

**KING PENDA'S CAPTAIN:
A ROMANCE OF
FIGHTING IN THE DAYS
OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS**

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King Penda's captain: a romance of fighting in the days of the Anglo-Saxons by MacKenzie
MacBride

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MACKENZIE MACBRIDE

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Fergus stepped to the side of Edwy and drew his sword, shouting,
"I am your captain: stand back, Mercians!"

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Feargus stepped to the side of Edwy and drew his sword, shouting, " I am your captain: stand back, Mercians! "	<i>Frontispiece</i>
So Feargus put his hands between the hands of Penda and became his man	<i>Facing page 4</i>
Feargus thrust his body through the opening and held Torfrida in his arms and kissed her and she him	" 44
" Now," said Penda, " cometh death, and I shall die in the best company that ever I was in "	" 72
Feargus wrenched the sword from Osbert's hand and struck him to the earth	" 116
The feet of Feargus sank deep in the snow at every step and made him weary, but he fared on	" 170
Then Feargus thought that Torfrida was like to die, for she fainted, and lay for long as one in death	" 178
Torfrida drew forth a burning faggot and then stepped to the windows and set the hangings alight	" 190

KING PENDA'S CAPTAIN.

CHAPTER I

OF FEARGUS AND KING PENDA

It chanced in the days when the preaching of Augustine and his followers had stirred all England from the Tyne to the Thames and the English sea that there arose in the Midlands, by the waters of Trent, a king of the Mercians named Penda, son of Wybba, who, though he counted full fifty years when he came to be king, had spirit like to that of a young man, and he was a great warrior and faithful unto death to that which he held true. When he saw the people of the lands around him casting over the gods of their forefathers and following the new faith he was wrath, and the more so with Northumbria, which had far outstripped the other nations of the Angles under its noble and mighty king. For Edwin

had broken the old gods and brought under his overlordship the countrymen of Penda, and the North Angles, the Middle Angles, East Angles, and Southumbrians or men of Lindesey. Penda had seen all these things but had bided his time, though the great heart in him beat hard as he beheld. And when he came to be king he saw himself beset with foes: on the one hand his people were hemmed in by the Welsh and West Saxons, on the other by the North English and Middle English, East Angles and Lindiswaras or Lindeseymen, while towering above all was impregnable Northumbria. When Penda arose the heathen people, seeing the front of him, rallied, and he led them forth and conquered: his sword fell first upon his near neighbours the North Angles, Middle Angles, East Angles, and Southumbrians, and he brought them in under him. And, the heathen people still gathering to his banner, he tore the lands to the west from the West Saxons and overthrew king Cadwalla of Wales. Then the Welsh king, seeing what a mighty man was Penda, joined hands with him, and together they brought the kingdom of Wessex to their feet. So everywhere the Mercians had the victory. Then, at length, king Edwin lifted his war brand