

# **SLAVERY IN GERMANIC SOCIETY DURING THE MIDDLE AGES**

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Slavery in Germanic Society During the Middle Ages by Agnes Mathilde Wergeland

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By

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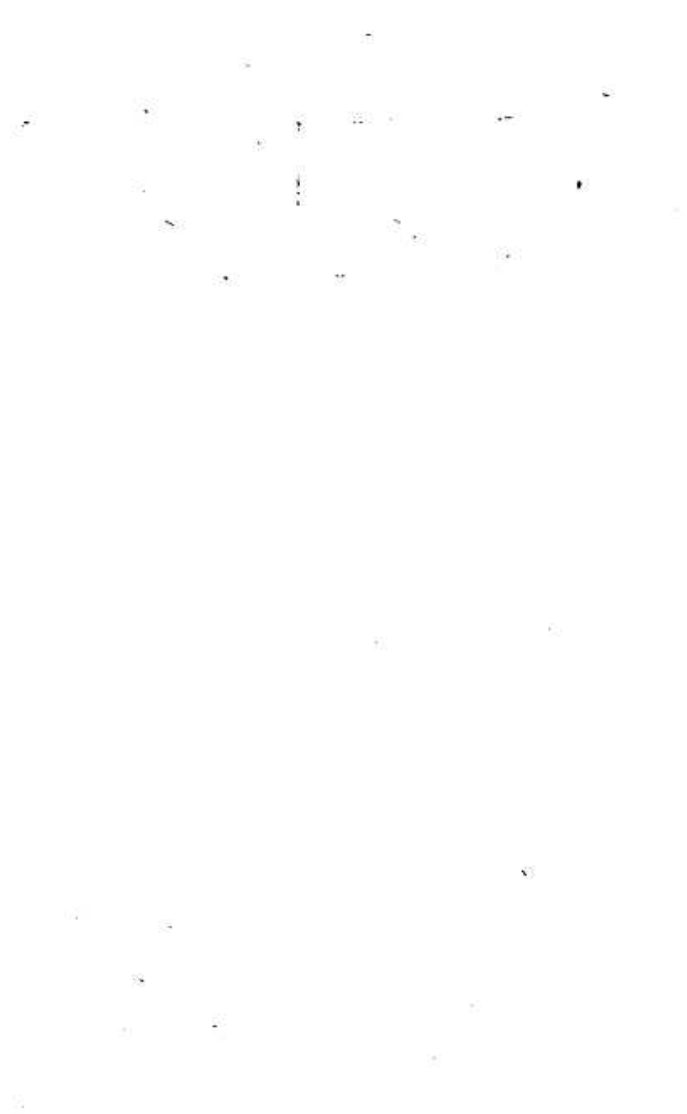
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## PREFACE

That loyal affection to Dr. Wergeland's memory should suggest the thought of reprinting her monograph on *Slavery in Germanic Society during the Middle Ages* will seem wholly natural, as certainly it will be deeply gratifying, to all those who really knew her. While she was much else than merely a scholar—a woman of noble character, a valiant soul, generous, straightforward, friendly, an inspiring teacher, and a literary writer of varied accomplishments in more than one language—it was impossible not to wish that something of what she did in the field of scholarship, the field into which she threw the main endeavors of her forcible and energetic mind, might be preserved in a permanent form. The circumstances of her life, especially the devoted work of the teacher, did not permit the completion of any large book. From among her lesser writings a wise choice has been made of her papers on

mediaeval slavery, originally printed in the *Journal of Political Economy*.

The theme is one of much importance, and especially for American readers. Slavery has a large place in the history of the United States, yet the story of its development, institutional characteristics, and abolition has been pursued almost entirely as if slavery had never existed in other lands and other times. The history of American slavery, in other words, has not had that additional light cast upon it which would come from comparative study, though it is well known how potent an illuminator the comparative method has proved itself to be in many other fields of economic and social history. In reality, we cannot hope to attain a true understanding of American slavery in some of its most essential aspects unless we are somehow made mindful of the history of slavery as a whole.

The history of slavery in the Middle Ages has received much less attention than that of serfdom, and perhaps less with respect to the Germanic portions of Europe than the

southern lands. Dr. Wergeland's contribution to it is marked by great learning. That is a matter of course. Especially valuable is the information she brings from her extensive reading in the legal writings of mediaeval Scandinavia. But the reader will also see the evidences of logical, and even of philosophical thinking, and of a large, general grasp of the institutional history of Northern Europe as a whole. He will see a close appreciation of the working of economic motives. He will see the marks of a cultivated mind, and will probably be struck with the excellence of the English, in the case of one to whom English was not the native tongue. If in some small instances he detects a slight foreign flavor, it is compensated by a certain originality and piquancy of phrase, in other places, that were characteristic of the author.

It will be the hope of all Dr. Wergeland's friends that the publication of her essay in its present form shall aid to perpetuate her memory in a way she would have especially liked, for certainly she shared the "inward