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History.

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DENMARK, SWEDEN, AND NORWAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
THE "HISTORY OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL."

VOL. II.

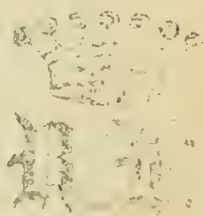
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HISTORY  
OF  
DENMARK SWEDEN AND NORWAY.

BY  
G. F. DUNHAM,  
*Author of "The History of the Danes," &c.*

VOL. II.



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# TABLE,

## ANALYTICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL,

### TO THE SECOND VOLUME OF

## THE HISTORY OF SCANDINAVIA.

### CHAPTER IV. — *continued.*

#### MARITIME EXPEDITIONS OF THE NORTHMEN DURING THE PAGAN TIMES.

#### SECTION II.

#### IN THE ORKNEYS, THE HEBRIDES, ICELAND, GREENLAND, NORTH AMERICA, RUSSIA, ETC.

795—1026.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A GOVERNMENT IN THE ORKNEYS. — SUCCESSION OF JARLS, ROGNEVALD, SIGURD, HALLAD, EINAR, SIGURD II., ETC. — DISCOVERY AND COLONIZATION OF ICELAND. — DISCOVERY AND COLONIZATION OF GREENLAND. — ALLEGED DISCOVERY OF NORTH AMERICA. — STATEMENT OF FACTS CONNECTED WITH IT. — FOUNDATION OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE BY THE SCANDINAVIAN RURIC.

A. D.		Page
888.	Establishment of a Government in the Orkneys by Harald Harfagre; Sigurd, the first Jarl - -	- 1
889—892.	Able Administration of Sigurd; he is succeeded by Einar - -	- 2
893—936.	Administration of Einar - -	- 4
936—943.	Of Arnkel and Erlend, the Sons of Einar - -	- 5
946—980.	Succession of Jarls - -	-

vi ANALYTICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

A. D.	Page
980—1014.	Sigurd, the next Jarl, compelled to embrace Christianity ;
	Legend - - - - - 6
	Piratical Depredations on the neighbouring Islands - 8
861, &c.	Iceland Discovered by the Norwegian Naddod, who is followed by other Navigators - - - 9
874.	Iceland first colonised by Ingulf ; Fate of Jorleif - 10
884.	Other Colonists, especially Thorolf, the Priest of Thor ; Manner in which he established the new Colony - 11
874—936.	Progress of the new Colonies - - - 13
	Formation of a Northern Code - - - 14
930.	Internal Economy of this important Island ; the great Chief of the Law - - - - 15
	Circumstances which led to the Discovery of Greenland by Eric the Red - - - - 16
	Christianity Introduced into Greenland by Leif, the Son of Eric - - - - 17
1001.	Alleged Discovery of North America by Biarn, a Descendant of Ingulf - - - - 17
	The newly discovered Country visited by Leif, the Son of Eric - - - - 18
	Remarks on this Relation - - - - 19
1004—1008.	Voyage of Thorwald, who dies in the Country called Vinland - - - - 19
1009.	Thorfin, a Norwegian Chief, makes the first Attempt at Colonisation - - - - 20
1026—1121.	The Country visited by other People, especially by the Missionaries - - - - 21
	The Balance of Evidence decidedly in favour of the alleged Discovery of the American Continent many Ages before Columbus - - - - 22
862.	A Scandinavian Dynasty founded in Russia by Ruric - 23
	Circumstances connected with that memorable Event ; how far probable - - - - 24
861, 862.	Novogrod the Seat of the new Dynasty - - - - 25
	The Domination of the Strangers extended to Kief ; two Governments - - - - 26
882.	Evils arising from the Creation of two States ; Kief subdued by the Regent of Novogrod - - - 27
	Maritime Expeditions of the Northmen into Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Greece, &c. - - - 27

CHAP. V.

COSMOGONY AND RELIGION OF SCANDINAVIA.

INTRODUCTION.

THE TWO EDDAS, THE ELDER AND THE YOUNGER, THE POETIC AND THE PROSE. — CONTENTS OF THE FORMER. — DIVISION INTO

CLASSES. 1. THE MYSTICAL. 2. THE MYTHIC-DIDACTIC. 3. THE PURELY MYTHOLOGICAL. 4. THE MYTHIC-HISTORICAL.—POEMS OF EACH CLASS. — THE PROSE EDDA. — SNORRO STURLESON.

	Page
Religion of the Pagan Northmen an interesting Subject of Inquiry	30
The Two Eddas	30
I. Saemund, reputed Compiler of the Poetic Edda; its slow Publication	31
Poems included in the Elder Edda divisible into four Classes	31
1. The Mystie Class :—	
The Voluspa	32
The Grougaldor	32
The Magic of Odin similar in many Respects to that of Zoroaster	33
2. The Mytho-didactic Class :—	
The Vafthrudnis-mål	34
Grimnis-mål	34
Other Pieces of this Class	36
The Hava-mål	36
3. The purely Mythologic Class :—	
The Hymis-guida	37
The Hamars-heimt	37
The Rafna-galdur Odins	37
The Skirnirs-for	37
The Vegtams-Quida	38
Undoubted Antiquity of the preceding Poems	38
4. The Mytho-historical Class	38
II. The Prose or Younger Edda, usually ascribed to Snorro Sturleson	39
Some Account of that celebrated Man	40
Sources from which he drew	42

## SECTION I.

THE SCANDINAVIAN UNIVERSE, ITS WORLDS, AND THEIR INHABITANTS IN GENERAL, WITH THE PHYSICAL INTERPRETATION.

CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE. — YMER. — THE GIANTS. — THE GODS. — OTHER BEINGS. — THE NINE WORLDS, WITH THEIR POSITION AND PHYSICAL INTERPRETATION. — THE TWELVE HOUSES OF ASGARD. — SWARTALFAHEIM. — INHABITANTS OF THE NINE WORLDS. — THE ASER. — THE VEVER, ETC.

Progress of Creation according to that venerable Authority, the Elder Edda	43
The Waters of Nifleheim flow into the Abyss and freeze	43
But they are thawed by the Fires of Muspelheim	44

# viii ANALYTICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

	Page
To the Operation of Cold and Heat on the Waters of Nifleheim must be ascribed the Origin of this visible Universe - -	44
Generation of Ymer, the Patriarch of the Frost Giants - -	44
Creation of the Cow Andumbla, which calls Burè into Existence -	45
From this new Being, half Deity, half Giant, arose Odin, Vilè, and Vè	45
Ymer destroyed, and the Universe formed from his Body - -	45
Affinities between the Scandinavian and other Systems of Mythology -	46
The Cow, as a Symbol, very generally diffused - -	47
Physical Interpretation of the Mythos - - -	47
Physical Interpretation of another Mythos, the Destruction of Ymer and his Offspring - - -	48
Notions concerning a Supreme, Eternal Being entertained by the Scandinavians - - - -	49
Creation of other Beings, especially the Dwarfs - - -	50
Creation of Man - - - -	51

## THE NINE WORLDS.

GIMLE AND MUSPELHEIM - - - -	53
MIDGARD AND UTGARD - - - -	53
ASGARD - - - -	55
Divine Residences in Asgard : —	
1. Ydale - - - -	56
2. Alfheim - - - -	57
3. Valaskialf - - - -	57
4. Soequabeck - - - -	58
5. Gladsheim - - - -	58
6. Thrymheim - - - -	58
7. Breidablik - - - -	59
8. Himmelbiërg - - - -	60
9. Folkvangur - - - -	60
10. Glitner - - - -	61
11. Noatun - - - -	61
12. Landvide - - - -	61
Residences of Odin - - - -	62
Diversions of the Einheriar - - - -	62
Ascent of slain Heroes from Earth to Heaven - - -	63
Bloodthirsty Character of the Odinis - - - -	63
SWARTALFAHEIM - - - -	64
Residences of the Alfs or Elves - - - -	64
Their Nature according to Thorlacius - - - -	64
Origin of the Word - - - -	65
Universality of the Word - - - -	66
Traditions still rife respecting them - - - -	67
Scandinavian Dwarfs - - - -	69
Two Legends respecting them - - - -	70
Their wondrous Manufactures at the Instance of Loke - -	70
Physical Interpretation - - - -	72
THORSTON AND THE DWARF - - - -	73
HECHLIN AND NIFLEHEIM - - - -	74



# ANALYTICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE. ix

	Page
THE YGGDRASIL - - - - -	75
Explanation of this Mythos - - - - -	77
Races which inhabited the Scandinavian Universe - - - - -	78
Were the Aser Gods, or Mortals only, or deified Mortals? - - - - -	79
Some Reasons for the Inference that Odin and his Followers really existed - - - - -	80
Hypothesis of two Odins, how far reconcileable with Facts - - - - -	81
Did Odin, in his own Case, inculcate the Doctrine of Metempsychosis? - - - - -	82
Conclusion that Odin and his Companions actually existed on Earth; but how account for the divine Attributes claimed by them? still more, how account for the extraordinary Diffusion of their Worship? - - - - -	82
Their Policy in the North - - - - -	83
Two distinct Systems of Religion evidently prevalent in the North,—the Native and the Foreign,—that of Thor, and that of Odin - - - - -	84
And also two distinct Systems of Magic - - - - -	85
Another Argument for this Distinction - - - - -	86
Progress of Odin and his Companions towards Deification - - - - -	88
Geographical Position of the Aser and Vanir led to their celestial Location - - - - -	89
The Union of two Systems—the Native and the Foreign, the Finnish and the Gothic—every where discernible in the Eddas - - - - -	91

## SECTION II.

### CHIEF MYTHOLOGICAL PERSONAGES OF SCANDINAVIA.

ODIN, THOR, AND LOKE. —THEIR CHARACTERS PHYSICALLY INTERPRETED. —THEIR WIVES AND OFFSPRING. —THE THREE DEMON CHILDREN OF LOKE. —INFLUENCE OF THIS DEITY OVER THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE. —HE IS PRESENT IN EVERY GREAT MYTHOS. —RAPE OF IDUNA. —THOR'S VISITS TO JOTUNHEIM. —THOR AND THE GIANT HYMIR. —THOR AND THE GIANT THRYM. —NIVOD, FREYR, FREYA. —EXPEDITION OF SKIRNER-ÆGIR AND RAN. —OTHER DEITIES. —BALDER. —PUNISHMENT OF LOKE. —RAGNAROK. —RECOGNITION OF A GREAT FIRST CAUSE BY THE PAGAN SCANDINAVIANS.

### ODIN, THOR, LOKE.

Wives and Sons of ODIN - - - - -	92
His Functions, Abodes, and Ministers - - - - -	93
The three Valkyrs - - - - -	93
Legend of Odin and Sterkodder - - - - -	94
This Legend furnishes another Proof of the Fact that Odin was a foreign Deity - - - - -	95
THOR, his Superiority over Odin in the more ancient System of the North, and his three Treasures - - - - -	96

## X ANALYTICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

	Page
Mythical Interpretation	- 97
Thor peculiarly worshipped in Norway	- 97
The Giants, the everlasting Enemies of Thor	- 98
This Article of popular Belief essentially Celtic	- 98
LOKE	- 99
His Description	- 100
His Offspring three :—	
1. The Great Serpent	- 101
2. Hela, Queen of Death	- 101
3. The Wolf Fenris	- 102
Manner in which the last-named Demon was bound by the Gods	- 102
Loke originally the same with Utgardelok, and the Personification of	
Evil in the Celtic Creed	- 103
Mythological Fables in which Loke is concerned	- 104

### RAPE OF IDUNA.

Odin, Hoenir, and Loke visit Utgard	- 105
Loke compelled to promise that he will deliver Iduna into the Power of Thiasse	- 105
He performs his Promise	- 106
Consequent Wrath of the Gods, who compel him to restore her	- 106
Interpretation of this Mythos	- 107

### THOR'S VISITS TO UTGARD.

Loke, taken by the Giants, is compelled to promise that he will bring Thor without Belt or Hammer	- 108
Thor accordingly undertakes the Journey ; his Punishment of Geyruth, and the Daughters of that Giant	- 109
Second Journey of Thor to Utgard, accompanied by Loke	- 110
Adventure in the Cottage	- 110
Dreary Wastes through which the Travellers passed	- 111
Adventure in the desert Heath	- 112
Adventures in Utgard itself	- 113

### THOR AND THE GIANT HYMIR.

Banquet of the Sea-god Ægir	- 114
Thor and Tyr proceed to Giant-land to steal a Caldron	- 114
Adventures at the House of Hymir	- 115
Physical Meaning of this Mythos	- 116
The same Adventures paraphrased by the Danish Poet Ohlenschlager	117

### THOR AND THE GIANT THRYM.

Thor loses Miolner	- 124
Loke discovers the Thief, who is the Giant Thrym	- 125
Thrym will not restore it, unless he have Freya to Wife	- 125

	Page
When Freya refuses, Thor is persuaded to assume Female Apparel, and go to Jotunheim	- 126
Adventures there	- 127
Metrical Version of this Legend	- 128
Magnussen's Interpretation	- 129
<i>Sif</i> , the Wife of Thor	- 131

## NIORD, FREYR, FREYA.

<i>Niord</i> , Lord of the Vaner, and a God	- 132
His second Wife is Skada, from whom he separates	- 133
<i>Freyr</i> , the Son of Niord, in love with a Giant Maiden	- 133
Skirner, his Attendant, goes to Jotunheim and wins her	- 134
Metrical Version of Skirner's Expedition	- 135
<i>Freya</i> , the Daughter of Niord, and the Goddess of Love	- 136
Her Functions and Authority in Asgard	- 140

## ÆGIR AND RAN.

<i>Ægir</i> , the God of the Deep, more element than <i>Ran</i> , his Queen	- 141
Another Feast given by the Sea-god, in which Loke is abusive	- 142

## OTHER DEITIES.

The Nornies	- 143
Night and Day	- 143
The Giant of Winter	- 144

## BALDER.

His Fate connected with that of the Universe; his Dreams, and consequent Anxiety of the Gods	- 145
Interpretation of the Mythos	- 146

## PUNISHMENT OF LOKE.

He is bound, like Prometheus, to the Flinty Rock; Poison; Fidelity of his Wife	- 146
--	-------

## RAGNAROK, THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS.

Account of that great Consummation extracted from the Prose Edda	147
Corroborated by the Voluspa	- 150

SECTION III.

INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO DENMARK AND SWEDEN.

OBSCUR E EFFORTS OF THE ANGLO-SAXON MISSIONARIES TO CHRISTIANISE FRISIA AND DENMARK. — VICTORIES OF CHARLEMAGNE PREPARE THE WAY FOR A WIDER DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY. — FEALTY OF HARALD KLAK. — MISSIONARIES SENT INTO THE NORTH. — ST. ANSCAR. — CREATION OF AN ARCHBISHOPRIC. — ST. REMBERT. — SUCCEEDING ARCHBISHOPS. — FLUCTUATIONS IN THE STATE OF THE NEW RELIGION. — ITS ULTIMATE ESTABLISHMENT IN THE KINGDOMS OF THE NORTH.

A. D.		Page
	Early Efforts of the Anglo-Saxon Missionaries to Christianise the North; very little effected in the Eighth Century - - -	151
822.	But in the Ninth there is more Success -	152
826—830.	<i>St. Anscar</i> , Monk of Corbey - - -	153
	He repairs first to Denmark, and next to Sweden -	154
	His Reception by the Swedish King, and his Return to Germany - - -	155
830—852.	He is made Archbishop of Hamburg, with the Primacy over the North - - -	155
	Difficulties of his Position - - -	156
852.	He goes Ambassador to the North; Opposition to him in Sweden - - -	157
853—865.	But that Opposition he overcomes through the royal Aid - - -	158
865—889.	<i>St. Rembert</i> , his Biographer and Successor -	160
	<i>Adalgar</i> , his Coadjutor - - -	160
889—936.	<i>Adalgar</i> and <i>Hoger</i> , in succession Archbishops of Bremen, have no great Zeal for the Cause - - -	161
	But <i>Unnus</i> has; his Success - - -	161
936—988.	Progress of Christianity in Denmark under <i>Adalrag</i> ; Erection of four Episcopal Sees - - -	162
988—1026.	Pontificate of <i>Libentis</i> - - -	163

## BOOK II.

## THE MIDDLE AGE.

## CHAPTER I.

## DENMARK.

1014—1387.

CANUTE THE GREAT. — HARDA-CANUTE. — MAGNUS. — ROMANTIC ADVENTURES OF HARALD HARDRADE. — SWEYN II. — HARALD III. — CANUTE IV. — OLAF II. — ERIC III. — NICHOLAS. — ERIC IV. — ERIC V. — CANUTE V. AND SWEYN III. — VALDEMAR I. — HIS ABLE REIGN. — ARCHBISHOPS ESKIT AND ABSOLOM. — CANUTE VI. — VALDEMAR II. — DECLINE OF THE DANISH POWER AND THE CAUSES WHICH LED TO IT. — ERIC VI. — ABEL. — CHRISTOPHER I. — ERIC VII. — ERIC VIII. — CHRISTOPHER II. — INTERREGNUM. — VALDEMAR III. — MEMORABLE TRANSACTIONS WITH NORWAY AND SWEDEN. — OLAF III. — UNION OF DENMARK AND NORWAY.

## CANUTE THE GREAT.

1015—1035.

1014.	<i>Canute the Great</i> succeeds his Father Sweyn in both Denmark and England	-	-	-	-	165
1016—1028.	He conquers Norway	-	-	-	-	167
1028—1035.	Character of his Administration	-	-	-	-	167
	His personal Character	-	-	-	-	167
	He divides his Dominions among his Sons	-	-	-	-	168

## HARDA-CANUTE.

1035—1042.

1035—1040.	Loses Denmark by the Usurpation of his Brother Harald, but recovers it on that Prince's Death	-	-	-	-	171
1040—1042.	His Administration of England	-	-	-	-	171
1035—1042.	And of Denmark	-	-	-	-	171
	His Compact with Magnus, King of Norway	-	-	-	-	172

# MAGNUS I.

1042—1047.

	Page
1042—1044. Succéds in virtue of his Compact with Harda-Canute, and is well received in Denmark -	172
His Impolicy in regard to Sweyn, the Nephew of Canute the Great, whom he makes Viceroy of Denmark -	173
The Viceroy rebels, and is vanquished -	173
1044, 1045. Magnus triumphs over the Pirates -	173
1045. A new Enemy appears in Harald Hardrade; his romantic Adventures -	174
1045, 1046. Harald allies with Sweyn, but Magnus dissolves the Alliance by his Policy -	177
1047. Magnus leaves the Danish Crown to Sweyn -	178

# SWEYN II.

1047—1076.

1048—1070. Transactions with Norway, England, &c. -	178
1066—1070. And with the Church, which his Incontinence provokes -	179
1070. He commits Murder also, and does Penance for it -	180
1070—1076. Character of this Monarch, and Description of Denmark, by Adam, Canon of Bremen -	181

# HARALD III.

SURNAMED HEIN, OR THE GENTLE.

1076—1080.

1076. Harald, a Bastard Son of Sweyn II., is elected by the States -	183
1076—1080. His Reign affords no Materials for History -	183

# CANUTE IV.

SURNAMED THE SAINT.

1080—1086.

1080—1085. His foreign Preparations -	184
1080—1086. His vigorous Administration -	184
His impolitic Indulgence to the Church -	185
His Enforcement of the Tithe -	186
1086. His tragical End -	186
His Semi-deification -	187
He is succeeded by Olaf, Duke of Sleswic -	187

## OLAF II.

SURNAMED FAMELICUS, OR THE HUNGRY.

1087—1095.

		Page
1087—1095.	During his Reign, the Realm wasted by Famine	- 187

## ERIC III.

SURNAMED THE GOOD.

1095—1103.

1095, 1096.	His vigorous Administration	-	-	- 188
1097—1103.	Lund erected into a Metropolis independent of Bremen	-	-	- 189
	His Pilgrimage to the Holy Land	-	-	- 189
1103.	His Death and Character	-	-	- 190

## NICHOLAS.

1105—1134.

1103—1105.	Interregnum of two Years, when Nicholas is elected	-	-	- 190
1105—1126.	His Jealousy of his Nephew Canute	-	-	- 191
1126—1132.	Civil Wars	-	-	- 192
1132—1134.	Civil Wars continued ; Murder of Nicholas	-	-	- 193

## ERIC IV.

SURNAMED EMUND.

1134—1137.

1134—1137.	His Reign has no Materials for History	-	-	- 193
------------	--	---	---	-------

## ERIC V.

SURNAMED THE LAMB.

1137—1147.

1137—1147.	Vanquishes a Competitor for the Throne, and retires to the Cloister	-	-	-	- 194
	Double Election	-	-	-	- 195

## CANUTE V.

## SWEYN III.

1147—1156.

1147—1157.

1147—1152.	Civil Wars	-	-	-	- 195
1152—1156.	Continued ; Actions of Prince Valdemar	-	-	-	- 196
1156, 1157.	After the Death of Canute, Sweyn contends with Valdemar	-	-	-	197

VALDEMAR I.

SURNAMED THE GREAT.

1157—1182.

	Page
1157—1169. Valdemar, Monarch of Denmark, destroys the Pirates of Rugen - - - -	198
1169—1175. Other Transactions with the Pagans of Vandalia -	200
Archbishop Eskil, Primate - -	202
1175—1179. Archbishop Absalom, the Successor of Eskil -	203
1176—1179. Valdemar exacts the Tithe; Disturbances in consequence	205
1180. His Transactions with the Empire - -	206
1182. His Character and Administration - -	207

CANUTE VI.

1182—1202.

1182—1189. Prosperity of this Monarch - - -	208
1183—1188. He quarrels with the Emperor - -	209
1191—1202. His Troubles through Bishop Valdemar -	209
Flourishing State of Denmark in his Reign -	211

VALDEMAR II.

SURNAMED THE VICTORIOUS.

1202—1241.

1202—1204. His early Transactions with Holstein - -	212
1204—1210. His Expedition against the Livonians -	212
1205—1218. His Disputes with the Empire - -	213
1219—1223. His Transactions with Esthonia - -	214
1223. He is made Prisoner by one of his Vassals -	215
1223—1226. Negotiations for his Ransom, which is at length effected -	216
1226—1238. His unfortunate Projects - - -	216
1238—1241. His internal Administration - -	217
1240. His Character as a Legislator - -	217

ERIC VI.

SURNAMED PLOGPENNING, OR PLOUGHPENNY.

1241—1250.

1241. Eric, prior to his Accession, had been Duke of Sleswic -	218
1241—1248. His unfortunate Dispute with his Brother Abel, and its Results - - - -	218



A. D.		Page
1249.	His Expedition into Livonia . . . . .	- 219
1250.	His War with the Count of Holstein led to his Murder by his Brother Abel . . . . .	- 220

## ABEL.

1250—1252.

1250—1252.	The royal Fratricide undertakes an Expedition against the Frisians, and is slain in a Morass . . . . .	- 221
1252.	In the popular Creed he becomes a Vampire . . . . .	- 222

## CHRISTOPHER I.

1252—1259.

1252—1258.	Troubled Reign of this Prince . . . . .	- 223
1256—1257.	His Disputes with the Church, especially with Jacob Er- landsen, Bishop of Roskild . . . . .	- 224
1257.	Violent Measures of the King . . . . .	- 225
1258, 1259.	To sustain the Vengeance of the Church, he allies himself with his royal Neighbours, but dies . . . . .	- 226
1259.	Was his Death natural? . . . . .	- 227

## ERIC VII.

SURNAMED GLIPPING.

1259—1286.

1259—1268.	Troubles during the Minority of this King . . . . .	- 227
1261—1264.	He and his Mother Prisoners, but both eventually released	229
1272—1275.	He is reconciled with the Church . . . . .	- 230
1280—1286.	But he is embroiled with other Enemies, who deprive him of Life . . . . .	- 231
	His Reign disastrous . . . . .	- 231

## ERIC VIII.

SURNAMED MOENVED.

1286—1319.

1286—1308.	Troubles of the Minority; Efforts to recal the Murderers of the late King . . . . .	- 232
1292—1299.	The King embroiled with the Church . . . . .	- 233
1299—1319.	Other Troubles; Eric a Legislator; before his Death (without Issue) he advises the States not to elect his turbulent Brother . . . . .	- 234
1319.	But that Brother procures the Crown . . . . .	- 235

## CHRISTOPHER II.

1320—1334.

A. D.		Page
1320—1323.	Prodigality of the new King to secure himself on the Throne	- 236
1324, 1325.	He violates his Pledges	- 236
1325.	Dissatisfaction of his People, who expel him	- 237
1326—1328.	Rapacity of the Nobles during his Exile; he returns	- 238
1329—1331.	His ruinous Promises	- 239
1331, 1332.	Proceedings in regard to Scania, which becomes the Prize of Sweden	- 240
1332, 1333.	Last Days of Christopher	- 241

## INTERREGNUM.

1333, 1334.	State of the Country	- 241
1334—1340.	Rapacity of the Regents, especially Count Gerard, who is murdered	- 242
1340.	Election of a new King	- 243

## VALDEMAR IV.

SURNAMED ATTERDAG.

1340—1375.

1340.	State of the Kingdom on the Accession of Valdemar	- 244
	His vigilant Administration	- 244
1344.	He sells Scania, but redeems many other Places	- 245
1345—1348.	He sells Esthonia, and makes good Use of the Money	- 245
1348—1350.	He obtains Money from another Quarter	- 246
1351—1357.	His Rigour occasions Rebellion, which, however, he suppresses	- 247
1357—1360.	He recovers Scania	- 247
1360—1363.	By helping Magnus of Sweden, he offends the Hanse Towns	- 248
1362, 1363.	His artful Policy in regard to the Union of his Daughter with Hako of Norway	- 250
1363.	Important Consequences of this Union	- 250
1364, 1365.	Valdemar abroad	- 251
1367—1370.	Again. Why?	- 251
1370—1375.	Closing Years of his Reign	- 252

## OLAF III.

1376—1387.

1375, 1376.	Olaf, Son of Hako, elected; his Mother Regent	- 253
1375.	Lavish Promises of Margaret	- 254

	Page
Opinion respecting them - - -	- 255
1376—1380. She triumphs over all Competitors -	- 255
1380—1386. Olaf becomes King of Norway ; ambitious Policy of the Queen Mother - - -	- 256
1386. Transactions with the House of Holstein -	- 257
1387. Sudden Death of Olaf - - -	- 258

## CHAP. II.

## NORWAY.

1030—1387.

CANUTE THE GREAT. — SWEYN. — MAGNUS I. — HARALD HAR-  
RADE. — OLAF III. — MAGNUS II. — MAGNUS BAREFOOT. —  
EVILS OF A DIVIDED SOVEREIGNTY. — ROMANTIC ADVENTURES  
OF SIGURD I. — MAGNUS IV. — CIVIL WARS. — EXTRAORDINARY  
ADVENTURES OF SWERRO. — HAKO IV. — MAGNUS VI. — ERIC II.  
— HAKO V. — OTHER SOVEREIGNS. — UNION OF NORWAY WITH  
DENMARK.

1030—1035. CANUTE THE GREAT.—SWEYN - - -	- 260
1035. The Norwegians look to Magnus, a bastard Son of St. Olaf	261
1035, 1036. MAGNUS I. enters into a Treaty with the King of Denmark	262
1038—1040. His Mother and Stepmother - - -	- 262
1042—1046. He becomes King of Denmark - - -	- 262
1047. Last Days of this Monarch - - -	- 263
1047—1064. HARALD HARADRADE - - -	- 263
1066. He falls in England - - -	- 264
1066—1069. Two Kings in Norway - - -	- 264
1069—1093. Olaf alone - - -	- 264
1093—1095. MAGNUS BAREFOOT - - -	- 265
1096—1099. His Expedition to the British Isles - - -	- 265
1099—1101. His War with Sweden - - -	- 266
1102—1103. His second Expedition to these Islands, and his Death in Ireland - - -	- 266
1103. Partition of the Sovereignty between his three Sons -	267
1103—1122. Fate of two of them - - -	- 268
1107—1111. Romantic Adventures of the third Son, Sigurd I. -	268
1111—1123. His Severity against Idolaters - - -	- 269
1124—1130. His strange Conduct - - -	- 270
1130. MAGNUS IV. compelled to share the Kingdom with an Adventurer - - -	- 271
1130—1152. HARALD IV. — SIGURD II., &c. - - -	- 272
1152. Arrival of a Papal Legate - - -	- 273
1153—1161. Internal Troubles - - -	- 274

# XX ANALYTICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

	Page
1161—1164. Continued - - - -	- 275
1164—1170. Transactions with Denmark - -	- 276
1166—1169. Troubles; Rival for the Throne - -	- 276
1173—1177. A second Rival - - - -	- 277
1174—1178. A third, the celebrated Swerro - -	- 277
1178—1186. His romantic Adventures - - -	- 278
1186—1194. Swerro's vigorous Rule - - -	- 280
1194—1200. His unscrupulous Conduct - - -	- 282
1194—1202. Internal Troubles - - - -	- 283
1202. His Death and Character - - - -	- 283
1202—1204. HAKO III. - - - -	- 284
1204—1207. GUTHRUM - - - -	- 284
1207. Ordeal to prove the Descent of Hako from King Swerro -	- 284
1208—1241. HAKO IV. ; his troubled Minority - -	- 285
1242—1260. Internal Events of his Reign - - -	- 286
1263. His Transactions with the Scots - - -	- 287
His famous Expedition - - - -	- 288
1263—1266. MAGNUS VI. - - - -	- 289
1263—1280. Internal Changes during this Reign - -	- 290
1280—1289. ERIC II. - - - -	- 291
1289—1299. Transactions with Scotland - - -	- 292
1299—1319. HAKO V. - - - -	- 292
1319. Under this Prince, Norway declines - -	- 293
1319—1387. Succeeding Kings - - - -	- 294

## CHAP. III.

### SWEDEN.

1001—1389.

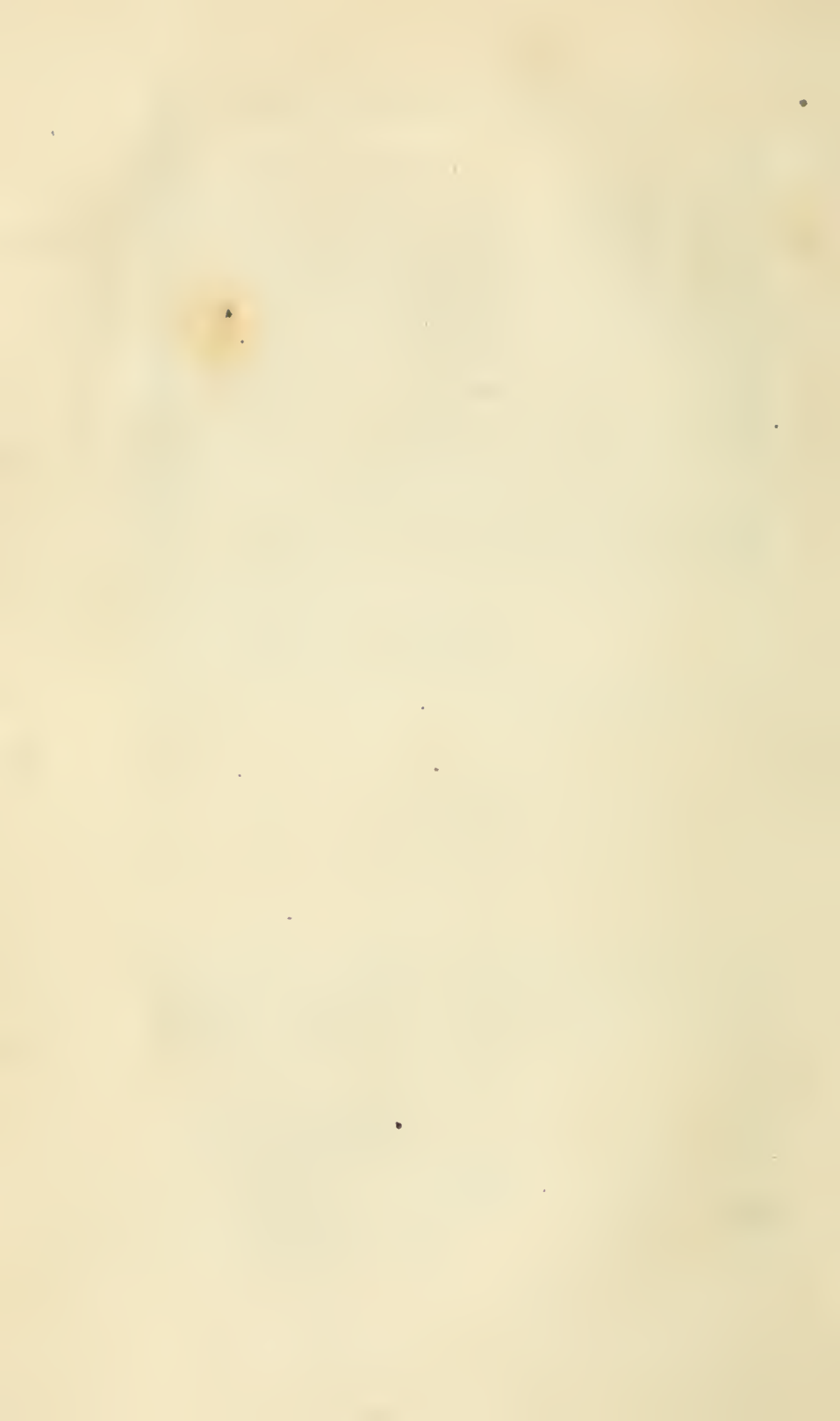
OLAF. — EMUND I. — EMUND II. — STENKILL. — INGE I. — PHILIP.  
 — INGE II. — SWERKER I. — CHARLES. — ST. ERIC. — INTER-  
 NAL TROUBLES. — BIRGER JARL. — VALDEMAR I. — MAGNUS I.  
 — BIRGER. — MAGNUS II. — ERIC IV. — ALBERT OF MECKLEN-  
 BURG. — UNION OF SWEDEN WITH DENMARK.

Chronological Difficulties - - - -	- 295
1001—1026. OLAF Skatkonung - - - -	- 295
1026—1051. EMUND I. - - - -	- 296
1051—1143. EMUND II., and succeeding Kings - -	- 296
1148—1154. SWERKER I.; double Election - - -	- 298
1155—1167. ST. ERIC and CHARLES - - - -	- 299
1161—1167. Charles the sole King - - - -	- 300
1167—1192. CANUTE - - - -	- 301

	Page
1192—1210. SWERKER II.	- 301
1210—1250. Other Rulers	- 309
1250. VALDEMAR I.	- 303
1251—1266. Regency of Birger	- 303
1266—1276. Troubled Reign of Valdemar	- 304
1276—1279. He is compelled to resign the Throne of Sweden	- 305
1279, 1280. MAGNUS I.	- 305
1281—1290. His internal Administration	- 306
1290—1305. BIRGER; his guilty Impudence	- 307
1305—1319. He is exiled	- 308
1319—1320. And his Son Beheaded	- 309
1319—1354. MAGNUS II.; his Minority, and subsequent Actions	- 310
1354—1357. His Weakness	- 311
1357—1363. His Unpopularity	- 312
1363. Election of ALBERT	- 313
1364—1371. Actions of this Prince	- 313
1371—1376. He too is unpopular	- 314
1377—1387. He quarrels with his Diet	- 314
1388, 1389. He is defeated and captured by Margaret of Denmark	- 315

## APPENDIX.

ST. CANUTE, KING OF DENMARK	-	-	- 317
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## TABLE OF KINGS.

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### SUCCESSION OF DANISH KINGS DOWN TO THE UNION OF THE CROWNS OF DENMARK AND NORWAY.

#### I. SKIOLDUNGS, OR DYNASTY OF SKIOLD THE SON OF ODIN.

						Died B. C.
Odin arrived in the North	-	-	-	-	-	70
Skiold	-	-	-	-	-	40
Fridleif I.	-	-	-	-	-	23
						A. C.
Frode I.	-	-	-	-	-	35
Fridleif II.	-	-	-	-	-	47
Havar	-	-	-	-	-	59
Frode II.	-	-	-	-	-	87
Vermund the Sage	-	-	-	-	-	140
Olaf the Mild	-	-	-	-	-	190
Dan Mykillate	-	-	-	-	-	270
Frode III. (the Pacific)	-	-	-	-	-	310
Halfdan I.	-	-	-	-	-	324
Fridleif III.	-	-	-	-	-	348
Frode IV.	-	-	-	-	-	407
Ingiald	-	-	-	-	-	456
Halfdan II.	-	-	-	-	-	447
Frode V.	-	-	-	-	-	460
Helge and Roe	-	-	-	-	-	494
Frode VI.	-	-	-	-	-	510
Rolf Krake	-	-	-	-	-	522
Frode VII.	-	-	-	-	-	548
Halfdan III.	-	-	-	-	-	580

					Died A.C.
Ruric Slyngebände	-	-	-	-	588
Ivar Vidfadme	-	-	-	-	647
Harald Hildetand	-	-	-	-	735
Sigurd Ring	-	-	-	-	750
Ragnar Lodbrok	-	-	-	-	794
Sigurd Snogoje	-	-	-	-	803
Harda-Canute	-	-	-	-	850
Eric I.	-	-	-	-	854
Eric II.	-	-	-	-	883
Gorm the Old	-	-	-	-	941
Harald Blaataud	-	-	-	-	991
Sweyn I. Tveskaeg	-	-	-	-	1014
Canute the Great	-	-	-	-	1035
Harda-Canute II.	-	-	-	-	1042
Magnus I.	-	-	-	-	1047

## II. DYNASTY OF SWEYN.

Sweyn II. Estrithson	-	-	-	-	1076
Harald (Hein) Sweynson	-	-	-	-	1080
Canute IV. (the Saint)	-	-	-	-	1086
Olaf II. (Hunger)	-	-	-	-	1095
Eric (Eiegod) III.	-	-	-	-	1103
Nikolas Swendson	-	-	-	-	1134
Eric IV. (Emun)	-	-	-	-	1137
Eric V. (Lamm)	-	-	-	-	1147
Canute V.	-	-	-	-	1156
Sweyn III. (Grathe) Emunsson	-	-	-	-	1157
Valdemar I. (surnamed the Great)	-	-	-	-	1182
Canute VI.	-	-	-	-	1202
Valdemar II. (Sejer)	-	-	-	-	1241
Eric VI. (Plogpenning)	-	-	-	-	1250
Abel	-	-	-	-	1252
Christopher I.	-	-	-	-	1259
Eric VII. (Glipping)	-	-	-	-	1286
Eric VIII.	-	-	-	-	1319
Christopher II.	-	-	-	-	1334



						Died A. C.
Valdemar IV. (Atterdag)	-	-	-	-	-	1375
Olaf III.	-	-	-	-	-	1387

N.B. Little dependence is to be placed on the accuracy of this list prior to Harald Blaatand. (See Vol. I, p. 66.)

## KINGS OF SWEDEN.

### I. SACRED DYNASTY OF THE YNGLINGS.

						B. C.
Odin arrived in the North	-	-	-	-	-	70
Njord died	-	-	-	-	-	20
						Died A. C.
Freyr-Yngve	-	-	-	-	-	10
Fiolner	-	-	-	-	-	14
Swegdir	-	-	-	-	-	34
Vanland or Valland	-	-	-	-	-	48
Visbur	-	-	-	-	-	98
Domald	-	-	-	-	-	130
Domar	-	-	-	-	-	162
Dygve	-	-	-	-	-	190
Dag-Spaka the Wise	-	-	-	-	-	220
Agne	-	-	-	-	-	260
Alarie and Eric	-	-	-	-	-	280
Yngve and Alf	-	-	-	-	-	300
Hugleik	-	-	-	-	-	302
Jorund and Eric	-	-	-	-	-	312
Aun hinn Gamle (the Old)	-	-	-	-	-	448
Egil Tunnaddgi	-	-	-	-	-	456
Ottar Vendilkraka	-	-	-	-	-	460
Adils	-	-	-	-	-	505
Eystein	-	-	-	-	-	531
Yngvar	-	-	-	-	-	545
Braut-Onund	-	-	-	-	-	565

					Died A. C.
Ingiald Illrada	-	-	-	-	- 623
Olaf Trætelia exiled about		-	-	-	- 630

## II. DYNASTY OF THE SKIOLDUNGS, ETC.

					Died A. C.
Ivar Vidfadme	-	-	-	-	- 647
Harald Hildetand	-	-	-	-	- 735
Sigurd Ring	-	-	-	-	- 750
Ragnar Lodbrok	-	-	-	-	- 794
Biorn Ironside	-	-	-	-	- 804
Eric Biornson	-	-	-	-	- 808
Eric Raefillson	-	-	-	-	- 820
Emund and Biorn	-	-	-	-	- 859
Eric Emundson	-	-	-	-	- 873
Biorn Ericsen	-	-	-	-	- 923
Eric the Victorious	-	-	-	-	- 993
Eric Arsaell	-	-	-	-	- 1001
Olaf Skotkonung	-	-	-	-	- 1026
Emund Colbrenner	-	-	-	-	- 1051
Emund Slemme	-	-	-	-	- 1056
Stenkil	-	-	-	-	- 1066
Halstan	-	-	-	-	- 1090
Inge I. (the Good)	-	-	-	-	- 1112
Philip †	-	-	-	-	- 1118
Inge II.	-	-	-	-	- 1129
Swerker I.	-	-	-	-	- 1155
Saint Eric	-	-	-	-	- 1161
Charles Swerkerson	-	-	-	-	- 1167
Knut Ericsson	-	-	-	-	- 1199
Swerker II.	-	-	-	-	- 1210
Eric II. (Knutsson)	-	-	-	-	- 1216
John Swerkerson	-	-	-	-	- 1222
Eric III. (the Stammerer)	-	-	-	-	- 1250
Birger Jarl (Regent)	-	-	-	-	- 1266
Valdemar I.	-	-	-	-	- 1275
Magnus I. (Ladislaes)	-	-	-	-	- 1290
Birger	-	-	-	-	- 1319

				Died A. C.
Magnus II. (Smek) expelled	-	-	-	1350
Eric IV.	-	-	-	1359
Magnus restored	-	-	-	1363
Hakon II. (VI. of Norway) deposed	-	-	-	1363
Albert of Mecklenburg	-	-	-	1389

N.B. On this list, prior to the eleventh century, as little dependence is to be placed as on that of Denmark.

## KINGS OF NORWAY.

### I. DYNASTY OF THE YNGLINGS.

					Died A. C.
Olaf Trætelia	-	-	-	-	640
Halfdan Huitben	-	-	-	-	700
Eystein	-	-	-	-	730
Halfdan Milde	-	-	-	-	784
Gudrod Mikillati	-	-	-	-	824
Olaf Geirstada	-	-	-	-	840
Halfdan Swart	-	-	-	-	863
Harald Harfager	-	-	-	-	934
Eric Blodaexe	-	-	-	-	940
Hako the Good	-	-	-	-	963
Harald Graafeld	-	-	-	-	977
Hako Jarl	-	-	-	-	995
Olaf Tyggveson	-	-	-	-	1000
Olaf the Saint	-	-	-	-	1030
Sweyn Canutson	-	-	-	-	1035
Magnus the Good	-	-	-	-	1047
Harald Hardrade	-	-	-	-	1066
Magnus II.	-	-	-	-	1069
Olaf III. (Kyrre)	-	-	-	-	1093
Magnus (Barfoed)	-	-	-	-	1103
Olaf IV.	-	-	-	-	1116

						Died A. C.
Eystein I.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1122
Sigurd I.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1130
Magnus IV.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1134
Harald IV. (Gille)	-	-	-	-	-	- 1136
Sigurd II.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1155
Eystein II.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1157
Inge I.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1161
Hako III.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1162
Magnus V.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1186
Swerro	-	-	-	-	-	- 1202
Hako III.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1204
Gutborm	-	-	-	-	-	- 1205
Inge II.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1207
Hako IV.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1263
Magnus VI. (Lagabaeter)	-	-	-	-	-	- 1280
Eric II. (the Priest-hater)	-	-	-	-	-	- 1299
Hako V.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1319
Magnus VII. (Smek), II. of Sweden	-	-	-	-	-	- 1343
Hako VI.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1380
Olaf III.	-	-	-	-	-	- 1387

N.B. This kingdom henceforth united with Denmark, and therefore subject to the same monarchs.

THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
SCANDINAVIA.

---

CHAP. IV.—*continued.*

MARITIME EXPEDITIONS OF THE NORTHMEN DURING  
THE PAGAN TIMES.

SECTION II.

IN THE ORKNEYS, THE HEBRIDES, ICELAND, GREENLAND, NORTH  
AMERICA, RUSSIA, ETC.

795—1026.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A GOVERNMENT IN THE ORKNEYS. — SUCCESSION OF JARLS, ROGNEVALD, SIGURD, HALLAD, EINAR, SIGURD II., ETC. — DISCOVERY AND COLONIZATION OF ICELAND. — DISCOVERY AND COLONIZATION OF GREENLAND. — ALLEGED DISCOVERY OF NORTH AMERICA. — STATEMENT OF FACTS CONNECTED WITH IT. — FOUNDATION OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE BY THE SCANDINAVIAN RURIC.

THE *Orkney Islands* were probably visited by the northern pirates at a period much earlier than is generally supposed. If, from their barrenness and from their limited surface, they offered no inducement to permanent occupancy, they were useful as strongholds, — as ports where the northern ships might anchor in safety. From their position between Scandinavia and Ireland,

which we know was hostilely visited in the year 795, they must have been frequently subject to the ravages of the strangers. The Pictish inhabitants, who were not warlike or numerous, had the mortification to witness the frequent seizure of their cattle, their fish, their corn, and such other stores as they had been able to collect or to produce. Their only advantage was in their poverty, which shortened the stay of these avaricious men. But after the battle of Hafursfiord (885), these islands became the perpetual abode of the sea-rovers, who were no longer tolerated in Norway \*; here they fitted out expeditions to ravage every coast from the south of Ireland to the extremity of the Gulf of Finland. So frequent and so formidable were those ravages that in 888 — three years after his glorious victory — Harald Harfagre, with a view of suppressing them, sailed with a powerful armament into these seas. The isles of Shetland, of Orkney, of the Hebrides, and Man, were subdued by him. But to conquer was little, unless some measure were adopted to secure the conquest. The monarch determined to place one of his most valiant and most respectable chiefs over the islands, and cast his eyes on Rognevald, jarl of Moria, who, in the present expedition, had lost one of his sons. But Rognevald, attached to his hereditary domains in Norway, induced his royal master to invest his brother Sigurd with the dignity. Sigurd, therefore, was the first jarl, or earl, of the Orkneys.

889

to

892. This chief had qualities worthy of the post: he was valiant, liberal, politic. But he was also ambitious: he longed to reduce a portion of the neighbouring continent; and, as his own forces were unequal to an attempt of such magnitude, he formed an alliance with Thorstein the Red, son of Olaf the White, a chief famous in the annals of Norway. Having effected a junction, the two jarls subdued Caithness and Sutherland, and then extended their ravages into the counties of Ross and Moray. In the latter, Sigurd, who was intent on durable con-

\* Vol. I. p. 175.

quest, is said to have built a fortress. But he soon afterwards died, — whether in battle, or in consequence of a wound, is not very clear ; and all the advantages which he had gained were lost. He was succeeded, indeed, by his son, Guthrum ; but the latter, alike feeble in mind and body, soon paid the debt of nature. The depredations of the pirates were resumed ; and Rognevald, who had been the feudal superior of Sigurd, was required to nominate another governor. His choice fell on Hallad, one of his sons. But it was less fortunate than the preceding one. If Hallad had the wish, he certainly had not the power, to contend with the frequent piratical bands who infested the islands : he soon deserted his post, and returned to Norway. The father lamented his unfortunate choice ; still more did he lament the stain which want of success had brought upon his name. His children, he bitterly observed, were sadly degenerated from the ancient valour of their line. He could not foresee that Einar, one of them, was about to confer splendour on the family ; still less that Rollo, another of them, would become the head of a powerful race of sovereigns. Rollo proposed to clear the islands from the piratical bands ; but his proposal was declined, probably from want of confidence in his powers. And when Einar prayed the old jarl to send *him* to the government, the chief reason of his success was the little favour which he possessed in the eyes of his father. He was an illegitimate son ; his mother was of servile condition ; he had lost an eye ; his countenance was in other respects repulsive ; and all these circumstances combined to render the paternal roof disagreeable to him. The saga has preserved the words in which he made the application to his father :—“ Thou hast never shown *me* much honour, nor will my departure afflict thee : wherefore I will proceed to the west, if thou wilt afford me the means. Do this, and I promise thee never to revisit Norway !” The old man gave him a large vessel, manned with good mariners ; told him that he had no confidence in his valour or



prudence, and expressed a hope that he should see him no more. His prayer was granted.

893 On the arrival of Einar, his conduct proved that he  
to had not overrated his own powers. Over two pirate  
336. chiefs, who had, since the death of Sigurd, held the  
dominion of the islands, he triumphed; he governed  
the inhabitants by his wisdom, no less than protected  
them by his valour; and joined with his firmness such  
moderation that he became exceedingly popular with  
his people. His celebrity inspired with envy the sons  
of king Harald, who equally hated his father: that  
father was burnt to death, with many of his companions\*;  
and a fate no less tragical was reserved for Einar. In  
894, Halfdan, one of his sons by the Finnish lady (he  
had three of the name †), reached the Orkneys un-  
expected by Einar, who, being wholly unprepared for  
defence, fled into Caithness. In his turn, Halfdan was  
surprised by the jarl, and compelled to hide himself;  
but he was discovered and put to death, in revenge  
alike for the unprovoked aggression and for the murder  
of Rognevald. In this act of retribution, as it might be  
considered by a pagan, there was much temerity. The  
monarch armed to punish it, and, in 895, again appeared  
off the coast with a powerful armament. Unable to  
resist, Einar again fled into Caithness, a portion, if not  
the whole of which, was entirely subject to the jarls of  
the Orkneys. He had certainly formidable means  
of defence; so formidable, indeed, as to make Harald  
listen to overtures of accommodation. Probably, too, as  
a pagan, he made considerable allowance for the act of  
Einar, who, in avenging the death of a father, had done  
what religion dictated. At length he professed his  
readiness both to pardon the islanders, and to leave the  
jarl in the government, if sixty golden merks were paid  
him. This sum, moderate as it may seem, they were  
unable to raise; but Einar agreed to pay it for them,  
on the condition that their lands should be considered  
his until they found the means of redemption. Relieved

\* See Vol. I. p. 178.

† Ibid. 176. 178, 179.



from this formidable enemy, Einar resumed with his usual success the duties of government. By posterity he was called *Turf-Einar*, from his introducing, we are told, the use of that article. It is, however, scarcely to be credited that the islanders should, in his time, be ignorant of it. They had no wood; and sea-weed alone could not have sufficed them through the long and dreary winter. Probably he introduced some improvement into the manner of preparing it; and thus earned a title to their gratitude.

On the death of Einar, the government of the 936 Orkneys, and of the most northern counties of Scot- to land, devolved on two of his sons, Arnkel and Erlend. 946. If they had the ambition they had not the wisdom of the father. When Eric of the Bloody Axe was expelled from Norway by Hakô the Good\*, they received him with readiness, became his allies, and accompanied him in his predatory expedition against the Scottish and English coasts. For a time, indeed, fortune seemed to smile upon them. Eric became the governor of Northumbria, as the vassal of king Athelstane: they shared in his prosperity, and in the wealth which he acquired in his piratical expeditions to the coasts of Scotland and Ireland; but they also shared his tragical fate in the battle which the royal Edred waged against the northmen, and which for ever united Northumbria with the Anglo-Saxon crown.†

These princes were succeeded by another brother, 946 Thorfin Hausak-liufurs, whose administration, the re- to sult of his wisdom, was one of great prosperity. Not 980. so that of his sons. Of these he left five. The eldest, Arnfin, married Ragnilda, the daughter of Eric Blodoxe and the infamous Gunhilda, and quite worthy of her parentage. Through her Arnfin, the victim of treachery, descended to an untimely grave. Havard, the next brother, succeeded to the government; and his conduct was so wise and prosperous, that he obtained the name of the Happy. But he had the

\* Vol. I. p. 187.

† Ibid. p. 188.

folly to marry the widowed Ragnilda; and he suffered the deserved penalty of his weakness. She had transferred, we are told, her affection to Liot, the next brother; and with the view of obtaining the gratification of her wishes, had provoked a quarrel between Havard and a kinsman that proved fatal to the former. But such a woman could have no affection; and her motive to the deed was probably dislike of her husband's ascendancy. However this be, she became the wife of the third brother, who succeeded to the government. But Liot had little reason to congratulate himself on his elevation. The readiness with which he had become the instrument of a base and bloody woman roused the anger of Skuli, the next brother, who, being no less ambitious, resolved to dethrone him. Repairing to the court of the Scottish king, he offered to hold the islands as a fief of the crown, if, through the royal aid, he were raised to the dignity now held by Liot. The offer was accepted; and, at the head of a considerable force, he returned into Caithness, which declared for him. In the centre of that province the kinsmen met, and victory declared for Liot, — Skuli being left dead on the field. But the Scots now appeared in greater numbers; and though the jarl triumphed in a second engagement, he received a wound which brought him to his end in the year 980. The authority now passed into the hands of Laudver, the fifth brother. Of him we know only that he was addicted to piratical expeditions, that he married an Irish princess, and that he reigned sixteen years.

980  
to  
1014. Sigurd, the son and successor of the last jarl, occupies more room in fable than in history. Rejecting the former, we may observe, that he had many great qualities; that he was valiant, generous, persevering; that he freed his people from the obligation which they had contracted to the jarls in the days of Turf-Einar, thus restoring the lands, which had lately been feudal, to their original allodial state; and that in addition to the Shetland Isles and the two Scottish counties, which had for nearly

a century been under the jurisdiction of his predecessors, he held some fortresses, and, we are told, some extensive demesnes, in the heart of Scotland. Yet these might be held as a vassal of the Sottish monarch. But the most memorable event in his administration was the introduction of Christianity into the Orkneys. To this event we have before alluded\*, but it requires a more ample detail. Sigurd being summoned on board the vessel which carried Olaf Trygvesson from Ireland to Norway, was told that if he did not immediately receive Christianity, cause his people to receive it, and do homage to Olaf as the heir of Harald Harfagre, he, and all who refused, should be put to death. At this moment Olaf had not ascended the throne of Norway, which was occupied by jarl Hako; and Sigurd might well hesitate to acknowledge him. Again, though he must have frequently heard of the religion which he was now required to embrace, he had been accustomed to despise it, because it was professed by the peaceable—that is, the cowardly—portion of mankind. He, therefore, began to make some excuse for his inability to comply with the demand; but none would be admitted; and as he had to choose between obedience and instant death, he naturally selected the former. He and his people, with one accord, submitted to the rite; and to secure his fidelity, he gave his son as hostage. On the death of that son, however, he renounced his allegiance to the Norwegian crown, and entered into a close connection with that of Scotland, by marrying a daughter of king Malcolm. Probably this new alliance prevented him from renouncing Christianity with as much facility as he had renounced his dependence on Norway. It certainly increased his power, and the consideration in which he was held by the chiefs of the age. He was one of the leaders in the war against the Irish king Brian; and, with many others, he was killed at the battle of Clontarf.† Such a man, in such an age, could not, of course, be permitted to fall in the ordinary way. If the

\* See Vol. I. p. 216.

† Ibid. p. 220.

scalds are to be credited, he had some presentiment of his fate before he left the islands ; and he confided the administration to his three sons by the first wife, Einar, Sumerled, and Brusi. Connected with his death are two legends, which deserve a momentary notice. One of his friends, who wished to accompany him, he insisted on remaining, with the assurance that he should be the first man to whom intelligence of the battle should be communicated. One day the chief saw, as he thought, jarl Sigurd approaching at the head of a troop of horse. He instantly mounted, rode forward, met the jarl, embraced, and, in the view of several followers, afterwards disappeared with the jarl behind an eminence : neither, adds the legend, was again seen in this world. The other story has called forth the splendid effusion of Grey : — Darrod, a native of Caithness, saw twelve horsemen ride towards a hill, and immediately enter it. Hastening to the place, and looking through a small aperture, he perceived twelve gigantic women weaving and singing ; the woof and the song no less supernatural than the singers.\* This event, which is placed in the year 1014, illustrates the mental condition of the people, who, if they had outwardly embraced Christianity, were still pagans in superstition.

Of the Shetland Isles, during this period, we know nothing. They formed, as we have observed, a portion of the government of the Orkney jarls ; and so did the Hebrides. But the connection between the governors and the governed must have been lax, and subject to frequent interruption. The Hebrides were frequently ravaged, — now by Norwegians, now by Danes, now by fierce adventurers from all parts of the north. The condition of Iona, the hallowed abode of St. Columba's disciples, was mournful. In 793 the monastery was laid in ashes, and most of the inmates massacred ; again in 797 and 801. In 805 sixty-eight more of the monks suffered the same fate. From that period to the year 875 the barbarian ravages were frequent. To escape

\* See "The Fatal Sisters."



destruction, the monks fled ; and when the pirates were defeated, returned to the same hallowed spot, to quench the still smoking ruins, and to rebuild the house of their saint. After 875 the depredations of the northern rovers were much less frequent. We read, indeed, of no massacre until 985, when the abbot and fifteen of his monks obtained the martyr's crown. This seems to have been the last disaster of the kind. Christianity, in a degree far greater than the governments of Norway and the Orkneys, was destroying the spirit of piracy. In 1093, as we shall hereafter have occasion to relate, the Western Isles, like Man and the Orkneys, were subdued by Magnus of Norway, and annexed to his crown.\*

5. *Iceland* (861, &c.) was probably known to the Irish missionaries before it was discovered by the Norwegians. At least some articles were found there which missionaries only could have left ; and these must have come from Iona or Ireland. "Before Iceland was discovered by the Norwegians," says the *Landnamabok*, "men were there whom we call Papas, who professed the Christian religion, and who were believed to have come from the west." The same authority also speaks of the books in the Irish and the Anglo-Saxon languages ; of the bells, staves, and other articles left by preceding visitors. But if any colony had ever settled upon it, it had long been uninhabited when it was accidentally discovered by Naddod, in 861. That searover left the Faroe Islands with the intention of steering directly for the west of Norway ; but a storm arising, drove him far to the north-west, until he reached that largest of the European isles. But he knew not it was an island : he saw that it was covered with snow, and from that circumstance he denominated it *Snoeland*. Though he ascended several high mountains, he could discern no trace of human beings. On his return he acquainted his countrymen with the discovery. The fol-

\* The materials for the preceding section are derived from the Orkney-*inga Saga* ; *Snorro, Heimskringla* ; *Johnstone, Antiquitates Celto-Scindicæ*.

lowing year it was again accidentally visited by a Swede, Gardar Swafarson, who sailed round it, and ascertaining it to be an island, gave it the name of Gardarsholm. The season was too advanced for him to return ; and he passed the whole winter on the coast, living chiefly on the fish which he caught in abundance. The third person that visited it was the Norwegian Floki, surnamed *Rafna*, or the Raven, from the manner in which, according to legend, he found the island. Sailing from the Faroes, he proceeded towards the north-west ; but as he was uncertain of the exact direction in which Snoeland lay, he let fly three ravens, which he had previously dedicated to the gods. One of these flew back to the islands which he had left ; another returned to the ship ; the third proceeded in a right line, and was followed by Floki, until he reached the country which Naddod had discovered. Its name he changed from Snoeland to Iceland. He admired its boiling fountains and its burning lava ; but the country was too barren for his subsistence : he was troubled at the mysterious quaking of the earth ; and he soon bade adieu to a region which he had evidently designed to colonize, but which the gods had doomed to everlasting desolation. His companions, however, did not give so disheartening an account of the island. They praised its fish, its climate, its soil ; and above all, they praised it because “ it was a place where men might live in freedom, far away from kings and jarls.”

874. The first attempt made to colonize the island was in the year 874. Ingulf, the son of a Norwegian jarl, had slain his adversary ; and to escape the consequences of the act, he, with his brother-in-law Jorleif, prepared to visit a region where neither the vengeance of the kindred nor that of Harald Harfagre could pursue him. Deeply imbued with the superstition of the ancient Norwegian worship, he offered due sacrifices to the gods—for in these patriarchal times the privilege of sacrificing descended with that of primogeniture ; and when he sailed took with him the ornamented door-

posts of the apartment in which his household deities were enshrined. These, as he approached the island, he cast into the sea, and vowed that on the part of the coast to which the elements should drive them, he would establish his colony. In the meantime a promontory on the south-east, still called Ingulfshod, received him ; but the door-posts, watched by his slaves, proceeded to the south-west, and entered a bay on which the modern Reykiavik stands. The place in which he had fixed his temporary abode was comparatively fertile ; the neighbourhood of the bay for many leagues was unusually sterile ; yet in spite of all remonstrances Ingulf removed to the latter spot, which he believed to be divinely ordained for him. His companion, Jorleif, chose a more fertile locality to the south ; but Jorleif had no reverence for the gods, to whom he never deigned to sacrifice. In the estimation of many, the latter was the wiser man ; but in a short time he was murdered by his own slaves, who fled with his substance to some distant islands. They did not escape with impunity : pursued by Ingulf, they paid the penalty of their crime. However much the regret of the chief for the fate of his friend, he piously observed that it was the lot of all who despised the national divinities.

Ingulf was followed by several Norwegian chiefs, and 884.  
by a multitude of simple freemen, who desired "to live far away from tyrannical kings and jarls." In general, each new community chose for itself some habitable valley, fixed its boundaries, erected a rude temple to the gods, and provided for the civil no less than the religious administration. Of the jarls contemporary with Ingulf, Thorolf was the most celebrated. Descended, in popular opinion, like many other chiefs, from the divine race which had held the government of the country, Thorolf was at once the head of his clan and the pontiff of his religion. Attached to the great temple of Thor, on one of the islands close to the Norwegian coast, furnished with a venerable beard, endowed with many vassals, many flocks and herds, and a wide domain,

Thorolf was one of the most influential chiefs in the north of that kingdom. But he had the misfortune to incur the wrath of Harald Harfagre, by giving an asylum to Biorn, one of his kinsmen, who was persecuted by that monarch. From a *Thing*, or public assembly of the province, Harald obtained a decree of outlawry against Thorolf, if, within a given period, he failed to surrender Biorn. To ascertain the will of the gods, whether he should give himself up to the king or flee to Iceland, he sacrificed to Thor, and the reply favoured the latter project. No less devout than Ingulf, he took with him the statue of Thor, the earth on which the throne had stood, and a portion of the temple. Approaching the island, he threw into the sea the wooden columns which had supported the sanctuary; and, as his predecessor had done ten years before him, settled on the spot to which the elements carried them. Marking the boundaries of his new domain by walking round it with a flaming brand and setting fire to the grass, his next object was to build a large house, and then a large temple, in which he was to officiate as the high priest of Thor. There were the same columns, the same throne, the same mystic ring, and the same great altar. The other divinities were placed in the niches prepared for them; and the worship was celebrated with less pomp indeed than in the parent country, but with equal fervour. Close to the temple was the spot where the *Thing*, or judicial assembly of the people, was held, in the open air, in presence of "Freya, and Niord, and the Almighty As," by whom the witnesses in a suit always swear. The ground of both was held to be holy; for the laws which the ancient divinities had ordained were necessarily a part of religion. This was the ordinary mode of proceeding when any new colony was formed. By degrees, as the cabins of the slaves increased, and were spread over the domain, the aspect of the country became more cheerful. The settlement of Thorolf was soon a flourishing one; it was increased by many new arrivals from Norway; and was at length divided into three



populous districts, each of which recognized him as chief pontiff, until human passion begun to produce its inevitable result, — disunion and bloody feuds.

At this distance of time, we do not estimate as we <sup>874</sup>ought the number of emigrants from Norway to this <sup>to</sup> newly-discovered island. Before the death of Harald <sup>936.</sup> Harfagre, most of its habitable portions had their occupants. What with the expulsion of the pirates, what with the voluntary exile of the chiefs who disdained to acknowledge a superior, the mother country must have lost no inconsiderable proportion of its inhabitants. It promised indeed to be left half peopled, when that monarch, in conjunction with the nobles who still remained, severely prohibited these emigrations. But neither he nor they could always watch the ports; still less could they control the motions of those who, while occupied in traffic from coast to coast, seized the opportunity of sailing for a land where there were no kings, no lords. Yet this was only true of the earliest state of Icelandic civilization. Subsequently, as the chiefs with their numerous slaves and their warlike dependants repaired to that place, a system resembling the clanship of Norway, though less despotic, was introduced. They, indeed, seized the land as their own, and parcelled it out to their followers on certain conditions. Among these conditions was always the payment of an annual rent in agricultural produce, and of something for the support of religion; but frequently was superadded some hereditary jurisdiction in the family of the chief. As he was often a pontiff no less than a patriarch, and was a reputed descendant from the divine family of the Ynglings, this union of the sacerdotal, of the judicial, and of almost royal functions, invested him with a consideration which he had scarcely enjoyed even in Norway. He who filled this twofold office of pontiff and civil magistrate, who formed a sort of patriarchal aristocracy not uninteresting to contemplate, was called *Godar*, or *Haf-godar*. But in half a century after the colonization of the island, an evil arose for which the social con-

stitutions of the period afforded no remedy. The isolation of the communities led to the formation of a separate rival spirit, which was often destructive to the district. When two neighbouring communities or their magistrates disputed, who was to act as the umpire? There was no monarch, no hereditary chief of the province, no Al-Thing, to decide between them. It became necessary, therefore, either to renounce the advantages of a general confederation, and to live in scattered independent tribes, whose hostilities must soon have led to the depopulation of the island, or to establish a superior authority. Hence the selection of a supreme judge, who was also empowered to collect laws, which, however, could not be obligatory until they had been accepted by the chiefs and the people of each community. The first Icelander raised to this high dignity was Ulflot (925), who, though sixty years of age, proceeded to Norway to obtain a more intimate acquaintance with the unwritten observances of that kingdom. Under the direction of Thorleif the Wise, he obtained in three years the information which he sought; and on his return to Iceland he promulgated a code that for many generations regulated the decisions of the deemsters, or local judges. Its provisions have unfortunately perished, with the exception of some inconsiderable fragments. They were no doubt nearly identical with those which governed the parent country; but of the latter we have not one in the state in which it was originally promulgated, — not one that has not been altered by succeeding legislators. The spirit of the code which Thorleif himself compiled at the instance of Hako the Good, can be inferred only from the general character of Norwegian society, and from the legal provisions of later times; provisions which are, in truth, but adaptations of ancient penalties to an altered state of society. The laws designed for pagan use would obviously require considerable modification before they could be adopted by Christians.

