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Saxo Grammaticus  
*Gesta Danorum*



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*'Gesta Danorum' by*  
**SAXO GRAMMATICUS**

(c. 1150-c. 1220)



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**SAXO GRAMMATICUS**



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*Gesta Danorum by Saxo Grammaticus*



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## The Translation



*The Cliffs of Stevns, south of Copenhagen, Zealand (the largest and most populous island in Denmark proper) — Saxo was born in Zealand in c. 1150*

## Gesta Danorum (Books I-IX)



*Translated by Oliver Elton, 1905*

Saxo Grammaticus was a twelfth century Danish historian, who, according to *The Jutland Chronicle*, was born in Zealand in c. 1150. Saxo was a common name in medieval Denmark, while Grammaticus (“the learned”) was first given to him in the chronicle. He lived during a period of frenetic warfare and Danish expansion, led by Absalon, the Archbishop of Lund, and the Valdemars. Saxo’s technical finesse with the Latin language would suggest that he was educated outside Denmark. Some suggest that “Grammaticus” refers not to his education, but rather to his elaborate Latin style. We know from his writing that he served in the retinue and received the patronage of Absalon (c. 1128-1201), who was the foremost adviser to King Valdemar I (1131-1182). Also known as Valdemar the Great, Valdemar was King of Denmark from 1154 until his death in 1182. The reign of King Valdemar I witnessed the rise of Denmark, which reached its medieval zenith under his son King Valdemar II.

Sadly, little is known or confirmed about the life of Saxo. Sven Aggesen, a Danish nobleman and author of a slightly earlier history of Denmark, describes him as his *contubernalis* (tent-comrade). This implies that Saxo and Sven soldiered together in the Hird or royal guard. There is also mention of a Saxo on a list of clergy at Lund, recorded as being an Archdeacon. Likewise there is a record of a Dean Saxo, who died in 1190; however, the date does not match what is known about the historian. Both arguments, for a secular or religious Saxo, would confirm that he was well educated; as clergy, he would have received training in Latin and sons of great men were often sent to Paris. Saxo comes from a warrior family and in his writing he confides that he is himself “committed to being a soldier”. He tells us that he follows “the ancient right of hereditary service” and that his father and grandfather “were recognised frequenters of your renowned sire’s (Valdemar I) war camp”.

The historian’s enduring legacy is the sixteen-book heroic history of the Danes, known under its Latin title of *Gesta Danorum* (Deeds of the Danes). In the preface, Saxo explains that his patron Absalon had encouraged him to write a history of the Danes. The text is thought to have been started in c. 1185, after Sven Aggesen had completed his own history. The objective of *Gesta Danorum* was, as Saxo writes, “to glorify our fatherland”, which he sets about on the model of Virgil’s epic poem *The Aeneid*. Other likely sources of influence come from Plato and Cicero, as well as from more contemporary writers like Geoffrey of Monmouth, author of *The History of the Kings of Britain* (c. 1085).

Saxo’s work was compiled from various sources that are of questionable historical value, but were to him the only available texts. He drew on oral tales of the Icelanders, ancient volumes, letters carved on rocks and stone and the statements of his patron Absalon concerning the history, of which the Archbishop had formed a part. *Gesta Danorum* was not strictly a history or a simple record of old tales, but also a work of the author’s own invention at many points, while exemplifying the past of the Danes. The sixteen books cover the period of the founders of the Danish people, Dan I of Denmark and Angul, to about 1187. The first four books are concerned with the history of the Danes before Christ, the next four deal with their history after Christ, and Books IX to XII concern Christian Denmark and the final four books

promote Lund and exploits before and during Saxo's own lifetime. It is assumed that the last eight books were written first, as Saxo drew heavily on the work of Absalon, who died in 1201, before the work was completed, for evidence of the age of Saint Canute and Valdemar I.

The style of the first eight volumes reveals a similarity with the works of Saxo's contemporary Snorri Sturluson. They deal with mythical elements such as giants and the Scandinavian pantheon of gods. It tells of Dan the first king of Denmark and his brother Angul, who would give his name to the Angles. Saxo relates the stories of various other Danish heroes, many of whom interact with the Scandinavian gods. Saxo's "heathen" gods, however, are not always virtuous beings. They are sometimes treacherous, such as in the story of Harald, legendary king of the Danes, who was taught the ways of warfare by Odin and then betrayed and killed by the god, before being brought to Valhalla.

Saxo's world embraces many warlike values. He glorifies the heroes that made their names in battle far more than those that sought peace. His view of the period of peace under King Frode is very low and is only satisfied when King Knut brings back the ancestral customs. Saxo's chronology of kings extends up to Saint Canute and his son Valdemar I. Saxo finished the history with the preface, which he wrote last, in c. 1216, under the patronage of Anders Sunesen, who replaced Absalon as Archbishop of Lund. The preface stresses a warm appreciation of both Archbishops and of the reigning King Valdemar II.

Of particular interest for Shakespeare scholars is the story of Amleth in Book III — the first instance of the playwright's famous Hamlet. Saxo based the story on an oral tale of a son taking revenge for his murdered father. Christiern Pedersen, a Canon of Lund, collaborated with Jodocus Badius Ascensius, a fellow enthusiast, to print the work of Saxo Grammaticus early in the sixteenth century. This was the first major step toward securing the historical significance of *Gesta Danorum*. Starting from that point, the knowledge of the history began to spread within the academic community. Oliver Elton, who was the first to translate the first nine books of *Gesta Danorum* into English, wrote that Saxo was the first writer produced by Denmark. Elton's translation is the text that appears in this edition.

Saxo's skill as a Latinist was praised by Erasmus, who wondered how "a Dane of that age got so great power of eloquence". R. W. Chambers, the early twentieth century British literary scholar, would call Saxo's writings, "difficult and bombastic, but always amusing Latin". There have been many attempts to understand the type of Latin language used by Saxo, hoping to deduce more information about where he was educated. Some have considered his Latin to have more in common with legal than with ecclesiastical training, and his poetry is thought to reveal traces of parallelism (the use of successive verbal constructions in poetry or prose which correspond in grammatical structure, sound, metre, meaning, etc.).

Although Saxo is widely viewed by Danes as their "first national historian", two other coherent accounts of Danish history predate the *Gesta Danorum*. They are *Chronicon Roskildense* (Roskilde Chronicle), a small work written in Latin, completed in c. 1143, spanning from the introduction of Christianity in Denmark to the author's own time. The next to be published was *Brevis historia regum Dacie*, composed by Sven Aggesen, believed to have been finished in c. 1186, detailing events covering the years 300-1185.

*Gesta Danorum* was received enthusiastically by Renaissance era scholars, who were curious about the pre-Christian history and legends. Saxo's portrayal of history differed greatly from those of his contemporaries, especially Norwegian and Icelandic

sources, including portrayals of various historical characters as either heroes or villains. There are also differences between Saxo's work and that of the fellow Danish historian Sven Aggesen from the same era. For example, Saxo's elaboration and euhemerism in his descriptions of mainly Scandinavian history and mythology; also, his account on the tale of Thyri is considered to be far more fantastic than the same tale presented by Sven.

The original manuscripts of *Gesta Danorum* are lost, except for four fragments: the *Angers Fragment*, *Lassen Fragment*, *Kall-Rasmussen Fragment* and *Plesner Fragment*. The *Angers Fragment* is the largest fragment and the only one attested to be in Saxo's own handwriting. The other fragments are copies from c. 1275. All four texts are in the collection of the Danish Royal Library in Copenhagen. In 1510 Christiern Pedersen, a Danish translator working in Paris, searched Denmark high and low for an existing copy of Saxo's work, which by that time was nearly all but lost. The majority of knowledge about Saxo's work came from a summary located in *Chronica Jutensis*, from around 1342, called *Compendium Saxonis*. It is also in this summary that the name *Gesta Danorum* is found. The title Saxo himself used for his work is unknown.

Regardless of the uncertainty of its historical precision, *Gesta Danorum* remains an incredibly important work of European history. Without doubt, it is the most ambitious literary undertaking of medieval Denmark, providing an essential source for the nation's early history. The text is also one of the oldest known written documents providing information on the history of Estonia and Latvia.



experimenta fuere ut ab ipso ceteri danorum re  
 ges communi quodam uocabulo scoldungi ui  
 cuparentur. <sup>no 60</sup> Precurrebat igitur leioldus <sup>no 60</sup>  
 uirum complementum animi maturitate  
 conflictusque gessit <sup>no 60</sup> quorum eum uix specta  
 torem etiam esse paciebatur. <sup>no 60</sup> In quo annorum uir  
 tutisque percursu ob aliudam saxonum regis fi  
 liam quam summe pulchritudinis intutu postu  
 labat cum scato allmannie lactapa ei  
 dem puelle competitorum teutonum danorum  
 que exercitu inspectante expuocacione di  
 micauit interfectoque eo omnem allemannorum  
 gentem <sup>no 60</sup> punde ac ducis sui in  
 teritu debellatam tributa lege choer  
 dundare debere testatur. <sup>no 60</sup> Omniumque alienis ex fisco suo soluebat  
<sup>no 60</sup>

