

**SELECTED
POEMS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649092802

Selected poems by Gustaf Fröding & Charles Wharton Stork

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GUSTAF FRÖDING & CHARLES WHARTON STORK

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POEMS**

GUSTAF FRÖDING

Selected Poems

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH
WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

CHARLES WHARTON STORK

A. M., PH. D.

AUTHOR OF "SEA AND BAY,"
"THE QUEEN OF ORFLEDE," ETC.



New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1916

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TO
GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE
PREËMINENT SCHOLAR
AND
INTERPRETER OF LITERATURE

THE translations in this volume have been favorably passed upon by the PUBLICATION COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION. Several of the poems have appeared in the *American-Scandinavian Review*, and are here reproduced with the courteous permission of the FOUNDATION.

INTRODUCTION

ONE of the most marked tendencies in recent European literature has been the sudden rise and growth of Scandinavian influence. Ibsen, Björnsen and Strindberg created new types of the drama, Ellen Key advanced the cause of feminism, and Selma Lagerlöf is now generally recognized as one of the greatest living novelists. And yet, despite all this, the richest and most characteristic field of Scandinavian letters has been hitherto unexplored. The Northmen themselves, whether Norwegians, Danes or Swedes, pride themselves most on their lyric poetry, in which the Swedish Muse is by far the most eminent. Of this very little is known in English, the only Swedish poets who have been translated at all extensively being Runeberg and

Tegnér, whose "Frithiof's Saga" is rather epic than lyric.

The variety and power of the Swedish lyric is far too great to be more than touched on here. It had its roots in the folk-songs, began to develop in the first half of the Seventeenth Century and assumed more conscious artistic form about 1750. At first it was largely influenced by German, Italian and French models, later to some degree by the English Romantic Movement, and again by the Romanticism of Germany. The greatest of the early names is that of Karl Mikael Bellman, a consummate master of verse-form. After him important poets come thick and fast through the Nineteenth Century, reaching a climax in the early part of the present generation with such men as Snoilsky and Fröding. There has, however, been hardly any decline since then, as the number of notable living poets attests; among others Daniel Fallström, Erik

Karlfeldt, Per Hallström, and Verner von Heidenstam.

All good poetry has the quality of universality. We therefore find the Swedish lyric dealing with all the great human emotions; with religion, with love, with the beauty of nature, and the rest of the gamut. If we sought to define the peculiarly national characteristics of the Swedish lyric, we might say that they were: first, a remarkable closeness to the earth, reminding one rather of primitive than of modern poetry; and secondly, on the other side, a purely visionary quality, a sort of clairvoyance in the realm of the imagination. These two opposed faculties tend to give the remarkable contrast with which every reader will be struck. There is also a considerable classic tinge in some poets, and a strong injection of modern thought and philosophy in others. Kindliness and trenchant humor very frequently relieve the tension of

too insistent seriousness. In form the Swede adheres to regular metres and stanzaic arrangements, which he varies with infinite skill.

In the long array of distinguished Swedish poets the most striking and probably the greatest figure is that of Gustaf Fröding. He is at least the most powerful, the most popular and the most finely imaginative. He unites the qualities already mentioned with remarkable breadth of appeal, intellectual vigor, and a compactness of style that makes every phrase significant. In his pictures of peasant life he reminds one most of Burns, some of whose songs he translated, but his ironic humor is more like that of Heine. The visionary gift appears in poems of almost Shelleyan ideal beauty, and his power of dramatic narrative has a virility which makes the work of Kipling seem journalistic. Above all in every line we are impressed by his complete originality, his absolute truth to nature and his own emotions.