To understand rightly the social condition of Iceland 930, during the pagan and indeed the succeeding ages, too much attention cannot be paid to the political constitution and the civil administration of that interesting colony. The island was divided into four great districts, —viertel; and over each was a chief magistrate elected by the people. At certain periods, there was an assembly of the freemen in each; all had a voice in the deliberations; all could vote; and the magistrate whom they had chosen was entrusted with the execution of such laws, such regulations, as they adopted. But though comprising one fourth only of the habitable portion of the island, each of these districts was too extensive to render the meetings of the freemen so frequent as the interests of the community required. Hence the subdivision of each into inferior districts, which had their meetings for the transaction of such business as was more peculiarly local. Affairs which concerned the whole community could be discussed only in the *Al-Thing*, or great national assembly, which was held once a year. The place of meeting was situated on a level plain, on the shores of the lake of Thingvalle, and was called *the Law Mount*. Justice, indeed, was generally administered on an eminence among all the nations of Gothic origin; not because there was any sanctity in a hill, but that the proceedings might be more visible to the multitude. During eight centuries the Law Mount continued to be the scene of the national assemblies; and it is only in our own times that the place of meeting has been removed to a spot more convenient indeed to the scattered population, but less hallowed by time. The president was chosen for life,—an anomaly surely in a community where the freemen would be thought equal; but the truth is that among all the Germanic nations there was a wide difference between the theory and practice of the constitution. The meanest freeman present at the Thing might, for any thing we know, have a vote; he might even have the right of speech; but still the real power lay in the hands of a few noble

chiefs. What made the authority of this president, this logsogomadr, or promulgator of the law, the more formidable, is the fact, that though he was not, as some writers have contended, a legislator, no laws were made without his concurrence ; and of these he had the interpretation, no less than the administration. His office therefore being more than executive, and conferred for so long a period, made him irresponsible, except when the Thing was actually assembled. As we have before observed, Ulfiot was the first who held this dignity. The laws he enacted were, we are told, preserved for two centuries by tradition only, before they were committed to writing. This is not credible. The Runic art at least was understood many centuries before his time ; and so, we may infer, were the ordinary characters : at least we read of communication by letter between the sovereigns and jarls of the time. The more important of Ulfiot's laws must have been invested in a dress less perishable than oral tradition. For ages before his time, every German tribe with which we are acquainted, had, besides its common or unwritten, its statute or written, law ; and we know not why Scandinavia should in this respect be different from such barbarous tribes as the Saxons, or Finns, or Suabians, during the same period. On this subject, however, more in the proper place.\*

6. *Greenland* owed its discovery to the Icelandic colony. Towards the close of the tenth century, Eric the Red, son of Torwald, a Norwegian jarl, who had been compelled to forsake his country in consequence of a feud, was, for the same reason, obliged to leave Iceland. Whither was he to repair ? To Norway he could not ; for there were the deadly enemies of his family whom old Torwald had made. To hide himself in Iceland was hopeless ; and in the Orkneys, which were far distant, he could scarcely hope to escape the vengeance of

\* The preceding section is derived from, 1. Torfæus, *Islandia Antiqua* ; 2. Ditto, *Historia Rerum Norvegicarum* ; 3. Snorro, *Heimskringla* ; 4. The *Landnamabok*, seu *Origines Islandorum* ; 5. Schlegel, *Comment. de Codice Gragas*. ; 6. Wharton, *History of the Northmen*.



those enemies. He therefore resolved to seek a land of which some maritime adventurers had obtained a confused knowledge. Sailing towards the west, he at length discovered a small island in a strait, which he called Eric's Sound, and on which he passed the winter. The following spring, he examined the neighbouring continent, which from its smiling verdure — smiling in comparison with the bleak desolation of Iceland — he called *Greenland*. Filled with the importance of this adventure, he soon returned to that island, and succeeded in collecting a number of colonists, whom he established in the newly-discovered land. Yet Greenland was not uninhabited: better for the settlers had it been so; for the wild natives were not friendly to men whom they regarded as intruders on their own domain. Some years after the settlement of the colony, viz. in 999, Leif, the son of Eric, repaired to Norway, where he was well received by the reigning monarch, Olaf Trygvesson: Olaf was soon interested in the description which Leif gave of the country; and in his zeal for the conversion of all pagans, he resolved to support the new colony. Whatever might be the faults of the royal convert, he was the instrument of much good. He persuaded or forced Leif to receive baptism, and caused a missionary to accompany him to Greenland. Hence the introduction of that religion among the Norwegian colonists; but it had little success amongst the natives, who, whether from stupidity or vicious habits, have always been slow to comprehend its truths. During more than three centuries this infant colony flourished: the plague of 1348 lamentably thinned its numbers; and early in the following century the rest were either exterminated by the savage inhabitants, or compelled to leave the country. Not a vestige remains of that colony; nor is it clearly ascertained in what part of the coast it was located.

7. *North America* (1001—1002). The most curious part of the present subject is that which relates to the alleged discovery of North America by a native of Iceland. Let us state the facts, as recorded by the

ancient sagas, and the authorities followed by Snorro Sturleson, before we reason upon them.—Herjulf, a descendant of Ingulf, and his son Biarn, subsisted by trading between Iceland and Norway, in the latter of which countries they generally passed the winter. One season, their vessels being as usual divided for the greater convenience of traffic, Biarn did not find his father in Norway, who, he was informed, had proceeded to Greenland, then just discovered. He had never visited that country; but he steered westwards for many days, until a strong north wind bore him considerably to the south. After a long interval, he arrived in sight of a low, woody country, which, compared with the description he had received of the other, and from the route he had taken, could not, he was sure, be Greenland. Proceeding to the south-west, he reached the latter country, and joined his father, who was located at Herjulfsnœs, a promontory opposite to the western coast of Iceland.

1001. The information which Biarn gave of this discovery induced Leif, son of Eric the Red, the discoverer of Greenland, to equip a vessel for the unknown country. With thirty-five persons he sailed from Herjulfsnœs towards the south, in the direction indicated by Biarn. Arriving at a flat stony coast, with mountains, however, covered with snow, visible at a great distance, they called it Hellu-land. Proceeding still southwards, they came to a woody but still flat coast, which they called Mark-land. A brisk north-east wind blowing for two days and two nights, brought them to a finer coast, woody and undulating, and abounding with natural productions. Towards the north this region was sheltered by an island; but there was no port until they had proceeded farther to the west. There they landed; and as there was abundance of fish in a river which flowed into the bay, they ventured there to pass the winter. They found the nights and days less unequal than in Iceland or Norway; on the very shortest (Dec. 21.) the sun rising at

half-past seven, and setting at half-past four. From some wild grapes which they found a few miles from the shore, they denominated the country Vinland, or Winland. The following spring they returned to Greenland.

This description, as the reader will instantly recognize, can apply only to North America. The first of the coasts which Leif and his navigators saw must have been Newfoundland, or Labrador; the second was probably the coast of New Brunswick; the third was Maine. The causes which led to the voyage, the names, the incidents, are so natural and so connected as to bear the impress of truth. And Snorro, the earliest historian of the voyage, was not an inventor: he related events as he received them from authorities which no longer exist, or from tradition. Neither he nor his countrymen entertained the slightest doubt that a new and extensive region had been discovered. The sequel will corroborate the belief that they were right.

The next chief that visited Vinland was Thorwald, <sup>1004</sup> another son of Eric the Red. With thirty companions he proceeded to the coast, and wintered in the tent which had <sup>to</sup> sheltered his brother Leif. The two following summers <sup>1008.</sup> were passed by him in examining the regions both to the west and the east; and, from the description in the Icelandic sagas, we may infer that he coasted the shore from Massachusetts to Labrador. Until the second season no inhabitants appeared; but two who had ventured along the shore in their frail canoes were taken, and most impolitically, as well as most inhumanly, put to death. These were evidently Esquimaux,<sup>1</sup> whose short stature and features resembled those of the western Greenlanders. To revenge the murder of their countrymen, a considerable number of the inhabitants now appeared in their small boats; but their arrows being unable to make any impression on the wooden defences, they precipitately retired. In this short skirmish, however, Thorwald received a mortal wound; and was buried on the next promontory with a cross at

his head and another at his feet, a proof that he had embraced Christianity. Having passed another winter, his companions returned to Greenland. The following year Thorstein, another son of Eric the Red, embarked for the same place with his wife Gudrida and twenty-five companions; but they were driven by the contending elements to the remote western coast of Greenland, where they passed the winter in great hardships. This adventure was fatal to Thorstein, whose corpse was taken back to the colony by his widow.

1009. The first serious attempt at colonizing Vinland was made by a Norwegian chief, Thorfin, who had removed to Greenland, and married the widowed Gudrida. With sixty companions, some domestic animals, implements of husbandry, and an abundance of dried provisions, he proceeded to the coast where Thorwald had died. There he erected his tents, which he surrounded by a strong palisade, to resist the assaults, whether open or secret, whether daily or nocturnal, of the natives. They came in considerable numbers to offer peltries and other productions for such commodities as the strangers could spare. Above all, we are assured, they wanted arms, which Thorfin would not permit to be sold; yet if an anecdote be true, their knowledge of such weapons must have been limited indeed. One of the savages took up an axe, ran with it into the woods, and displayed it with much triumph to the rest. To try its virtues, he struck one that stood near him; and the latter, to the horror of all present, fell dead at his feet. A chief took it from him, regarded it for some time with anger, and then cast it into the sea. Thorfin remained three years in Vinland, where a son was born to him; and after many voyages to different parts of the north, ended his days in Iceland. His widow made the pilgrimage to Rome; and on her return to the island retired to a convent which he had erected. Many, however, of the colonists whom he had led to Vinland remained, and were ultimately joined by another body under Helgi and Finnbogi, two brothers from Greenland. But the latter had the misfortune to be accom-



panied by a treacherous and evil woman, Freydisa, a daughter of Eric the Red, and who in a short time excited a quarrel, which proved fatal to about thirty of the colonists. Detested for her vices, she was constrained to return to Greenland; but the odour of her evil name remained with her: she lived despised, and died unlamented.

Towards the close of the reign of Olaf the Saint, an <sup>1026</sup> Icelander, named Gudleif, embarked for Dublin. The <sup>to</sup> vessel being driven by boisterous winds far from its <sup>1121.</sup> direct course, towards the south-west, approached an unknown shore. He and the crew were soon seized by the natives, and carried into the interior. Here, however, to their great surprise, they were accosted by a venerable chief in their own language, who enquired after some individuals of Iceland. He refused to tell his name; but, as he sent a present to 'Thurida, the sister of Snorro Gode, and another for her son, no doubt was entertained that he was the scald Biorn, who had been her lover, and who had left Iceland thirty years before that time. The natives were described of a red colour, and cruel to strangers; indeed, it required all the influence of the friendly chief to rescue Gudleif and his companions from destruction. From this period to 1050, we hear no more of the northern colony established by Thorfin; but in that year a priest went from Iceland to Vinland to preach Christianity. His end was tragical, — a proof that if any of the original settlers had been Christians, they had reverted to idolatry. In 1121, a bishop embarked from Greenland for the same destination, and with the same object; but of the result no record exists. We hear no more, indeed, of the colony, or of Vinland, until the latter half of the fourteenth century, when the two Venetians Zeni are said to have visited that part of the world. From that time to the discovery of the New World by Columbus, there was no communication — none at least that is known — between it and the north of Europe.

This circumstance has induced many to doubt of the

facts which have been related. If, they contend, North America were really discovered and repeatedly visited by the Icelanders, how came a country, so fertile in comparison with that island, or with Greenland, or even Norway, to be so suddenly abandoned? This is certainly a difficulty; but a greater one, in our opinion, is involved in the rejection of all the evidence that has been adduced. It is not Snorro merely who mentions Vinland: many other sagas do the same; and even before Snorro, Adam of Bremen obtained from the lips of Sweyn II., king of Denmark, a confirmation of the alleged discovery. For relations so numerous and so uniform, for circumstances so naturally and so graphically described, there must have been some foundation. Even fiction does not invent, it only exaggerates. There is nothing improbable in the alleged voyages. The Scandinavians were the best navigators in the world. From authentic and indubitable testimony we know that their vessels visited every sea from the Mediterranean to the Baltic, from the extremity of the Finland Gulf to the entrance at least of Davis's Straits. Men thus familiar with distant seas must have made a greater progress in the science of navigation than we generally allow. The voyage from Reykiavik, in Iceland, to Cape Farewell, is not longer than that from the south-western extremity of Iceland—once well colonized—to the eastern coast of Labrador. But does the latter country itself exhibit, in modern times, any vestiges of a higher civilization than we should expect to find if no Europeans had ever visited it? So at least the Jesuit missionaries inform us. They found the cross, a knowledge of the stars, a superior kind of worship, a more ingenious mind, among the inhabitants of the coast which is thought to have been colonized from Greenland. They even assure us that many Norwegian words are to be found in the dialect of the people. The causes which led to the destruction of the settlement were probably similar to those which produced the same effect in Greenland. A handful of colonists, cut off from all communication with the mother country, and

consequently deprived of the means for repressing their savage neighbours, could not be expected always to preserve their original characteristics. They would either be exterminated by hostilities, or driven to amalgamate with the natives: probably both causes led to this unfortunate result. The only difficulty in this subject is that which we have before mentioned, viz. the sudden and total cessation of all intercourse with Iceland or Greenland; and even this must diminish when we remember that in the fourteenth century the Norwegian colony in Greenland disappeared in the same manner, after a residence in the country of more than three hundred years. On weighing the preceding circumstances, and the simple natural language in which they are recorded, few men not born in Italy or Spain will deny to the Scandinavians the claim of having been the original discoverers of the New World. Even Robertson, imperfectly acquainted as he was with the links in this chain of evidence, dared not wholly to reject it. Since his day, the researches of the northern critics, and a more attentive consideration of the subject, have caused most writers to mention it with respect.\*

8. *Russia* (862). That the Scandinavian pirates founded a sovereignty in Russia soon after the middle of the ninth century, is a fact which no historian ventures to dispute. A body of the people under the denomination of the Varangians, — a denomination which nobody can explain, — subdued the Tshuder and other Slavonic tribes between the Gulf of Finland and Novogrod. They were indeed masters of the maritime coasts in this part of the Baltic. At this time Russia was split into many separate states, which had never known a common head, and of which most, though of kindred origin, were at war with one another. Of these states the most considerable was Novogrod, a flourishing republic, which had an extensive commerce, not merely

\* Snorro, *Saga af Olafi Tryggva-Syni*; *Heimskringla* (multis locis); Torfæus, *Vinlandia Antiqua*; Adamas *Bremenis*, *De Situ Daniæ*; Malte Brun, *Géographie*; Pontoppidan, *Gesta et Ventigia Danorum extra Daniam*.

with the nations surrounding the Baltic, but with the Greek empire, with Persia, and perhaps with India. Its wealth naturally raised the cupidity of the warlike tribes, who were on the watch to intercept its merchandise, to harass its convoys, and, when the opportunity was favourable, of assailing its outposts. Separately, indeed, none of these tribes could have made any impression on that powerful city; but leagues for a common object distinguished the barbarian no less than the civilised times. By such a league were the people of Novogrod menaced; and in accordance with a custom of the times, solicited the aid of their neighbours, the Varangians. All the Northmen, and the Varangians in particular, were ready to sell their sword to the highest bidder. The offer of the republic, therefore, was promptly accepted; and her enemies were speedily humbled.

861 About the fact which we have just related there  
to is no difference of opinion among historians; but there  
862. is much between native and foreign writers, as to the  
circumstances which led to the establishment of the  
Varangian dynasty in Russia. According to one of the  
former, four of the great tribes, with the city of Novogrod,  
being struck with admiration at the wisdom, the justice,  
no less than the valour of the Northmen, and rendered  
miserable by their continual dissensions, sent an em-  
bassy over the sea for princes that might govern and  
protect them! "The interests of order and of do-  
mestic tranquillity," says the historian already quoted \*,  
"induced them to lay down their national pride:  
the Slavi, says a tradition, influenced by the advice  
of an aged inhabitant of Novogrod, demanded so-  
vereigns from the Varangians. Our ancient annals do  
not mention this sage; but if the tradition be true,  
his name is worthy of immortality, and of a glorious  
rank in our fasti." It seems that the Novogrodians  
and the Krivitches were allies of the Finnish tribes on  
the borders of the Finland Gulf, and like them tri-  
butaries of the Varangians. Subject for some years to

.. \* Karamsin, tom. i.



the same laws, they could easily draw closer the bonds of the alliance which had formerly united them. Thus, according to Nestor, they sent an embassy beyond the sea to the Varangians, saying, "Our country is extensive and fertile, but we are the prey of anarchy : come then to govern, to rule over us!" "Three brothers, Ruric, Sineas, and Truvor, illustrious alike for birth and valour, consented to assume the reins of government over a people who did not know how to use the liberty which their own right hands had won. Accompanied by a large body of Scandinavians, and prepared to defend by force of arms their own sovereign rights, these ambitious brothers for ever abandoned their own country. Ruric established himself at Novogrod; Sineas at Bielo-Ozero, amongst the Vessians, or Finnish people; and Truvor at Isborsk, a town of the Krivitichans." The internal improbability of this relation, in connection with the total absence of authority for it, must ensure its rejection by every critic.

The foreign historians of Russia, though relying on Russian authority, have given the only rational history of this event. They assure us that, after the three brothers had assisted Novogrod to humble her enemies, they were in no hurry to leave the country. Near the confluence of the Volkhof with the waters of the Ladoga Ruric built a town, which gave its name to that lake; and having fortified it, determined to make it a point of departure for his meditated conquests. His intention was but too evident to the people of Novogrod, who began to adopt measures for their defence. The Varangians were no less eager to profit by their superiority in arms; and to secure their great object, they combined their forces, and marched on the city. A mercantile people are seldom warlike. The inhabitants loudly expressed their determination to bury themselves amidst their houses rather than yield; but when the formidable enemy appeared before their gates, they preferred the part of submission, and from that moment received him as sovereign within their walls. Thus was a

republican exchanged for a monarchical government, despotism for anarchy. Yet Ruric acted with much caution, and caused the weight of his power to sit as lightly as possible on the people he had subdued. He established a council of the chief inhabitants, whom he consulted for some time in every act of importance ; and though he conferred most of the responsible offices on his own followers, his sway, at once moderate and firm, was an advantage to the people. His title of grand prince illustrates his wide ambition. His two brothers were princes ; so were some others whom he placed over the local governments ; but they were only his vassals, and their fiefs were reversible to him as their sovereign. Soon after his elevation, indeed, both the brothers died ; and Ruric incorporated their states with his own. Both he and they must have been conquerors ; for in a few years his authority extended from the northern extremity of the Ladoga lake to the western Dwina, and eastward to the confines of Yaroslaf.

But before the death of Ruric the Norman domination extended even to Kief. Two of his followers, Ascaid and Dir, having apparently some reason for dissatisfaction, left Novogrod with the intention of doing what many other Scandinavians had done, — of offering their swords to the Greek emperor. On their way they perceived a little town, built on an eminence overlooking the Dnieper ; and on inquiring to whom it belonged, they were told that it had been founded by three brothers long before dead, and that it was inhabited by a quiet inoffensive people, who paid tribute to the Khozars. The chieftains had a military eye : they saw at once the importance of such a position ; that it might become the centre of a sovereignty, great perhaps as that of Novogrod ; and with the armed force which they were leading they surprised the place. In a few years they were joined by great numbers of their countrymen, both from that city and from Scandinavia. This was the period, indeed, when Harald Harfagre was consolidating his empire by the reduction of the

Norwegian chiefs, and securing tranquillity by the banishment of the more licentious pirates. Thousands and tens of thousands must, at this period, have left Norway in quest of new habitations. Hence Kief soon became very populous, and so confident of its strength that it sent its piratical sons to the very gates of Constantinople. Money induced them to retreat. The domination of the Khozars over Kief was at an end. The introduction of Christianity into that city did not much assuage the ferocity of the Normans : many adopted the mass without forsaking their warrior god.

The establishment of two empires in Russia was soon 882. found to be impolitic. After the death of Ruric, and during the minority of his son Igor, Oleg, to whom he had confided the administration, resolved to incorporate Kief with the northern principality. In his way, the regent took Smolensko and Lubetch ; but on reaching the banks of the Dnieper beneath that city, he saw that it was too strong to be taken by force, and he had recourse to stratagem. By a pretended embassy, he lured the two princes into his power, and put them to death. The other conquests of Oleg, and his successful efforts to consolidate no less than to extend the infant empire, must be sought in the histories of that empire. Sufficient for our purpose is the fact, that these enterprising men established in Russia a sovereignty which still subsists. The family of Ruric held the throne of that empire above seven centuries ; down to the accession of the present Romanoff dynasty.\*

10. *Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Greece, &c.*—During the Pagan age, the Northmen were on the coasts of all these countries, which they ravaged with success. Their visit to Italy, however, was but transient. Hastings, their leader, did no more than surprise a town at the mouth of the Tiber, and returned to Gaul, where a richer spoil invited him. In Spain, the Scandinavians abode for many years. The important city of

\* Keramsin, *Histoire de Russia* ; Levesque, *Histoire* ; Pontoppidan, *Gesta et Vestigia*.

Seville was in their power, and from it they made frequent and most disastrous incursions into the neighbouring provinces. They were long too powerful to be expelled by the monarch of Cordova, though that monarch was no other than the great Abderahman. On the coast of Galicia too, according to the ancient chroniclers of Castile, they abode for a season, and caused much mischief to the subjects of Pelayo's successors. In Belgium and Spain their ravages were more frequent and more severe ; in fact, there was no cessation to them until the north became Christianized. But though of their predatory expeditions a volume might be composed, they would little interest the reader, both because the description of one is the description of all, and because they left no permanent or important results behind them. In the expeditions which we have already contemplated, such results are to be found. In England they led to the formation of an independent kingdom in Northumbria, compelled even Alfred to retire into private life, and eventually placed Danish sovereigns on the throne. In France they occasioned the dismemberment of Normandy and Britany from the crown. In Ireland they gave rise to many principalities, and continued, for centuries, to influence in the highest degree the fate of that country. In the Orkneys, they led to the establishment of a powerful dynasty, and produced a hardy race of men who still possess those islands. In Iceland there was the same result; and Iceland too became, what to literature is more important,—the refuge of the Norwegian language, religion, and learning. In Greenland, they called into existence a colony which subsisted above three hundred years. In Russia, they laid the foundation of the greatest empire which the world has yet seen. Even in North America, transient or unknown as were the results they produced, they exhibit a phenomenon as curious as it is interesting,—a handful of warlike shepherds, or adventurous mariners, traversing the wide Atlantic, and attempting to introduce their own institutions among the savages of another world. But



those which were undertaken into the countries before us were not directed by master minds, and their motive was only sordid gain. The circumstances, therefore, which accompanied them may, for any thing we care, slumber in oblivion.\*

\* Pontoppidan, *Gesta et Vestigia Danorum extra Daniam*. The best account of the piratical exploits of the Northmen in France is in the *Roman de Rou of Wace*, and the *Chronique of Benoit de St. Maur*. Their exploits in Spain are mentioned both by the Mohammedan and Christian writers. Their exploits in Scotland, Iceland, Ireland, and the coast of Britain, are contained in the Sagas; but these abound so much in wild fiction that it is difficult to separate the true from the false.

## CHAP. V.\*

## COSMOGONY AND RELIGION OF SCANDINAVIA.

## INTRODUCTION.

THE TWO EDDAS, THE ELDER AND THE YOUNGER, THE POETIC AND THE PROSE. — CONTENTS OF THE FORMER. — DIVISION INTO CLASSES. 1. THE MYSTICAL. 2. THE MYTHIC-DIDACTIC. 3. THE PURELY MYTHOLOGICAL. 4. THE MYTHIC-HISTORICAL.—POEMS OF EACH CLASS. —THE PROSE EDDA. — SNORRO STURLESON.

THE religion of the ancient Northmen — which, though it has many points of affinity with other religions, has yet a sufficient number of its own peculiarities to constitute it a distinct system — has been always admitted to be a most interesting and most curious subject of inquiry, not merely in the north of Europe, but in England, in Germany, and in France. Yet until the last few years, the popular notions concerning it were vague and inaccurate; and for the best of all reasons—that, of the two sources from which alone a full knowledge of it could be acquired, the one had been carelessly, the other partially published.

The two works to which we allude are the two Eddas, the Elder and the Younger; the former attributed to

\* The authorities for the present chapter are, — 1. *Edda Sæmundar hins Froda*; *Edda Rythmicea seu Antiquior vulgo Sæmundina dicta*: pars i. 1787, pars ii. 1818, pars iii. 1828. Ilavniæ. — 2. *Edda Snorronis à Rask*. Copen. 1818. — 3. Mallet, *Introduction à l'Histoire de Danemarck*, tom. i. and ii. — 4. Percy, *Notes to the Northern Antiquities*. — 5. Wheaton, *History of the Northmen*. — 6. Pigott, *Manual of Scandinavian Mythology*. — 7. *Foreign Quarterly Review*, Nos. 3 and 7. — 8. Notes of Stephanus to his edition of Saxo Grammaticus.

Saemund, the other to Snorro, the son of Sturlo, both Icelanders and both Christians,—the one born in the eleventh, the other in the twelfth century.

Saemund, who, from his varied knowledge, is styled *hin Frode*, or the Learned, and by posterity at least was regarded as a wizard, had greater advantages of education than we should have expected in an Icelfander of that remote period. He studied, we are told, both in France and Germany, and is supposed to have visited Rome. On his return he settled at Oddé, in the northern part of the island, embraced holy orders, and was entrusted with the cure of souls. Much of his time, however, was devoted to the education of youth, and to literary pursuits. Whether, as Christianity had not long been established in that remote island, he was still in some degree influenced by the lingering spirit of paganism, or whether (a more probable supposition) a taste superior to the age in which he lived led him to preserve, instead of destroying, the remaining monuments of paganism, we are indebted to him for one of the most curious books that has ever occupied the attention of the human mind. This was the Elder Edda, the first part of which was published for the first time in 1787. The second part did not issue from the press until 1818, nor the third until 1828. No writer, therefore, prior to these years, could have any just notice of this venerable collection of pieces, or, consequently, of the religion which they illustrate. To the advantage furnished to the modern student by their publication must be added the vast erudition of Finn Magnusen, editor of the third or last part, whose Mythological Lexicon and Critical Dissertations (especially the one elaborately devoted to “the Edda Doctrine and its Origin”) have not only exhausted the subject, but pointed out many of the affinities between the Scandinavian religion and that of the most celebrated nations both in ancient and modern times.

The Elder, or Poetic Edda, consists of about forty poems,—all anonymous, all, with one exception, pagan

compositions, though written at different periods, the most recent of them bearing the impress of considerable antiquity. They have been arranged, perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, into four different classes, according to the nature of the subjects. These are—1. the Mystical; 2. the Mythic-didactic; 3. the purely Mythological; and 4. the Mythic-historical.

1. Of the Mystical class, the most prominent is the *Voluspa* (Volu-spa), the oracle of Vala the prophetess. This contains a rapid, abrupt, and very dark account of the whole system, beginning with the creation, and ending with the destruction of the universe by fire. All things, however, are not to be destroyed: two individuals, a man and a woman, are to be saved, and made the progenitors of a new and fairer world. It should be observed, that in the Scandinavian as in the Greek and Roman superstition, superior sanctity is ascribed to the women. They alone knew the fates; even Odin had to consult them when he wished to look beyond the dark cloud that concealed the future from the gods no less than from mankind.

The *Grougaldor*, or the magical song of Groa, is another of this class. It consists of terms and precepts, the use of which is to produce the most astounding supernatural effects. These "words of might" were not peculiar to the Odinic worship. They pervade still more thoroughly that which Zoroaster instituted, between whom and the northern prophet there are more points of resemblance than the learned have yet discerned. Both, for example, pretended to magical powers, because both found the pretension already in existence when they entered on their respective careers; and neither was willing to be thought inferior to the members of the priestly caste which he undertook to subvert. The magic of the Finns and Lets Odin stigmatized as *black* magic—as inculcated by the powers of darkness for the injury of mankind; but *his* was the white, the pure magic, the kingly art. He found a school already established in the north; and with all

his power he could not wholly extirpate it. There seems, indeed, reason to infer that he connived at the union of many native rites with his own; or, at least, that if *he* did not, his immediate successors did. Just so it was with the renowned Magian. In contemplating the origin of his religion, we may either smile, or be provoked, at the prodigies which every where meet us. It is a religion of magic; it boasts of supernatural powers; it openly owns not merely the possibility, but the necessity, of miraculous results, when the words of might which it prescribes are duly pronounced. And if miracles and prodigies constitute its peculiar character even at this day, in the comparatively civilised Hindostan, they were doubly necessary when Zoroaster first announced it to the world. To them he boldly appealed for the truth of his mission. The miracles which preceded, those which accompanied, his birth, may be seen in the elaborate account of him prefixed by Anquetil du Perron to his translation of the Zendavesta. Throughout his life, if any faith is to be placed in his biographers, he wrought, or pretended to work, miracles by his magical terms. Yet he exceeded even Odin in the zeal with which he inveighed against the magic of his rivals. Against the magicians his most terrible anathemas were hurled; against them he waged a war of extermination, and justified the hostility by alleging the express command of heaven. But they were the servants of Ahriman, the irreconcilable enemies of Ormuzd—of every thing that is good—of every thing that issues from the benevolent deity. In their hands, magic was sure to become an instrument of evil; but in those of himself and his disciples, it could not fail to be an instrument of happiness. In the former case it must be fatal, in the latter highly useful, to human nature: hence the necessity of destroying in the one case that which should be piously maintained in the other. Such, too, was the conduct of Odin. There was, however, this difference between the two legislators: while the Median regarded women as absolutely



impure, and confided the celebration of all his rites, magical or religious, to the men ; the Scythian paid peculiar honour to the sex : women were allowed, enjoined, to perform the most solemn, the most awful, ceremonies of the new faith. Yet the men were not excluded from the privilege. There were colleges or fraternities of wizards from the earliest known periods of Scandinavian history, down to the time of Harald Harfager, or even later still. Rognevald, a son of that monarch, was burned to death, with eighty of his associates, on the charge of exercising a magic condemned by Odin, and emanating from the evil powers.

The *Solar Liod*, or Song of the Sun, is almost wholly the composition of Sæmund. But then he derived his materials from ancient pagan times.

2. Of the mytho-didactic poems, the first place may well be assigned to the *Vafthrudnis-mål*. It is, like many of the other Odinic pieces, in the form of a dialogue. Odin expresses his resolution to visit Vafthrudnir, a famous giant or genius, and of contending with him in science. Frigga, his queen, “to whom the future is known,” attempts to dissuade him from the journey, because “no one of the genii is to be compared with Vafthrudnir in wisdom and valour.” If Odin should be vanquished in the contest, he must perish, and with him all the gods who were dependent on him. But he persists, assumes the disguise of a weary traveller, and proceeds to the palace of the sage giant. On this poem, however, we shall not further dilate, as a translation of it may be found in a volume of the present collection.\* This contest between the chief of the gods and the giant is derived from the same source as the war of the Titans with Jove.

*Grimnis-mål*, or Grimner’s Song, is another of the mytho-didactic class. Grimner is no other than Odin, who has assumed the disguise of an aged minstrel, for a purpose explained by the Icelandic introduction to the

\* Europe during the Middle Ages, vol. ii., appendix.

poem. King Rodung had two sons, the one eight, the other ten years of age. One day they embarked in a boat to pass some hours in fishing. A storm arising, they were driven into an unknown sea, and cast upon a strange coast. Approaching a hut, they were hospitably received by the master and mistress, who seemed to be a rustic pair, but who in reality were Odin and Frigga. Agner, the elder, was the favourite of the latter, Geirrod, the younger, of the former. In the hut they remained the whole winter; and when spring arrived, they were led to the sea-coast, and embarked in a new vessel which their hosts presented to them. When bidding adieu, the male rustic whispered something into Geirrod's ear. The purport of this secret may be inferred from the conduct of the prince just as he reached land. As he leaped on shore, he pushed the boat away, exclaiming to his brother Agner, "Go, where the evil genii may seize thee!" Repairing to his father's court, he found that father no more, and he was immediately proclaimed king of the country. On the other hand, Agner was among the giants or evil genii, and married to a woman of that hated race. Great, therefore, was the contrast between the fortunes of the two; and Odin one day, from the highest heaven, pointed it out in triumph to his goddess-queen. Frigga declared that Geirrod was undeserving of the good fortune; that he was a niggard who starved his dependents and guests. This the god refused to credit; and when she persisted in the charge, he assumed a mortal form to try the experiment. But what man can equal a woman, either god or goddess, in cunning? Frigga sent one of her confidential messengers to Geirrod, telling him to be on his guard against a wise magician then in his dominions, who had resolved to destroy him: that magician was to be known by this token—that no dog would bark at him. The royal command was therefore given that dogs should be set on all who approached the palace, and whomsoever they refused to assail should be brought before him. A man, covered with a

blue peltz, was brought before him and questioned ; but the stranger would return no other answer than that he was called Grimmer. In great wrath, the king placed him between two great fires—an infallible way of discovering a wizard—and commanded that he should receive no food. There he remained eight days and eight nights, suffering from the heat and from thirst, when Agner, the son of Geirrod, a boy of ten years, took pity on him, and presented him with a full horn, observing that his father did wrong thus to punish a guiltless man. Here the piece opens : Odin exclaims that the fire is hot ; and prophesies that the royal youth shall, for this service, soon hold the sceptre of the Goths. He then proceeds—somewhat oddly, only immortal beings may be privileged to say or do what they please—to describe in succession the twelve mansions of heaven. (To this description we shall afterwards advert, when we endeavour to explain the cosmogony of the Scandinavians.) He ended by declaring who he was ; and that the death of Geirrod was at hand. In great fear, the king arose to release the divine speaker ; but stumbling, the point of his sword entered his body, and Agner was immediately proclaimed.

As many poems on the Edda will hereafter occupy our attention, we shall only observe that the *Alvis-mál*, or song concerning the dwarf Alvis ; the *Hyndlu-liod*, or song concerning Hyndla ; and the *Fiolsvinns-mál*, or story about Fiolsvinr, are of the same class, and equally conversant with mythological subjects. The second of these also mentions the names of some Norwegian jarls who traced their origin to a divine source. The *Havamál*, or sublime discourse of Odin, concludes this class of poems. It consists partly of moral precepts, some of which are very good ; while others are dictated by a mind more cunning than wise ; and partly of the wonderful powers attached to certain runes. For the latter we have no taste ; of the former, half a dozen specimens may be given.

“ Remain not long a guest in the house of another ; for he who does so becomes a burden to his host.”



“ A secret can be kept by *one* person only, — by him whom it concerns. If two know it, there is danger; if three know it, it is no longer a secret.”

“ Be thou the friend of thy friend’s friend, and in no wise the friend of thine enemy’s friend.”

“ If thou hast a true friend, and keepest nothing from him, join thy heart with his, exchange gifts with him, and visit him often. The path untrodden is soon overgrown.”

“ If thou hast a friend whom thou canst not trust, but yet wouldst obtain a benefit from him, speak fairly to him, but keep thine own secret: return him falsehood for falsehood.”

“ Trust not to a woman’s word: her heart is moveable as the wheel at which she spins, and deceit is cherished in her breast.”

“ The child of one’s old age is the most precious.”

“ Flocks and herds perish; so do friends and kindred; such will be our own lot. But one thing there is that will never perish,—the good man’s fame.”

3. The poems purely mythological are of a more interesting class. The *Hymis-guida*, or song concerning Hymir, describes an entertainment given by Ægir, the sea-god, to the deities of the Scandinavian Olympus. Ægir, to his great dismay, has no cauldron large enough to brew mead in for such thirsty guests; and Thor goes to borrow or steal one from the great Hymir. This entertainment gave rise to another poem, the *Lokaglespa*, or quarrelling of Loka with the assembled guests. It is curious as showing the estimation in which the gods were held by one of their own number. A more imaginative production is the *Hamars-heimt*, or recovery of Thor’s mallet, which the guests had stolen, and which Thrym, one of the number, had buried eight miles below the surface of the ground. The *Rafna-galdur Odins*, or raven song of Odin, describes the lamentations of the gods at their approaching annihilation. The *Skirnirs-for*, or journey of Skirnir to the region of the giants, in search of a wife for Freyr, one of the

gods, is graphic, and strikingly illustrative of northern mythology. The *Vegtams-guida*, or Song of the Traveller, contains the descent of Odin to consult the charmed prophetess Vala concerning the fate of Baldur. This piece we have already translated.\*

That most of the preceding poems were composed at a period lost in the depths of antiquity, and in a region less remote than Scandinavia from the cradle of the human race, is exceedingly probable. Such are the *Veluspa*, *Vafthrudnis-mâl*, *Grimmis-mâl*, *Alvis-mâl*, *Rafna-galdur-Odins*, and *Vegtams-guida*. In regard to *Hymis-guida*, *Hamars-heimt*, *Skirnirs-for*, *Hyndliud*, &c., they do not bear the impress of so high an antiquity : they are supposed to be the productions of the northern muse. They have their interest ; but that interest is much stronger when we read the olden pieces. These have been compared by a living writer † “ to the organic remains, the wrecks, of a more ancient world ; or to the gigantic ruins of Egypt and Hindostan, speaking a more perfect civilisation, the glories of which have long since departed.” We see, however, no reason for assuming this “ more perfect civilisation :” the nation or people who knew such doctrines might have been ignorant enough, while their priests were comparatively learned. The oriental impress which they bear cannot be mistaken ; still less can we overlook the extreme antiquity which they may claim. Kindred with the most ancient superstitions of Rome, of Greece, of Persia, they must have been derived from the same common source.

4. Of the mytho-historical poems, there are many. In them magic is so joined with the ordinary knowledge of life, the supernatural with the human, that we are inclined to reject even that which has a real historical foundation. In this respect, however, they are like the poems of all heroic ages, and not more censurable than those of Homer or of Hindostan. A more interesting

\* See Vol. I. p. 51.

† Mr. Wheaton.

fact is, that from these lays have sprung most of the great Teutonic fictions which adorn the Nibelungenlied, and many even of those which we denominate the romantic or the chivalric. Probably the incidents are perversions of real facts, which happened in a period approaching that of Attila and his Huns, whose exploits occupy the attention of the northern muse. Some of them, we know, were sung at the court of Olaf Trygvesson, the Norwegian king. It would not, however, be difficult to trace others to a higher source than the age of Attila,—to the source whence the heroic classical lore of Greece was derived; and others again bear a marked affinity with the legends of the Arabian Nights.

The prose or younger Edda, usually, but perhaps erroneously, ascribed to Snorro Sturleson, has also many of these chivalric or mytho-historical lays. Of this venerable monument of antiquity the world could form no just notion prior to the year 1818, when that admirable scholar professor Rask published his edition. The edition of Resenius—the only one previously known to Europe—is an imperfect work, derived from corrupted MSS. and the notes of the Scalds are often confounded with the text. It consists of several parts. The *Formali*, which is the introduction, has many legends and fables respecting the descent of nations, especially of the Scandinavian. They are evidently from both Asiatic and European sources. After the introduction, comes the *Gylfa-ginning*, or deception of Gylfa. This personage was a king of Swithiof (part of Sweden) and a famous magician,—the head of the native magical college which the Aser were endeavouring to subvert. To account for their superior power, the result of their superior wisdom, he determined to assume a disguise, and proceed at once to the cradle of the Aser in the east. Under the name of Gangler (the traveller), he reaches the celestial city, and finds an oracle capable of resolving all his doubts, of removing all his ignorance. To each of his ques-

tions the reply is in full, explaining the mythology of the elder Edda, illustrated by extracts from the *Voluspá*, the *Hava-mâl*, and the predictions of the Scalds. This part of the work is, in its design, and partly in its execution, so similar to the *Vafthrudnis-mâl* in the elder Edda, that it must have been derived from it, or from a source common to both. The *second* part of the prose Edda, called *Braga-raedar*, contains the recitation of his best pieces by the divine Braga, at the banquet of the sea-god Ægir. The *Eptirmali* is a kind of epilogue written by Icelandic poets immediately prior to Snorro, or possibly by Snorro himself. It is an attempt to explain many of the fables in the Edda, by the circumstances of the Trojan war. In addition to all these subjects, we have the *Skalda*, which is a kind of *ars poetica*, for the use of poetical students.

While mentioning the prose Edda, we are naturally drawn to its reputed compiler Snorro, the son of Sturle, who was also the compiler of the *Heimskringla*, our only sure guide for northern history down to the 13th century. This extraordinary man was born in 1178, near the bay of Hoams-fiord, on the domain of his family. He was, consequently, above a century later than Sæmund, whose birth was between 1050 and 1060. His descent was illustrious; it could be traced to the ancient Ynglings and to the jarls of Moria. In his fourth year he was sent to Oddé, which, as we have before related\*, had been the residence of that remarkable priest; and, strange to say, he was educated under the direction of Sæmund's grandson, Jon Loptston. Here he remained until his twentieth year, and was instructed in Greek no less than in Roman literature. The MSS. collections made by Sæmund and Ari Frode, were his delight; and to them he was indebted for the ruling bias of his life. In 1197 he left Oddé, and by marrying the daughter of a rich priest, greatly increased his patrimonial inheritance. In every thing fortune smiled upon him; he became in a few years the richest

\* See before, page 31.

man on the island ; and when he appeared at the Althing, he was generally escorted by a body of some hundred horsemen. In 1202, he removed his residence from Borg, one of his patrimonial seats, to the estate of Reykholt, which he had also inherited. This place he fortified—a proof that deadly feuds were common—and adorned it with works that evinced alike his genius and his riches. In 1213, he was raised to the dignity of logsogomadr\*, or chief judge of the island. No man could be better qualified for duties, the nature and origin of which had occupied so much of his time. In 1218 he visited Norway, where he was well received by king and nobles. His fame, indeed, had travelled before him. Among his poetical compositions were some odes in honour of the great ; and these (for flattery has every where the same effect) procured him many valuable presents, not only in Norway, but in Sweden. His sojourn in West and East Gothland doubtless originated in his desire to collect all the information which tradition, and possibly MSS., could furnish him in regard to his ancestors, and the Yngling princes. But his patriotism seems to have been inferior to his genius. That he entered into a conspiracy for the complete subjection of his country to the Norwegian court is certain. In 1220, both enriched and honoured, he returned to Iceland ; but we no longer perceive in him the great qualities which had led to his election in 1213. Avaricious, haughty, revengeful, he made enemies on every side, and in 1237 was compelled to seek a refuge from their fury. Again he repaired to Norway, where he found one of his old patrons, Skule, the jarl, plotting for the crown of the realm. That plot he favoured ; he even wrote a poem in support of that nobleman's claims. Yet he also flattered the king, from whom he received the title of jarl. But he had designs deeper than either Skule or the king suspected ; and in a short time some of his intrigues were known to that monarch. He was forbidden to sail for Iceland ; and when he de-

\* See before, page 14.



parted in defiance of that prohibition, secret instructions were sent to his son-in-law, Gissur Thorwaldson, to seize him and send him bound to Norway; or if this should be impossible, to put him to death. The extremities to which feuds in a barbarous age may be carried, are clearly illustrated by the conduct of Gissur. Though so nearly connected with the historian; though formerly the most intimate of his friends; he performed the more atrocious part of the proposal. The great wealth of Snorro, there can be no doubt, was one inducement to the deed of blood; but this must have been inferior to the feeling of vengeance. His measures required caution, for Snorro was powerful; and to be prepared, had only to be warned. His design was penetrated by one of Snorro's friends, who in a Runic letter acquainted him with his danger. But this letter the poet could not understand;—we are told even that he could not read it; and that all to whom he showed it were equally unable to decipher it. However this be, Thorwaldson, marching at the head of a strong body of men belonging to a clan at deadly feud with his victim, hastened to Reykholt, where he surprised and murdered the noble owner, September 22., 1241.

Snorro, as we have observed, is the reputed collector of the prose Edda, and of the *Heimskringla*. A collector merely he seems to have been; but he exhibited great judgment in selecting, arranging, and modernising the poetic compositions which he followed. For his history, no less than his mythology, the pagan Scalds were his authorities.

So much for matter purely introductory. From the two Eddas, assisted by the commentaries of the best northern scholars, we proceed to lay before the reader the most striking features of the cosmogony and religion of the Scandinavians; and to accompany them by such reflections as may seem necessary to show their origin and nature.



## SECTION I.

THE SCANDINAVIAN UNIVERSE, ITS WORLDS, AND THEIR INHABITANTS IN GENERAL, WITH THE PHYSICAL INTERPRETATION.

CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE. — YMER. — THE GIANTS. — THE GODS. — OTHER BEINGS. — THE NINE WORLDS, WITH THEIR POSITION AND PHYSICAL INTERPRETATION. — THE TWELVE HOUSES OF ASGARD. — SWARTALFAHEIM. — INHABITANTS OF THE NINE WORLDS. — THE ASER. — THE VEYR, &c.

In the *Volu-spa*, or Song of the Prophetess, the Vala, who is probably *Urda*, the Norn of the past, being seated on a high throne, and surrounded by the deities, acquaints them with the wonders of creation, and of the destiny reserved for them all,—destruction. In the *Grimnis-mâl*\*, *Odin* gives a similar account of the origin of all things; and throughout the elder *Edda*, we have allusion to the same doctrines. From them was derived the relation in the younger or prose *Edda*, with the merit of being much clearer. According to both, there existed in the beginning, on the site of the world, a vast abyss, *Ginnunga-gap*, which contained nothing. But to the north of that abyss there was another world, called *Nifleheim*, the cold and misty. It contained nothing but a spring, *Vergelmer*, from which flowed eleven great rivers into the abyss. They were called *Elivagar* (the cold waters), and their streams were poisonous as they were cold. As they flowed on, owing to the cold they became more sluggish in their course; so that when they reached the centre of the abyss, they were converted into ice. Still they flowed, and still the ice increased, until the whole *Ginnunga-gap* was filled. Out of such materials what could be made? It was necessary to create some other

\* See before, page 34.

power before the visible universe could be formed. This northern realm, Nifleheim, which contained nothing except the fountain, which had no quality except that of coldness, which was covered with darkness, could, of itself, produce nothing ; it could only send the sluggish poisonous waters into the centre of the abyss. That these waters were eternal we may infer ; but we cannot infer how long the ice had accumulated when the real events of creation began. The agent of that creation is placed in another region, or rather world, Muspelheim, which lay far to the south of Ginnungagap, and which was intolerably hot,—more hot than Nifleheim was cold. The origin of this earth and its inhabitants, therefore, was the work of these two agencies, heat and cold, operating on the poisonous waters which lay between them. (Muspelheim, we suppose, with its numerous fiery inhabitants, and their mighty chief Surtur, the dark, the incomprehensible, the great evil principle, had no beginning ; or if it had, the Odinian theologians were unacquainted with it.) What was frozen by the one influence was thawed by the other. It was probably some centuries before the heat from Surtur's fiery empire dissolved the prodigious mass into a liquid element. From that element sprung the giant Ymer, by a process of generation which the northern sages do not deign to explain ; and his vast bulk filled no inconsiderable portion of the abyss, as will soon appear from the use made of his corpse. This giant begat others. How ? By a process no less odd than that which brought him into being. While asleep, a male and a female sprung from his left armpit ; and he had the felicity too, by rubbing one foot against another, to produce a son. Why there should be *three* ancestors to the Rinthurser, or frost-giants, when, in our humble notion, two might have sufficed, is another mystery which we shall not attempt to penetrate. How were all nourished, seeing that there was no alimentary substance created ? By the Supreme Being, the Great Alfadur, a cow with four teats was created ; and from

these flowed four rivers of milk. The cow herself was sustained by licking the salt-rocks, on which the hoar frost still lay. But her destiny was not fulfilled by this service ; she was to call into existence a new race. When she had licked one day, the hair appeared ; when she had licked two, there was a head ; when three, there was a complete animal,—a man or giant, named Burè. This Burè, in his turn, became the father (probably by marriage with a descendant of Ymer) of Bur, or Bórr, or Bore, who was more famous than any of his predecessors. His son married a lady of the giant race, named Bestla, and by her had three gods, Odin, Vilè, and Vè. Before these were long born, they slew the old giant Ymer. His blood was sufficient to drown all of the giant race, except Bergelmer and his wife, who sailed away to the mountains, and became the progenitors of a new race of giants. The corpse was now cast into the Ginnunga-gap ; and from it heaven and earth were created. Thus the Grimnis-mâl : —

From Ymer's flesh  
Was the earth formed ;  
The sea from his blood,  
The hills from his bones,  
Plants from his hair,  
Heaven from his skull ;  
From his eye-brows  
Formed the mild gods  
Midgard for the sons of men.  
But from his brain  
Were the thick clouds  
All created.

This heaven, made from the giant's skull, was supported by four dwarfs, East, West, North, South, and at one of the corners, a living pillar. (What supports the earth, or the dwarfs themselves, we are not informed). The globes of fire which ascended from Muspelheim, and spread through all space, were now placed by the three gods in the firmament, and made sun, moon, and stars, to enlighten heaven and earth.

That these notions are wild and extravagant will be

asserted by most readers ; but do they not involve physical truths ? Were they not invented by the priests of old to cover their learning from the vulgar gaze ? Let us hear the interpretation of Finn Magnussen, the most learned, the most acute, though, in too many instances, the most visionary, of northern commentators. The giant Ymer, he observes, represents the chaotic undigested state of the earth, produced by the combined effects of heat and cold upon water. That water was the first existing matter, is evident even from holy scripture. Many nations regarded it as the source of all things. The opinions of the Greek philosopher on this subject are well known ; but we may mention the Orphic fragment preserved by Athenagoras. The water produced mud ; the mud produced a monster with three heads, — the head of a god, of a lion, of an ox. This monster, which, however, was a deity, laid an egg, the upper half of which formed the heaven, the lower half the earth. From the union of heaven and earth, the offspring were, first the three fates, and then the giants and cyclops who rebelled, and were eventually cast into the Tartarean gulf. The Greeks, like all other people, had seen the mud deposited by water give birth to animals, after receiving for a time the solar heat. The action, therefore, of fire on the slimy particles thus deposited, was received as a generative principle ; and assuredly there is nothing more irrational in the system of Scandinavia than in that of Greece. The Egyptian system was conformable with it. An original chaos ; the separation of the mud from the waters ; the action of the sun, or of heat, on the mud ; the fermentation which followed ; and the origin of animal existence, are the great features : as a necessary result, the sun, no less than the water, was deified. In the Scandinavian, as in the other systems, some kinds of matter were eternal. Eternal were the mists of Nifleheim, and the well Vergelmer ; eternal perhaps the abode of Surtur, Surtur himself, and his fiery spirits. From the beneficent Alfadur nothing evil was to spring ; he, therefore, we suppose, could not

create Muspelheim, or its inhabitants; nor could he give birth to the giants of the frost, who are emphatically called wicked: hence their origin from the poisonous waters of Nifleheim.

If, in respect to water and fire, the cosmogony of the Scandinavians was kindred with that of other people, the resemblance furnished by the cow was equally great. "We need not be surprised," observes Magnussen, "that men selected the ox, the most useful and widely-spread animal with which they were acquainted, for a cosmic symbol in its various forms. The cow was probably our first nurse; and the oldest nations, especially the Hindoos and the Egyptians, regarded her with religious veneration, and called her the mother of mankind. When men applied poetry to cosmogony, they elevated a mythic cow to the place of earth's mother, or nurse. Such is our Audumbla. And if the cow was the mother, well may the bull (as in India) be held the father: he propagated the race, drew the plough, and in both cases might be said to rear or nurse mankind." Among the Persians, the cow was held in even greater veneration than among the Scandinavians. The Abudad was the earth, which Jemsheed (the sun) pierced with his dagger. The cow was the symbol of creation, the instrument which Ormuzd employed for the production of the first human being. A cow, too, received the soul of Zoroaster, and transmitted it in the form of milk to the father of the prophet; but the notion was common to most people. The Cimbri in Italy had their copper ox, on which they swore, just as the Egyptians swore by Apis. It was the symbol of heaven, just as the cow was that of earth; it was held to be the father, just as the female was the mother, of all. The chariot of Hertha, or mother earth, was, as Tacitus informs us, drawn by cows. The Io of the Greeks was probably derived from the same widely-spread doctrine.

The cow, according to Finn Magnussen, is a purification of the atmosphere in the Scandinavian mythos of



the creation. This, however, is not very clear ; nor do we perceive more justice in the explanation given of Burè's origin, — that the licking of the salt-rocks betokens the emersion of the solid earth from the deep waters. In another of his analogies, he is whimsical — that which makes Bôrr, or Bors, to be the Elbors, the Caucasus of the Persians. A correspondence of names is, in most cases, purely accidental, and proves nothing. More rational, perhaps, is our commentator, when he treats of Odin, Vilè, and Vè, which he makes into air, light and fire. The three gods destroyed Ymer, that is, the elements in question destroyed chaos. Whether, however, he is equally successful in the derivation of the three words, may be disputed ; but there is much ingenuity, and some plausibility, in all. The Greek *αἶμος*, the Sanscrit *atma*, the Teutonic *athem*, all signifying air or breath, are certainly cognate ; and they are probably the same with the Othem, or Odin, or Woden, of the Germans. But whether Odin or Woden is derived from the Latin *vado*, to go through, to pervade, is not so clear. If this etymology were established, we should have no difficulty in conceiving Odin to be the air, the breath, the soul of the world. Still the subject is worthy of consideration ; and the reader may adopt or reject it. He will be less inclined to admit the derivation of Vilè, which seems far-fetched. Nor are we quite sure that Vè, akin to *Vesta*, is to be taken for elemental *fire*, or metaphorically for *life*. Yet on a subject so obscure, we are unwilling to pronounce dogmatically.

The destruction of Ymer and his offspring, the wicked giants of the frost, by the divine race, is evidently the same mythos as the defeat of the Titans by Jove ; of Ahriman and the evil genii, by Ormuzd and the Amshaspands. Surtur is the Ahriman of Scandinavia. He is the author of evil, viz., of the giants ; and is destined one day to assist in the destruction of the universe. We read of the great Alfadur, — another than Odin who is sometimes called eternal. It is



pleasing to read such notions of a First Cause, in such an age. To this omnipotent, eternal, and beneficent Being, who is far above all the worlds, inaccessible to any thing created, there are more allusions than one in the Edda of Sæmund. Thus the Hyndlu-mâl, after mentioning the destruction of Odin, with all the gods: —

Yet there shall come  
Another mightier,  
Although him  
I dare not name.  
Farther onward  
Few can see,  
Than where Odin  
Meets the Wolf.

Such notions may be regarded as traces of a purer religious dispensation—of the patriarchal. As an eminent northern writer elegantly observes\* —“Thus sounds the voice of the northern prophetess, the Vala, to us obscure and indistinct, through the darkness of ages. It speaks of other times, other men and ideas; if fettered by the bonds of superstition, it longs after eternal light, and, though imperfectly, expresses that longing. We may also recognise some of those mighty minds of which Pindar speaks, as wandering eternally over earth and sea. In such sounds heaven and earth announce an Eternal Being, and at the same time their own mortality,—truths which no paganism has expressed more strongly than the Scandinavian. However darkly, still it does allude to the Mighty One on high, who is above all the deities of nature,—to one mightier than the mighty, whom it dares not name,—to that unknown God whom the Athenians also worshipped.” We may, however, doubt whether this notion of the One First Cause, dark as it is, was introduced by Odin into the north. In most of the relics which the ancient pagans have left us, we have traces of two religions, distinct from each other,—both from Asia, but not at

\* Geijr, Svea Bikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 539.

the same period, or from the same region. The worship of Thor, for example, seems to be much more ancient than that of Odin ; and perhaps before either was known — before the light of patriarchal truth was entirely departed from the north — the elementary form of worship, the most ancient and least debasing of all superstitions, prevailed.

The three gods, Odin, Vilè and Vè, were not the only created beings. Besides Bergelmer and his wife, from whom sprung a new giant race, other offspring than the three deities resulted from the union of Bôr with Bestla —

The maid so good and fair  
Though born of giant race.

From these sprung all the good, benevolent beings, — gods, goddesses, elves, Vanir, and spirits of air, of whom more in the proper place. All these were created before man. So also were the Duergar, or dwarfs.

According to the prose Edda, they bred like maggots in Ymer's dead body ; but the Voluspa tells us that they were created by the gods from the blood and bones of that giant :

Then went the gods  
To their exalted seats ;  
The high and holy  
Then consulted  
Of them which  
Should form the dwarfs  
From the sea-giant's blood,  
And his blue bones.  
Thus Modsogner is  
The chief become  
Of all the dwarfs ;  
And after him Durin.

But the former account is preferable, because it accounts more satisfactorily for the cruel, vindictive, yet often contemptible character of the race, — a race with small deformed bodies, large heads, flat noses, and still more despicable in mind. Probably, as Mr.

Magnussen conjectures, these beings, who could not bear the light of day ; who, if they accidentally saw it, were changed into rocks ; whose life was passed in the bowels of the earth, especially in the bowels of the mountains, were intended to personify the subterraneous powers of nature. Their names, when translated, favour the interpretation. Wind, Blast, Gleam, Light, Fruit-giver, Iceberg, and others equally fantastic, attest their elementary character. Of all beings they were the most skilful, the most expert, the most industrious : they were unrivalled smiths ; they manufactured wondrous armour, and other enchanted things, which were highly prized by the gods, who excelled them in power, but were inferior in ingenuity.

The beings next created were mankind. " The sons of Bure," says the prose Edda, " went to the sea-shore, and found two trees, which they formed into man and woman. Odin gave them breath and life ; Vilè, understanding and vigour ; Vè, beauty of form, speech, hearing, sight." But the Valuspa says that it was Haenir who gave understanding, and Loder a fair complexion. These, however, may be only different names for the same beings. Askur was the name of the first man, and Embla of the woman ; the former signifying an ash tree, the latter, it is said, an elm. This is evidently a vegetable mythos. It is not peculiar to the Goths. Hesiod informs us that Zeus formed the third race of men from ash trees. The ancient Medians had the same notion ; the mythic Kaiamar died without issue because without mate ; but from his remains in forty years sprung a tree with fifteen branches ; and from it Ormuzd fashioned the first progenitors of mankind.

Midgard, or the middle world, was made for the habitation of man ; but before we describe it, we must glance at the other worlds with which it was connected. According to both the poetic and the prose Edda, there were *nine*.

## THE NINE WORLDS.

In the Valuspa, the prophetess says—

I can tell of nine worlds  
And of nine heavens.

The giant Vafthrudnis has the same boast; and Alvis, the dwarf, tells Thor,

All the nine worlds  
Have I passed through  
And every being known.

These worlds, which were all vertically arranged, except Utgard, which was on the same plane with Midgard, are thus specified by Magnussen:—

1. *Gimle*, the residence of the Supreme Being, the eternal Alfadur. Connected with it was Liosalfaheim, the abode of the benevolent light elves (of whom an account in the proper place). This region is to be the everlasting abode of the good after the destruction of the universe.

2. *Muspelheim*, the world of Surtur and his fiery genii, which lay far below Liosalfaheim. This world was *perhaps* uncreated and *perhaps* will not be destroyed.

3. *Asgard* (Aser-yard), or *Godheim*, the residence of the Aser, or gods; the starry firmament, which lay far below Muspelheim.

4. *Vanaheim*, the residence of the Vanir or spirits of air: it was also called *Vindheim*, the home of the winds. Its position was the atmosphere below Asgard.

5. *Midgard* (mid-yard), so called because it was the middle world, between Gimle above, and Nifleheim below. It was also called *Manheim*, from its being the home of men.

6. *Utgard* (outer-yard), or *Jotunheim*, the home of the giants, lay beyond the vast sea which, according to the Scandinavian cosmography, encompasses Midgard. Midgard and Utgard are horizontal with each other.

7. *Swartalfaheim*, the home of the black elves or dwarfs, the spirits of darkness, is situated in the bowels of the earth.

8. *Helheim*, the palace of Hela, the goddess of death, lower far than *Swartalfaheim*, and the abode of all, however good, who die a natural death.

9. *Nifleheim*, the world of mist, the lowest of all the worlds. It contains the poisonous fountain and rivers in which the bad are to be punished.

Of these worlds six are to perish,—perhaps seven, for there is some doubt as to *Muspelheim*. The virtuous are to enjoy an eternity of happiness in *Gimlè*; the wicked an eternity of punishment in *Nifleheim*.

#### GIMLE AND MUSPELHEIM

Defy description. None of the *Valas*, none of the gods, none of the giants or dwarfs who boasted of their having seen these nine worlds, have left us any record of either. The former, indeed, must have been inaccessible to all created intelligences; but *Liosalfaheim* was esteemed less holy. Why *Muspelheim* was placed so near to *Gimlè* has not been satisfactorily explained; but we may infer that *Surtur* and his subjects, ministers of evil as they were, were only the instruments of the unknown power. In one account, they are said to be placed there to forbid the ascent of any hostile foot to the pure realms so far above them.

#### MIDGARD AND UTGARD.

The notion entertained of *Midgard* by the Scandinavians was, that it is round; that it is entirely encompassed by a vast sea; and that at the extremity of this sea begins *Utgard*, the abode of the giant race descended from *Bergelmer* and his wife. No better description of *Utgard* can be given than that which has been already given in the mysterious voyages of *Gorm*



and Thorkill.\* We will, however, have frequent occasion to revert to the same subject.

The notion in question was not different from that of the Greeks. In the time of Homer, the earth was regarded as horizontal and circular, with the Mediterranean in its centre; which by one or more channels communicated with the ocean-stream that flowed round the land. On the other side of that ocean-stream was the abode of the Cimmerians and also of the damned,—a region dark and dismal as that to which the two Danish navigators, Gorm and Thorkill, repaired. The heaven too was thought to be solid, supported by four great pillars, which answer to the four dwarfs of the Hindoos and Scandinavians. The latter had a bridge from earth to heaven,—the *bifrost*, or rainbow, which though slender, was strong as adamant; and in this they resembled the Magians, whose sacred books speak of a similar bridge, most dangerous to pass, between the earth and the mount of the good genii. The Magians, too, recognised a dark country to the north, inhabited by evil genii, whose assaults are continually dreaded by the deities of the stony firmament. But reverting to the Greeks, the description which Ælian gives of the earth, is still more kindred with that of the northern pagans. “Europe, Asia, and Lybia,” says he, “are only islands, being surrounded by a great sea; but encircling the world is a continent of vast magnitude. On it are to be found huge animals: the men are double the size of us; and they live twice as long. Some are martial, and always at war; others so inoffensive and pious, as to be honoured sometimes by the conversation of the gods. They have gold and silver in abundance; and they value gold less than we do iron. A thousand myriads of them once crossed the ocean, and came to the country of the Hyperboreans. Near the extremity of that country there is a place called Avostos, resembling a large gulf or bay, where it is neither perfectly light, nor perfectly dark, but where a strong lurid sky

\* See Vol. I. p. 91—99.



hangs down to the earth." The Arabians had the same notion of the mysterious country to the north ; and of the giant race which inhabited it,—a race which is one day to destroy the world.

## ASGARD.

Asgard, the residence of the gods, deserves a more detailed description. This vast city, as it is called by the Edda, was built by Odin and his two brothers immediately after the death of Ymer. It was well fortified, to defend it against the Vanir below, and the fiery sons of Muspelheim above. In it were twelve palaces, for the twelve chief gods :—

1. Ydale, the abode of	-	-	Uller
2. Alfheim	—	-	Freyr
3. Valaskialf	—	-	Vale (or Vile)
4. Soequabeck	—	-	Saga
5. Gladsheim	—	-	Odin
6. Thrymheim	—	-	Skada
7. Breidablik	—	-	Baldur
8. Himmelbiery	—	-	Heimdall
9. Folkvangur	—	-	Freyja
10. Glitner	—	-	Forsete
11. Noatun	—	-	Njord
12. Landvide	—	-	Vidar.

With Thrudheim, the house of Thor.

At the first glance every reader must perceive that by these twelve palaces are meant the twelve signs of the zodiac ; and by Thrudheim the region of the sun. It could scarcely be expected, indeed, that the Scandinavians should be ignorant of a system which prevailed over the whole earth. Like the Egyptians and Assyrians, and Persians and Hindoos, they divided their year into twelve parts or months, and placed over each a god.

The best description of these abodes is in the Edda, in the poem of Grimnis-mâl. It is Odin himself, while between the two fires \*, that describes them to Geirrod and Agner. The mere enumeration of these palaces, and of the divine inhabitants, would be useless unac-

\* See before, page 35.

accompanied by astronomical explanations. To the critical antiquaries of the north, especially to Finn Magnussen, must be conceded the honour of having first penetrated the hidden mysteries of their mythology. From him chiefly we condense the following account.

#### THURUDHEIM.

Thrudheim, or Thrudvangur, the residence of Thor, the god of thunder, is the atmosphere between Asgard and the earth. The palace in which the god dwelt was called *Bilskirner*, which Ohlenschlager, the modern Danish poet, thus justly describes : —

In wide Thrudvangur's land  
 (So ancient Scalds indite),  
 A palace vast doth stand,  
 Unmatched in breadth and height.  
 Its halls with burnish'd gold  
 Are richly fretted o'er ;  
 Their number rightly told,  
 Five hundred and two score.  
 Blue lakes and verdant fields  
 Smiling around are spread ;  
 Studded with copper shields,  
 The palace glares in red.  
 From distant earth its walls  
 Some radiant meteor seem :  
 Far off the warrior halls  
 In purple splendour gleam. \*

#### 1. YDALE.

Uller's month commenced the Scandinavian year with the entrance of the sun into Sagittarius, November 22., and ended December 21. Uller excelled as an *archer*, and he was unrivalled in the art of skating on the ice and snow : hence he was the god of hunting. He was the son of the goddess Sif, whose second husband was Thor ; but the name of his father, the first husband, does not appear. Ydale, his residence, signifies the dewy valley.

\* Pigott's translation, p. 95.

## 2. ALFHEIM.

Freyr month commenced December 21., when the sun entered Capricorn. He was the son of Niord, one of the Vanir, and produced at the same birth with his sister Freya. He was the god of the sun, — doubtless because during this month the days began to lengthen, that is, the sun to return. In the same manner the Egyptians honoured their heroes; and from them, perhaps, the Romans styled the winter solstice “*natalitia invicti solis.*” Alfheim, the abode of the light elves, was given to him for a residence by the gods, when he cut his first tooth. “He is to be invoked,” says the Edda, “for peace and a good season: he is the dispenser of blessings to mankind.”

## 3. VALASKIALF.

Liosberi, the light-bringer, which extended from January 21. to February 19., began when the sun entered Valaskialf, the residence of Valè, and was sacred to that god. He was a son of Odin by Rinda (frost), a personification of the frozen barren earth. He presided over mid-winter. As the sun was now gaining power, his festival was celebrated by illumination in the houses. In imitation of that pagan ceremony, the Gothic christians had their Candlemas and the feast of torches. Valè too was an archer, probably from the rays of the sun, which now shot downwards with greater force. Valaskialf was said to be white, and covered with silver, — an allusion to the snowy character of the month. Valè (also called Bo \*) slew Hoder the blind god, who had killed Baldur. This mythos signifies that the day is beginning to triumph over the night, — for Hoder is the symbol of darkness. Valentine’s day fell within the dominion of Valè, — when half the month was run. Was it derived from this pagan god?

\* See Vol. I. p. 54.

## 4. SOEQUABECK.

The fourth month, sacred to Saga, commenced February 19. and ended March 19. Soequabeck signifies the deep brook ; in allusion, no doubt, to the abundant rains which fall, and to the snows which are thawed, at this period, which, in some places, indeed, to this day retains the name of Fillbrook. Mythologically, Odin and Saga are said to drink deeply this month. Saga, the goddess of tradition and history, is here put for Urda, the norn of the past. The name, however, of the month, or house, is much more explicit than that of the goddess ; for what has the deep brook in common with history ? The key to the difficulty may, we think, be found in the fact, that at this period was held the great assembly of Upsal, when all the freemen who were able to attend hastened to the temple, and heard the pontiffs relate the past exploits of the gods ; then at the Al-thing, which was held immediately after the sacrifices, listened to the explanation of the old laws, and to the promulgation of new ones, by the judges. Upsal was the place of meeting for the Swedes : the Danes and Norwegians had a different place, but at the same period of the year. On these occasions, the people took care that the name of the month, Soequabeck, should be appropriate ; for, in imitation of Odin and Saga, they made the cup pass merrily round.

## 5. GLADSHEIM.

Gladshheim, the joyful house, the month sacred to Odin, carries its own signification with it. From the 20th of March to that of April, was indeed a joyful season.

## 6. THRYMHEIM.

The next month, when the sun was in Thrymheim (April 21. to May 20.), was called Harpa or Harpen, alluding probably to the music of the birds at this

season. This sixth house, Thrymheim, had been the residence of the giant Thiasse, but is now of his daughter, Skada. On his death, by the hands of Thor, she was given to Niord, and thus became a goddess. This mythos may be easily explained. The ancient summer began with this month. Thiisse, the genius of winter, is slain by Thor, the thunder god,—for in the mountainous regions of the north the sound begins again to be heard. Skada represents the clear, penetrating wind of spring.

#### 7. BREIDABLIK.

The ninth solar house (May 21. to June 23.), Breidablik,—the wide-shining, was named Baldur from the god who inhabited it. An unclouded sun, warm breezes, and sudden fertility, caused the god to be esteemed the most beautiful of all the deities ; to be denominated the fair, the bright, the gentle, the good. The mythos of his death by the hands of Hoder\*, may be explained by the gradual yielding of the sun to the encroachments of night ; for Hoder is represented as blind, and is employed as the symbol of darkness. The nights are beginning to lengthen, the sun to leave the northern hemisphere : Hoder, or darkness, is instigated by Loke, the personification of evil, to encroach on the light. In all the ancient systems, especially in the Magian, which has so many points of affinity with the Scandinavian, night is the characteristic of the evil, just as light is of the good principle ; and the former is always at war with the latter. The tears of all nature for the fate of Baldur more strongly illustrate the truth of the physical interpretation. Even the mistletoe, the instrument of Baldur's death, was not chosen without a meaning ; it flourishes when the tree decays ; it retains its verdure throughout the winter : hence it was the symbol of immortality, while the physical god was created mortal. When heroes or monarchs died, their

\* See Vol. I. p. 46.



bodies were burnt: the funeral fire was therefore a rite necessary to the honour of the dead; and all who loved him or were dependent on him, were present on this last solemn occasion. In the mythos, Odin and all the gods were present: their worshippers, corroborating the physical interpretation, honoured Baldur on midsummer eve by lighting fires on the high mountain tops. When the Northmen, and we may add, Scotland and Ireland, received the Christian faith, they still continued the custom; but now they paid the honour, not to Baldur, but to St. John, whose festival happened at the same period.