<sup>no 60</sup> r. p. i.  
<sup>no 60</sup> r. q. u. i. a. m. p. e. r. e. t. h. q. e. t. a. n. s. s. t. a. c. l. a. r. i. s. s. i. m. i. s. i. n. d. o. l. e. r. e. x. p. u. m. i. s. t. a. n. e. m. i. u. g. r. e. s. e. c. i. a. f. u. l. g. o. r. e. s. u. o. f. u. n. c. i. m. o. s. o. c. c. u. p. a. u. i. t.  
<sup>no 60</sup> r. q. u. i. u. i. r. s. p. e. c. t. a. t. o. r. o. b. t. e. n. e. r. i. t. u. m. e. e. p. o. t. e. r. a. t.  
<sup>no 60</sup> r. s. p. e. c. t. a. t. o. r. e. o. b. t. e. n. e. r. i. t. a. t. e. e. e. p. o. t. e. r. a. t.  
<sup>no 60</sup> r. h. i. c. n. o. n. a. r. m. i. m. e. c. c. i. a. p. a. r. t. e. c. a. r. i. t. e. o. s. p. i. t. u. s. f. u. i. t. e. t. i. t. S. i. h. d. i. m. p. i. a. g. e. s. a. d. r. o. g. a. u. i. t. s. a. t. a. r. i. s. t. u. l. t. i. q. u. o. q. u. e. e. m. e. n. d. a. n. d. p. a. r. t. e. s. t. a. r. t. e. a. r. t. u. m. d. i. l. i. g. e. n. t. i. a. p. l. l. i. c. i. t. S. t. u. a. q. u. e. r. e. g. n. i. p. a. r. t. e. p. l. i. c. i. t. e. a. m. i. s. s. i. m. i. z. t. u. r. e. r. e. c. u. p. a. u. i. t. P. r. e. c. i. d. e. n. d. u. m. m. a. n. s. i. o. n. i. l. e. g. e. t. u. l. t. i. e. s. u. i. q. u. e. f. i. c. i. t. l. i. b. e. r. i. d. o. n. a. u. i. t. c. l. a. n. d. e. s. t. i. m. f. i. d. i. s. p. e. r. i. t. P. r. o. q. n. o. n. s. o. l. i. d. o. m. e. s. t. i. s. u. t. d. i. s. c. o. l. e. b. a. t. S. e. c. i. a. l. i. s. e. x. h. o. s. t. e. q. u. i. b. u. s. m. a. r. e. s. o. l. i. c. i. t. i. s. t. d. i. p. e. c. u. n. i. a. a. d. m. g. l. a. m. a. d. d. u. c. e.

The opening page of 'Gesta Danorum', Angers Fragment, twelfth century



Front page of Christiern Pedersen's 'Saxo version', Paris, 1514

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*BOOK NINE.*





*An 1157 bracteate (thin gold medal worn as jewellery) commemorating the wedding between  
Valdemar the Great and Sophia of Minsk*



*King Dan I and his brother Angul by Gudmund Hentze, c. 1920. According to the 'Gesta Danorum', Dan held the lordship of Denmark along with his brother Angul, the father of the Angles in Angeln, which later formed the Anglo-Saxons in England.*

## PREFACE.



FORASMUCH AS ALL other nations are wont to vaunt the glory of their achievements, and reap joy from the remembrance of their forefathers: Absalon, Chief Pontiff of the Danes, whose zeal ever burned high for the glorification of our land, and who would not suffer it to be defrauded of like renown and record, cast upon me, the least of his followers — since all the rest refused the task — the work of compiling into a chronicle the history of Denmark, and by the authority of his constant admonition spurred my weak faculty to enter on a labour too heavy for its strength. For who could write a record of the deeds of Denmark? It had but lately been admitted to the common faith: it still languished as strange to Latin as to religion. But now that the holy ritual brought also the command of the Latin tongue, men were as slothful now as they were unskilled before, and their sluggishness proved as faultful as that former neediness. Thus it came about that my lowliness, though perceiving itself too feeble for the aforesaid burden, yet chose rather to strain beyond its strength than to resist his bidding; fearing that while our neighbours rejoiced and transmitted records of their deeds, the repute of our own people might appear not to possess any written chronicle, but rather to be sunk in oblivion and antiquity. Thus I, forced to put my shoulder, which was unused to the task, to a burden unfamiliar to all authors of preceding time, and dreading to slight his command, have obeyed more boldly than effectually, borrowing from the greatness of my admonisher that good heart which the weakness of my own wit denied me.

And since, ere my enterprise reached its goal, his death outran it; I entreat thee chiefly, Andrew, who wast chosen by a most wholesome and accordant vote to be successor in the same office and to headship of spiritual things, to direct and inspire my theme; that I may baulk by the defence of so great an advocate that spiteful detraction which ever reviles what is most conspicuous. For thy breast, very fruitful in knowledge, and covered with great store of worshipful doctrines, is to be deemed a kind of shrine of heavenly treasures. Thou who hast searched through Gaul and Italy and Britain also in order to gather knowledge of letters and amass them abundantly, didst after thy long wandering obtain a most illustrious post in a foreign school, and proved such a pillar thereof, that thou seemedst to confer more grace on thy degree than it did on thee. Then being made, on account of the height of thy honours and the desert of thy virtues, Secretary to the King, thou didst adorn that employment, in itself bounded and insignificant, with such works of wisdom as to leave it a piece of promotion for men of greatest rank to covet afterwards, when thou wert transferred to that office which now thou holdest. Wherefore Skaane has been found to leap for joy that she has borrowed a Pontiff from her neighbours rather than chosen one from her own people; inasmuch as she both elected nobly and deserved joy of her election. Being a shining light, therefore, in lineage, in letters, and in parts, and guiding the people with the most fruitful labours of thy teaching, thou hast won the deepest love of thy flock, and by thy boldness in thy famous administration hast conducted the service thou hast undertaken unto the summit of renown. And lest thou shouldst seem to acquire ownership on the strength of prescription, thou hast, by a pious and bountiful will, made over a very rich inheritance to Holy Church; choosing rather honourably to reject riches (which are covered with the rust of cares) than to be shackled with the greed of them and with their burden. Likewise thou hast set about



an amazing work upon the reverend tenets of the faith; and in thy zeal to set the service of public religion before thy private concerns, hast, by the lesson of thy wholesome admonitions, driven those men who refused payment of the dues belonging to religion to do to holy things the homage that they ought; and by thy pious gift of treasure hast atoned for the ancient neglect of sacred buildings. Further, those who pursued a wanton life, and yielded to the stress of incontinence above measure, thou hast redeemed from nerveless sloth to a more upright state of mind, partly by continuing instant in wholesome reproof, and partly by the noble example of simple living; leaving it in doubt whether thou hast edified them more by word or deed. Thus thou, by mere counsels of wisdom, hast achieved what it was not granted to any of thy forerunners to obtain.

And I would not have it forgotten that the more ancient of the Danes, when any notable deeds of mettle had been done, were filled with emulation of glory, and imitated the Roman style; not only by relating in a choice kind of composition, which might be called a poetical work, the roll of their lordly deeds; but also by having graven upon rocks and cliffs, in the characters of their own language, the works of their forefathers, which were commonly known in poems in the mother tongue. In the footsteps of these poems, being as it were classic books of antiquity, I have trod; and keeping true step with them as I translated, in the endeavour to preserve their drift, I have taken care to render verses by verses; so that the chronicle of what I shall have to write, being founded upon these, may thus be known, not for a modern fabrication, but for the utterance of antiquity; since this present work promises not a trumpery dazzle of language, but faithful information concerning times past.

Moreover, how many histories must we suppose that men of such genius would have written, could they have had skill in Latin and so slaked their thirst for writing! Men who though they lacked acquaintance with, the speech of Rome, were yet seized with such a passion for bequeathing some record of their history, that they encompassed huge boulders instead of scrolls, borrowing rocks for the usage of books.

Nor may the pains of the men of Thule be blotted in oblivion; for though they lack all that can foster luxury (so naturally barren is the soil), yet they make up for their neediness by their wit, by keeping continually every observance of soberness, and devoting every instant of their lives to perfecting our knowledge of the deeds of foreigners. Indeed, they account it a delight to learn and to consign to remembrance the history of all nations, deeming it as great a glory to set forth the excellences of others as to display their own. Their stores, which are stocked with attestations of historical events, I have examined somewhat closely, and have woven together no small portion of the present work by following their narrative, not despising the judgment of men whom I know to be so well versed in the knowledge of antiquity. And I have taken equal care to follow the statements of Absalon, and with obedient mind and pen to include both his own doings and other men's doings of which he learnt; treasuring the witness of his August narrative as though it were some teaching from the skies.

Wherefore, Waldemar, (Waldemar the Second (1203-42); Saxo does not reach his history.) healthful Prince and Father of us all, shining light of thy land, whose lineage, most glorious from times of old, I am to relate, I beseech thee let thy grace attend the faltering course of this work; for I am fettered under the weight of my purpose, and dread that I may rather expose my unskillfulness and the feebleness of my parts, than portray thy descent as I duly should. For, not to speak of thy rich inheritance from thy fathers, thou hast nobly increased thy realm by conquering thy neighbours, and in the

toil of spreading thy sovereignty hast encompassed the ebbing and flowing waves of Elbe, thus adding to thy crowded roll of honours no mean portion of fame. And after outstripping the renown and repute of thy forerunners by the greatness of thy deeds, thou didst not forbear to make armed, assault even upon part of the Roman empire. And though thou art deemed to be well endowed with courage and generosity, thou hast left it in doubt whether thou dost more terrify to thy foes in warfare or melt thy people by thy mildness. Also thy most illustrious grandsire, who was sanctioned with the honours of public worship, and earned the glory of immortality by an unmerited death, now dazzles by the refulgence of his holiness those whom living he annexed in his conquests. And from his most holy wounds more virtue than blood hath flowed.

Moreover I, bound by an old and inherited duty of obedience, have set my heart on fighting for thee, if it be only with all the forces of my mind; my father and grandfather being known to have served thy illustrious sire in camp with loyal endurance of the toils of war. Relying therefore on thy guidance and regard, I have resolved to begin with the position and configuration of our own country; for I shall relate all things as they come more vividly, if the course of this history first traverse the places to which the events belong, and take their situation as the starting-point for its narrative.

