

and France for such commodities ; later on, captives were sold in Ireland or carried east to Esthonia and Russia. But in January 793 a cargo of English monks could not have been taken so far with profit, and there is no hint here or elsewhere that the Vikings took prisoners with the definite intention of holding them to ransom, except in a much later period when all the circumstances had changed, as in the sack of Canterbury, 1012. They carried off their captives to sell in some distant port ; but where ?

Everything seems to indicate that this attack came from the south. We have hints of previous plundering on French and English coasts, and Roger de Hoveden, a north-country writer, says that before the attack on Lindisfarne there had been attempts on the Northumbrian coast. The earlier Scandinavian boat, long and shallow and with great, top-heavy sail was not built for crossing the North Sea in winter. Alcuin indeed wrote, "Nothing like their mode of navigation has ever been heard of before," and the adventure was in any case a remarkable achievement. Still the coast route must have been the one followed on this occasion ; and the sudden, decisive attack upon the weakest point, the rich, undefended island, showed previous knowledge and a well-laid plan of action. We cannot help feeling that the "wolves" were led by a fox whose earth lay somewhere nearer than Norway or even Denmark ; and that as Christian nations had set the example of raiding, so now a "Christian" employer showed the way and profited by the work—some one at least who lived in a country