#### 8. HIMMELBIERG.

The eighth solar house, *HimmelbiERG*, or the heavenly mountain, the abode of Heimdal, was so called because the sun was now at its height. *HimmelbiERG*, being the highest of all the palaces, was well adapted for watching; hence Heimdal was the watchman of the gods; and from his elevated situation he looked out upon the whole universe. His golden teeth, his golden-maned horse, his appellation "the whitest and brightest of the Aser," are but so many expressions for the unusual splendour of the sun at this season (June 23. to July 23). Another of his epithets, the *declining*, alluding to the declination of the sun in the heavens, is equally explanatory of the mythos. Heimdall, says the Edda, needs less sleep than a bird; an allusion to the extreme shortness of the nights in northern countries at the summer solstice. He can see as well, it adds, by night as by day,—meaning that, at this season, there is no such thing as darkness, properly so called. His hearing, too, is equally acute: not even the growth of the grass, or of wool on the sheep's back, escaped him. This may denote the silence of all nature during the great heat, and especially during the night.

#### 9. FOLKVANGUR.

The sun careered through Folkvangur, from July 23.



to August 23. The word means a meeting of people in the field, alluding most evidently to the harvest labours during this season. Hence, Freya was considered the goddess of fertility, and, figuratively, of love. An extension of the same figure rendered her the goddess of the night,—of the moon,—of the planet Venus.

#### 10. GLITNER.

Glitner, the tenth house (August 23. to September 23.), was ruled by the god Forsete, which means the *fore-sitter*, the president. Every year this deity held a *Thing* at the will of Urda, the norn of the past; and there he decided all controversies so justly that every party was satisfied. Forsete, therefore, was the god of justice. On earth, too, in imitation of the mythical proceedings above, a great judicial assembly, or *Al-thing*, was held at this season. During its continuance, and indeed during the whole time of harvest, all feuds were suspended; hence the satisfaction of all with his authority.

#### 11. NOATUN.

Noatun was the abode of Niord, and the eleventh great solar house (September 23. to October 23). Niord (of whom more hereafter) was a prince of the Vanir, but was admitted among the gods. He was lord of the winds, and consequently of the sea, which is governed by them. Noatun, his residence, was said to lie near the sea-shore, but higher in the clouds. He was the beneficent deity of the sea, while Ægir and Ram were the terrible deities of the same element. The meaning is, that though in this month the winds were high, they were not destructive to ships.

#### 12. LANDVIDE.

Landvide, the twelfth solar house, means empty or barren land,—a term descriptive enough of the earth at this season. As this is the last of the months so

Vidar, the presiding deity, is to outlive the rest of the gods, and to revenge the death of his father Odin on the wolf Fenris.

Such were the divine palaces of Asgard. But that great world had other parts, which require a moment's notice. Three of them belonged to Odin:—Gladshheim was the great palace or hall where he presided over the twelve diar, or judges, who administered the affairs of Asgard. Valaskialf, the palace of his son Valè, was also his own. The highest part of this dwelling was called Lidskialf, where he had a throne, and which was so elevated that he could see all the dwellers upon earth. But more celebrated than these, or all his other abodes, was *Valhalla*.

Easily can they  
Who come to Odin  
Perceive and know Valhall.  
The roof is decked with spears,  
The walls covered with shields,  
The benches with helmets.

This was the great hall in which Odin entertained the Einheriar, or souls of the warriors slain in battle. Like, the palace of Thor, it had 540 gates. Daintily were they fed on the boar Schrimner, which though killed and eaten every day, was always alive again in the evening. Andrimner, the best cook in the world, prepared the meal. As for the mead, without which in profusion no northern feast would have been esteemed, abundance of it was furnished by the goat Heidrun. Never had guests a more liberal host. He treated them thus, that when the dreaded twilight of the gods arrived, they might assist him in repelling the giants and the spirits of fire. Nor would he allow them to forget their martial exercises. Early each morning they are awakened by the crowing of the cock with the golden comb,—that cock which is doomed also to warn the gods when the last enemy approaches. Hastily assuming their vizors, 800 of them issued at each of the 540 gates, so that the god had nearly half a million of boon

companions. The whole of the time from sunrise to the hour of dinner was passed in fighting ; and with such hearty good will, that multitudes were prostrated ; but when the great hour arrived, all rose, perfectly well, to contend over the cups as strenuously as they had done in the field. They were served by the Valkyrs, viz., the choosers of the slain.—goddesses who were the favourite messengers of Odin, and the only females admitted into Valhalla.

The way in which a hero, who died in battle, or marked his bosom with runes to Odin, left Midgard for Valhalla, is poetically described. Thus shortly after his burial, king Hako, in his silent mound, first changed his posture from the supine to the sitting. He grasped his sword in his right hand ; his shield with his left ; while the celestial gold-hoofed courser, which had been sent to convey him, pawed the ground outside with manifest impatience. The mound opens ; the monarch rises, mounts the noble horse, gallops up Vifrost, and passes through Gladsheim into Valhalla, where the gods came forward to meet him ; while Braga, the deity of song, sounds the celestial harp with his praises.

We have seen the pursuits of the Einheriar by day, —fighting and drinking. Did they sleep ? So we suppose. Sometimes, however, they mounted their horses, galloped down Vifrost, and entered their sepulchral mounds. Sometimes, too, they were present in battle ; at other times they communed with their mortal friends.

The blood-thirsty character of the Northmen, which could not enjoy peace without cutting one another to pieces, has been justly exposed by historians. Still, however valour might be esteemed, we would not assert that it was the only virtue in the mind of the Scandinavians, or that heaven was closed to every other. There is, indeed, room to infer that this tenet was confined merely to a sect,—a caste,—the dominant one,—the immediate followers of Odin.

As we shall have frequently to speak of these celestial residences in the course of this chapter, we shall only

add that Asgard had another palace called Vingolf, where the Asyniar, or goddesses met, just as the gods met in Valhalla.

#### SWARTALFAHEIM

Was the abode of the Black Elves, (to distinguish them from the Light or shining Elves, who dwelt in Loislafheim,) and also of the Dwarfs.

But there were elves who dwelt in the air, in water, amongst the trees. These could not be called underground people; and it is almost doubtful whether they can be classed among the Black Elves. As the term, however, has been adopted for the purpose we have indicated, viz., to distinguish the elves of earth from those of the highest heaven, — both those who dwell *on*, and those who dwell *below*, the earth's surface — the well and the ill disposed — may here be considered.

“Our heathen forefathers,” says Thorlacius \*, “believed, like the Pythagoreans — and the farther back in antiquity the more firmly — that the whole world was filled with spirits of various kinds, to whom they ascribed in general the same nature and properties as the Greeks did to their Dæmons. These were divided into the celestial and the terrestrial, from their places of abode. The former were, according to the ideas of those times, of a good and elevated nature, and of a friendly disposition towards men, whence they also received the name of White or Light Alfs, or spirits. The latter, on the contrary, who were classified after their abodes in the air, sea, and earth, were not regarded in so favourable a light. It was believed that they, particularly the *land ones*, the *δαίμονες ἐπιχθόνιοι* of the Greeks, constantly and on all occasions sought to torment or injure mankind, and that they had their dwelling partly on the earth in great and thick woods, whence came the name Skovtrolde † (Wood-Trolde); or

\* Thorlacius Noget om Thor og hans Hammer, in the Skandinavisk Museum for 1803.

† Thorlacius *ut supra*, says the thundering Thor was regarded as parti-

in other desert and lonely places, partly in and under the ground, or in rocks and hills: these last were called Bjerg-Trolde (Hill Trolde); to the first, on account of their different nature, was given the name of Dverge (Dwarfs), and Alve, whence the word Ellefolk, which is still in the Danish language. These Dæmons, particularly the underground ones, were called Svartalfar, that is, Black Spirits, and inasmuch as they did mischief, Trolls."

The prose Edda draws a broad distinction between the light and the black elves,—the former being whiter than the sun; the latter darker than pitch.

"Of the origin of the word Alf," says Mr. Keightley, "nothing satisfactory is to be found. Some think it is akin to the Latin *albus*, white; others to *alpes*, Alps mountains. There is supposed to be some mysterious connection between it and the word Elf or Elv, signifying water in the northern languages; an analogy which has been thought to correspond with that between the Latin *Nympha* and *Lympha*. Both relations are perhaps rather fanciful than just. Of the derivation of Alf, as just observed, we know nothing certain\*; and the original meaning of *Nympha* would appear to be, a new-married woman†, and thence a marriageable young woman; and it was applied to the supposed inhabitants of the mountains,

cularly inimical to the Skovtrolde, against whom he continually employed his mighty weapon. He thinks the *Bidental* of the Romans, and the rites connected with it, seem to suppose a similar superstition, and that in the well known passage of Horace,

Tu parum castis inimica mittes  
Fulmina lucis,

the words *parum castis lucis* may mean groves or parts of woods, the haunt of unclean spirits or Skovtrolde, *satyri lascivi et salaces*.

\* The analogy of Deev, and other words of like import, might lead to the supposition of Spirit being the primary meaning of Alf.

† It is probably derived from an obsolete verb *νέβω*, the Latin *nubo* signifying to veil or cover; hence *nubes*, clouds. In Homer (Il. iii. 130.), Iris says to Helen,

Δεῦρ' ἴθι, νέφεα φίλη.

The preceding and following notes are also from Mr. Keightley.



seas, and streams, on the same principle that the northern nations gave them the appellation of men and women, that is, from their imagined resemblance to the human form.

“ Whatever its origin, the word *Alf* has continued till the present day in all the Teutonic languages. The Danes and Swedes have their *Ellen* or *Elven* Dan, and *Elfvor* Swed (*Elvus*), and the words *Elf-dans* and *Elf-blæst*, together with *Olof* and other proper names, are derived from it. The Germans call the nightmare *Alp*; and in their old poems we meet *Elben* and *Elbinnen*, male and female elves, and *Elbisch* frequently occurs in them in the bad sense of the “*Elvish*” of Chaucer and our old romancers, and a number of proper names, such as *Alprecht*, *Alpine*, *Alpwin*, &c., were formed from it; undoubtedly before it got its present ill sense. In the Anglo-Saxon *Ælf*, with its feminine and plural, frequently occurs. The *Orcades*, *Naiades*, and *Hamodryades* of the Greeks and Romans are rendered in an Anglo-Saxon Glossary by *Munt-ælfenne*, *jæ-ælfenne*, and *feld-ælfenne*. *Ælf* is a component part of the proper names *Ælfred* and *Ælfric*; and the author of the poem of ‘*Judith*’ says that his heroine was *Ælf-scine* (*Elf-sheen*), bright as an *Elf*. But of the character and acts of the *Elfs* no traditions have been preserved in Anglo-Saxon literature. In the English language, *Elf*, *Elves*, and their derivatives, are to be found in every period, from its first formation down to this present time.”\*

The judicious and indefatigable writer whom we have followed in the preceding extract, and who has treated the subject with a minuteness and an accuracy unequalled in this country, continues:—

“ The *Alfar* still live in the memory and traditions of the peasantry of Scandinavia. They also, to a certain extent, retain their distinction into white and

\* Keightley’s Fairy Mythology, vol. i.



black. The former, or the good elves, dwell in the air, dance on the grass, or sit in the leaves of trees ; the latter, or evil elves, are regarded as an underground people, who frequently inflict sickness or injury on mankind ; for which there is a particular kind of doctors, called Kloka, to be met in all parts of the country.

“ The elves are believed to have their kings, to celebrate their weddings and banquets, just the same as the dwellers above ground. There is an interesting intermediate class of them in popular tradition, called the Hill-people (Högfolk), who are believed to dwell in caves and small hills : when they show themselves they have a handsome human form. The common people seem to connect with them a deep feeling of melancholy, as if bewailing a half-quenched hope of redemption.

“ There are only a few old persons who now can tell any thing more about them than of the sweet singing that may occasionally on summer nights be heard out of their hills, when one stands still and listens, or, as it is expressed in the ballads, *lays his ear to the Elve-hill* (lägger sitt öra till Elfvehögg) : but no one must be so cruel as, by the slightest word, to destroy their hopes of salvation, for then the sprightly music will be turned into weeping and lamentation.

“ The Norwegians called the Elves, Huldrafolk, and their music, Huldraslaat : it is in the minor key, and of a dull and mournful sound. The mountaineers sometimes play it, and pretend they have learned it by listening to the underground people among the hills and rocks. There is also a tune called the Elf-king’s tune, which several of the good fiddlers know right well, but never venture to play ; for as soon as it begins, both old and young, and even inanimate objects, are impelled to dance, and the player cannot stop unless he can play the air backwards, or that some one comes behind him and cuts the strings of his fiddle.

“ The little underground Elves, who are believed to

dwell under the houses of mankind, are described as sportive and mischievous, and as imitating all the actions of men. They are said to love cleanliness about the house and place, and to reward such servants as are neat and cleanly.

“The Elves are extremely fond of dancing in the meadows, where they form those circles of a livelier green which from them are called *Elfdans* (*Elfdance*): when the country people see in the morning stripes along the dewy grass in the woods and meadows, they say the Elves have been dancing there. If any one should at midnight get within their circle, they become visible to him, and they may then illude him. It is not every one that can see the Elves; and one person may see them dancing, while another perceives nothing. Sunday children, as they are called, *i. e.*, those born on Sunday, are remarkable for possessing this property of seeing Elves and similar beings. The Elves, however, have the power to bestow this gift on whomsoever they please. They also used to speak of *Elf-books*, which they gave to those whom they loved, and which enabled them to foretell future events.

“The Elves often sit in little stones that are of a circular form, and are called *Elf-mills* (*Elf-quärnor*); the sound of their voice is said to be sweet and soft, like the air.

“The Danish peasantry give the following account of their *Ellefolk* or *Elve-people*:

“The *Elle-people* live in the *Elle-moors*. The appearance of the man is that of an old man, with a low-crowned hat on his head: the *Elle-woman* is young, and of a fair and attractive countenance, but behind she is hollow like a dough-trough. Young men should be especially on their guard against her, for it is very difficult to resist her; and she has, moreover, a stringed instrument, which, when she plays on it, quite ravishes their hearts. The man may be often seen near the *Elle-moors*, bathing himself in the sunbeams; but if any

one comes too near him, he opens his mouth wide and breathes upon them, and his breath produces sickness and pestilence. But the women are most frequently to be seen by moonshine ; then they dance their rounds in the high grass so lightly and so gracefully, that they seldom meet a denial when they offer their hand to a rash young man. It is also necessary to watch cattle, that they may not graze in any place where the Elle-people have been ; for if any animal come to a place where the Elle-people have spit, or done what is worse, it is attacked by some grievous disease, which can only be cured by giving it to eat a handfull of St. John's wort, which had been pulled at twelve o'clock on St. John's night. It might also happen that they might sustain some injury by mixing with the Elle-people's cattle, which are very large, and of a blue colour, and which may sometimes be seen in the fields licking up the dew on which they live. But the farmer has an easy remedy against this evil ; for he has only to go to the Elle-hill when he is turning out his cattle, and to say, ' Thou little Troid ! may I graze my cows on thy hill ? ' And if he is not prohibited, he may set his mind at rest."\*

Of the Scandinavian *Dwarfs* much less is known by the general reader.

" These diminutive beings, dwelling in rocks and hills, and distinguished for their skill in metallurgy, seem to be peculiar to the Gothic mythology. Perhaps the most probable account of them is, that they are personifications of the subterraneous powers of nature ; for it may be again observed, that all the parts of every ancient mythology are but personified powers, attributes, and moral qualities. The Edda thus describes their origin : —

" ' Then the gods sat on their seats, and held a council, and called to mind how the Duergar had be-

\* Keightley's Fairy Mythology, vol. i.

come animated in the clay below in the earth, like maggots in flesh. The Duergar had been first created, and had taken life in Ymer's flesh, and were maggots in it, and by the will of the gods they became partakers of human knowledge, and had the likeness of men, and yet they abode in the ground and in stones. Mod-sogner was the first of them, and then Dyrin.'

"The Duergar are described as being of low stature, with short legs and long arms, reaching almost down to the ground when they stand erect. They are skilful and expert workmen in gold, silver, iron, and other metals. They form many wonderful and extraordinary things for the Æser, and for mortal heroes, and the arms and armour that come from their forges are not to be paralleled. Yet the gift must be spontaneously bestowed, for misfortune attends those extorted from them by violence."\*

Two narratives of undoubted antiquity will illustrate the cunning of these subterraneous workmen. They are, however, somewhat out of place, since they would better suit the following section.

The first is from the Edda : —

"Loke, the son of Laufear, had out of mischief cut off all the hair of Sif. When Thor found this out, he seized Loke, and would have broken every bone in his body, only that he swore to get the Suartalfar to make for Sif hair of gold, which would grow like any other hair.

"Loke then went to the Dwarfs that are called the sons of Ivalldr. They first made the hair, which as soon as it was put on the head grew like natural hair; then the ship Skidbladnor\*, which always had the wind with it, wherever it would sail; and, thirdly, the spear Gagner, which always hit in battle.

"Then Loke laid his head against the Dwarf Brock, that his brother Eitri could not forge three such valu-

\* Keightly, vol. i.

† See Vol. I. p. 32.

able things as these were. They went to the forge ; Eitri set the swine-skin (bellows) to the fire, and bid his brother Brock to blow, and not to quit the fire till he should have taken out the things he had put into it.

“ And when he was gone out of the forge, and that Brock was blowing, there came a fly and settled upon his hand, and bit him ; but he blew without stopping till the smith took the work out of the fire ; and it was a boar, and its bristles were of gold.

“ He then put gold into the fire, and bid him not to stop blowing till he came back. He went away, and then the fly came and settled on his neck, and bit him more severely than before ; but he blew on till the smith came back and took out of the fire the gold ring which is called Drupner.

“ Then he put iron into the fire, and bid him blow, and said that if he stopped blowing all the work would be lost. The fly now settled between his eyes, and bit so hard that the blood ran into his eyes, so that he could not see ; so when the bellows were down he caught at the fly in all haste, and tore off its wings ; but then came the smith, and said that all that was in the fire had nearly been spoiled. He then took out of the fire the hammer Miölner, and gave all the things to his brother Brock, and bade him go with them to Asgard and settle the wager.

“ Loke also produced his jewels, and they took Odin, Thor, and Freyr, for judges. Then Loke gave to Odin the spear Gugner, and to Thor the hair that Sif was to have, and to Freyr Skidbladnir, and told their virtues as they have been already related. Brock took out his jewels, and gave to Odin the ring, and said that every ninth night there would drop from it eight other rings as valuable as itself. To Freyr he gave the boar, and said that he would run through air and water, by night and by day, better than any horse, and that never was there night so dark that the way by which he went



would not be light from his hide. He gave the hammer to Thor, and said that it would never fail to hit a Troll, and that at whatever he threw it, it would never miss it; and that he could never fling it so far that it would not of itself return to his hand; and when he chose, it would become so small that he might put it into his pocket. But the fault of the hammer was, that its handle was too short.

“ Their judgment was, that the hammer was the best, and that the Dwarf had won the wager. Then Loke prayed hard not to lose his head; but the Dwarf said that could not be. ‘ Catch me, then,’ said Loke; and when he went to catch him, he was far away; for Loke had shoes with which he could run through air and water. Then the Dwarf prayed Thor to catch him, and Thor did so. The Dwarf now went to cut off his head; but Loke said he was to have the head only, and not the neck. Then the Dwarf took a knife and a thong, and went to sew up his mouth; but the knife was bad, so the Dwarf wished that his brother’s awl were there; and as soon as he wished it, it was there, and he sewed his lips together.”\*

The physical interpretation of this mythos is entitled to some attention. Sif is a personification of the earth, “ the wife of Thor, the heaven or atmosphere: her hair is the trees, bushes, and plants, that adorn the surface of the earth. Loke is the fire-god, that delights in mischief, *bene servit, male imperat*. When by immoderate heat he has burned off the hair of Sif, her husband compels him so by temperate heat to warm the moisture of the earth, that its former products may spring up more beautiful than ever. The boar is given to Freyr, to whom and his sister Freya, as the gods of animal and vegetable fecundity, the northern people offered that animal, as the Italian people did to the earth. Loke’s bringing the gift’s from the under-

\* Keightley, vol. i.



ground people, seems to indicate a belief that metals were prepared by subterranean fire; and perhaps the forging of Thor's hammer, the mythic emblem of thunder, by a terrestrial demon, on a subterranean anvil, may suggest that the natural cause of thunder is to be sought in the earth."

The next illustration is from the *Heimskingla* of Snorro: —

## THORSTON AND THE DWARF.

"When spring came, Thorston made ready his ship, and put twenty-four men on board of her. When they came to Vinland, they ran her into a harbour, and every day he went on shore to amuse himself.

"He came one day to an open part of the wood, where he saw a great rock, and out a little piece from it a Dwarf, who was horridly ugly, and was looking up over his head, with his mouth wide open; and it appeared to Thorston that it ran from ear to ear, and that the lower jaw came down to his knees. Thorston asked him why he was acting so foolishly. 'Do not be surprised, my good lad,' replied the Dwarf; 'do you not see that great dragon that is flying up there? He has taken off my son, and I believe that it is Odin himself that has sent the monster to do it. But I shall burst and die if I lose my son.' Then Thorston shot at the dragon, and hit him under one of the wings, so that he fell dead to the earth; but Thorston caught the Dwarf's child in the air, and brought him to his father.

"The Dwarf was exceeding glad, and was more rejoiced than any one could tell; and he said, 'A great benefit have I to reward you for, who are the deliverer of my son; and now choose your recompense in gold and silver.' 'Cure your son,' said Thorston, 'but I am not used to take rewards for my services.' 'It were not becoming,' said the Dwarf, 'if I did not reward you; and let not my shirt of sheep's-wool, which

I will give you, appear a contemptible gift, for you will never be tired when swimming, or get a wound, if you wear it next your skin.

“Thorston took the shirt and put it on, and it fitted him well, though it had appeared too short for the Dwarf. The Dwarf now took a gold ring out of his purse, and gave it to Thorston, and bid him to take good care of it, telling him that he never should want for money while he kept that ring. He next took a black stone, and gave it to Thorston, and said, ‘If you hide this stone in the palm of your hand, no one will see you. I have not many more things to offer you, or that would be of any value to you; I will, however, give you a fire-stone for your amusement.’

“He then took the stone out of his purse, and with it a steel point. The stone was triangular, white on one side, and red on the other, and a yellow border ran round it. The Dwarf then said, ‘If you prick the stone with the point in the white side, there will come on such a hail-storm that no one will be able to look at it; but if you want to stop this shower, you have only to prick on the yellow part, and there will come so much sunshine that the whole will melt away. But if you should like to prick the red side, then there will come out of it such fire, with sparks and crackling, that no one will be able to look at it. You may also get whatever you will by means of this point and stone, and they will come of themselves back to your hand when you call them. I can now give you no more such gifts.’

“Thorston then thanked the Dwarf for his presents, and returned to his men, and it was better for him to have made this voyage than to have stayed at home.”

#### HELHEIM AND NIFLEHEIM.

The palace of Hela has been already described,

on the occasion of Hermod's visit to his brother Balder.\*

Of Niflheim no more need be added to what has been already said. None of the mythological beings whom Scandinavia recognised were ambitious of exploring it.

Such were the worlds of the pagan Northmen. But before we dismiss this part of our subject, we must advert for a moment to one of more philosophical import,—

#### THE YGGDRASIL.

As this is to us at least a mysterious subject (we do not pretend to the faculty of "looking through a mill-stone"), we shall present it to the reader in the words of Magnussen, and an able critic of our own country.

"The principal and most holy place of the gods is at the ash Yggdrasil. This ash is the largest and best of all trees. Its branches spread over the whole world, and reach up over the heaven. The tree has two roots, which extend widely; the one to the Aser, the other to the Frost-giants, where before was Ginnunga-gap; the third stretches over Niflheim, and by it is Hvergelmer (the abyss), where (the Snake-king) Nidhug gnaws the root beneath.

"By the other root, which extends to the Frost-giants, is Mimer's well, wherein Wisdom and Understanding lie concealed. Mimer, the owner of the well, is full of wisdom; for every morning he drinks from the well out of the Giallar horn. Once came All-Father (Odin) thither, and sought a drink from the well, but attained not his wish, till he gave his eye as a pledge. As it is said, in the *Völuspá*:

"All know I, Odin,  
Where thou hiddest thine eye;

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\* See Vol. I. p. 49.

In the clear  
Well of Mimer.  
Mimer mead  
Each morning drinks  
From All-Father's pledge.'

"By the third root of the ash, which extends to heaven, is the Urdar-fount. By the fount stands a fair dwelling, out of which go the three maids, Urda, Verande, and Skuld. These maids appoint the lifetime of all men, and are called Nornir. Of them, saith the Vala :

"'Thence come maids  
Much knowing,—  
Three,—from the lake (or hall)  
Beneath the tree,' &c.

"The Nornir, who dwell by the Urdar-fount, take each day water from the well, and with it and the mud that is about the well, sprinkle the ash-tree, that its branches may not rot or wither. This water is so holy, that every thing that comes into the well becomes as white as the membrane within an egg-shell. So it is said in the Völuspá,

"'An ash know I standing,  
Yggdrasil it hight,  
A lofty tree besprinkled  
With white water;  
Thence cometh dew  
Which in the dales falleth;  
Ever green it standeth  
Over Urda's well.'

"The dew which comes from it is called Honey-dew, and is the food of the bees. Two birds are fed in the Urdar-fount: they are called swans, and from them is descended this species of birds.

"In the branches of the ash Yggdrasil sitteth an eagle, who knows many things; between his eyes sitteth a hawk, called Vederlöfner (Storm-damper). A squir-

rel, named Ratatösk, runs up and down in the tree, and seeks to set strife between the eagle and the Snake-king Nidhug. Four harts run about in the branches of the tree, and bite the buds. In Hvergelmer, by the root of the tree, are so many snakes, that no tongue can tell it. So, in Grimnis-mål,

“ Ratatösk hight the squirrel,  
Who shall run  
Through the Ash Yggdrasil:  
The eagle’s words  
He from above shall bear,  
And tell to Nidhug below.

There are also four harts,  
Who the branches’ buds  
Wry-necked gnaw,  
Dain and Dvalin,  
Dunuir and Durathror.

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More snakes lie  
Beneath the ash Yggdrasil  
Than any one can think.

• • • • •  
The Ash Yggdrasil  
Endureth toil  
More than men know.  
The hart gnaws it above:  
In the side it rotteth;  
Nidhug wastes it below.”

“ The mythos of Yggdrasil is contained in the preceding passages; and northern mythologists in general, and Magnussen in particular, have been no where more fortunate than in their explanation of it. Yggdrasil, they say, represents the universe (rather the world); its three roots lie in the three portions into which, according to the system of the devisers of Yggdrasil, the universe is divided. The central root is in Nifheim,

the dark and dismal abyss beneath the earth, and is watered by Hvergelmer (the Ancient Cauldron), and its stem runs up through the earth to the summit of heaven. The second root is by Mimer's well, in the north, the abode of the Frost-giants. The third root is by the Urdar-fount, in the bright and warm south, whose waters the three Maids, *i. e.* Time Past, Present, and Future, cast over its foliage to keep it in perpetual verdure. The branches are the æther, their leaves the clouds, the clusters of keys the constellations; the four harts are the four winds, the eagle denotes the air, the hawk the still æther, the squirrel the snow-flakes, hail-stones, and rain-drops. Urda's fount, *i. e.* the fount of Destiny, is the source of life, light, and warmth; the snow-white swans, which swim on its waters, represent the sun and moon. The mythos of Mimer's well shows the descent of the sun (*Odin's eye*) into the sea each evening, where, during the night, he learns wisdom from the owner of the well; the golden-hued mead which Mimer drinks each morning, is the ruddy dawn that daily flows out over the sky before the sun."\*

There can be no doubt that two distinct systems of creation are embraced by these mythi. They could not have originated in the same people. The Ymerian, there is strong reason to believe, was the *native*, the Yggdrasil the *foreign*, system.

From the preceding sketch of the Scandinavian universe, we perceive that it was inhabited by many distinct races of inhabitants. With one slight alteration, they may be classified after the nine worlds:—

1. The Shining Elves of Liosalfaheim.
2. The fiery spirits of Muspelheim.
3. The Aser, and Asyniar, gods and goddesses.
4. The Vanir, or inhabitants of the windy Vanheim.
5. Mankind.

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\* Foreign Quarterly Review, No. 3.



6. The Giants and Giantesses ; the descendants of Bergelmer and his wife.
7. The Black Elves, or Dwarfs, male and female.
8. The subjects of Hela.
9. The nondescripts, that it would puzzle the best antiquaries to say what they are.

With most of these we have little acquaintance. A few of the Light Elves are to be found in the palaces of the Asyniar ; but none of Muspel's sons do we encounter. Of the Vanir in general, we know little ; but half a dozen of the race are venerated or esteemed in Asgard. Utgard and its sons were well known, from their intercourse, whether hostile, or friendly, with the Aser ; and still better known is Asgard. The land of the Black Elves was frequently visited by men and gods. The realms of Hela were but once visited by living feet, — by those of Hermod. \* Of men we can mention such only as came into contact with beings of a higher or lower nature. Most of these classes, therefore, may be dismissed with a few general observations. Details respecting *individuals*, in most of these classes, will be found under the names of the chief Aser, or gods.

Whether the Aser were gods, or mortals only, or men who had been deified, has been long and zealously disputed. Each party gives elaborate reasons for its own hypothesis, and they have been convincing to itself if not to others. On a subject which requires the aid of the imagination to understand it, and to which speculation only can be applied, this diversity was inevitable. Within the last twenty years, however, a more careful examination of the pagan monuments of antiquity, and a more extended acquaintance with the religious systems of other people, have led to the conclusion that the Aser, like the Vaner, never existed on earth, and that they are purely mythologic. There is certainly much reason for the conclusion. The satisfactory way in which func-

\* See Vol. I. p. 48.

tions of the deities have been resolved into physical qualities may well fortify it. Still there are difficulties—we think insuperable ones—to be removed. The account which, in the former volume of this work\*, we have given of Odin, Niord, Freyr, and Baldur, will scarcely countenance the hypothesis. The circumstances which attended Odin's progress; those which accompanied and followed his arrival in the north; his temporal even more than his spiritual policy; his extraordinary success; the thrones which he established; the sons whom he left; the universal anxiety of the northern princes—even those of Saxony—to claim him as their ancestor, and an ancestor too only a few generations removed from them†; afford, we think, evidence enough of his mortal career. Nor should we overlook the fact that both Saxo Grammaticus and Snorro Sturleson,—the former well acquainted with the tradition and history of his country; the latter most deeply versed in the religion and literature of the Scythian conquerors—contended for the mortal character of the Aser. In their days, this was not a new interpretation of the subject: ascend the stream of time as far as we can, and still we find that Odin and his pontiff chiefs were regarded as men whom credulity had deified. Such was the opinion of Adam of Bremen in the eleventh century; of the biographer of St. Anscar in the ninth; of St. Kentigern in the sixth. In one of his sermons to the pagans of south-eastern Scotland, the last-named saint upbraided them with their folly for worshipping one (Odin or Woden) whom they themselves acknowledged to have lived on earth,—to have been a Saxon king,—to have paid the common debt of nature,—one whose bones had long before been confounded with the dust. Men of learning, who lived so much nearer to the times when the pontiff-king reigned in the north—who, for any thing we know to the contrary, had better evidence than

\* See Vol. I. p. 31.

† See Vol. I. p. 35.

tradition for his actions, young as that tradition was, have thought the same. It has been said, that even the least of those actions were of too superhuman a character ever to have been attributed to a mortal ; and that the being concerning whom they were invented, must have been mythologic. But the assertion would not have been made, had the memory been consulted : *it* would have furnished personages, indisputably historic, concerning whom wilder legends (if legends can be wilder) have been invented than concerning the Asiatic conqueror. What have the ancient Romans or the modern Persians to say of their kings ? What has been said of Attila ? What of Arthur ? What of Macbeth and of Don Sebastian ? There are indeed few eminent characters in the history of the middle ages concerning whom supernatural tales have not been invented and believed. Perhaps, however, the term *invented* may be too severe a one ; for in general the actions or qualities of personages much more ancient have been transferred to those of recent date.

These difficulties have appeared so formidable to most of the advocates for the mythological system, that they have been induced to admit the hypothesis of *two* Odins, who appeared in the north at different intervals ;—the former a pontiff, whom superstition afterwards deified ; the other a king, yet the chief of religion, who, seeing the veneration in which his predecessor was held, boldly declared himself an incarnation of the same being. This hypothesis, which is purely arbitrary, so far from diminishing the difficulty, greatly increases it, and is not, in other respects, worth another moment's consideration. A second is more plausible, and not so arbitrary. It represents the pontiff-warrior—the *second* Odin—as assuming the name, and laying claim to the attributes, of another Odin, long received as a god. In this case, the god must have been incarnate in the person of this Scythian warrior ; yet we have not even the shadow of a proof that metempsychosis was a doctrine ever received

by the Scandinavians, or by any nation of the Goths. The Celts had it \*; yet this wide distinction between the two races has not prevented them from being confounded. As well confound the Caffre with the Cherokee. The Eddas assure us that, when a mortal paid the debt of nature, or fell in battle, he went at once to Hielheim or Valhalla. Still there are two or three instances in which a transmigration into other bodies was effected; and though they are manifestly at variance with the religious creed of the north, and must be regarded merely as extraordinary exceptions, we are not disposed to reject the hypothesis that Odin assumed, or rather, after death, his people conferred upon him, the name of the god whom they had so long worshipped. It receives no little confirmation from the facts tated by Snorro, that in Asia the pontiff-king was known by the name of *Sigoe*. The truth is, that transmigration being an article of the Celtic creed, Odin might so far avail himself of it as to pass for the incarnate god. In either case, however, unless we reject Snorro and Saxo, and the Saxon Chronicle, and Adam of Bremen, and a host of writers in the middle ages, we adopt the conclusion that Odin lived, and reigned, and conquered, in the north.

Advocating then, as we deliberately do, the historical interpretation, we have yet to account for the extraordinary powers attributed to mere mortals; for the extraordinary difference of their religion; for the still more extraordinary doctrines of that religion, as contained in the Eddas. The subject is not without its difficulties; but probably they may be removed by a few natural reflections. That Odin and his twelve pontiff-chiefs found, on their arrival in the north, some kind of religious worship established, nobody will deny. What were the doctrines of that religion? Here con-

\* Cæsar, de Bello Gallico, lib. i.

jecture only can guide us : we have no written, no traditional, monuments of that antecedent worship. We read only that the Aser — the Scythian bands from Asia — had to contend with the native authorities ; but that having in so great a degree the superiority of wisdom, they compelled the natives to receive their spiritual, no less than their temporal, yoke. Their arms, no doubt, effected more than their arguments ; but to suppose that they could extirpate the dominant faith — if indeed there were not several established modes of worship in different provinces of the north — would be very irrational in itself, and irreconcilable with all the known facts of history. Pagan conquerors have always been disposed to respect the gods of other people. Every region was believed to have its own peculiar deities ; and to honour *them* was necessary, if that region were to be either permanently or prosperously held. On the other hand, the natives themselves would, in a superstitious age, be sufficiently disposed to respect the gods of their victors ; for human prosperity was always regarded as the work of heaven. If they still retained their own, they would not refuse homage to the more powerful stranger gods whose shrines were now transported among them, and whom they must, by degrees, consider as their own tutelary divinities. Hence the union of the two religions ; not indeed wholly, but certainly in a very considerable degree. Their gods would be joined ; so would such dogmas as were not absolutely irreconcilable with one another ; and in a few, a very few, generations, both would be received by priest and people as if they had always been identical and indissoluble. That this *has* been the case in other countries, we know from authentic history. It was so with the Greeks ; it was so with the Romans ; it has been so since their conquests with several Asiatic nations. And reason tells us that this must always be the natural progress of events.

But on this subject we have more than conjecture,



or even reason ; we have facts. There are in the Eddas, and still more in the Scaldic interpretations, principles too repugnant to each other ever completely to harmonise. We know that Thor was more esteemed in Norway than Odin ; and that in Denmark, no less than in Sweden, Odin was more highly venerated than Thor. The reason is, that the Goths, or, we should rather say, the last swarm of them that arrived with Odin, had more influence in these latter kingdoms than in the former. Thor, indeed, was almost exclusively worshipped by the Norwegians, who invoked Odin only on the eve of a battle. They held the former to be immeasurably the superior of the other ; and, in contradiction to the Swedes and Danes, contended that Odin was the son of Thor. The elder Edda calls him the most powerful of the gods ; and in the Sagas, by the most ancient Scalds, he is represented as frequently hostile to the other deity. Considering these facts, and the universal homage still paid to Thor by the Finns and Lapps — people of the same race with the Norwegians — we are of opinion that Thor was the native, Odin the foreign, divinity. The giants, too, appear to have been of native, perhaps of Celtic, origin, and to have been adopted by the Scythian Goths, after their arrival ; while the *black* dwarfs, whose habitation was in the bowels of the earth, were introduced by the latter, and soon made a portion of the native creed. The white, or benevolent elves, were universally received by the Goths ; but the dark, the malignant elves, seem to have been brought from an eastern region. It is in the highest degree absurd to suppose that if there had been no foreign admixture with that creed, and a very large admixture, we should have nine different worlds, with their complicated, often dissonant relation to one another. Where this complexity, and, still more, this evident dissonance between the elements, are found to exist, we may safely conclude that they have been introduced at different periods ; that the mighty and irregular edifice



has been reared by different hands. But if there were no other argument to establish the dissonance for which we contend, and the forcible union of opinions never intended to harmonise, it would be sufficiently obvious from the distinction between the two great systems of creation to which we have already alluded—the Ymerian or animal, and Yggdrasil or vegetable.\* Beyond all doubt, they were as distinct in their origin as in their nature; and were long held by the people essentially different. We are strongly disposed to regard the Ymerian as the native, the Yggdrasil as the foreign, system. Giants were more kindred with the Celtic than with the Gothic creed. By the latter, indeed, they were hated even more than feared. Whoever will peruse with attention those passages of the two Eddas where giants are mentioned, will probably arrive at the same conclusion with ourselves—that they were foreign to the genius of the Scythians. We may adore what we *fear*; but we never adore what we *hate*, still less what we *despise*. The same may be observed in regard to the magical rites of the two people. Of *dark* magic we read every where amongst the people of the former race. We meet with it in districts where the Scythian Goth never inhabited—in the more remote districts of Lapland and Finland. The rites, the opinions, of the people in these districts, were also, we believe, the rites, the opinions, of all the people that inhabited Norway and Sweden. Some of them, we know, were disliked by the followers of Odin. It was not Odinian, that is Gothic, or *white* (innocent) magic, that was professed by Raude of Norway.† It was not Odinian, or Gothic, magic that caused Harald Harfager to be captivated so long and so fatally by the daughter of the Finnish Swaso.‡ In the latter case, nothing can be more evident than that it was the native, black magic, which produced this effect. Hence the detestation with which

\* See before, p. 78.

† See Vol. I. p. 229.

‡ See Vol. I. p. 176.

that monarch, pagan as he was, regarded the art.\* It was not Odin's magic which Egill practised when he left Norway, outlawed by Eric of the Bloody Axe. Before he finally left the coast, he fixed the head of a horse on one of the oars of the vessel, and raising it aloft, exclaimed, "Here I erect the rod of vengeance against king Eric and queen Gunhilda!" Turning the horse's head in another direction, he exclaimed "I direct this curse also against the tutelary deities of Norway, that they shall wander, in pain, and have no rest for the soles of their feet, until they have expelled the king and queen!" This strange imprecation he then carved in runic characters upon the oar, and placed it in the cleft of a rock, where it was not likely to be found, or the spell to be dissolved. It was native magic that distinguished Gunhilda, wife of Eric with the Bloody Axe.† More than one king who worshiped Odin punished with death the observers of these rites. And in most of the Gothic writers, pagan or christian, the palm of superiority in magic is awarded to native professors. The magic of the latter might be darker, more inhuman, more diabolical, but it was also admitted to be more profound and more potent. We agree with Magnussen in the conclusion that there was a union, more or less complete, of two schools of magic, as well as of two religions. But there were tenets which could *not* be reconciled, and the natives, by adhering to their own, caused a system to be perpetuated essentially at variance with that of the conquerors.

These facts, these arguments, will be admitted to have considerable weight. We shall adduce another which, joined with the preceding, should set the subject as to the fact of a religion having been dominant in the north anterior to the Odinic, and essentially different from it. Rude stones and rocks—so rude as scarcely to have a form—were lately, and probably are now, worshipped

\* See Vol. I. p. 180.

† See Vol. I. p. 181.

by the more remote Finns and Lapps. This idol they term the *Storjunkar*, or great ruler ; they offer sacrifices upon it (generally the rein-deer), and prostrate before it, in certain mountainous districts, far from the usual habitations of men.\* This worship is a relic of the idolatry once common to the Norwegians, no less than to the Finns and Laps, who are of the same origin. That it was celebrated in Norway is certain ; for we find it in Iceland as late as the close of the tenth century. Indrid was the mortal enemy of Thorstein ; and one night he left his house to murder him. The latter entered a temple where he was accustomed to worship, prostrated himself before a stone, and prayed to know his fate. The stone replied, in a kind of chant, that his feet were already in the grave ; that his fatal enemy was at hand, and that he would never see the rising of the next morning's sun. All such stones, all such gods, were foreign to the Scythian Goths ; and this relation, connected with others which might be easily extracted, proves that the Norwegians, who had felt little of the Asiatic yoke, had retained many of their gods, many of their religious rites, in defiance of opposition.

To say more on this subject in the present place would be useless ; as in the course of the present chapter we shall have opportunities enough both of adverting to the more ancient superstition, and of comparing the two. It will, we believe, be found that much of the Eddaic cosmogony is of native growth ; that the majority of the worlds and of their inhabitants were native ; and that the Scythian warriors added little more than their Midgard, their Asgard, especially their Valhalla ; their twelve gods (except Thor), with Odin at their head ; their female deities (scarcely a dozen in number) ; and such other points of the creed as were necessary to connect and illustrate their cardinal articles.

The question of two distinct religions being conceded, it will not be difficult to account for the progress which

\* Schefferi *Historia Lapponica*, cap. ix.

Odin and his companions made towards deification. Most of the steps, indeed, have been indicated on a former occasion \*, and need not be repeated here. Few were the regal pontiffs of Asia who did not boast of their descent from some god — some warrior king, whom after ages, admiring his success, had deified. Odin was not likely to neglect so useful an instrument for his designs. Then as he and the Vanir chiefs were unquestionably a much more civilised people than the natives of the north ; as his talents, beyond all doubt, were of a commanding order ; as the religious rites of which he was the superior hereditary pontiff, were celebrated with more pomp ; as success attended all his measures, whether of war or of policy ; as he himself, and his followers for him, laid claim to something of a divine character, the natives soon regarded him as a supernatural personage. The feeling was no doubt shared by his own people, who had always been taught to believe that a divine spirit might inhabit the bosom of a hero or a king. As in former ages Rovstam and Jemsheed, so in later ages Alaric and Attila, were beheld with equal reverence. With equal reverence at this day do the Chinese, the Thibetians, the Tartars, regard *their* rulers. So did the Mexicans and the Peruvians. From Snorro, however, we learn that the progress of Odin towards deification was much slower than is generally supposed. He expressly intimates that the king began to be peculiarly honoured *after* his death : “ From this time men began to have more faith in Odin, and to offer him vows.” If his pretensions to divinity were recognised, so must those of his chief pontiffs ; since the cause and the interests of the two were inseparable.

The original seat of that colony of the Goths which Odin led into the north, has, with much appearance of reason, been placed east of the Tanais or Don : probably it was considerably to the east of that river. On this subject we can have no better guide than Snorro :

“The orb of the world, in which dwell the race of mankind, is, as we are informed, intersected with bays and gulfs: great seas from the ocean penetrate the firm land. It is well known that from the Straits of Gibraltar (Njövasund) a great sea extends quite to Palestine (Jórsala-land). From this sea there lies towards the north-east, a gulf called the Black Sea, which separates the three parts of the world from each other: the land to the east is called Europe, by others Enea. Northerly from the Black Sea lies the greater or cold *Svithjód* (Svecia or Scythia magna). Some affirm that great *Svithjód* is not of less extent than Serkland (North Africa): others even compare it with the great *Blá-land* (*Æthiopia magna*). The northern part of *Svithjód* is uncultivated on account of the frost and cold, in the same manner as the southern part of *Bláland* lies waste, on account of the burning heat. In great *Svithjód* are many provinces peopled with various tribes of different tongues. There are giants and dwarfs; there are black men, and dragons and other wild beasts of prodigious size. Towards the north, in the mountains beyond the habitable country, rises a river properly called the Tanais, but which has obtained the name of the *Tanasquisl*, or *Vanasquil*, and which running through *Svithjód*, falls into the Black Sea. The country encircled by the branches of this river was in those days called *Vana-land* or *Vanaheimr*. This stream separates the *three* parts of the world from each other, the part lying east being called Asia, and that to the west Europe. The country to the east of *Tanasquisl* in Asia was called *Asaland* or *Asaheimr*, and the capital of that country, *As-gard*. There ruled Odin, and there too was a great place of sacrifice. Twelve pontiffs (*hofgodar*) presided in the temples, who were at the same time the judges of the law.” \*

Defective as was the geographical knowledge of

\* *Heimskringla*, tom. i.



Snorro, he has, no doubt, correctly assigned the cradle of this people, and of the Vanir. They were neighbours ; they were consequently often at war, until the chiefs of both agreed, not only to be for ever amicable, and to join in all future conquests, but in some degree to amalgamate by a union of government. Hence the junction of the Vanir to the Aser, and the contiguity of their respective regions in the Scandinavian calendar. How Asgard and Vanaheim came to be placed in heaven, as well as on earth, has puzzled many writers. They may be equally puzzled, that the twelve drothmen, or pontiff-chiefs, should be transfused into so many divinities ; and the temple of the earthly transferred to the celestial Asgard. There are two ways of solving this problem. It is possible — it is even exceedingly probable — that the Scythians, long prior to their migration from Asia, called their country after the heavenly one which they expected to inhabit after death. The government of the Aser was essentially theocratic, and assimilated as much as possible to that which they believed to exist above. Nor were they peculiar in this economy: Athens and greater nations have done the same. The twelve great priests of Egypt were named after the twelve gods who ruled the same number of celestial signs. Such was the case in Assyria. In Persia, too, the number of priests in the great temple corresponded with that of the Amshaspands, or celestial genii, who governed the world as vicegerents of Ormusd. Nothing, indeed, is more natural than the position, that men devoted to the service of the gods would endeavour to form their establishments after the model which the gods themselves were believed to have adopted. “ Thus, the Aser were the gods of the new religion introduced by Odin, and at the same time his temporal companions and followers, — the tribe of the Ases, or Aso-Goths, from the river Tanais. Asgard, or Godheim, is their celestial abode, from which they descended on earth (Manheim) to mingle with the children of men : and is, at the same time, the original seat of Odin and his people



on the river 'Tanais.'"\* This we consider the more natural solution of the problem in question. It may, however, be, that the disciples of the original pontiff began after his death to invest both him and his companions with the ensigns of divinity, and assimilated them, both in number and in attributes, with the ancient divinities of Scythia; making, however, some change. In either case there must have been a change. We have before expressed our opinion that Thor was not a Scythian god: he, therefore, (and the same may be said of one or two others,) must have been subsequently admitted into the divine college, when the union for which we have contended took place between the native and foreign religion; or rather, when the foreign was engrafted on the native system. That system, we repeat, was, in our opinion, the basis of the one contained in the Eddas; and much more than the basis.

The union which we have endeavoured to establish, will account for the elaborate, however heterogeneous, system of the Eddas. That system was, assuredly, not the work of one people, or, we may add, of one age. It was derived from people widely different in character, habits, opinions, and manners; and it was probably the work of centuries. The successors of the twelve original pontiffs effected, there is reason to think, much more than *they* did, or than their predecessors had done. The elements were, indeed, strewed in Norway; but they could scarcely be fashioned into a whole; still less could they have assumed that stately form which they exhibited in the age of Sæmund and Snorro. They consisted of detached portions, composed at different periods, and probably not connected — not fashioned into a whole — until many centuries after Odin's death. Nay, there is some reason for concluding, that the two Icelanders we have just mentioned were the first collectors of these scattered fragments, no less than of the comments on each by the recent Scalds of their own

\* Wheaton, p. 117.

country, and the more ancient Scalds of Norway. Of the same opinion the reader will probably be, before he closes the present volume.

Having now given a general view both of the Scandinavian universe and of its inhabitants, and shown the probable relation between its gods and its mortals, we proceed, in the following section, to examine these gods more in detail, and, where practicable, to explain their respective attributes by the physical phenomena on which they were so frequently based.

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## SECTION II.

### CHIEF MYTHOLOGICAL PERSONAGES OF SCANDINAVIA.

ODIN, THOR, AND LOKE. — THEIR CHARACTERS PHYSICALLY INTERPRETED. — THEIR WIVES AND OFFSPRING. — THE THREE DEMON CHILDREN OF LOKE. — INFLUENCE OF THIS DEITY OVER THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE. — HE IS PRESENT IN EVERY GREAT MYTHOS. — RAPE OF IDUNA. — THOR'S VISITS TO JOTUNHEIM. — THOR AND THE GIANT HYMIR. — THOR AND THE GIANT THRYM. — NIVOD, FREYR, FREYA. — EXPEDITION OF SKIRNER-ÆGIR AND RAN. — OTHER DEITIES. — BALDER. — PUNISHMENT OF LOKE. — RAGNAROK. — RECOGNITION OF A GREAT FIRST CAUSE BY THE PAGAN SCANDINAVIANS.

### ODIN, THOR, LOKE.

THE first two gods we place together, as well for the purpose of comparison as that of contrast; the last, because his agency is necessary to explain the other two.

According to the Eddas, ODIN had several wives; the first was *Frea*, or *Frigga*, by whom he had five sons, Thor, Balder, Braga, Hermod, and Tyr: the second was *Skada*, by whom he had Semming; the third was *Grydur*, by whom he had Vidar; the fourth was *Rinda*, by whom he had Balder, or Bo.\*

\* Sec Vol. I. p. 54.

In Valhalla he has a table separate from the Einheriar, but he lives only on wine ; and the meats set before him he distributes to two wolves which stand by his side. These are *Geri* the devouring, and *Freki* the fierce.

He learns all that passes on earth, without the trouble of ascending Lidskialf\*, by means of two ravens, which leave Asgard at daybreak, and at dinner time return, to perch on his shoulders, and whisper into his ear all that they have seen. These ravens are — Observation and Memory ; both presents from the enchantress Hulda. Hence he is called the raven god.

These myathi are for the most part sufficiently obvious. Frigga is a personification of the earth ; while Odin himself, in his character of chief god, may represent heaven. Heaven and earth give origin to — thunder (Thor), the summer-sun (Balder), the swift messenger (Hermod), the hospitable board (Braga), and the undaunted defender of nature (Tyr). Skada, the daughter of the giant Thiasse, and a nymph of the mountains, is a personification of the spring winds ; but we cannot see the import of the mythos — if, indeed, there were any intended—in regard to Semming. Why Vidar should be the offspring of Grydur is equally dark ; but there is propriety enough in making the frost (Rinda) the mother of barrenness. The two wolves at Odin's side denote his ferocity as the god of battles ; and the two ravens, memory and observation, explain his knowledge of the past and present. To that of the future this god had no pretensions ; this was reserved to the Norny Skulda, and to a few of the Valas, or prophetesses.

Immediately dependent on Odin — the ministers of his will as the god of war — were the three Valkyrs, or choosers of the slain. They also administer to the slain at his banquet.

There are many legends respecting Odin, who often visited mankind. We select one because it illustrates the observations we have made in regard to the rivalry

\* See before, p. 61.

of him and Thor. Sterkodder, the celebrated champion\*, when a child, was taken captive. He fell to the lot of one named Granè, or Whiskers, who was named Horsehair Whiskers, and who brought him up as a foster-son. This was no other than Odin in disguise, whose attachment to one destined to become so unrivalled in arms may be easily conceived. One night the destiny of the young man, unknown to himself, was to be shown him. Horsehair Whiskers, of whose quality he was ignorant, embarked with him in a small boat, and they proceeded to an island, landed, and by midnight reached an open plain in the centre of a forest. There he saw a large assemblage; and within the ring formed by the assemblage were twelve seats, for so many judges. Eleven were full, but one was empty. and Horsehair Whiskers immediately seated himself in it. From the instantaneous salute of Odin by the judges, and the mention of his name, the chieftain perceived that he was in the awful presence of that deity, and of the other gods. Odin said, that the judges should now decree Sterkodder his destiny. Thor then spoke and said, "Alfhild, the mother of Sterkodder's father, chose for her son's-father (*husband*) a very wise Jötunn (*giant*) in preference to Asathor; wherefore I appoint to Sterkodder that he shall have neither son nor daughter, and thus be the last of his race."

*Odin.* "I grant him to live three men's age."

*Thor.* "He shall do a vile act in each of them."

*Odin.* "I give him that he shall own the best weapons and harness."

*Thor.* "And I appoint him that he shall own neither land nor sand."

*Odin.* "I give him that he shall be rich in money."

*Thor.* "I lay on him that he shall never seem to have enough."

*Odin.* "I give him victory and martial skill in every fight."

\* See Vol. I. p. 86.

*Thor.* "I lay on him that in every fight he shall lose a limb."

*Odin.* "I give him the poet's faculty, so that he shall produce poems with as much ease as unmeasured language."

*Thor.* "He shall never be able to remember the verses he makes."

*Odin.* "I grant him that he shall be favoured by those of greatest rank and name."

*Thor.* "He shall be hated by all others."

Then the judges ratified to Sterkodder all that had been said, and the council broke up.

The Saga from which this incident has been derived was written by a Norwegian, who certainly held Thor to be the equal, if not the superior, of Odin. It is not unlike the magian scene at the creation of the world, when to every good thing decreed by Ormusd, an evil one was joined by Ahriman. That Odin and Thor were rival deities, and that they gave rise to hostile sects, is evident. And there is another point from which this hostility may be viewed. The warriors who went to Valhalla were all of noble birth; they were jarls or hersers, were rich and powerful. But what became of meaner freemen and thralls (serfs) who fell in battle? They went to Thrudheim to the palace of Thor, Bilskirner \*, which that the owner might not be outdone, had the same number of gates as the palace of Odin, viz. five hundred and forty. Does not this prove that Thor was the native, Odin the foreign, god?—that the former belonged to the vanquished, the latter to the victorious people? The very name of Thor shows that he was a Celtic divinity. He is the *Taranis* of Lucan, the *Toron* of the Scottish Highlands, and the *Tiermes* of the Lapps.†

The visit of Odin to the giant Vafthrudnir, and his contest with him ‡, may also serve to illustrate his boasted

\* See before, p. 55.

† Schefferi *Historia Lapponica*.

‡ Europe during the Middle Ages, vol. ii. Appendix.



knowledge, as well as power. Frigga, his wife, was alarmed when she first heard of her husband's intention to visit "that learned giant." He conquers, indeed, in the strife, but not through any superiority of knowledge: it is rather by an unworthy artifice.

*Frigga*, the wife of Odin, was a distinguished personage in the northern Olympus. She is the queen and mother of the gods. Her palace, called Fensale, was magnificent; and it was a sort of drawing-room for all the goddesses. Her prescience was great; she could foresee the future, and she was invoked by women in childbed.

According to the vulgar genealogy,—that which the Odinists, in opposition to the Thorists, were anxious to establish, — *Tnor* was the eldest son of Odin and Frigga. Even in Sweden he was, after Odin, the first in rank among the gods. We may even doubt whether by one sect of the Odinists he was not esteemed the first; for his image at Upsal, where he is represented seated on a throne, with the attributes of divine majesty about him, — while Odin, the war god, is standing at his right hand with a drawn sword, and Frigga, the goddess of production, on his left, with the fruits of nature in her hands, — clearly establishes his predominancy. His strength was unrivalled; and his structure so large, that no horse could carry him: he always travelled in a chariot drawn by two he-goats. He had three treasures, all unrivalled, all made by the Dwarfs. Of these the most famous was his hammer, called *Miölner* (the miller, the bruiser), which, when thrown by his powerful hand, was irresistible; yet, however far it was thrown, it always returned to him. Formidable as it was, it was so small that he could put it in his pocket. No hands but his could touch it; nor even he without his wonderful steel gloves, the second of his treasures. The third was a belt, — *Melgingandur*, which doubled his strength whenever he girded it on. Above all the gods, he was the enemy of the Rimthurser, or Frost Giants; against whom, with his dreaded weapon, he



waged unceasing war. The very glare of his eyes was tremendous: it was lightning; and lightning was emitted by his chariot wheels as he rolled along. Every day did he make the circuit of Asgard, to drive away the giants.

Of this mythos an interpretation is scarcely necessary. Miölner is his thunderbolt. His antipathy to the giants — the powers alike of darkness and of cold, and his daily circuit round Asgard, sufficiently explain themselves. His gloves and belt were an embellishment, which have no necessary connection with his nature. The latter is to be found in many oriental fictions, (the Arabian Nights, for instance,) and in many also current throughout Europe. His wife, *Sif*, is another illustration of the mythos. She is held to be a personification of the summer earth, and is represented in the act of distributing fruits and flowers. She, like her husband, was peculiarly worshipped in Norway. By a former husband she had a son — Uller, the god of hunters, whose residence was Ydale, or the Dewy Valley.\* The most wonderful of her peculiarities was her *hair*, which was unrivalled for its beauty, and to which we have before adverted.

The fact, that *Sif* was worshipped in Norway alone, of all the Scandinavian regions, is another argument in favour of her husband's supreme worship, long before the arrival of the Aser. A still stronger one is to be found in the fact, that Thrudheim, or Thrudvang, was the name of a district in that kingdom, no less than of a palace in heaven: and the strongest of all is, the peculiar affection with which he was regarded by the Norwegians, who held him to be their native, their tutelary god. He seems to have had some attributes of the Roman thunderer: the same day (Thursday), and the same planet (Jupiter), were sacred to him.

The giants of whom Thor was thus the natural, the everlasting enemy, were, as we have frequently ob-

\* See before, p. 56.

served, the offspring of Bergelmer, the old man of the mountains, and of his wife, who escaped the destruction of their race by the blood of Ymer, only because they chanced to be at sea, fishing, when the giant was slain. Repairing to the dark lower region which lies within the polar seas, they soon peopled it. Darkness, indeed, was the element of these beings: no sun enlightened or cheered them. When they visited earth, it was during the night, for then their power was the greatest. In magic they surpassed all other beings: they possessed many secrets, relating to the origin and nature of things, unknown to the wisest of the gods. With them the three Nornies, or destinies, — with them Vala herself, the great prophetess of heaven, was educated. They regarded the Aser with dislike, — as usurpers of a world which rightly belonged to them; and towards the sons of Askur, the creation of the gods, they bore equal dislike. This feeling, indeed, did not prevent the Aser from occasionally intermarrying with them; but the marriages were never well assorted. The king of this vast gloomy region was Ugarthilok, or, more correctly, Utgardelok, viz. the Loke of Utgard, the monarch of the outer world. The notion entertained of this personage, and of the whole race, by the Danes, we have shown on a former occasion.\* Wild as the legends there related may seem, they have their meaning. The reader will not fail to observe, that these original inhabitants of the earth — this people destroyed by the Aser, and exiled into the dreary wastes of the North, were the original Finnish, or rather Celtic race, whom the Goths expelled. The mythology of that race was full of giants; the Druids boasted of an acquaintance with nature denied to the rest of mankind; and the boast was probably a just one. The testimony borne by Cæsar to the extensive character of their knowledge, will abundantly illustrate this part of the historical question. Again, the Celts pretended to mystical science: in proof of it, look to

\* See Vol. I. p. 91—93.

Cæsar, to the traditions rife wherever the Celts have been located, and, above all, to the fragments of the ancient Welsh bards preserved in the *Archæologia* of the principality. The Eddas are filled with Celtic mythological allusions. For example, Celtic were the dwarfs or fairies of the benevolent class ; while the malignant ones, who were a kind of evil genii, came with the Aser from a seat where the two principles of good and evil were a dominant article of the popular creed.

A personage no less important than Odin or Thor in the Scandinavian mythology, is *LOKE*, or, as he is sometimes called, *Luptur*. He was important, not from his power, or his wisdom, or his dignity, but from his cunning, his treachery, his ill-nature, and the influence which he exercised alike over gods and men. He was the son of the giant *Farbautè*, by the enchantress *Laufeya*. Though of giant race, he obtained admission among the gods : indeed, as his manners were exceedingly pleasant, his mirth constant, and his wit unbounded, whenever they were not mixed with spite, he could not fail to be acceptable to so vulgar a race as the Aser. But when, as indeed was often the case, there was malice in his jokes, his laughter made the hearer shudder. Why the gods should tolerate him, is not very clear ; but destiny was probably the reason which a devout Odinist would have assigned for it, — a very convenient reason in most systems of mythology. His birth might be traced to the origin of time ; for, in some way or other, he was concerned with Odin in the work of creation, though the connection is very obscurely hinted at. He was a relation, we are told, of the *Utgard Loke*, or *Ugarthiloe*, the monarch of the frosty giants. These two personages were no doubt originally the same ; but as the Celts and Aser had different notions of the same being, it was found necessary to introduce the two into the united creed. In virtue of his connection with them, *Loke* often visited the

giants, by whom he was as little trusted as by the Aser. But he was sometimes useful to both; and, from the malice of his nature, no less than from his dislike to the gods, whom he at once feared and hated, he was frequently the ally of the giants in their efforts to recover their lost dominion, and to destroy the usurpers. If he thus brought the latter into danger, he alone could extricate them from it. In perfect accordance with the Eddas, he is thus described by Ohlenschlager: —

Amongst bright Asgard's lords  
Is one, As-Luptur hight.  
Like honey are his words;  
His heart is filled with spite:  
His form is passing fair,  
And winning is his mien;  
But still his guileful leer  
Shows all is false within.

Though oft his traiterous wiles  
The Aser's wrath provoke,  
His smooth tongue still beguiles,  
And stops the impending stroke.  
Oft cited to appear  
He cowers the Ash before.\*  
At Odin's table near  
His place to Asa Thor.†

He was, indeed, as a god, the familiar companion of Thor; who, however, had no great wish for his society. Like most of the gods, he was married. His wife, *Signe*, was an amiable being, who loved him in spite of his depravity. By her he had two sons, Nari and Vali, whose fate will be mentioned in the proper place. But he had other and more mischievous offspring by the giantess Augerbode, — *Fenris* the wolf, *Jormungandur* the great serpent, and *Hela* the queen of death. This alleged affinity will confirm the observa-

\* The great, the mysterious Ash Yggrasid, under which Odin and the twelve Aser were accustomed to administer justice.

† Pigott's translation.

tion, that there was originally but one Loke, the lord of Utgard, and consequently the everlasting foe of the gods. How the Asgard Loke should become so wicked as to produce such offspring, might surprise us, if we were not assured that he was not so originally, and that he became so by eating the half-roasted heart of an enchantress.

These three children of Loke were reared in Utgard by the mother. The fatal influence which they were to exercise over the universe, was not concealed from Vala, the mysterious prophetess of heaven, or from Skulda, the Norny of the future. The gods being warned, sent to secure them. Jormungandur, one of the most dreaded, was seized, and by Odin cast into the great sea that separates the human from the giant world. There so large did it become, that it surrounded the whole earth, — being condemned to hold its tail in its mouth, and thus to form a circle. There he lies, waiting for the time when destiny will unloose him — the Ragnarok, or the twilight of the gods ; when he will assist in the destruction of the visible universe.

Hela, the next mythologic offspring, is hideous to behold, — her body being half livid, half of natural colour. By Odin, or rather by destiny, of which he was merely the instrument, she was placed in the upper confines or Nifleheim, — in the region which, from her, is called Hell (Helheim). She was invested with dominion over six, or perhaps seven, of the nine worlds, (as we have before observed, there is some doubt whether Maspelheim be eternal,) — over men, and dwarfs, and giants, and gods. All who die a natural death proceed to her “drear abode :” hence her title, queen of the dead. “Hela’s hall,” says the prose Edda, “is affliction ; her table is famine ; her knife is hunger ; her threshold, a drawbridge ; her bed, lingering sickness ; her tent, cursing.” She too, like Odin, had nornies, whose province it was to summon mortals to her vast domain. But these were much inferior in loveliness and dignity to the celestial nornies. They appeared to



the fated victim by night only. Hela herself was sometimes believed thus to appear. She had a dark red cock, to signify, by its crowing, the approach of fate; and a spectre horse, to carry the doomed to her gloomy abode.

The third demon offspring of Loke, the wolf Fenris, is no less wonderful than his brother and sister. The one had been surprised and, thrown into the sea; the other had been partly persuaded to submit, through the high dignity offered to her; but Fenris, who was more powerful, was also more troublesome. He was taken, indeed, and bound; but he snapped his fetters, strong as they were, as if they had been nothing. A massive chain was now made, and he was bid to try its strength: it snapped as if it had been dried clay. Another was made double the strength of the preceding, — the strongest that the gods could make; but with a very slight effort it too gave way. What was to be done with this formidable criminal, — one destined, if oracles were true, to endanger the world? The gods had no fetter in which to bind him; the giants, who were skilful, could not be expected to join in any design against one of their own body, — one, too, that was naturally hostile to the Aser. In this, as in many other dilemmas, recourse was had to the Dwarfs in the bowels of the earth. At the instance of Skirner, the messenger of Freyr, they constructed a chain called Gleipner; which, though so slender as to resemble a silken thread, was nevertheless not to be broken by gods, or giants, or dwarfs. The Edda acquaints us with the materials of which it was constructed. These were six, all curious enough to deserve mentioning: — the sound made by the feet of a cat; the beard of a woman; the roots of huge rocks; the fibres of trees; the breath of fishes; the spittle of birds. But how bind by it the formidable monster? Deceit must be used. Repairing with him to a solitary island, the gods desired him to try his strength on this, as he had done on preceding things. “Little honour,” replied the cunning demon, “can result



from breaking a silken thread ; but probably it may be enchanted!" and he refused to try it. He was next taunted and jeered ; and in vexation he at length consented to be bound ; but then, to be assured that the gods were honest in their proffer, he insisted that some one of them should put a hand in his mouth. They were in utter dismay ; but the undaunted Tyr \*, the northern Mars, the defender of the gods, at length resolved to sacrifice a member for the preservation of the universe. He therefore placed his hand in the open jaw, and the wolf allowed himself to be fettered. The chain was cunningly fastened round his body, passed through a rent rock, carried downwards to the centre of the earth, and there made fast. Fenris now tried as before ; but so far from escaping, every effort that he made only entangled him the more, and rivetted his bonds the more firmly. He therefore desisted ; but in his anger he bit off the hand of Tyr. From that moment the god has been only left-handed ; but as he uses that hand with much effect, he is still to be dreaded. He alone had courage to take food to an animal, the roaring of which was felt by all nature, until the gods thrust a sword into his jaws, and thus gagged him. There he lies until Rognarok, when, like Midgard's serpent, he will break loose.

There is no personage in the whole system of a more mythic character than Loke. He was evidently the personification of the active evil principle. His name signifies *flame* ; and he is a representative of the demon of fire—the *destructive*, in opposition to the alimentary, aerial fire, of which Balder may be considered the symbol. At this day the devil is called Loke by the Norwegians. Still there is frequently some obscurity in the mythi respecting him, and it is occasioned by his being so often confounded with the demon-king of Utgard. Though they were originally *one*, the Edda has made him into two, in conformity no doubt with the

\* See before, p. 87.

genius of two distinct systems of mythology. The mysterious allusion to the assistance which he afforded Odin in the work of creation, is one great proof of his identification with the powers of evil : his relationship with the giants, on both sides, sufficiently accounts for his hostility towards the gods, with whom he associated that he might find an opportunity of triumphing over them. He is styled a coward, because his deeds will not bear the light—the inventor of deceit, of lies, of every thing base. The first of his offspring, the great serpent, is evidently a relic of the Celtic creed. The Britons acknowledged its existence ; and there are two bold promontories on the coast to which they have given the name of the Worm's Head.\* Of the wolf Fenris the character is more obscure, though no less confirmatory of the mythos. It is doubtless a symbol of destruction. In several countries of the East, it is believed that a wolf will finally destroy, if not the world, the sun and moon. Thus, in the Buddhist system, a wolf, Rakoo, is always on the watch to swallow both luminaries. This mythos, we suspect, with a living writer†, has given rise to the superstition so common in the middle ages,—that of men-wolves ; viz., the power possessed by some men of assuming the form of that animal. Hela, or death, the offspring of sin, or Satan (Loke), needs no explanation. We may, however, observe, that there is some plausibility in the arguments of Magnussen, when he attempts to show that Helheim is more ancient than Valhalla ; that it is the place of punishment acknowledged by the original inhabitants, while the warrior's heaven was introduced by the Gothic conquerors.

The mythological fables in which Loke so prominently appears, will illustrate his character better, and certainly more agreeably, than any formal description. In most of them he was associated with Thor ; but we

\* Great Ormshead in Denbighshire ; *orm* being the Danish, and, indeed, the old English, for a worm. Another, entering the Bristol Channel, is called " The Worm's Head."

