

**EPOCHS OF MODERN  
HISTORY; THE  
NORMANS IN EUROPE**

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**A. H. JOHNSON**

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## PREFACE.

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THE history of the Scandinavian Exodus which began in the ninth century falls conveniently into two periods.

During the first, (800 circ.—912) the people of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway harassed Europe with their inroads, and formed definite settlements in the British Isles, Russia, and France.

During the second, (1029—1066) France itself became the starting-place for a new series of incursions, led by men of Scandinavian descent, who had by that time adopted French customs and language. To this period belong the settlements in Spain and Italy, and the Norman conquest of England.

The aim of this book is to present a connected view of these incursions, and to bring clearly before the reader the important fact, that the Norman Conquest was only the last of this long series of settlements and conquests.

The narrow limits required by the character of the series have necessitated much compression.

Taking, therefore, the Norman Conquest as the centre of the book, I have contented myself with the briefest sketch of those settlements which do not intimately affect that event; and concentrating attention on that of the Seine, have sketched its fortunes in some detail and traced the growing connection be-

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tween Normandy and England which resulted in the conquest of the latter country.

Finally, following the Normans to England, I have dwelt especially on their influence on our country and the principles of our government, and drawn out the relations of Norman England with France and Sicily.

Want of space alone has prevented me from dealing more particularly with the Norman settlement in Italy, one of the most interesting of all, and one which requires the more attention, because it has not been adequately treated of by any English writer. But the history of that island belongs to Italian and Eastern rather than to English history, and it is one important period of English history which I have attempted to illustrate.

In one respect I feel conscious of having departed somewhat from the rule of the series. There are more names than I could have wished. This I have found unavoidable ; but to obviate as far as possible the difficulty which may thereby be caused to the young reader, I have added a few genealogies of the most important families.

I have also given a short list of the authorities which may be useful to those who would extend their studies.

In conclusion, I would offer my best thanks to Professor Stubbs for much kind advice and invaluable criticism.

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the general movement, and that the expeditions were often joined indiscriminately by Dane and Swede and Norseman.

It will be well, therefore, to direct our attention in the first instance to these three countries, and obtain as accurate a knowledge of the condition of the Northmen in their home as is possible from the scanty evidence which exists.

Denmark, Sweden, and Norway were, in the eighth century, inhabited by a people called the 'Northmen,' a name universally used to describe the inhabitants of the Scandinavian continents.

These Northmen were, there is little doubt, closely akin to the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons, who had left their homes on the shores of the German Ocean some five centuries before for England,—branches therefore of the great Teutonic family of the Indo-European or Aryan race, which, coming originally from the East, broke in upon the Roman Empire, and overwhelmed the earlier Keltic or Finnish tribes who preceded them.

That this people should have turned north rather than south, that they should have occupied the inhospitable regions of the Scandinavian continents in preference to the more accessible lands to the south of them, may, at first, appear extraordinary. But, apart from the probability that they were forced northwards by the pressure ensuing on the general migration of the Gothic races and their conflict with the Roman Empire, the fact is not hard to explain on other grounds. These continents, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, with all their apparent savageness, offered to a people of hunters better opportunities for supporting life, than the trackless forests of Germany. The land abounded in animals which could be more easily captured in the broken coun-

Reason for their settlement in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

The Northmen in their home.

try of the North than in the dense forests and wide plains of Germany. The rivers and fiords teemed with fish and wild-fowl; fossil belemnite and other stones used for weapons in an early state of society, are said to abound on the Norwegian coast; and Sweden was singularly rich in iron and copper ore, which lay very near the surface. Everything, in fact, required by people in an early state of civilisation was to be found there.

Of the condition of the Northmen at the time of their first settlement we can assert nothing. We do not know whether they had already passed out of the hunting stage and become a pastoral people, nor can we mark the date at which this condition was abandoned for the more fixed one which marks the rise of the agricultural system. The analogy of all other tribes of which we have any historical evidence would lead us to suppose that they had, at some time, passed through these stages. But, when we first meet with them, they had certainly become an agricultural people, and dwelt in settled homes.

The origin of society amongst the Northmen, in common with the rest of the Germanic peoples, is probably to be sought in the 'village community,' an association founded on the real or fictitious tie of the family. According to this system, the district occupied by each community was the common possession of the family or tribe, in whom the absolute ownership resided, and was divided into three parts: the village, the arable 'land,' and the common pasture. In the village, each of the tribal members had his homestead. Of the arable lands he had a right to a share, but he had to follow the prescribed rotation in his crops, and, when it was to lie fallow, changed his plot for another. On the pasture lands he might turn out his cattle, and cut his firewood, and when they were taken up for hay, each marks