

Forfatter: Grundtvig, N. F. S.

Titel: Udrag fra Bibliotheca Anglo-Saxonica. Prospectus, and Proposals of a Subscription, for the Publication of the Most Valuable Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts, Illustrative of the Early Poetry and Literature of Our Language. Most of Which Have Never Yet Been Printed

Citation: Grundtvig, N. F. S.: "Grundtvigs værker", i Grundtvig, N. F. S.: *Grundtvigs værker*, Faculty of Arts, Aarhus University, s. 27. Onlineudgave fra Grundtvigs Værker: [https://tekster.kb.dk/catalog/gv-1830\\_487A-txt-shoot-idm214/facsimile.pdf](https://tekster.kb.dk/catalog/gv-1830_487A-txt-shoot-idm214/facsimile.pdf) (tilgået 24. juni 2024)

Anvendt udgave: Grundtvigs værker

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And here a question arises as to an editor, who, conversant with the subject, might so far acquire the confidence of the public as to be deemed fitted for the task. When Messrs. Black, Young, and Young unexpectedly applied to me on the subject, notwithstanding the interest I have long felt in everything connected with it, I could not but hesitate to engage in it, both from the circumstance of my being a foreigner, and the calls of duty which bind me to my own country. But I have since thought there would be an idle and affected modesty in seeming to hesitate from any doubts I entertained of my relative fitness for the task; and yet, whatever I may be, or may presume of myself, at home, I am very sensible that I am but an obscure individual to the English public, and without this application I should never have ventured to come before them in the capacity of an advocate, as it were, for my poor unhappy brethren, those early Anglo-Saxon poets and divines who, for more than a thousand years, have been confined in those dark prison-houses which in this country I understand are so expressively termed *Presses*. But, during the two last summers, which, by the liberal support of the Danish government, I have spent in England, engaged in the examination of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, it has been my good fortune to become acquainted with the most eminent native Anglo-Saxon scholars; and though I could not but regret that they were no way likely to engage in any edition of these works themselves, I take a pride in stating that they are willing and eager to recommend an edition undertaken by me. Under these circumstances I am not unwilling to try my chance of success, even though I should fail in exciting that interest for the subject which I desire. I shall, at least, have this satisfaction—that I have addressed the English public previous to any attempt I may make out of England, where, as one not altogether unknown, and an author of rather long standing, I might hope for a certain degree of success, though I could not but also feel myself in the ungracious situation of casting a reflection upon a country where I am satisfied no foreigner has ever been allowed a more liberal access to its unparalleled stores of ancient manuscripts. If I were an English and not a Danish poet and historian, I should apply to my country these striking lines of the immortal bard:

— Duller should'st thou be than the fat weed  
That rots itself in ease on Lethæ's wharf,  
Would'st thou not stir in this?

but, unable as I am to express my thoughts in the English language with even that energy which might prepossess the public in my favour, I shall have no reason to complain of my services being rejected if it shall appear that this indifference on their part is not to the subject, but to me as the Editor.

I will now submit an outline of the publication projected, with my own opinion of the intrinsic merit of the respective compositions, leaving it to the public to decide whether any reasonable confidence can be put in my statement.

The Anglo-Saxon translation of Beda, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Anglo-Saxon laws, and all that comes under the denomination of public records, we leave out of the question, as these will all find a place in the 'Corpus Historicum,' now happily printing at the expense of the Government; and the work could never have fallen into better hands than those of Mr. Petrie and Mr. Price.

If Mr. Price—who, in the new edition of 'Warton's History of English Poetry,' has shown himself not only a most accomplished Anglo-Saxon scholar, but also an excellent judge of poetic merit—were likely to undertake an edition of the series I am about to mention, I should much more rejoice in giving way to him than in proceeding with it myself; but as he has been unfortunately prevented from keeping his promise of giving a new edition of Beowulf, with a literal English version, the first thing I propose to engage in is the publication and illustration of this poem, of which the merits are so great and so obvious, that it would be confessedly a disgrace to England if a tolerably good edition of it were any longer a desideratum.

This poem, though published abroad fifteen years ago, where it has excited considerable attention, seems almost unknown to the English