† Mr. Pigott, p. 82.

select one in which Odin and Hoenir were concerned with him. Hoenir, we must observe, is but another name for Vile, the brother of Odinn, who assisted in the work of creation.\*

## RAPE OF IDUNA.

The three Aser one day left Asgard to see other worlds, especially Utgard. Travelling over dreary wastes, they reached a mountainous region, more hungry than they had for some time been. Entering a valley, they found a herd of cattle, and killed one of the animals for supper. Loke, who was to be the cook, made a fire, and proceeded to his task, while the two nobler gods walked about. But notwithstanding the great heat of the fire, the ox would not roast. A voice, from the tree above him, told him that he would have no supper unless he promised to let the speaker join. He looked up, and seeing an eagle only, gave his consent. The bird now descended to the fire, and seized both shoulders, which he, considering as somewhat too large a share, would not permit. Taking a large billet of wood, he struck the unreasonable animal; when the eagle instantly flew upwards, one end of the billet adhering to its beak. But alas! the other end was no less tenacious of Loke's hand; and away he was dragged over mountain, wood, and stream, his arm ready to fall from his body, and his feet sorely wounded by being trailed over the sharp rocks and bushes. He lustily called for help to Odin and Thor. "Cry away!" replied the eagle, who was no other than the giant Thiasse in that shape†; "but never shalt thou be released from this situation, unless thou promise by oath to bring Iduna and her apples from Asgard to me!"

Iduna was the wife of Braga, the god of eloquence, and daughter to the dwarf Ivalldr, one of the most scientific of his race. She was a goddess, and the wife of a god: for both honours she was no doubt indebted to the wonderful apples of which she was the guardian,

\* See before, p. 47.

† See Vol. I. p. 98.

and which had been given her by her kindred. They had this virtue, that when the gods felt the approach of age, they had only to eat of these apples to be restored to all the bloom of youth. The giants, like the gods, were subject to decay ; and, like the gods, they wished for the means of immortality, — to escape the dark empire of Hela.

As Loke was no friend to the Aser, he swore to comply with the giant's demand, within a given time. He was therefore released, and enabled to return with the two gods to Asgard. When the covenanted time arrived, he told Iduna, that in a neighbouring wood he had discovered some apples, much finer, and much more valuable, than any she possessed. Her curiosity being raised, she took some of her own apples with her, to compare with the others, and was accompanied by Loke to the wood ; but scarcely had they passed the boundary of Asgard, than Thiasse arriving in the eagle's shape, bore her away to the dark mountains of Utgard.

Great was the consternation of the Aser at the disappearance of Iduna and her apples. The effect was soon visible: they became weaker, less supple, decrepit, and wrinkled. Though the season was spring, the flowers withered, and the leaves became sear as at the close of autumn. A council of the gods was convoked to learn how and whither Iduna had disappeared. No one could give them any other information than this. — that she had been last seen with Loke departing from Asgard. Loke was examined ; and when he showed a disposition to evade the questions that were asked, Thor seized him, and threw him into the air so high that his heels struck the moon, and then descended to the sea. All this was nothing in comparison with what he would suffer if he did not restore the goddess. He readily promised to do so, if Freya would lend him her disguise, that of a hawk. Being furnished with it, he flew in that disguise to Utgard, and reached the abode of Thiasse just

as that giant had left it to row for a short time on the neighbouring sea. Changing Iduna into a swallow, he returned with her in his claws towards Asgard. When Thiasse returned, and learned the departure of the goddess, he resumed his eagle's dress, and rapidly followed in the direction which the hawk had taken. He obtained sight of the fugitives just as they approached Asgard; and he would certainly have overtaken them but for a stratagem of the Aser, who were anxiously watching the pursuit. Forming a vast pile of faggots under the walls of the city, they set fire to it; and the flames ascended so high as to burn the eagle's wings. Thiasse fell to the ground, and was immediately despatched by Thor.

This is one of the most interesting fables of the prose Edda. It has doubtless a meaning, though we are by no means sure that Magnussen has discovered the right one. According to him, Iduna is the spring, which may be called the renewer of nature's youth. Spring is always accompanied by joy and harmony, — by the song of birds, by the cheerful hum of men, by the gambols of animals, by the sportive winds: hence it is personified in Iduna: she is the wife of Braga, the god of poetry, of music, of song, of harmony. Thiasse, the giant, is the winter: Iduna flies from him in the shape of the swallow, which is everywhere the bird of spring. The destruction of the giant by the flames, denotes the season of winter killed by the heat of the spring. — That this explanation of the mythos is ingenious, as well as plausible, cannot be denied; but we are not quite satisfied with it. Though a meaning is involved in these fables, we doubt whether all the incidents are thus designed. Many were invented through the love of invention, or rather to please the multitude; and by such inventors physical principles would not always be observed. For this obvious reason, much caution is requisite in interpretations which have not positive authority for their base.



The next mythos in which Loke is exhibited, is in connection with Thor.

#### THOR'S VISITS TO UTGARD.

Geyruth, also called Geirrod, was one of the Aser's most formidable enemies. In the former volume we have given, from Saxo Grammaticus, a description of his empire\*, — a description rivalling in power of invention any to be found in Homer. To it we refer the reader, before he proceeds any farther with this narrative, as nothing can be more curious than to compare the account which Saxo derived from tradition (no Edda had then been compiled), and, what is more, from Danish tradition, with that given in the sacred books of the Scandinavians from Norwegian sources.

Thor's first journey was preceded by that of Loke. Loke, with all his cunning, was frequently in trouble; — and how could the devil be otherwise? Assuming a hawk's disguise, (the hawk in more countries than the North was the symbol of that personage,) he entered the dominions of Geyruth, was caught, and, when he refused to answer the questions that were put to him, was shut up in a chest during three months. His revenge then gave way, and he confessed who he was. The giant then released him, on his promise to bring Thor to Utgard, without belt or hammer. The object of the giant's policy may be easily guessed. Thor, the defender of Asgard, the everlasting enemy of the giants, would be reduced to the same level with themselves when deprived of those wonderful treasures. Loke had no difficulty in prevailing on the stout-hearted god to visit the dominions of the giant king. On the way to that region, within the boundaries of Utgard, was a magic forest, of which the trees were all iron. It was inhabited by certain enchantresses, who were the mothers of male and female sorcerers, who could at any time assume the wolf's shape. These enchantresses were

\* Page 91.

cruel: they often raised storms, and enticed travellers into their power from the mere love of destruction. Thor met one of these witches, who cautioned him against the arts of Geyruth, and presented him with a pair of iron gloves, a girdle, and a staff.

On reaching the river Vimur, the longest one in the world, he observed Gialp, one of the giant's daughters, standing astride the whole river, — one foot on each bank; and making the water rise in a fearful manner. He threw a rush at her, and forced her to retire. Wading across, he proceeded to Geyruth's palace, which he entered, and a separate lodging was provided for him. In one corner of the cavern was a stool, on which he sat down; but scarcely was he seated, when the stool began to rise from the ground. With the staff which he held, he struck the roof of the cave, and immediately heard a loud scream beneath him. On looking, he discovered, with broken backs, three daughters of his host, who had placed themselves on the roof with the design of crushing him to death. Geyruth himself did not escape more easily. Inviting Thor to drink with him, the two sat down in another part of the palace, one on each side of a large fire. Having sat for some time, the giant seized a red-hot iron wedge that was glowing in the fire, and threw it with all his might at the god. The latter caught it with his gloved hand, and returned it with such force, that though Geyruth had run behind a pillar, it went through both pillar, himself, and the walls of the palace. Still it remained in his breast; and in that position, attended by his three maimed daughters, he has remained ever since.\*

In the second journey, which is much more imaginative, Thor was accompanied by Loke. The temple of Upsal had been visited by Utgardelok (the demon king of Utgard)†, who had not only extinguished the sacred fire, but made a ruin of the edifice. Now Upsal was the palace which, above all others in Midgard, Odin loved. In it Thor and Frigga too were

\* See Vol. I. p. 95.

† Idem, p. 98.

worshipped with great pomp ; and the priestesses of the latter were of royal blood,—the daughters of kings. Great was the wrath of the three deities. Thor, in particular, was observed to knit his brows, and to clench his fist at table : but he spoke not a word ; for he was revolving the means of vengeance. Formidable as he knew the demon king to be in natural, and still more in supernatural power,—in a science unknown to the gods, — he resolved to invade his dominions. Having emptied a full horn presented to him by one of the Valkyrs, he called for his car, for his goats, and for Loke, as the companion of his journey. Having harnessed the animals, nailed on their golden shoes, wound the reins round his waist, he entered with Loke ; and grasping Miölnir in his right hand, proceeded at a rapid pace down the bridge Bifrost.

Adown the pointed way  
As drove the impetuous god,  
The red flames, lambent, play  
Along the wheel-tracks broad.

Heimdal his horn blew loud,\*  
The god with sleepless eye ;  
Seven maids submissive bowed †  
As the gold car flew by.

On earth some meteor dire  
Men thought then to behold ;  
The heavens were fraught with fire ;  
In peals the thunder rolled. ‡

Reaching a cottage towards nightfall, they asked for hospitality, which was readily granted. Humble was the cot ; and it contained little for gods to banquet on, — nothing but simple vegetables. But Thor was not anxious on this account. With his hammer he slew his two goats, which were skinned and roasted with con-

\* Heimdal, the wonder of the gods, whose station was at the summit of Bifrost.

† Alluding evidently to the seven colours of the rainbow, which was no other than Bifrost.

‡ Ohlenschlager, Pigott's translation.

siderable despatch. Ample was the entertainment ; not only was the flesh delicious, but the place teemed with excellent mead ; and some idea may be formed of a divine appetite, when we add, that the two goats were entirely devoured, — all but the bones, which Thor desired should be carefully thrown back into the skins that were stretched before the hearth. But Thialf, a son of the rustic host, and a mere stripling, broke a thigh-bone of one goat for the sake of the marrow. The next morning, before daybreak, Thor arose, and swung his hammer over the two skins, when suddenly the two goats rose up as if nothing had happened. But one of them limped ; and dreadful was the countenance of the god. Supplication, however, disarmed him ; he took the youth and a sister into his service ; and leaving the car and the goats at the peasant's cottage, all four proceeded on foot. The boy, who immediately won the favour of his master, carried a wallet ; and the maiden, quite a beauty, tripped lightly along. Thor marched pensively ; his hammer flung over his shoulder ; his dark locks escaping from his silvery casque. They reached the sea, which was agitated by a dreadful tempest ; and Loke began to be afraid ; but he was compelled to follow the god, who rushed into the water, like some thundering rock. The mortals too followed : but the storm continued to rage ; and they required all the help of the leader to reach the other side. A trackless desert was next to be traversed ; and on they went, in darkness, except that the moon now and then gleamed, — weary, hungry, wet, and faint. Other trials were to be encountered, — the storm, the lightning, the slippery ice, the deep mud ; the roaring wind, which the demon king excited by his magic power. Thor, who had to support the maiden Roska, lost his temper ; and he vowed revenge on Utgardelok when he should meet him. What seemed to be a hut, in the midst of the pitiless waste, presented itself ; and three of them entered it, Thor himself remaining at the entrance with his mallet in his hand, to protect them while they slept.

Vast, and of a strange form, was the only apartment which the hut contained ; but in a storm any port is welcome. Towards morning, while Thor glanced in great anger over the waste, he heard a strange noise, and felt a strange motion. Rising, he beheld, by the faint glimmer of the moon, a vast giant—so vast as to cover several acres—asleep and snoring. Grasping his mallet, he was preparing to punish the intruder, when up started the giant. “ Who are you ? ” demanded Thor. “ Skrymner, the servant of king Utgardelok, just come from Jotunheim.” He addressed Thor by name, of whose feats he had heard much ; but common report, he thought, had been too favourable ; for after all, even *he*, who was of little esteem compared with his fellows, could put this hero of the gods in the palm of his right hand. “ I have lost my gauntlet ! ” suddenly observed the giant, who groping for it, took it up. What was it but the strange hut in which Loke and the two mortals had passed the greater part of the night ? All but Thor were dismayed at this commencement of their acquaintance with the subjects of Utgardelok ; but Thor trusted in his hammer. “ What brings you so far to look at a desert ? ” was the natural question of Skrymner. Thor replied, that he was determined to see, face to face, their boasted monarch, whose magic and frozen mountains he only ridiculed. The giant thought he might rue his boldness : however, if he was determined to proceed, let him do so, and he (Skrymner) would be his guide. When evening came, and the giant laid down to sleep under a great tree, until supper was ready, there was more magic. Neither Thialf, nor Loke, nor Thor himself, could open the wallet, or cut the strings. In great wrath the god seized his hammer, and struck at the forehead of the sleeping giant. “ Has a leaf fallen on my face ? ” asked the giant, rubbing his face, and wondering why they had not gone to sleep. Towards midnight, the snoring of Skrymner so enraged Thor, that he arose, and aimed a hard and more vigorous blow at the monster : the hammer seemed to enter his very



brain. "Has an acorn fallen?" was the cool observation of the other, as he rubbed his face. A third blow, which seemed to send the very handle into the giant's head, had no better effect; so that Thor now began to have less confidence in the weapon which had hitherto terrified all created things.

But we must not dwell on events which have been so frequently described.\* The adventures of the god and his companions at the palace of Utgardelok were not such as to inspire him with more confidence. Loke—fire itself, which consumes all things—was beat at eating. Thialf—a mythologic personage too, though represented as a peasant's son, his name signifying *thought*—is exceeded in the race. The mighty thunderer himself is vanquished in three successive trials. Though he is the sun, the greatest drinker surely in all nature, he cannot much lessen a large horn of liquor that is presented to him: he cannot lift a huge tom-cat from the floor: he cannot, in wrestling, throw a toothless old woman, who brings him on one knee. In much shame, though in no consternation, the god returned with his companions. On leaving the confines of the city, however, he was made acquainted with the deceptions that had been practised on him. The three blows which he had struck, were not at a head, but at a rocky mountain; and deep were the dells which they had made in it. The horn was the ocean; yet he had drunk so much of it as to leave in many places land instead of water. The cat was Midgard's great serpent, which he had almost lifted from the sea. The old woman was Hela, the goddess of death, who with all her strength could only bring him on one knee. In great anger, he was going to exact revenge for such tricks, when the spectre and the city itself vanished like mist.

\* Why does Mr. Pigott, in his excellent manual of Scandinavian mythology, follow Ohlenschläger so much, instead of the prose Edda? This latter work is but a modernised amplification, a paraphrastic explanation, of the poetic Edda. To follow a still more paraphrastic moderniser, the Danish poet, is to destroy the very spirit of the myths.

This mythos in a great degree explains itself. The contest between Thor and Utgard's monarch is evidently one between the summer and the winter, between heat and cold, between light and darkness. Many of the details, we believe, in opposition to Magnussen, who sees in every thing a physical meaning, to have been created without any other design than entertainment.

*Hymis-quida*, a song about Hymir, is from the elder Edda, and is of great antiquity.

#### THOR AND THE GIANT HYMIR.

The sea-god Ægir gave a banquet to the gods ; but he was little prepared for such drinkers, and his mead fell short. Thor called for more with some anger ; and that anger was not diminished when he found that no more was forthcoming. The excuse was, that Ægir had not a cauldron large enough to brew sufficient mead at a time. Tyr, who was present with the rest, and who, though a god, is represented as the son of the giant Hymir, observed that his father had one a mile deep, which might be obtained by stratagem. On this business the two gods immediately departed in the chariot of Thor towards Hymir's abode, which lay on the confines of the eastern sea. Here they found two ladies, the mother and wife of the giant ; the former a strange creature, with 900 heads ; the latter, who was the mother of Tyr, a fine woman, and kind as she was comely. She told them both that she feared Hymir's return ; since he was subject to dreadful passions ; and she hid them behind some kettles. Towards evening he returned, in no good humour. As he entered the house, the icy mountains emitted a thundering noise. An old man he was to view, and the hairs of his head, which resembled a forest, were frozen. His wife, saluting him, told him that their son was arrived, in company with the famous enemy of the giants and the friend of men, Veor.\* "Look," she added, "where

\* The meaning of this word is doubtful : it is another name for Thor.

they sit, at the extremity of the house, to avoid thy glance!" The giant looked; but they were concealed by the nine kettles. At his glance, however, the tree or beam from which they were suspended, burnt into two, and eight of them burst. The two gods now advanced; and though Hymir was compelled to exercise some degree of hospitality, he did so unwillingly. Three oxen (one for each, we suppose, unless the lion's share was to be Hymir's,) were ordered to be roasted. But Thor showed that he had more than a giant's appetite; for, to the surprise of his host, he ate two of the animals himself. This made the latter observe, that the next evening the two visitors must eat what they could take in hunting or fishing for themselves. The next day, therefore, Thor proposed to fish, if the giant would give him bait. "Go amongst the cattle, and seize one," was the reply. "I suspect, however," Hymir added, "that thou wilt not easily catch such bait." Without reply, Thor went into the wood, and seizing the horns of a large black bull, pulled off its head, and returned to the giant, who expressed some surprise at such a feat in one so little. They now went out into the sea, and the giant hauled two whales. But nobler was the prey of Thor: with the bull's head he caught the great serpent Jormungandur, the head of which he drew out of the water, and which spewed venom upon him. The rocks trembled; the desert places howled, and the ancient earth rolled itself closer. He then struck the monster with his mallet, and it sank. Hymir rowed back, sullen and silent; and the strength which had been exhibited in bringing the two whales to his mountain home, gave him some reason for thought. When returned, the two gods were desired to try their strength in other things. A cup was put into the hands of Thor, and he was defied to break it. In vain did he dash it against several pillars in succession: he split *them*, but *it* remained unbroken. The wife now whispered him to throw it against the giant's head, which was much harder than the rock.

He did so; the head was uninjured; but the cup was broken, and the owner lamented its loss. The next trial of strength was to carry the great cauldron out of the house. Tyr tried twice; but could not so much as move it. But Thor placed it upon his head; and though the edges descended to his heels, he walked away with it. He was now pursued by a great number of giants whom he slew with his mallet.—From that time the sea-god was able to treat the Aser men to their satisfaction.

Of this mythos the physical meaning is dark; and this darkness is probably owing to the fondness with which the northern scalds added extraneous circumstances for the sake of embellishment. Nothing, indeed, is more hopeless than the attempt to restore these ancient pieces to the original fragmentary state in which they were left by the priests of Thor and of Odin. The scald has, by embellishing, concealed the priest; the fabulist concealed the philosophic theologian. All that we can safely assert is, that there is here a physical contest between heat and cold, between evaporation and congelation; that the sun (Thor), having drunk up all the streams of the earth, now invades the dominions of frost and snow. The bursting of the vessels under the glance of Hymir, is a notion universally diffused in the northern latitudes. Thus, the two magicians the suitors of Gunhilda, could destroy every thing by their glance.\* The meaning doubtless is, that excessive frost makes every thing brittle, and may therefore be said to split every thing.

If the scalds took such liberties with the ancient or poetic Edda, as often to bury the sun, they were more licentious still in regard to the younger or prose Edda. This work was evidently compiled to explain the former. With *it* a licence still more dangerous has been taken; so that, in many instances, it bears little conformity with the preceding work. We may add, that by modernising, paraphrasing, and embellishing the

\* Vol. I. p. 182.

prose Edda, Ohlenschleger has done no service to the ancient mythology of his country: he cannot be followed by any one that would form a correct notion of the subject. In the same manner as the compilers of the second Edda deviated from the spirit of the first, so has the celebrated Danish poet deviated from *them*.<sup>\*</sup> For the sake of illustrating this divergence, let us advert for a moment to the same adventure in the prose Edda and in the version of Ohlenschlager: it will be found to have lost its mythical character in proportion to the improvement of its fable.

When Thor reflected on the gross impositions which Utgardelok had practised on him, he was apprehensive, and not without reason, that gods and men would take him for a fool. To vindicate his merits, he ventured again to visit Utgard, and without Loke, whose honour he justly suspected. This time he would, like them, change his form, and he obtained from Odin, in the shape of ointment, power that would enable him to do so. Leaving behind his car and his goats—

O'er Dovre's ridge† he strode,  
For cliff nor torrent slack'd;  
The tall pines, where he trode,  
Like field of stubble crack'd.

Sneehattan's peak of snow,  
And Jotunfieldt he past,  
Then sought the plains below,  
And the sea reach'd at last;  
He mark'd in curling wreath  
The dull wave roll away,  
And saw where, far beneath,  
The serpent, brooding, lay.

His heart with hope beat high,  
His voice shook as he spake,  
Turning to Heaven his eye,  
"No more, accursed snake,"

\* We must again express our regret that Mr. Pigott, in his otherwise excellent work, should have paid so little attention to the elder Edda, and so much to Ohlenschlager.

† The Dovre.feldt is one of the loftiest parts of the great Scandinavian chain of mountains, and Sneehattan its highest peak.



Quoth he: "in giant bend  
Earth prison'd shalt thou keep,  
Nor struggling sea-man send  
To fell Ran's cavern deep."

"But being now resolved to proceed with caution, he began by changing his form. Throwing his ponderous helmet on the ground, it became a rock covered with pines.

Next, from his cloven chin,  
He tore the bushy beard;  
Which, cast in the ravine,  
A thorny copse appear'd.  
A smooth-faced peasant boy  
He stood, in wadmél \* blue,  
White Heimdall smiled for joy  
The cunning wile to view.

Now straight to Hymir's grot  
He hies, a simple hind,  
His flaxen ringlets float  
Wild in the morning wind;  
His belt, by magic cheat,  
A woollen girdle seem'd,  
Art with like art to meet,  
No shame the Aser deem'd.

Mjölner, as woodman's axe,  
Athwart his arm he bare,  
His courage high 'gan wax  
At thought of vengeance near.  
In moss-lined cavern deep,  
Lull'd by a torrent's play,  
Taking his morning sleep,  
At length the giant lay."

"The poet in describing Hymir's residence gives a vivid picture of Norwegian scenery, black rugged rocks crowned with pines, a waterfall, a river white with foam dashing through thick brushwood down the ravine, and hard by a verdant dell filled with cattle. On hearing a stranger's step, Hymir sprang up,

\* Wadmél is a kind of coarse cloth made in Iceland, and worn universally by the peasants in Norway and Denmark.

and demanded of the stripling how he dared unbidden to venture into his wood. Thor replied that he felt no apprehension :

‘ My pulse beats steadily,’  
 The youth replied : ‘ for ne’er  
 Hath Nornies’ stern decree  
 Been changed, I trow, by fear.  
 One of a form so good,  
 Of generous soul should be ;  
 My little drop of blood,  
 What would it profit thee ? ’ ”

“ He finishes a long speech by saying, that his object was to obtain the giant’s permission to accompany him when he went out to fish.

The grisly giant grinn’d  
 So wide, that either ear  
 His mouth appear’d behind,  
 Ne’er yet was seen such leer ;  
 The earth shook all around,  
 He laugh’d so heartily,  
 ‘ One with a heart so sound  
 I’ll never harm,’ quoth he.”

“ He then granted the request, and invited Thor to take shelter in his cave from the keen morning wind, adding tauntingly,

‘ When many a league from shore  
 The kraken’s snort we hear,  
 And whirling Maelström’s roar,  
 ’Tis then we’ll talk of fear.’ ”

“ Thor asked only to be put to the proof, and now begged to be allowed to take with him what he might want for his fishing. Hymir assented, telling him that for bait he would find a grub amongst the cows. Thor went into the field, and a wild bull rushing towards him, he seized it by the horns and brake off its head, and then throwing it over his shoulders leaped the enclosure, and hastened to Hymir, who was getting the boat ready.

When Hymir the bull’s head  
 On the youth’s shoulders saw,  
 He laugh’d, and own’d the deed  
 Was good for one so raw.

Then shoved the boat from shore,  
Swift through the waves it flew.  
Hymir plied well his oar,  
And Thor row'd stoutly too."

"The god now became elated at the near prospect of measuring himself with the serpent, and gave full liberty to his thoughts. If he could succeed in slaying it,

' By Yggdrasil\*, the feat  
Would glad me more, by far,  
In Valhall than to beat  
Ten score Einheriar.

What fruitful seeds of ill  
To mar man's mortal state,  
And earth with woes to fill,  
From the worm emanate !  
His pestilential breath  
Fevers and plagues doth cause,  
And each disease to death  
Which man untimely draws.

When one in manhood's prime  
Feels his approaching end,  
And ere yet lapsed his time,  
To Hela's power must bend ;  
When his heart-broken spouse  
Sees hope's last promise fail,  
Then his fell might he'll rouse  
To mock the widow's wail.

Her babe, which will not rest  
When the pale mother clasps,  
And gives in vain the breast,  
Struggling for life it gasps.  
Poor babe, as early rose  
Late fresh — she sees its eye  
In death for ever close —  
Nor weeps for agony :

When one, who purely burns,  
Absent for many a year,  
To his true love returns  
And finds her on her bier.

\* The name of the great Ash.

When from a mourning realm  
Some virtuous prince is ta'en,  
Or chief has bow'd his helm ;  
Then sure the foul snake's seen

Writhing for joy. Their birth  
All serpents, which infest  
Man's central spot of earth,  
Draw from his nostril's blast.  
The great snake, whose wide jowl,  
(To th' southwards, far away)  
Will gulp a raging bull,  
Through him first saw the day.

Its tail wound round an oak  
It watcheth long its prey,  
Which from the affrighted flock  
Struggling it drags away.  
Others, with diamond eyes,  
To Askur's mortal race,  
Death-doomed ! though less in size,  
Alas ! not fatal less.

Fair sight their forms to view  
Basking in new-donn'd sheen,  
To their's the violet's blue  
Must yield, or emerald's green :  
They know, by wizard gaze,  
Coil'd 'neath some leafy bower,  
Their prey with fear to glaze,  
And charm him to their power.

Gaunt Fenris, Loptur's son,  
Who loves to prowl the night,  
Bewilder'd travellers down  
Hurling from rocky height :  
When bloody treason's rife,  
When for some murder foul  
The bandit whets his knife,  
The wolf for joy doth howl.

All who delight in blood  
From him beginning have ;  
From him the tiger brood,  
The hyæna's traitor laugh ;

The like each robber beast, '  
Which from the fair light shrinks,  
Fitchet of plunderers least,  
Marten, and fox, and lynx.

For nought hath Fenris ruth,  
When midnight winds blow hoarse,  
His sacrilegious tooth  
Tears from its grave the corse —  
Still 'twere my chiefest joy  
The foul worm and his brood  
Of reptiles to destroy.  
Grieves me that man the food

Of crawling worms should be:  
This slain, his life should pass,  
From loathsome sickness free,  
In years of happiness.  
And, when th' o'erpeopled earth  
No more her sons could feed,  
The bravest should stand forth,  
And like good warriors bleed.

Not hatred should unsheath  
Their swords, nor lust of power,  
But a soul-warming wrath,  
Gone when the fight was o'er.  
From some dark cloud the fray  
I'd watch, my bolts in hand  
The boldest on their way  
To Odin's hall to send."

Thus mused the Aser Thor,  
And pull'd with all his might,  
Each time he struck his oar  
The dark-green wave turn'd white.  
The more his anger burn'd  
The huge boat sped the more,  
Seem'd as the waves it spurn'd  
Skimming like Dolphin o'er —

So swiftly on it flew,  
The sides began to split,  
The sea so fast came through,  
The twain in water sit.



Quick Hymir sprang to bale  
It out, and loud to roar,  
(His giant-heart 'gan fail)  
'Avast there! back your oar.

'An you keep on this rate  
We soon to Ran shall go'—'  
Quoth Thor: 'Take heart, must yet  
A score good leagues or so.'  
'Score leagues!' cried Hymir: 'why,  
Art mad! mark'st not the storm!  
E'en now I can descry  
Where lies fell Midgard's worm.'

'And what care I for worm!'  
Cried Thor, the fisher good:  
'The bleak north's bitterest storm  
But fans my heated blood—  
I love the tempest's roar—  
Ha! there the foul worm struck,  
Now I'll take in mine oar,  
And try with line my luck.'

Then rising to full height,  
The iron kedge he took,  
Which, though it seem'd him light,  
Must serve him for a hook.  
The gory bullock's head  
He took him for a bait—  
The giant, pale with dread,  
In the stern, trembling, sate.

For line, he next made loose  
His belt, and one end pass'd  
Twice round his waist, with noose  
Well bound to th' other fast  
The baited hook he tied,  
And in the ocean threw:  
O'er the boat's yielding side  
The girdle, hissing, flew "

*Ohlenschlager.*

"It must be confessed," says the prose Edda, "that Thor here made quite as great a fool of Jormungandur as Utgard's-Lok did of him, when the giant king caused him to lift up

the worm, believing it was a cat. The worm gulped down the ox's head so ravenously, that the hook stuck deep in his jaws. As soon as he perceived this, he plunged with such violence, that both Thor's fists struck against the sides of the boat, on which the god's anger got up and his strength at the same time, and he pulled so furiously against the snake, that both his legs went through the boat, and he remained standing on the bottom of the sea. He now pulled up the serpent to the edge of the boat, and, to say the truth, it was a terrible sight to see Thor look so grim at the serpent, and the serpent all the while gaping and spewing out poison against Thor. It is reported also that the giant Hymir changed colour, and became white with fear, when he saw the snake, and the dark blue sea breaking through the sides of the boat.

"In the same moment Thor seized hold of his hammer and swung it round in the air, but the giant fumbled about for his knife, and scored Thor's knot over, by which means the snake got loose and sank down to the bottom of the sea. Thor threw his hammer after it, and it has been asserted that he thus knocked its head off against the breakers. But I think that it is pretty certain that the Midgard's worm still lives and lies in the sea. Thor then lifted his arm and gave Hymir such a cuff on the side of the head that he fell overboard, and the soles of his feet were turned up in the air, but Thor waded to shore."\*

The contrast between the preceding version and the simple relation in the venerable poetic Edda will, no doubt, appear striking to the reader, and abundantly confirm all the observations we have made on the subject.

#### THOR AND THE GIANT THRYM.

The poem of *Thrym's-guida*, or the song about Thrym, in the elder Edda, has a physical meaning, though that meaning is dark. Awaking one morning, Thor could not find his hammer. Like Jove he shook his head and his beard, and groped about in every direction. Calling Loke to him, he said, "Here is a mishap, never before known in earth or heaven,—I have lost my hammer!" No doubt but it had been stolen during the night by one of the giants, who were always on the

\* Pigott's Manual of Scandinavian Mythology.

alert to injure the Aser. Both gods then went to Freya, to borrow her hawk's-dress, as Loke had before borrowed it to recover Iduna.\* "And thou should'st have it," replied the goddess, "if it were gold, nay, if it were even silver."† Loke assumed the dress, and flew into the giant region of Utgard. There he found Thrym, one of Utgard's lords, making golden collars for his dogs, dressing the manes of his horses, and singing all the time. Seeing Loke, he inquired, "What news of the Aser? What of the elves? What brings thee alone to Jotunheim?" "Neither Aser nor elves are very well, just now:—hast thou hidden Thor's hammer?" "That I have, eight miles below the earth's surface; and regain it shall you never, unless you bring me the goddess Freya to wife!" The condition was a hard one. Freya was the queen of love; she was the Venus of Asgard; and she was also the moon,—two things much wanted in the cold dark region of Jotunheim. Away flew Loke, his wings resounding, until he reached Asgard, where he was anxiously met by Thor. "Hast thou been to Giant-land? And hast thou succeeded in thine errand?" "I have been to Giant-land, and I have succeeded in my errand. Thrym, the lord of the frost giants, has thy mallet, and thy mallet he will not restore, unless he has Freya to wife!" The loss of Freya would be a great loss, but that of the thunderbolt was worse; for how without it could Asgard be defended against the giants? Away went the two gods to Freya, and the Thunderer most unceremoniously bade her to prepare herself for a husband, and for a ride to Jotunheim:—

Angry was Freya,  
And she trembled (with rage),  
The whole palace of the gods  
Was shaken.

The gods and goddesses were now assembled to deliberate on other means of recovering the hammer.

\* See before, p. 105.

† This expression, we suppose, is for the sake of the metre.

Heimdall proposed that Thor himself should assume the bridal dress, with the habit and ornaments of Freya, and proceed to Jotunheim : —

Let us make on him  
The keys to jingle \* ;  
And a woman's dress  
To flow below his knees ;  
And on his breast  
The jewell'd ornaments ;  
And let us put on him  
The handsome head-gear.

Thor did not much relish the proposal, from a fear that the gods would hereafter hold him to be degraded, — would regard him as really a woman. Loke told him, however, that he had only to choose between the mode of recovering his mallet, and of seeing Asgard in possession of the giants. He then suffered himself to be conveyed in the manner proposed. Then spake Loke, the son of Laufeya : —

“ I as thy servant  
With thee will go :  
We together will ride  
To the land of the giants. ”

The chariot was brought out, the goats were yoked, and the two Aser rapidly proceeded to their destination, — so rapidly, that the rocks split, and the earth blazed under the shining wheels : —

Then spake Thrym,  
Lord of the Thurser † ;  
“ Arise, ye giants,  
And strew the benches.  
Then bring unto me  
Freya my bride,  
The daughter of Niord  
From Nocturn :

\* The keys hung from the girdle of a housewife. They were wanted, we suppose, in Giant-land, as well as on earth. However, they were a symbol of marriage; and none could be effected without them.

† Frost giants.

“ Bring into the bower  
The cows with golden horns,  
And the coal black oxen,  
The giant’s delight.  
Many jewels have I  
And many treasures :  
Of Freya alone  
Have I need.”

The giants arrived, and the bridal feast was prepared. Great was the surprise of Thrym to see his bride eat a whole ox, and eight salmon into the bargain ; and to send after all three barrels of mead : —

“ Who ever saw a bride  
Eat so greedily ?  
Never did I see one  
Devour so much ;  
Nor any virgin  
Swill so much mead !”

The reply of Loke, disguised as a handmaid, was ready : —

“ Nothing has Freya tasted  
These eight nights (days),\*  
So great was her desire  
To be in Jotunheim.”

The giant in a gallant style wished to kiss his bride ; but no sooner did he lift the veil, and see her looks, than he started back in great alarm : —

“ Why so angry  
The glance of Freya ?  
I see from her eyes  
The very fire doth issue.”

The reply of Loke, the handmaid, was equally ready : —

“ No sleep hath Freya had  
These eight nights :  
Such was her longing  
To visit Jotunheim !”

\* The Scandinavians reckoned by *nights* instead of days, and by *winters* instead of years.



The giant's sister came for a bridal present, and one she was about to get that she little expected. The mallet, by Thrym's command, was now brought forth, that the wedding might be solemnised over it. The god laughed as he grasped his well-known bolt; and no sooner did he grasp it than he killed Thrym, the sister, and all assembled.\*

\* This poem has been thus versified by the Hon. and Rev. W. Herbert, in his "Select Icelandic Poetry":—

Wroth waxed Thor, when his sleep was flown,  
And he found his trusty hammer gone;  
He smote his brow, his beard he shook,  
The son of earth 'gan round him look;  
And this, the first word that he spoke;  
"Now listen what I tell thee, Loke;  
Which neither on earth below is known,  
Nor in Heaven above—my hammer's gone."  
Their way to Freyia's bower they took,  
And this, the first word that he spoke;  
"Thou, Freyia, must lend a winged robe,  
To seek my hammer round the globe."

FREYIA (*sung*).—"That shouldst thou have, though 'twere of gold,  
And that, though 'twere of silver, hold." †  
Away flew Loke; the wing'd robe sounds,  
Ere he has left the Asgard grounds,  
And ere he has reach'd the Jotunheim bounds.  
High on a mound in haughty state  
Thrym the king of the Thursi sate;  
For his dogs he was twisting collars of gold,  
And trimming the manes of his coursers bold.

THRYM (*sung*).—"How fare the Asi? the Alfi how?  
Why com'st thou alone to Jotunheim now?"

LOKE (*sung*).—"Ill fare the Asi; the Alfi mourn;  
Thor's hammer from him thou hast torn."

THRYM (*sung*).—"I have the Thunderer's hammer bound,  
Fathoms eight beneath the ground;  
With it shall no one homeward tread,  
Till he bring me Freyia to share my bed."  
Away flew Loke; the wing'd robe sounds,  
Ere he has left the Jotunheim bounds,  
And ere he has reach'd the Asgard grounds.  
At Midgard Thor met crafty Loke,  
And this the first word that he spoke;  
"Have you your errand and labour done?  
Tell from aloft the course you run.  
For setting oft the story fails,  
And lying oft the lie prevails."

LOKE (*sung*).—"My labour is past, mine errand I bring;  
Thrym has thine hammer, the giant king;  
With it shall no one homeward tread,  
Till he bear him Freyia to share his bed."

According to Magnussen, the physical meaning of the poem is this. During the winter, Thor, the god of

Their way to lovely Freyia they took,  
 And this the first word that he spoke ;  
 " Now Freyia, busk as a blooming bride,  
 Together, we must to Jotunheim ride."  
 Wroth waxed Freyia with ireful look ;  
 All Asgard's hall with wonder shook ;  
 Her great bright necklace started wide.  
 " Well may ye call me a wanton bride,  
 If I with ye to Jotunheim ride."  
 The Asi did all to council crowd,  
 The Asiniae all talk'd fast and loud :  
 This they debated, and this they sought,  
 How the hammer of Thor should home be brought.  
 Up then and spoke Heimdallar free,  
 Like the Vani, wise was he ;  
 " Now busk\* we Thor, as a bride so fair ;  
 Let him that great bright necklace wear ;  
 Round him let ring the spousal keys ;  
 And a maiden kirtle† hang to his knees,  
 And on his bosom jewels rare ;  
 And high and quaintly braid his hair."  
 Wroth waxed Thor with godlike pride ;  
 " Well may the Asi me deride,  
 If I let me dight‡, as a blooming bride."  
 Then up spoke Loke, Laufeyia's son ;  
 " Now hush thee, Thor ; this must be done :  
 The giants will strait in Asgard reign,  
 If thou thine hammer dost not regain."  
 Then busk'd they Thor, as a bride so fair,  
 And the great bright necklace gave him to wear ;  
 Round him let ring the spousal keys,  
 And a maiden kirtle hang to his knees,  
 And on his bosom jewels rare ;  
 And high and quaintly braided his hair.  
 Up then arose the crafty Loke,  
 Laufeyia's son, and thus he spoke ;  
 " A servant I thy steps will tend,  
 Together we must to Jotunheim wend."  
 Now home the goats together hie ;  
 Yoked to the axle they swiftly fly.  
 The mountains shook, the earth burn'd red,  
 As Odin's sons to Jotunheim sped.  
 Then Thrym the king of the Thursi said ;  
 " Giants, stand up ; let the seats be spread :  
 Bring Freyia Niorder's daughter down  
 To share my bed from Noatun.  
 With horns all gilt each coal-black beast  
 Is led to deck the giant's feast ;  
 Large wealth and jewels have I stored ;  
 I lack but Freyia to grace my board."  
 Betimes at evening they approach'd,  
 And the mantling ale the giants broach'd.  
 The spouse of Sif ate alone  
 Eight salmons, and an ox full-grown,

\* *Busk*, dress.

† *Kirtle*, a woman's garment.

‡ *Dight*, dressed, adorned.

thunder, sleeps ; and Thrym, the lord of that season, hides the thunderbolt. Loke (*flame*, and by an extension of the metaphor, *heat*) is sent in pursuit of it. The sun and moon were very meet and very natural gifts for the inhabitants of the dark region to solicit from the gods ; and the world, on the present occasion, must have been left in darkness, or rather perhaps in cold, but for the interference of Thor. In the foundation of his theory, the critic is doubtless correct ; but in the explanation of the attendant circumstances,—that in which the god assumes the female habit—he is whimsical enough. The truth is, that the foundation only can be traced in any of their myths : the circum-

And all the eates, on which women feed ;  
 And drank three firkins of sparkling mead.  
 Then Thrym the king of the Thursi said ;  
 “ Where have ye beheld such a hungry maid ?  
 Ne’er saw I a bride so keenly feed,  
 Nor drink so deep of the sparkling mead.”  
 Then forward leant the crafty Loke,  
 And thus the giant he bespoke ;  
 “ Nought has she eat for eight long nights,  
 So did she long for the nuptial rites.”  
 He stoop’d beneath her veil to kiss,  
 But he started the length of the hall, I wiss.  
 “ Why are the looks of Freyia so dire ?  
 It seems as her eyeballs glistened with fire.”  
 Then forward leant the crafty Loke,  
 And thus the giant he bespoke ;  
 “ Nought has she slept for eight long nights,  
 So did she long for the nuptial rites.”  
 Then in the giant’s sister came,  
 Who dared a bridal gift to claim ;  
 “ Those rings of gold from thee I crave,  
 If thou wilt all my fondness have,  
 All my love and fondness have.”  
 Then Thrym the king of the Thursi said ;  
 “ Bear in the hammer to plight the maid ;  
 Upon her lap the bruizer lay,  
 And firmly plight our hands and fay.” \*  
 The Thunderer’s soul smiled in his breast,  
 When the hammer hard on his lap was placed ;  
 Thrym first the king of the Thursi he slew,  
 And slaughter’d all the giant crew.  
 He slew that giant’s sister old,  
 Who pray’d for bridal gifts so bold.  
 Instead of money and rings, I wot,  
 The hammer’s bruises were her lot.  
 Thus Odin’s son his hammer got.

\* Fay, faith.

stances are introduced purely for the sake of the embellishment, or for ensuring greater probability to the fable.

Before we dismiss Thor, we must advert to the goddess *Sif*, his wife. The word means a conjunction, kindred, and probably she was one of his family. By her he had two sons, Magne and Mode, and two daughters, Thrude and Lora. He was not her first husband, whose name does not appear ; but she had a son named Uller by that husband.\* She excelled in chastity, and was much worshipped, not in Scandinavia only, but among the Vends, and perhaps the Slavonians, as a personification of the summer-earth. Her greatest pride is her fair hair, which, like the hammer of Thor, and the magic ring possessed by Odin, was the work of the dwarfs. She is thus described by Ohlenschlager :

Sif, tall and fair with native grace,  
To none in beauty need give place  
Save her whom Odin called to light,  
To make the erst dull world more bright.  
Fair tho' she be, to Freya ne'er  
Can stately Sif in form compare.

Not her's the clear eye's speaking glance,  
Age-frozen blood might make to dance :  
Or heart which passion ne'er had felt  
Like snow 'neath mid-day sun to melt.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sif seems some Amazon to be,  
Her look replete with dignity,  
Her eye beams no impassioned glance,  
But rests in cold indifference.  
Her round arms, form'd alike to prove  
The contests of war or love ;  
Her swan-like bosom's faultless curve  
Would Bragi's golden lyre deserve.  
Smaller though Freya's hand, not snow  
Than Sif's, fresh fallen on mountain brow,  
More white, nor softer virgin down  
Of Eyder-fowl, nor breast of swan.  
Two pencill'd brows of darkest brown  
Meet on her front, and seem to frown :

\* See before, p. 56.

What gentler beauty would deface,  
 To hers but adds another grace ;  
 Her pearly teeth, of dazzling white,  
 With ruby lips form contrast bright ;  
 But her first charm, past all compare,  
 Is her long, silken, amber hair.

#### NIORD, FREYR, FREYA.

Niord, a lord of the Vaner, obtained, as we have before related\*, a share in the government of the Aser. He could not, indeed, do otherwise after the junction of the two people. Mythologically, he is the lord of Vindheim, the region of the winds, and consequently the ally of Ægir, the god of the sea. His palace, Noatun, is represented as on the borders of the ocean. Thus, Ohlenschlager, who may be followed where poetical description merely is required : —

Niord who with ocean's god  
 Full oft in league is found,  
 Loves o'er the raging flood  
 In swift career to bound.  
 Skimming each billow's back,  
 Loud neighs his coal-black steed :  
 On the calm wave no track  
 He leaves—so great his speed.†

Niord was twice married. By his first wife, who was also his sister, and we are distinctly informed that the union of such near relatives was peculiar to the Vanir (the custom, however, was common to the Egyptians, the Persians, and the royal family of Peru), he had two children, Freyr ‡ and Freya.§ His second wife was Skada, daughter of the giant Thiasse. The circumstances which led to his marriage were these. No sooner did Skada hear that her father had been killed by Thor ||, than she armed herself, and proceeded to Asgard to avenge his death. As the condition of

\* See Vol. I. p. 3.

† See before, p. 57.

§ Ibid. p. 61.

† Pigott's translation.

|| Ibid. p. 107.



peace, the gods proposed that she should take a husband from them, but that, while choosing, she should be blindfolded. She groped about, and at length fixed on one whose feet were small and well formed, whom she thought to be Balder. It was Niord; and the marriage was celebrated. The pair, however, could not agree about their place of residence. The bride could not bear the sea-shore; the waves, she observed, would not let her sleep, and she longed for her native mountains. He was no less hostile to her father's abode. A compromise was at length effected; the couple were to live nine days in Thrymheim, and three days in Noatun; that is, nine days in the mountains, and three on the sea-coast. But this compromise was of no long duration. The two were so dissimilar in character that they could not agree; there was a separation; and Skada became the wife of Odin.\* Of Niord we shall only add that though little is said of him in the Edda, he must have been a primary deity from the terms of the oath solemnly taken by the Scandinavians: — “So help me Freyr, and Niord, and the mighty Aser!”

Freyr, the son of Niord, has been mentioned as one of the twelve ruling gods of Asgard — as god of sunshine, of rain, and consequently of vegetation. Alfheim, his residence, the kingdom of the light elves, was given him in the morning of time, when he had cut his first tooth. One day he had the presumption to ascend Lidskialf, the awful seat of Odin†; and he was punished for it by falling in love with Gerda, daughter of the giant Gymer, whom he saw issue from her father's palace in the North. Surpassing, indeed, was the maiden's beauty; it was so bright as to enlighten the whole region. He gazed and loved; and after the beautiful vision had departed, he descended, melancholy and miserable, to his own palace. What hope was

\* See before, p. 86.

† How then could Jotunheim be so dark? The reason is afterwards given. Her supernatural beauty illumined the whole country.

there of winning a giant maiden? Would the gods themselves sanction such a connection? Sleep and appetite forsook him. In much anxiety, Niord besought his confidential messenger, Skirner, to draw from Freyr the cause of his affliction. With some persuasion, Skirner consented, and by much entreaty obtained the secret :

From Gymer's house  
I have seen a maiden issue  
For whom I long.  
Her fair arms shone  
So as to enlighten air and sea.  
Dearer is the maid to me  
Than ever was maid to any youth.  
But of gods or demigods  
Not one will wish  
That we should be united.

Skirner loves the lord with whom he was reared ; and he proposes, if Freyr will give him the horse " regardless of flame," and the sword, to go and win the lady for him. Having mounted, he thus addressed the animal :—

" Dark is the night without ;  
Yet it is time for us to go  
Through the misty hills,  
Through the land of the Thurser.  
We both must return,  
Or both be seized  
By the powerful giant."

He rode to Jotunheim, and before the gate of Gymer saw fierce dogs. On a hill close by was a herdsman, to whom he rode, and inquired by what means he might pass the dogs so as to speak with Gymer's daughter. The herdsman replied, that he must either be dead already, or about to die, to venture on such an errand ; never could he speak to the lady. Skirner observed, that he could but die ; that he feared not death ; and he dismounted. The noise attracted the attention of Gerda : she caused the stranger to enter, and thus addressed him :—

“ Who art thou? — of the elves?  
 Or of the Aser sons?  
 Or of the wiser Vaner?  
 Why comest thou hither, alone,  
 Through raging flames  
 To visit our hall? ”

He replied that he was not an Elf, nor an Aser, nor a Vanir; and he offered her eleven apples, — no doubt those of immortality, stolen from the treasury of Iduna\*, — if she would bestow her love on Freyr, the most agreeable of all beings. She rejected the apples with scorn, declaring that she would never live with Freyr. He then offered her the ring — the very ring — which was laid on the funeral pyre with Balder, the son of Odin — that ring which every ninth night produced eight other rings of the same weight. It too she scorned; she had gold enough in her father's house. He then bade her look at the sword which he held in his hand, and threatened to behead her unless she would love Freyr. Still she refused; and said that if he and her father met, there would be bloodshed. Other threats he employed, and commenced a charm which was for ever to deprive her of beauty, of happiness, of worldly esteem, and consign her to the most direful woes. In the midst of the charm, she interrupted him; she could resist no longer; she offered him a cup of mead; and at length named the very night on which she would meet Freyr in the grove of Barre. — Skirner now returned in great joy. He is met by Freyr, who will not allow him to dismount until he has said what success has attended him. The news, which ought to fill him with joy, makes him impatient. One night seems long; nine seems an age. The giant-maiden kept her promise; and for a reward, Skirner received the sword of Freyr.†

\* See before, p. 99.

† Mr. Herbert has thus versified the expedition of Skirner: —

“ Skirner, arise! and swiftly run,  
 Where lonely sits our pensive son!  
 Bid him to parley, and enquire,  
 'Gainst whom he teems with sullen ire.”

Freya, the sister of Freyr, and the goddess of love, is thus described by Ohlenschlager :—

——— Freya's hall  
With precious gems o'erlaid,  
Stands in a lonely vale,  
Which rose-tree forests shade ;

SKIRNER (*sung*). — “ Ill words, I fear, my lot will prove,  
If I thy son attempt to move ;  
If I bid parley, and enquire,  
Why teems his soul with savage ire. ”

SKIRNER (*sung*). — “ Prince of the gods, and first in fight,  
Speak, honoured Freyr, and tell me right !  
Why spends my lord the tedious day  
In his lone hall to grief a prey ? ”

FREYR (*sung*). — “ O how shall I, fond youth, disclose  
To thee my bosom's heavy woes ?  
The ruddy god shines every day,  
But dull to me his cheerful ray. ”

SKIRNER (*sung*). — “ Thy sorrows deem not I so great,  
That thou the tale shouldst not relate.  
Together sported we in youth,  
And well may trust each other's truth. ”

FREYR (*sung*). — “ In Gymer's court I saw her move,  
The maid, who fires my breast with love.  
Her snow-white arms and bosom fair  
Shone lovely, kindling sea and air.  
Dear is she to my wishes more,  
Than ere was maid to youth before :  
But gods and elfs \*, I wot it well,  
Forbid that we together dwell. ”

SKIRNER (*sung*). — “ Give me that horse of wondrous breed  
To cross the nightly flame † with speed ;  
And that self-brandish'd sword to smite  
The giant race with strange affright. ”

FREYR (*sung*). — “ To thee I give this wand'rous steed,  
To pass the watchful fire with speed ;  
And this, which borne by valiant wight,  
Self-brandished will his foemen smite. ”

SKIRNER (*addressed to his horse*). — “ Dark night is spread ; 'tis time,  
I trow,  
To climb the mountains hoar with snow.  
Both shall return, or both remain  
In durance by the giant ta'en. ”

Skirner rode into Jotunheim to the court of Gymer ; furious dogs were tied there before the door of the wooden enclosure, which surrounded Gerda's bower. He rode towards a shepherd, who was sitting on a mound, and addressed him :

\* Asi and Alf.

† The bower of Gerda was surrounded with fire.

Swans, white as virgin snow,  
There on the calm lakes sail,  
Lovers, who ne'er brake vow,  
Tell there their ardent tale.

"Shepherd, who sittest on the mound,  
And turn'st thy watchful eyes around,  
How may I lull these bloodhounds, say!  
How speak unharm'd with Gymer's may\*!"

THE SHEPHERD (*sung*). — "Whence, and what art thou? doomed to die,  
Or dead revisitest the sky?  
For ride by night, or ride by day,  
Thou ne'er shalt come to Gymer's may."

SKIRNER (*sung*). — "I grieve not, I; a better part  
Fits him, who boasts a ready heart.  
At hour of birth our lives were shaped;  
The doom of fate can ne'er be 'scaped."

GERDA (*sung*). — "What sounds unknown mine ears invade,  
Frighting this mansion's peaceful shade?  
The earth's foundation rocks withal,  
And trembling shakes all Gymer's hall."

THE ATTENDANT (*sung*). — "Dismounted stands a warrior sheen;  
His courser crops the herbage green."

GERDA (*sung*). — "Haste, bid him to my bower with speed,  
To quaff unmix'd the pleasant mead:  
And good betide us! † for I fear  
My brother's murderer is near. —  
What art thou? Elf, or Asian son?  
Or from the wiser Vanians sung?  
Alone to visit our abode  
O'er bickering flames why hast thou rode?"

SKIRNER (*sung*). — "Nor Elf am I, nor Asian son;  
Nor from the wiser Vanians sprung:  
Yet o'er the bickering flames I rode  
Alone to visit your abode.  
Eleven apples here I hold,  
Gerda, for thee, of purest gold;  
Let this fair gift thy bosom move  
To grant young Freyr thy precious love."

GERDA (*sung*). — "Eleven apples take not I  
From man, as price of chastity!  
While life remains, no tongue shall tell,  
That Freyr and I together dwell."

SKIRNER (*sung*). — "Gerda, for thee this wonderous ring  
Burnt on young Balder's pile I bring;  
On each ninth night shall other eight  
Drop from it, all of equal weight."

GERDA (*sung*). — "I take not, I, that wonderous ring,  
Though it from Balder's pile you bring.  
Gold lack not I in Gymer's bower;  
Enough for me my father's dower."

\* *May*, maid.

† The duties of hospitality were held so sacred amongst the northern nations, that Gerda would not refuse admittance to Skirner, though she imagined him to be her greatest enemy.



But in Folkvangur's bower  
Nought like its matchless queen;  
Mid many a beauteous flower  
No flower like her, I ween.

SKIRNER (*sung*). — "Behold this bright and slender brand  
Unsheath'd and glittering in my hand;  
Deny not, maiden! lest thine head  
Be sever'd by the trenchant blade."

GERDA (*sung*). — "Gerda will ne'er by force be led  
To grace a conqueror's hateful bed:  
But this, I trow, with main and might  
Gymer shall meet thy boast in fight."

SKIRNER (*sung*). — "Behold this bright and slender brand  
Unsheath'd, and glittering in my hand!  
Slain by its edge thy sire shall lie;  
That giant old is doom'd to die.  
E'en as I list, the magic wand  
Shall tame thee! Lo, with charmed hand  
I touch thee, Maid! There shalt thou go,  
Where never man shall learn thy woe.  
On some high pointed rock forlorn  
Like eagle\* shalt thou sit at morn;  
Turn from the world's all-cheering light,  
And seek the deep abyss of night:  
Food shall to thee more loathly show,  
Than slimy serpent† creeping slow.  
When forth thou com'st, a hideous sight,  
Each wondering eye shall stare with fright.  
By all observ'd, yet sad and lone;  
'Mongst shivering‡ Thursians wider known,  
Than him, who sits unmoved on high,  
The Guard of heaven with sleepless eye.  
'Mid charms, and chains, and restless woe,  
Thy tears with double grief shall flow.  
Now seat thee, Maid, while I declare  
Thy tide of sorrow and despair.  
Thy bower shall be some Giant's cell,  
Where phantoms pale shall with thee dwell.  
Each day to the cold Thursian's hall  
Comfortless, wretched, shalt thou crawl;  
Instead of joy and pleasure gay,  
Sorrow and tears and sad dismay;  
With some three-headed Thursian wed,  
Or pine upon a lonely bed.  
From morn till morn love's secret fire  
Shall gnaw thine heart with vain desire;  
Like barren root of thistle pent,  
In some high ruin'd battlement.

\* Eagles are said to sit without moving for a long time upon some high eminence in the morning.

† Perhaps alluding to the serpent of Midgard in the Icelandic Mythology.

‡ *Hrim-thursar*. *Hrim* (*Anglicè rime*) was spoken with a guttural aspiration; and probably *Crim-Tartary*, the former seat of the Asi, was so called from its cold.

Her form so round and slight,  
Her look which love doth beam,  
Her step as Zephyr's light,  
Exceeds e'en poet's dream.

O'er shady hill, through greenwood round,  
I sought this wand ; the wand I found.  
Odin is wroth, and mighty Thor ;  
E'en Freyr shall now thy name abhor.  
But ere o'er thine ill-fated head  
The last dread curse of heaven be spread,  
Giants and Thursians far and near,  
Suttungur's\* sons, and Asians, hear,  
How I forbid with fatal ban  
This maid the joys, the fruit of man !  
Cold Grimmer is that giant hight,  
Who thee shall hold in realms of night ;  
Where slaves in cups of twisted roots  
Shall bring foul beverage from the goats :  
Nor sweeter draught, nor blither fare,  
Shalt thou, sad virgin, ever share.  
'Tis done ! I wind the mystic charm ;  
Thus, thus, I trace the giant form ;  
And three fell characters below,  
Fury, and Lust, and restless Woe.  
E'en as I wound, I straight unwind  
This fatal spell, if thou art kind."

GERDA (*sung*). — " Now hail, now hail, thou warrior bold !  
Take, take this cup of crystal cold,  
And quaff the pure metheglin old !  
Yet deem'd I ne'er, that love could bind  
To Vanian youth my hostile mind."

SKIRNER (*sung*). — " I turn not home to bower or hall,  
Till I have learnt mine errand all ;  
Where thou wilt yield the night of joy  
To brave Niorder's gallant boy."

GERDA (*sung*). — " Barri is hight the seat of love ;  
Nine nights elapsed, in that known grove,  
Shall brave Niorder's gallant boy  
From Gerda take the kiss of joy."

Then rode Skirner home. Freyr stood forth and hailed him, and asked what tidings.

" Speak, Skirner, speak, and tell with speed !  
Take not the harness from thy steed,  
Nor stir thy foot, till thou hast said,  
How fares my love with Gymer's maid !"

\* Suttungur, the son of Gilling, was a giant, and possessed the liquor of poetry, which he had gained from the dwarfs. It is related in the Edda, that the Asi and Vani, having been long at war, made peace, and spit into a vase. From this the gods formed Kuaser, a person of exceeding learning ; and the dwarfs mixed his blood with honey, and so made the liquor of poetry. The Vani were a Grecian colony, and this fable seems to imply that both the learning and the poetry of the North was partly of Greek origin. Odin, under the feigned name of Bolverk, entered into the service of Bauge, brother of Suttungur, and drank up the liquor. A small quantity of it, which he spilt, was scattered amongst men. It is observable, that the name of *Suttungur*, from whom Odin gained this liquor, may denote that he derived his poetry from the *Southern tongues*.

Each small, white, taper hand,  
 A blushing rose doth bear,  
 Which through her faery land  
 Breathe forth their fragrant air.  
 Their sweets no guardian thorn  
 From rude touch needs defend,  
 'Tis they to even and morn  
 The roseate tints which lend.

Like her no goddess kind,  
 She saves from wounds and death,  
 Her sigh — the sweet south wind  
 O'er the wild flowers doth breathe.\*  
 Round tears for mortal woe  
 Each morn her blue eyes fill,  
 Which on the flowers below  
 In purest dew distil.

Her daughters Siofna † hight  
 And Hnos, with amber hair,  
 Not e'en the spirits of light  
 Can boast of aught so fair.  
 Whate'er is passing bright  
 On earth, from Hnos we call:  
 Siofna gives slumbers light,  
 The morn on pure souls fall.‡

Freya had an equal share with Odin in the souls of all slain in fight; for is not love the cause of as much bloodshed as any other passion? All maidens of birth also hastened to her palace of Vingolf. Her car was drawn by two wild cats, or perhaps leopards; and next to

SKIRNER (*sung*). — “Barri is hight the seat of love;  
 Nine nights elapsed, in that known grove,  
 To brave Niorder's gallant boy  
 Will Gerda yield the kiss of joy.”

FREYR (*sung*). — “Long is one night, and longer twain;  
 But how for three endure my pain!  
 A month of rapture sooner flies,  
 Than half one night of wishful sighs.”

\* O, it came o'er mine ear like the sweet south,  
 That breathes upon a bank of violets.

*Twelfth Night*, Act i., Sc. 2.

† Freya's daughters were Hnos and Gersime. Siofna was only one of her followers.

‡ Ohlenschlager, Pigott's translation.

Frigga, with whom she has been often confounded ; she was the most powerful of all the goddesses. Her husband was Oddur, of whom little is known, except that he travelled far and wide, and that her attachment to him induced her to follow him, weeping tears of gold. Yet, if report be true, she was not always distinguished for conjugal faith. She had two daughters by Oddur, both exquisitely fair to behold ; and she had four attendants, to each of whom was intrusted some portion of her sovereignty. Thus Siofna was the goddess of first love ; Lofna removed all obstacles which impeded the fruition of lovers' wishes ; Var presided over betrothals, and punished false vows ; Tir, the portress of Freya's palace, refused admission to all who were not qualified to enter ; and she was the enemy of all unfortunate lovers : she it was who prevented the fruition of their hopes.

This mythos explains itself more satisfactorily than any other.

#### ÆGIR AND RAN

Were of giant race, and deities of the deep. They had nine daughters, personifications of the billows, the currents, and the storm.

Ægir might be propitiated ; but Ran was always cruel, when the fates would permit her : she occasioned shipwrecks in which she delighted, on account of the spoil which they brought her. She had a wonderful net, with which she caught such mariners as fell into the sea.

In crystal halls his head  
Rears Ægir, Ran's stern spouse ;  
A silver helmet red  
With coral guards his brows ;  
His beard, of ocean weeds,  
His spear with amber deck'd,  
And pearls, but show he needs,  
And the proud waves are check'd.

The emblem of his sway  
 When lifts the watery god—  
 Quick sinks the raging sea,  
 Obedient to his rod;  
 His pearly muscle throne,  
 In Hlesey may be seen;  
 Has daughters nine by Ran,  
 Three are the billows green.\*

There was a brilliant feast held in the palace of Ægir, beneath the waves. Gods, goddesses, and elves were present to honour it; and the great cauldron which Thor had stolen† contained mead enough for all the guests. This feast, therefore, was subsequent to the other, when the want of that liquor was resented by Thor. On this occasion Thor was not present, but Loke was; yet no welcome guest was he. The deities did not like him; first, because he had a wicked tongue, and next, because he had but too much reason for using it at their expense. Two of the sea-gods, attendants, obtaining from all the praise of dexterity, Loke killed one of them, merely because he could not bear to hear any one commended. In great anger the gods excluded him from the festive hall; but he, at length, returned, and asked for his place, not in a penitential mood, but in the resolution of creating strife. All seemed inclined to reject him, until he won upon Odin by reminding him of past times:

Rememberest thou, Odin,  
 How, in the morning of time,  
 We mixed blood together? ‡  
 To taste of liquor  
 Thou swarest never,  
 Unless it were brought to us both.

The sire of gods was moved by this appeal; and he cried—

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\* Ohlenschlager, Pigott's translation.

† See before, p. 116.

‡ Alluding not to any degree of consanguinity, but to a sworn covenant of brotherhood.



Arise, Vidar,  
And let the wolf's father  
Take his place at the board !

He did take his place ; and as each of the guests remonstrated with him on his ill-nature, he launched out into new abuse. He spared none ; and though his reproaches were bitter, they had foundation enough to render them keenly felt. Neither the awful dignity of Odin, nor the thunderbolt of Thor, who arrived about the midst of the festival, could shield them from his attacks. We have not space for the alleged vices of the dwellers in the Scandinavian Olympus ; but his abuse made the gods inwardly resolve to effect his destruction whenever the opportunity occurred. His share in the death of Balder (to which we shall soon advert) hastened the time.

## OTHER DEITIES.

The three Nornies, Urda, Verdandi, and Skula, are celebrated in Scandinavian mythology. Of them we have before spoken, and have little to add here. Their origin was unknown. They appear to have sprung up with the great tree Yggdrasil, and to have been dependent only on the mysterious Al-fader. They were said to have more sympathy than destined beings would be expected to have, and to have wept over the fall of their favourites. Both Urda and Skula were frequently consulted by the gods, who were ignorant of their own fate.

Besides these there were inferior Nornies among the elves and the dwarfs.

*Night* and *Day* (Nott and Dagr) were also deified ; so was the horse *Rimfaxi* (frost-mane), which carried night, and the horse *Skinfaxi* (bright mane), which drew the car of day. Dew is merely foam which falls from the bits of the former horse. Night was the daughter of the great Norvè ; and being married to the god Delling

(the dawn) the offspring was Day. There is some poetry in the following description from the poetic Edda:

Delling's son (*day*) forth  
Drove his horse,  
Richly beset  
With shining stones.  
O'er Manheim (*earth*) gleamed  
The courser's mane,  
Who drew in his ear  
The baffle of Dualin (*day*).

Through earth's great  
Gates of the north,  
Beneath the outer root  
Of the ancient tree,  
To rest now glided  
Giantesses and giants,  
Ghosts and dwarfs,  
And dark-alfs.

Heroes arose,  
Alf-beamer (*sun*) got up:  
Northwards to Niflheim,  
Night is flown.  
On Argiöll (*rainbow*) stood  
Ulfruna's son (*Heimdall*),  
The great horn-sunder  
Of heaven's hill.

The deity of winter was the giant *Hrsnelgar*, who dwelt in a cavern towards the dreary pole, and from whose wings comes the bleak north wind. Thus the Vafthrudnis-mal: —

The giant Hrsnelger  
At Heaven's extremity  
Sits under an eagle's form.  
From his wings, 'tis said,  
The cold winds sweep  
Over all nations.

This is the giant whom Thorkil saw in the cave.\* In two or three places there is also allusion to a summer god, *Sfosoder*, the sweet, the pleasant; a contrast with Hrsnelgar, the devourer of carrion.

\* See Vol. I. p. 98.

The Valkyrs, the elves, and dwarfs, having been already described, all that now remains is to relate the circumstances which will precede and accompany the destruction of the world. Many of them have a connection with the fate of

## BALDER.

On this personage *historically* — if indeed there ever was one of this name and character — we have already dwelt \*; we have now to consider him *mythologically*.

Balder had fearful dreams, and he believed that something dreadful was impending over him. He consulted his mother Frigga, who, though a prophetess, could not interpret his dreams, or foresee the kind of danger that was at hand. The gods were assembled; and as from ancient oracles they had learned how their fate was linked with his, they were the more anxious for the result. But all was darkness. Odin cut Runes in vain. Thrain and Dain, two dwarfs who excelled all beings in Runic wisdom, could only say that the dream was heavy, and that it portended evil. At this time Iduna was in the power of Thiasse\*, but she must be consulted, for she was a great prophetess. Heimdall, Loke, and Braga went to Jotunheim for that purpose. As she groaned for the joys of Asgard, the gods out of pity had previously sent her a wolf's skin, by clothing herself in which she forgot the past. Why then should the three Aser proceed on their monstrous horses to her abode? Her only reply was by tears, which, though they proved that she dreaded, also proved that she knew not the cause of that dread. Again were the Aser convoked; and it was then resolved that Frigga should exact from every thing an oath not to injure Balder. But how could destiny be averted? She overlooked the Mistletoe.

At this crisis, when the future was impenetrable to the most prophetic of gods and dwarfs, Odin descended to

\* Vol. I. p. 42.

consult the awful Vala, whose tomb lay on the confines of Helheim. His descent we have before related.\* He returned to Asgard with the certainty that nothing could avert the fate of his beloved son, or that of the gods, of whose ruin it was the forerunner.

In the work of destiny, Loke, as might be expected, was the most active agent. He it was who drew from Frigga the secret of the Mistletoe; he it was who directed the blind Hoder to cast it; he it was who after Hela had consented to release Balder from her empire, if all creatures would lament for him, either persuaded the giant-woman to refuse, or personated one himself.

That this mythos of Balder — one of the most celebrated in the whole range of Scandinavian lore — has a physical meaning, is evident: it denotes the departure of the summer sun from the northern hemisphere. Some of the circumstances, however, have not been happily explained; and for the reason that we have more than once assigned, — that they never can be explained, since they were invented, not on physical principles, but to embellish the fable, and render it more interesting.

#### PUNISHMENT OF LOKE.

The crimes of Loke were now full; and the gods determined to suffer them no longer. Their vengeance fell, first, on his two sons, Nari and Vali. The latter being changed into a wolf, devoured his brother. With some difficulty Loke himself was taken by Thor, and, like Prometheus, bound to the flinty rocks. If he has not a vulture to feed on his entrails, he has something quite as bad, — a serpent hung over his head, which every moment drips its venom. More fortunate, however, than his prototype, he has a wife, Signi, who perpetually watches by his side, and building a large basin, catches the venom intended for him. But at

\* See Vol. I. p. 51.

intervals she is obliged to empty the basin ; and when she does so, his agony, owing to the poison falling on his unprotected face, is the cause of earthquakes. There, like his monstrous offspring, the serpent \* and the wolf †, he must remain until Ragnarok, the twilight of the gods, when he and they and the whole visible universe will be destroyed.

#### RAGNAROK, THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS.

Of this consummation, so much dreaded by gods and elves and giants and men, the prose Edda gives the following account : —

“ There will first come a winter which shall be called Fimbulveter; snow will fall from every quarter, and hard frost and cutting winds have sway, so that the heat of the sun will have no influence. Three such winters, unalleviated by any summer, will follow each other. Previously to this the whole world will be scourged, during three winters also, by wars and bloodshed. Brothers will kill each other through avarice, and there will be no mercy even from parents to their children.

