

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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For instance, he should have swept away, as unworthy of credence—or at all events he should have spoken more doubtfully on the subject, unless far better support could be found for the theory than any hitherto given—all those tales of the expeditions of the ancient Northmen to America, which are very current indeed among Icelandic historians, but which, if traced to their sources, will be discovered to be without authority. But does not Snorro Sturleson, the father of northern history, does he not record these American expeditions? Not he; though Mr. Wheaton quotes him; the fact being, that the passage which is printed in the Copenhagen edition, from the very faulty and almost worthless Swedish edition, and which records the visits of the Northmen to America (Vinland), is not, we believe, to be found in any existing ancient MS. And the accounts given of the natural productions, natural appearances, and aboriginal inhabitants of the discovered land, prove that they cannot refer to the American continent. The length of the days would, as Mr. Wheaton says, give the latitude of Boston, in the United States; yet the Icelandic chronicles tell us, the land was occupied by a race of squalid and diminutive dwarfs, and produced a quantity of grapes, and that the language of the natives was “something like the Irish tongue.” The internal evidence of the story, is enough to show that it is wholly unworthy of credit, and it should have been mentioned to be refuted. The same tale is told in the life of Rollo (Rolf Rögnvaldsen) the progenitor of William the Conqueror; but the Norman historians seem, in his case, to have been especially busy in inventing all sorts of spurious adventures to give *éclat* to the ancestral history of the man who founded in England a dynasty of kings. It is not from any disposition to lessen the interest of the past, that we desire to sweep away the rubbish and the weeds that have gathered round its authentic records. On the contrary, the true chronicles of the Northernmen are pregnant with all the charms of heroic adventure; and rise up in the midst of a mythology, bold, characteristic, and poetical. The eye of inquiry turns with eagerness proportioned to its knowledge, on the literary Aurora Borealis of the middle ages; those northern lights that throw so wondrous an illumination on the night of the past.