Forfatter: Grundtvig, N. F. S.

Titel: Udrag fra History of the Northmen, or Danes and Normans, from the Earliest Times to

the Conquest of England by William of Normandy

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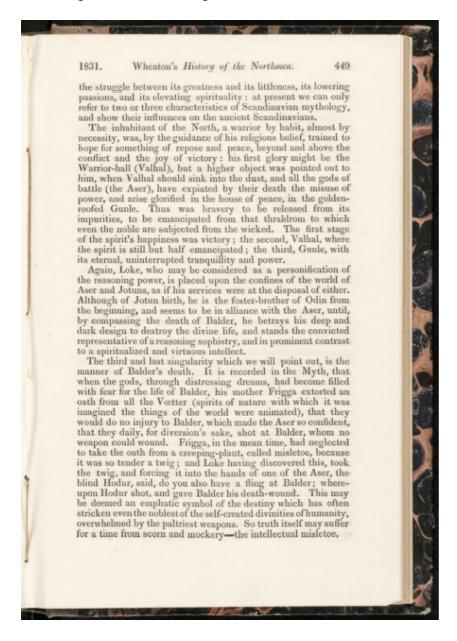
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450 Wheaton's History of the Northmen. Passing on to the poetry of the North, it is obvious, that where the mythology has a universal historic character, the poetry will principally be national-historic, and twine itself, not as a chaplet of roses around the beauties of nature, but as a laurel-wreath round the brow of the hero, and if it approaches beauty with its myrtle garland, it will be when beauty becomes linked to valour. It would here be out of place to discuss the peculiar distinctions, It would here be out of place to discuss the peculiar distinctions, or to weigh one against another, the separate merits of natural and historic poetry. We are here on the domains of taste, where the praise should be according to the pleasure; but if it cannot be denied that heroic achievements, and passionate and faithful love, are naturally calculated to produce poetical inspirations, the Skalds of the North deserve to be listened to by those who desire to be acquainted with, not merely one, but all the regions of the wonderful creation which poetry has called into existence; and who would not wish to be every where at home in a world, where the human mind excited by the deepest emotions, strives in all directions to elicit whatever it is able—if not to satisfy, at least to calm or sweeten or dignify them? in all directions to elicit whatever it is able—if not to satisfy, at least to calm or sweeten or dignify them?

In this part of the field, Mr. Wheaton has not quite done all we could have wished. It is, indeed, a theme not easily to be handled; and we are not sure that poets themselves have said much about poetry that is worthy to be heard and remembered. Mr. Wheaton's account of the Skalds in general, and of the historical songs of the Edda, are however very interesting, if not quite complete; but he should not have passed so slightly over Beowulf's Drapa, one of the very brightest monuments of ancient Northern poetry, a mirror in which so much light is reflected from the days of old. He has referred to it, and is certainly not unacquainted with it. In Denmark, it is well known through Grundtvig's admirable translation—in England, it has hitherto excited attention wholly disproportioned to its high merits. We are surprised that Mr. Wheaton should deem the Rigs-mal worthy of comparison with Beowulf's poem; and yet more so, that on the prised that Mr. Wheaton should deem the Rigs-mal worthy of comparison with Beowulf's poem; and yet more so, that on the authority of Thorkelin, whom he does not name, and if he did the authority would not be of much value, he deems Beowulf's great work to be "probably a translation or rifaccimento of some older lay, originally written in the ancient language of Denmark." [p. 130]. We are a little tender, be it owned, of Beowulf's reputation, and unwilling that the original merit of one of the most remarkable, if not the most remarkable, literary production of our Anglo-Saxon progenitors, should, without good evidence, be snatched away. Of Beowulf other occasions will be found to speak. A version into English, and accompanied with a preface