“ And now, to the great affliction of mankind, one wolf will devour the sun, another the moon, the stars will disappear from the firmament, the earth quake violently, trees be torn up by their roots, mountains fall together, all chains and bonds be burst asunder, and the wolf Fenris will break loose. Then will the ocean rise above its shores, for the great Midgard’s serpent will recover its giant strength, and struggle to gain the land.

“ At length he will succeed, the ship Nagelfare will be set afloat, and the giant Hymir take the helm. Nagelfare is built of the nails of dead men, and it should be remarked that when a person dies and his nails are not cut, materials are furnished towards the building of

\* See before, p. 101.



a vessel, whose completion both gods and men should seek to delay as long as possible.

“Fenris now rushes onward open-mouthed; fire streams from his eyes and nostrils; his under jaw touches the earth, the upper heaven, and he would open them still wider if there were space. Jormungandur vomits out poison, which renders the air and the waters deadly. He is the most terrible of all, and fights by the side of the wolf.

“In the midst of the confusion the heavens are rent asunder, and the sons of Muspell (the genii of fire) ride forth, led on by Surtur, who is clothed in flame, and whose unrivalled sword surpasses in brightness the sun itself. The bridge Bifrost gives way beneath their weight. The sons of Muspell press onwards to the plain Vigrid, which extends five hundred miles every way, and where they meet Fenris and Jormungandur. Asa-Loke also has repaired thither, and at the same time appears Hymir with the Giants of the Frost. All the sons of Hela follow Loke.

“But now, on the other side, Heimdall rouses himself, and blowing with all his might on his Gjallar-horn, wakes up the Aser who hold council as to what is to be done. Odin rides to Mimer’s well to ascertain what is best; the Ash Yggdrasil is shaken, and all earth and heaven are in dismay.

“The Aser and Einheirar march to the plain Vigrid, with Odin at their head. Armed with his golden helm, his glittering mail and his spear, Gungnir, he encounters Fenris who swallows him up.

‘Then is accomplished  
The goddess’ second-heart’s grief.\*  
Then falls the god  
Best beloved of Frigga.’ — *Foluspa*.

“At the same moment his son Vidar advances to avenge his father; he presses down with his foot the

\* The first was the death of Balder.

wolf's lower jaw, and raising the other with his hand, rends him till he dies. Thor fights with the serpent, and acquires great fame by slaying him, but overpowered by the poison which he spews forth, recoils back nine paces, and falls dead to earth.

"Freyr is opposed to Surtur, but now misses his good sword which he had given to Skirner, and is slain. The dog, Garmer, who had hitherto been bound in a cavern, escapes and rushes upon Asa-Tyr, and both fall. In like manner Loke and Heimdall slay each other. After all this Surtur pours out fire upon the earth, and the whole world is consumed. The great Ash, however, outlives this general ruin.

'Yggdrasil's Ash  
Totters, but stands.' — *Voluspa*.

"Good and just men will now be transported to Gimle, which is built of red gold, and where there are various splendid and delightful habitations. Bad men, perjurers, murderers, and the seducers of other men's wives, will go to Nastrond, a vast, hideous dwelling, whose gates face northwards. It is built of adders, whose heads are turned inwards, and are continually spewing out poisons which form a large lake or river, where its inmates are to swim eternally, suffering horrible tortures.\*

"A new earth, fairer and more verdant than the other, will arise out of the sea; from which the grain will shoot forth of itself. Vidar and Vale will survive the general destruction, and dwell upon the plain Ida, where Asgard lay before. Thither also will repair Magne and Mode, the sons of Thor, taking Miölnir with them. Balder and Hoder will return from Hela, and these gods will sit together, and talk over the events of past times.

'The Aser will meet  
On Ida's plain,

\* In another place a ravenous wolf tormented the souls of the damned.

And talk of the mighty  
 Earth-surrounder\* :  
 There they will call to mind  
 Great deeds of olden-time,  
 And the lofty gods'  
 Ancient learning.' † — *Voluspa*.

“ During the conflagration caused by Surtur, a man and a woman, Lif and Livthraser, will lie concealed in a place called Honimer's Holt, and there nourish themselves with the morning-dew. From them is to spring the second race of men.” ‡

The *Voluspa* also refers to the second and more blissful world : —

A hall I see  
 More brilliant than the sun,  
 Roofed with gold,  
 On the summit of Gimlè ;  
 There shall dwell  
 A virtuous race,  
 And enjoy blessedness  
 To time eternal.  
 Thither cometh the mighty one  
 To the council of the gods,  
 In his strength from above ;  
 He who thinketh for all.  
 He issueth judgments,  
 He causeth strife to cease,  
 And establisheth peace  
 To endure for ever.

This is to finish the visible universe, with its physical gods. But the immortality of the human soul is a doctrine strongly inculcated by the religion of the North. The souls of the gods, indeed, are, with two or three exceptions, to perish ; and for this reason, — that they are physical gods merely, — mythologic creations to denote the powers and functions of nature. In this circumstance there is something pleasing to contemplate. The *physical* Alfader (Odin) has passed into

\* The great serpent.

‡ Pigott's translation.

† Runes.

annihilation ; but the eternal Alfadur (Almighty God) remains to govern the world, and to reward the good whom he has admitted to Gimlè. Thus even in the darkest systems (and few are darker than the Scandinavian) sages have attempted to vindicate the ways of Providence.

### SECTION III.\*

#### INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO DENMARK AND SWEDEN.

OBSURE EFFORTS OF THE ANGLO-SAXON MISSIONARIES TO CHRISTIANISE FRISIA AND DENMARK. — VICTORIES OF CHARLEMAGNE PREPARE THE WAY FOR A WIDER DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY. — FEALTY OF HARALD KLAK. — MISSIONARIES SENT INTO THE NORTH — ST. ANSCAR. — CREATION OF AN ARCHBISHOPRIC. — ST. REMBERT. — SUCCEEDING ARCHBISHOPS. — FLUCTUATIONS IN THE STATE OF THE NEW RELIGION. — ITS ULTIMATE ESTABLISHMENT IN THE KINGDOMS OF THE NORTH.

As the introduction of Christianity into Norway has been already related, we have briefly to contemplate its origin and progress in the two sister kingdoms.

Nothing can be more obscure than the origin of the Christian worship in these regions. Probably it was much more ancient than is generally supposed ; but the number of Christians prior to the ninth century must have been exceedingly small ; and of these most were probably converts only in name, — joining the adoration of Thor and Odin with that of Christ. We know that in the seventh century Anglo-Saxon missionaries endeavoured to obtain an entrance into Denmark, the contiguity of

\* The authorities for this section are : — *Vita S. Anschariæ* ; *Vita S. Remberti* (both in Bollandus, *Acta SS.*, and in Langbek, *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum*) ; Ornjolm, *Historia Ecclesiastica Sueciæ*.

which to Frisia, and especially Germany, could not fail to attract the pious zeal of those excellent men. St. Wilfrid could do no more than evangelise a few of the Frisians. His successor, St. Willibrod, who in 696 was consecrated archbishop of the Frisias, passed into Jutland. Though the mission failed, the prelate brought away thirty young Danes, whom he designed to send as missionaries into that barbarous region. Wherever this venerable man preached, he attempted to demolish the idols. Even in the sacred island of Heligoland, where a tempest had cast him, he exhibited the same undaunted zeal ; and on his death in 739, he had impressed the neighbouring people with much respect for his character. That he escaped martyrdom, which seems to have been his aim, can be ascribed only to that Providence which suffers not a sparrow to fall unheeded to the ground. But ages are required to extirpate an old and to plant a new religion. If many converts were made, they bore little proportion to the bulk of the population ; nor could the salutary effects be permanent when there was no church, no succession of missionaries to continue the work. We need not be, therefore, surprised at the martyrdom of St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany, in 755. When the victories of Charlemagne had disposed the Saxons to receive the yoke of Christ, there was a better opening for the gospel, not in Saxony only, but in other parts of the North ; for many of the Scandinavians, especially of Denmark, were in the same great confederation. St. Sturm contemplated the conversion of Denmark ; but he was prevented by the emperor, who was more anxious for the progress of the truth in his new conquests than in more distant regions.

822  
to  
826.

During the reign of Charlemagne, no serious effort was made to establish a permanent mission in Denmark or Sweden. Louis le Debonnair had more zeal or better opportunities ; and he readily sanctioned the departure of Ebbo, archbishop of Rheims. Ebbo was a Saxon, and more eager for the conversion of the kindred Danes



than any of the French prelates. Encouraged by a papal bull, he ventured on the perilous enterprise in 822. Fortunately for him, Harald, surnamed *Klak*, who ruled over a portion, at least, of Jutland, had need of imperial aid to secure himself on the throne. As the condition of such aid, he agreed not only to become a vassal of the empire, but to embrace Christianity, and do all in his power to make his subjects embrace it. The court of Harald was near the present city of Sleswic, in the duchy of that name. Ebbo, accompanied by the monk Halitger, proceeded thither, and was permitted by the royal consent to preach to the people. But the fortunes of Harald were diversified; he was expelled three or four times, and as often enabled to return, as much through foreign assistance as through the efforts of his own partisans. That he was unpopular may easily be inferred from these revolutions in his fortunes. Of this unpopularity one cause was doubtless his profession of the new faith; another was the homage which he had paid to the emperor. Yet the efforts made by the kings who reigned in Zealand to create a monarchy, and consequently to destroy the Reguli, who aimed at independence, was, doubtless, more injurious to his interests, than the disaffection of the pagans. But during his intervals of peace, his patronage of Christianity was serviceable to the cause. Ebbo naturally left the country when the king was expelled; and there was danger of the good seed being choked, when another and more zealous missionary was raised by divine Providence both to continue the work which he had begun, and to extend it to Sweden.

*Anscar*, a monk of Corbey in Westphalia, was from his youth an enthusiastic churchman. He had dreams and visions, which to him seemed prophetic of his future martyrdom. For that result he accordingly prepared; and soon loved to contemplate it as an object of desire rather than of fear. When, therefore, he heard that missionaries were required to continue the labour which Ebbo had abandoned, and to return again with Harald

826  
to  
830.

into Denmark, he readily offered himself, and was joyfully accepted. The perils, indeed, of the enterprise had no charms for the luxurious ecclesiastics of that age, — men whom the favours of succeeding monarchs had enriched ; and Anscar with another monk, Aubert, were the only inmates of the great establishment at Corbey that could be induced to go. Indeed the community were not a little amazed to witness the self-devotion of these missionaries. Leaving Corbey, the latter repaired into South Jutland. From Harald, however, they received less assistance than they had been led to expect. Knowing his unpopularity, he remained chiefly in a fortress which the emperor had given him. Of Louis, indeed, he was the vassal, not for Jutland merely, which might never acknowledge him, but for the extensive region on the sea-coast, from Holland to Hamburg. Yet he showed little gratitude to his imperial master. He was suspected, — probably with much justice — of favouring the piratical ravages of the Danes on the Frisian coast. However, he outwardly conformed to Christianity, and was the avowed patron of the missionaries, though he left them to struggle with difficulties which he might have done more to remove. But we must make some allowance for the situation in which he was placed. He had been for many years — he was now — at war with other pretenders to the throne ; and as these pretenders (the sons of Gudred) were supported by the influence of the pagan chiefs, he had cares which he deemed more urgent than those of religion. In 828 he was signally defeated, and compelled to seek refuge within the bounds of the fief which he held of the emperor. Probably Anscar retreated with him ; and subsequently returned to his post. But the death of his coadjutor, and the desperate state of Harald's affairs, convinced him that the time for the conversion of Jutland was not yet come ; and he listened to a proposal, made by some Swedish ambassadors to the emperor, of introducing the gospel into that country.

According to the Swedish historians, who will not admit that the Danes were converted before themselves, Christianity had been embraced by many of the Goths many years antecedent to the arrival of St. Anscar. They assert that in 813 a church was erected at Linköping, through the holy zeal of Herbert, a Saxon ecclesiastic. That the gospel was preached in Gothia before it reached Sweden, is probable enough; but we very much doubt whether the result was so great as the national writers would have us believe. However this be, St. Anscar was the first apostle of the Swiars. Reaching Birca, the capital—a place not far distant from the modern Stockholm—he converted some of king Biorn's council, and was permitted to preach freely. This visit was auspicious; success appeared to be inevitable; but in the midst of his labours, after a residence of six months only, he and his companion returned to Germany. Why? To report what had been effected, says his biographer, Rembert, and to solicit further aid for prosecuting the great work. But if these objects were necessary (which we are unable to perceive), surely *one* of them might have remained to confirm the new converts. Anscar was the bearer of a letter from Biorn to the emperor, written in runic characters, and bearing testimony to the success of the two monks.

The pope and the emperor were much gratified by the unexpected opening in the North. To reward Anscar, and stimulate him to greater exertions, he was made archbishop of Hamburg, with a jurisdiction over all the Scandinavian kingdoms, when he should have converted them to Christianity. In addition he was invested with the legatine authority over these regions; but it was shared with Ebbo, who knew less of the people, of their wants, and of their disposition, and who certainly had not either the zeal or the prudence of the other. One of Ebbo's first acts was to consecrate a bishop, Gansbert, whom he dispatched into Sweden, while Anscar sent a vicar. It was evidently not the saint's intention to

830  
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return. He thought, and justly, that Denmark was a field sufficiently wide for his own exertions, and that he might superintend the Swedish mission from his new metropolis. That mission slowly but surely gained ground ; while his own exertions in the more southern portion of his immense diocese corresponded, if not with his wishes, probably with his hopes. Both he and Gansbert, however, had the fault of all Roman catholic missionaries ; they baptized before they had sufficiently instructed. Hence they had the mortification to see many of their converts join the worship of Odin and Thor with that of Christ ; and many to forsake their new profession with as much levity as they had embraced it. Other misfortunes arrived. Hamburg was assailed by pirates : the sacred buildings were consumed by fire ; the same fate attended the books which the saint had collected ; and would, no doubt, have befallen him and his clergy, had they not fled from the danger. These pirates were headed by a king — Eric of Jutland and Frisia. For some time the work was nearly at a stand. Another disappointment — the loss of a monastery, which Anscar had held with the archbishopric, and from which the chief support of the mission was derived — paralysed his exertions. A misfortune no less serious was the expulsion of Gansbert from Sweden. This event is wrapt in some obscurity. It could not be entirely caused by religious persecution ; for the king was still tolerant. Perhaps Nithard, the companion of Gansbert, and the nephew of Anscar, abused the popular deities and their worshippers. There was a great commotion ; the mission-house was plundered and destroyed ; Nithard was killed ; the bishop with his clergy forced to leave the kingdom. All this, however, was “ non-jussu regis,” which the Swedish historians convert into “ Berone nesciente.” Yet Anscar did not despair. Though poor, he contrived still to instruct some of the Danish children, whom he designed as missionaries for both kingdoms. Being afterwards sent ambassador to Eric — the very prince who had

burned his cathedral, and who by Harda-Canute's death had become king of all Denmark—he so far softened that monarch as to obtain permission to preach without hinderance. At Sleswic he was allowed to build a new church; the number of converts increased; and their ardour was increased by the extension of their commerce with the Christian empire. Such converts, indeed, could do little credit to religion; still toleration was an advantage which in time might, he hoped, effect all that could be desired.

Unfortunate as had been the issue of the mission to Sweden, *Ardgar*, a hermit of much sanctity, was persuaded to renew it. He was soon joined by some Danish converts. By Herigar, one of the chief nobles of the country, who had sincerely embraced Christianity at the first preaching of Anscar, they were received with joy. Through his influence the infant worship was again permitted at Birca; but it made little progress; and *Ardgar*, whose heart yearned for his old anchoretical life, at length resigned his missionary office, and left the country. Still Anscar was not discouraged. The see of Bremen being united with that of Hamburg, offered him more ample means to prosecute his meritorious enterprise. In the same view, he prevailed on the German sovereign to send him ambassador to both kingdoms. From Eric, the Danish king, he bore a letter to Olaf \* of Sweden, containing an honourable recommendation of his character and conduct. Eric asserted that he had never known so good a man as the archbishop; he had therefore allowed him to labour in his own way for the good of the people. But on his arrival in Sweden he found new obstacles. The Odinic priests were seriously alarmed at the efforts

\* Who was he? Loccenius and most Swedish writers (who are followed by our Universal History), tell us that he was Olaf Træteliæ. Yet that prince had been dead two centuries. Neither could it be Olaf Skotkonung, who did not reign until two centuries afterwards — always supposing that any dependence is to be placed on the chronology of the Scandinavians. Yet an Olaf did reign at this period; and this only illustrates what we observed in the first volume as to the confusion so evident in all the regal lists.



which during above twenty years had been made to establish Christianity in the North. The imposture to which they had recourse affords a good illustration of the popular character, no less than of their religious notions. Just as Anscar and his clergy arrived at the capital, a man suddenly appeared there, who asserted that he was the bearer of a communication from the gods to king Olaf and his people. The substance of it was, that the ancient deities had conferred great prosperity on Sweden; that hitherto they had no reason to complain of ingratitude in their worshippers; that now, however, there was a sad lack of zeal, their altars being comparatively deserted for those of a new and hostile divinity; that if the people were anxious for another god, why go out of their own country for one? "If," added they, "you really wish for another, we will readily admit your late king, Eric, to the honours of deification!" Gross as the imposture was, it was undisputed; the hearts of the Swedes began to warm towards the Aser, and a temple was erected to Eric, when altars smoked with continued sacrifices.

853 The aspect of affairs was so unfavourable, that the  
to companions of the archbishop urged him to leave the  
865. country. But he would not a second time abandon his post. He had been successful with Eric of Denmark, and he endeavoured to be equally so with Olaf. Inviting that king to a feast, he redoubled his attentions, which coming as they did not merely from an archbishop, but from the ambassador of a powerful monarch, were peculiarly grateful to Olaf. Yet Olaf was a limited sovereign; though he readily promised to afford the missionaries all the liberty he could, he was bound to consult the will of the people, and even that of the gods. In the true pagan spirit, he believed that other countries might have local deities as well as Scandinavia, — deities as powerful and as able to protect their worshippers. He advised the archbishop to send a deputy to the next Al-Thing, or general meeting of the freemen, promising that he would use his influence to obtain the

requisite licence for the celebration of the new worship. "Olaf first mentioned the subject to his chiefs; lots were cast; and the gods were declared — probably through some intrigue of the king's — not to be unfavourable to the preaching of Christianity. When, according to the Germanic custom, the people were assembled in their annual plaids, Olaf caused the subject of the French embassy to be proclaimed by a herald. In the discussion which followed, much murmuring was heard; one party condemning the innovation as disrespectful to their ancient gods; another vindicating it as necessary to the well-being of the kingdom. A venerable old man at length spoke: — 'King and people, listen to me! The worship of this new god is already known to us, and we also know that he often assists those who call on him. This many of us have experienced amidst the perils of the deep, as well as on other occasions: why then should we reject what we know to be useful? Formerly many of our people went to Dorstadt, to embrace this advantageous faith; now, as the passage thither is dangerous, why should we reject a good which is brought to our own doors?' — 'We have often found our own gods unpropitious: let us cultivate the favour of this god, who is as willing as he is able always to aid his servants.' The shrewd barbarian succeeded, because he touched in the hearts of his hearers a chord that responded to his own. Neither he nor they had much notion of a religion which did not confer temporal blessings; all had been disappointed at one time or other in their invocations for them; all, therefore, were disposed to receive favourably proposals from a god who promised them a constant succession of such blessings. This was a poor foundation on which to build; but it was better than none. A proclamation was now made that churches might be built, and that whoever pleased was at liberty to embrace the faith of Christ. While these things were passing in Sweden, a revolution in Denmark was fatal to Eric, and, for a time, to the new religion, which the

next king prohibited. But this time was a brief one ; for the prudence of Anscar, who now returned from Sweden, fully repaired the disaster. The ecclesiastics whom he sent to both countries he enjoined to imitate the example of St. Paul, — to labour for their own maintenance, so as to be chargeable to no one. It was probably this necessity of manual labour that rebutted many, even more than the persecutions they endured ; for during the whole of his pontificate, he had great difficulty in providing the infant churches with pastors.” \*

865     The work which Anscar had so well commenced, was  
to     as well continued by his disciple, his companion, his  
889. friend, his biographer, *St. Rembert*, who immediately after his death succeeded him in the archiepiscopal dignity, with the full approbation of the pope and the Germanic sovereign. He had, indeed, indicated to the clergy the propriety of electing his friend, to whose merits he had borne this splendid testimony : — “ Rembert is more fit to be archbishop than I am to be a humble deacon.” To the success of this prelate’s labours, ample testimony is borne by writers nearly contemporary. He founded several churches, not in Sweden and Denmark only, but among the Slavi. His virtues equalled his zeal. To redeem Christian captives from pagan thralldom, he sold the very plate of the altar. One day, for the redemption of a virgin, he gave the horse on which he was riding. His time was always occupied ; scarcely did he allow himself leisure for eating or sleep. During the twenty-three years that he presided over the united sees of Hamburg and Bremen, he was no less zealous than he had been in company with his predecessor. Towards the close of his life he chose as his coadjutor *Adalgar*, a monk of New Corbey, whom he wished to succeed him. — Of this eminent ecclesiastic, as many miracles are recorded as he himself had related of his predecessor, St. Anscar. That he believed them is certain ; that his biographers believed those recorded of him, is equally so. We should have

\* Europe during the Middle Ages (Cab. Cyc.), vol. ii.

been glad to perceive them wrought for nobler occasions. With all their zeal, Anscar and Rembert left few native Christians in Sweden, — few, we mean, compared with the population, and scarcely perhaps with the advantages they possessed. But to them be due praise! If they did not effect all that we could wish, probably they effected all that they could. Their sense of responsibility was strong enough; but their diocese was too extensive, their duties too numerous, to allow of their devoting as much time as they would otherwise have done, to the Northern mission. Nor must we omit the inveterate bigotry of some pagans, the indifference of others, and (a still worse evil) the hardness of heart which a vicious system of religion had engendered.

The successor of St. Rembert did not imitate the zeal of his predecessors. To extend his authority was apparently a dearer object than to extend religion. It is certain that he never visited Sweden: it is probable that he sent no missionaries to that kingdom; nor do we read that he showed any zeal in regard to Denmark. *Hoger*, his successor, was not more active. Of him the canon of Bremen expressively says: “Unde fuerit, aut qualiter vixerit, Deo cognitum est.” Yet *Hoger* was half a saint; he prayed and read when he should have slept, and still more, when he should have attended to urgent duties. Too many have been the churchmen of this selfish character, — esteeming every moment lost that was not devoted to their own salvation; and expressing only barren wishes for that of others. It is, however, but justice both to *Adalgar* and *Hoger* to observe that their pontificate was very brief; and that, had their lives been prolonged, history might have left some record of their zeal, if not of their success. *Unnus*, the next archbishop (916—936), was of a different character. When the invasions of the Huns and the pagan Northmen had been repressed by his imperial master, he proceeded to the court of *Gorm*, king of Denmark, whom, however, he vainly endeavoured to dispose in favour of the Christians. With *Harald*, the

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936



son of Gorm, he was more successful. Though this prince did not immediately embrace Christianity, he viewed it with a favourable eye; and he protected, as far as he could, all who professed it, especially the priests. From Denmark he proceeded into Sweden, which had not been visited by any Hamburg archbishop, for above sixty years. No wonder then that, as Adam of Bremen informs us, he found Christianity nearly extinct. Still he did find Christians, whom he endeavoured to establish in the faith. As Helmold asserts, whatever might be the persecution of the Swedish kings towards their pagan subjects, from the first dawning of the gospel, there was never an entire cessation of Christian worship. This excellent prelate died in the vicinity of Birca. His best eulogium is in the words of the canon Adam, who advises the idle, luxurious, worldly-minded bishops of the time to follow his example: "Look, ye bishops, who constantly remain at home, wholly given to pomp, lucre, eating and sleep, and who have no delight in the most urgent duties of your post — look, I say, at this ecclesiastic, poor in the world's estimation, but rich in the sight of God, — one whose end was so glorious, and who has left an example to posterity that no disasters of the times, no distance of place, can be an excuse for idleness." But what except idleness, except indifference could be expected at a period when the popes themselves were so worthless?

936 During the pontificate of *Adalrag*, the successor of  
 to Unnus, Christianity made greater progress in Denmark  
 988. than it had ever yet made. This ecclesiastic was a canon of Hildesheim; he was subsequently, we are told, the chancellor of two, or even of three, Othos. But this is incorrect. He was never at any time arch-chancellor, and was vice-chancellor only during a short period of the first Otho's reign. Probably he was secretary to one or more of those emperors; he was certainly high in their favour. Through his influence, three bishoprics were established in Jutland,



— Sleswic, Rypen, and Aarhus, and one in Holstein, that of Altenburg,—all subject to the metropolis of Hamburg. This result, as we have before related\*, must be attributed to the victories of Otho I., who subdued the whole of Holstein and Jutland. Harald would have had no peace had he not consented to reign as Otho's vassal for the southern part at least of Jutland; to pay an annual tribute; to sanction the creation of these bishoprics; to embrace Christianity with the whole of his family; and to aid in its diffusion throughout his dominions. If, on this occasion, he was an unwilling convert, subsequently he became a sincere believer in its doctrines, which he openly and constantly professed. At the time he transferred his government from Ledra, the ancient seat of the Odinic superstition, to Roskild, he erected in the latter place a church to the most Holy Trinity. It was attachment to Christianity, even more than ambition, in his son, that led to his tragical death. The old pagan party were resolved to have a king of their own creed: hence the accession of Sweyn. Though Sweyn was an enemy of the new faith, he could not undo the work of his father, and of the Christian missionaries: the converts were too numerous to be exterminated. In a few years he himself became conqueror of England, and found it convenient to embrace the Christian faith, which from his death was the dominant faith of Denmark. Nor did the archbishop, Adalrag, lose sight of Sweden, which his predecessor had done so much to reclaim. At his instance, Liafdag, bishop of Rypen, and a Dane, Odincar the elder, laboured in the kingdom, and probably in some parts of Norway. Hako the Good was at this time the ruler of the latter kingdom, and he naturally wished to confer on his subjects the blessings which he had received.

*Libentis*, the successor of Adalrag, was also an honour to his dignity. Fit missionaries were despatched by him into both Denmark and Sweden; and if their

988

to

1026.

\* See Vol. I. p. 108.

progress was slow, it was steady. Their efforts were much assisted by Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics, who inspired less jealousy than those of Germany, and who had the happiness to baptize the Swedish king, *Erio Arsaël*. This monarch, it is said, was the victim of his zeal. Not satisfied with encouraging the diffusion of Christianity throughout his states, he laid violent hands on the holy temple of Upsal; and for this last act fell in a tumult of the populace (1001). On the death of Libentis, in 1013, his successor, archbishop *Unver*, trod in his steps. In the time of this latter prelate, Denmark, which obeyed Canute the Great, became decidedly Christian. The same blessing was in preparation for Sweden. Olaf, surnamed Scot-Konung, or the Tributary, because he sanctioned a yearly tribute to the pope, established three bishoprics, and was enabled to ensure a preponderance to the religion which he had embraced. From his death, in 1026, Sweden may therefore be regarded as a Christian state. Thus all the three kingdoms forsook idolatry for the truth about the same period, viz., the commencement of the eleventh century. This revolution, as we have had many opportunities of observing, was exceedingly progressive. In Norway it continued during three quarters of a century; in Denmark, from the mission of St. Anscar to the reign of Canute the Great; in Sweden, from the same event to the reign of Olaf Skot-konung, — in both instances about a century and a half. Yet we must not forget that paganism *lingered* in all three, especially Sweden, down to the twelfth, or even the thirteenth, century.

## BOOK II.

## THE MIDDLE AGE.

## CHAPTER I.

## DENMARK.\*

1014 — 1387.

CANUTE THE GREAT. — HARDA-CANUTE. — MAGNUS. — ROMANTIC ADVENTURES OF HARALD HARDRADE. — SWEYN II. — HARALD III. — CANUTE IV. — OLAF II. — ERIC III. — NICHOLAS. — ERIC IV. — ERIC V. — CANUTE V. AND SWEYN III. — VALDEMAR I. — HIS ABLE REIGN. — ARCHBISHOPS ESKIT AND ABSOLOM. — CANUTE VI. — VALDEMAR II. — DECLINE OF THE DANISH POWER, AND THE CAUSES WHICH LED TO IT. — ERIC VI. — ABEL. — CHRISTOPHER I. — ERIC VII. — ERIC VIII. — CHRISTOPHER II. — INTERREGNUM. — VALDEMAR III. — MEMORABLE TRANSACTIONS WITH NORWAY AND SWEDEN. — OLAF III. — UNION OF DENMARK AND NORWAY.

## CANUTE THE GREAT.

1015—1035.

ON the death of Sweyn, his son Canute was proclaimed by the Danes. But this was the signal for the revolt of the Anglo-Saxons against the Danish yoke, and for the restoration of Ethelred. That rash and vicious

\* The chief authorities for this chapter are:—Saxonis Grammatici Historia Dancia, lib. x. ad fin.; Suenonis Aggonis, cap. 4., &c.; Knytlinga Saga; many of the treatises in Langebek's Scriptores Rerum Danicarum; Mallet, Histoire de Dannemarc, tom. iii. and iv.; Meursius, Historia Danica; Torfæus, Series Dynastarum et Regum Daniæ; Suhm, Historie af Dannemarc; Adamus Bremensis, Historia Ecclesiastica; with the historians of Germany.

prince was accordingly invited from the court of his brother-in-law, Richard duke of Normandy, on the condition of his governing better in future. What excited his hope, and that of his people, was the abrupt departure of Canute for Denmark. Harald, brother of the latter, who was invested with the administration, was aiming at the sovereignty of that kingdom ; and prudence demanded that he should not suffer the loss of his hereditary realm, when he must evidently have again to fight for England. Released by the death of Harald from all apprehension in that quarter, he returned, with all the forces he could raise, to the English coast. Lord of Denmark, of a considerable portion of Norway \*, of several English counties, and of a fine army in that kingdom, he thought himself equal to any enterprise. What most favoured his views on England was the detestation in which Ethelred was held. His labour would have been easy, except for the valour of Edmund Ironside, who, but for the treason which ruled his father's councils, and for that father's utter worthlessness, would have resisted with success. Leaving to the historians of England the task of detailing the battles and negotiations which followed, we shall only observe that on Ethelred's death (1016). Edmund was acknowledged by London and some counties ; and that both parties being tired of the destrutive warfare, agreed to a compromise — the counties north of the Thames being ceded to the Dane, those south of the Thames to the Saxon ; and that on Edmund's assassination (probably at Canute's instigation) the Danish monarch was acknowledged by the whole kingdom. The two children of Edmund, indeed, remained ; and, if report be true, the conqueror endeavoured to remove them by violence. But the Swedish prince to whom they were confided, refused to be made the instrument of his purposes, and sent them for greater safety to the court of the Hungarian king. In this relation there is evidently much

\* See Vol. I. p. 237.

romance. We have no proof that the Swedish prince of this period was the friend, or even the ally, of Canute. Probably the children were sent by their own friends to a place of security.

The English administration of Canute must be sought <sup>1016</sup> in the histories of that kingdom. In Denmark he endeavoured to give to Christianity a predominancy which <sup>to</sup> it had not yet attained. <sup>1023.</sup> On his accession, full half of the Danes were pagans. To reclaim them, churches were built, and Anglo-Saxon missionaries appointed. This latter measure was hateful to them; and it was not agreeable to his Christian subjects, who wished the dignities of the church for themselves. Both were dissatisfied with his almost continued absence in England. Availing himself of this universal feeling, Ulfo the jarl, as we have before related\*, placed Harda-Canute, an infant son of the king, on the Danish throne. We have related, too, the issue of this rash step—the resignation of the boy, and the murder of Ulfo by the royal order. From this time there was continued tranquillity in both Denmark and England. Canute, indeed, was too powerful and too vindictive to be resisted with impunity. The acquisition of a third kingdom, which he conquered in 1028†, surrounded his throne with a splendour that no Saxon or Danish prince had before possessed.

That Canute was sullied by many crimes is evident, <sup>1029</sup> even, from his most partial historians. He put to death <sup>to</sup> many, without the forms of law, either because he <sup>1035.</sup> would punish their past, or avert their future, hostility. After his accession to the English throne he acted with great cruelty to many Anglo-Saxon nobles, and with perfidy to more. Yet he had great qualities. He must have been a good ruler, or he would not have dismissed his Danish followers, with the exception of about 3000. That he placed Danes and English on a footing of equality; that he administered justice with

\* Vol. I. p. 267.

† Vol. I. p. 270.



strict impartiality ; that he improved the laws no less than the administration ; that his yoke was felt to be tolerable by the English and the Norwegians, no less than by his hereditary subjects, are historical truths. "In fact, he was one of the best princes that ever swayed the English sceptre. If in his earlier days he was ferocious, after his establishment on the English throne he was humanised by Christianity. Of his zeal for religion, no less than for the temporal welfare of his people, we have evidence enough in his acts. There was an air of barbaric grandeur about the monarch, not to be found in any other sovereign of the times." \* Lord of three great kingdoms as he was, we must look for his true elevation to his own mind ; and (a rare phenomenon) his moral qualities improved as he advanced in years. Few are the instances, whether in history or in common life, of men so completely reclaimed from evil to good. Much of this reformation has been ascribed by Roman catholic historians to his pilgrimage to Rome. They would be more logical if they called this pilgrimage the effect of the reformation. The state of his mind, his motives, his principles, are well described in the remarkable letter which he wrote from the eternal city, and which exhibits his character in a truer light than the comments of any historian.†

\* Europe during the Middle Ages (Cab. Cyc.), vol. iii.

† Canute, king of all Denmark, England, and Norway, and of part of Sweden, to Egelnoth the metropolitan, to archbishop Alfrie, to all the bishops and chiefs, and to all the nation of the English, both nobles and commoners, greeting. I write to inform you that I have lately been at Rome, *to pray for the remission of my sins*, and for the safety of my kingdoms, and of the nations that are subject to my sceptre. It is long since I bound myself by vow to make this pilgrimage ; but I had been hitherto prevented by affairs of state and other impediments. Now, however, I return humble thanks to the Almighty God, that he has allowed me to visit the tombs of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and every holy place within and without the city of Rome, and to honour and venerate them in person. And this I have done, because I had learned from my teachers that the apostle St. Peter received from the Lord the great power of binding and loosing, with the keys of the kingdom of heaven. *On this account, I thought it highly useful to solicit his patronage with God.* Be it moreover known to you, that there was, at the festival of Easter, a great assemblage of noble personages, with the lord the pope John, and the emperor Conrad, namely, all the chiefs of the nations from Mount Gargano to the nearest sea, who all received me honourably, and made me valuable presents ; but particularly the emperor, who gave me many gold and silver

This monarch was liberal to his followers, as well as to the church. How, considering the splendid retinue which generally accompanied him, the magnificent presents which he made, the churches and monasteries which he founded and endowed, he could still be surnamed the *Rich*, is not easy to be conceived. His prudence was doubtless great; but his moderation is the virtue on which his biographers dwell with most satisfaction. There may be, and there probably is, no

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vases, with rich mantles and garments. I therefore took the opportunity to treat with the pope, the emperor, and the princes, on the grievances of my people, both English and Danes; that they might enjoy more equal law, and more secure safeguard in their way to Rome, nor be detained at so many barriers, nor harassed by unjust exactions. My demands were granted both by the emperor and by king Rodulf, who rules most of the passages; and it was enacted by all the princes, that my *men*, whether pilgrims or merchants, should, for the future, go to Rome and return in full security, without detention at the barriers, or the payment of unlawful tolls. I next complained to the pope, and expressed my displeasure, that such immense sums should be extorted from my archbishops, when according to custom they visited the apostolic see to obtain the pallium. A decree was made that this grievance should cease. Whatever I demanded for the benefit of my people, either of the pope, or the emperor, or the princes, through whose dominions lies the road to Rome, was granted willingly, and confirmed by their oaths, in the presence of four archbishops, twenty bishops, and a multitude of dukes and nobles. Wherefore I return sincere thanks to God that I have successfully performed whatever I had intended, and have fully satisfied all my wishes. Now, therefore, be it known to you all, that I have dedicated my life to the service of God, to govern my kingdoms with equity, and to observe justice in all things. *If by the impetuosity or negligence of youth, I have violated justice heretofore, it is my intention, by the help of God, to make full compensation.* Therefore I beg and command those to whom I have confided the rule, as they wish to preserve my friendship or save their own souls, to do no injustice either to rich or poor. Let all persons, whether noble or ignoble, obtain their rights according to law, from which no deviation shall be allowed, either from fear of me, or through favour to the powerful, or for the purpose of supplying my treasury. I have no need of money raised by injustice. I am now on my road to Denmark, for the purpose of concluding peace with those nations, who, had it been in their power, would have deprived us both of our crown and our life. But God has destroyed their means: and will, I trust, of his goodness preserve us, and humble all our enemies. When I shall have concluded peace with the neighbouring nations, and settled the concerns of my eastern dominions, it is my intention to return to England as soon as the fine weather will permit me to sail. But I have sent you this letter beforehand, that all the people of my kingdom may rejoice at my prosperity. For you all know that I never spared, nor will spare myself, or my labour, when my object is the welfare of my subjects. Lastly, I entreat all my bishops and all my sheriffs, by the fidelity which they owe to me and to God, that the church-dues, according to the ancient laws, may be paid before my return; namely, the plough alms, the tithes of cattle of the present year, the Peter-pence, the tithes of fruit in the middle of August, and the kirk-shot at the feast of St. Martin, to the parish church. Should this be omitted, at my return I will punish the offender, by exacting the whole fine imposed by law. Fare ye well.

truth in the well-known anecdote of his rebuking his flatterers on the sea-coast. But another, which displays him in a light equally striking, is less known. Many years before his pilgrimage he drew up a code of laws, and was one of the first to violate them by killing, in a fit of anger, aggravated perhaps by intoxication, one of his servants. His good sense told him that this violation was a bad example for his ferocious nobles; and he resolved that his punishment should be signal. Convoking his judges, he appeared before them in the garb of a prisoner, accused himself of homicide, and awaited their decision. The penalty, according to the Germanic jurisprudence, which governed the greater part of Europe, was forty silver marks for one in the condition of the victim.\* But the slavish administrators of the law deemed that in publicly confessing his crime, he had made sufficient recompence. Seeing their fear of him, he condemned himself to pay 360 silver marks, or nine times the amount of the legal compensation. Of this large fine half went to the kindred of the victim, half to the crown; but the king would not touch his portion, which was distributed to the poor.

In his last testament, and near three years before his death, this monarch divided his states between his sons. To Harda-Canute, whom he had invested with the government of Denmark, he left England also, because that prince was his offspring by Emma, the widow of Ethelred II. To Sweyn, who, since the death of St. Olaf (1030—1035), governed Norway, he bequeathed that kingdom. Whether any provision was made for Harald Harefoot, the eldest of his sons, is not very clear; but Harald taking advantage of his brother's residence in Denmark, usurped the English crown. He could not expect, and he probably did not wish, that all three should rest on the same brow. Partition was the mania of the age.

\* See Europe during the Middle Ages, vol. iii. chap. i.; and, History of the Germanic Empire, vol. i.

## HARDA-CANUTE.

1035—1042.

By his father's death, Harda-Canute, the heir of 1035 Denmark, was equally so of England; and he was <sup>to</sup> preparing to pass over into that kingdom when intelli- 1040. gence reached him of Harald's usurpation. But that usurpation was not sudden, or complete; and had he hastened with a few thousand followers to claim the crown, he would have triumphed. But he had little energy of character; and while he remained irresolute, the period favourable for his hopes passed away. Fortunately Harald's reign was short; and in 1040 he was called by the English themselves to ascend the throne. On his arrival he committed an act of impotent vengeance against the memory of his brother, whose bones he caused to be disinterred, and cast into the Thames. They were, however, reburied.

In his government of England, Harda-Canute seems 1040 to have committed only one reprehensible act, and for that he had provocation. A tax being levied for the <sup>to</sup> support of the Danish soldiery, was condemned by the 1042. English, and at Worcester resisted, by the murder of the two collectors. To vindicate his authority, he resorted to severe measures. The ringleaders were executed, the city pillaged and partly burnt. In other respects he was not unpopular. His kindness to the family of Ethelred did him great honour. To Emma he confided a share in the administration; and to prince Edward, the youngest son of Ethelred, afterwards named the Confessor, whom he recalled from Normandy, he gave a splendid establishment. As he died without issue (the result probably of his intemperance), with him ended the Danish dynasty in England.

Of Harda-Canute's government in Denmark we 1035 have few records. He was negligent and intemperate; <sup>to</sup> and his father's memory, more than his own qualities, 1042.



secured him on the throne. His transactions with Norway deserve especial consideration. On the death of Canute the Great, as we have just related, the sceptre of that kingdom devolved on Sweyn, who had for some years held the government. But his administration was disliked; he and his mother were equally unpopular; and his father had scarcely been dead a year, when both were expelled from the country by the ascendancy of Magnus the Good, bastard son of St. Olaf.\* Sweyn took refuge with his nearest brother in Denmark, and died the same year (1036). If the Danish king was feeble, he was not without ambition. He knew that he should succeed to the English throne; and as, after that event, he should be the sole heir of Canute's extensive empire, he urged his claim to the crown of Norway. Finding Magnus too powerful for him, he met that prince, and concluded a treaty singular in its nature, and in its results important. If either king died without issue, the other was to inherit his dominions. This convention was guaranteed by the chief nobles and prelates of the two countries. Harda-Canute, as we have just related, did die without issue, and the throne of Denmark accordingly fell to

### MAGNUS.

1042 — 1047.

1042 On the arrival of this prince in Denmark, he was  
to received with open arms. He was the son of a saint,  
1044. with whose miracles the North resounded; and his  
own virtues (much less questionable than his father's)  
justified the expectation of a happy reign. To few  
princes, indeed, can history accord more virtues than  
to Magnus; yet he was not deficient in the active  
duties of his station. The Jomsberg pirates who  
had revolted, and whose ferocity was the dread of the  
North, he speedily reduced, and their capital he laid  
in ashes. This was a service both to the Danes and  
the Norwegians for which they could not be too grateful.

\* See Vol. I. p. 273.



But the former, influenced by fickleness or by attachment to their old line of kings, or by mortification at receiving a sovereign from a country which they had twice conquered, soon cast their eyes on Sweyn, son of Jarl Ulfo and of Estrida, sister of Canute the Great. After his father's murder\*, this prince sought refuge at the court of the Swedish king. As he approached man's estate, he grew weary of inactivity, and having something to hope from the generosity of Magnus, he repaired to that monarch in Norway. He did not ask for any portion of Canute's vast possessions : he wanted employment merely under so generous a monarch ; and his request was immediately granted. His talents, his lofty mien, his deportment, and, above all, his skilful flattery, won the confidence of the Norwegian, who made him first minister, and next his lieutenant in Denmark. There was much imprudence in confiding to one so ambitious and so nearly connected with the throne a trust of this nature ; but judging of other men's hearts by his own, Magnus thought that such a trust would for ever bind Sweyn to his interests, and be agreeable to the Danes. On the relics of St. Olaf the young prince swore fidelity to the monarch, and was well received by the people. To deepen this favourable sentiment was his constant care ; and by his affability, his attention to his duties, and his liberalities, he completely succeeded. When secure of their affection, he openly revolted. Magnus assembled an armament, proceeded to Denmark, defeated and expelled the usurper, who again sought refuge at the Swedish court.

No sooner was this enemy vanquished, than another 1044 appeared in the pagan bands, who occupied all the eastern shores of the Baltic, that are now comprised 1045. to in the Russian monarchy. These men, scarcely less ferocious than their allies the Jomsberg pirates, invaded Sleswic, wasting every thing with fire and sword. Magnus flew to oppose them, and, after a severe struggle, triumphed. During his absence, Sweyn returned from

\* Vol. I. p. 267.

Sweden, reduced Scania, and passing into Zealand and Funen was again acknowledged by the people. Victory, in two or three successive actions, still declared for the monarch. Yet the cause of Sweyn was not destroyed. In the assistance of the Swedish king, in the adventures on all the maritime coasts of the Baltic, and still more, in the attachment of the Danes, he had resources which even the power of Magnus was not wholly able to destroy.

1045. A third enemy now appeared in Harald, surnamed *Hardrade*,\* or the Stern, the son of Sigurd, and the half-brother of St. Olaf. If there be any truth in the ancient sagas, his adventures were most extraordinary. He was present at the last fatal scene of Olaf's life; and from Norway he fled to the court of the Russian duke Jaroslaf, whose service he entered. With Elisif (Elizabeth), daughter of Jaroslaf, he became deeply enamoured; but his suit being unsuccessful\*, he repaired to Constantinople, and was admitted amongst the Varangians, or Scythian guards of the emperors. By his valour, and his birth, he obtained at length the command of that formidable, though small body, and by his exploits invested his name with much lustre. Heading an expedition against the pirates of the African coast, he was the victor in several battles, and the owner of immense booty, a portion of which he sent to his friends in Russia. He was afterwards employed in Sicily, in Italy, and in a journey to the Holy Land. In all this, there is no great improbability; but what follows is too romantic to be credited. As the reward of his services, Harald had demanded the hand of a princess of the imperial family, and had been refused. "Those Væringjar," says Snorro, "who were in Miklagard, and received rewards for their services during the war, have said since their return home to the North, that they were told in Greece by wise and grave men of that country, that queen Zoe herself wished for

\* Mr. Herbert says it was *successful*, and that the virgin was plighted to him. Certainly *his* translation agrees better with the tenor of that piece than that of Dr. Bowring in Wheaton.

Harald as her husband, and that this in truth was the cause of her resentment, and of his wishing to leave Miklagard, though other reports were spread among the people. For these reasons the king Constantinus Monomachus, who ruled the empire jointly with queen Zoe, ordered Harald to be cast into prison. On his way thither, St. Olaf appeared to him, and promised him protection ; and on that same street, a chapel has been since erected, which is standing at this day. Here was Harald imprisoned with Halldór and Ulfr his *men*. The following night there came a noble lady, with two attendants, who let down a cord into the dungeon, and drew up the prisoners. This lady had been before healed by St. Olaf, the king, who revealed to her that she should relieve his brother from captivity. This being done, Harald immediately went to the Væringjar, who all rose up at his approach, and received him with joy. They seized their arms, and went to the chamber where the king slept, and put out his eyes. The same night, Harald went, with his companions, to the chamber in which Maria slept, and carried her away by force. They afterwards proceeded to the place where the gallies of the Væringjar are kept, and, seizing two vessels, rowed into the Bosphorus (Sævidar-sund). When they came to the iron chains which are drawn across the sound, Harald ordered all his men who were not employed in rowing, to crowd to the stern with their baggage, and when the gallies struck upon the chains, to rush forward to the prow, so as to impel the gallies over the chains. The galley in which Harald embarked was carried quite over on to the other side, but the other vessel struck upon the chains, and was lost. Some of her crew perished in the water, but others were saved. In this manner, Harald escaped from Miklagard, and entered the Black Sea, where he set the virgin on shore, with some attendants, to accompany her back to Miklagard, requesting her to tell her cousin, queen Zoe, how little her power could have availed to prevent his carrying off the virgin, if he had been so minded." The

anxiety of Harald was occasioned by the intelligence that his nephew Magnus had ascended the thrones of Norway and Denmark. Proceeding through Russia, he married the daughter of Jaroslaf; and with her returned to Norway through Sweden.\*

\* Harald is said to have been a poet, and to have sung his own exploits. The piece (Harald's song) has been thus translated by Bowring:—

## 1.

“Our ships\* along Sicilia plied,  
In those our days of strength and pride,  
And Venger's Stag † the warriors carried  
Still on and on — nor ever tarried.  
No craven coward, well I wis,  
E'er track'd a dangerous path like this.  
Yet Gardar's Gerda — gold-ring'd maid! ‡  
Flings scorn upon the hero's head.

## 2.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 3.

“We baled the ship — we, six and ten,  
As broke the mighty seas again —  
As rushed the billows at our feet,  
While toiling on the rowers' seat  
No craven coward, well I wis,  
E'er track'd a dangerous way like this.  
Yet Gardar's Gerda — gold-ring'd maid!  
Flings scorn upon the hero's head.

## 4.

“Eight § virtues have I — I can pour  
Out Odin's drink — and forge the ore —  
Upon the active horse can ride:  
And I can breast the ocean-tide,  
And I can glide on skates of snow,  
And I can shoot, and I can row.  
Yet Gardar's Gerda — gold-ring'd maid!  
Flings scorn upon the hero's head.

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\* In the original — the planks — the keel.

† Venger — a Vikingr of old times — the Stag, his battle-ship.

‡ The alliteration of the original line, and its peculiar poetic beauty, which consists in an allusion to one of the fables of the Northern mythology, is happily preserved in this translation. Gardar-rike — Russia, the Russian land. Gerda, a mythic-poetic name for Harald's mistress Elizabeth. Gerda was the beloved of Freyr, the god of the sun, whose love was so long resisted by Gerda. Freyr had also offered to Gerda a golden ring — hence the allusion. — *F. Magnússen*, *Lex. Myt. Bor.* 116. 439.

§ Yet only seven are enumerated. Professor F. Magnússen supposes the original second line may have been

Oð, fet ek lið, at smiða.

Which may be rendered — I make verses — I arrange the battle — I forge (or smith) the ore.

(These notes are from Wheaton, p. 343.)

On reaching Sweden, where the fame of his riches<sup>1045,</sup> had preceded him, he entered into a league with Sweyn.<sup>1046.</sup> The objects of this league are not very clearly defined; but we may infer that one of them was to place Harald on the Norwegian, Sweyn on the Danish throne. The wealth of Harald hired numerous adventurers; and by the two princes the coasts of Denmark were ravaged. Again Magnus prepared an armament to oppose them; but his surer recourse was policy. To detach the celebrated Varangian chief from the cause of the Dane, he offered him half of the Norwegian kingdom (and also no doubt the eventual succession), on the condition of Harald's allowing in like manner a division of his treasure. The latter eagerly accepted the proposal; he forsook Sweyn, repaired to Norway, divided the treasure, the amount of which is described as wonderfully large, and was admitted to a share in the administration. Contrary to the usual experience of rulers so placed in regard to each other, they lived in harmony to the death of Magnus in the following year. By this defection, or rather by this conversion of an ally into an enemy, Sweyn was compelled to retire. But

## 5.

“Can widow, or can maid gainsay,  
That we have clash'd our swords in fray,  
That we have sought the Southern land,  
And forced the city with our hand?  
At break of day our foes were slain —  
And still the vestiges remain.  
Yet Gardar's Gerda — gold-ring'd maid!  
Flings scorn upon the hero's head.

## 6.

“And I was born in mountains where  
The highland heroes wield the spear.  
My war-ships, fear'd by men of flocks,  
I guide across the ocean-rocks,  
And long o'er ocean's waves have bounded,  
And many an ocean-isle surrounded.  
Yet Gardar's Gerda — gold-ring'd maid!  
Flings scorn upon the hero's head.”

It had before been translated by several writers, especially by Mr. Herbert, in a very different manner: that gentleman, however, had not seen the original *Knyttlinga Saga*.



he had his partisans in Denmark, and Magnus, at his death, had the generosity to declare him his successor in that kingdom. To Harald was left the Norwegian throne. Thus the two adventurers became kings, in little more than a year after the arrival of Harald in the North.

The surname of Harald *the Good*, sufficiently establishes his character. He was indeed an admirable king and a virtuous man. Much praise is awarded to a code of laws which he compiled ; but they no longer exist in their original form.

## SWEYN II.

1047—1076.

1047. As with Harda-Canute had ended the ancient male line of Denmark — a line that traced itself to Odin — Sweyn II. may be called the founder of a new dynasty. That dynasty occupied the throne to the extinction of its male line in Valdemar IV., when it was succeeded by the reigning house of Oldenburg.

1048 Scarcely was Sweyn invested with the dignity, when  
to he found an enemy as powerful as Magnus, and less  
1070. generous, in Harald Hardrade, who claimed the Danish crown. The assertion of this claim led to many years of warfare, ruinous to both kingdoms, but especially to Denmark, the coasts of which were often ravaged. In general the advantage rested with the Norwegian monarch, who, in 1064, obtained a great victory over the Danish fleet at the mouth of the Nissa. With great difficulty Sweyn escaped into Zealand, and began to collect a new armament. Fortunately the mind of Harald was now disposed to peace. Sixteen years of hostilities had brought him little advantage ; the fortune of war was dubious ; and the Danes, like their king, were averse from a foreign yoke. The two monarchs met, and entered into a treaty, which left affairs just as they had been at the death of Magnus.

These were not the only hostilities in which they were engaged. Both undertook predatory expeditions to the English coast; but they could obtain no advantage over the vigilant and intrepid monarch (William I.), who now swayed the sceptre of that kingdom.\* Sweyn too had the mortification to see his own coasts ravaged (those of Holstein) by the Vandalic pirates, who had renounced Christianity, and who laid both Sleswic and Hamburg in ashes. Before he could reach them they retired. Subsequently he was persuaded to march against the Saxons, then at war with the emperor; but his troops having no inclination to exasperate a people with whom they had long been on terms of amity, he desisted from the undertaking.

Sweyn showed much favour to the church. He <sup>1066</sup> built many places of worship, which he endowed with liberality; and he founded four new bishoprics: of these <sup>to</sup> two were in Scania, viz. Lund and Dalby, which were <sup>1070.</sup> subsequently united; and two in Jutland, viz., Wiburg and Borglum. Yet this liberality did not preserve him from quarrelling with it. His chief vice was incontinence. Numerous were his mistresses, and numerous his offspring: thirteen sons are mentioned, of whom five succeeded him†; but the number of his daughters was much inferior; two only appear by history. For this vice he could not hope to escape the censure of holy mother, and he married. He did not, however, marry with that mother's consent; but chose for his queen a Swedish princess within the prohibited degrees of kindred. When Adalbert, archbishop of Bremen, heard of the union, he angrily condemned it, and by his messengers threatened the king with excommunication if he did not separate from the princess. The king resisted, and even threatened to lay Bremen (the legate's residence) in ashes; but the power of the church was too great even for him to resist, and in the

\* We merely *allude* to English occurrences, the detail of which must be sought in our own history.

† Harald, Canute, Olaf, Eric, Nicholas or Niels.

end he dismissed his wife, who had the misfortune to be his cousin. There is no reason to infer, with a recent historian of Denmark\*, that he dismissed her to recal his mistresses; for he was now arrived at an age when the empire of the passions could not be omnipotent. But he was probably taught to believe that a real was less sinful than an imaginary crime — fornication than marriage within the fourth degree.†

1070. In another transaction we must admire, as much as we may here condemn, the conduct of the church. Sweyn was a man of strong passions, and of irritable temperament. In a festival which he gave to his chief nobles in the city of Roskild, some of the guests, heated by wine, indulged themselves in imprudent, though perhaps true, remarks on his conduct. The following morning, some officious tale-bearers acquainted him with the circumstance; and in the rage of the moment he ordered them to be put to death, though they were then at mass in the cathedral — that very cathedral which had been the scene of his own father's murder.‡ When, on the day following this tragical event, he proceeded to the church, he was met by the bishop, who, elevating the crosier, commanded him to retire, and not to pollute by his presence the house of God — that house which he had already desecrated by blood. His attendants drew their swords, but he forbade them to exercise any degree of violence towards a man who in the discharge of his duty defied even kings. Retiring mournfully to his palace, he assumed the garb of penance, wept and prayed, and lamented his crime during three days. He then presented himself, in the same mean apparel, before the gates of the cathedral. The bishop was in the midst of the service; the *Kyrie Eleison* had been chaunted, and

\* Mallet, tom. iii.

† But was she not his step-daughter? Had he married the *mother* Gundhilda some years before, and lost her by death? We are not very clear as to the degree of affinity.

‡ See Vol. I. p. 268.

the *Gloria* about to commence, when he was informed that the royal penitent was outside the gates. Leaving the altar, he repaired to the spot, raised the suppliant monarch, and greeted him with the kiss of peace. Bringing him into the church, he heard his confession, removed the excommunication, and allowed him to join in the service. Soon afterwards, in the same cathedral, the king made a public confession of his crime, asked pardon alike of God and man, was allowed to resume his royal apparel, and solemnly absolved. But he had yet to make satisfaction to the kindred of the deceased in conformity with the law; and to mitigate the canonical penance, he presented one of his domains to the church. The name of this prelate (no unworthy rival of St. Ambrose) should be embalmed in history. He was an Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastic, William, whom the archbishop of Bremen had nominated to that dignity, and who had previously been the secretary of Canute the Great. During the long period that he had governed the diocese of Roskild, he had won the esteem of all men alike by his talents and his virtues. For the latter he had the reputation of a saint (and he deserved the distinction better than nine-tenths of the semi-deities whose names disgrace the calendar), and for the former, that of a wizard. It is no disparagement to the honour of this apostolic churchman, that he had previously been the intimate friend of the monarch; nor any to that of Sweyn, that after this event he honoured this bishop more than he had done before.

From this time to his death, Sweyn practised with <sup>1070</sup> much zeal the observances of the Roman catholic church. By his excessive liberalities he injured his revenues; <sup>to</sup> <sup>1076.</sup> and by his austerities, perhaps, his health. A faithful portrait is given of him and of his people by one who knew them well, Adam of Bremen. This ecclesiastic, hearing so much in favour of the royal Dane, proceeded to his court, and, like all other strangers, was graciously received. "Sweyn," says the canon, "is not only

liberal towards foreigners, but well versed in literature ; and he directs with much ability the missions which he has established in Sweden, Norway, and the isles ; from his own mouth have I received most of the facts contained in this history." In his reign the pagans of Bornholm were first converted to Christianity, by bishop Egin. The image of Frigga, which they had been so long accustomed to venerate, they demolished with contempt. Another proof of their sincerity appeared from their offer of their most valuable effects to the bishop. This, unlike most churchmen of the age, he refused to accept ; and advised them to expend it in two noble ways — in the foundation of churches, and the redemption of Christian captives. "The king," proceeds Adam, "has no vice but incontinence." The canon speaks of Denmark as consisting almost wholly of islands. "Of them Zealand is the largest and richest, and its inhabitants are the most warlike. Ledra had been, but Roskild was then, the capital. Next to Zealand in importance was Fionia, which was very fertile, but its coasts were exposed to the ravages of the pirates. The capital, Odinsey, was a large city. To cross from one island was perilous, not only from the stormy sea that rolled between them, but from the pirates. Jutland had a barren soil except on the banks of the rivers, the only parts cultivated : the rest of the country consisted of forests, marshes, and wastes, and was hardly passable. The chief towns lay near the narrow bays on the coast. Scania, always geographically, now politically included in Sweden, is represented as fertile, as very populous, and full of churches. No where, indeed, had Denmark much lack of these structures ; Fionia, Adam assures us, had 100 ; Zealand, 150. "Scania is almost an island, and separated from Gothland by large forests and rugged mountains. Here is the city of Lund, where the robbers of the deep laid their treasures. These robbers paid tribute to the Danish king, on the condition of being allowed to exercise their vocation against the barbarians." Among the Danes,



Adam perceives many other things contrary to justice : he sees little indeed to praise beyond the custom of selling into slavery such women as dishonoured themselves. So proud were the men, that they preferred death to stripes ; and they marched to the place of execution, not only with an undaunted, but with a triumphant air. Tears and groans they held to be unmanly ; and they mourned neither for their wives, nor for their dearest connections.

## HARALD III.

SURNAMED HEIN, OR THE GENTLE.

1076—1080.

As Sweyn left no legitimate offspring, the only claim 1076. that could be made was from his numerous bastards. Harald was the eldest ; but then as he was of a quiet, gentle nature, he was not very agreeable to a fierce people. On the other hand, Canute, the next brother, had distinguished himself greatly in the wars against the pagans of Livonia. There was, accordingly, a dispute when the states assembled, most declaring for Harald, but all Scania for Canute ; and a civil war must have been the result ; but for the bribes of two chiefs, who prevailed on the electors of that province to confirm the choice of Harald. After this decision, Canute refused to remain in Denmark, and passed the rest of his brother's life in his old occupation.

The short reign of Harald affords no materials for 1076 history. Silent, reserved, timid, averse to the shedding to of blood, even for judicial delinquencies, he was little 1080. esteemed. Yet few periods were more happy than that which witnessed his administration. He made new laws, which have been praised and condemned. According to Saxo, whose means of information cannot be disputed, he abolished the judicial combat, and substituted purgation by oath — a change which led to

frequent perjury. But if the testimony of Elnoth be admissible, he enacted other laws which were long valued by the people — so valued, that they made every new monarch swear to observe them.

## CANUTE IV.

SURNAMED THE SAINT.

1080—1086.

1080 This prince, who had unsuccessfully contended for  
to the crown with his brother Harald, and who was now  
1085. unanimously elected, was very unlike his predecessor. Fond of martial glory, he prosecuted the war in Livonia, until he had brought it to an advantageous issue. His next project was one of greater magnitude — to subdue England, which the Danes had learned to regard as a revolted province. It is, however, inconceivable how so wild a project could enter the brain of the king, even though the Norwegians engaged to join in its execution, and though he received aid from his father-in-law, Robert, count of Flanders. Perhaps he only aspired to the recovery of Northumbria. But though a large armament was collected, it never sailed, owing to the intrigues of the English monarch, or the revolt of the pagan Vandals, or probably to both causes combined. To pacify the revolted pagans, he sent money and promises, and detained the fleet on the Jutland coast until the result was known. In the mean time, his warriors, ignorant what caused his delay, began to mutiny: when he had punished some, others vainly conspired against his life; while the rest quietly dispersed, and he was compelled to dismiss the Norwegians with gifts. The armament, therefore, led to nothing but disappointment and exasperation.

1080 Internally the administration of this king was dis-  
to tinguished by great vigour and great love of justice.  
1086. Under the mild sway of his predecessor, and indeed for

the greater part of a century, the local governors were so many tyrants, regardless alike of law, of religion, of decency. Of them he made many severe examples; he punished capitally offences which had become almost inveterate; he applied the law of talion to all convicted of striking or mutilating others; he completely reformed the administration, deposing corrupt judges, and replacing them by others of greater integrity, and we may add of greater sternness. Pecuniary fines — the basis of Germanic jurisprudence — were exerted with a rigour never before experienced. In all these measures the king was abundantly justified; but they gave not the less offence to men hardened by long impunity. Open mutiny or smothered discontent, loud menaces, or secret conspiracies, marked the greater part of his short reign. Even the rigour with which he suppressed piracy made him enemies; if it was agreeable to the great body of his people, it was hateful to the licentious nobles who had so long profited by it.

The conduct of St. Canute in regard to the church <sup>1080</sup> was no less unpopular. He exempted ecclesiastics <sup>to</sup> from all dependence on the secular tribunals; he placed <sup>1086.</sup> bishops on the same level with dukes and princes; he brought the clergy into his council, and endeavoured to give them a voice in the assembly of the states. In this policy we see little to condemn. It may be true, in the abstract, that churchmen should be restricted to their peculiar province, the care of souls; but practically they have never been so; and in giving them influence in public affairs, — in converting the bishops into temporal barons, and the higher clergy into local judges, — Canute acted merely in conformity with the spirit of the times. And indeed he seems to have had good reason for that policy. Churchmen were better informed, more regular in their lives, than laymen: he therefore believed that they would make better administrators of the law; and in that belief he increased their powers at the expense of the feudal nobles. He could not foresee that by thus rendering them inde-

pendent of the crown and of the people, he was preparing a scourge for his successors.

- 1080    Though these measures raised him many enemies,  
       to his prodigality to several churches, and still more, his  
 1086. attempt to make tithes an obligatory impost, rendered three fourths of his people disaffected to his sway. Yet here, too, he is not to be censured by impartial posterity. He, doubtless, saw that if the church must subsist at all, it must not depend solely on so precarious a source as voluntary contributions. He saw that tithes were sanctioned by God's word, and obligatory in the rest of Christendom ; and he thought the impost less oppressive than any other that could be devised. But he did not proceed to his object with sufficient caution ; he was too precipitate : he exasperated where he should have conciliated ; and he was impatient of the least contradiction to his will. In fact, he was a despot ; in most instances a well-meaning one ; but his acts were more evident than his motives ; and while he had no credit for these, he was hated for those. In another respect he was impolitic. Zealand he conferred, as a fief, on his brother Eric, with the title of Jarl ; Sleswic, on his brother Olaf, with the title of Duke ; and by so doing set a precedent for the dismemberment of his kingdom.
1086.    When so many causes of dislike existed, the end of Canute could scarcely be one of peace. He could not carry the tithe question in the states-general ; but by his own authority he levied a capitation tax, partly as a punishment for the resistance which had been shown to his will, and partly for the use of the clergy. The rigour of the collectors was no less offensive than the tax itself. The inhabitants of Vend-syssel broke out into open revolt, and went in search of the king, who, with his wife, his children, and two brothers, sought refuge in the church of St. Alban in Odinsey. There he was soon invested ; the sacred building was forced ; his attendants put to the sword, and Benedict, one of his brothers, laid lifeless on the floor. Seeing that his own death was inevitable, the king knelt before the

altar, and in that posture, according to one account, received the fatal stroke. Another says that he was killed by a lance through the window. Both agree that he died with resignation.

By the church, Canute was immediately placed in the glorious fellowship of saints and martyrs. His claim to this distinction is rather dubious: if he had been a private individual, or less liberal to the clergy, if he had exhibited greater moral virtues, and founded fewer churches and monasteries, assuredly he would have never been deified, — for canonization may be well called so. His widow returned to her father's court, accompanied by one only of her sons, Charles. It is not a little singular that the same destiny was reserved for this son as for the father. Becoming count of Flanders, he was slain by his subjects in a church, and, like his father, “*inter divos relatus*.”

The people of Jutland, proud of having killed one <sup>1037</sup>. king, would elect another, and in conformity with the will of Sweyn II., which set aside the children in favour of the brothers, they passed over the infant sons of St. Canute, and chose Olaf, duke of Sleswic, the third son of Sweyn. Olaf was at that time a kind of prisoner at the court of count Robert of Flanders, whither he had been sent by his despotic brother, on the suspicion of complicity in the mutiny of the fleet. But of that complaint there is no evidence. A heavy ransom is said to have been exacted by the count, before he was permitted to join his new subjects.\*

## OLAF II.

SURNAMED FAMELICUS, OR THE HUNGRY.

1087—1095.

During the reign of this prince, Denmark had one blessing, — that of peace. But it had also one curse,

\* For the way in which history is sometimes perverted to suit party purposes, we gave a good illustration in the Appendix to Vol. I. That of St. Canute (see the Appendix to the present volume) is scarcely better. It contains nearly as many inaccuracies as there are sentences.



—that of famine, which the clergy declared to be a divine infliction for the murder of the sainted martyr, Canute. The people, we are told, died by thousands and tens of thousands, for lack of the mere necessities of life ; and to this cause, if Saxo be correct, is to be attributed the tranquillity of the country. Horses and even dogs were the ordinary nourishment of the people. In a country where agriculture was despised, a barren season could not fail to produce famine ; our only surprise is that the visitation was not more frequent. Prince Olaf bore all the blame ; it was his fault, not want of foresight in his subjects, that occasioned the evil. His personal character does not seem to have been amiable. He is represented as avaricious, despotic, unfeeling ; as regardless of the laws and their administration ; hence tyranny in the great, and licentiousness in the people. According to one account, he was found dead in his bed, after an entertainment which he had given or intended to have given to his nobles and clergy : according to another, he died of a natural disease, regretted by nobody. If the prayer which Saxo puts into his mouth were really his, he does not merit the severity with which he has been treated. Afflicted at the continuance of the famine, he said :—“ O Lord, I can no longer endure the weight of thine hand ! If thou art wroth with my people, spare them, and let me alone suffer ! ”

### ERIC III.

SURNAMED THE GOOD.

1095—1103.

1095, Eric was the fourth son of Sweyn II., and from the  
 1096. jarldom of Jutland was raised by the states to the throne of that kingdom. As the next harvest was one of abundance, the people were again contented, and he obtained credit for the abundance with the same injustice as his brother had been condemned for the

famine. More active than his predecessor, he administered the laws with vigour ; and he destroyed Jomsberg, the stronghold of the pirates, who had again reared their heads during the preceding reign. To keep them in continued subjection, he erected fortresses in their country, and garrisoned them well.

