as a technical term for a leader of less rank than king, in these wicking voyages, and in the ninth century. It is especially used by the North-men;¹ the Danes are led by sea-kings.

¹ Cf. B.M. Anglo-Saxon Coin Catalogue, C. F. Keary, No. 1077, p. 230. Sitric Coins.