

**EDDA; OR, THE TALES OF A
GRANDMOTHER. HISTORY OF
DENMARK, FIRST PART, FROM
THE EARLIEST AGES TO THE
DEATH OF CANUTE THE GREAT**

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PREFACE.

THE writer of these pages, observing the great interest with which young people peruse the "TALES OF A GRANDFATHER," has often regretted that the histories of other countries were not written in the same entertaining and instructive manner as that of Scotland. By Sir Walter's method history ceases to be a tedious task to the young, and its page becomes the means of beguiling many an hour which would otherwise be consumed in the perusal of those idle works of fiction with which, to the great detriment of youth, our subscription libraries now abound.

The Author has devoted some hours of leisure to the compilation of the earlier history of Denmark, and the following pages form a part of the work, which he intends to continue to the era of the Reformation.

FIRST PERIOD.

FROM THE EARLIEST AGES TO THE TIMES OF ANSGARIUS, WHO
FIRST PREACHED THE GOSPEL IN THE NORTH.

INTRODUCTION.

WE find great difficulty in giving a correct view of the first ages of any country, on account of the accumulation of fables, which always confuses this period of history. To separate the simple facts from the mass of superincumbent fiction is, indeed, a task so laborious, that the writer of these pages would shrink from it, did he not reflect that great forbearance is always extended to those who engage in such an undertaking. In full confidence of this indulgence, we shall at once give the sources whence any information can be had regarding the early history of Denmark. These are, in the first instance, the language, such as it appears in old writings, and the analogy which it bears to other languages; secondly, the monuments of those early periods which are still extant; and, thirdly, the traditions given us by those old chroniclers whose writings have been preserved, and which, after being carefully examined by competent archaeologists, have since been republished.

Confusion and difficulty have sprung up from the intimate connexion which was maintained between the three Scandinavian nations, and which was founded on similarity of religious faith as well as close family ties. The old chroniclers were unfortunately apt, in their mistaken national pride, to deviate from the strict truth, and to transfer such valiant deeds as had been performed by one nation to the history of that country in which the writers were personally most interested. Consequently, it became necessary, in many instances, to compare various writers, and to weigh the internal evidence of the facts which they state, before any certain conclusion could be formed from their works. To give instances of this foolish rivalry, we will mention the celebrated old Swedish writer, Rudbeck, who proved, to his own entire satisfaction, that the garden of Eden was origin-

ally placed in the valleys of Dalecarlia; and another Swedish writer of high standing, Doctor Bang, has asserted, that Adam's first earthly toils were begun in Sweden. Lyscander, the royal historiographer of Christian the Fourth of Denmark, came to the conclusion that Noah and his family had settled in Jutland after landing from the ark; and the Cimbri, as well as all the ancestors of his royal master, came thus in a direct line from Noah's son, Japhet. An archbishop of Sweden, John Magnus, went so far as to invent a long list of kings named by no other historian: he even relates circumstantially the actions done by them, that he might secure to the history of his own country the honour of extending farther back than that of Denmark.

We will, however, pass over these singularly speculative ideas, and rather endeavour to trace what information may be gained from the language itself. In this investigation we find that the old Danish language was originally the same as that spoken at the present day in Iceland. The latter, again, differs little from that in which the most ancient of northern chronicles are written. So little has the Icelandic language varied, that deeds for the conveyance of property which were executed in the eleventh century can yet be easily read and understood by the intelligent farmers of that island.

We find, further, that the Icelandic language, together with the Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, as they are now spoken, has a striking resemblance in its roots, construction, and even in many of its words, to those dialects which are now spoken by the people who inhabit the Crimea, and those who live on the borders of the Caspian Sea. These have all been found to have a close connexion with the Sanscrit language; and we think, therefore, that we are not presumptuous if we infer, from this affinity of languages, that it was from the continent of Asia, and particularly from India, those races emigrated which first peopled the North of Europe. It seems almost impossible to determine the probable period of this emigration; but, from various traditions, we may state that it happened about 2500 years before Christ. Many are rather inclined to the opinion, that the wilds of Scandinavia were only peopled as late as about 1000 years before Christ, when two races, called Finners and Celts, are said to have arrived. The first-named people are thought to have been some Jewish tribe, which had fled thus far north from the miseries which so often visited their own land.

Having thus slightly directed attention to the language of Denmark as one source of information, we will now turn to those monumental buildings which still exist. We find here, however, very little which can throw any light on the subject. While over the south of Europe there are scattered many ruins, which are still so perfect that they frequently afford a clue to the ancient histories of the countries in which they exist, the North cannot boast of presenting to the antiquarian any monuments whereon to build his theories with any thing like certainty.

Tumuli, or barrows, have been discovered of various sizes, and in these there have been found many interesting relics of past ages. Warlike weapons, tools, curious utensils, and sepulchral urns, have been collected from these, and they have been placed in museums, as interesting records of the gradual advancement of art from those early times when the rude wedge and hammer were formed of stone, to the period when metal came into use, and was converted into the required forms by means of the forge. Still neither in these collections, nor in the stone-hills which served as altars for the heathen religion, nor in the chambers of the sepulchrea, can there be found any clue to the history of the ancient inhabitants of these lands. The tools and weapons, we know, were generally buried with the dead, that they might serve them in the day of that resurrection, of which even the most barbarous nations seem to have had a natural anticipation; but no inscriptions on these utensils shew to whom they have belonged, nor at what period they were thus deposited.

We now come to the source of information which we mentioned as the last; namely, the traditions which were transmitted from one generation to another, and were then in a collected form preserved in manuscripts.

The Roman and Greek authors have only slightly noticed the geography and history of that part of the world which was to them its very end—its "Ultima Thule;" and, consequently, we meet here with much disappointment. They might have derived much information from the Carthaginians, who were the most nautical people of the ancient world, and who visited frequently the northern seas. But, unfortunately for us, the Romans did their work of destruction so well, that we have none of the Carthaginian writings left us, which might possibly have given us much valuable information. Nor had the Romans previously succeeded in acquiring any knowledge from the Carthaginians regarding the