The most remarkable event of this monarch's reign is the erection of Lund into an archbishoprick. <sup>1097</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>1103.</sup> Hitherto, Denmark had depended entirely on the archbishop of Bremen, whose jurisdiction extended over the whole North. The king disputed with the haughty prelate Liemar, who then occupied the see, and by whom he was excommunicated. Instead of submitting, Eric appealed to Rome, and even visited that city to plead his cause in person. He gained it and returned triumphant to his own kingdom. Subsequently (in 1103), on his way to the Holy Land, he again visited the Eternal City, and prevailed on the pope to invest Lund with the metropolitan privileges. The pope could refuse nothing to the brother of a saint, who almost equalled that brother in devotion to the church : besides, the immense authority held by the archbishops of Bremen had rendered them dangerous when they had taken, as they had usually done, the part of the German emperors against the Roman see. By the bull issued on this occasion, Adgar, a descendant of the famous Palnatoko, became primate of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and the islands dependent on those kingdoms.

The cause of Eric's pilgrimage, from which he was <sup>1103.</sup> destined never to return, is not well known ; but it was probably to expiate an homicidal act which he had perpetrated in a fit of anger or of drunkenness. The idle fable of Saxo, that while under the influence of music he killed four of his attendants (or soldiers of his guard), is characteristic enough of that writer, but has obtained no credit in this country since the authors of the Universal History adopted it. Whatever the cause, he resolved to visit the Holy Land, and that too in opposition to the prayers and tears of his people, by

whom he was cherished. Passing through Rome, where, as we have just related, he obtained the erection of Lund into a metropolitan see, he repaired to Constantinople. By Alexis Comnenus he was received with much distinction ; though for some time he was narrowly watched, lest, with all his piety, he should place himself at the head of the Varangian guard, and become troublesome to his host. His manners soon dispelled this diffidence, and he was splendidly entertained. Being supplied not only with provisions and vessels, but with a liberal store of gold, he sailed for Palestine ; but, landing in the isle of Cyprus, he fell a victim to a pestilential disease.

1103. Eric III. was one of the best princes that ever swayed the Danish sceptre. " With his people," says an ancient writer, " he lived like a father with his children ; and no one left his presence dissatisfied." Hence his surname of *the Good*. He never undertook any important matter without consulting his states. His chief fault was incontinence. If, as we are assured, he refrained from the bed of his queen, it was only to indulge himself the more freely with his concubines, of whom he had a considerable number. Saxo assures us that, so far from being offended with her royal lord for this frailty, she admitted the favoured ladies into her own suite, and assisted to adorn them for his gratification. Yet Eric was not far from canonization ; and but for this frailty he would probably have obtained the honour. His liberality to the church, his pilgrimage, his settlement of the Cistercians in his dominions, and his foundation at Lucca of a cloister for the accommodation of Danish palmers, procured him the epithet of saint from more than one writer of the times.

## NICHOLAS.

1105—1134.

- 1103 After Eric's death there was an interregnum of two  
to years. He had left his son Harald governor of the realm  
1105.

during his absence ; but the conduct of that prince was so unpopular, that when the states assembled they excluded both him and his brothers, and resolved to choose some one of his uncles. The eldest, named Sweyn, died before he could be elected. Ubbo, the next prince, refused the dignity ; which then descended to Nicholas, the next in age.

The long reign of this monarch was one of calamities, 1105  
occasioned chiefly by his jealousy of his nephew Canute, to  
second son of the late king. Henry king of the Obo- 1126.  
trites, a Slavonic people who dwelt on the Baltic coast  
from Mecklenburg to Pomerania, was nearly connected  
with the royal house of Denmark, his mother being  
Sigritha, daughter of Sweyn II. As the Obotrites had  
been subdued by at least two Danish kings, and forced  
to embrace Christianity, they were regarded in the light  
of vassals. But Henry, more powerful than any of his  
predecessors, since he had reduced other Slavonic tribes  
to his yoke, would be no vassal to Denmark, though he  
was certainly one to Germany. He first demanded his  
mother's dowry, which he asserted had never been paid ;  
and when it was refused, invaded the southern part of  
Jutland. Nicholas marched against him, and was de-  
feated. To arrest the career of the invader was reserved  
for Canute, who had been invested by his father with  
the ducal fief of Sleswic. This prince not only cleared  
the duchy of its invaders, but carried the war into the  
country of the Obotrites. Henry now sued for peace,  
and was thenceforth the friend of his nephew. Canute  
had saved Denmark from many evils ; and his conduct  
now showed that he was no less excellent a governor  
than he had been a general. He exterminated the ban-  
ditti, restored the empire of the laws, and caused the  
arts of life to flourish. His reputation gave much um-  
brage to the king ; nor was that feeling diminished  
when, after the death of Henry, he was presented by  
the emperor Lothair with the vacant regal fief. With  
this augmented power he maintained tranquillity the

more easily, not in his ducal fief only, but in the whole of Denmark. His eldest brother Harald, whose vices had excluded him from the throne, made many hostile irruptions into Jutland ; but Eric, his next brother, was no less ready than he to protect that kingdom.

1126 The contrast between the conduct of Nicholas and of  
to Canute made a deep impression on the Danes. On two  
1132. of them, the king and his son, it was no less painful  
than it was deep. To hasten his destruction was the  
object of both. The first attempt was to accuse him of  
some crime in the assembly of the states ; but he de-  
fended himself so powerfully, that he was unanimously  
absolved. Disappointed in this view, Magnus requested  
an interview with him, under the pretext of settling all  
differences amicably ; and, while unsuspecting of danger,  
assassinated him. All Denmark was in instant com-  
motion. The kindred of the victim hastened to the  
meeting of the states, and displaying his bloody gar-  
ments, called for vengeance on the murderers. To  
escape the popular indignation, Magnus fled into Swe-  
den ; but Nicholas, who relied on the support of a  
party, endeavoured to brave the storm. He was, how-  
ever, solemnly deposed, and Eric, the brother of Ca-  
nute, elected in his stead. But he refused to comply  
with the decree. He collected troops, and took the  
field against his rival, who exhibited no less activity in  
his own behalf. In the civil war which followed, the  
bishops took part, and fought like the temporal nobles.  
Canute had been the vassal of Lothair, and had de-  
manded the assistance of the empire ; and that monarch  
collecting a small army, marched into Jutland to co-  
operate with Eric in avenging the death of Canute.  
Seeing that the junction of the emperor and Eric must  
be fatal to his cause, Nicholas withdrew the former  
from the alliance by the offer of a large sum of money,  
and by consenting to hold Denmark as a fief of the  
empire. Lothair then returned, leaving the fortune of  
war to decide between the two kings.



The retreat of the Germans was the signal for re-<sup>1132</sup>  
 newed and more fierce hostilities between the rivals. <sup>to</sup>  
 With his usual perversity Harald forsook the cause of <sup>113</sup>  
 his brother Eric, to fight for Nicholas ; and Magnus,  
 who had powerful armies in Sweden, brought reinforce-  
 ments to the war. Success was varied : on the deep  
 Magnus was defeated ; on the land, Eric. But some  
 acts of more than usual barbarity perpetrated by Ni-  
 cholas and Harald at Roskild, diminished the number  
 of their supporters. Still they were enabled to make  
 another stand on the coast near the gulf of Fodvig in  
 Scania. Victory declared for Eric : Magnus fell in the  
 battle ; and Nicholas, with much difficulty, escaped into  
 Jutland. Among the slain were five bishops, and sixty  
 priests. As Magnus was dead, Nicholas declared Harald,  
 the brother of Eric, his successor,—a declaration which  
 did no good to his own cause. To escape the pursuit  
 of his rival, he threw himself into Sleswic, which was  
 better fortified than any city in the North. But this  
 was an imprudent act : in that city the memory of  
 Canute was idolized ; and there he was massacred by  
 some members of a fraternity of which the deceased  
 prince had been the head. Thus fell a monarch who  
 in the early part of his reign had afforded his subjects  
 reason to hope that he would prove a blessing to the  
 realm, but whose subsequent conduct had covered him  
 with universal odium.

## ERIC IV.

SURNAMED EMUND.

1135—1137.

In the reign of Eric IV., who on the death of his <sup>1135</sup>  
 rival succeeded to the government of the whole king-<sup>to</sup>  
 dom, there is little for history. One of his first exploits <sup>1137.</sup>  
 was to put to death his brother Harald, and eleven sons  
 of that prince. There was a twelfth, Olaf, who escaped  
 into Sweden, and became in the sequel king of Denmark.

He next pursued the Vend pirates into their stronghold of Arcona, which he took and destroyed. On his return, he applied himself with zeal to the administration of justice; and was assassinated by a Jutland chief, whose father or brother he had judicially condemned to death. This tragedy took place in the midst, not merely of his court, but of his people, while presiding over an assembly of the Jutland states.

There were candidates for the crown,—1. Canute the son of Magnus, and consequently grandson of Nicholas; 2. Sweyn, a natural son of Eric IV.; 3. Valdemar, the son of Canute king of the Obotrites, who had been murdered by Magnus, and who in 1170 was canonized, like the martyr of that name who had ruled over Denmark. The bias of the assembly was evidently in favour of Valdemar; but as both he and the two other candidates were of tender years, the choice fell on a grandson of Eric the Good by a daughter.

## ERIC V.

SURNAMED THE LAMB.

1137—1147.

1137 The surname of this king will sufficiently explain  
 to his character. He was indeed one of the most pacific  
 1147. of men. Yet he was compelled to fight for his crown; for Olaf, the only son of Harald that had escaped the bloody proscriptions of Eric Emund, appeared at the head of a considerable force, and claimed it. That if hereditary right only was to be consulted, the claim was a valid one, is certain, for he was the only representative of his father, the eldest son of Eric the Good. But the Danish throne was elective; and though the claim was confined to one family, little regard was paid to primogeniture. After many alternations of fortune, Olaf was vanquished and slain (1143). But Eric himself was conquered by the Slavonic pirates of the Baltic, who, though so frequently humbled (if any credit is to

be placed in the national historians), soon re-appeared in numbers formidable enough to alarm the kingdom. This check, and the consequent decline of his reputation in the eyes of a warlike people, induced him soon afterwards to resign the crown, and to profess as monk in the cloister of Odinsey.

On the retirement of Eric the Lamb, the three 1147. princes who had before been rejected on account of their youth were again candidates. Valdemar being deemed still too young, the choice was restricted to the other two. Unfortunately for the interests of order both were elected,—Sweyn by the Lands Thing of Scania and Zealand, Canute by the people of Jutland.

CANUTE V.

SWEYN III.

1147—1156.

1147—1157.

That the division of the sovereignty would inevitably 1147 lead to civil war might have been foreseen by the blind- to est. It was a long and a bloody one, which, though 1157. suspended for a time through the efforts of the pope, who wished all Christendom to arm against the infidels, burst out with renewed fury. Adzer, archbishop of Lund, led the Danish host against the pagans of the Baltic; but the expedition was inglorious; and the remnant which returned from it embraced one of the two parties. The fortunes of both varied; but when Valdemar, the favourite of the nation, joined Sweyn, the advantage was on the side of that king, who gained at least three battles over his rival. At one time Canute was driven from the realm, and forced to seek shelter at the court of the emperor Conrad III. But tranquillity was not the result of his retirement. The Wendish pirates, not satisfied with having defeated the archbishop, and incited by the agitated state of the public mind, ravaged the coasts both of Jutland and of the isles. Finding their king and nobles unable to protect them, the people entered into armed fraternities, which were

consecrated by religion. They not only defended their own coasts, but equipped vessels to cruise in the Baltic, and to surprise such of the pagan ships as they might find detached from the rest. In a few years twenty-two of these vessels took above eighty of the enemy's. Still these were partial, isolated effects, which had little influence over the general mass of misery. When Canute returned as the vassal of the empire, the civil war again raged. Frederic Barbarossa, as the lord paramount, now interfered, and meeting the two parties, decreed that while the title of king of Denmark should be left to the victorious Sweyn, Canute should reign over Zealand as a fief of the Danish crown. This award satisfied neither party, and least of all the nation, which was indignant with both of them for sacrificing its independence to the emperor. Sweyn refused to cede Zealand to his rival; and the civil war was about to recommence, when Valdemar, to whose valour Sweyn owed every thing, prevailed on the one to give and the other to accept, in lieu of that island, certain domains in Jutland and Scania. Peace therefore was procured for the moment; but it was a hollow peace, which the accident of an hour might break.

- 1152 The advantage which Sweyn had gained by the aid  
to of Valdemar he lost by his misconduct. He adopted  
1156. the German costume; imitated the German manners; expressed much contempt for every thing Danish as in the highest degree barbarous; seldom appeared at the national Thing; restored the old judicial ordeal of duel; became luxurious; and levied high contributions on his people. A disastrous expedition into Sweden made him despised as well as hated; and on his return into Scania, he was assailed by the yellings of the infuriated populace. Something worse than this result would have been experienced by him, had not a chief, named Tycho, one of the most influential in the province, rescued him from his position. When at liberty, he allowed his licentious followers to plunder the inhabitants. Many he put to death; and among them was the

brave man who had saved him from their fury. This atrocious ingratitude lost him the favour of Valdemar, who passed over to the side of Canute, and cemented the alliance by marrying the sister of that prince. It was now the object of Sweyn to seize both princes, either openly or by stratagem ; but they were on their guard ; and each was always surrounded by armed attendants. At length he was vanquished, and forced to seek a temporary asylum in Saxony. But he obtained succour from the duke of that province, and from the archbishop of Bremen, who could never forgive the Danes for forcing the abolition of his jurisdiction over the North, and allied himself with the Slavonic pirates, who were always ready to join any party that offered them plunder. At the head of these forces he returned, and compelled the people to receive him as their king. Again Valdemar and Canute marched against him ; but the former, pitying the sufferings of the people, offered his mediation, and tranquillity was for the moment re-established. The chief condition of this treaty was, that the kingdom should be divided into *three* sovereignties ; that Sweyn should have Scania, Canute the isles, and Valdemar Jutland, in addition to his duchy of Sleswic. The whole people abandoned themselves to joy, and Sweyn pretending to join in it, gave a magnificent entertainment to his brother kings in the castle of Roskilda. But at that very festival, he ordered both to be assassinated. Canute fell ; but Valdemar, who defended himself courageously, escaped into Jutland.

The reputation of Valdemar, and above all his words, 1156 easily induced the people to espouse his cause. Pursued by his active enemy, he was constrained to fight 1157. before his preparations were completed. The result, however, was indecisive. In a subsequent and more general action, near Viburg, Sweyn was defeated and compelled to flee. He was eagerly pursued by the victors, who overtook him in a morass, from which the weight of his armour prevented him from emerging ; and he was immediately beheaded. Never did the



Danes suffer more than under this unworthy prince. Enfeebled at home, degraded abroad, without government or security for either person or substance, they were sunk even in their own estimation. But for these disasters they could only blame themselves; they were the inevitable results of their own folly in dividing the monarchy.

## VALDEMAR I.

SURNAMED THE GREAT.

1157—1182.

1157 Never was the joy of people greater than that of the  
to Danes when Valdemar, whose talents had been tried on  
1169. so many occasions, succeeded to the undivided throne. They had need of an enlightened, a patriotic, an active, a firm governor to rescue them from anarchy at home, and humiliation abroad. One of his most urgent objects was to secure his coasts against the pagan rovers. In his first expedition, however, he effected little; his armament was inadequate to the undertaking. In the second, he subdued most of the isle of Rugen, and obtained great plunder. In the third, he had for his ally Henry the Lion, duke of Saxony; and both princes overran the maritime coasts of the Baltic, dictating such terms as they pleased. But such expeditions had never any permanent effect. If the pagans submitted, or fled, scarcely was their victor beyond the confines of their territory, than they recommenced their lawless career. It was so with Valdemar; it had been so with the most valiant of his predecessors. Five or six armaments in succession had only the temporary result we have mentioned. He saw that unless he entirely destroyed their strongholds, cut in pieces their gods, and converted them sincerely to Christianity, no peace was to be expected from them. With these intentions, in

1169, he led another armament against the isle of Rugen, and assailed Arcona. It was situated on the northern extremity of the island, and so defended by nature and art as to be thought impregnable. To the inhabitants Christianity had been announced ; but no sooner were the visiters departed, than they reverted to their idolatry, and expelled the missionaries. To their gigantic idol, Svantovit, they offered human sacrifices, and believed a Christian to be the most acceptable of all. The high-priest had unbounded power over them. He was the interpreter of the idol's will ; he was the great augur ; he prophesied ; nobody but him could approach the deity. The treasures laid at the idol's feet from most parts of the Slavonic world were immense. Then there was a fine white horse, which the high-priest only could approach ; and in it the spirit of the deity often resided. The animal was believed to undertake immense journeys every night, while sleep oppressed mortals. Three hundred chosen warriors formed a guard of honour to the idol ; they too brought all which they took in war to the sanctuary. There was a prestige connected with the temple ; it was regarded as the palladium not of the island merely, but of Slavonic freedom ; and all approach to it was carefully guarded. Valdemar was not dismayed. He pushed with vigour the siege of Arcona ; and was about to carry it by assault, when his two military churchmen, Absalom bishop of Roskild, and Eskil archbishop of Lund, advised him to spare the idolaters upon the following conditions : that they would deliver him their idol with all the treasure ; that they would release, without ransom, all their Christian slaves ; that all would embrace, and with constancy, the gospel of Christ ; that the lands now belonging to their priests should be transferred to the support of Christian churches ; that, whenever required, they would serve in the armies of the king ; that they would pay him an annual tribute. Hostages being given for the performance of these sti-

pulations, the invaders entered the temple, and proceeded to destroy Svantovit, under the eyes of a multitude of pagans, who expected every moment to see a dreadful miracle. The idol was so large, that they could not at once hurl it to the ground, lest it should fall on some one, and the pagans be enabled to boast of its having revenged itself. They broke it in pieces ; and the wood was cut up into logs for the fires of the camp. Great was the amazement of the spectators to witness this tameness on the part of so potent a god ; and they could only account for it by inferring that Christ was still more powerful. The temple was next burnt ; and so were three others, all with idols. The numerous garrisons of the island were made to capitulate ; the victors returned to Denmark in triumph ; and missionaries were sent to instruct the inhabitants in the doctrines and duties of Christianity. At the instance of bishop Absalom, the island was annexed to the diocese of Roskild. This was a glorious and it was an enduring conquest ; a fierce people were converted into harmonised subjects, and piracy lost its great support.

1169 But with this vigorous effort, piracy was not extir-  
to pated : on the contrary, the Danish coasts were them-  
1175. selves ravaged the following year by the Slavonians. This disaster was owing to the anger of Henry the Lion, duke of Saxony, who had sent a contingent to the corps of Valdemar. He had probably not expected the reduction of Rugen ; he certainly was jealous of his ally's success ; and, to provoke a breach, he demanded half of the treasures, of the captives, of the hostages, and of the tribute stipulated to be paid. There was probably some justice in the demand ; but the king refused to comply with it, and Henry, in great anger, informed the Slavonians that they might consider themselves at liberty to inflict whatever injuries they could on the Danes. How this prince had acquired so great an ascendancy over these people ; how they came to call themselves his vassals, is one of those problems which history cannot

solve. There must have been treaties, and marriages, and conquests, which chroniclers have omitted. The fact of his ascendancy is indisputable. "He was the only prince on earth," says Helmold, "that could put a bridle into the mouth of that ferocious people, and direct it at his pleasure." The vast restless tribes, from Courland to Mecklenburgh, wanted only this stimulus to rise; and they did rise, in numbers too formidable to be resisted. Valdemar and his ministers suffered the tide to roll on: they had the mortification to witness its ravages on their shores; but when it had spent a portion of its fury, they raised an armament, cleared their shores, passed into the Baltic, and, after some advantages, carried the war into the Vandalic territories.\* But what salutary impression could be made on a people who, at the approach of an enemy, plunged, with their substance, into the impenetrable recesses of their forests, and returned the moment that enemy retired? Jomsburg, indeed, one of the most flourishing maritime cities in Europe, was taken, and its great treasures became the prize of the victors; but the place had been taken before by Canute the Great in 1010, and Magnus the Good in 1044. No sooner was it demolished, than it began to rise from its ruins. Valdemar therefore perceived that, as he could not exterminate these numerous tribes, who often acted in a general confederation, and were always ready to descend upon his coasts, his only hope was in the friendly interference of the Saxon duke. He therefore met that sovereign, conceded all his demands, and had the satisfaction to see Henry issue his mandate, that the Danish coasts should no longer be molested. For some years they were not; but a very precarious surety was that which depended on the will of another person — a person who might, at any moment, change his policy, or whose influence might be destroyed by death.

\* The Vandals were certainly of Slavonic stock. The name, however, though constantly used by the Danish historians, is not the best that might be used.



The two prelates whose names we have mentioned, Eskil and Absalom, had great influence over the king, and over all the affairs of the realm. They were ministers of state as well as bishops, and able generals no less than ministers. Eskil had been educated at Hildesheim, one of the best schools in Germany at that period. His first preferment was a stall in the cathedral of Lund; and he rose through the gradations of the hierarchy to the see of Roskild, and lastly to the archbishopric of Lund, with the primacy of the North. The Danish kings soon found that the church had succeeded to more than the authority of the ancient pontiffs. Under the old system there was not a distinct priesthood; any chief of his clan — any at least who could trace his descent to the deified heroes of the North — could sacrifice. But now all the offices of religion were reserved to a body which, from its indissoluble unity, its vast possessions, its exclusive privileges, its favour with the pope, and its sanctity in the eyes of the people, was nearly irresistible. Eskil, while bishop of Roskild, contended with Eric Emund for the rights of his church — not with spiritual arms merely, but with the temporal sword. Being defeated, he was condemned to pay a fine of twenty pounds of gold. This hostility to the royal will did not prevent Eric's successor from procuring his elevation to the archiepiscopal throne of Lund. In the civil wars between Eric the Lamb and Olaf the son of Harald, he adhered to his lawful sovereign, and was consequently expelled from his see; but on the restoration of the royal authority, he also was restored. In those battles between Sweyn and Canute, the predecessor of Valdemar, he for some time fought valiantly for the former; but, like Valdemar, he turned to the latter, for whom he drew the sword with equal valour. At one time he was a prisoner, but was released through the interposition of his friends, and, above all, through the sanctity of his character, which rendered him amenable only to the pope. It was soon his lot to dispute with Valdemar, on the question of the schism



which divided the church. He declared for Alexander, and in so doing acted in concert with the whole Christian world, except Germany, or rather the German emperor, Frederic Barbarossa, who espoused the cause of Victor. Valdemar, influenced by the emperor, followed the same party, and so did Absalom, the friend of the king. For this adhesion Absalom was excommunicated by his metropolitan; but, aided by the king, he resisted: recourse was had to arms, to try which pope had the better right to the tiara; and the result being unfortunate to Eskil, he was compelled to retire into Sweden. At length he sued for pardon, and obtained it, on the condition of his returning into the royal hands some of the domains which the prodigality of former kings had bestowed on the church of Lund. Some time afterwards he resigned his dignity, and retired to the monastery of Clairvaux, in France. To that retirement he gave the preference, from his intimacy with St. Bernard. He had founded in Denmark five monasteries of the same order (that of St. Benedict reformed); and, notwithstanding his martial prowess, he was regarded by the inmates of Clairvaux as half a saint, especially after his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He died in 1181.

The successor of Eskil in the primacy was bishop Absalom. This churchman, a native of Zealand, and descended from one of the noblest families in Denmark, was the most warlike prelate of the age. His attachment to Roskild was such, that he at first refused the dignity, notwithstanding the earnest entreaties of the electors, and the commands of the king. He would not separate from a people with whom he had been so long acquainted; and to hold both sees was contrary to the canons. When entreaties and rewards were equally ineffectual, application was made to the pope, who commanded him, under ecclesiastical penalties, to assume the primacy, with the legatine authority, and at the same time to hold the sec of Roskild. He therefore submitted, and undertook the multitude of affairs rendered necessary by so many

posts — chief minister of state, general, admiral, judge, bishop, archbishop, legate: how he found time for all his duties may well surprise us. His military talents were of a high order; and his arms were not suffered to rust after his elevation. He had often assisted to subdue the Wend pirates; and against them he would now defend his flock, on the more exposed coasts of his diocese. For this purpose he caused rude huts to be erected on various parts of the coast; and leaving his palace to his clergy, he resided in one or the other of these, according to the exigencies of the occasion. Day and night he was ready to repel any attack of the pirates on his humble flock. Neither the wintry storm, nor the extreme cold, could prevent him from cruising off the coast in search of the enemy. He was even known to leave the altar when danger approached, and to wield the sword with an arm which few lay nobles could equal. Thus, he was one Palm Sunday informed that the pirates had disembarked, and were ravaging the district. Throwing aside his mitre, his crosier, and his pontifical vestments, he hastily assumed his armour, summoned his household dependents, marched to the spot, and compelled them to retire with great loss to their ships. But if he was thus martial, he was by no means inattentive to the duties of his station. He was an active bishop, and a generous patron of letters. By him Sweyn Aggesen and Saxo Grammaticus were enabled to write their respective histories. He paid great attention to the school which Eskil had founded; and, in the distribution of church patronage (and his was immense), he always gave the preference to the men, who, *cæteris paribus*, excelled in literature. Hence he exercised a much greater influence than his predecessor over the destinies of the kingdom. In the Thing his voice was always heard with respect; he was a stout advocate for the national independence; and his ascendancy alike over the sovereign and nobles frequently enabled him to restore

peace when other means of reconciliation were wanting. Nor must we omit to state, that to him the city of Copenhagen owes its origin. In 1168 it was a mere fishing village. The bishop erected a fortress on the spot as a defence against the sea-rovers, and in it placed a strong garrison. The security afforded by the place attracted many settlers to it; it rose into wealth and population, and by Valdemar was annexed to the see of Roskild, to remain dependent on an authority which had called it into existence. By the successors of Absalom it was endowed with a municipal charter, and its privileges confirmed by the crown.

There was but one circumstance to diminish the <sup>1176</sup> popularity of Valdemar and his archbishop. The latter, <sup>to</sup> a strenuous advocate of all ecclesiastical privileges, <sup>1179.</sup> persuaded the former to enforce the collection of tithes even by the sword. The ascendancy of their characters, and the services which both had rendered to the country, averted mischiefs, that would have followed had any other persons acted with equal rigour in regard to that obnoxious impost. Both thought that resistance to this impost was double guilt — rebellion and impiety, — and on this belief they acted. But they had other reasons for severity. The Scanians, who most distinguished themselves by their hostility to the impost, were also unfriendly to bishops, and still more to clerical celibacy. Nor were they satisfied with remonstrances; they flew to arms, and the archbishop was compelled to retire. But he retired only to collect an armed force; and being joined by the king, he returned to the province. As both were lenient, they tried what could be effected by negotiation. But the insurgents were impracticable: probably they believed that both were afraid of them; and they persisted in their rebellion, until they were routed with great loss. Their only resource was to throw themselves on the king's mercy, and they were readily pardoned. Still they refused to pay the tithes; and as Valdemar dreaded greater evils, he prevailed on

the archbishop to suspend the collection until the minds of his flock were more accessible to reason.

1166 Long before the death of Valdemar, the states of the  
 to kingdom, grateful for the services which he was every  
 1177. day rendering to his people, at the perpetual risk of his  
 own life, declared his son Canute his successor. In  
 1177 the young prince was joined in the administration.

1180. The transactions of Valdemar with the sovereigns of  
 Norway will be noticed in the chapter devoted to the  
 history of that kingdom. Those with the empire were  
 of a more complicated and not less interesting charac-  
 ter. It was the object of Conrad III. and of Frederic  
 Barbarossa, to make both him and his kingdom entirely  
 dependent on the empire. To the latter this object was  
 of greater importance, since in his perpetual disputes  
 with the spiritual head of Christendom he wanted all  
 the support that could be obtained. As little could be  
 effected by embassy, he had at least two interviews with  
 Valdemar, who was accompanied by Absalom. On  
 the first occasion Frederic rather forced than persuaded  
 him into an act of homage. There are writers who  
 contend that this homage was rendered only for the  
 conquests which the king had made on the Baltic coast,  
 or at most for the duchy of Sleswic. The contrary,  
 however, is apparent from written instruments. On  
 another occasion the emperor had need of Valdemar's  
 aid against the duke of Saxony, Henry the Lion ; and  
 the king conducted that aid in person. Arriving with  
 his fleet at Lubeck, his majestic presence won the ad-  
 miration of the German princes. From the emperor he  
 received many favours, and the question of homage  
 for the kingdom of Denmark was this time waved. We  
 are not told why Valdemar so readily abandoned the  
 Saxon duke (whose daughter was the wife of his son  
 Canute) for the emperor ; but interest was probably the  
 chief motive. Flattered by the proposal of a twofold  
 matrimonial alliance between his family and that of  
 Hohenstauffen, he left the unfortunate Henry to his fate.  
 These alliances, however, were not solemnised, owing



to the youth of the parties, and still more to the heavy sum demanded by Frederic as dowry.

On his return to his own dominions, Valdemar was 1182. preparing for another expedition against the Slavonians, — probably to reduce them under his sceptre, and to obtain the same ascendancy over them as Henry the Lion had possessed — when death surprised him in Zealand, in the forty-eighth year of his age. Never was monarch more lamented; he was indeed a great and a good one. As a conqueror, and a conqueror over savage enemies, whose humiliation was necessary to the repose of the kingdom, he was celebrated throughout Europe. But he was also a legislator. Three different codes emanated from his authority: — the law of Scania, which was founded on the ancient customs of the inhabitants, was also amplified by new provisions, rendered necessary by an improved state of society. Such as were essentially pagan were rejected; others, pagan in their origin, were easily made applicable to Christian times. This code was published in two parts, — the ecclesiastical and the civil — the former in 1162, the latter in the following year. 2. The Zealand law or code was also founded on the unwritten observances of the inhabitants; which observances were altered, modified, curtailed, or amplified, according to the actual necessities of the period. They were published in 1171, and were also divided into two portions — the civil and the ecclesiastical. These codes, with the addition of the Jutland law, which was added by Valdemar II. form the basis of the present law of Denmark. From the reign of this able monarch, the rights of all classes in the community were more clearly defined. But those of the agricultural class were not improved by the change of circumstances. Prior to Valdemar's reign even the peasants attended the provincial Thing in arms. They exercised the right of suffrage which they had derived from their pagan ancestors, with as much freedom as the noble. But when feudality made such progress in the kingdom; when compelled



to exchange their allodial for vassalitic lands, and to march at the bidding of their temporal or ecclesiastical chief, they lost their noble independence. Yet from evil comes good. Many of them had been unruly subjects ; if unable to carry any thing by clamour, they had used their arms with better effect, and through their numerical superiority, they had too often prevailed on the calm wisdom of the old chiefs. Now they were no longer allowed to appear in arms, and the change was a blessing.

## CANUTE VI.

1182—1202.

1182. This prince had been crowned in his father's lifetime, and from his fourteenth year had been admitted to a share in the government. His accession therefore to the undivided sovereignty was expected to pass without opposition. But the people of Scania elected another sovereign — Harald, a grandson of prince Magnus. The contest, however, was short lived ; they were reduced, and their ruler compelled to flee into Sweden.
- 1182      The reign of this monarch was one of conquest and  
to      of prosperity. Soon after his accession, Absalom the  
1189.      archbishop led an armament against Bogislas duke of  
Pomerania, who exhibited ill-will to Denmark and her vassals, and obtained a complete victory over the enemy. During the two following years the warlike operations continued, and Bogislas at length was compelled to throw himself on the royal mercy. Besides offering a large quantity of gold, he did homage for all his possessions to Canute. The two dukes of Mecklenburgh were also reduced, and acknowledged fealty to him. The submission of two such provinces, which had been dependent on Henry the Lion, and had subsequently acknowledged the superiority of the empire, filled the king with so much pleasure, that he assumed the title of king of the Vandals. To this title he had, in his

opinion, a two-fold claim : first, in virtue of the investiture of his ancestor, Canute duke of Sleswic, with the royal fief of the Obotrites\* ; and, secondly, in virtue of his present conquests.

To assume the feudal supremacy over these regions 1183 was a blow struck at the authority of the emperor to Frederic Barbarossa. Between these potentates there 1188. was a misunderstanding from the very commencement of Canute's reign. Frederic invited him to his court under the pretext of drawing more closely the amicable bonds which had been formed between him and Valdemar ; but as the king suspected that this was only a lure to enforce the payment of homage, he evaded compliance. It soon appeared that such was indeed the intention ; for he was formally summoned to visit the diet for that purpose. A second refusal to attend so exasperated Frederic that he threatened to confer the fief of Denmark on some other vassal. The king replied, that before he could give it, he must first take it. All negotiation being useless, the emperor offered the greatest insult to the majesty of Denmark, by sending back to her own country the sister of Canute, who had been betrothed to his second son, the duke of Swabia. From this moment the breach was irreparable ; and the king turned with more zeal to the cause of his father-in-law Henry the Lion.

The next three years were years of tranquillity for 1191 the realm ; but its peace was now disturbed by a to bishop and a member of the royal family. Valdemar, 1202. a bastard son of Canute V., held the see of Sleswic. In addition, the king had conferred on him the government of the duchy until Valdemar, the king's brother, for whom the fief was destined, reached an age fit to govern. When that age arrived, the prince was knighted, and at the same time invested with the duchy, of which he hastened to take possession. The bishop had tasted the sweets of power, and he was deeply hurt at its withdrawal : from that moment he became the enemy of

\* See before, p. 185.

the king. Determined on revenge, he entered into alliance with all whom he knew to be hostile to Canute ; and, among others, with Adolf of Schawenburg, count of Holstein. When his preparations were matured, he threw off the mask, declaring that his right to the Danish throne was as good as the king's, and demanding a share of the sovereignty. Passing into Norway, which at that time was not on friendly terms with Denmark, he obtained supplies, returned to the latter kingdom, and assumed the royal title. At the same period another army, led by the count of Holstein, marched towards the Eyder to support his views. To Canute it was evident that their operations could not be long sustained ; that the invaders would soon be in want of provisions, and disperse of themselves. Instead therefore of risking an action, he quietly watched the motions of the bishop. The result justified his policy ; the treasures of Valdemar were speedily exhausted ; his mercenaries disappeared ; he threw himself on the royal mercy ; but was conducted a close prisoner to a strong fortress in Zealand (1194). Adolf yet remained ; the king marched against him, and forced him to sue for peace. But that peace was of short duration. The count being required to do homage to Canute for some of the domains which he had obtained by the deposition of Henry the Lion, refused to acknowledge any other superior than the emperor ; and to fortify himself against the vengeance of the king, he entered into an alliance with the margrave of Brandenburg, whose territory adjoined the Vandalic dominions of the Dane, and who had an interest in preventing any further augmentation in that quarter. To assail both, Canute sent an armament to the northern coast of the Baltic ; and as the venerable Absalom was now too old and too infirm for active warfare, the bishop of Roskild was invested with the command. The result was not very favourable to the king. Two years afterwards, however, he took the field in person, and forced Adolf to accept terms of peace : the chief were, that Dithmarsh, with the strong

fortress of Ratzburg, should be ceded to Denmark (1200). But in this, as on the former occasion, tranquillity was of short duration. Adolf again quarrelled with his ally; and Valdemar, the king's brother, invaded Holstein. The result was favourable to the Danish arms: Adolf, who had thrown himself into Hamburg, was compelled to leave it, and to witness the fall of Lubeck, which was feudally subject to him. Most of Holstein was now reduced; and the duke having, in the king's name, received the homage of the towns and nobles, returned to Sleswic. No sooner had he left the province, than the count re-appeared; but it was only to be made prisoner, and conveyed in triumph to one of the Danish fortresses. The king himself soon appeared amidst his new subjects; and at Lubeck he received the homage of the great vassals of Holstein, Dithmarsh, Stormar, Ratzburg, Schwerin, and other lordships, which were now subject to him, but which he could not incorporate with the monarchy, because they were dependencies of the empire, and for them he must himself do homage to the chief of that empire. This was a proud day for Denmark; but that pride was much alloyed by the sudden death of Canute, in the very flower of his age.

The flourishing state of Denmark under this prince is well described by Arnold of Lubeck. He alludes to its vast commerce, to its ceaseless activity, to its constantly increasing wealth, to its improvements in the arts of life, to its military reputation, to its zeal for learning. Many Danish youths, he informs us, were annually sent to study at Paris, where they distinguished themselves in philosophy, law, and theology. Many became admirable canonists; many subtle didacticians. The visits of young Danes to the capital of France may be explained by the union of Ingeberg, sister of Canute, with Philip Augustus. That union indeed was for many years an unhappy one; she was dismissed to make way for a concubine; until the monarch was compelled by the pope to receive her back to his palace.

1201. Towards the close of Canute's reign died archbishop Absalom, who had held the see of Roskild since 1158, and the primacy since 1178.

## VALDEMAR II.

SURNAMED THE VICTORIOUS.

1202—1241.

1202. As Canute VI. died without heirs male, the choice of the states fell on his brother Valdemar, duke of Sleswic, who, as we have just related, had given some proofs of military talent.
- 1203, Like his predecessor, the new king repaired to Lu-  
1204. beck to receive the homage of the conquered inhabitants; and there he assumed the titles, "King of the Slavonians," and "Lord of Nordalbingia." In the midst of his triumph he offered to release count Adolf, provided the latter would for ever renounce all pretension to Holstein with his other domains north of the Elbe, and engage not to make war, either personally, or through his allies, on the king of Denmark. The conditions were accepted; and hostages being given for their execution, the count was enlarged. Imprisonment seemed to have sobered him; for he passed the rest of his days in tranquillity.
- 1204 Having fomented the troubles of Norway in revenge  
to for the aid given to bishop Valdemar, and exacted an  
1210. annual tribute from Erling, whom he had opposed to Guthrum\*, the Danish king departed on a more distant expedition,—against the pagans of Livonia. It was attended, however, with no great success: the best that can be said of it is, that it was not disastrous. A subsequent expedition into Sweden was more unfortunate: he was signally defeated; but peace was made on terms sufficiently honourable. About the same time the na-

\* See the chapter on that kingdom.



tional arms regained their former lustre by the conquest of Eastern Pomerania, the duke of which did homage to Valdemar.

From the prison to which he had been consigned by Canute VI. the bishop of Sleswic was no inattentive spectator of events. He longed for revenge ; but he must first recover his liberty. In this view he applied to the pope, to the archbishop of Lund, to many prelates of Denmark, and even to the queen, and interested them so far in his behalf, that Valdemar, at their intercession, agreed to release him, on the condition of his never again entering Denmark, or any other place where he might give umbrage to the state. Of these conditions the pope was a guarantee, and he repaired to Bologna ; but that city he soon left to urge his interests with the chapter of Bremen, some members of which showed a disposition to elect him. The king immediately complained to Innocent III. that Bremen was, of all cities, that where the bishop, if elected, would be most likely to injure him ; and the pope, admitting the justice of the plea, commanded the prelate to desist from aspiring to the vacant dignity. That command he disregarded. Philip of Swabia, now head of the empire, was hostile to the Danish king : from him the bishop readily obtained troops, and with them hastened to Bremen, where he was soon elected. But Burkard, the other candidate, being favoured by the chapter of Hamburg, which had a voice in the election equal to that of Bremen, also assumed the archiepiscopal dignity, and obtained troops from the Danish king. What confirmed the triumph of the latter was the suspension of bishop Valdemar by the pope, and the death of his patron Philip. Otho, the new emperor, concurred with the pope and with Valdemar in expelling the bishop from Bremen. But on the death of Burkard, bishop Valdemar was introduced to the see, with the full concurrence of the emperor. In revenge, the Danish king espoused the interests of Frederic II. king of Naples, in opposition to those of Otho. For this service the grateful Frederic ceded to the Danish crown

the conquests which Valdemar and his predecessor, Canute VI., had made in the empire and in Slavonia. But the letters-patent containing this cession (dated from Metz in 1214) could have no validity, since Otho was yet obeyed by a considerable portion of the empire. Still the cession was a triumph. Not less so was the excommunication of Otho and of archbishop Valdemar by the pope. The first soon died ; the latter, succeeded by the bishop of Osnaburg, retired to a monastery, and was for ever dead to the world.

- 1219      Freed from the cares which had so long distracted  
     to      him, the king again turned his eyes towards Livonia.  
 1223.      His former successes in that region had not corresponded  
     with his preparations : the bishop of Riga was persecuted  
     alike by the pagan inhabitants and the Greek Christians :  
     the glory of vindicating the true faith was no slight one  
     in his estimation ; but the ambition of reigning over  
     the whole maritime coast of the Baltic, from Holstein  
     to Livonia, was a still greater inducement for under-  
     taking a new expedition. Never had Denmark equipped  
     so great an armament as that which now left her ports.  
     The Esthonians, against whom his attacks were chiefly  
     directed, prepared to receive him, but they were defeated ;  
     a new city, Revel, was built, to awe the province ; and a  
     Christian bishop made it his metropolis. The advantages  
     resulting from this conquest were almost neutralised by  
     the hostility of the bishop of Riga, who regarded his new  
     brother as an intruder on his own domain. He claimed  
     the greater part of Esthonia as a part of his jurisdic-  
     tion, and he sent his missionaries through it to reclaim  
     it from idolatry. On the other hand, the archbishop of  
     Lund, in behalf of his royal master, prohibited those  
     missionaries from labouring in their vocation, and sent  
     those of his own country and his own church to op-  
     pose them. It will scarcely be credited by modern  
     readers — though the fact seems indisputable — that  
     the Danes actually hung an Esthonian prince for no  
     other crime than that he had received baptism at the  
     hands of the bishop of Riga's dependents. What

were the motives — shrewd though pagan — to infer from this and similar facts other than this — that the god of the Danes was not the god of the Germans? The pope and the emperor declared for the Danish king, in opposition to the complaints, the remonstrances, of the bishop. At length Valdemar, of his own accord, abated much of his pretensions, and allowed a portion of the disputed territory to be ceded to the bishop, and to the Christian knights whom that bishop had taken into his service.

At this period Denmark was at the summit of her <sup>1223</sup>. glory. Her descent was more rapid than her rise. There are few instances in all history where that descent is so remarkable. The occasion of this change was a man insignificant in himself, and in his influence. Among the vassals whom Valdemar had acquired by his successes over the count of Holstein, was Henry count of Schwerin. In granting to Henry the investiture of the lordship, Valdemar had demanded the hand of the count's sister for his natural son Nicholas, whom he had created count of Upper Halland, and, as a dowry, one half of the castle of Schwerin with the dependencies. Whether this stipulation was sanctioned by the count, we know not; but we know that Valdemar had forcibly occupied a portion of the lordship, and conferred it on that son. This was an injustice, and deeply was it revenged. Count Henry repaired to the Danish court, showed great obsequiousness, won the confidence of the king, and one night while encamped in the wood after a hard day's hunting, he caused both Valdemar and his eldest son to be surprised, carried on board a vessel, conveyed to the Mecklenburg coast, and confined in the strong castle of Schwerin! All Europe was in surprise at an event which resembled a tale of knight errantry more than a fact — that the obscure, the powerless count Henry should thus seize the greatest monarch of the North, and cast him like a common felon into a dungeon.

That all Denmark did not rise as one man, and

- 1223 hasten to release its monarch, may, to modern readers,  
 to seem extraordinary. But had it done so, we know not  
 1226. what the result might have been. If those were days  
 of chivalry, they were also days of gross perfidy: as  
 an army approached Schwerin, he would have been  
 transferred to some more distant fortress until he had  
 acceded to all the terms demanded from him. Many  
 were the princely nobles who were ready to share in  
 the responsibility of the act, provided they might also  
 share in its advantages; even the emperor Frederic was  
 inclined to imitate the example of his predecessor in  
 regard to Richard Plantagenet. More ruinous to Den-  
 mark was the captivity of Valdemar, than that of  
 Richard to England. We shall not detail the negoti-  
 ations which, during three years, agitated the realm;  
 but the reverses experienced by the Danish arms may  
 be noticed. The new conquests north of the Elbe  
 were lost. Livonia and Esthonia were freed from de-  
 pendence on the crown. The Slavonic provinces of  
 Pomerania asserted their independence. Lubeck and  
 also Dithmarsh showed a disposition to escape from the  
 yoke. At length the menaces of the pope, and still  
 more the gifts distributed among the leading actors  
 in this strange proceeding, led to the monarch's re-  
 lease. The conditions were that 45,000 marks of  
 fine silver should be paid for his ransom, with all the  
 gold and ornaments which the queen possessed, and  
 complete habiliments for 100 knights; that forty Danes,  
 including two sons of the king, should remain as hos-  
 tages; that all the domains between the Elbe and the  
 Eyder should be ceded to the empire; that all the Sla-  
 vonic conquests should be renounced except the isle of  
 Rugen; that Valdemar should swear never to attempt  
 the reconquest of the territories now abandoned.
- 1226 On his return to his own states, Valdemar applied to  
 to the pope to be released from the oath he had taken,  
 1238. and for the restoration of his hostages; promising that  
 if the application were successful, he would join the  
 crusade. In vain did the pope interfere; beyond the



release from his oath, he obtained no advantage. There were too many interested in the cause of count Henry to leave him thus exposed to regal or papal vengeance. Adolf of Schawenburg, Albert duke of Saxony, the archbishop of Bremen, the prince of Werle—all had profited by the spoil, and all had troops ready to defend their usurpations. In great wrath Valdemar took the field; but his good fortune had left him for ever; and after many fruitless, however ruinous, efforts, he was compelled to make peace with his enemies, and to pay money for the ransom of his hostages. The loss of Lubeck and of all Dithmarsh grieved him more perhaps than the rest; for Lubeck was already a rich and a populous city, the centre of a large commerce. Equally fruitless were his endeavours to recover the Slavonic provinces. They were in the power of the bishop of Riga, and of the Teutonic knights, who could always depend on the favour of the pope and that of the emperor. Revel and a small district of Livonia were at length restored to him.

During the rest of his life, Valdemar applied himself <sup>1238</sup> to the internal administration. He caused a survey to <sup>to</sup> be made of the whole kingdom; and of this important <sup>1241.</sup> document the greater part still remains. There were eight bishoprics, subdivided into parishes, and into Styreshavne or maritime districts, each district to furnish a certain number of men, and each see a certain number of ships, whenever required by the public service. North Jutland had four of these sees—Rypen, Aarhuus, Viborg, Borglum, which together supplied 450 vessels. South Jutland, or Sleswic, one see, was divided into 130 of these districts, each to furnish a vessel. Fionia, Laland, and Langeland, forming the diocese of Odinsey, were rated at 100. Zealand, Moen, Falster, and Rugen, which formed the see of Roskild, were rated at 120; Scania, Holland, and Bleking, subject to the archbishop of Lund, contributed 150.

As a legislator, Valdemar ranks high in the Danish <sup>1240.</sup> annals. In 1240, he promulgated what is termed the



Jutland law \*, but which he intended for the whole kingdom. The attachment, however, of the Scanias and Zealands to their unwritten customs, inclined them to receive this code as supplementary only. To it we shall revert in the chapter appropriated to northern jurisprudence.

## ERIC VI.

SURNAMED PLOGPENNING, OR PLOUGH-PENNY.

1241—1250.

1241. The late king had associated with him in the government his eldest son, by the title of Valdemar III., and when that prince was killed in hunting (1231), Eric, duke of Sleswic, the next son, supplied his room. Eric therefore had been crowned, and had an active share in the government, ten years before the death of his father. At the time he was thus associated in the regal power, he had relinquished the duchy of Sleswic in favour of his next brother, Abel, while Christopher and other brothers had extensive domains conferred on them in different parts of the kingdom. Nothing could be more unwise than such feudal concessions: they were sure to engender quarrels, and eventually civil wars.

1241 Scarcely was Eric on the throne, when he had a  
to deadly quarrel with Abel, duke of Sleswic, his next  
1248. brother. He wished to recover some of the territories  
which his father had been forced to cede, especially  
Holstein: Abel, who was the guardian of the count  
of Holstein's children, resisted, on the specious plea  
that he was bound to defend their interests; but his  
real motive, as we shall soon perceive, was a very different one. The two brothers flew to arms; but an apparent reconciliation was effected between them through the interference of German and Danish friends: Abel

\* See before, p. 201.

resigned the tutorship, and ceased therefore to be responsible for the result. But he evidently nursed a vindictive feeling towards Eric, and he could not long refrain from exhibiting it. He refused to do homage for Holstein, which he determined to hold in full sovereignty. Again was the sword drawn; and though returned for a time to the scabbard, the feeling of hatred rankled in the duke's heart. During this short suspension of hostilities, Eric endeavoured to regain Lubeck, and he sent an armament into the river Trave; but a fleet from Sweden, which had a great interest in the protection of that city, compelled him to raise the siege. The coasts of his kingdom were now ravaged by the combined Swedes and citizens; and at the same time, through the influence of his perverse brother, the count of Holstein and the archbishop of Bremen became his open enemies. Allured by the successful example of Abel, the other brothers also refused to do homage. Seeing that the very existence of the monarchy was at stake, he took the field. Numerous as were his enemies, he created more, and those more formidable than the rest,—his own bishops, who naturally threw themselves into the party of Abel. The ravages committed in the fraternal war were dreadful. At length the city of Sleswic being taken by surprise, Abel fled to his allies; and when he could effect nothing by arms, he had recourse to stratagem. He received with eagerness the proposals of a pacification from the duke of Saxony and the margrave of Brandenburg, who were connected with the regal family of Denmark. The brothers met, swore friendship, and separated.

Freed from that dreadful scourge, civil war, Eric now 1249. projected an expedition into Livonia, to recover the territories which his father had ceded. To defray the expenses, a tax of a silver penny was laid on every plough in the kingdom. With much difficulty he obtained the sanction of the states to this impost; with more difficulty still was it collected, at least in Scania. The inhabitants of that province were fond of rebellion:

they rebelled on the present occasion ; but as usual they were subdued, punished, and made to contribute like the rest of the Danes. The expedition arrived in Esthonia, but its details are very imperfectly recorded in the national chronicles. They merely tell us that the Teutonic knights acknowledged the king's right to what he held, and to what he might hereafter conquer from the pagans. Certainly he made no conquests ; and probably his troops were defeated by St. Alexander Neusky, governor of Novogorod.\*

1250. Eric, on his return, engaged in war with the count of Holstein, who, conjointly, with the archbishop of Bremen and the bishop of Paderborn, laid siege to Rendsburg. To relieve it, the king advanced at the head of a considerable force. But his doom was at hand. Near Sleswic he was met by Abel, who treated him with the utmost deference, with the most obsequious respect ; and so disarmed him, that in the joy of his heart he accepted an invitation to one of the duke's country palaces, in the immediate vicinity of Sleswic. From that palace he was forcibly dragged on board a boat in the Sley, taken to a solitary part of that river, landed, allowed to make his confession, and beheaded. Heavy chains were then fastened to his corpse, and it was thrown into the deepest part of the river. The news was spread that he had perished by accident in the river ; but the monks who had administered to him the last offices of religion, declared that he had been murdered,—by whose contrivance was unknown. The body being afterwards found by some fishermen, confirmed that declaration. It was buried in the church of the monastery. The brethren even asserted that miracles were wrought at his tomb, and they were believed : some years after his death he was canonized ; and he is the fifth Danish prince who has been thus deified.

\* For the exploits of this prince, see History of Russia, Vol. I. (*Cab. Cyc.*), one of the most judicious historical compendiums we have ever seen,

## ABEL.

1250—1252.

To obtain the reward of this fratricide, Abel sent his creatures to the assembly of the states, convoked for the election of a new king. As there was only suspicion, he was permitted to purge himself by his own oath, and by the oath of twenty-four nobles, that he was innocent of the deed. How he could find that number of men to take such an oath, may surprise us; but we must remember that the tenor of it was that “to the best of their belief” the accused party was not guilty of the crime. He was therefore elected and crowned by the archbishop. By lavish gifts to the clergy, and to the nobles who adhered to him, and by confirming his brethren (from whom he had the most to fear) in their respective fiefs, he stifled all murmurs. To avert war, too, which he well knew would lead to his ruin, he surrendered to the count of Holstein the domains which his brother had occupied, and to the Teutonic knights most of what he yet held in Livonia. These concessions did no harm to Denmark; and some of his other measures were decidedly good. He restored the wisest parts of the Danish constitution, especially the annual meeting of the states; he improved the laws; and began to redeem the crown lands, which during the late reigns had been pledged. In short, like all usurpers, he sacrificed to popularity, and succeeded so well that he was enabled to raise an extraordinary impost to complete his work of redemption. In the western parts of Sleswic, however, the collectors met with opposition, and Abel, to punish the disobedience, marched with a body of troops. He penetrated into a country always marshy, and now rendered more so by the rains. Surprised by a strong party of the inhabitants, he fled, and fell into a morass, from which the weight of his armour prevented him from

emerging. In this helpless situation he was discovered and slain.

1252. The mutilated corpse of Abel was left in the marsh, where it remained for some time, and, if tradition be true, to the great annoyance of the whole country. Abel was too great a sinner to lie peacefully in his grave. He became a wandering spirit. Supernatural voices had so terrified the people that they were glad to deliver the corpse to the canons of Bremen, who honoured it with the rites of sepulture. But they too had soon reason to regret the contiguity of the vampire: he was frequently seen out of his tomb; and at length the corpse was disinterred, and buried in a solitary marsh a few leagues from Gottorp. Still there was no respite; and the inhabitants nearest to the place removed to a distance. To this day the superstition has been perpetuated that the murderer on a dingy horse may sometimes be seen, followed by demon hounds, amidst the echoing of the magic horn. Leaving these wild fancies to vulgar admiration, the Christian will scarcely fail to acknowledge that in the death of Abel there was retribution.

Abel left three sons, the eldest of whom, Valdemar, was designed for his successor; but the young prince, returning from the university of Paris, was seized by the archbishop of Cologne, and detained in prison until a ransom of 6000 silver marks was paid. Probably this act was done at the instigation of Christopher, brother of the late king, who knew that he alone was to be dreaded, since he had been already recognised by the states, and his brothers were too young for the duties of government. Besides, the dislike to Abel's posterity was general; and Christopher might well aspire to a throne which, after their exclusion, became his of right. Nor was he disappointed: by the states he was immediately elected.



## CHRISTOPHER I.

1252—1259.

The reign of this prince was even more troubled than <sup>1252</sup> that of his predecessors. Fearing a popular re-action <sup>to</sup> in favour of Abel's sons, who were minors, he claimed <sup>1258.</sup> the guardianship. The claim was resisted by the house of Holstein ; and to decide the contest both parties resorted to arms. The king was defeated ; and though he soon collected a larger force, he found the number of his enemies increased. The people of Lubeck, always hostile to Denmark, and for that same reason always the allies of the counts of Holstein, ravaged the coasts, while those nobles reduced Sleswic. The two margraves of Brandenburg also complained that one of them had not received the dowry promised with his wife, Sophia, daughter of Valdemar II. ; and they joined the common league. Nor was this all : during Abel's reign, there had been some disputes with Sweden and Denmark ; and to allay them a conference had been covenanted between the three kings. The death of Abel had prevented the pacification ; and Christopher, engrossed by other troubles, was unable to give them the satisfaction required. In revenge the Norwegian arrived with a great armament, while 5000 Swedes penetrated into the heart of the country. Never had the situation of Denmark appeared so critical ; but strange to say, its safety lay in the number of its enemies, who became jealous of each other, and of the advantages which each might secure. In this disposition, the offer of mediators was accepted ; and conditions of peace between Christopher and his nephews were at length sanctioned. He agreed to invest those nephews, on their reaching majority, with the duchy of Sleswic ; and they, in return, were to renounce all pretensions to the crown. In conformity with this treaty, Valdemar, the eldest son of Abel, was

released from prison at Cologne, and invested with the government of the duchy. The margrave of Brandenburg was appeased by the pledge of two fortresses, until the dowry could be paid. Thus there remained only Norway and Sweden to be pacified ; and though hostilities existed for some time, they were desultory, and were terminated by a reconciliation. An interview with Birger, regent of Sweden, easily led to that result ; and when Hako of Norway, who had again arrived with a formidable armament, saw that Christopher was sincerely desirous to satisfy him, he now accepted the will for the deed, and became the friend of the monarch.

1256. But the chief troubles of Christopher arose from his  
1257. own prelates. Jacob Erlandsen, bishop of Roskild, a personal friend of Innocent IV., had imbibed the highest notions of clerical privileges. He condemned the influence of the crown in the election of bishops, which was certainly an evil, since royal favourites only were appointed to the rich sees. Acting on his own principle, that bishops had no earthly superior except the pope, he refused, when elected by the chapter of Lund to the primacy, either to allow royal influence any weight in the election, or to accept of confirmation at the royal hands. He next condemned some of the provisions in the ecclesiastical law which Valdemar I. had promulgated in Scania ; and when opposed by the king, he intrigued with the royal enemies. There can be no doubt that in his resistance to the encroachments of the crown, not merely on the freedom of election, but on the ecclesiastical revenues, he was abundantly justified ; but the *manner* of his resistance was censurable ; and still more so was his league with the enemies of the king. If the primate was an archbishop, he was also a temporal baron ; nothing was more easy than to confound the two characters ; and while Christopher determined to punish him in the latter, he chose to forget the privileges of the former. Erlandsen was summoned before the states at Vyburg. In reply he convoked a national

council to be held at Vedel, a town in the diocese of Rypen in Jutland. In that assembly it was decreed that if any Danish bishop were taken and mutilated, or afflicted with any other atrocious injury, by the order, or with the connivance of the king, or any noble, the kingdom should be laid under an interdict, and the divine service suspended. If the same violence were committed by any foreign prince or noble, and there were reason to infer that it was done at the instigation of the king or any of his council, in the diocese of that bishop there should be a "*cessatio à divinis*," and the king during a month should be bound to see justice done: if he refused, the interdict was to be extended over the whole kingdom. After it was laid, no ecclesiastic, under pain of excommunication, was to celebrate any office of religion in the royal presence. The decree was sent to Rome, and confirmed by pope Alexander in October, 1257.

The wrath of the king and of his nobles was roused by this bold, though perhaps necessary, act. But the primate was of an intrepid temper, and quite prepared to share, if necessary, the fate of our Thomas à Becket. In the next diet a number of frivolous and two or three substantial charges were made against him; and he begged time until the next meeting of the states to prepare his answers. In the interim efforts were made to reconcile the two; and they sometimes met. But Erlandsen, by excommunicating a lady of Scania, a favourite of the king, again rekindled the half-smothered wrath of Christopher. Repairing to Lund, the latter held his tribunal, invited all who had any complaint against the archbishop to appear before him, and summoned the archbishop himself to appear and answer whatever might be urged against him. As ecclesiastics were, by a regulation of some standing, amenable to their own laws alone, the churchman denied the competency of the tribunal. In revenge the king revoked the concessions of privileges, immunities, and even of

1257.

domains, made by his ancestors to the cathedral of Lund—a strange and lawless measure, which, if sanctioned by the nation at large, must have occasioned the entire ruin of the church. As well might a private gentleman revoke his father's will, and reclaim property of which the bequest has been sanctioned by the laws of society. The officer who served the act of revocation was excommunicated by the primate, who had also the people on his side. Two or three of the bishops were gained by the court; the rest adhered to their spiritual head. Every day widened the breach between the two chief personages in the nation. The states being convoked at Odinsøy to swear allegiance to Eric, eldest son of the king, Erlandsen refused to appear, and commanded his suffragans also to refuse. The rage of the king was unbounded. From the states which he now convoked at Copenhagen he obtained permission to seize the primate with the other bishops, and imprison them. A brother of the primate's was the instrument of his apprehension, and he was conveyed to a fortress in Fionia. The dean and archdeacon of Lund, with the bishop of Rypen, were next secured; but the two spiritual peers of Odinsøy and Roskild had time to flee from the realm.

1258 In his captivity the primate was treated with much  
to rigour. What his proud spirit could least bear was  
1259. insult: if it be true, that he was forced to wear a cap  
made from a fox's skin, we may smile at what called forth  
the bitter resentment of himself and the pope. The  
king was soon made to repent his violence. In virtue  
of the ordinance of the national council at Vedel, the  
fugitive bishops laid an interdict on the kingdom; the  
pope espoused the cause of his church; and Jaromir,  
prince of Rugen, to whose hospitality the bishop of  
Roskild had fled, was persuaded by both to arm in be-  
half of the altar. Great was the wrath of Christopher  
to see the interdict so well observed, and to hear the  
murmurs of his people. How could he, alone, resist a  
power which had proved fatal to so many emperors

and so many kings, compared with which his was that of the meanest vassal in his dominions? In the hope of obtaining what he called justice, he appealed to Rome. Yet at the same time he endeavoured to dispose his royal neighbours of Sweden and Norway in his favour. *They*, too, had bishops, and the cause of one was the cause of all: it was a struggle, he observed, between the rights of kings and the insolence of their subjects. They promised to assist him in this war alike on the pope and his own clergy, whom he was about to deprive of their temporalities; and had already powerful armaments in motion when intelligence reached them that he was no more.

Whether this monarch died naturally, or through <sup>1259</sup> poison, is doubtful. The suddenness of that death, and the peculiar circumstances in which he met it, could not fail to create the suspicion, and with some minds suspicion is truth. Even the monk whose fanaticism was said to have occasioned the deed, has been indicated by name. In the letter, however, which both his widow and his son addressed to the pope after this event, no one is implicated, and the charge of poison, true or false, was merely stated in general and indefinite terms. That he fell a victim to poison has not been proved, still less that it was administered by a churchman. The evidence, however, is rather indicative of a tragical end, though the causes and the circumstances must for ever rest a mystery.

## ERIC VII.

SURNAMED GLIPPING.

1259—1286.

Eric, the eldest son of the king, was elected by the <sup>1259</sup> states; and as he was only ten years of age at his father's death, the regency devolved on his mother, <sup>to</sup> <sup>1268</sup> Margaret, daughter of Sambir, duke of Pomerania.



That princess had great courage and great prudence, and both were required in the peculiarly difficult circumstances in which she was placed. Some of the bishops were exiles, some in prison, but all protected by the pope, and venerated by the people. Eric, the son of Abel, supported by the counts of Holstein, by the prince of Rugen, and by the exiled prelates, aspired to the throne. The interdict still remained, and consequently the discontent of the people. And now Jaromir, prince of Rugen, and the duke of Sleswic, accompanied by the bishop of Roskild, made a descent on the coast of Zealand, with a formidable army. Margaret collected what troops she was able, and hastened to meet the enemy. The battle was disastrous to the royal party, 10,000 being left on the field. The consequences were still more disastrous — the occupation of Zealand, and the destruction of several towns, (among others Copenhagen, which had recently been invested with municipal rights,) by the victors. Bornholm was next reduced, then Scania, which remembered its primate with gratitude; and the whole kingdom must have been subjugated by the Slavonic prince, had not a tragical death arrested him in his career. This was a heavy loss to the ecclesiastical party; but the bishop of Roskild confirmed the censure, and denied Christian burial to the dead of the royal party. Jutland only remained faithful to the latter. Yet Margaret was not dismayed: notwithstanding the interdict and the absolute prohibition issued alike by the primate and the bishop of Roskild, she caused her son to be crowned. To soothe in some degree the animosity of the former, she released him and all the churchmen; but he would not compromise what he deemed his duty; he refused all overtures from her, and retired into Sweden to await the decision of Rome. For this conduct he has been much censured by modern historians. They should, however, remember that he could not do otherwise: the decision was no longer in his hands, but in those of

the pope, to whom it had been carried by the appeal of both parties. Alexander IV. was dead ; and Urban IV., who was raised to the dignity, took cognizance of the cause. He condemned the primate, and ordered him to resign his archbishopric into the hands of two ecclesiastical commissioners whom he nominated for that purpose. Erlandsen obeyed ; but, hearing that Clement IV. had succeeded to Urban, he hastened to Rome to plead for himself. Clement did not confirm the judgment of his predecessor ; he took up the case *de novo*, and sent a legate to examine on the spot into the circumstances of the dispute, and to decide according to justice. Erecting his tribunal at Sleswic, the papal functionary cited the king and the queen-mother to appear before him ; but they refused on the plea that Sleswic was unfavourable to them. The plea was a frivolous one, and devised only to cover their determination not to acknowledge the competency of the judges. Apprehensive for their safety in a city which depended on the king, the legate and the bishops repaired to Lubeck, whence they excommunicated Eric, his mother, and all who had refused to obey the citation. The primate retired to Rome, where he remained about seven years ; and during that period, the interdict remained in full force.

While these events were passing, others occurred of still greater moment to the queen and her son. On the death of Valdemar (1257), eldest son of Abel, who had been transferred from the dungeons of Cologne to the ducal palace of Sleswic, and who left no issue, the succession was claimed by Eric, the next brother. Abel, who then reigned, had refused to invest him, and he had therefore thrown himself into the arms of his kinsmen, the counts of Holstein, and by their aid had entered on the administration of the duchy. Unable to dispossess him, Margaret proposed to recognise him, provided he would acknowledge that he held the fief by the pure favour of the crown, and not by any right of inheritance. But in every European country except Scandinavia fiefs had long been hereditary : they had

become allodial property ; and Eric refused to sanction a condition which must have proved fatal to the hopes of his family. To chastise him, the queen and her son marched towards the south ; but on the plains of Sleswic they were signally defeated. Flight did not save them from the power of their enemies : they were overtaken and consigned to imprisonment — the former at Hamburg, in the charge of the counts of Holstein, the latter in the fortress of Norburg, subject to duke Eric. There both might have remained to the close of life (for the bishop and the people were equally disaffected), had not Albert of Anhalt, who had married the princess Mechtilda, sister of the king, interfered in their behalf. The queen was soon released (1263), and enabled to resume the administration : the king was confided to the guardianship of John, margrave of Brandenburg, also connected by the ties of blood with the royal family. It was at length agreed that he should be enlarged, on the condition of his marrying Agnes, daughter of the margrave, whose dowry, 6000 marks, was to be placed against his ransom. Returning to his capital (1264), he was now old enough to assume the reins of government.

1272 In 1272 died Eric, duke of Sleswic — an event  
to which again disturbed the tranquillity of the country.

1275. He left two sons, Valdemar and Eric, both minors. To the guardianship a claim was put in by the king, and another by the counts of Holstein. Both parties flew to arms, and at first the counts had the advantage ; but seeing the royal forces augmented, they consented to resign the trust into the royal hands, on the condition of his investing the eldest with the duchy when arrived at the due age. Eric now celebrated his marriage with Agnes of Brandenburg ; and he had also the satisfaction to see the convocation of a general council, (that of Lyons, 1274,) destined to remove the interdict from his kingdom. He was, however, enjoined not merely to receive the primate into his friendship, but to pay him 15,000 marks by

way of indemnification. This may appear a large sum, and it has been censured by historians. They forget, however, to tell us that during the long absence of the archbishop, he had been receiving the revenues of the see—an amount many times greater than the indemnification. The following year (1275), a national council held at Lund finished the work of reconciling the king with the church.

But if Eric was thus at peace with his spiritual, he <sup>1280</sup> was often in disputes with his temporal, barons, on <sup>to</sup> whose rights he was always ready to encroach. Not- <sup>1286.</sup> withstanding his treaty with the counts of Holstein, he endeavoured to evade the investiture of Sleswic in favour of Valdemar. Both parties, however, were equally to blame; for when Valdemar was invested, he claimed other domains in Frisia, on the plea that they belonged to his paternal uncle. When this was refused, he leagued himself with the enemies of Denmark: the plot was discovered, and he was imprisoned while at Eric's court. But his detention was of short duration; and at the intercession of his allies, he was enlarged, after subscribing some conditions which more clearly established the authority of the crown over the fief. Still, if one enemy was vanquished, others remained, and to some of them, or rather to his own vices, the king fell a victim. To the count of Halland he had been oppressive: he had deprived him of his domains, and if report were true, dishonoured the wife during the husband's absence. Revenge was sworn, and the oath was kept. One night, after hunting, he was murdered asleep at a rural village in Jutland. The king's chamberlain was privy to the design: it was he who guided the assassins (all in masks) to the bed. They subsequently fled to Norway, by the king of which they were protected against the vengeance of Eric's family.

Thus ended a reign of troubles, most of which cannot with any justice be imputed to the monarch. Yet his own vices added greatly to his misfortunes. After his peace with the church, when moderation might have



been expected from him, he frequently seized the church tithes, and applied to his own use the produce arising from the monastic domains. With his nobles he was no less severe ; and more than once (especially in 1262) he was in danger of being driven from the realm by their united arms. Eric promulgated the code, called *Birke-rett*, to the provisions of which we shall allude on a future occasion.

## ERIC VIII.

SURNAMED MÆNVED.\*

1286—1319.