The extremes, then, of this country are partly bounded by a frontier of another land, and partly enclosed by the waters of the adjacent sea. The interior is washed and encompassed by the ocean; and this, through the circuitous winds of the interstices, now straitens into the narrows of a firth, now advances into ampler bays, forming a number of islands. Hence Denmark is cut in pieces by the intervening waves of ocean, and has but few portions of firm and continuous territory; these being divided by the mass of waters that break them up, in ways varying with the different angle of the bend of the sea. Of all these, Jutland, being the largest and first settled, holds the chief place in the Danish kingdom. It both lies fore-most and stretches furthest, reaching to the frontiers of Teutonland, from contact with which it is severed by the bed of the river Eyder. Northwards it swells somewhat in breadth, and runs out to the shore of the Noric Channel (Skagerrak). In this part is to be found the fjord called Liim, which is so full of fish that it seems to yield the natives as much food as the whole soil.

Close by this fjord also lies Lesser (North) Friesland, which curves in from the promontory of Jutland in a cove of sinking plains and shelving lap, and by the favour of the flooding ocean yields immense crops of grain. But whether this violent inundation bring the inhabitants more profit or peril, remains a vexed question. For when the (dykes of the) estuaries, whereby the waves of the sea are commonly checked among that people, are broken through by the greatness of the storm, such a mass of waters is wont to overrun the fields that it sometimes overwhelms not only the tilled lands, but people and their dwellings likewise.

Eastwards, after Jutland, comes the Isle of Funen, cut off from the mainland by a very narrow sound of sea. This faces Jutland on the west, and on the east Zealand, which is famed for its remarkable richness in the necessaries of life. This latter island, being by far the most delightful of all the provinces of our country, is held to occupy the heart of Denmark, being divided by equal distances from the extreme frontier; on its eastern side the sea breaks through and cuts off the western side of Skaane; and this sea commonly yields each year an abundant haul to the nets of the fishers. Indeed, the whole sound is apt to be so thronged with fish that any craft which strikes on them is with difficulty got off by hard rowing, and the prize is captured no longer by tackle, but by simple use of the hands.

Moreover, Halland and Bleking, shooting forth from the mass of the Skaane like two branches from a parent trunk, are linked to Gothland and to Norway, though with wide deviations of course, and with various gaps consisting of fjords. Now in Bleking is to be seen a rock which travellers can visit, dotted with letters in a strange character. For there stretches from the southern sea into the desert of Vaarnsland a road of rock, contained between two lines a little way apart and very prolonged, between which is visible in the midst a level space, graven all over with characters made to be read. And though this lies so unevenly as sometimes to break through the tops of the hills, sometimes to pass along the valley bottoms, yet it can be discerned to preserve continuous traces of the characters. Now Waldemar, well-starred son of holy Canute, marvelled at these, and desired to know their purport, and sent men to go along the rock and gather with close search the series of the characters that were to be seen there; they were then to denote them with certain marks, using letters of similar shape. These men could not gather any sort of interpretation of them, because owing to the hollow space of the graving being partly smeared up with mud and partly worn by the feet of travellers in the trampling of the road, the long line that had been drawn became blurred. Hence it is plain that crevices, even in the solid rock, if long drenched with wet, become choked either by the solid washings of dirt or the moistening drip of showers.

But since this country, by its closeness of language as much as of position, includes Sweden and Norway, I will record their divisions and their climates also as I have those of Denmark. These territories, lying under the northern pole, and facing Bootes and the Great Bear, reach with their utmost outlying parts the latitude of the freezing zone; and beyond these the extraordinary sharpness of the cold suffers not human habitation. Of these two, Norway has been allotted by the choice of nature a forbidding rocky site. Craggy and barren, it is beset all around by cliffs, and the huge desolate boulders give it the aspect of a rugged and a gloomy land; in its furthest part the day-star is not hidden even by night; so that the sun, scorning the vicissitudes of day and night, ministers in unbroken presence an equal share of his radiance to either season.

On the west of Norway comes the island called Iceland, with the mighty ocean washing round it: a land very squalid to dwell in, but noteworthy for marvels, both strange occurrences and objects that pass belief. A spring is there which, by the malignant reek of its water, destroys the original nature of anything whatsoever. Indeed, all that is sprinkled with the breath of its vapour is changed into the hardness of stone. It remains a doubt whether it be more marvellous or more perilous, that soft and flowing water should be invested with such a stiffness, as by a sudden change to transmute into the nature of stone whatsoever is put to it and drenched with its reeking fume, nought but the shape surviving. Here also are said to be other springs, which now are fed with floods of rising water, and, overflowing in full channels, cast a mass of spray upwards; and now again their bubbling flags, and they can scarce be seen below at the bottom, and are swallowed into deep hiding far under ground. Hence, when they are gushing over, they bespatter everything about them with the white spume, but when they are spent the sharpest eye cannot discern them. In this island there is likewise a mountain, whose floods of incessant fire make it look like a glowing rock, and which, by belching out flames, keeps its crest in an everlasting blaze. This thing awakens our wonder as much as those aforesaid; namely, when a land lying close to the extreme of cold can have such abundance of matter to keep up the heat, as to furnish eternal fires with unseen fuel, and supply an endless provocative to feed the burning. To this isle also, at fixed and appointed seasons, there

drifts a boundless mass of ice, and when it approaches and begins to dash upon the rugged reefs, then, just as if the cliffs rang reply, there is heard from the deep a roar of voices and a changing din of extraordinary clamour. Whence it is supposed that spirits, doomed to torture for the iniquity of their guilty life, do here pay, by that bitter cold, the penalty of their sins. And so any portion of this mass that is cut off when the aforesaid ice breaks away from the land, soon slips its bonds and bars, though it be made fast with ever so great joins and knots. The mind stands dazed in wonder, that a thing which is covered with bolts past picking, and shut in by manifold and intricate barriers, should so depart after that mass whereof it was a portion, as by its enforced and inevitable flight to baffle the wariest watching. There also, set among the ridges and crags of the mountains, is another kind of ice which is known periodically to change and in a way reverse its position, the upper parts sinking to the bottom, and the lower again returning to the top. For proof of this story it is told that certain men, while they chanced to be running over the level of ice, rolled into the abyss before them, and into the depths of the yawning crevasses, and were a little later picked up dead without the smallest chink of ice above them. Hence it is common for many to imagine that the urn of the sling of ice first swallows them, and then a little after turns upside down and restores them. Here also, is reported to bubble up the water of a pestilent flood, which if a man taste, he falls struck as though by poison. Also there are other springs, whose gushing waters are said to resemble the quality of the bowl of Ceres. There are also fires, which, though they cannot consume linen, yet devour so fluent a thing as water. Also there is a rock, which flies over mountain-steeps, not from any outward impulse, but of its innate and proper motion.

And now to unfold somewhat more thoroughly our delineation of Norway. It should be known that on the east it is conterminous with Sweden and Gothland, and is bounded on both sides by the waters of the neighbouring ocean. Also on the north it faces a region whose position and name are unknown, and which lacks all civilisation, but teems with peoples of monstrous strangeness; and a vast interspace of flowing sea severs it from the portion of Norway opposite. This sea is found hazardous for navigation, and suffers few that venture thereon to return in peace.

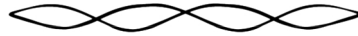
Moreover, the upper bend of the ocean, which cuts through Denmark and flows past it, washes the southern side of Gothland with a gulf of some width; while its lower channel, passing the northern sides of Gothland and Norway, turns eastwards, widening much in breadth, and is bounded by a curve of firm land. This limit of the sea the elders of our race called Grandvik. Thus between Grandvik and the Southern Sea there lies a short span of mainland, facing the seas that wash on either shore; and but that nature had set this as a boundary where the billows almost meet, the tides of the two seas would have flowed into one, and cut off Sweden and Norway into an island. The regions on the east of these lands are inhabited by the Skric-Finns. This people is used to an extraordinary kind of carriage, and in its passion for the chase strives to climb untrodden mountains, and attains the coveted ground at the cost of a slippery circuit. For no crag juts out so high, but they can reach its crest by fetching a cunning compass. For when they first leave the deep valleys, they glide twisting and circling among the bases of the rocks, thus making the route very roundabout by dint of continually swerving aside, until, passing along the winding curves of the tracks, they conquer the appointed summit. This same people is wont to use the skins of certain beasts for merchandise with its neighbours.

Now Sweden faces Denmark and Norway on the west, but on the south and on much of its eastern side it is skirted by the ocean. Past this eastward is to be found a vast accumulation of motley barbarism.

That the country of Denmark was once cultivated and worked by giants, is attested by the enormous stones attached to the barrows and caves of the ancients. Should any man question that this is accomplished by superhuman force, let him look up at the tops of certain mountains and say, if he knows how, what man hath carried such immense boulders up to their crests. For anyone considering this marvel will mark that it is inconceivable how a mass, hardly at all or but with difficulty movable upon a level, could have been raised to so mighty a peak of so lofty a mountain by mere human effort, or by the ordinary exertion of human strength. But as to whether, after the Deluge went forth, there existed giants who could do such deeds, or men endowed beyond others with bodily force, there is scant tradition to tell us.

But, as our countrymen aver, those who even to-day are said to dwell in that rugged and inaccessible desert aforesaid, are, by the mutable nature of their bodies, vouchsafed the power of being now near, now far, and of appearing and vanishing in turn. The approach to this desert is beset with perils of a fearful kind, and has seldom granted to those who attempted it an unscathed return. Now I will let my pen pass to my theme.

