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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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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

who inhabited Nordalbingia, or the territory between the Elbe and the Eyder.—pp. 10, 11.

The authority referred to here, is that of professor Rask, who quotes as his authority the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Yet it may well be doubted if there be any the slightest ground for these refined and closely drawn distinctions. The proof has not yet been produced that, either in Denmark or in England, a people speaking Icelandic ever existed; and as little is it proved that the Anglo-Saxon language, as we find it in books, is a mixed language sprung up in England, produced by the amalgamation of the Vikings, whom history calls Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, and by local circumstances with which we are unacquainted. It would, indeed, be much too rash to decide from this book-language on the German origin of the Anglo-Saxons, even if it had much more of a German character than it really possesses. Without inquiring into grammatical niceties, the argument which, by means of the language, is brought against the *Northernity* of the Anglo-Saxons, may be combated by these three facts; that modern English, which has still most in common with ancient English, is far more nearly allied to Norse than it is to German; that Danes and Icelanders have found it much less difficult than Germans to make themselves acquainted with Anglo-Saxon; and lastly, that the ancient Icelanders reckoned the language as well of England as of Denmark, but never that of Germany, under what they called Danish. If, in the meanwhile, other positive proof of the preponderance of the northern spirit amongst the Anglo-Saxons is required, than that which springs forth visibly from their whole history and literature, the "Drapa" of Beowulf might well serve for such; since we there not only find Hengist as a fief-holder of the Danish king, but discover the clearest northern tradition, and are continually occupied with Denmark and Gothland, without hearing one particle about Germany. To meet this irresistible fact, by declaring, like Thorkekin, that Beowulf's "Drapa" is a translation from the Icelandic, is certainly easy enough, but if it be merely remembered that the Icelandic literature first commences at the termination of the eleventh century, just when the Anglo-Saxon, through the Norman invasion, ceases, there will be little disposition to select so desperate an outlet, instead of following the track of history, and coming to this reasonable conclusion; that in the North of England, which in particular continued to maintain a close alliance with the North, and which was the principal seat of Anglo-Saxon poetry, the Northern legends were preserved, from the middle of the sixth century, to the beginning of the eighth, when Beowulf's "Drapa" must have been written.