

seem now as if foreigners were to sweep over it for the third time. These foreigners are usually spoken of as Danes, or Northmen, and included those who lived anywhere in the vicinity of the Baltic Sea. The Saxons and Danes were of the same race, but while the Saxons had become Christians, the Danes still worshipped the heathen gods; and while the Saxons had learned to live peaceably on the land, the Danes thought that nothing was so glorious as to set out in a war vessel with a company of wild, reckless followers, to go wherever the waves and the winds might bear them; to land upon any shore, no matter where; to destroy, burn, kill, fill their ship with treasure, with slaves, clothes, dried meat,—anything that they could seize,—and carry it all back to their own country, to show their prowess to those who had remained at home.

King Egbert was able to drive these robbers away, and so was his son after him; but in the reigns of Egbert's grandsons, matters grew worse and worse, for the Danes



A SAXON HOUSE

came in great swarms. There would be an alarm from the east, but before the king could go to the rescue, another alarm would come from the south. Houses were burned, people tortured or killed or carried away as slaves. If a man planted a field of grain, he had little hope of being able to reap it. The Danes hated the English for giving up the old gods, Woden and Thor, and they delighted in killing the monks and in robbing and burning the churches and monasteries. Everything that was made of gold or of silver was seized by the robbers. The precious manuscripts were of no value to them, and they took special care to burn every one that