## BOOK ONE.



NOW DAN AND Angul, with whom the stock of the Danes begins, were begotten of Humble, their father, and were the governors and not only the founders of our race. (Yet Dudo, the historian of Normandy, considers that the Danes are sprung and named from the Danai.) And these two men, though by the wish and favour of their country they gained the lordship of the realm, and, owing to the wondrous deserts of their bravery, got the supreme power by the consenting voice of their countrymen, yet lived without the name of king: the usage whereof was not then commonly resorted to by any authority among our people.

Of these two, Angul, the fountain, so runs the tradition, of the beginnings of the Anglian race, caused his name to be applied to the district which he ruled. This was an easy kind of memorial wherewith to immortalise his fame: for his successors a little later, when they gained possession of Britain, changed the original name of the island for a fresh title, that of their own land. This action was much thought of by the ancients: witness Bede, no mean figure among the writers of the Church, who was a native of England, and made it his care to embody the doings of his country in the most hallowed treasury of his pages; deeming it equally a religious duty to glorify in writing the deeds of his land, and to chronicle the history of the Church.

From Dan, however, so saith antiquity; the pedigrees of our kings have flowed in glorious series, like channels from some parent spring. Grytha, a matron most highly revered among the Teutons, bore him two sons, HUMBLE and LOTHER.

The ancients, when they were to choose a king, were wont to stand on stones planted in the ground, and to proclaim their votes, in order to foreshadow from the steadfastness of the stones that the deed would be lasting. By this ceremony Humble was elected king at his father's death, thus winning a novel favour from his country; but by the malice of ensuing fate he fell from a king into a common man. For he was taken by Lothar in war, and bought his life by yielding up his crown; such, in truth, were the only terms of escape offered him in his defeat. Forced, therefore, by the injustice of a brother to lay down his sovereignty, he furnished the lesson to mankind, that there is less safety, though more pomp, in the palace than in the cottage. Also, he bore his wrong so meekly that he seemed to rejoice at his loss of title as though it were a blessing; and I think he had a shrewd sense of the quality of a king's estate. But Lothar played the king as insupportably as he had played the soldier, inaugurating his reign straightway with arrogance and crime; for he counted it uprightness to strip all the most eminent of life or goods, and to clear his country of its loyal citizens, thinking all his equals in birth his rivals for the crown. He was soon chastised for his wickedness; for he met his end in an insurrection of his country; which had once bestowed on him his kingdom, and now bereft him of his life.

SKIOLD, his son, inherited his natural bent, but not his behaviour; avoiding his inborn perversity by great discretion in his tender years, and thus escaping all traces of his father's taint. So he appropriated what was alike the more excellent and the earlier share of the family character; for he wisely departed from his father's sins, and became a happy counterpart of his grandsire's virtues. This man was famous in his youth among the huntsmen of his father for his conquest of a monstrous beast: a marvellous incident, which augured his future prowess. For he chanced to obtain leave from his guardians, who were rearing him very carefully, to go and see the



hunting. A bear of extraordinary size met him; he had no spear, but with the girdle that he commonly wore he contrived to bind it, and gave it to his escort to kill. More than this, many champions of tried prowess were at the same time of his life vanquished by him singly; of these Attal and Skat were renowned and famous. While but fifteen years of age he was of unusual bodily size and displayed mortal strength in its perfection, and so mighty were the proofs of his powers that the rest of the kings of the Danes were called after him by a common title, the SKIOLDUNG'S. Those who were wont to live an abandoned and flaccid life, and to sap their self-control by wantonness, this man vigilantly spurred to the practice of virtue in an active career. Thus the ripeness of Skiold's spirit outstripped the fulness of his strength, and he fought battles at which one of his tender years could scarce look on. And as he thus waxed in years and valour he beheld the perfect beauty of Alfhild, daughter of the King of the Saxons, sued for her hand, and, for her sake, in the sight of the armies of the Teutons and the Danes, challenged and fought with Skat, governor of Allemannia, and a suitor for the same maiden; whom he slew, afterwards crushing the whole nation of the Allemannians, and forcing them to pay tribute, they being subjugated by the death of their captain. Skiold was eminent for patriotism as well as arms. For he annulled unrighteous laws, and most heedfully executed whatsoever made for the amendment of his country's condition. Further, he regained by his virtue the realm that his father's wickedness had lost. He was the first to proclaim the law abolishing manumissions. A slave, to whom he had chanced to grant his freedom, had attempted his life by stealthy treachery, and he exacted a bitter penalty; as though it were just that the guilt of one freedman should be visited upon all. He paid off all men's debts from his own treasury, and contended, so to say, with all other monarchs in courage, bounty, and generous dealing. The sick he used to foster, and charitably gave medicines to those sore stricken; bearing witness that he had taken on him the care of his country and not of himself. He used to enrich his nobles not only with home taxes, but also with plunder taken in war; being wont to aver that the prize-money should flow to the soldiers, and the glory to the general.

Thus delivered of his bitterest rival in wooing, he took as the prize of combat the maiden, for the love of whom he had fought, and wedded her in marriage. Soon after, he had by her a son, GRAM, whose wondrous parts savoured so strongly of his father's virtues that he was deemed to tread in their very footsteps. The days of Gram's youth were enriched with surpassing gifts of mind and body, and he raised them to the crest of renown. Posterity did such homage to his greatness that in the most ancient poems of the Danes royal dignity is implied in his very name. He practiced with the most zealous training whatsoever serves to sharpen and strengthen the bodily powers. Taught by the fencers, he trained himself by sedulous practice to parrying and dealing blows. He took to wife the daughter of his upbringing, Roar, she being his foster-sister and of his own years, in order the better to show his gratefulness for his nursing. A little while after he gave her in marriage to a certain Bess, since he had oftentimes used his strenuous service. In this partner of his warlike deeds he put his trust; and he has left it a question whether he has won more renown by Bess's valour or his own.

Gram, chancing to hear that Groa, daughter of Sigtryg, King of the Swedes, was plighted to a certain giant, and holding accursed an union so unworthy of the blood royal, entered on a Swedish war; being destined to emulate the prowess of Hercules in resisting the attempts of monsters. He went into Gothland, and, in order to frighten people out of his path, strode on clad in goats' skins, swathed in the motley hides of beasts, and grasping in his right hand a dreadful weapon, thus feigning the attire of a

giant; when he met Groa herself riding with a very small escort of women on foot, and making her way, as it chanced, to the forest-pools to bathe, she thought it was her betrothed who had hastened to meet her, and was scared with feminine alarm at so strange a garb: so, flinging up the reins, and shaking terribly all over, she began in the song of her country, thus:

“I see that a giant, hated of the king, has come, and darkens the highways with his stride. Or my eyes play me false; for it has oft befallen bold warriors to skulk behind the skin of a beast.”

Then began Bess: “Maiden, seated on the shoulders of the steed, tell me, pouring forth in thy turn words of answer, what is thy name, and of what line art thou born?”

Groa replied: “Groa is my name; my sire is a king, glorious in blood, gleaming in armour. Disclose to us, thou also, who thou art, or whence sprung!”

To whom Bess: “I am Bess, brave in battle, ruthless to foes, a terror to nations, and oft drenching my right hand in the blood of foes.”

Then said Groa: “Who, prithee, commands your lines? Under what captain raise ye the war-standards? What prince controls the battle? Under whose guidance is the war made ready?”

Bess in answer: “Gram, the blest in battle, rules the array: force nor fear can swerve him; flaming pyre and cruel sword and ocean billow have never made him afraid. Led by him, maiden, we raise the golden standards of war.”

Groa once more: “Turn your feet and go back hence, lest Sigtryg vanquish you all with his own array, and fasten you to a cruel stake, your throats haltered with the cord, and doom your carcasses to the stiff noose, and, glaring evilly, thrust out your corpses to the hungry raven.”

Bess again: “Gram, ere he shall shut his own eyes in death, shall first make him a ghost, and, smiting him on the crest, shall send him to Tartarus. We fear no camp of the Swedes. Why threaten us with ghastly dooms, maiden?”

Groa answered him: “Behold, I will ride thence to see again the roof of my father which I know, that I may not rashly set eyes on the array of my brother who is coming. And I pray that your death-doom may tarry for you who abide.”

Bess replied: “Daughter, to thy father go back with good cheer; nor imprecate swift death upon us, nor let choler shake thy bosom. For often has a woman, harsh at first and hard to a wooer, yielded the second time.”

Whereupon Gram could brook no longer to be silent, and pitching his tones gruffly, so as to mimic a gruesome and superhuman voice, accosted the maiden thus:

“Let not the maiden fear the brother of the fleet giant, nor turn pale because I am nigh her. For I am sent by Grip, and never seek the couch and embrace of damsels save when their wish matches mine.”

Groa answered: “Who so mad as to wish to be the leman of giants? Or what woman could love the bed that genders monsters? Who could be the wife of demons, and know the seed whose fruit is monstrous? Or who would fain share her couch with a barbarous giant? Who caresses thorns with her fingers? Who would mingle honest kisses with mire? Who would unite shaggy limbs to smooth ones which correspond not? Full ease of love cannot be taken when nature cries out against it: nor doth the love customary in the use of women sort with monsters.”

Gram rejoined: “Oft with conquering hand I have tamed the necks of mighty kings, defeating with stronger arm their insolent pride. Thence take red-glowing gold, that the troth may be made firm by the gift, and that the faith to be brought to our wedlock may stand fast.”

Thus speaking, he cast off his disguises, and revealed his natural comeliness; and by a single sight of him he filled the damsel with well-nigh as much joy as he had struck her with fear before at his counterfeit. She was even incited to his embraces by the splendour of his beauty; nor did he fail to offer her the gifts of love.

