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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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Hakon, the foster-son of Athelstane, are indisputable evidence of this. Of the Edda songs, the descriptions of battle are the most remarkable passages.

There is, however, a source, which has not been referred to by Mr. Wheaton, whence very valuable relics of ancient Northern poetry may be derived. Though what is there recorded is only in the shape of translation, there can be no doubt of its authenticity, and as little of its poetical recommendations. We refer to those Latin imitations of the ancient Northern songs which are to be found in the writings of Saxo-Grammaticus. These, collected by him in the twelfth century, and immediately referred to those who might have impugned their genuineness had there been any grounds for doubt, we cannot but deem of the highest value; and of literary debts, long owing and still unpaid, we think the debt to Saxo among the strongest. In his living pages will be found a moving picture of the past, which, though sometimes verging into too fanciful a world, does notwithstanding present a striking portraiture of things that were. Here may be traced the original of that master-piece of Shakspeare, his Hamlet; and here might also be followed to their sources, what Ehlenschläger and many inferior minds have made the topics of their songs.* Mr. Wheaton supposes that Hamlet (Saxo's Amlet) assisted the Saxons against the Franks in the sixth century. Where Mr. Wheaton discovered any authority for this theory, we know not, unless in that wilderness of Suhm, which the author calls a "Critical History of Denmark," and of which it has been somewhat bitterly, but not altogether undeservedly said, that every thing is to be found there, but truth.

Proceeding now to the history of the North, let the reader allow his interest to be excited, and he will find how much the events of the middle ages in general, and of the British isles in particular, will receive of light from the sources to which we are now directing his attention; he will see, that in the North there was formed an historic style in the mother-tongue, so pure, so simple, and so lively, that it might serve as a pattern even now. He will discover that one kingdom at least in the North, has an eventful history thus written, with the pencil of a Walter Scott, and will feel that it has some claim upon the attention of civilized man. Now it is really the fact, that Snorro Sturleson's "Heimskringla," or history of Norway, written in the thirteenth century, is, beyond any other, a book such as here described, which, al-

* Ewald's "Balder" and "Rolf Krage" are among the first results of the study; Ehlenschläger's "Steerkodder" followed; and Grundtvig's translation of the whole of Saxo, is a very important contribution to the subject.

though it has only yet been translated into Danish, Swedish, and Latin, deserves to be rendered into all languages, since it would be an ornament to the literature of any land, and become a favourite book with old and young, with all who enjoy the union of simplicity and grandeur. More or less resemblance to this master-work have all the Historic Sagas of Iceland, but even where Snorro's rank makes his tone and his style questionable, as in *Knylinga-Saga* (a history of the Danish kings, from Canute the Great, to the son of Valdemar the Great) and in *Nials saga*, (an Icelandic domestic history) his work is still highly valuable. It represents a continually renewed conflict for the regal throne on Doore, and it excites so lively an interest, that it is impossible for the reader to remain neutral, but he is hurried away by the stream with the hero who pleases him, and sorrows by his grave till he once more arises in a renovated form.

These are some of the motives which ought to direct the attention of literary men to the North, and it is clear, that this attention should naturally be strong and fervent, in the degree in which nations are allied to the old Northmen, and consequently likely to participate in their character, and able to enter into their feelings. Now, that no nation beyond the bounds of the North is so nearly akin to it in spirit as the English, has been generally imagined through so many centuries, and is indeed so manifest, that we should have presumed it to be a decided matter, did not the book which we announce so expressly remind us, that we live in an age, wherein not merely every thing may be called in doubt, but wherein doubt may become, before one is aware of it, even an article of faith.

Mr. Wheaton says,

‘ In the latter part of the fifth century of the Christian era, the island of Britain, deserted by its Roman masters, was invaded and subdued by three different tribes of barbarians who dwelt between the Elbe and the Baltic sea,—the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. The history of the Anglo-Saxon nation, which was formed by the blending of these tribes, is intimately connected with that of the Scandinavians, and it has for us an interest lively and enduring, since from it we trace the origin of the English name and nation. But the race of the Anglo-Saxons belongs to the Teutonic, not the Scandinavian family; and though they participated in the widely diffused worship of Odin, the language spoken by them is perfectly distinct from the ancient Northern, or Icelandic tongue. The Jutes, who came from the northern parts of the Cimbric Chersonesus, were the least numerous of these emigrating tribes. The Angles dwelt in the present duchy of Sleswick, which they entirely abandoned, leaving the country a perfect desert. The Saxons were of that tribe of the Saxon confederation