1286     At his father's death Eric was only twelve years of  
 to     age. A guardian and regent was therefore necessary ;  
 1308.     and the post was demanded by Valdemar, duke of  
        Sleswic, the nearest male kinsman of Eric. The queen-  
        mother, Agnes of Brandenburg, willing but afraid to  
        refuse, at length recognised his claim. There could  
        not have been a better choice : he forgot the wrongs of  
        his family in his new duties. In the first assembly  
        which he convoked, he called for vengeance on the mur-  
        derers of the late king. They were in alarm ; and to  
        escape the consequence, they entered into a plot, the  
        object of which was to seize the young king, and de-  
        tain him as a hostage, until their pardon should be  
        declared by the states. That plot did not escape the  
        vigilance of the regent, who took measures to disconcert  
        it ; and also, at the same time, caused a commission to  
        be appointed, with power to inquire into the circum-  
        stances of Eric Glipping's death. That commission  
        consisted of Otho of Brandenburg, brother of the queen-  
        mother ; of Vicislas, prince of Rugen ; of the counts of  
        Holstein, and of twenty-seven Danish nobles. The  
        result was a verdict of wilful murder against James,  
        count of Halland, Stig, marshal of the court, and seven  
        others. Condemned to perpetual banishment, they re-

\* So called from his frequent use of the word *mæn* — *certainly*.



paired to the court of the Norwegian king, then at war with Denmark, by whom they were hospitably received. Assisted by him they were enabled to visit the northern parts of their fief, and to commit, during many years, considerable depredations. That the Norwegian monarch should thus become the ally of murderers — the murderers, too, of a brother king — might surprise us, if we did not remember that he and his father had long applied, but applied in vain, for satisfaction on points, the justice of which had never been denied. One of them was, that the dowry of his mother, Ingeburga, a Danish princess, had never been paid. At the head of a considerable fleet, he himself soon followed the regicides, and devastated the coasts. To no proposals of peace would he listen, unless the regicides were pardoned — for such was his engagement with them. This war raged until 1308, when peace was restored in the treaty of Copenhagen. The chief condition was, that in compensation for his mother's dowry, the Norwegian monarch should hold northern Halland as a fief from Eric of Denmark. In regard to the regicides, it was stipulated, that some should be allowed to return and enjoy their property, but that the more guilty should never revisit the realm. Yet, even to them a permission during three years was given to dispose of their lands and personal substance.

This long war was not the only trouble of Eric. <sup>1292</sup>  
 Like his two predecessors, he was embroiled with the church. To Grandt, a dignitary of Roskild, he was <sup>to</sup> hostile, for reasons apparently which had no foundation. <sup>1299.</sup>  
 When that dignitary was elected to the see of Lund, he refused, like Erlandsen, either to solicit or to accept the royal confirmation; and he hastened to Rome to obtain that of the pope. On his return, he was arrested by Christopher, the king's brother, and treated with remarkable severity. His property was seized; he was made to exchange his pontifical robes for the meanest rags; he was fastened to the back of a worn-out horse; and in this state led, amidst the jeers of the royal de-

pendants, to the fortress of Helsinburg. He was soon transferred to the castle of Soeburg, where an unwholesome dungeon, heavy fetters, and meagre fare awaited him. The same treatment was inflicted on Lange, another dignitary of Lund; but he had the good fortune to escape and to reach Boniface VIII. at Avignon (1295). Some time afterwards, Grandt himself was so lucky as to escape, and repair to Bornholm, where he was received as a martyr. He too arrived at Avignon, and was welcomed by the pope, who observed, with much truth, that there were many saints that had suffered less for the church than archbishop Grandt. The dispute between the king and the church was examined at Rome, by a commission of cardinals. The award was a severe one for the king; it sentenced him to pay the archbishop, by way of indemnification, 49,000 silver marks; and until the money was paid, not only was his kingdom to remain under an interdict (it had been subject to one ever since the archbishop was seized), but he himself was to be excommunicated, and also his brother Christopher, the instrument of that arrest. When the king evinced no disposition to pay the money, the papal legate who had been dispatched to Denmark for the occasion, sequestered a portion of the royal revenues in Scania. This measure Eric could feel; and he threw himself on the mercy of the pope. Boniface so far relaxed from his severity as to allow the archbishop to resign his see of Lund, and to abate the indemnification to 10,000 marks. Grandt subsequently became archbishop of Bremen, while the papal legate succeeded to the primacy of Denmark.

1299 But the whole of Eric's reign was not disastrous.  
 to Lubeck and the baron of Rostock sued for his protec-  
 1319. tion, and paid him for it: he obtained from the latter some augmentation of his territory, and from other German powers a large sum of money. Tranquillity, however, for any long period, he was not to enjoy. One of his worst domestic enemies was his brother Christopher, who leagued himself with the kings of Sweden,

Norway, and other enemies of the realm. As a punishment, seeing that leniency had no result, Eric occupied his domains. He fled to Wratislas, duke of Pomerania, who espoused his cause; so did the counts of Holstein and some other princes. In 1317, peace was made, but Christopher was not restored. Two years afterwards, the king paid the debt of nature, leaving his kingdom plunged in debt, occasioned by his efforts to contend with his misfortunes. He had more discernment than some of his predecessors. He encouraged the rising municipalities, to some of which he granted charters, analogous to those which existed in Germany. To commerce he was a benefactor; and he was useful to the judicial administration by the compilation of a code (in six books), called the Law of Zealand. He did more; he made a collection of such public acts as might throw light on the national history.\* Of his offspring, none survived him; one at least, on whom his hopes were placed, met a tragical but accidental death; and grief led his queen to the cloister, where she died a few months before him. There was nobody therefore to succeed him but his turbulent brother Christopher, then in Sweden, whom he advised the states to remove from the succession.

But Christopher was not to be so easily deprived of <sup>1319.</sup> what he regarded as his birthright; and when he heard that he should have a rival in Eric duke of Sleswic, he commenced his intrigues, and pushed his warlike preparations with a vigour that showed his determination to attain his object. The promises which he made to the nobles, the clergy, and the municipalities, were exceedingly lavish, and must, if executed, have changed the government into an aristocratic republic. Few of these had he the slightest intention of fulfilling; and as most were never fulfilled, we will not enumerate them. They answered his purpose, for he was elected by the states, and at the same time his eldest son Eric was joined with him in the government.

\* Known as the *Congesta Menvedi*.

## CHRISTOPHER II.

1320—1334.

1320     Though Christopher was thus placed on the throne,  
       to he soon found that to maintain himself on it, while an  
 1323. active rival was striving to unseat him, was no easy  
       matter. He therefore began to lavish grants on his  
       nobles so as to plunge the crown in new difficulties,  
       and to threaten the dismemberment of the monarchy.  
       To the church he showed great deference: he bore,  
       without complaint, the postponement of his coronation  
       until it suited the convenience of the primate to return  
       from abroad; and he engaged never to violate the pri-  
       vileges which had been usurped. But he had also need  
       of foreign allies, and to procure them he evinced the  
       same disregard of the public interests. To Wratislas,  
       duke of Rugen, he confirmed the investiture of that fief,  
       with some other domains. To Henry of Mecklenburg,  
       who held Rostock in pledge, in consideration of money  
       advanced to the late king, he granted that territory in  
       perpetuity, as a fief of the Danish crown. With Ger-  
       ard, count of Holstein (then count of Rendsburg), he  
       entered into a closer treaty, by which each engaged to  
       assist the other, whenever required, with all the dis-  
       posable force at his command. The cession of so many  
       fiefs within and without Denmark Proper, could not  
       but have fatal consequences. Not less fatal was the  
       custom of assigning, until payment was made, whole  
       islands and provinces, in return either for personal ser-  
       vices, or advances of money.

1324     What all men might have foreseen soon arrived.  
       to Though Christopher was never to impose any tax  
 1325. without consent of the nobles, and never, in any cir-  
       cumstances, to require a tax from the church, his neces-  
       sities were so great that he soon laid a new and extra-  
       ordinary impost on both orders of the state. The nobles



were to pay one tenth of their annual revenues ; the clergy in an equal proportion ; the people still more. Suddenly one universal cry of resistance arose from every part of the kingdom. The archbishop boldly declared that he would resist to the last ; that if the king did not keep his promises made at his accession, no more would the church or the nobles keep *theirs* ; that they should consider themselves absolved from their allegiance. Christopher bent to the influence which he could not resist ; but he had already exasperated his people, and his relinquishment of the impost did not restore them to good humour. His next measure was not only censurable, but in the highest degree unjust : it was to recover by force of arms the islands, provinces, and domains, which had been pledged, without paying any portion of the debt. In these days it may appear almost incredible that the whole of Scania, nearly one third of the kingdom, was thus held by one noble. The creditors, thus deprived of their rights, naturally combined to obtain justice by force. They were aided by all that were discontented, and by not a few who had no cause for dissatisfaction, but who hoped to benefit by a change. Scania and Zealand were laid waste by fire and sword. From two of his enemies, viz. the archbishop of Lund, and Eric duke of Sleswic, he was released by death ; but the latter event, from which he expected so much advantage, had baneful consequences. Eric left a young boy, Valdemar. Who was to be the tutor ? To obtain the post, Christopher invaded Sleswic. But he found a competitor in the very ally on whom he had so much relied, Gerard of Holstein, who has been styled the Great, and who, as the maternal uncle of Valdemar, had equal right to the trust. In the midst of his successes, after reducing most of the duchy, he was defeated by this count, and compelled to retire.

Many of Christopher's disaffected subjects had been 1325. silent through fear : now that he was vanquished, he was assailed by one universal complaint. The nobles demanded their fiefs, the creditors their money, the



people a removal of taxation ; and all bitterly complained of his breach of faith, though that breach was the unavoidable result of his position. Revolt became general ; and when the states met he was solemnly deposed, the reason assigned for this measure being “ the intolerable abuse which he had made of his authority.” When Christopher received this intelligence, he was in Zealand with his son ; at the same time he learned that count Gerard was advancing. To repel the invader Eric marched with the disposable troops ; but he was defeated, betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and consigned to a dungeon. With the loss of that son, his colleague on the throne, he lost all hope of present resistance ; and with two younger sons he precipitately left the kingdom. At Rostock he procured aid from Henry of Mecklenburg and some Vandalic princes, and returned to struggle for his rights. He reduced a fortress, but this success did not render the states more favourable ; they persisted in their resolution to elect another sovereign. Besieged and taken by Gerard, he was allowed to retire into Germany. He made another attempt, with equal want of success, was again taken, and again set free, on the condition of his retiring to Rostock.

- 1326 The states assembled at Nyburg to elect a king made  
to choice of Valdemar, duke of Sleswic, still a minor, —  
1328. the chief cause, no doubt, of his election, since there  
must be a regency, and the most powerful might  
hope to participate in the public spoils. Gerard was  
the head of the regency : half a dozen other nobles  
were joined with him, and all were eager to derive the  
utmost advantage from a tenure of dignity which must  
evidently be brief. Gerard obtained the duchy of Sles-  
wic, in perpetuity. Count John of Holstein was in-  
vested with the islands of Laland, Falster, and Femeren.  
Canute Porse, who by Christopher had been created  
duke of North Halland, and who yet had been one of the  
first to desert that unfortunate king, was confirmed in  
the fief in addition to South Halland : it was no longer  
to be revocable, but descend to his posterity. The

archbishop of Lunden obtained Bornholm ; another noble had Colding and Rypen ; a third, Langeland and Arroe ; in short, the whole country was parcelled out into petty principalities, which, though feudally subject to the crown, would be virtually so many sovereignties. These measures could not fail to displease all who had any love for their country : a dozen tyrants were more tyrannical, more rapacious than one ; and pity began to be felt for the absent Christopher. That prince was not inactive in his retirement at Rostock. By the most lavish promises he obtained succours of men and money from some of his allies ; and many of his own nobles, among whom were the primate and the bishops, engaged to join him as soon as he landed in Denmark. He did land, and was joined by the bishops of Aarhus and Rypen, by many nobles, and enabled to obtain some advantages over the regents. But he had not learned wisdom by adversity. One of his allies, count John of Holstein, he converted into a deadly enemy ; and he offended the church by arresting the bishop of Borglum. The prelate escaped by corrupting his guard, and hastened to Rome to add the pope to the other enemies of Christopher. The kingdom was immediately placed under an interdict.

In this emergency, Christopher endeavoured to prevent his expulsion from the realm by resorting to the same means of bribery that he had before adopted. To pacify count John, he ceded to him Zealand and part of Scania, in addition to Laland and Falster, which he still held. By grants equally prodigal, and equally ruinous to the state, he endeavoured to secure the aid of other nobles. So well did he succeed, that Gerard, abandoned by many supporters, sued for peace. The articles were signed at Rypen in 1330. Valdemar was sent back to Sleswic ; but the reversion to the duchy was secured to Gerard in the event of Valdemar's dying without heirs male. As this was merely a future and contingent advantage, Fionia was placed in his hands until Sleswic should become his by inheritance ;

1329  
to  
1331.

and for that island he was to become the vassal of the Danish crown. Nor was this all: he was to hold the whole of Jutland by way of pledge until reimbursed for the expenses of the war, which he estimated at forty thousand marks.

1331 This tranquillity was of short duration. The two  
to counts, Gerard and John, quarrelled; and Christopher,  
1332. instead of remaining neuter, espoused the cause of the latter. He was defeated by Gerard; and the greater part of Jutland withdrew from him to swell the cause of the victor. His only resource was now to throw himself on the generosity of the other, who professed his willingness to make peace in return for one hundred thousand marks; and until that sum (immense for those days) were paid, he was to hold Jutland. The two counts also treated with each other, John surrendering to Gerard one half of the debt on Fionia; and they agreed to guarantee each other in the acquisitions which they had made, that is, in the dismemberment of the realm. At the same time Scania escaped for a season from the sceptre of the Danish kings. That province had passed into the hands of John, count of Holstein, through the inability of the crown to discharge the loans which had been borrowed on it. Holstein collectors therefore overran it to collect the revenues claimed by the representative of the creditors. They were even more unpopular than those of the king had been; and the natives not unfrequently arose to massacre them. Three hundred were at one time put to death in the cathedral of Lund. To escape chastisement the inhabitants looked, not to Christopher, who was helpless as an infant, and whom they distrusted, but to Magnus king of Sweden. Him they proposed to recognise as their sovereign, on the condition of his defending them against the counts of Holstein. It is almost needless to add that Magnus joyfully availed himself of the opportunity of obtaining a province which was geographically within the limits of his kingdom, and which had always been an object of desire to his predecessors. He received the homage

of the whole country, and sent forces to defend it. Instead of drawing the sword to recover it, John sold his interest in it, and all claim to its government or revenues, for thirty-four thousand marks — a sum which Magnus readily paid him. The latter had now a double right to the province — that of voluntary submission, and that of purchase.

In the last year of Christopher's life, two of his nobles, in the view of obtaining the favour of the Holstein family, entered into a plot for his assassination. They set fire to his house, seized him as he was escaping, and bore him to a fortress in the isle of Laland, which belonged to count John. That nobleman, however, no longer feared a prince who had fallen into universal contempt, and whose cause was hopeless. He therefore ordered him to be released. The following year Christopher died a natural death, after the most disastrous reign in the annals of the kingdom.—By his wife Euphemia, daughter of Bogislas, duke of Pomerania, he had three sons and three daughters. Eric, the eldest, preceded him to the tomb; Otho ultimately became a knight of the Teutonic order; Valdemar, after a short interregnum, succeeded him. Of his daughters two died in youth; but the eldest, Margaret, was married to Ludovic of Brandenburg, son of the emperor Ludovic of Bavaria.

## · INTERREGNUM.

1333—1340.

The two counts of Holstein, who had thus partitioned the kingdom between them, consulted how they might perpetuate their usurpation. The best mode was to delay as long as possible the election of a new monarch; to exclude the two sons of the late king from the succession; and, when an election could no longer be avoided, to procure the union of the suffrages in favour



of some prince whom they might control. In any case as their sway might and probably must be brief, their interest lay in deriving the utmost advantage in the shortest possible time from their position. Hence their rapacity, which their armies enabled them to exercise with impunity.

- 1334 Under no circumstances would the domination of  
to strangers have been long borne without execration: that  
1340. of rapacious strangers was doubly galling. The murmurs which arose on every side emboldened the two sons of Christopher to strive for his inheritance. But they entered the field before their preparations were sufficiently matured. Otho, with a handful of troops supplied by his brother-in-law the margrave of Brandenburg, landed in Jutland. He evidently relied on the popular indignation entertained towards the two usurpers; but he overlooked their means, their military talents, and the ascendancy which years of success had given. He was vanquished, and committed to close confinement, from which he did not escape for many years. To avert another invasion by excluding the sons from all hope to the succession, Gerard turned towards Valdemar, duke of Sleswic, who had been placed on the throne during Christopher's exile. If the duke succeeded, the duchy became the inheritance of count Gerard; but he would not wait for probabilities. In return for his promised aid, Valdemar, in a solemn treaty, agreed to surrender that province *immediately*; and if he did not obtain the object of his ambition, he was to receive Jutland in lieu of it. The rights of Gerard over that peninsula, in virtue of the one hundred thousand marks which he claimed from the crown, have been mentioned: these rights therefore he might transfer. In the midst of the negotiation prince Valdemar prepared to return and conquer, or to share the fate of his brother Otho. The people were almost universally favourable to him; and his arrival was expected with impatience. When the Jutlanders heard of the treaty which consigned them to



Valdemar of Sleswic, they no longer waited for their prince, but openly revolted. Gerard was compelled to retreat, but only to return with ten thousand German auxiliaries; and with these he laid waste the peninsula. His fate, however, was at hand. A Jutland noble, with fifty accomplices only, resolved to rid his country of a tyrant. Hastening to Randers, where the count lay with four thousand men, at midnight, he disarmed the guard, penetrated into the bedchamber of the regent, murdered him, and escaped before the army was aware of the deed.

Thus perished Gerard, surnamed the Great, a prince 1340. of great talents, and of greater ambition. With him perished the grandeur of his house. His sons had not his personal qualities, and they could not maintain themselves in the position in which he left them. Emboldened by the event, the states met, and declared the absent Valdemar, the third son of Christopher (Otho was still in confinement), heir to the throne. The act of election was sent to that prince in spite of the care taken by the counts of Holstein to prevent all intercourse between the country and the exile. Valdemar received it at the court of the emperor, Ludovic of Bavaria; and that monarch immediately enjoined his son, the margrave, to facilitate the return of his brother-in-law. Under the imperial sanction, there was a conference at Spandau. It was there agreed that Otho should receive his liberty on the condition of his resigning all claims to the crown. The new king engaged to marry Hedwige, sister of Valdemar, duke of Sleswic, whose dowry of 24,000 marks was to be deducted from the 100,000 claimed by the sons of count Gerard. Until the rest were paid, Fionia and a part of Jutland were to remain in the hands of the counts. The king was not to protect the murderers of the late count. There were some other conditions of much less moment—all dictated by the necessity of sacrificing much to obtain a greater advantage. This

treaty having been solemnly ratified, Valdemar returned to Denmark, and ascended the throne without opposition.

## VALDEMAR III.

SURNAMED ATTERDAG.

1340—1375.

1340. When this prince ascended the throne, the prospect before him was gloomy: there was no monarchy; there were no revenues. Scania and Holland were in the hands of the Swedes; Fionia and Jutland were forcibly held by the counts of Holstein; Zealand and Laland obeyed another chief; and the rest of the isles had each its ruler who regarded it as his own estate to be inherited by his children. Even these were not the worst evils. The anarchy of so many years had caused the laws to be forgotten; the feeble were every where a prey to the strong; the poor were at war with the rich, the native with the foreigner; and nobody thought either of obedience to authority, or of paying the contributions rendered necessary by the wants of society.

1340. The two first objects of Valdemar were to make the  
to laws respected, and to recover, one by one, by conquest  
1344. or treaty, the domains which had been alienated. Without the former there could be no security; without the latter there could be no prosperity. To make the judges respected, he himself administered justice. Not for days only but for weeks and months in succession, he thus presided in the tribunals, both in the cities and in the rural towns. At the same time, he caused most of the nobles in whose vicinity he happened to be, to produce their titles to the domains which they held; and when these were not valid, he resumed the fiefs. Against Ingeborga, widow of duke Albert Porse, to whose rapacity we have already alluded, he instituted a suit, and recovered two lordships from her; but in the very court of justice he had his armed

men—a proof that the judgment would be in his favour, and, in spite of all opposition, enforced. The firm demeanour of the monarch had a good effect on his people, who rose against their foreign oppressors, while the latter defended themselves with their accustomed valour. This desultory warfare raged for many years.

The recovery of several domains by justice, or force <sup>1344.</sup> of arms encouraged the king to persevere in his efforts. But there were some parties against whom neither would avail—who were too powerful for either, and before them he could appear with money only. Where should he obtain it? He looked to Magnus, king of Sweden, who did not feel quite secure in the possession of Scania, and from whom he obtained 49,000 marks as the condition of for ever ceding that province to the northern kingdom. That one so patriotic as Valdemar should thus sanction the ruinous dismemberment of the monarchy, may well surprise us. But probably he reasoned thus :—“ If the province *be* lost, let that loss be counterbalanced by other acquisitions: if it be not finally lost,—if circumstances should arise favourable to my recovering it,—let the fortune of war decide whether the purchase-money is to be returned or not.” Of that money he made a good use: he redeemed from count John of Holstein the isle of Falster, with many domains and castles in other parts; soon too he redeemed Vordingburg and the whole isle of Laland. By this means he increased his own power in the same degree that he weakened that of his enemies. There must, however, have been some concert between the two parties, since he received no molestation in his financial proceedings, and especially since in 1345 he was able to leave the kingdom to settle the affairs of Esthonia.

In that country there was a revolt of the whole servile <sup>1345</sup> population against their lords, of whom most were Ger- <sup>to</sup> mans. The grand master of the Teutonic knights being <sup>1348.</sup> requested to succour the local feudatories, consented to

do so ; but from his measures it was evident that he aimed at supplanting the Danish monarch. Valdemar sailed to the coast ; but on his arrival he found that a truce had been signed between his own governors and the other party. From thence he proceeded to the Holy Land — probably in consequence of some vow — and this circumstance proves that his kingdom must have been in a more secure state than the chroniclers of the age would have us believe. By the pope he is said to have been censured for presuming to visit the holy places without the licence of the apostolic see. His absence, however, must have been short ; for in the following year (1346) he was again in Esthonia. His motive for this second expedition may be inferred from the result ; he sold that province to the Teutonic knights for 19,000 marks. This act has been much censured by historians ; but to us it appears a wise one. The expense of maintaining that distant possession was greater than it was worth : troops could not be spared for it when every disposable man was required at home ; and the money was necessary to pay some importunate demands, and to redeem another portion of the national domains. Well was that money employed ; it enabled him to recover all the fortresses in Jutland and Zealand that had not been previously redeemed. In exchange for other possessions, he received from the counts of Holstein one half of Fionia and the town of Nyburg. This circumstance confirms what we have just mentioned — that the intervals of war were neither so frequent nor so long as those of peace ; that he lived with the counts and his other rivals on terms much less hostile than from the strict language of the chroniclers we should be justified in believing.

1348 Another opportunity of replenishing his empty treasury was opened to Valdemar in the aid which he  
to  
1350. afforded to his brother-in-law the margrave of Brandenburg, son of the emperor Ludovic of Bavaria. For that aid he received the annual tribute which the city of Lubeck paid to the margrave's family for the protec-

tion (or advocacy, as it was called during the middle ages) afforded by that family to the commerce of the inhabitants.

On his return to Denmark the king proceeded with, <sup>1351</sup> as much zeal as before in the reforms he had meditated. to Rigour was required, and he employed it; but it con- <sup>1357.</sup> verted into enemies all whose evil deeds he chastised. This was the most formidable of the obstacles which impeded his career of improvement. A whole generation of anarchy had rendered the nobles impatient of all restraint; they sighed for their former impunity; and they hated a ruler who in the administration of the laws made no distinction between them and the meanest artisan. To humble this tyrant as they considered him, they renewed their alliance with the counts of Holstein; but it led to nothing at this time: these nobles had yet no need to renew the war with the king. Four years afterwards, however (in 1357), they joined the Jutland nobility, and the king, who marched to repel them, was defeated. But the check was of short duration; for in a few weeks he was the victor in his turn—Adolf, one of the counts, being left dead on the field. This was a useful victory: it enabled Valdemar to seize the other half of Fionia without payment of the mortgage. The following year he subdued Langeland, Alfen, Femeren. The second of them, which belonged to the duke of Sleswic he subsequently restored, security being given that the inhabitants would remain neutral in the contest between him and the house of Holstein. With that house, however, peace was soon made; but these alternations of war and peace are perpetual at this period.

If Valdemar had ceded to Sweden the important <sup>1357</sup> province of Scania, he had done so either unwillingly, or with the resolution of recovering it whenever the <sup>to</sup> opportunity should occur. That opportunity at length <sup>1360.</sup> presented itself, and in a manner different from his anticipations. King Magnus became so unpopular, that he was compelled to resign the throne in favour of



his son Eric. To regain it, he solicited aid from Valdemar; but the latter would promise none unless Scania were restored. The condition was a hard one; but the prize in view was of more importance; and in a treaty (1359) Magnus conceded the demand. At the same time, to draw closer the alliance between them, Margaret, daughter of Valdemar, then only six years old, was affianced to Hako king of Norway, another son of Magnus. In accordance with this treaty, Valdemar invaded Scania; and in a short time reduced most of the fortresses. From this career of conquest, however, he was recalled, for a moment, by an invasion of Femenen. The invaders were the counts of Holstein, the duke of Mecklenburg, and many nobles of Jutland, who were resolute in hastening the downfall of a stern master. This was a diversion effected by the counts to save Scania, in the preservation of which to the Swedish crown they had an interest. They were the allies of Eric, who had rebelled against his father Magnus; and their sister Elizabeth, in lieu of the Danish princess, was intended for Hako. The advantage lay with the king, who having forced his enemies to disband, returned to Scania, which he wholly seized. This he did without much difficulty, owing to a revolution in the internal state of Sweden. Eric, who had been associated with Magnus in the government, who was hostile to every thing Danish, who was the close ally of the counts of Holstein, fell a victim, we are told, to his own mother's ambition. Magnus therefore resumed the sole direction of affairs, and the Danish interest again predominated. He was indeed enjoined by the states to defend Scania; but though he marched towards that province, he made no effort to arrest the progress of the Danes. On the contrary, he entered into a new alliance with them, and the projected union between Margaret and Hako was confirmed.

1360 Magnus had again need of his ally's assistance against  
to his rebellious subjects. The inhabitants of Wisby,  
1363. capital of the isle of Gothland, refused to pay the im-

post which he had laid upon them ; and Valdemar, in obedience to his wish, sailed to chastise them. Wisby was one of the greatest ports in Europe ; it was the magazine where the merchandize of the Baltic was kept. Of this much belonged to the Hanse Towns, especially to Lubeck. Immense was the booty which the Danish monarch seized in that town ; but why he should plunder the subjects of his ally for his own benefit, is not easy to be explained. Whatever were his own reasons, he soon repented of his violence. The Swedes, indignant with their monarch whom they knew to have been the occasion of the disaster, shut him up in a fortress, called Hako of Norway to aid them, and declared war against Denmark. To obtain more assistance, they entered into alliance with the enemies of Denmark, — with the counts of Holstein, with the duke of Mecklenburg, and with the Hanse Towns, which were justly exasperated at the plunder of Wisby. The confederated powers put their armaments in motion, and soon reduced Copenhagen. Helsingburg in Scania was besieged, but Valdemar raised the siege and defeated the allied fleet with great loss. Vordingburg was next assailed, but with no better success ; and other disasters soon rendered the allies anxious for peace, which was concluded at Lubeck in 1363. But it was of short continuance. There was a general meeting of deputies from all the towns of the Hanseatic League, above seventy in number ; and the result of their deliberations was a new war. It was indeed evident, that unless that body secured the free transit of merchandise, there must be an end to all mercantile enterprise, and the worst days of piracy must be restored. Two armaments were soon equipped ; and the number of assailants was increased by the adhesion of Denmark's hereditary enemies. Valdemar, terrified, had recourse to negotiations. Adolf, count of Holstein, he detached from the league by investing him with the isle of Femeran. The Hanse Towns he propitiated by commercial privileges. A truce was accordingly made,

and the king was left to resume his intrigues, in the North.

1362 After the imprisonment of Magnus, who, however,  
to was soon allowed to share in the government, Hako  
1363. was the only hope of the Swedes: they crowned him in 1362, and then urged him to marry the sister of the counts of Holstein. But the breach of the contract between Margaret and Hako could not be so easily dissolved: it had been written and sealed with the necessary formalities, and under the sanction of an oath. Yet the Swedish states, regardless of these circumstances, sent an ambassador to Holstein to perform the marriage ceremony by proxy. It was celebrated with much pomp; and, soon afterwards, the new queen of Norway and Sweden embarked for her destination. The intelligence was a blow to Valdemar; but fortune enabled him to recover from it. A tempest cast the bride on the Danish coast; and she was conducted to the court, where the most flattering reception awaited her. A succession of feasts and entertainments blinded her for some time to the designs of Valdemar; but at length she perceived that with all the humour so studiously paid her, she was little better than a prisoner. But little did she suspect the deep game that was playing. During her stay at the court, which was protracted for many weeks, Hako was induced to visit the country and to solemnize his marriage with the princess Margaret. Great was the joy of the Danes at this event, and no less great the mortification of that numerous party in Sweden, which had prosecuted the alliance with Holstein. As Margaret was still very young, the marriage was not consummated for three years afterwards. But the advantage was gained; and Elizabeth; in despair, took the veil in a Swedish monastery.

1363. This marriage deserves especial consideration from one circumstance; — it led to the union of the crowns between Denmark and Norway, — a union which has continued unbroken to our own days. For a considerable period too it occasioned a junction of the three king-

doms which constitute Scandinavia. Many obstacles, however, intervened, before it could be effected; and indeed there was no hope of such a result at the time of its celebration. So indignant were the Swedes at it, that they declared the throne vacant, and elected Albert of Mecklenburg to rule over them. Hako, like his father, therefore, lost the crown; but these circumstances can be detailed only in the chapter devoted to Swedish history.

The next year was passed by Valdemar abroad, in 1364, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Italy, and France. Why 1365. he should abandon the kingdom at so critical a period has exercised the ingenuity of historians; but none of their conjectures are satisfactory; and his motions must remain shrouded in mystery. On his return, after an absence of ten months, he found his own kingdom as tranquil as Sweden was stormy. In the latter there were two parties—that which adhered to Magnus and Hako, and that which had invited Albert to ascend the throne. The former, numerically inferior, had obtained succour from Norway and Denmark, and, with this aid, had made an irruption into the provinces which held for Albert. A battle ensued, in which Magnus was made prisoner; but Hako, though desperately wounded, contrived to escape. But Valdemar recruited his party; and by his arms, no less than his intrigues, reduced Albert to such perplexity, that he was compelled, whatever the price, to propitiate the formidable Dane. Overtures were accordingly made to Valdemar by the kinsmen of Albert; and he received them with eagerness. They were, however, delusive; not one of the promises made was executed, or intended to be executed.

The influence of Albert, and of his connections, 1367 proved more disastrous to Valdemar than he could have to expected. His own subjects, especially those of Jut- 1370. land, who were in league with the counts of Holstein, again broke out into open rebellion. They were aided by the king of Sweden (Albert), by the duke of Meck-



lenburg, by the Hanse Towns, and by other enemies of Denmark. The most extraordinary circumstance is, that at this very period, when the monarchy was menaced within and from without, Valdemar again left the kingdom to pass several months abroad! Was his intention to interest the emperor and the pope in his behalf? Such has been the opinion of writers. Others, again, have attributed his departure to a formidable conspiracy, the object of which was darkly seen by him. The subject must remain in mystery. The hypothesis of a conspiracy, however, derives some confirmation from the fact, that after his departure the Hanseatic Towns, the counts of Holstein, and Albert of Sweden, made simultaneous attacks on different parts of the kingdom, and with some degree of success. In 1370, however, the minister to whom Valdemar had confided the affairs of the realm made peace with all the enemies of Denmark.

1370     The same year Valdemar returned, and the same year  
       to     too witnessed the extinction of the ducal line of Sleswic,  
 1375.     which, as we have before related, originated in Abel,  
       king of Denmark. To recover the duchy was the object  
       of Valdemar, long before duke Henry's death; and  
       when that event arrived, his measures were so well  
       taken, that in a few weeks most of the fortresses were  
       in his possession. But the counts of Holstein urged  
       their claim, in virtue of the agreement between their  
       father, Gerard, and the duke of that period. They did  
       not, however, immediately proceed to hostilities, nor  
       was it their fortune to measure swords with Valdemar,  
       while busily occupied in the internal reforms which he  
       had so long contemplated, he saw that war was inevi-  
       table; and in this apprehension he besought pope Gre-  
       gory XI. to interfere in his behalf — to teach his subjects  
       obedience, and his enemies moderation. The pope, in  
       his reply, professed his willingness to espouse the royal  
       cause; but before his interference could be availing,  
       Valdemar was no more. He died through his confidence  
       in a quack, whose medicines he took. By his queen,



Hedwige, he had six children, four of whom preceded him to the tomb. The survivors were two daughters — Ingeburga, married to Henry duke of Mecklenburg, and the celebrated Margaret, afterwards queen of the North.

Valdemar was the first Danish monarch that styled <sup>1375.</sup> himself king of the *Goths*. The assumption was occasioned, either by the conquests which he made in Gothland (they were very temporary), or by the diversions which Albert, to preserve his alliance, proposed to make, and, in fact, did make, in that province.

### OLAF III.

1376—1387.

With Valdemar III. ended the male line of the <sup>1375,</sup> dynasty founded by Sweyn, the nephew of Canute the <sup>1376.</sup> Great. Who was to succeed him? As we have before related, he left two daughters only; viz. Ingeburga, wife of Henry, duke of Mecklenburg, and Margaret, the consort of Hako, king of Norway. As there was no example in the North of female succession, the electors must turn either to some collateral branch of the family, or to the sons of those princesses, — unless indeed they did what they might easily have done, and what many indeed professed to do, viz. make choice of a foreign house. The greater number, however, decided for preserving the sceptre in the ancient house, and without regard to the collateral branches. The choice therefore rested between the issue of Ingeburga and that of Margaret; viz. between Albert of Mecklenburg, and Olaf of Norway. The former was the eldest daughter, and Albert was much older than Olaf, yet merely a child; but the feeling of the states seemed to run in favour of the latter. In the first assembly nothing was effected;

in the interval between it and the convocation of the next, Margaret was not inactive. Her intrigues, her presents, her promises, and above all the fact that Olaf was the heir of the Norwegian throne, and consequently that there would be a union of the two kingdoms, determined the question in his favour. In this decision too, dislike of Sweden had some share ; for Albert was nearly connected with the king who had been elected the successor of Magnus. On this occasion, there was no general meeting of the states ; and those of each province voted separately. Jutland, with its three orders, viz. the nobles, the clergy, the burghers and rich peasants, set the example. It was followed by Scania ; and the rest, constrained by their preponderating influence, joined with them.

1376. The promises of the queen to which we have alluded were not dissimilar from those which Christopher II. had made. In the name of her son (he was but five years of age), she guaranteed to the clergy all their rights, immunities, and privileges. No benefice should be held by a layman. No foreigner should become a dignitary. No bishop or any other ecclesiastic should be arrested, exiled, or deprived of his revenues, without the previous sentence of an ecclesiastical judge only. Abbots, friars, and rectors, were to be dependent only on the bishop, their lawful superior. The nobles and not the crown were to receive the fines inflicted on the rural inhabitants within their respective districts by any secular judge, when those fines fell below a certain amount, according to the custom of the province : in some provinces the maximum was three, in others nine marks ; when it exceeded three or nine, it went indisputably to the crown. The king was to undertake no war without the consent of his senators, the prelates, and some nobles of the realm. No man in holy orders should be invested with any temporal employment. No man should be executed unless he had been judicially convicted, or caught *flagrante delicto* in some matter

worthy of death. Even if he had been sentenced by the tribunals, one month and a day should be allowed him to flee from the kingdom ! The peasants should not be compelled to repair the royal palaces, without the sanction of the senate. The king should not build on any other domain than his own, without the consent of the owner. The property of no man should be confiscated, even judicially, unless he were proved guilty of high treason, or had borne arms against his country. Foreign merchants might trade freely throughout the kingdom, and should be subject to no other tax or impost than such as were already sanctioned by custom. The great assizes should, according to ancient custom, be held annually on the feast of St. John the Baptist. No officer of justice should cite any one before a foreign tribunal — that of Norway, for instance — but every man should be amenable to the local jurisdiction alone.

Such were the chief provisions of the capitulation <sup>1376.</sup> between Margaret and the people. They have been severely condemned by the national historians, as trenching on the just prerogatives of the crown. But surely they do not all merit the censure. Some of them are in the highest degree salutary. That indeed which allowed the nobles to enjoy the fines levied on their vassals, or more correctly freemen (subject, however, to many vassalitic obligations), was censurable ; but it was common in most other countries where feudal tribunals existed. Two or three of those which concerned the clergy are also reprehensible ; but they were sanctioned by the canon law, and were as obligatory in other places as in Denmark. The greatest defect of this capitulation is that too much influence was left to the nobles. But how should Margaret be condemned for sacrificing to the aristocracy, when aristocratic privileges were predominant every where else ?

The election of Olaf could not fail to exasperate the <sup>1376</sup> party of Albert. The head of the house of Mecklenburg called in the emperor Charles IV. to interfere in <sup>to</sup> <sup>1380.</sup> behalf of his grandson : he flew to arms, and persuaded

his son Albert, king of Sweden, to join him ; and he brought the courts of Holstein into the same league. These counts, in the event of Albert's succession, were to have Sleswic, Alfen, and Langeland. On her part, Margaret was not idle. She too obtained allies, among whom were the dukes of Pomerania, the hereditary enemies of the Mecklenburg family. The result justified her policy. A formidable armament sailed against the coasts, and she was prepared to meet it. The elements, however, fought for her : the armament was dispersed or destroyed ; and the enemy consented that the great subjects of dispute should be laid before arbitrators. This was to acknowledge Olaf *de facto* sovereign of Denmark, whatever the concessions expected from him in return. Whether this arbitration ever took place is not very clear : there are no records of it ; yet there is some reason to suspect that it did, and that from the period in question the house of Mecklenburg was excepted from all homage for the lordship of Rostock. What confirms the inference is, that for some years the realm was undisturbed by foreign enemies, and the regent left at liberty to pursue her course of policy. That course was a judicious one. She drew closer the connection between Denmark and the Hanseatic Towns ; she courted the clergy ; she was gracious to the barons ; she endeavoured to remove all subjects of discord, and to bind all orders of the people to her government.

1380 In 1380, Hako, the husband of Margaret, who was  
to greatly her senior, paid the debt of nature. Olaf there-  
1386. fore, still a child, became king of Norway. But Hako  
was also the rightful heir to the Swedish throne, and  
these rights Margaret determined to secure in favour of  
their legitimate heir, her son. This indeed was the  
great, the constant, object of her policy : she had united  
two kingdoms, and she would now add a third. The mor-  
tification of the Swedish king was great. He feared lest  
the strength of the two hostile kingdoms should be con-  
solidated, and become fatal to himself. To avert this



result, he had recourse to hostilities, during the absence of Olaf and his mother in Norway (1381). Though he effected some mischief, he made little impression on that country. Two years afterwards, he made a second attempt, but was compelled to retreat. In 1385, both Olaf and his mother repaired thither to confirm the people in their fidelity, and to gain their attachment by such marks of favour as sovereigns can bestow.

In regard to the counts of Holstein, Margaret had 1386. more trouble than with Albert of Sweden, or the prince of Mecklenburg. These counts, as we have often intimated, looked to Sleswic as their lawful inheritance; nor had they relinquished their hope of succession after the reversion of the fief to the crown through the default of issue in Henry the late duke. To the surprise of many, count Gerard, grandson of the celebrated prince of that name, was formally invested by Olaf with that important fief. In dismembering (for the act was no better) so important a limb of the Danish body, there was certainly much impolicy; but the act is neither so surprising nor so censurable as some historians assert. In fact there are strong reasons for it. Gerard, the representative of his house, had, according to feudal law, a good claim to the succession. Its justice, therefore, would have weight, not merely with the allies of his house, but with all Germany. Policy, however, more than justice, influenced the queen-mother in this important step. Was it nothing to separate the interests of the Holstein count from those of the Mecklenburg dukes? She well knew the efforts which Albert of Sweden had made, and was making, to secure the active assistance of the former. Besides, most of her subjects, and all her noble subjects, looked upon the count as hardly used by his exclusion from his birth-right; and they were not without apprehension that, if left as a precedent, it might operate to their own disadvantage. But the strongest of all reason is, that the count was already *de facto* duke of Sleswic. Soon after the death



of Valdemar III., he had, with the aid of his allies, occupied it by force ; and as the people were attached to his government, who was to dispossess him ? Certainly to do so was not in the power of the queen-mother, or of her son. But though the standard — the ordinary symbol of infeudation — was delivered by Olaf to the count, and homage done in return, no letters patent were expedited on the occasion. Why ? Because there was a dispute as to the conditions of the tenure by which the fief was to be held. Gerard wished to hold it on the same footing as his celebrated ancestor, viz. without the obligation of military service ; but from that wish Margaret dissented. The subject, therefore, was left undecided, and it gave rise, as we shall perceive in the ensuing volume, to much effusion of blood. Connected with this count Gerard is one circumstance worthy of notice : his sister Hedwige married Theodric count of Oldenburg ; and from that union sprung Christian I., king of Denmark, founder of the illustrious family which now sits on the throne.

1387. One year after this important investiture, Olaf, whose constitution had always been feeble, paid the debt of nature. As he was only in his seventeenth year, he left no issue, and indeed was never married. Again, therefore, was the male line extinct ; and Margaret only could rule, unless (what nobody contemplated) a foreign house should be called to the succession. The queen-mother had so obvious an interest in the event, that by some people she was suspected of having quietly removed her son to reign in his place. The suspicion, indeed, was an absurd one : there was not the shadow of a foundation for it ; but it suited popular credulity ; and it enabled, as we shall hereafter show, a false Olaf to deceive a considerable portion of the multitude. The Franciscans contend that the king, influenced by piety alone, relinquished his worldly grandeur, and retired to a house of their order in Italy, where he died in all the odour of sanctity.

By this monarch's decease Margaret became sovereign of both Denmark and Norway ; and from this period down to the nineteenth century, both crowns were united on the same brow. Henceforth the fortunes of both are inseparable. Our next care must be to give a summary of Norwegian events prior to this union.

## CHAPTER II.\*

## NORWAY.

1030—1387.

CANUTE THE GREAT. — SWEYN. — MAGNUS I. — HARALD HARD-  
RADE. — OLAF III. — MAGNUS II. — MAGNUS BAREFOOT. —  
EVILS OF A DIVIDED SOVEREIGNTY. — ROMANTIC ADVENTURES  
OF SIGURD I. — MAGNUS IV. — CIVIL WARS. — EXTRAORDINARY  
ADVENTURES OF SWERRO. — HAKO IV. — MAGNUS VI. — ERIC II.  
— HAKO V. — OTHER SOVEREIGNS. — UNION OF NORWAY WITH  
DENMARK.

1030 AFTER the death of St. Olaf †, CANUTE THE GREAT  
to was the undisputed sovereign of Norway. The care  
1035 of three kingdoms being too great even for his strength,  
he confided the government of Norway, with the  
regal title, to his son SWEYN, to whom, in his last will,  
he bequeathed the crown. But Sweyn was no fa-  
vourite with his new subjects. Independently of the  
mortifying reflection that he was not one of their own  
race, but had been forced on them by conquest, his own  
conduct was not of a kind to remove the prejudice against  
him. That in the distribution of fiefs and honours he gave  
a preference to Danes, is probable enough ; that he had  
no affection for a people who detested him, is equally so ;  
but had his impartiality been strict, and his virtues un-  
deniable, he never could have founded a dynasty in that

\* Authorities for the present chapter : — Snorronis Sturlonidis Heims-  
Kringla (in the Sagas of each reign). Torfæus, *Historia Rerum Norvegi-  
carum*. Saxonis Grammatici *Historia Danica*. The Chronicles in  
Langebek, *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum*. Mallet, *Histoire de Danemarck*.

† See Vol. I. p. 273.

country. It was only fear of his father, the greatest monarch of his times, that kept them in subjection ; and no sooner did they hear of that monarch's death, than they looked towards Magnus, son of St. Olaf, then an exile in Russia.\*

Magnus, as we before related †, was a bastard son of 1035. that odd saint by his concubine Alfilda. He accompanied his father in the exile to Holmgard, and there he remained during that father's unfortunate expedition to Norway. Left an orphan, he was well entertained by his host, the grand prince of Russia. Here he received intelligence of Canute's death, of the unpopularity of Sweyn, and of the anxiety with which his return was expected. Proceeding to Sweden, he was honourably received by Emund, and by his step-mother Astrida ‡, sister of that monarch. Owing to her influence, a small but resolute band of armed men accompanied him into Norway. As he passed the mountains into Drontheim, the adherents of Sweyn fled in great alarm towards the southern provinces ; and Sweyn himself followed the example. In his progress, Magnus received many evidences of the popular goodwill. At Nidaros, the capital, his reception was enthusiastic. To the Thing assembled on the occasion, flocked a multitude of men friendly to his cause ; and there he was solemnly elected king.

The first care of MAGNUS I. was to reward his fol- 1035, lowers by conferring on them the governments which 1036. had been held by Sweyn's adherents. His next was to collect troops and march against his rival. To assert his rights, the latter, who was then in Hadaland, sent out the arrow of war in every direction ; and many hastened to his summons. In the midst of the assembly, he asked whether they were ready to join him

\* According to the chronology of Thorlak, and even Snorro himself, Magnus was invited to Norway *before* the death of Canute, though in the same year (1035). This is too improbable to be received. Certainly the father of Norwegian history must have confounded dates.

† See Vol. I. p. 273.

‡ See Vol. I. p. 254.

in resisting Magnus. Some expressed their consent ; some openly refused ; the greater number hesitated ; but disaffection to his cause was so evident in the great body, that he declared his resolution of seeking more faithful defenders. Leaving Norway, he repaired to Denmark, where, that very year, he died. Harda-Canute, as we have before related, claimed the crown of Norway ; but hostilities were closed by the singular compact, that if either died without children, he should succeed to the states of the other.

1038 Astrida, the widow of St. Olaf, had accompanied  
to Magnus into Norway ; and such had been the aid she  
1040 had procured him, that he gratefully settled her in his palace, showing her the utmost honour. But, at the same time, he sent for his mother Alfhilda, whom he treated with more affection but with less honour. Indignant at this distinction, she insisted on more than an equality, which Astrida being unwilling to grant, the two ladies could no longer reside in the same house. In his kingdom Magnus had more influence than in his palace he effectually restored tranquillity, and became popular. Of his deceased father miracles were reported. The mere report was enough : he pretended to believe it ; he well knew what honour would be his through his descent from a saint ; and he caused the relics of the royal martyr to be placed in a magnificent casket, and displayed for the veneration of the faithful.

1042 On the death of Harda-Canute, Magnus, in accord-  
to ance with the compact which had been made between  
1046. them, proceeded to Denmark, to take possession of the throne. His claim, as we have before observed, was admitted by his new subjects. We have related his transaction with Sweyn, son of Estrith, the sister of Canute, and the founder of the line of kings who sat above three centuries on the Danish throne. Nor need we again recur to his transactions with Harald, surnamed Hardrade, or the Stern, whom he admitted to a participation in the kingdom. Few men in his circumstances



could have acted more wisely, yet, with all his mildness, he was a firm supporter of his own rights; and more than once he made his remarkable colleague feel that there was a distance between them.\*

The demise of Magnus immediately followed his suc- 1047.  
cessful expedition in Denmark to avenge the rebellion of Sweyn. The son of a saint could scarcely leave the world without some manifestation of divine favour. In a dream his father Olaf appeared to him, and ordered him to make his choice between two proposals—either to die, and join the deceased king in heaven, or to live the most powerful of monarchs, yet commit some crime for which he could hardly expect the divine forgiveness. He instantly chose the former alternative; and was immediately afflicted with a disease the result of which, to the great sorrow of his people, was fatal. He was a great and good prince; as much superior to his father in intellect and moral worth as one man can be to another. To his moderation in regard to Harald his colleague and Sweyn of Denmark we have done justice; but if Snorro is to be credited, he showed no less towards our Edward the Confessor. That he was not without ambition is evident; and as the heir of the Danish throne, by his compact with Harda-Canute, king of England and Denmark, he claimed, after that monarch's death, all the states of the great Canute. Edward returned a spirited reply, the justice of which he acknowledged by his inactivity.

By the death of Magnus the Good, HARALD HAR- 1047  
RÅDE was the undisputed king of Norway. He as- to  
pired also to the throne of Denmark, from which he 1064.  
endeavoured to unseat his former ally Sweyn. His desultory operations and his decisive victory over the Dane, in 1062, we have before related. Two years afterwards peace was made, no permanent advantage having been gained by either.

\* For these events, see the commencement of the last chapter.

1066. On the death of Edward the Confessor, and the accession of Harald the son of earl Godwin, the Norwegian monarch led an armament against that usurper. The ambition which could prompt him to such an undertaking was not very measured ; but it was characteristic of this king, whose early familiarity with danger, and whose wild adventures in the East and North, had rendered him confident of success. If the English were not favourable to earl Godwin's son, they could scarcely be so to *him* ; and the hope of conquest, when so valiant a competitor as William of Normandy was entering the field, would have appeared futile to any less desperate man. The result is known to every reader of English history : at Stamford-Bridge Harald found a grave.

1066 From the fatal shores of England OLAF III., the son  
to of Harald, returned to Norway, and with his brother  
1069. MAGNUS II. was elected to the government. The former had the eastern, the latter the northern, provinces of the kingdom. In three years Magnus paid the common debt, and Olaf became monarch of the whole.

1069 The reign of Olaf was pacific ; and he applied his  
to efforts to the civilisation of his kingdom. He first  
1093. introduced chimneys and glass windows into houses : he established a commercial emperium at Bergen ; and to him we must ascribe the introduction of guilds or mercantile fraternities, after the model of those existing in Germany and England. He must be praised, too, for his humanity to the servile class : he carried in the national Thing a law that in every district throughout Norway a serf should be annually enfranchised. To the church he was a munificent patron. At Nidaros, or Drontheim, he began to build a stone cathedral, destined to receive the hallowed relics of his ancestor. " This city," says Adam of Bremen, the contemporary of Olaf the Pacific, " is the capital of the Northmen. It is adorned with churches, and frequented by a great concourse of people. Here lies the body of

the holy king and martyr Olaf, at whose tomb miracles are daily wrought: here, from the most distant nations, pilgrims flock to his shrine to share in his blessed merits. Hitherto there are no fixed limits to the dioceses in Norway and Sweden. Any bishop, when desired by the king and people, may build a church in any district, and govern those whom he converts to the day of his death." These regionary bishops, as they are called, moved from place to place, baptising and preaching as they went along; and assuredly this is a more useful, a more apostolic practice than that which has since prevailed.

MAGNUS III., surnamed *Barfoet*, or the Barefoot, 1093 succeeded his father Olaf III. At first, he was acknowledged by the southern provinces: in the northern was opposed to him Hako, nephew of the late king. Though death soon rid him of that rival, an army only could induce those provinces to receive him. <sup>to</sup> 1095.

This was the first Norwegian monarch after St. Olaf that visited the Orkneys. He went to punish the jarls of those islands, which had thrown off their allegiance to the yoke of Norway. These jarls were Erling and Paul, whom he took and sent prisoners to his kingdom. Leaving his son Sigurd in the government, with fit councillors, he laid waste Sutherland, which was a portion of the jarldom, and feudally dependent on the Scotch crown. Proceeding to the Hebrides, he reduced them also. Very different was his conduct at Iona from that which had been pursued by his pagan ancestors. He showed great veneration for the memory of S. Columbe, and great affability to the inhabitants of all the islands that submitted. Ilay was next reduced, then Cantyre. These successes were followed by predatory depredations on both the Irish and Scottish coasts. Most places offered little resistance, but the conquest of Anglesey could not be effected without a battle. Two Welsh chieftains, both named *Hugh*, fought stoutly <sup>to</sup> 1099.

for their independence. One, Hugh the Magnanimous, was so encased in armour, that his two eyes only were visible: Magnus shot an arrow into one eye, and a Norwegian warrior into another; and after a valiant struggle victory declared for the Northmen. The whole island, we are told, acknowledged the king; but this statement will obtain little credit with any reader. The truth seems to be that he made some of the chiefs do homage for their respective domains; but they re-asserted their independence the moment he had left the shores. There is more probability in another statement of the northern chroniclers, that he forced Malcolm of Scotland to cede to him the sovereignty over all the islands, from the Orkneys to Man. From this expedition he returned in 1099. Its results were valuable: the Hebrides and the Orkneys were now his. The possession of the former indeed was short-lived and precarious; but the latter were long subject to his successors.

1099 The next war of this restless prince was with his  
to neighbour Inge, king of Sweden. It arose from a  
1101. dispute as to the boundary, and raged for two years  
with varied success until, through the mediation of  
Eric king of Denmark, peace was restored. On this oc-  
casion, Magnus married the princess Margaret, daughter  
of Inge.

1102 Within a year from this pacification, Magnus, whose  
to enterprise was excited by his late successes, again sailed  
1103. for Ireland, with the design of subjugating, if not the  
native kings, those who were of Scandinavian origin.  
At this period, the island contained several of these  
principalities. Landing on the coast of Connaught, the  
king of which, Murdoch, was his acquaintance and  
ally, he effected a junction with that chief, and subdued  
the kingdom of Dublin. The following winter he  
spent in Connaught; and when spring arrived, he em-  
barked to return. As he slowly passed along the  
Ulster coast, he sent a party of his followers in search



of provisions, that is, of plunder. Their stay being much longer than he had expected, he landed with a small body, and with difficulty made his way through the marshes. Being at length joined by the foragers, he was returning to his ships, when he fell into an ambush prepared for him by the natives. He was easily known by his shining helmet and breastplate, and by the golden lion on the red shield—the device of the Norwegian kings. Ordering one of his chiefs with a body of archers to clear the marsh, and from the other side to gall the enemy with their arrows, so as to cover his passage also, he fought with desperation. Unfortunately, the chief on whom he thus relied fled, and was followed by the rest. Magnus, therefore, with a mere handful of men, had to sustain the hostile assaults of a multitude. All that valour could do was effected by him; but the contest was too unequal; and, after receiving several wounds, he fell. His followers retreated, leaving his corpse in the hands of the enemy. Thus perished a monarch whose valour and constancy rendered him equal to the ancient heroes of the North. By the warlike he was beloved; but with the people at large, whom he taxed heavily to defray the expenses of his frequent expeditions, he was no favourite. His character may be best conceived from the reply which he gave to his courtiers, who expressed their apprehension lest his continued wars should prove fatal to him:—“It is better for a people to have a brave than an old king.”

On the death of Magnus III., Norway was divided 1103. between his three sons. SIGURD had the southern provinces, with the Scottish islands, which he governed by his jarls. EYSTEIN I. reigned over the North. OLAF IV. had the central and eastern provinces. All were children at their accession: the eldest, Eystein, was but fifteen; and Olaf was so young that for some years his portion of the monarchy was administered by his elder brothers.



1103 Of these kings, two may be dismissed with little  
to notice. Eystein was distinguished for prudence, and  
1122. for the useful structures with which he adorned his  
portion of the kingdom. He erected stone churches and  
palaces, which were novelties in the North. He was  
well versed in history and the laws, and was the patron  
of literary men, especially of the Scalds. Olaf was the  
best beloved of the three ; but he died in 1116, and  
his dominions were divided by his brothers. Eystein  
was never at open war with Sigurd ; but the two  
brothers could scarcely be warm friends ; and while we  
read of their disputes, we are surprised that there should  
have existed so much tranquillity in the realm. In  
1122 he breathed his last, and Sigurd was monarch of  
Norway.

1107 The name of Sigurd I. is celebrated in the annals of  
to the North alike for his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and his  
1111. exploits during the voyage. To aid in the recovery of  
the holy places from the hands of the infidels might  
enrich an adventurous monarch, and would surely open  
to him the gates of heaven. Influenced by this two-  
fold advantage, and by the hope of booty on the passage,  
Sigurd, with sixty ships, sailed from the North. Du-  
ring the first winter he remained in England, and was  
hospitably entertained by our Henry I. The second  
winter, at least the greater part of it, he passed near  
the shrine of Santiago in Galicia : he was a pilgrim,  
no less than a champion of the cross. On his way to  
Lisbon, he captured some infidel privateers, and de-  
stroyed several Moorish settlements on the coast, es-  
pecially one at Cintra. All who refused baptism he  
put to the sword. Lisbon, according to the North-  
ern chroniclers, was divided into two parts, one in-  
habited by the Moors, the other by the Christians.  
The former he assailed, took it, and with much booty  
proceeded through the straits of Gibraltar in quest of  
new adventures. Having passed these straits, he con-  
quered a whole fleet of the infidels, and this was the

fifth battle since he left Norway. In vain did the Mohammedan pirates on the African coast resist him : his valour overcame every thing. Landing in Sicily, he was magnificently entertained by Roger, sovereign of the island, who had expelled the Saracens. Roger was of Norman descent : he remembered the land of his sires ; and so far did he carry his goodwill as to insist on serving Sigurd at table. Continuing his voyage, he landed at Acre, and proceeded to Jerusalem, where the offer of his sword was most welcome to Baldwin. From that king he received what he thought a valuable treasure — a fragment of the true cross, which he promised to deposit in the shrine of St. Olaf. He promised too, at the instance of his new friends, to establish an archiepiscopal see in Norway, to build churches, and to enforce the payment of tithe. His last exploit in these regions was to join in the siege of Sidon ; and when that city was taken, half the booty became his. On his return through Constantinople, his reception by the Greek emperor was a noble one ; but much of what the Northern annalists relate bears the marks of invention. Such are, the opening of the golden gate ; the carpeting of the streets ; the three large presents made him by Alexis, with their immediate distribution among the followers of Sigurd ; and the gift by the latter of his sixty ships to Alexis. Such fables may gratify a Northern imagination ; but history can only say that in 1111, the king arrived in Norway after an absence of four years.

That this remarkable expedition redounded greatly to 1111  
the honour of Sigurd, is certain : he was thenceforth to  
much venerated throughout the North. He married, 1123.  
and attended to the duties of government, especially to  
the extirpation of idolatry. His expedition (undertaken  
at the request of the Danish king) against the inha-  
bitants of the isle of Smaland, was one congenial to his  
feelings. They had received Christianity, but, like  
many other portions of the Scandinavian population,

had returned to idolatry. Even Sweden had its pagans and apostates, some too of royal dignity.\* Great was the punishment inflicted by Sigurd and his ally Nicholas on the pagans whom they had vanquished ; but mercy to infidels, and still less to apostates, formed no portion of their creed.

1124 In his latter days, Sigurd seems to have occasionally  
to lost the use of his reason, or perhaps he was visited by  
1130. some bodily infirmity which gave him the appearance of insanity. But he never relinquished the duties of royalty. One of his last cares was to fortify Konghella on the river Gotha, to ornament it with a fine Gothic church, and to place in that sacred edifice some of the pictures which he had brought from the East. But with all his attachment to the church, he was not without his delinquencies. Of these one of the most noted was his dismissal of his queen to make room for a concubine, Cecilia by name, whom he resolved to marry. A great entertainment was provided for the occasion, and many were the guests assembled at Bergen. The bishop of the district, hearing of the intention, hastened to the town, and expostulated with the king on the guilt of dismissing one wife to take another, when there was no charge against the former, and consequently no way of annulling the marriage. Great was the wrath of Sigurd, who held a drawn sword in his hand, and who, at one moment, seemed disposed to use it on the neck of the prelate. If he so far restrained his passion as to walk away, he persevered in his design, and the union was celebrated. The truth is, that his heart was so fixed on the maiden, that no earthly consideration could induce him to abandon her. Some time afterwards he was afflicted with his last illness, which was regarded by many as the judgment of Heaven on his crime. His courtiers

\* "Succia enim," says Snorro, "tunc temporis passim vel ethnica vel male Christiana : reges quinetiam quosdam habuit, qui, abjectâ Christi fide, sacrificia instaurabant."

urged him to dismiss her ; and she, out of regard for him—to save him from renewed guilt—really wished to leave him. Such was the attachment he bore her, that he could not give his consent to the separation. She departed, however, and with her departed the only solace which had been left him. In a few days he was no more. Previously to his death, he had caused his son Magnus to be recognised as his successor, and had prevailed on the states to swear that they would obey him.

From the death of Sigurd I. to the union of Norway <sup>1130.</sup> with Denmark, there is little in the history of the former country to interest us. During the whole of the twelfth century we perceive nothing but anarchy and bloodshed occasioned by disputes for the throne. In a country where illegitimacy was no bar to the succession, and where partition of the sovereign power was frequent, there could not fail to be numerous candidates. Sigurd I. was succeeded by his son MAGNUS IV., to whom, as we have related, the states of the realm had sworn fealty before the death of Sigurd. How little dependence could be placed on such a guarantee soon appeared. In the reign of the preceding monarch, an adventurer, Harald Gille, had asserted—probably with justice—that he was a natural son of king Magnus Barefoot. As he could produce no satisfactory proof of that connection, recourse was had to the decision of Heaven, and he was made to pass over nine red-hot ploughshares. This ordeal, merely to prove his parentage, was thought to be severe ; but he shrunk not from it ; and led by two bishops, he sustained it unhurt. To resist the divine pleasure was impossible, and Harald's claim was allowed even by Sigurd, on the condition that he would not insist on the advantage to which his relationship entitled him, before the death of his son Magnus IV. Scarcely, however, had this Magnus succeeded to the throne, than Harald came forward to assert his right ; and from the number no less than the influence of those

who espoused his interests (among them were the kings of Denmark and Sweden), he had every thing to hope from a civil war. In this emergency, Magnus consented to a division of the kingdom, the very year of his accession.

- 1130 HARALD IV. was very different in character and  
to manners from his colleague Magnus. He was mild  
1152. as the latter was severe, and generous as the latter was  
penurious. He therefore became the favourite of the  
people. This circumstance probably roused the jealousy  
of Magnus, who at the head of many followers marched  
against him, conquered him, and compelled him to  
forsake the realm. Repairing to the court of Eric  
Emund, king of Denmark, he was well received by  
that monarch, "because they were brothers in arms."  
With the supply of money and men furnished him by  
his generous host, he returned to Denmark, and sur-  
prised rather than defeated Magnus, whom he consigned  
1134. to a monastery and deprived of eye-sight. He was now  
therefore monarch of Norway. But his reign was of  
short duration. The town of Konghella which Sigurd  
had fortified, and adorned with so magnificent a church,  
was taken by the Slavonic pirates: it was completely  
sacked, and the inhabitants led into captivity. For this  
disaster, Harald was censured: he was accused of in-  
activity in repelling the invaders; and was even for-  
saken by the great body of his supporters. In this  
condition he was assassinated. A melancholy illus-  
tration of the spirit of the times is afforded by the  
fact that the assassin, Sigurd, also claimed Magnus  
Barefoot for his father. From this deed of blood  
1136. he derived no advantage. The nation would not ad-  
mit *his* claim, but proclaimed two sons of the mur-  
dered king, SIGURD II. (1136—1155) and INGE I.  
(1136—1161). Both, however, were children; and  
their inability to defend themselves led to civil war.  
Sigurd, their reputed uncle, the assassin of their father,  
raised troops and laid waste the country. To strengthen  
his party he formed an alliance with Magnus the Blind,



whom he drew from the monastery ; but he was defeated and compelled to flee. Both soon obtained the aid of the Danish king Eric ; but fortune was still unfavourable : in battle, Magnus lost his life ; and the restless Sigurd too was made prisoner, and subsequently executed. Though two enemies were thus removed, the royal brothers, Sigurd and Inge, were often at discord ; and a third firebrand was soon added in EYSTEIN II. (1142—1157), a younger brother, who, returning from Scotland in 1142, was invested with a third portion of the realm. There was not, nor could there be, any tranquillity in the country. Complaints, recriminations, quarrels, treachery, bloodshed, succeeded each other, when the arrival of a papal legate, the cardinal Albano, suspended for a time the sanguinary proceedings of these princes.

This legate was Nicholas Breakspear, our country-<sup>1152.</sup> man, who subsequently ascended the pontifical throne as Adrian IV. His mission was two-fold—to restore peace between the unnatural brothers, and to establish an archbishopric. The Norwegian monarchs had long demanded a primate of their own, instead of being dependent on the archbishops of Lund. In both objects he was successful. The three kings laid down their arms ; united in showing the highest deference to the legate ; and beheld with joy the creation of a metropolitan see at Trondheim, with a jurisdiction, not over Norway merely, but Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe islands, the Shetlands, the Orkneys, the Hebrides, and Man. In return, the chiefs and people readily agreed to pay the tribute of Peter's Pence. Many were the reforms which this well-meaning dignitary endeavoured to carry. He introduced more decorum into the public worship ; he enjoined the clergy to attend more to their proper functions, and to interfere less in secular matters ; and impressed on the new archbishop the necessity of a rigorous control over the morals of his flock. In attempting to enforce clerical celibacy, he did not

meet with so ready an acquiescence; but no one dared openly to resist him. To another of his measures we must award a much higher meed of praise. Seeing that bloodshed had for many reigns stained the proceedings of the Lands-Thing, or provincial assembly, he prevailed on the chiefs to promise that they would not in future attend with arms. Even the king was only to be accompanied by twelve armed men — an exception conceded less to his dignity than to the necessity under which he lay of enforcing the judicial sentences. To an Englishman the conduct of cardinal Albano on this mission is gratifying. It was no less esteemed by the Norwegians. “In several other respects,” observes Snorro, “he reformed the customs and manners of the people during his stay; so that never did stranger come to the land more honoured or more beloved by the princes and their subjects.”

1153 If the ascendancy of the cardinal had restored peace,  
 to his departure was immediately followed by new struggles  
 1161. between two of the brothers. Eystein had no share in them, because he absented himself on a piratical expedition. He is said to have ravaged the eastern coasts of our island, from the Orkneys to the Humber. Soon after his return, he entered into a plot with Sigurd to remove their brother Inge. In 1155, Sigurd and Inge met in the Thing held at Bergen, and though they could not fight for want of arms, both they and their followers regarded one another with deadly hatred. Scarcely was the assembly dissolved, when Inge, who had heard of the plot for removing him, determined to prevent it by assailing Sigurd, and after a sharp contest the latter fell. The following year Inge and Eystein, who were still hostile, met to agree on conditions of peace; but it was a truce rather than a peace, and in a few months it was broken by both parties. They marched towards each other with the resolution of deciding their quarrel by the sword; but Eystein, who was unpopular, was deserted by most of his followers, and compelled to seek an asylum in the mountains of

Vikia. Thither he was pursued by Inge, was betrayed in a forest, and put to death by one of his brother's myrmidons. By this deed therefore Inge was the monarch of the country. But he had soon a competitor in HAKO III., son of Sigurd II., whom the party of Eystein proclaimed king (1157). The four succeeding years were years of civil war. Hako, a mere child, was driven into Gothland. The following season he returned and besieged Konghell; but he was again defeated and forced to re-enter Sweden. Yet early in 1159 he arrived at Drontheim, where he found adherents. With thirty vessels he laid waste the coasts which held for Inge; but in a great naval battle he was defeated by that king, though not without considerable loss to the victor. Repairing into Drontheim where he passed the winter, he prepared for the next campaign. It was not decisive; but, in 1161, Inge, betrayed by his own followers, fell in battle with Hako.

By this event, Hako, it might be expected, would be left undisputed sovereign of Norway. But the Norwegians at this period seem to have had little wish for a monarchy; and MAGNUS V. (1162—1186) was raised by the party of the deceased Inge to the throne of the North. Magnus was the grandson of Sigurd I., and one of his duties in the opinion of the times was to revenge the murder of his kindred. As, however, he was but a child, the government was administered by his father Erling. Erling was, by marriage, a kinsman of the Danish monarch, from whom he obtained aid to resist the hostility of Hako. Through that aid he was victor; Hako fell (1162), and consequently Magnus was the only king left. A rival indeed, Sigurd, a son of Sigurd II., was opposed to him; but in little more than a year that rival was crushed by the indefatigable Erling. To confirm the authority of his son by religious sanction, Erling requested the primate to crown him. The archbishop consented on the condition that Norway should be regarded as a fief of St. Olaf; that on the death of every monarch, the crown was to be

formally offered to the saint in the cathedral ; that the saint's representative, the archbishop of the time, should receive it ; that from each diocese the bishop, the abbots, and twelve chiefs, should assemble to nominate a successor, and that the sanction of the primate should be necessary before any one could be lawful king of Norway. That a considerable reduction in the number of electors was politic cannot be disputed ; and probably this was one of the reasons that induced the archbishop to introduce so extraordinary an innovation. But a greater no doubt was the superiority which the church would thereby acquire over the state. The proposal was accepted ; and Magnus, then only eight years of age, was solemnly crowned by Eystein in presence of the papal legate.