Having won Groa, Bess proceeded and learnt that the road was beset by two robbers. These he slew simply by charging them as they rushed covetously forth to despoil him. This done, loth to seem to have done any service to the soil of an enemy, he put timbers under the carcasses of the slain, fastened them thereto, and stretched them so as to counterfeit an upright standing position; so that in their death they might menace in seeming those whom their life had harmed in truth; and that, terrible even after their decease, they might block the road in effigy as much as they had once in deed. Whence it appears that in slaying the robbers he took thought for himself and not for Sweden: for he betokened by so singular an act how great a hatred of Sweden filled him. Having heard from the diviners that Sigtryg could only be conquered by gold, he straightway fixed a knob of gold to a wooden mace, equipped himself therewith in the war wherein he attacked the king, and obtained his desire. This exploit was besung by Bess in a most zealous strain of eulogy:

“Gram, the fierce wielder of the prosperous mace, knowing not the steel, rained blows on the outstretched sword, and with a stock beat off the lances of the mighty.

“Following the decrees and will of the gods, he brought low the glory of the powerless Swedes, doing their king to death and crushing him with the stiff gold.

“For he pondered on the arts of war: he wielded in his clasp the ruddy-flashing wood, and victoriously with noble stroke made their fallen captain writhe.

“Shrewdly he conquered with the hardness of gold him whom fate forbade should be slain by steel; unsworded, waging war with the worthier metal.

“This treasure, for which its deviser claims glory and the height of honour, shall abide yet more illustrious hereafter, known far and wide in ampler fame.”

Having now slain Sigtryg, the King of Sweden, Gram desired to confirm his possession of the empire which he had won in war; and therefore, suspecting Swarin the governor of Gothland of aspiring to the crown, he challenged him to combat, and slew him. This man’s brethren, of whom he had seven lawfully born, and nine the sons of a concubine, sought to avenge their brother’s death, but Gram, in an unequal contest, cut them off.

Gram, for his marvellous prowess, was granted a share in the sovereignty by his father, who was now in extreme age, and thought it better and likewise more convenient to give his own blood a portion of the supremacy of the realm, than now in the setting of his life to administer it without a partner. Therefore Ring, a nobly-born Zealander, stirred the greater part of the Danes with desire for insurrection; fancying that one of these men was unripe for his rank, and that the other had run the course of his powers, alleging the weakness in years of both, and declaring that the wandering wit of an old man made the one, and that of a boy the other, unfit for royal power. But they fought and crushed him, making him an example to all men, that no season of life is to be deemed incompatible with valour.

Many other deeds also King Gram did. He declared war against Sumble, King of the Finns; but when he set eyes upon the King’s daughter, Signe, he laid down his arms, the foeman turned into the suitor, and, promising to put away his own wife, he plighted troth with her. But, while much busied with a war against Norway, which he had taken up against King Swipdag for debauching his sister and his daughter, he heard from a messenger that Signe had, by Sumble’s treachery, been promised in marriage to Henry, King of Saxony. Then, inclining to love the maiden more than his

soldiers, he left his army, privily made his way to Finland, and came in upon the wedding, which was already begun. Putting on a garb of the utmost meanness, he lay down at the table in a seat of no honour. When asked what he brought, he professed skill in leechcraft. At last, when all were drenched in drunkenness, he gazed at the maiden, and amid the revels of the riotous banquet, cursing deep the fickleness of women, and vaunting loud his own deeds of valour, he poured out the greatness of his wrath in a song like this:

“Singly against eight at once I drove the darts of death, and smote nine with a back-swung sword, when I slew Swarin, who wrongfully assumed his honours and tried to win fame unmerited; wherefore I have oft dyed in foreign blood my blade red with death and reeking with slaughter, and have never blenched at the clash of dagger or the sheen of helmet. Now Signe, the daughter of Sumble, vilely spurns me, and endures vows not mine, cursing her ancient troth; and, conceiving an ill-ordered love, commits a notable act of female lightness; for she entangles, lures, and bestains princes, rebuffing beyond all others the lordly of birth; yet remaining firm to none, but ever wavering, and bringing to birth impulses doubtful and divided.”

And as he spoke he leapt up from where he lay, and there he cut Henry down while at the sacred board and the embraces of his friends, carried off his bride from amongst the bridesmaids, felled most of the guests, and bore her off with him in his ship. Thus the bridal was turned into a funeral; and the Finns might learn the lesson, that hands should not be laid upon the loves of other men.

After this SWIPDAG, King of Norway, destroyed Gram, who was attempting to avenge the outrage on his sister and the attempt on his daughter's chastity. This battle was notable for the presence of the Saxon forces, who were incited to help Swipdag, not so much by love of him, as by desire to avenge Henry.

GUTHORM and HADDING, the son of Gram (Groa being the mother of the first and Signe of the second), were sent over to Sweden in a ship by their foster-father, Brage (Swipdag being now master of Denmark), and put in charge of the giants Wagnhofde and Hafle, for guard as well as rearing.

As I shall have briefly to relate doings of these folk, and would fain not seem to fabricate what conflicts with common belief or outsteps the faithful truth, it is worth the knowing that there were in old times three kinds of magicians who by diverse sleights practiced extraordinary marvels. The first of these were men of monstrous stock, termed by antiquity giants; these by their exceeding great bodily stature surpassed the size natural to mankind. Those who came after these were the first who gained skill in divination from entrails, and attained the Pythonic art. These surpassed the former in briskness of mental parts as much as they fell behind them in bodily condition. Constant wars for the supremacy were waged between these and the giants; till at last the sorcerers prevailed, subdued the tribe of giants by arms, and acquired not merely the privilege of ruling, but also the repute of being divine. Both of these kinds had extreme skill in deluding the eyesight, knowing how to obscure their own faces and those of others with divers semblances, and to darken the true aspects of things with beguiling shapes. But the third kind of men, springing from the natural union of the first two, did not answer to the nature of their parents either in bodily size or in practice of magic arts; yet these gained credit for divinity with minds that were befooled by their jugglings.

Nor must we marvel if, tempted by the prodigious miracles of these folk, the barbaric world fell to worshipping a false religion, when others like unto these, who were mere mortals, but were revered with divine honours, beguiled even the shrewdness of the Latins. I have touched on these things lest, when I relate of sleights

and marvels, I be checked by the disbelief of the reader. Now I will leave these matters and return to my theme.

Swipdag, now that he had slain Gram, was enriched with the realms of Denmark and Sweden; and because of the frequent importunities of his wife he brought back from banishment her brother Guthorm, upon his promising tribute, and made him ruler of the Danes. But Hadding preferred to avenge his father rather than take a boon from his foe.

This man's nature so waxed and throve that in the early season of his youth he was granted the prime of manhood. Leaving the pursuit of pleasure, he was constantly zealous in warlike exercises; remembering that he was the son of a fighting father, and was bound to spend his whole span of life in approved deeds of warfare. Hardgrip, daughter of Wagnhofde, tried to enfeeble his firm spirit with her lures of love, contending and constantly averring that he ought to offer the first dues of the marriage bed in wedlock with her, who had proffered to his childhood most zealous and careful fostering, and had furnished him with his first rattle.

Nor was she content with admonishing in plain words, but began a strain of song as follows:

“Why doth thy life thus waste and wander? Why dost thou pass thy years unwed, following arms, thirsting for throats? Nor does my beauty draw thy vows. Carried away by excess of frenzy, thou art little prone to love. Steeped in blood and slaughter, thou judgest wars better than the bed, nor refreshest thy soul with incitements. Thy fierceness finds no leisure; dalliance is far from thee, and savagery fostered. Nor is thy hand free from blasphemy while thou loathest the rites of love. Let this hateful strictness pass away, let that loving warmth approach, and plight the troth of love to me, who gave thee the first breasts of milk in childhood, and helped thee, playing a mother's part, duteous to thy needs.”

When he answered that the size of her body was unwieldy for the embraces of a mortal, since doubtless her nature was framed in conformity to her giant stock, she said:

“Be not moved by my unwonted look of size. For my substance is sometimes thinner, sometimes ampler; now meagre, now abundant; and I alter and change at my pleasure the condition of my body, which is at one time shrivelled up and at another time expanded: now my tallness rises to the heavens, and now I settle down into a human being, under a more bounded shape.”

As he still faltered, and was slow to believe her words, she added the following song:

“Youth, fear not the converse of my bed. I change my bodily outline in twofold wise, and am wont to enjoin a double law upon my sinews. For I conform to shapes of different figure in turn, and am altered at my own sweet will: now my neck is star-high, and soars nigh to the lofty Thunderer; then it falls and declines to human strength, and plants again on earth that head which was near the firmament. Thus I lightly shift my body into diverse phases, and am beheld in varying wise; for changefully now cramped stiffness draws in my limbs, now the virtue of my tall body unfolds them, and suffers them to touch the cloud-tops. Now I am short and straitened, now stretch out with loosened knee; and I have mutably changed myself like wax into strange aspects. He who knows of Proteus should not marvel at me. My shape never stays the same, and my aspect is twofold: at one time it contrasts its outstretched limbs, at another shoots them out when closed; now disentangling the members and now rolling them back into a coil. I dart out my ingathered limbs, and presently, while they are strained, I wrinkle them up, dividing my countenance

between shapes twain, and adopting two forms; with the greater of these I daunt the fierce, while with the shorter I seek the embraces of men.”

