

FRITHIOF'S SAGA

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Frithiof's saga by William Lewery Blackley

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WILLIAM LEWERY BLACKLEY

**FRITHIOF'S
SAGA**

FRITHIOF'S SAGA

FROM THE SWEDISH OF
ESAIAS TEGNÉR

Bishop of Wexjö

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM LEWERY BLACKLEY, M.A.

First American Edition

EDITED BY
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PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

THIS volume is the second of a uniform series of foreign poems lately inaugurated by the publication of "King René's Daughter" from the Danish of Henrik Hertz. It is our intention speedily to add Lessing's "Nathan the Wise," with the splendid introductory essay of Fischer, translated, and edited by the Rev. O. B. Frothingham.

If we are not disappointed in our hopes of the public appreciation of these, we will add others of equal interest. Among those we have in contemplation are Goethe's "Hermann and Dorothea;" Molière's "Tartuffe;" Calderon's "Life is a Dream;" Tasso's "Aminta," translated by Leigh Hunt; "The Wooing of the King's Daughter," from the Norwegian of Muench; "Boris Godounoff," from the Russian of Pouschkine; "Nala and Damajanti," translated from the Sanscrit by Milman; and a translation of Bodenstedt's version of the Turkish songs of Mirza-Schaffy.

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FRITHIOF'S SAGA,

AND ITS AUTHOR.



No poetical work of modern times stands forth so prominently and peculiarly a representative of the literature of a race and language, as the "Frithiof's Saga" of Esaias Tegnér. Swedish poetry, of comparatively recent growth, attained in this work, for the first time, a development in consonance with the character of the Swedish people, and with those qualities of the Swedish tongue which distinguish it from other cognate languages. Purely Scandinavian in its spirit, its scenery, its legendary element, and only indebted to antique culture for a part of its rhythmical form, it combines the freshness and freedom of the early Saga with very high artistic finish and proportion. It appeals at once to the national pride, and the simple human sentiment of the farmer or herdsman, and to the taste of the scholar. Immediately upon the appearance of the poem, its claim to be placed at the head of the imaginative literature of Sweden was recognized. No one attempted to contro-

vert the decision, which has only been strengthened during the forty-three years that have since intervened.

In asserting that Swedish poetry is of recent growth, I refer neither to the old Eddaic literature, nor to those authors of the seventeenth century whose reputation still survives in their native land. Few, indeed, outside of Sweden, have ever read or even heard of the hexameters of Stjernhjelm, or the pious epic of Archbishop Spigel. With Dalin commenced the new era, which nearly corresponds in time to that of England and Germany, and of which Bellmann, Franzén, Wallin and Leopold—names which first carried Swedish poetry to other lands—were the most prominent representatives. When Bellmann died, Tegnér was a boy of thirteen: to Leopold, whom he knew, he dedicated his poem of "Axel," and Geijer and Ling belonged to his own generation. He is thus the central figure of the period—a calm, earnest, beautiful life, in which the fire and enthusiasm of the poet, the sedate strength of the scholar, the tender and solemn humanity of the preacher, and the social and domestic affections of the honest Scandinavian nature, are blended in equal and harmonious measure. Although other of the modern Swedish poets may occasionally surpass Tegnér in depth of reflection, or originality of form, in no one has the poetic faculty attained such a free and plastic grace of expression, while retaining that antique symmetry which always suggests repose.

The secret of this excellence is to be found in the history of his life. Like Linnæus and Thorwaldsen, he sprang directly from the people—from the simple, sturdy, vigorous level of the Scandinavian race. His grandfather was a "*bonde gud*" of the Thorsten Vikingsson stamp: he fought under Charles XII, and after the battle