1164 The aid furnished by the Danish king was not gra-  
 to tuitous. In return for it Erling had promised the  
 1170. province of Vikia (Vigen), and Valdemar (the first of that name) now demanded the fulfilment of that pledge. His position was a critical one. He had not power to transfer that province, and if he attempted that transfer, his own destruction and that of his son must be the result. Yet if he did nothing, he must expect an encounter with that formidable monarch. To escape from this dilemma, he convoked the states, and laid before them the proposition of Valdemar : they indignantly refused to receive the Danish yoke. Open war followed, but through the policy of Erling it was soon succeeded by peace. He secretly engaged to hold Vikia with the title of jarl as a fief of Denmark ; and, in the event of a failure of issue in his son, to subject the whole kingdom to the same crown.

1166 Neither the sanction of the church, nor the vigour of  
 to his father, nor even his own virtues, could except Magnus  
 1169. from the common lot of Norwegian kings— open rebellion and rivalry for the throne. The next who troubled his tranquillity was Olaf, a grandson of Eystein II. Proclaimed king by the Uplanders, Olaf had the glory to defeat the regent ; but in his turn he was defeated,



and compelled to flee into Denmark, where he died the following year (1169).

The next was a more formidable rival, in the person of Eystein, a prince of the same family. Placing himself at the head of the discontented, the banished, the proscribed, this prince became a bandit chief, and laid waste the provinces on the borders of Sweden. As the number of his followers increased, so did his boldness, until with a small fleet he sailed for Nidaros, which he subdued. Here he persuaded or forced the people to elect him king (1176). The following year he penetrated into the central provinces, which had the option of either doing homage, or of experiencing all the evils of desolation. In 1177, four years after the commencement of his adventurous career, he met Magnus in the field, and was defeated. His followers hastened into Sweden, the eastern provinces of which were still pagan, and but loosely connected with the crown. He was less fortunate : he was slain in his flight.

Of a different character from either of the preceding, and more successful in his object, was the next adventurer, Swerro, whose career is one of romance. His mother, Alfhilda, had been the concubine of Sigurd II. ; and he was the issue of the connection. After Sigurd's death, she became the wife of a smith—a business of high repute in the North—and removed, with her husband and son, to the Faroe isles. Young Swerro was designed for the church, and on reaching the age of twenty-five, he entered into holy orders. Now, for the first time, his mother acquainted him with the secret of his birth. Far more wisely would she have acted by keeping it in her own bosom ; for no sooner did the young priest know it, than he indulged in dreams of ambition. As our sleeping are but the images of our waking thoughts, he had a dream which seemed to prognosticate his future greatness. He mentioned it to a friend, who promised him the archbishopric of Drontheim. But he had no relish for the ecclesiastical state ;



and he mentally interpreted it in a different way. Urged by ambition, he left the obscure isles in which he had been so long imprisoned, and repaired to the court of Magnus. His learning and his martial appearance made a favourable impression on the regent Erling; and he too so admired the vigorous administration of that chief, that in despair of effecting a revolution, he withdrew into the Swedish province of Wermeland. Probably his design was to subsist by plunder, in the service of one of those predatory bands, so frequent on the confines of the two kingdoms. At first, however, his prospects were gloomy; and in his restlessness, he had resolved to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, when the band which Eystein had commanded solicited him to become their chief. After some hesitation he consented, was invested with the royal title, and enabled to take the field.

1178     The early efforts of this adventurer were bold but  
to     unsuccessful. In an expedition through the southern  
1186. provinces he was indeed joined by some hundred of followers, mostly bandits; but when he proceeded towards the north, where Magnus and Erling had their seat of government, he was abandoned by most of his adherents: the enterprise was too desperate even for them. With great difficulty did he save himself by penetrating through the mountain passes into Wermeland. To escape the pursuits of his enemies, no less than to recruit his numbers, the following spring he plunged into the vast forests of the modern Delecarlia, then called Jarnberaland, or the Iron-being land. The inhabitants knew little of Swedish kings, or of the rest of the world, or of Christianity; but they knew the value of freedom; and in the apprehension that he came to deprive them of it, they prepared a stout resistance. He had no difficulty, however, in persuading those sons of the forest, the mountain, and the river, that he had no design against them—that he wanted hospitality, guides, and troops. Of the last he seems to have obtained none; but he was well entertained, and conducted

into Jamtland, where his little band was recruited. The hardships which he underwent in this expedition, — cold, hunger, fatigue — made him resolve to attempt some enterprise, the success of which would rescue him from this wretched mode of life. Appearing suddenly before Drontheim, he hoped to surprise the place ; but he was repulsed, and again forced to seek a refuge in the mountains. His next object was to increase the number of his followers ; and as he, or some about him, were well acquainted with the haunts of the banditti in the trackless forest, and the inaccessible cavern, he obtained a considerable accession. But a hardy band of peasant archers from Tellmark was his most valuable acquisition. Reappearing before the gates of the capital, he defeated the little army of Magnus, and captured the banner of St. Olaf. As both king and regent were at Bergen, their usual place of residence, he pushed his way into the city, assembled the inhabitants of the province, and was proclaimed king ! His task, however was not half accomplished. A numerous party, including all the churchmen, adhered to Magnus ; and he was soon expelled from Drontheim, to seek a shelter in his mountain fastnesses. But with these revolutions he was now familiar : he knew how to recruit his forces — to advance when there was a prospect of victory — retreat when the danger was evident. During two years the civil war raged with violence, and the alternations of triumph and defeat succeeded each other with rapidity. At length Swerro suddenly descended from the mountains, and defeated the regent and his son, leaving the former dead on the field. Magnus fled, but only to return with another army. The second battle, however, was not more fortunate than the first ; his army was annihilated or dispersed ; and he was glad to seek a refuge in Denmark, while the archbishop fled to England. By the Danish monarch Magnus was supplied with an armament, with which he again contended for the throne, but with no better success. A second time he repaired

to that country for aid, and again he fought with the usurper. As on the two former occasions, victory declared for Swerro: his rival fled, and perished in the waves. He was not one of those savage chieftains in whom ancient Norway rejoiced, and whom some of her modern sons would have us mention with respect. If his soul had not been much improved by religion, it had been humanised by education. To the followers of Magnus he exhibited great clemency. He caused the fallen monarch to be magnificently interred in the cathedral of Drontheim; and he himself, in conformity with ancient custom, pronounced the funeral oration of the deceased, to whose virtues, now that he had no reason to fear them, he paid the sincere homage of praise.

- 1186 SWERRO (1186—1202) thus obtained the object of  
to his ambition; but he could not expect to hold it in  
1194. peace. In fact, the whole of his reign was a struggle  
to preserve what he had so painfully gained. From  
England archbishop Eystein hurled the thunders of the  
church at the head of the apostate priest; but the promise of the king, that he would lay his case before the pope, and submit to such penance as his holiness might impose, induced the primate to return and resume his metropolitan functions. Much of his attention was employed on the enlargement and improvement of his cathedral, which he wished to vie with the most splendid Gothic edifices in Europe. From the king he derived considerable aid towards this end; but he lived only to finish the choir. The rest was completed by archbishop Sigurd, in 1248. It was then a very respectable structure. The high altar, which was adorned with a costly silver shrine containing the relics of St. Olaf, and which was visited by pilgrims from all parts of the North, had a splendid appearance. Swerro no doubt expected that by his liberality on this occasion he should win over to his government the great body of the clergy; but he refused to hold the crown as a feudatory of St. Olaf, that is, of the primate; and this rebellion cancelled all his other merits. Aware of the influence which the primate

exercised over the people, he endeavoured, on the death of Eystein, to obtain the election of a successor favourable to his views ; but in defiance of his influence, that successor was one of his enemies, Eric bishop of Stavenger, who had been the warm friend of Erling and Magnus. From the hands of the new primate he solicited the ceremony of the coronation ; but Eric refused, and for so doing he has been severely censured. It should, however, be remembered, that he could not crown an excommunicated prince. That penalty Swerro had incurred by various crimes — by forsaking the altar without the leave of his diocesan, by the shedding of blood at the head of banditti, by assuming the crown without secularisation, and by taking a wife. No bishop, no metropolitan could absolve him : the pope only was competent to dispense with the authority of the canons. In revenge for this refusal, Swerro, a man of vigorous mind, and without a particle of superstition, endeavoured to curtail the revenues and patronage of the church. He insisted that its claim to the pecuniary fine in case of homicide should be abolished, and that the fine should revert to the crown. For this act he must command our praise ; but we cannot praise him for attempting to usurp the patronage of the church. We have scarcely an instance in all history of a king exercising the trust in an enlightened and a conscientious manner. Eric supported with firmness the rights of the church, and by so doing incurred the royal displeasure to such a degree that he was compelled to flee into Denmark. From thence he appealed to the pope, who threatened to place the kingdom under an interdict, unless satisfaction were made to the church. In vain did Swerro endeavour to prove that the pope had no right to interfere in such cases : the canons, he well knew, taught a different doctrine. In vain did he attempt to make the multitude believe that the blindness with which the archbishop was visited during the dispute was owing to the wrath of heaven. The people had more confidence in the primate and in the pope,



than they had in a monarch whose early career had not been the most edifying.

1194      Convinced by experience how little was to be gained  
to      by struggling with the formidable power which hum-  
1200.      bled the greatest monarchs, Swerro now applied to the  
pope for absolution and pardon. He was directed, in  
the first instance, to make his peace with the archbishop,  
who alone could intercede for him. Incensed at the  
reply, and fearful lest the people should desert him be-  
cause he had not been crowned, he convoked his bishops,  
and prevailed on one of them — a mere court tool  
— to perform the ceremony. To anoint an apostate  
priest would not have been within the bounds even  
of papal authority: penance and absolution were pre-  
viously indispensable; but neither were exacted, and  
if they had been, the censure could only have been re-  
moved by the supreme pontiff. The bishop who per-  
formed a ceremony in its very nature null was excom-  
municated; and the king's own excommunication was  
confirmed. In this emergency, Swerro convoked an Al-  
Thing at Bergen, where a resolution was passed to send  
deputies to Rome to procure his absolution. On their  
return they all died in Denmark — no doubt through  
poison. They brought no absolution; but a confirma-  
tion of the former sentence. For this instrument the  
king, who was capable of any act, substituted another,  
which contained a plenary remission, and which he  
declared was the one brought from the head of the  
church. To account for the death of his messengers,  
he asserted that they had been poisoned by his enemies  
lest the papal absolution should reach him. The bene-  
fits of this deception he could not long hope to enjoy:  
Alexander III. charged him with both the forgery and  
the murder, and placed the whole kingdom under an  
interdict. Even the bishop, Nicholas, who had crowned  
him now escaped into Denmark, to join the metro-  
politan; and both were nobly entertained by archbishop  
Absolom, primate and minister of that kingdom.



During these transactions with the church, Swerro 1194 was twice compelled to enter the field against claimants to for the crown. The first was Sigurd, son of Magnus V., 1202. who had taken refuge in the Orkneys. Accompanied by a band of adventurers, Sigurd landed in Norway, and was joined by many of the peasantry. But Swerro had a body of men whose valour was unequalled, and whose fidelity was above all suspicion — men whom he had commanded before his accession, to whom he was indebted for the throne, and whom he had transferred from robbers into good soldiers. With them he triumphed over Sigurd, whose corpse rested on the field. The next adventurer was supported by bishop Nicholas, who was anxious to ingratiate himself with his metropolitan and the pope, by exhibiting uncommon zeal in the destruction of the king. His name was Inge, and he was represented by his patron as a son of that same Magnus. When he and the bishop landed, they were joined by a considerable number of the discontented ; but the king, who had obtained archers from England, was better prepared than even on the former occasion to defend his authority. Still the struggle was a desperate one ; several battles were fought, and two or three victories were necessary to humble the hopes of the assailants.

In the midst of these struggles, after a whole life 1202. past in fomenting rebellion or crushing it, Swerro breathed his last at the age of fifty-one. That he was a man of great genius and of commanding character is evident from his unparalleled success. Whether he was really the son of a Norwegian king is extremely doubtful ; but even if he were, he had none of the advantages which the relationship generally ensures. His fortune was the result of his own enterprising powers. Few indeed are the characters in history who have risen from so obscure to so high a station against obstacles so great ; fewer still who, in the midst of perpetual dangers, have been able to maintain themselves in that station. In both respects he is almost un-

- equalled. On the whole, he may safely be pronounced one of the most extraordinary men of the middle ages.
- 1202 Before the death of his father, HAKO III. (1202—  
to 1204) had been saluted as heir of the monarchy ; and  
1204. he ascended the throne without opposition. One of his first acts was to recal the primate, the rest of the bishops, and all whom his father had exiled. In return the interdict was removed from the realm ; and prosperity was returning to a country so long harassed by civil wars when the young king died—not without suspicion of poison from the hands of his stepmother, Margaret, a daughter of St. Eric, king of Sweden. There seems, however, to be no foundation for the suspicion ; and indeed what could she gain by the crime ?
- 1204 GUTHRUM (1204—1205), a grandson of Swerro,  
to was next raised to the throne ; but his reign was only  
1207. a year, and there seems to be little doubt that he was removed by poison, through the contrivance of a faction which hoped to restore the ancient line of kings. In consequence of this event, INGE II. (1205—1207), a grandson on the female side of Sigurd II., acceded ; but in two years he too descended to the tomb—whether violently or in the order of nature is unknown. The death of four princes in five years is a melancholy illustration of the times.
1207. There now remained only one male descendant of this dynasty—Hako, a natural son of Swerro. After his father's death, and during the struggles between the old and the new dynasty for the supreme power, this prince was secreted in the mountains. Fortunately for him, the companions of his father, the devoted Birkibeinar, the bandit soldiers, still remained : they espoused his cause, and procured his election to the throne. Before the church, however, would ratify the election, the mother, Inga, was required to undergo the ordeal of hot-iron, in proof of her having truly sworn to the paternity of her son. She consented ; was shut up in a church to prepare by fasting and prayer for the trial ; was guarded night and day by twelve armed men ;

and the burning-iron left no wound on her fair hand. Whoever doubted that the ordeal was a fair one, that Hako was the offspring of Swerro, was menaced with excommunication.

HAKO IV. was thus the recognised monarch of the 1208 country ; but he had still to sustain the hostility of the faction which adhered to the former dynasty. The 1241. most inveterate as well as the most powerful of his enemies was Skule the jarl, half-brother of Inge II. To pacify this ambitious noble, he was admitted to a share in the government ; and his daughter became a wife of Hako. This union, in effecting which the church had a great share, was expected to combine the hearts of both factions. But the hope was vain : other pretenders to the legitimate or illegitimate honour of royal descent appeared in succession to claim a portion of their birthright. So distracted was the country by these conflicting claims, that a great council of the nation was convoked at Bergen. The decision was, that Hako was the only lawful king. Yet through the advice of the primate, whose object was evidently to avert a civil war, the northern provinces were confided to Skule ; and by the king he was soon adorned with the ducal title — a title which had been in disuse ever since the ninth century. But this ambitious noble was not to be silenced by benefits. On a memorable day (1240) he convoked the states of his own government to assemble in the cathedral : his descent from the martyr Olaf was then attested by oath on the relics of that saint ; and by his party, amidst the silence of the spectators, he was declared the lawful heir to the crown, as the successor of Inge II. Constrained by the example, the rest did homage to him after he had sworn to administer the laws in righteousness, as his holy predecessor had administered them. Thus the northern provinces were again dissevered from the monarchy. But Hako was true to his own rights and the interests of his people. Assembling his faithful Birkibeinar, and all who valued the interests of his order, he marched towards Dron-

them. At his approach, the usurper fled into the interior, but only to collect new forces, with which he obtained some advantages over those of Hako. When spring returned, however, and the latter marched against the rebels, fortune declared for him. Skule was signally defeated, compelled to flee, overtaken, and killed.

- 1242 Released from the scourge of civil war, Hako now  
to applied his attention to the internal government of his  
1260. kingdom. He made new treaties of commerce with  
the neighbouring powers: he fortified his sea-ports; he improved the laws; he made salutary changes in the local administration. But he was not yet fully at peace with the church; and he requested Innocent IV. to mediate between him and them, and to cause the crown to be placed on his brow. Innocent dispatched a legate, the cardinal bishop of Sabina, for this purpose. At first the king was desired to comply with the law of his predecessor Magnus V. — that Norway should hereafter be regarded as a fief of St. Olaf: but he had the patriotism to refuse: he would protect, he observed, the just rights of the church, but he would never sanction this usurpation of the ecclesiastical over the secular state. His firmness was respected, and at the cardinal's instance he was crowned without subscribing to the obnoxious compact. He had gratified that churchman by promising to go on the crusade; but though he made preparations circumstances prevented his departure. His kingdom indeed could not safely be left at such a crisis. His frontiers were still subject to ravage from the licentious bands who infested the western provinces of Sweden, and who took refuge in either territory when pursued by the injured inhabitants of the other. Without a cordial union between the two governments, there could be no hope of extirpating these predatory bands. Fortunately Birger, the regent of Sweden, concurred with him in his object. To create a good understanding between the two countries, a marriage was negotiated between the daughter of Birger,



whose son was on the throne of Sweden, and Magnus, the eldest son of Hako. But this union was never effected: the subsequent conduct of Birger was not agreeable to the monarch; and Magnus married the daughter of Christopher, king of Denmark. The clemency of Hako led to this connection. He had many causes of complaint against Denmark; and he did not recur to hostilities until he had long and vainly sued for redress. He soon reduced Christopher to long for peace; but with a generosity of which there are few records among kings, he forgot his wrongs in sympathy for his brother monarch, and became the friend of the man whom he had left Norway to chastise.

The last and by far the most memorable expedition 1263. of Hako was against the Scots. The chief incentive to this war was the attempt of Alexander III. to recover the Hebrides, which, as we have before observed\*, had been subdued by Magnus Barefoot. Not that they were then subdued for the first time. The truth is, that they had frequently been reduced to the Norwegian yoke as far back as the ninth century, and from that time had, at intervals, paid tribute to that power. More frequently, however, they had asserted their independence. Colonies, too, from the mother-countries, had assisted to people those islands, which Harald Harfagre and his successors had regarded as no less a dependency than the Shetlands or the Orkneys. In the time of Magnus the number of those colonists increased; and there were not a few nobles of the isles who could trace their pedigree to the royal line of Norway. But their position drew them into the sphere of Scottish influence: to Scotland, and not to the distant North, they must look for allies in their frequent wars with one another; and the eagerness of the Scottish monarchs to establish their feudal superiority over them brought the two parties into continual communication. In 1244, two bishops arrived in Norway to induce

\* See the reign of Magnus III.



Hako to renounce all claim to the Hebrides. They told him that he could have no just right to them, since Magnus Barefoot had only gained possession of them by violence — by forcibly wresting them from Malcolm Canmore. The king replied with more truth that Magnus had not wrested them from the Scottish king, but from the Norwegian Gudred, who had thrown off the allegiance due to the mother-country. Defeated in their historical arguments, they had recourse to one which with a poor monarch they hoped would be more convincing — the pecuniary argument. They besought him to say what sum he would demand for their entire cession. “I am not so poor that I will sell my birth-right!” was the reply, and the prelates returned. Alexander III., however, would not abandon the hope of annexing these islands to his crown; and he commenced a series of intrigues among the Highland chieftains. The vassals of Hako began to complain of the vexatious hostilities to which they were subject, especially from the thane of Ross, and to beg immediate aid. The atrocities which they detailed, we should scarcely expect to find in a Christian people, and in the thirteenth century: we should rather assign them to the period when the pagan Northmen ravaged the coasts of these islands. In great anger Hako convened a diet at Bergen, and it resolved that the aid required should be immediately furnished.

1263. Leaving his son, prince Magnus, regent of the kingdom, Hako sailed for the Hebrides. In the Orkneys he was joined by the jarls and by the king of Man. On the western coast of Scotland, many of the Highland chieftains submitted to his arms. But though he took Arran and Bute, and laid waste many of the western districts of the continent with fire and sword, his expedition was a disastrous one. At the mouth of the Clyde, while landing his troops, a tempest arose and forced him from the shore; and those who were landed were overpowered by the superior number of the enemy.

In vain did Hako endeavour to lead the rest of his forces with the view of saving the brave men who were thus overwhelmed : the storm was too powerful for him ; some of his ships were lost ; more were dispersed ; and in great anguish of mind he repaired to the Orkneys where he intended to winter, and invade Scotland the ensuing spring. That spring he was never to see. A fever, the result of anxiety no less than of fatigue, laid him on the bed from which he was no more to rise. The activity of his mind, however, was not arrested even by fatal disease : he caused the Bible and the old Sagas to be read to him night and day. When convinced that there was no hope of his recovery, he dictated his last instructions to his son ; made liberal presents to his followers ; confessed and received the sacrament ; and “ at midnight Almighty God called him from this world, to the exceeding grief of all present and of all who heard of his death.” His body was first interred in the cathedral of St. Magnus, Kirkwall, but subsequently removed to Bergen, and laid with those of his royal ancestors.

MAGNUS VI. (1263—1280), who had been crowned 1263 during his father's life, now ascended the throne. He to had the wisdom to make peace with the Scots, by ce- 1266.  
ding to them all the islands off their coast except the Orkneys, but not in full sovereignty. For these he was to receive 4000 marks, and an annual tribute of 100 marks. At the same time Margaret, the daughter of Alexander, was betrothed to the son of Magnus. These islands had never produced any benefit to the crown : to maintain them would have entailed a ruinous expenditure of money and blood. But the Orkneys, though frequently independent, had been so long connected with the mother-country, and lay so much nearer, that though their preservation might bring no great advantage, they were useful as nurseries for seamen. In the reign of Magnus, too, Iceland became thoroughly dependent on the Norwegian crown.

Internally, the reign of this prince exhibits consider-

1263 able improvement. One of his most serious objects,  
to (which had also been his father's) was to establish, on  
1280. fixed principles, the succession to the throne. As in  
other European countries, that succession was now made  
to depend on the law of primogeniture, in the male line  
only. To this regulation the bishops gave their assent;  
and, in accordance with it, they not merely recognised  
Eric as the successor of Magnus, but crowned that  
prince. Hence they no longer insisted on the obnoxious  
compact between Magnus V. and the primate of that  
day \*—a proof that they do not merit all the abuse  
which modern history has poured upon them. It is  
indeed true that in return for their sanction of this new  
and fundamental law of succession, they obtained some  
favours; but most of them related to their own  
matters. They were excepted, for instance, from the  
secular tribunals; but so they were in every other  
country in communion with Rome. They refused lay-  
men to exercise any influence over the election of dig-  
nities, and they did right. But when each prelate  
claimed the right of coining money, and of maintaining  
a body-guard of forty men-at-arms, he surely forgot his  
spiritual character, and remembered only that he was  
a temporal baron. This reign too witnessed some other  
changes. The allodial proprietors became vassals: the  
old jarls and hersers were replaced by dukes and barons  
and knights; feudal usages were introduced in lieu of  
the ancient national customs. As a necessary conse-  
quence, the small landed proprietors, equivalent to the  
English yeomen, began to disappear, and to be replaced  
by farmers. Still in the national character there was  
that which prevented the worse evils of feudality. If the  
peasant had no longer a voice, or we should rather say  
a vote, in the assembly of the states, except by represen-  
tation, he yet continued to be free, and to bear arms. In  
the cities and towns of the kingdom there was also a  
modification of the old system. In proportion to the  
increase of commerce, and to the prosperity of the great

\* See his reign.

depôts, was that of municipal rights. These rights were, as much as possible, assimilated to those of the German towns. For the two important cities of Bergen and Drontheim, Magnus himself drew up a code of regulations, to define the rights of the guilds and of the different classes of burghers. And for the defence of the coasts he revived the ancient act of division of the maritime districts, each of which was to furnish a certain number of ships, and to maintain its beacon fire, so that intelligence of an invasion might speedily fly throughout the country.

But the fame of this monarch chiefly rests on his legislative talents: hence his surname of *Lugabeter*, or law-mender. To the code which he compiled from the centenary observances of the four Norwegian provinces, and which he designed for general use throughout his dominions, we shall allude in the proper place.

ERIC II., while yet a minor, succeeded his father <sup>1280</sup> without opposition; but his reign was not one of <sup>to</sup> peace. His first disputes were with the church. At <sup>1289.</sup> his coronation, he promised rather to amplify than to curtail its privileges. In virtue of this promise, the archbishop of Drontheim drew up a list of offences against the canon laws, and claimed for the clerical tribunals the pecuniary mulcts demanded on such occasions. These mulcts were considered the right of the crown, and as such were claimed by royal councillors, on behalf of the king. So far the conciliations were justifiable; but when they persuaded him to revoke all the privileges which his father had conceded, they wantonly perilled the tranquillity of the kingdom. They were excommunicated by the primate, who in his turn was banished. Both parties appealed to Rome; but the pope seems to have been a moderate man; and, though not disposed to surrender any right which the church universal possessed, he doubtless saw that the Norwegian branch of it had usurped some that were inconsistent with civil government. The successor of the primate consented to abandon one or



two of the more obnoxious claims, and to become the liege vassal of Eric. The king too was embroiled with Denmark, through the protection which he afforded to the assassins of Eric Glipping.\* Long and disastrous was the war which raged between the two countries. At length, both opened negotiations for peace; but it was not signed during the life of Eric.

1289 to 1299. These disputes with the church and his royal neighbour prevented Eric from engaging in another war, for which he might have urged a better reason. In conformity with the treaty between his father and Alexander III., he married Margaret of Scotland. The issue was a female, who, on the death of her grandfather in 1289 (her mother was no more), was undoubted heiress to the throne of that kingdom. The claims of the "Maid of Norway" were urged by her father; but she had a rival in our Edward I., who had determined to render the northern ruler his vassal. To unite the two crowns on the same brow was an object still more desirable; and in this view the English king proposed a marriage between his son and the Maid of Norway. The proposal was readily accepted by Eric; but before it could be carried into effect, the princess died in the Orkneys. If Eric exposed himself to ridicule in claiming the Scottish crown in her right, he had an indisputable claim to his queen's dowry, most of which had never been paid. For this cause he might have troubled the kingdom; and he had another reason for interference. His second wife was Isabel, daughter or sister of Robert Bruce, whose pretensions he might have supported against those of Baliol. But he declared for neither party—a degree of moderation, as we have intimated, attributable rather to his disputes with the church and with Denmark, than to any other cause.

1299 to 1319. As Eric the Priest-hater left no heirs male, he was succeeded by his brother HAKO V. (1299—1319),

\* See his reign.



whom he had created duke of Norway, and who had been admitted to some share in the government. One of his first objects was to resume the negotiations with Denmark ; but through the intrigues of the men who were implicated in the murder of Eric Glipping, the signature of the treaty was delayed until 1308. His transactions with Sweden are more important, since they led to a temporary union between the two crowns. His daughter Ingeburga became the wife of Eric, brother of Birger, king of Sweden. When Eric was barbarously murdered by his own brother, Hako armed to revenge the death of his son-in-law. After a war of some duration, Birger was compelled to abdicate, and Magnus, the son of Ingeburga, was elected in his place. As Hako had no heirs male, and females could not inherit, Magnus became the heir of the Norwegian throne, to which he succeeded on the death of Hako.

Under this prince, who died in 1319, Norway was <sup>1319.</sup> not so powerful as it had been under his father : just as in his father's time it was not to be compared with what it had been under the domination of Hako IV. With this monarch indeed ended the greatness of the kingdom : from his time to the union of the crown with that of Denmark, there was a continued decline in the national prosperity. This decline cannot, as some historians have asserted, be attributed to the cessation of piratical expeditions ; for in truth they had ceased long before the reign of Hako IV., or even of Swerro. A better reason is to be found in the wars between the kingdom and Denmark—wars which thinned the population, diminished the national revenues, and aimed a fatal blow at the national industry. A second is the monopoly of trade by the Hanseatic Towns. The vessels of that league had long frequented the coasts of Norway ; Swerro had favoured them ; Hako IV. in 1250 had conferred upon them exclusive privileges ; Magnus VI. had established the foreign merchants in his dominions, especially at Bergen. Hako also exempted them from many of the imposts to which they were subject

in other countries. These avaricious strangers did not benefit the country. Where two people trade, *both* cannot be gainers. The advantage was entirely in favour of these foreigners, who absorbed a traffic which ought to have been divided into many channels, and by their monopoly excluded the natives from other markets. In this respect, we must condemn the short-sighted policy of Hako, or rather perhaps the engrossing disposition of the league. But another reason may also be assigned for the decline of the national prosperity—the increase of luxury—the creation of artificial wants. The cardinal bishop of Sabina\* had expressed surprise at the condition of the people: he had found, not merely the comforts, but the luxuries of life. After the visit of that dignitary, the evil was not mended. The monarchs were fond of displaying a splendour which richer and more extensive kingdoms could not well support; and as the example of the court is sure to be followed by all who visit it, we may form some notion of the progress which luxury made amongst the people.

- 1319 On the death of Hako, as we have already intimated,  
 to the throne of Norway fell to his grandson MAGNUS VII.  
 1387. (1319—1343), king of Sweden. In 1343 Magnus resigned the Norwegian sceptre to his son HAKO VI. (1343—1380). This prince, as we have before observed, married the daughter of Valdemar IV., king of Denmark, and died in 1380. He was succeeded in both thrones by his infant son OLAF (the *fifth* of Norway, the *third* of Denmark), on whose death both Denmark and Norway were ruled by queen Margaret.

At this period the close connection between the three northern kingdoms can be explained only by reverting to the history of Sweden.

\* See before, reign of Hako.

## CHAPTER III.\*

## SWEDEN.

1001—1389.

OLAF. — EMUND I. — EMUND II. — STENKILL. — INGE I. — PHILIP.  
 — INGE II. — SWERKER I. — CHARLES. — ST. ERIC. — INTER-  
 NAL TROUBLES. — BIRGER JARL. — VALDEMAR I. — MAGNUS I.  
 — BIRGER. — MAGNUS II. — ERIC IV. — ALBERT OF MECKLEN-  
 BURG. — UNION OF SWEDEN WITH DENMARK.

IN Swedish history the chronological difficulties of which we had so much reason to complain in the former volume, are scarcely fewer even now that we are advanced into the eleventh century. Most writers give different lists of kings down to the twelfth century. The reason of this difference is two-fold: there were sometimes two kings reigning at the same time, the one over the Goths, the other over the Swedes; and sometimes each of these people had two, who divided the homage of the people.

All writers agree that at the opening of the eleventh century OLAF, surnamed *Skotkonung*, or the Tribute-king, reigned over Sweden. He was the ally of Denmark in the destruction of Olaf Trygvassen, king of Norway†; and with Denmark he shared the possession of

\* Authorities for the present chapter: — Torfæus, *Historia Norvegica*. Loccenius, *Historia Suevica*. Olaus Roskildensis, *Chronicon*. Johannes Magnus, *Historia Gothorum*. Pontanus, *Historia*.

† Vol. I. p. 234.

that kingdom.\* The enemy of St. Olaf, he would not, though commanded by the states of his kingdom, give his daughter Ingigerda to that king.† Contrary to his wish, however, his second daughter Astrida was married to his royal neighbour.‡ Probably this was the first of the Swedish princes that felt himself strong enough to contend with his pagan subjects, who prior to his time had held the ascendancy. His ardour, however, is said to have been mitigated by his diet, which at length decided for liberty of conscience.

1026 **ERMUND I.** (or **ORMUND**), surnamed *Colbrenner*, suc-  
ceeded to his father. Towards his unfortunate brother-  
in-law, St. Olaf of Norway, he acted with much severity; and by all writers testimony is borne to his virtues. Thus Adam of Bremen informs us that he excelled all his predecessors in wisdom and piety, and was more beloved by his people. Of his actions, except his hostilities in alliance with St. Olaf against Canute the Great, we are ignorant. Shrouded in equal obscurity are the actions of his immediate successors.

1061 **ERMUND II.** (1051—1056) was unpopular; first,  
to because he had no zeal for religion; and, secondly, be-  
1145. cause in a treaty of limits between Sweden and the Danish province of Scania, he did not uphold the national interests, but abandoned a considerable territory to that rival people. To repair this disaster, and to prove that he was not afraid of the enemy, he raised an army and invaded that province; but he was vanquished and slain. On his death the Swedes and the Goths, who were often hostile to each other, disagreed about the succession—the former raising **STENKILL** (1056—1066), the latter *Hakon the Red*, to the throne. Thus there were two kingdoms, two courts—the one reigning over the eastern, the other over the western and southern provinces. Similar partitions, as we fre-

\* Vol. I. p. 287.

† Ibid. p. 286—292.

‡ Ibid. p. 286—292.

: Ibid. p. 284.

quently observed in the former volume, had taken place, so as to confound the chronological succession of the kings. The Goths and the Swiars had never perfectly amalgamated, from the period when Odin had led the latter into Sweden, and expelled the former from the coast to the interior of the country. But, on the other hand, experience had taught both of them the destructive effects of disunion; and on the present occasion, now that Christianity had made so considerable a progress among them (more however in Sweden than in Gothland), they felt more sensibly the impolicy of their conduct. The heads of the two people met together, and agreed that Hako should continue to rule over the Goths, but that on his death his kingdom should cease to have a separate existence, and be re-merged into that of Sweden. We shall, however, see that the same moderation did not always govern the two parties; and that double elections continued to agitate the commonweal long after this period. But this circumstance does not detract from the merit of the men who sanctioned the present agreement. In thirteen years Hako paid the debt of nature, and in conformity with the agreement his crown reverted to the prince of the Swedes. Of Stenkil the national historians speak with praise. Of gigantic size, unrivalled strength, and indomitable courage, he was yet one of the mildest princes of his age. Over Sweyn II., king of Denmark, he is said by the Swedish historians to have frequently triumphed; but of such triumphs we have no record in the historians of the rival nation. Equal honour is accorded to his successor INGE I., surnamed *the Good*. In his wars this prince is said to have exhibited great valour; but he was more distinguished for his attachment to Christianity, and for the zeal with which he extirpated paganism. In this great work he probably evinced more ardour than discretion, if it be true that he was murdered in bed by his idolatrous subjects. HALSTAN, the brother and successor of Inge, if indeed they



did not reign conjointly over different parts of the kingdom, had the same mild virtues. PHILIP and INGE II. were equally worthy of the diadem. Distinguished alike for his piety and for the rigour with which he punished the banditti who infested his western provinces, and the pirates who ravaged his coasts, Inge, in particular, reigned in the hearts of his people, except those whose ill deeds he punished. To the hatred of a faction he became a victim. That faction raised to the throne *Rognerald*, a chief of gigantic dimensions and of fiercer qualities. *His* yoke was soon felt to be intolerable: he was removed by violence; and a double election followed,—the Swedes choosing a chieftain named *Kol*; the Goths *Magnus*, son of Nicholas king of Denmark. The former soon perished in battle; the latter, a great tyrant, reigned seven years only (1148), when the suffrages of the people fell on one who had neither birth nor connections to recommend him, but who had the great qualities becoming the dignity. This was SWERKER I. It is worthy of remark that Hako the Red and Rognerald, and Kol and Magnus, are not usually classed amongst the Swedish kings—at least by modern historians.

1148 The reign of Swerker was pacific and admirably  
to adapted to the interests of the kingdom. He was a  
1154. wise and patriotic monarch. But he had one grievous  
fault—blindness to the vices of his son. Never, if  
contemporary chroniclers are to be credited, did a  
youth so richly merit the curses of the people. At  
the head of a licentious gang, he violated the persons  
of the noblest virgins and matrons; he was addicted to  
every species of riot; and the insolence of his man-  
ners gave a more odious shade to his vices. In  
vain were remonstrances made to the father, whose  
first duty, as the people thought, was to insist that his  
own family set the first example of obedience to the  
laws. Indignant at this guilty toleration, the people  
arose and murdered the prince. Swerker's own end

was tragical ; but whether he died through the influence of the same conspirators, or through the avarice of a domestic, is doubtful. On his death, the same ruinous division took place as in the preceding century : the Goths elected CHARLES, another son of Swerker ; the Swedes made choice of ST. ERIC, who had married the daughter of Inge the Good—a name dear to the people. As civil war was so much to be deprecated, the heads of both parties met and agreed to this compromise—that Eric I. should retain both crowns during his life, and on his death both should be inherited by Charles. But what was to become of the rights of their children ? To prevent future disputes, the descendants of each were to rule alternately, without prejudice, however, to the elective suffrage of the people. It would have been impossible to devise any expedient better adapted to produce the contrary of what was intended.

The reign of Eric was one of vigour. The Finns, 1155 who had declared themselves independent, he reduced to subjection ; and he also forced them, we are told, to 1167. forsake idolatry for Christianity. We may, however, doubt whether his efforts in this respect were so general as the chroniclers would have us believe : certainly, they were not very permanent ; for there are pagans amongst them at this very day, and those who pass for Christians worship other gods. Probably they did as most barbarians do in similar circumstances—they submitted while the victor was near them, but reverted to their ancient superstitions when he had left. That he had idolators nearer to him than Finland, and more immediately subject to his sway, is evident from the distinction he was accused of making between the worshippers of Odin and those of Christ. The former he deprived of the rights which the law conferred upon them. For this conduct he naturally incurred their indignation, and he also made enemies of another party—the licentious, the disturbers of the public tran-

quillity, who were scarcely less numerous. Both conspired against him; and as their own strength was inadequate to the object, they invoked the aid of the Danish king, offering, as it appears, the crown of Sweden to the son of that monarch. A Danish army arrived, and being joined by the malcontents, marched towards Upsal. They were soon met by Eric who, though he performed prodigies of valour, was defeated and slain. His tragical death was one of the causes that led to his canonization. Another was the zeal which he showed in the extirpation of idolators, whom he pursued with fire and sword. Add that he was the founder of monasteries and churches, and we have reasons enough for his deification. By most readers he will be valued, less for his unenlightened devotion, than for his compilation of a code of laws — “St. Eric’s Lag.” Yet the provisions which it contains are deeply impressed by his dominant characteristics. Against pagans they are sanguinary; and they visit offences against the Christian religion and the Christian worship with stern severity.

- 1161 Charles, the son of Swerker, was now monarch of the  
to whole country. But he had some difficulty in ex-  
1167. pelling the invaders, who had proclaimed the son of the  
Danish king. He, too, was much attached to the church,  
and to which he was more generous than even his predecessor. If tradition be true (there is no contemporary authority for the statement), he embarrassed his affairs by his immoderate liberality. As he obtained from the pope the erection of an archbishopric, — that of Upsal, — he was expected to endow it. From his munificence in this respect, may have originated the report in question. His reign was not exempt from trouble. The adherents of the rival dynasty were his enemies, from a suspicion (apparently ill-founded) that he had been one of the conspirators against St. Eric. Though in conformity with the agreement which we have mentioned, he nominated Canute, the son of Eric, his successor, that

prince would not remain in the kingdom, under the pretence that his life was in danger. In a few years he returned into Sweden, at the head of a considerable Norwegian force, was joined by the partisans of his house, and enabled to triumph over his rival, whom he captured and beheaded. This act he justified by appealing to the untimely end of his father, which he represented as the work of Charles.

The reign of CANUTE was disturbed by two in-vasions. The first, consisting of Danes, who had armed to revenge the death of the late king, or rather under that plea to profit by the disasters of a rival country. The Goths, who loved the memory of Charles, immediately joined it; but the king was victorious. The second was an irruption of the Esthonian pirates, who laid Sigtuna in ashes, slew the archbishop of Upsal, and carried away many prisoners before the king could overtake them.

SWERKER II., the son of Charles, was the next king, in virtue of the compact between the Goths and the Swedes. But every day more clearly evinced the dangers resulting from that compact: it daily widened the breach, not merely between the two royal families, but between the two great tribes which constituted the nation. Blood had been openly or treacherously spilt by both parties; and the deadly feud had descended to the chiefs of both. It was, from the first, the object of Swerker to exterminate the family of his rival; but one prince—Eric, the only son of the late king—escaped into Norway. For some years he governed with moderation; but becoming tyrannical, the people of Upland invited the exile to return. Eric obeyed the call, was joined by most of the nobles, and enabled to triumph over Swerker, though the latter was supported by a Danish army. The king was expelled, and though he subsequently returned twice to renew the contest, twice he was defeated, and on the latter occasion his own corpse was among the slain.

1210 The reign of ERIC II. commenced by more policy  
to than could have been anticipated from preceding events.  
1250. To pacify the rival faction, he declared prince John, the  
son of Swerker, his successor. To conciliate the Danes,  
who had so warmly espoused the cause of his rivals, he  
obtained the hand of a Danish princess, the sister of  
Valdemar II. His reign was pacific, but too short for  
the interests of his people. JOHN I. (1220—1222)  
ascended without opposition the united thrones of the  
Swedes and the Goths; but his reign was still shorter—  
a misfortune the more keenly felt from his admirable con-  
duct. If he was less fortunate in two or three military  
expeditions (so obscure, however, as scarcely to deserve  
notice) than was hoped from the justice of his cause, his  
civil government was one of great success. He was  
succeeded without opposition by the son of his prede-  
cessor, ERIC II., named after the father. ERIC III.,  
surnamed the Lisper (1222—1230), had a reign less  
peaceful than those which immediately preceded it.  
There was a family in the realm too powerful for obe-  
dience—that of the Folkungar—the chiefs of which,  
by their wealth and their numerous connections, evi-  
dently aspired to the throne. To bind them to his in-  
terests, he married two of his sisters to nobles of that  
house, while he himself took to wife a lady of that  
family. But these alliances, as might indeed have been  
expected, only gave a new impulse to ambition. To  
wrest the crown from him, the whole family or tribe,  
the chiefs of which must have been connected with the  
royal line of either the Goths or the Swedes, broke out  
into rebellion—one noble only, the jarl Birger, remain-  
ing faithful to him. In the first battle ERIC was de-  
feated and compelled to flee; but he raised an army in  
Denmark, returned to Sweden, vanquished the usurper  
Sweyn, and was again acknowledged by the whole realm.  
In the last year of his reign, he sent an expedition  
against the Finns, who had reverted to idolatry. It  
was commanded by Birger Jarl, on whom he had con-



ferred the hand of his youngest sister. The cruelty of the general, who probably acted in obedience to the royal orders, equalled that of the former military apostle, St. Eric.

The death of Eric the Stammerer was followed by a <sup>1250.</sup> violation of the compact which had established the alternate order of succession. The Folkungar nobles no longer concealed their intention of aspiring to the throne. Through the intrigues of a dependent, when the diet met for a new election, the choice fell on VALDEMAR I., the son of Birger Jarl by the sister of the late king. On the part of the electors, this was an attempt to combine the interests of two great families. But Birger was dissatisfied: he had expected the crown himself; and he objected to the impolicy of choosing a child like his son. His design was to obtain the regency, and he succeeded.

However censurable the means by which Birger arrived at power, he had qualities worthy of the post. <sup>1251</sup> He founded Stockholm, which he also fortified: he revised and greatly improved the Landslag, or written laws of the kingdom; he conferred on the cities and towns privileges similar to those contained in the charters of later ages; he improved the internal administration in other respects; while he defended the coasts against the ravages of the pirates. Such indeed was the prosperity which he introduced, that the diet requested the king to confer on him the ducal title—a title previously unknown in Sweden. But the success of his administration, and the power held by his family, incurred first the jealousy, and soon the hatred of a faction, or rather of several factions who united to oppose him. Among the great Swedish families was one that rivalled the Folkungar in riches, in the number of its armed dependents, in its widely-spread connection. This was the Flokungar family, which had beheld with the deepest mortification the elevation of a rival house. A civil war followed, which was indecisive; and it was <sup>to</sup> <sup>1266.</sup>

ended by a pacification, but a pacification dictated by deceit. After Birger had solemnly sworn to it, and the heads of the other party repaired in unsuspecting confidence to his camp, he caused them to be put to death. One noble only escaped, Charles, who fled to the Teutonic knights, became a member of the order, and left an heroic name behind him. This perfidious act is a sad stain on the glory of his regency. Another was his excessive love of power, which induced him to retain the reins of government long after his son had arrived at manhood, and even after that son had married Sophia, daughter of Eric Plough-penny, king of Denmark. Death only caused him to release his grasp.

1266     The reign of Valdemar was one of trouble. Whe-  
to     ther through the persuasion of the diet, or through fra-  
1276.     ternal attachment, he tolerated, if he did not himself  
establish, the independence of his brothers. Magnus  
duke of Sudermania, Eric prince of Smaland, and Ben-  
vit duke of Finland, had separate courts, and exercised  
a sovereign authority in their respective jurisdictions.  
Magnus, the eldest, was formed for a monarch. He was  
learned, courteous, generous, and highly accomplished  
in all military sciences. So popular did he become,  
that his palace was more frequented than the king's.  
Of his popularity Valdemar soon became jealous ;  
yet he could do no other than leave the regency to  
Magnus during his pilgrimage to Rome. The motive  
of this pilgrimage was to expiate a criminal connection,  
of many years' standing, with Judith, sister of his queen.  
The severity of the penance was owing to the fact of  
Judith's being a nun, who had precipitately fled from  
the convent of Roskild. Nine children were the re-  
sult of this connection, which so scandalised the church,  
that the pope would not give him absolution until he  
had visited the Holy Land. Judith was condemned to  
perpetual seclusion. In 1276, after an absence of  
nearly three years, the royal penitent returned, and ac-  
cused Magnus of intriguing for the throne. Whether

there was any truth in the charge, cannot well be ascertained ; but that suspicion should arise in his mind was inevitable. He was jealous, not of Eric only, but of all his brothers. On this occasion, Benvit, the youngest, exhibited a proof of magnanimity which may well obtain the praise of history : to consolidate the royal power, he resigned his duchy, took holy orders, and subsequently became bishop of Linköping. The elder brothers, far from imitating the example, united themselves closely with the Danes, and a civil war followed. Valdemar was surprised, pursued, and captured. To end these disorders, the diet met, and divided the kingdom between the two brothers. To Valdemar was conceded the two Gothlands (East and West) with Småland and Dala : the rest fell to Magnus.

This peace was of short continuance. Magnus did <sup>1276</sup> not pay his Danish auxiliaries, by whose aid he had <sup>to</sup> triumphed. In revenge the Danish king ravaged the <sup>1279.</sup> Swedish provinces, and entered into a treaty with Valdemar to restore him to the undivided throne. At the head of a Danish army, Valdemar marched against Magnus, but was defeated. To repair this disaster, Eric of Denmark took the field with a large army — so large that Magnus would not risk an action. But the Swedish prince obtained by policy the advantage which arms could not give him. He drew the invaders into the heart of the kingdom ; cut off all supplies ; and awaited the approach of winter to effect their destruction. But through the mediation of the chiefs on both sides, peace was restored. As Magnus had not the money due to Eric, he pledged one of his maritime towns. In return, he obtained not merely a friend, but his recognition as monarch of Norway. Valdemar, thus sacrificed, was made to renounce his claim to the whole country, and to pass the remainder of his days in Denmark, on one of the domains which he had received with his queen.

MAGNUS I. at his accession assumed the title of king <sup>1279,</sup> of the Swedes and the Goths, to denote his superiority <sup>1280.</sup>

over the whole kingdom. But the title was more pompous than the power. He was soon accused of undue partiality towards the people of Holstein, who in virtue of his marriage with Hedwige, sister of the count Gerard\*, flocked to Sweden in great numbers. The remonstrance did not weaken his attachment to these foreigners, whom he loaded with honours. To the great families, especially that of the Folkungar, this preference was gall; and a conspiracy was formed to extirpate the odious strangers. An opportunity for the execution of this plot soon arrived. Escorted by a considerable number of Holsteiners, the queen proceeded to Scara, a town of Gothland, to meet her father. The conspirators followed, and massacred the guard, including even the brother-in-law of the king. Nor was this all: they threw the count of Holstein into a dungeon; and they certainly would have laid their hands on the queen, had she not contrived to escape into a monastery. Knowing the power of the family which had instigated these excesses, and fearing that they were supported by foreign alliances, the king dissimulated, and made use of the most conciliating language, until he had obtained the enlargement of the count. He then summoned a diet, charged the unsuspecting Folkungar with high treason, sent them to Stockholm, and beheaded all of them except one, who was allowed to be ransomed. From this time that ambitious family ceased to have much influence over the realm. To establish his throne still more solidly, he entered into a double matrimonial alliance with Denmark. His son Birger, still a child, was affianced to a daughter of the Danish king, and as she too was a child, she was taken, in conformity with the custom of the times, to the Swedish court to be educated. And soon afterwards Ingeburga, daughter of Magnus, became the wife of Eric Plough-penny's successor.

1281 The tranquillity obtained through these measures  
to enabled Magnus to devote his whole time to the internal  
1290. administration. His name is mentioned with great

\* See the corresponding period in the history of Denmark.



praise ; and he appears to have deserved it. His consolidated power and his firmness were indeed blessings to a realm so long distracted by intestine commotions. It was feared, indeed, lest, in his hands, the sceptre should become oppressive : but this too would have been an advantage ; for its weight would have fallen on the powerful and the turbulent only. To the peasant he was a friend. Prior to his reign, the local nobles had not hesitated to levy contributions on the despised portion of the nation. He decreed that whoever took any thing from a poor man's hut without paying the value, should be visited with rigorous penalties. From his brother Valdemar he sustained some trouble ; but he crushed the seeds of rebellion by imprisoning that restless prince. To support, with greater magnificence, the regal state, he obtained, from the gratitude of his people, a considerable augmentation of his resources. This augmentation consisted in certain returns from the mines, and from the great lakes of Sweden. Well did he merit this liberality ; for never had the country a greater king.

BIRGER, the son of Magnus, being only eleven years <sup>1290</sup> old at his father's death, the regency devolved on Thorkil, <sup>to</sup> a noble Swede. Nothing can better illustrate the merit of <sup>1305.</sup> Magnus than this choice. At home and abroad Thorkil evinced his talents and his patriotism. His expeditions against the Finns, the Carelians, and the Ingrians, were crowned with success. But his great object was to render the people happy. Having reason to fear the interruption of the social tranquillity, he arrested the sons of the late king Valdemar, who could not forget their claims to the throne. But as Birger rose up to manhood, he had still more cause of apprehension from Eric and Valdemar, brothers of his sovereign. Both evidently aspired to distinct governments. To strengthen his interests, the former married Ingeburga, daughter of Hako V., king of Norway. Seeing that he and Valdemar were acting more openly in pursuit of their treasonable object, yet unwilling to adopt extreme measures, Birger, with the advice of his minister, obtained from



them a written pledge never to leave the kingdom, or approach the royal residence without permission ; never to conspire against the government ; never to maintain more than a given number of armed men ; and always to obey the commands of their sovereign. But what engagement could bind spirits so restless, which were emboldened to attempt any thing by the success of preceding rebels ? The princes still continued to plot ; and to escape imprisonment, they fled into Denmark. The Danish king, however, being persuaded to abandon them, they took refuge in Norway, were friendly received by Hako, and enabled, from their new fiefs of Nydborg and Konghella, to lay waste the neighbouring provinces with fire and sword. A body of troops sent by Birger to repulse them, was defeated. A second army was raised ; and the king marched in person to chastise his brothers. They were, however, at the head of a large force, not of their own partisans merely, but of the Norwegians ; and to avoid the effusion of blood, a pacification was recommended. They were received into favour on the condition of their swearing obedience to the king : in return he conferred on duke Eric the fief of Varberg. The next feature of this transaction was the sacrifice of the able and patriotic Thorkil. The brothers could not forgive him for thwarting them in their rebellion ; and Birger was made to believe the vilest calumnies respecting him. The aged minister was sent to Stockholm and beheaded. At the same time his daughter, the wife of Valdemar, was repudiated. Thus was a long course of public service rewarded !

1305 By this criminal weakness, Birger was righteously  
to left to the intrigues of his brothers. By them he was  
1319. surprised and made prisoner, together with his wife and  
children, and forced to resign the crown in favour of  
Eric. His eldest son, Magnus, escaped, and fled to  
Denmark, the king of which armed for the restoration  
of his sister's husband. From this period to the close  
of Birger's reign there was war, alternated by hollow  
peace. In 1307, he obtained his liberty, on the con-

dition of his kingdom being dismembered in favour of his brother. To revoke this dangerous act he renewed his alliance with Denmark, and again obtained help ; but his proceedings were not decisive, and a new pacification followed, on conditions similar to the preceding, except that Birger was now regarded as the liege superior of his brothers, who did homage to him for their fiefs. Unable to reduce them by force, he had recourse to the usual acts of the base. He pretended great affection for them, and sent them many presents. At length alluring them to his court at Nykoping, he arrested them in bed, and consigned them to dungeons with expression of triumphant insult more galling than the perfidy itself. One died of the wounds which he had received in the effort to escape : the other was starved to death. But from this deed of blood the king derived no advantage. The bodies of the murdered princes being exposed to the public, roused the wrath of the very numerous party hostile to his government. The civil war was now renewed by Matthias Kettlemundson in behalf of duke Eric's son. Since the death of Thorkil, the king had become rapacious, tyrannical, and consequently unpopular. The people, who lamented the fate of the murdered princes, favoured the cause which Kettlemundson had espoused : the fortresses that still held for the king were soon reduced : Magnus, his son, was made prisoner ; and he himself compelled to seek a refuge in Denmark, where he was coldly received.

Fate had not yet done its worst for this exiled prince. 1319,  
A diet was assembled to choose a successor. Such was 1320.  
the hatred borne towards him and his line, that his son Magnus was beheaded for *his* crimes. The suffrages of the electors united in favour of duke Eric's son, a child three years old. Grief the following year (1320) brought Birger to the tomb. Whatever good signalised his reign must be attributed to his able and virtuous minister : his own conduct was dictated by odious vices. Thorkil caused a law to be passed against the sale of slaves, on the ground that it was in the highest degree

criminal for Christians to sell men whom Christ had redeemed by his blood. This noble truth is the best testimony to the character of that minister: we may add that it is the most deplorable illustration of the king's, who could, without a cause, sacrifice such a man. What better than fratricide could be expected from him?

1319 During the long minority of MAGNUS II., the re-  
 to gency was exercised by Kettlemundson, who had con-  
 1354. tributed so largely to the expulsion of Birger, and the execution of the blameless Magnus, the son of Birger. His administration, which continued eighteen years, is mentioned with respect; but it was signalised by no great exploit deserving the attention of history. Both his policy and that of his sovereign, in respect to Scania, has been related.\* In the administration of justice and the maintenance of the public tranquillity, he was successful. On his demise, Magnus assumed the reins of government; but did not give so much satisfaction as his minister. He undertook an expedition against the western provinces of Russia (then subject to their own princes), influenced only by a wild ambition. The result was not glorious. The taxes which he levied on the people for its support, gave rise to complaint. The pope too complained that he had appropriated to his own use the money, which, in virtue of Olaf Skotkonung's act, should have gone to the Roman treasury. Still his necessities increased: the purchase of Scania was another channel of expenditure; and though he pledged some of the royal domains, he had still to exact more from his people, including the clergy, than their patience would support. For this cause he was excommunicated by the pope. Regardless of murmurs, he proceeded in his course: he was distinguished alike for rashness, feebleness, and irresolution. Governed by young favourites, and still more by his queen, who persuaded

\* See the reigns of Eric VIII. and Christopher II. in the history of Denmark.

him that he might do whatever he pleased with impunity, and anxious to place a third crown on his brow (he had inherited Norway in right of his mother), he exhibited at once his silly ambition and his incapacity by embroiling himself with Denmark. So far from obtaining that crown, he lost his own. The diet insisted that he should resign Norway to Hako, and Sweden to Eric, his two sons. He fled into Scania; implored the aid of Valdemar; and in return ceded that province to the Danish crown.\* He was enabled by this means and by the support of a party (for what king was ever without one?) to carry on a war with Eric. Its ravages were deeply felt; its issue was dubious; and a diet was convoked at Jenkoping to avert by a pacification the ruin of the monarchy. Under the mediation of two princes connected with the royal family, it was decreed that the country should be divided between the father and the son: to the former were assigned Upland, the two Gothias, Vermeland, Dalecarlia, with the northern portion of Halland, and the isle of Oeland; to the latter, Finland, Smaland, the southern portion of Halland, and Scania.

The indiscretions of Magnus had lost him the hearts of his people, which turned with ardour to ERIC IV. This circumstance roused the jealousy of him and his queen, who are said to have conspired against the life of Eric. Whether he was removed by poison administered to him by his mother, or by the violence of conspirators, or by lawless banditti, or, finally, by natural causes, must for ever rest unknown, since ancient annals say nothing on the subject. The majority of historians, native and foreign, concur in fixing the guilt on queen Blanche; but until some better evidence than any they have adduced be brought to establish so unnatural a crime, the common feeling of mankind must compel them to doubt it. The only fact that is certain

1354  
to  
1357.

\* See the reign of Valdemar III. king of Denmark.



is that Eric died, and that Magnus profited by the event, since it restored him to the monarchy.

1357 It was impossible for this weak and unscrupulous  
to prince to win the esteem of the Swedes. He hated  
1363. them because they had deposed him ; and to be re-  
venged on them, he entered into a close alliance with  
Valdemar of Denmark. Valdemar, to whom he ceded  
Scania, became, as we have before related, the willing  
instrument of that vengeance in the sack of Wisby  
and in other depredations.\* This was not the way to  
acquire popularity : he and the whole Danish nation  
were soon detested ; nor was the feeling diminished  
when the secret transpired of a projected union between  
the king's son, Hako of Norway, and Margaret, the  
daughter of Valdemar. To prevent this obnoxious  
alliance, the nobles arose, imprisoned Magnus in the  
fortress of Calmar, called on Hako to assume the ad-  
ministration, and made him promise not only that he  
would renounce all connection with Denmark, but  
marry Elizabeth, sister of Henry count of Holstein.  
Though HAKO II. (the sixth of Norway) engaged to  
fulfil the wishes of the diet, neither he nor his father,  
who was soon enlarged, had the least intention to do so.  
On the contrary, they renewed their connection still  
more closely with the obnoxious Valdemar. The man-  
ner in which Elizabeth was deluded by that monarch  
until the marriage of his daughter with Hako was cele-  
brated, has been already described.

1363. Nothing could exceed the anger of the Swedes, or  
rather of a considerable faction (for the majority were  
passive) when they heard of this marriage. Deter-  
mined to exclude both father and son, they invited  
Henry of Holstein, who was connected with the royal  
line, to ascend the throne. But Henry was an old  
man ; and he would not risk his tranquillity for an  
object that he could not long enjoy. He recommended  
the electors to make choice of Albert duke of Mecklen-

\* For these events, we refer to the corresponding period in Danish his-  
tory.



burg, whose mother was the sister of Magnus. But the duke had no wish to rule a divided, turbulent people; nor did he wish his eldest son to undertake the perilous charge. He had, however, a second son, also named Albert, who had nothing to lose, and whom he recommended to the suffrages of the electors.

ALBERT arrived at Stockholm early in 1364. That city was in the interests of Magnus, and for a time it resisted; but he forced or persuaded it to capitulate. There he was joined by most of the nobles who were discontented with Magnus. Their first act was to renew the deposition of the one; their next, to confirm the election of the other. Hako, then in Norway, prepared to invade the kingdom; and Magnus, who had still a party, effected a junction with him. Their army being augmented by a considerable number of Danes, they penetrated into Upland. But Albert, on his side, hastened to oppose them; and in a battle of some magnitude, victory the most decisive inclined to his standard: Magnus was taken prisoner; Hako was wounded and compelled to retreat with expedition into his own kingdom. The fortresses which held for the two princes were next reduced; two or three of them only made a vigorous defence. But Valdemar of Denmark, whose interest lay in disturbing the kingdom, sent, from time to time, supplies of troops, which harassed the king. Peace with that formidable rival was felt to be necessary for the repose of the realm, and it was purchased by the cession of some domains. Among them was the isle of Gothland with Wisby the capital. That these cessions were unwillingly made, may be easily conceived; and to procure their restoration, Albert entered into a close league with the enemies of Denmark. The war was consequently renewed. While his allies assailed other parts of Denmark, he invaded Scania, a portion of which he reduced. But little time was left him for exultation. Hako of Norway invaded Sweden, defeated him, and compelled him to throw himself into Stockholm, which was closely invested. In

this extremity he proposed an interview, in which the conditions of peace were agreed on. Magnus was enlarged for a ransom of 12,000 marks; and in return for his cession of the Swedish crown, he received as fiefs West Gothland, Vermeland, and Dalia. He was, however, to have no share in the administration of these provinces, but merely to receive the revenues with the title of governor; and the rest of his days he was to pass in Norway. Lest he should break this, with as much levity as he had broken all his former engagements, sixty gentlemen of his party were to surrender themselves prisoners to Albert, if he should again disturb the peace of the realm. He did not disturb it, because he was soon afterwards drowned in crossing a ford.

- 1371 For some years after this pacification Albert enjoyed  
to comparative security. But he was not popular: he  
1376. brought over many greedy Germans to share in the  
spoils of the kingdom; and exhibited in their favour a  
partiality so gross as much to indispose the nation  
against him. Like a true German, indeed, he had little  
regard for any thing beyond his immediate interests,  
and those of his family. Insecure as was his possession  
of Sweden, he raised troops to support the claims of his  
nephew, Albert of Mecklenburg, to the Danish throne,  
in opposition to Olaf, the son of Margaret and Hako.\*  
The enterprise failed: the armament that was sent  
against the Danes was mostly destroyed by a storm;  
and there was no disposition to renew the contest.
- 1377 The gross partiality of Albert for his foreign mer-  
to cenaries was not the only fault he committed. Having  
1387. a high notion of the kingly prerogative, he endeavoured  
to rule without the control of the diet. For his attempt  
to restrain the privileges of the nobles he would deserve  
our praise, were not his motives of the most selfish cha-  
racter. The people had still more reason to complain.  
Not only were they subject to a tyranny odious as that

\* See the corresponding period in Danish history.

of the nobles, but they were ground to the earth by new imposts, and, what was still more mortifying, for the enrichment of avaricious foreigners. In this state of the public mind, he convoked a diet at Stockholm, and demanded an augmentation of his income. It was not, he observed, adequate to the decent support of royalty; and he solicited one third of the whole revenue, civil and ecclesiastical. Nothing could equal the indignant surprise of the diet at this extraordinary demand. They replied that former kings had found the usual revenues enough, not merely for comfort but for splendour; and intimated that if he was straitened, the cause lay in the number of foreigners whom he enriched. This intimation might have been expected to produce some good effect; but it had none on this imprudent king except to exasperate him, and to make him resolve that he would wrest by force what had been refused to his solicitations. In vain did both nobles and clergy cry aloud against his arbitrary purpose: in vain did they call upon him to respect the privileges which he had sworn to maintain; he persevered, and consequently plunged the kingdom into a ruinous civil war.

At this time Margaret, who had succeeded to her son Olaf, was sovereign of Denmark and Norway. To her the malcontents applied for aid, which she would not afford them, unless they acknowledged her for their queen. The condition was accepted: an army of Danes marched into Sweden, and was immediately joined by many of the nobles and clergy. The lower classes of the population—those who contributed little to the support of the state—were indifferent to the result, or if they had any bias, it was in favour of Albert—not from any attachment to him, but from dislike of the nobles. At Falkoping, in West Gothland, however, a good stand was made by his army, consisting not merely of Swedes but of Germans, and many adventurers whom the offer of large pay and the hope of plunder had drawn to his standard. But after a desperate conflict, he was defeated, and captured, together

with his son. Both were committed to a fortress, where, notwithstanding the efforts of their German allies, and those of their own party, they remained above six years ; nor did they obtain their enlargement without a solemn renunciation of the Swedish crown.

With MARGARET, sovereign of three kingdoms, begins a new era in Northern history.

## APPENDIX.

(See page 184.)

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*(From Alban Butler's Lives of the Saints.)*

### ST. CANUTUS, KING OF DENMARK, M. \*

From his life, faithfully written by Ælnoth, a monk of Canterbury, who had lived twenty-four years in Denmark, and wrote in 1105. It was printed at Copenhagen, in 1602. See also Saxo Grammaticus, the most elegant and judicious of the Danish historians.

A. D. 1086.

ST. CANUTUS, OR KNUT, the fourth of that name, king of Denmark, was natural son of Swein III. whose great uncle Canutus had reigned in England. Swein, having no lawful issue, took care of the education of Canutus, who being endowed with excellent qualities both of mind and body, answered perfectly well the care of his preceptors and governors. It is hard to say whether he excelled more in courage, or in conduct and skill in war; but his singular piety perfectly eclipsed all his other endowments. He scourged the seas of pirates, and subdued several neighbouring provinces which infested Denmark with their incursions. The kingdom of Denmark was elective till the year 1660; wherefore, when Swein died, many pitched upon our saint, whose eminent virtues best qualified him for the throne; but the majority, fearing his martial spirit, preferred his eldest natural brother Harald, the seventh king of that name, who, for his stupidity and vices, was commonly called the Slothful. Canutus retired into Sweden to king Halstan, who received him with the greatest marks of kindness and esteem; but the king could never induce him to undertake any expedition against Denmark; on the contrary, the Christian hero employed all his power and interest in the service of his country. Harald dying after two years' reign, Canutus was called to succeed him.

Denmark had received the Christian faith long before, some say in 826, but wanted a zealous hand at the helm, to put the finishing stroke to that good work. St. Canutus seems to

\* For the numerous inaccuracies\* (to give them the mildest term) in this article, the reader has only to consult the text.



have been pitched upon by Providence for this purpose. He began his reign by a successful war against the troublesome barbarous enemies of the state, and by planting the faith in the conquered provinces of Courland, Samogitia, and Livonia. Amidst the glory of his victories, he humbly prostrated himself at the foot of the crucifix, laying there his diadem, and offering himself and his kingdom to the King of kings. After having provided for its peace and safety, and enlarged its territories, he married Eltha, or Alice, daughter of Robert earl of Flanders, by whom he had a pious son, St. Charles, surnamed the Good, afterward also earl of Flanders. His next concern was to reform abuses at home. For this purpose, he enacted severe, but necessary laws, for the strict administration of justice, and repressed the violence and tyranny of the great, without respect of persons. He countenanced and honoured holy men, granted many privileges and immunities to the clergy, to enhance the people's esteem of them; and omitted nothing to convince them of their obligation to provide for their subsistence by the payment of tithes. His charity and tenderness towards his subjects made him study by all possible ways to ease them of their burdens, and make them a happy people. He showed a royal magnificence in building and adorning churches, and gave the crown which he wore, of exceeding great value, to the church of Roschild, in Zealand, his capital city, and the place of his residence, where the kings of Denmark are yet buried. He chastised his body with fasting, discipline, and hair-cloths. Prayer was his assiduous exercise. When William the Conqueror had made himself master of England, Canutus sent forces to assist the vanquished: but these troops finding no one willing to join them, were easily defeated in the year 1069. Some time after, being invited by the conquered English, he raised an army to invade this island, and expel the Normans; but through the treacherous practices of his brother Olas, or Olaus, was obliged to wait so long on the coast that his troops deserted him. The pious king, having always in view the service of God, and judging this a proper occasion to induce the people to pay tithes to their pastors, he proposed to them either to pay a heavy fine, by way of punishment for their desertion, or submit to the law of tithes for the pastors of the church. Their aversion to the latter made them choose the tax, to the great mortification of the king, who, hoping they would change their resolution, ordered it to be levied with rigour. But they, being incensed at the severity of the collectors, rebelled. St. Canutus retired for safety into the isle of Fionia, and was hindered from joining his loyal troops, by the treachery of one

Blanco, an officer, who, to deceive him, assured his majesty that the rebels were returned to their duty. The king went to the church of St. Alban, the martyr, to perform his devotions, and return God thanks for that happy event. This the rebels being informed of by Blanco, they surrounded the church with him at their head. In the mean time the holy king, perceiving the danger that threatened his life, confessed his sins at the foot of the altar, with great tranquillity and resignation, and received the holy communion. His guards defended the church doors, and Blanco was slain by them. The rebels threw in bricks and stones, through the windows, by which they beat down the shrines of certain relics of St. Alban and St. Oswald, which St. Canutus had brought over from England. The saint, stretching out his arms before the altar, fervently recommended his soul into the hands of the Creator; in which posture he was wounded with a javelin darted through the window, and fell a victim to Christ. His brother Benedict, and seventeen others, were slain with him, on the 10th of July, 1086, as Ælnoth, a contemporary author, testifies, who has specified the date of all the events with the utmost exactness. His wicked brother Olaf succeeded him in the kingdom. God punished the people during eight years and three months of his reign with a dreadful famine, and other calamities; and attested the sanctity of the martyr, by many miraculous cures of the sick at his tomb. For which reason his relics were taken up out of their obscure sepulchre, and honourably entombed towards the end of the reign of Olaf. His successor, Eric III., a most religious prince, restored piety and religion, with equal courage and success, and sent ambassadors to Rome, with proofs of the miracles performed, and obtained from the pope a declaration, authorising the veneration of St. Canutus, the proto-martyr of Denmark. Upon this occasion a most solemn translation of his relics, which were put in a most costly shrine, was performed, at which Ælnoth, our historian, was present. He adds, that the first preachers of the faith in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, were English priests; that the Danes then zealously embraced the Christian religion, but that the Swedes still continued more obstinate, among whom Eschill, an Englishman, received the crown of martyrdom, whilst he was preaching Christ to certain savage tribes.

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