By thus averring she obtained the embraces of Hadding; and her love for the youth burned so high that when she found him desirous of revisiting his own land, she did not hesitate to follow him in man’s attire, and counted it as joy to share his hardships and perils. While upon the journey she had undertaken, she chanced to enter in his company, in order to pass the night, a dwelling, the funeral of whose dead master was being conducted with melancholy rites. Here, desiring to pry into the purposes of heaven by the help of a magical espial, she graved on wood some very dreadful spells, and caused Hadding to put them under the dead man’s tongue; thus forcing him to utter, with the voice so given, a strain terrible to hear:

“Perish accursed he who hath dragged me back from those below, let him be punished for calling a spirit out of bale!

“Whoso hath called me, who am lifeless and dead, back from the abode below, and hath brought me again into upper air, let him pay full penalty with his own death in the dreary shades beneath livid Styx. Behold, counter to my will and purpose, I must declare some bitter tidings. For as ye go away from this house ye will come to the narrow path of a grove, and will be a prey to demons all about. Then she who hath brought our death back from out of void, and has given us a sight of this light once more, by her prayers wondrously drawing forth the ghost and casting it into the bonds of the body, shall bitterly bewail her rash enterprise.

“Perish accursed he who hath dragged me back from those below, let him be punished for calling a spirit out of bale!

“For when the black pestilence of the blast that engenders monsters has crushed out the inmost entrails with stern effort, and when their hand has swept away the living with cruel nail, tearing off limbs and rending ravished bodies; then Hadding, thy life shall survive, nor shall the nether realms bear off thy ghost, nor thy spirit pass heavily to the waters of Styx; but the woman who hath made the wretched ghost come back hither, crushed by her own guilt, shall appease our dust; she shall be dust herself.

“Perish accursed he who hath dragged me back from those below, let him be punished for calling a spirit out of bale!”

So, while they were passing the night in the forest foretold them, in a shelter framed of twigs, a hand of extraordinary size was seen to wander over the inside of the dwelling. Terrified at this portent, Hadding entreated the aid of his nurse. Then Hardgrip, expanding her limbs and swelling to a mighty bigness, gripped the hand fast and held it to her foster-child to hew off. What flowed from the noisome wounds he dealt was not so much blood as corrupt matter. But she paid the penalty of this act, presently being torn in pieces by her kindred of the same stock; nor did her constitution or her bodily size help her against feeling the attacks of her foes’ claws.

Hadding, thus bereft of his foster-mother, chanced to be made an ally in a solemn covenant to a rover, Lysir, by a certain man of great age that had lost an eye, who took pity on his loneliness. Now the ancients, when about to make a league, were wont to besprinkle their footsteps with blood of one another, so to ratify their pledge of friendship by reciprocal barter of blood. Lysir and Hadding, being bound thus in the strictest league, declared war against Loker, the tyrant of the Kurlanders. They were defeated; and the old man aforementioned took Hadding, as he fled on horseback, to his own house, and there refreshed him with a certain pleasant draught, telling him that he would find himself quite brisk and sound in body. This prophetic advice he confirmed by a song as follows:



“As thou farest hence, a foe, thinking thee a deserter, will assail thee, that he may keep thee bound and cast thee to be devoured by the mangling jaws of beasts. But fill thou the ears of the warders with divers tales, and when they have done the feast and deep sleep holds them, snap off the fetters upon thee and the loathly chains. Turn thy feet thence, and when a little space has fled, with all thy might rise up against a swift lion who is wont to toss the carcasses of the prisoners, and strive with thy stout arms against his savage shoulders, and with naked sword search his heart-strings. Straightway put thy throat to him and drink the steaming blood, and devour with ravenous jaws the banquet of his body. Then renewed strength will come to thy limbs, then shall undreamed-of might enter thy sinews, and an accumulation of stout force shall bespread and nerve thy frame through-out. I myself will pave the path to thy prayers, and will subdue the henchmen in sleep, and keep them snoring throughout the lingering night.”

And as he spoke, he took back the young man on his horse, and set him where he had found him. Hadding cowered trembling under his mantle; but so extreme was his wonder at the event, that with keen vision he peered through its holes. And he saw that before the steps of the horse lay the sea; but was told not to steal a glimpse of the forbidden thing, and therefore turned aside his amazed eyes from the dread spectacle of the roads that he journeyed. Then he was taken by Loker, and found by very sure experience that every point of the prophecy was fulfilled upon him. So he assailed Handwan, king of the Hellespont, who was entrenched behind an impregnable defence of wall in his city Duna, and withstood him not in the field, but with battlements. Its summit defying all approach by a besieger, he ordered that the divers kinds of birds who were wont to nest in that spot should be caught by skilled fowlers, and he caused wicks which had been set on fire to be fastened beneath their wings. The birds sought the shelter of their own nests, and filled the city with a blaze; all the townsmen flocked to quench it, and left the gates defenceless. He attacked and captured Handwan, but suffered him to redeem his life with gold for ransom. Thus, when he might have cut off his foe, he preferred to grant him the breath of life; so far did his mercy qualify his rage.

After this he prevailed over a great force of men of the East, and came back to Sweden. Swipdag met him with a great fleet off Gottland; but Hadding attacked and destroyed him. And thus he advanced to a lofty pitch of renown, not only by the fruits of foreign spoil, but by the trophies of his vengeance for his brother and his father. And he exchanged exile for royalty, for he became king of his own land as soon as he regained it.

At this time there was one Odin, who was credited over all Europe with the honour, which was false, of godhead, but used more continually to sojourn at Upsala; and in this spot, either from the sloth of the inhabitants or from its own pleasantness, he vouchsafed to dwell with somewhat especial constancy. The kings of the North, desiring more zealously to worship his deity, embounded his likeness in a golden image; and this statue, which betokened their homage, they transmitted with much show of worship to Byzantium, fettering even the effigied arms with a serried mass of bracelets. Odin was overjoyed at such notoriety, and greeted warmly the devotion of the senders. But his queen Frigga, desiring to go forth more beautified, called smiths, and had the gold stripped from the statue. Odin hanged them, and mounted the statue upon a pedestal, which by the marvellous skill of his art he made to speak when a mortal touched it. But still Frigga preferred the splendour of her own apparel to the divine honours of her husband, and submitted herself to the embraces of one of her servants; and it was by this man's device she broke down the image, and turned to the

service of her private wantonness that gold which had been devoted to public idolatry. Little thought she of practicing unchastity, that she might the easier satisfy her greed, this woman so unworthy to be the consort of a god; but what should I here add, save that such a godhead was worthy of such a wife? So great was the error that of old befooled the minds of men. Thus Odin, wounded by the double trespass of his wife, resented the outrage to his image as keenly as that to his bed; and, ruffled by these two stinging dishonours, took to an exile overflowing with noble shame, imagining so to wipe off the slur of his ignominy.

When he had retired, one Mit-othin, who was famous for his juggling tricks, was likewise quickened, as though by inspiration from on high, to seize the opportunity of feigning to be a god; and, wrapping the minds of the barbarians in fresh darkness, he led them by the renown of his jugglings to pay holy observance to his name. He said that the wrath of the gods could never be appeased nor the outrage to their deity expiated by mixed and indiscriminate sacrifices, and therefore forbade that prayers for this end should be put up without distinction, appointing to each of those above his especial drink-offering. But when Odin was returning, he cast away all help of jugglings, went to Finland to hide himself, and was there attacked and slain by the inhabitants. Even in his death his abominations were made manifest, for those who came nigh his barrow were cut off by a kind of sudden death; and after his end, he spread such pestilence that he seemed almost to leave a filthier record in his death than in his life: it was as though he would extort from the guilty a punishment for his slaughter. The inhabitants, being in this trouble, took the body out of the mound, beheaded it, and impaled it through the breast with a sharp stake; and herein that people found relief.

The death of Odin's wife revived the ancient splendour of his name, and seemed to wipe out the disgrace upon his deity; so, returning from exile, he forced all those, who had used his absence to assume the honours of divine rank, to resign them as usurped; and the gangs of sorcerers that had arisen he scattered like a darkness before the advancing glory of his godhead. And he forced them by his power not only to lay down their divinity, but further to quit the country, deeming that they, who tried to foist themselves so iniquitously into the skies, ought to be outcasts from the earth.

Meanwhile Asmund, the son of Swipdag, fought with Hadding to avenge his father. And when he heard that Henry his son, his love for whom he set even before his own life, had fallen fighting valiantly, his soul longed for death, and loathed the light of day, and made a song in a strain like this:

“What brave hath dared put on my armour? The sheen of the helmet serves not him who tottereth, nor doth the breastplate fitly shelter him that is sore spent. Our son is slain, let us riot in battle; my eager love for him driveth me to my death, that I may not be left outliving my dear child. In each hand I am fain to grasp the sword; now without shield let us ply our warfare bare-breasted, with flashing blades. Let the rumour of our rage beacon forth: boldly let us grind to powder the column of the foe; nor let the battle be long and chafe us; nor let our onset be shattered in rout and be still.”

When he had said this, he gripped his hilt with both hands, and, fearless of peril, swung his shield upon his back and slew many. Hadding therefore called on the powers with which he was allied to protect him, and on a sudden Wagnhofde rode up to fight on his side. And when Asmund saw his crooked sword, he cried out, and broke into the following strain:

“Why fightest thou with curved sword? The short sword shall prove thy doom, the javelin shall be flung and bring forth death. Thou shouldst conquer thy foe by thy

hand, but thou trustest that he can be rent by spells; thou trustest more in words than rigour, and putttest thy strength in thy great resource. Why dost thus beat me back with thy shield, threatening with thy bold lance, when thou art so covered with wretched crimes and spotted all over? Thus hath the brand of shame bestained thee, rotting in sin, lubber-lipped.”

