

nisbani. He, it is said, to outdo Hengist and Horsa and the Northmen from Hærethaland, set out to conquer England with *two* ships. Captured by Ælla of Northumberland, he was thrown into the pit of snakes. His sons, Ivar the Boneless and his brethren, avenged him by the great invasion and conquest; but their saga embroiders the true story with picturesque and mythical ornament. It tells how Ivar the Crafty, hanging back from the first fruitless attempt, bargained with Ælla for as much land as an ox-hide would cover,—the old Hengist and Horsa plot. Thus founding London (or York), he gained Ælla's confidence, brought his brothers' army back, and avenged his father with the torture of Ælla and St. Eadmund. The episode is not made more historical by placing the scene in Ireland, as Haliday (*Scandinavian Dublin*, p. 28) tries to do. A historic Ragnar was present at the siege of Paris in 845, and Ivar with his brethren conquered East Anglia and Northumbria; but the legendary part of the saga is merely one variant of the inevitable myth of explanation, invented to show why the Vikings attacked Britain, other variants being Roger of Wendover's tale of Berne the huntsman and Lothbrok, and Gaimar's of Buern Buzecarle.

It must be evident that such legends of prehistoric Vikings—Celtic, English and Scandinavian—are the natural growth of the story-telling genius at an age when the great movement was past. After every war we have a crop of novels about it. At the same time, the fact of piracy was no invention of the