While he thus clamoured, Hadding, flinging his spear by the thong, pierced him through. But Asmund lacked not comfort even for his death; for while his life flickered in the socket he wounded the foot of his slayer, and by this short instant of revenge he memorized his fall, punishing the other with an incurable limp. Thus crippling of a limb befell one of them and loss of life the other. Asmund’s body was buried in solemn state at Upsala and attended with royal obsequies. His wife Gunnhild, loth to outlive him, cut off her own life with the sword, choosing rather to follow her lord in death than to forsake him by living. Her friends, in consigning her body to burial, laid her with her husband’s dust, thinking her worthy to share the mound of the man, her love for whom she had set above life. So there lies Gunnhild, clasping her lord somewhat more beautifully in the tomb than she had ever done in the bed.

After this Hadding, now triumphant, wasted Sweden. But Asmund’s son, named Uffe, shrinking from a conflict, transported his army into Denmark, thinking it better to assail the house of his enemy than to guard his own, and deeming it a timely method of repelling his wrongs to retaliate upon his foe what he was suffering at his hands. Thus the Danes had to return and defend their own, preferring the safety of their land to lordship of a foreign realm; and Uffe went back to his own country, now rid of an enemy’s arms.

Hadding, on returning from the Swedish war, perceived that his treasury, wherein he was wont to store the wealth he had gotten by the spoils of war, had been forced and robbed, and straightway hanged its keeper Glumer, proclaiming by a crafty device, that, if any of the culprits brought about the recovery of the stolen goods, he should have the same post of honour as Glumer had filled. Upon this promise, one of the guilty men became more zealous to reap the bounty than to hide his crime, and had the money brought back to the king. His confederates fancied he had been received into the king’s closest friendship, and believed that the honours paid him were as real as they were lavish; and therefore they also, hoping to be as well rewarded, brought back their moneys and avowed their guilt. Their confession was received at first with promotion and favours, and soon visited with punishment, thus bequeathing a signal lesson against being too confiding. I should judge that men, whose foolish blabbing brought them to destruction, when wholesome silence could have ensured their safety, well deserved to atone upon the gallows for their breach of reticence.

After this Hadding passed the whole winter season in the utmost preparation for the renewal of the war. When the frosts had been melted by the springtime sun, he went back to Sweden and there spent five years in warfare. By dint of this prolonged expedition, his soldiers, having consumed all their provision, were reduced almost to the extremity of emaciation, and began to assuage their hunger with mushrooms from the wood. At last, under stress of extreme necessity, they devoured their horses, and finally satisfied themselves with the carcasses of dogs. Worse still, they did not scruple to feed upon human limbs. So, when the Danes were brought unto the most desperate straits, there sounded in the camp, in the first sleep of the night, and no man uttering it, the following song:

“With foul augury have ye left the abode of your country, thinking to harry these fields in War. What idle notion mocks your minds? What blind self-confidence has seized your senses, that ye think this soil can thus be won. The might of Sweden cannot yield or quail before the War of the stranger; but the whole of your column shall melt away when it begins to assault our people in War. For when flight has broken up the furious onset, and the straggling part of the fighters wavers, then to those who prevail in the War is given free scope to slay those who turn their backs, and they have earned power to smite the harder when fate drives the renewer of the war headlong. Nor let him whom cowardice deters aim the spears.”

This prophecy was accomplished on the morrow’s dawn by a great slaughter of the Danes. On the next night the warriors of Sweden heard an utterance like this, none knowing who spake it:

“Why doth Uffe thus defy me with grievous rebellion? He shall pay the utmost penalty. For he shall be buried and transpierced under showers of lances, and shall fall lifeless in atonement for his insolent attempt. Nor shall the guilt of his wanton rancour be unpunished; and, as I forebode, as soon as he joins battle and fights, the points shall fasten in his limbs and strike his body everywhere, and his raw gaping wounds no bandage shall bind up; nor shall any remedy heal over thy wide gashes.”

On that same night the armies fought; when two hairless old men, of appearance fouler than human, and displaying their horrid baldness in the twinkling starlight, divided their monstrous efforts with opposing ardour, one of them being zealous on the Danish side, and the other as fervent for the Swedes. Hadding was conquered and fled to Helsingland, where, while washing in the cold sea-water his body which was scorched with heat, he attacked and cut down with many blows a beast of unknown kind, and having killed it had it carried into camp. As he was exulting in this deed a woman met him and addressed him in these words:

“Whether thou tread the fields afoot, or spread canvas overseas, thou shalt suffer the hate of the gods, and through all the world shalt behold the elements oppose thy purposes. Afield thou shalt fall, on sea thou shalt be tossed, an eternal tempest shall attend the steps of thy wandering, nor shall frost-bind ever quit thy sails; nor shall thy roof-tree roof thee, but if thou seekest it, it shall fall smitten by the hurricane; thy herd shall perish of bitter chill. All things shall be tainted, and shall lament that thy lot is there. Thou shalt be shunned like a pestilent tetter, nor shall any plague be fouler than thou. Such chastisement doth the power of heaven mete out to thee, for truly thy sacrilegious hands have slain one of the dweller’s above, disguised in a shape that was not his: thus here art thou, the slayer of a benignant god! But when the sea receives thee, the wrath of the prison of Eolus shall be loosed upon thy head. The West and the furious North, the South wind shall beat thee down, shall league and send forth their blasts in rivalry; until with better prayers thou hast melted the sternness of heaven, and hast lifted with appeasement the punishment thou hast earned.”

So, when Hadding went back, he suffered all things after this one fashion, and his coming brought disquiet upon all peaceful places. For when he was at sea a mighty storm arose and destroyed his fleet in a great tempest: and when, a shipwrecked man, he sought entertainment, he found a sudden downfall of that house. Nor was there any cure for his trouble, ere he atoned by sacrifice for his crime, and was able to return into favour with heaven. For, in order to appease the deities, he sacrificed dusky victims to the god Frey. This manner of propitiation by sacrifice he repeated as an annual feast, and left posterity to follow. This rite the Swedes call Froblod (the sacrifice or feast of Frey).

Hadding chanced to hear that a certain giant had taken in troth Ragnhild, daughter of Hakon, King of the Nitherians; and, loathing so ignominious a state of affairs, and utterly abominating the destined union, he forestalled the marriage by noble daring. For he went to Norway and overcame by arms him that was so foul, a lover for a princess. For he thought so much more of valour than of ease, that, though he was free to enjoy all the pleasures of a king, he accounted it sweeter than any delight to repel the wrongs done, not only to himself, but to others. The maiden, not knowing him, ministered with healing tendance to the man that had done her kindness and was bruised with many wounds. And in order that lapse of time might not make her forget him, she shut up a ring in his wound, and thus left a mark on his leg. Afterwards her father granted her freedom to choose her own husband; so when the young men were assembled at banquet, she went along them and felt their bodies carefully, searching for the tokens she had stored up long ago. All the rest she rejected, but Hadding she discovered by the sign of the secret ring; then she embraced him, and gave herself to be the wife of him who had not suffered a giant to win her in marriage.

While Hadding was sojourning with her a marvellous portent befell him. While he was at supper, a woman bearing hemlocks was seen to raise her head beside the brazier, and, stretching out the lap of her robe, seemed to ask, "in what part of the world such fresh herbs had grown in winter?" The king desired to know; and, wrapping him in her mantle, she drew him with her underground, and vanished. I take it that the nether gods purposed that he should pay a visit in the flesh to the regions whither he must go when he died. So they first pierced through a certain dark misty cloud, and then advancing along a path that was worn away with long thoroughfaring, they beheld certain men wearing rich robes, and nobles clad in purple; these passed, they at last approached sunny regions which produced the herbs the woman had brought away. Going further, they came on a swift and tumbling river of leaden waters, whirling down on its rapid current divers sorts of missiles, and likewise made passable by a bridge. When they had crossed this, they beheld two armies encountering one another with might and main. And when Hadding inquired of the woman about their estate: "These," she said, "are they who, having been slain by the sword, declare the manner of their death by a continual rehearsal, and enact the deeds of their past life in a living spectacle." Then a wall hard to approach and to climb blocked their further advance. The woman tried to leap it, but in vain, being unable to do so even with her slender wrinkled body; then she wrung off the head of a cock which she chanced to be taking down with her, and flung it beyond the barrier of the walls; and forthwith the bird came to life again, and testified by a loud crow to recovery of its breathing. Then Hadding turned back and began to make homewards with his wife; some rovers bore down on him, but by swift sailing he baffled their snares; for though it was almost the same wind that helped both, they were behind him as he clove the billows, and, as they had only just as much sail, could not overtake him.

Meantime Uffe, who had a marvellously fair daughter, decreed that the man who slew Hadding should have her. This sorely tempted one Thuning, who got together a band of men of Perm (Byarmenses), being fain so to win the desired advancement. Hadding was going to fall upon him, but while he was passing Norway in his fleet he saw upon the beach an old man signing to him, with many wavings of his mantle, to put into shore. His companions opposed it, and declared that it would be a ruinous diversion from their journey; but he took the man on board, and was instructed by him how to order his army. For this man, in arranging the system of the columns, used to take special care that the front row consisted of two, the second of four, while the

third increased and was made up to eight, and likewise each row was double that in front of it. Also the old man bade the wings of the slingers go back to the extremity of the line, and put with them the ranks of the archers. So when the squadrons were arranged in the wedge, he stood himself behind the warriors, and from the wallet which was slung round his neck drew an arbalist. This seemed small at first, but soon projected with more prolonged tip, and accommodated ten arrows to its string at once, which were shot all at once at the enemy in a brisk volley, and inflicted as many wounds. Then the men of Perm, quitting arms for cunning, by their spells loosed the sky in clouds of rain, and melted the joyous visage of the air in dismal drenching showers. But the old man, on the other hand, drove back with a cloud the heavy mass of storm which had arisen, and checked the dripping rain by this barrier of mist. Thus Hadding prevailed. But the old man, when he parted from him, foretold that the death whereby he would perish would be inflicted, not by the might of an enemy, but by his own hand. Also he forbade him to prefer obscure wars to such as were glorious, and border wars to those remote.

Hadding, after leaving him, was bidden by Uffe to Upsala on pretence of a interview; but lost all his escort by treachery, and made his escape sheltered by the night. For when the Danes sought to leave the house into which they had been gathered on pretext of a banquet, they found one awaiting them, who mowed off the head of each of them with his sword as it was thrust out of the door. For this wrongful act Hadding retaliated and slew Uffe; but put away his hatred and consigned his body to a sepulchre of notable handiwork, thus avowing the greatness of his foe by his pains to beautify his tomb, and decking in death with costly distinctions the man whom he used to pursue in his life with hot enmity. Then, to win the hearts of the people he had subdued, he appointed Hunding, the brother of Uffe, over the realm, that the sovereignty might seem to be maintained in the house of Asmund, and not to have passed into the hand of a stranger.

Thus his enemy was now removed, and he passed several years without any stirring events and in utter disuse of arms; but at last he pleaded the long while he had been tilling the earth, and the immoderate time he had forborne from exploits on the seas; and seeming to think war a merrier thing than peace, he began to upbraid himself with slothfulness in a strain like this:

“Why loiter I thus in darksome hiding, in the folds of rugged hills, nor follow seafaring as of old? The continual howling of the band of wolves, and the plaintive cry of harmful beasts that rises to heaven, and the fierce impatient lions, all rob my eyes of sleep. Dreary are the ridges and the desolation to hearts that trusted to do wilder work. The stark rocks and the rugged lie of the ground bar the way to spirits who are wont to love the sea. It were better service to sound the firths with the oars, to revel in plundered wares, to pursue the gold of others for my coffer, to gloat over sea-gotten gains, than to dwell in rough lands and winding woodlands and barren glades.”

Then his wife, loving a life in the country, and weary of the marin harmony of the sea-birds, declared how great joy she found in frequenting the woodlands, in the following strain:

“The shrill bird vexes me as I tarry by the shore, and with its chattering rouses me when I cannot sleep. Wherefore the noisy sweep of its boisterous rush takes gentle rest from my sleeping eye, nor doth the loud-chattering sea-mew suffer me to rest in the night, forcing its wearisome tale into my dainty ears; nor when I would lie down doth it suffer me to be refreshed, clamouring with doleful modulation of its ill-boding voice. Safer and sweeter do I deem the enjoyment of the woods. How are the fruits of rest plucked less by day or night than by tarrying tossed on the shifting sea?”



At this time one Toste emerged, from the obscure spot of Jutland where he was born, into bloody notoriety. For by all manner of wanton attacks upon the common people he spread wide the fame of his cruelty, and gained so universal a repute for rancour, that he was branded with the name of the Wicked. Nor did he even refrain from wrongdoing to foreigners, but, after foully harrying his own land, went on to assault Saxony. The Saxon general Syfrid, when his men were hard put to it in the battle, entreated peace. Toste declared that he should have what he asked, but only if he would promise to become his ally in a war against Hadding. Syfrid demurred, dreading to fulfill the condition, but by sharp menaces Toste induced him to promise what he asked. For threats can sometimes gain a request which soft-dealing cannot compass. Hadding was conquered by this man in an affair by land; but in the midst of his flight he came on his enemy's fleet, and made it unseaworthy by boring the sides; then he got a skiff and steered it out to sea. Toste thought he was slain, but though he sought long among the indiscriminate heaps of dead, could not find him, and came back to his fleet; when he saw from afar off a light boat tossing on the ocean billows. Putting out some vessels, he resolved to give it chase, but was brought back by peril of shipwreck, and only just reached the shore. Then he quickly took some sound craft, and accomplished the journey which he had before begun. Hadding, seeing he was caught, proceeded to ask his companion whether he was a skilled and practised swimmer; and when the other said he was not, Hadding despairing of flight, deliberately turned the vessel over and held on inside to its hollow, thus making his pursuers think him dead. Then he attacked Toste, who, careless and unaware, was greedily watching over the remnants of his spoil; cut down his army, forced him to quit his plunder, and avenged his own rout by that of Toste.

But Toste lacked not heart to avenge himself. For, not having store enough in his own land to recruit his forces — so heavy was the blow he had received — he went to Britain, calling himself an ambassador. Upon his outward voyage, for sheer wantonness, he got his crew together to play dice, and when a wrangle arose from the throwing of the cubes, he taught them to wind it up with a fatal affray. And so, by means of this peaceful sport, he spread the spirit of strife through the whole ship, and the jest gave place to quarrelling, which engendered bloody combat. Also, fain to get some gain out of the misfortunes of others, he seized the moneys of the slain, and attached to him a certain rover then famous, named Koll; and a little after returned in his company to his own land, where he was challenged and slain by Hadding, who preferred to hazard his own fortune rather than that of his soldiers. For generals of antique valour were loth to accomplish by general massacre what could be decided by the lot of a few.

After these deeds the figure of Hadding's dead wife appeared before him in his sleep, and sang thus:

“A monster is born to thee that shall tame the rage of wild beasts, and crush with fierce mouth the fleet wolves.”

Then she added a little: “Take thou heed; from thee hath issued a bird of harm, in choler a wild screech-owl, in tongue a tuneful swan.”

On the morrow the king, when he had shaken off slumber, told the vision to a man skilled in interpretations, who explained the wolf to denote a son that would be truculent and the word swan as signifying a daughter; and foretold that the son would be deadly to enemies and the daughter treacherous to her father. The result answered to the prophecy. Hadding's daughter, Ulfhild, who was wife to a certain private person called Guthorm, was moved either by anger at her match, or with aspirations to glory, and throwing aside all heed of daughterly love, tempted her husband to slay her

father; declaring that she preferred the name of queen to that of princess. I have resolved to set forth the manner of her exhortation almost in the words in which she uttered it; they were nearly these:

“Miserable am I, whose nobleness is shadowed by an unequal yoke! Hapless am I, to whose pedigree is bound the lowliness of a peasant! Luckless issue of a king, to whom a common man is equal by law of marriage! Pitiably daughter of a prince, whose comeliness her spiritless father hath made over to base and contemptible embraces! Unhappy child of thy mother, with thy happiness marred by consorting with this bed! thy purity is handled by the impurity of a peasant, thy nobility is bowed down by ignoble commonness, thy high birth is impaired by the estate of thy husband! But thou, if any pith be in thee, if valour reign in thy soul at all, if thou deem thyself fit husband for a king’s daughter, wrest the sceptre from her father, retrieve thy lineage by thy valour, balance with courage thy lack of ancestry, requite by bravery thy detriment of blood. Power won by daring is more prosperous than that won by inheritance. Boldness climbs to the top better than inheritance, and worth wins power better than birth. Moreover, it is no shame to overthrow old age, which of its own weight sinks and totters to its fall. It shall be enough for my father to have borne the sceptre for so long; let the dotard’s power fall to thee; if it elude thee, it will pass to another. Whatsoever rests on old age is near its fall. Think that his reign has been long enough, and be it thine, though late in the day, to be first. Further, I would rather have my husband than my father king — would rather be ranked a king’s wife than daughter. It is better to embrace a monarch in one’s home, than to give him homage from afar; it is nobler to be a king’s bride than his courtier. Thou, too, must surely prefer thyself to thy wife’s father for bearing the sceptre; for nature has made each one nearest to himself. If there be a will for the deed, a way will open; there is nothing but yields to the wit of man. The feast must be kept, the banquet decked, the preparations looked to, and my father bidden. The path to treachery shall be smoothed by a pretence of friendship, for nothing cloaks a snare better than the name of kindred. Also his soddenness shall open a short way to his slaughter; for when the king shall be intent upon the dressing of his hair, and his hand is upon his beard and his mind upon stories; when he has parted his knotted locks, either with hairpin or disentangling comb, then let him feel the touch of the steel in his flesh. Busy men commonly devise little precaution. Let thy hand draw near to punish all his sins. It is a righteous deed to put forth thy hand to avenge the wretched!”

Thus Ulfhild importuned, and her husband was overcome by her promptings, and promised his help to the treachery. But meantime Hadding was warned in a dream to beware of his son-in-law’s guile. He went to the feast, which his daughter had made ready for him with a show of love, and posted an armed guard hard by to use against the treachery when need was. As he ate, the henchman who was employed to do the deed of guile silently awaited a fitting moment for his crime, his dagger hid under his robe. The king, remarking him, blew on the trumpet a signal to the soldiers who were stationed near; they straightway brought aid, and he made the guile recoil on its deviser.

Meanwhile Hunding, King of the Swedes, heard false tidings that Hadding was dead, and resolved to greet them with obsequies. So he gathered his nobles together, and filled a jar of extraordinary size with ale, and had this set in the midst of the feasters for their delight, and, to omit no mark of solemnity, himself assumed a servant’s part, not hesitating to play the cupbearer. And while he was passing through the palace in fulfilment of his office, he stumbled and fell into the jar, and, being choked by the liquor, gave up the ghost; thus atoning either to Orcus, whom he was

appeasing by a baseless performance of the rites, or to Hadding, about whose death he had spoken falsely. Hadding, when he heard this, wished to pay like thanks to his worshipper, and, not enduring to survive his death, hanged himself in sight of the whole people.

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